The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Social Justice Committee (SJC) invites you to take part in the 2023–2024 National Book Read featuring Disability Visibility: First Person Stories From the Twenty First Century edited by Alice Wong. This book guide was developed to help readers think broadly and specifically about (a) how disability justice is a key component of social justice and (b) how disability justice must undergird our work with youth and families in schools. Discussion questions begin on page 3. As you engage in the book read, please reference the NASP (2017) definition of social justice for additional context:

Social justice is both a process and a goal that requires action. School psychologists work to ensure the protection of the educational rights, opportunities, and well-being of all children, especially those whose voices have been muted, identities obscured, or needs ignored. Social justice requires promoting nondiscriminatory practices and the empowerment of families and communities. School psychologists enact social justice through culturally responsive professional practice and advocacy to create schools, communities, and systems that ensure equity and fairness for all children and youth.

Furthermore, in 2022, NASP updated its Social Justice Strategic Goal, which is as follows:

School psychologists have the self-awareness and critical consciousness to engage in and advocate for socially just practices that protect the right of every student to receive high-quality educational access, opportunities, and experiences.

We wish to emphasize that this guide is not comprehensive and does not fully address the wide variety of perspectives that exist within the disability community. As expressed by Alice Wong in the book introduction,

[Disability Visibility] is not Disability 101 or a definitive “best of” list. You may be unfamiliar with some terms or uncomfortable with some ideas presented in this book—and that’s a good thing! These stories do not seek to explain the meaning of disability or to inspire or elicit empathy. Rather, they show disabled people simply being in our own words, by our own accounts.

Furthermore, while some stories contain content that may be especially difficult for some readers—please be aware of the content notes at the start of contributor essays and seek care resources when needed—we invite you to challenge yourself to engage as much as possible.

Lastly, we remind readers that our NASP community consists of life-long learners who have dedicated their life’s work to supporting the development of youth and advancing social justice for a better world. This means committing to a growth mindset, thinking critically about our privileges and biases, and opening our hearts and minds to human experiences that are not our own. Each contributor in this book is a human who deserves respect, dignity, and care. Please keep this in mind as you read, especially when you are challenged with information that you disagree with or that may feel uncomfortable. Acknowledge feelings of discomfort and, with the support of your group, push yourself to grow and continue learning. Let’s commit to working toward liberation and justice for marginalized people and communities.

Positionality statement by the guide creators: This book guide was primarily prepared by a graduate student in school psychology and members of the SJC. The authors identify with a range of cultural, racial, and ethnic groups which
lend unique and rich perspectives to the development of resources for discussion and learning. Furthermore, a wide variety of socioeconomic experiences, levels of training in school psychology, residential geography, and gender identity are represented. Most importantly, the authors of this document are committed to transformational change, fostering critical consciousness, and social justice in school psychology.

PLANNING YOUR BOOK READ
To help coordinate and facilitate your book read, below is a suggested timeline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Per Meeting</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Essays to Discuss</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60 minutes</td>
<td>Introductions, norm setting, and defining collective learning goals</td>
<td>Introduction by Alice Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 minutes*</td>
<td>Part 1: Being</td>
<td>Part 1: Being</td>
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<td>60 minutes*</td>
<td>Part 2: Becoming</td>
<td>Part 2: Becoming</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 minutes*</td>
<td>Part 3: Doing</td>
<td>Part 3: Doing</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 minutes*</td>
<td>Part 4: Connecting</td>
<td>Part 4: Connecting</td>
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<tr>
<td>30–45-minute meeting or digital check-in (email, google doc, shared video check ins)</td>
<td>Follow-up and Call to Action</td>
<td>Check-in, share progress on action steps</td>
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</tbody>
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*We suggest a 5–10-minute check-in at the start of each meeting, 40–45 minutes of content discussion, and 5–10 minutes to debrief, share last thoughts and reflections, and state objectives for the next meeting.

FACILITATION SUGGESTIONS

Facilitators are strongly encouraged to codevelop a community agreement (group norms) at the first session and revisit this agreement throughout. The purpose of this is to (a) identify what norms each person in the group needs in order to feel heard and safe during discussions and (b) establish respectful guidelines for engaging with the material. For more information on community agreements, please see this brief guide by the National Equity Project.

Please also see the Facilitating a Book Read video available on NASP's Social Justice webpage for additional considerations for in-person environments. If you would like an asynchronous approach, we recommend dialogue-oriented sites for engaging with participants, such as Flipgrid, Padlet, Discord, or Microsoft Teams. Your schools/institutions may already have memberships and support to offer for these services. When facilitating a book read, there will likely be varying opinions, experiences, and interpretations. Furthermore, the subject matter can elicit strong emotional reactions that fuel disagreement among participants. To prepare, we encourage facilitators to watch our video, Tips for Fostering Dialogue Across Difference, to help navigate tense situations should they arise.

Lastly, facilitators are encouraged to also codevelop learning objectives with group members to help guide their group’s discussion. Below are suggested objectives we invite you to discuss with your group:

1. Recognize that experiences of people with disabilities are diverse, intersectional, and nuanced.
2. Examine ableism and its systemic impacts, particularly in educational environments.
3. Identify strategies to combat ableism in your life and work as a school psychologist.

1 While we use person-first language (i.e., “person who is blind”) in this guide because this is the language generally used in school psychology policies and practice, it is important to be aware that people with disabilities have different preferences regarding how they describe and refer to their disability. Instead of person-first language, some people prefer to use identity-first language (i.e., “blind person”) to reclaim their ownership over how they identify, as you see the contributors refer to themselves in their essays. It is best to ask individuals what their preferences are. Please refer to the APA guidelines to learn more: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/disability
4. Develop and commit to a plan to continue your education about disability justice and advocate for inclusive services that center the needs of the marginalized individuals and communities you work with.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

As you read, we invite you to reflect on the questions below. These questions are intended to:

- Help you think about how your body and identities influence how you experience the world and how others’ experiences are similar or different.
- Help you think about accessibility in the context of your work as a school psychologist.
- Help you move beyond reflection by identifying concrete actions that you can take to advocate and address gaps in accessibility.

The goal is to decenter nonmarginalized perspectives, identify oppressive norms embedded in our lives that harm people with disabilities, and take action against those norms.

Personal Life Reflection Questions

- As you read, take note of quotes and anecdotes that stand out to you. What resonates? What information and perspectives are you unfamiliar with?
- Reflect on your personal experience navigating the world in your body.
  - How does your body influence your experience of the world?
  - How often do you think (or are you forced to think) about accessibility for yourself?
  - How do your identities influence your experience of the world in your body?
- Reflect on how society centers able-bodiedness and ableist assumptions about mental health. What does this look like in the communities that you are a part of?

Work Life Reflection Questions

- Is your school a supportive environment for people with disabilities (both visible and not; physical and mental health related)?
- Does your school have discussions about accessibility?
  - Do those discussions involve leadership and feedback from people with disabilities?
  - Do those discussions lead to concrete action and advocacy?
- In what ways is your school accessible and supportive for people with disabilities? What are the areas of improvement?

Call to Action

- Identify an action that you can take to address a gap in accessibility in your community.
- Identify a concrete action you can take in your work as a school psychologist to address a gap in accessibility at your school—for yourself, students, families, or colleagues.
- Identify a resource to further explore the wide variety and nuanced experiences of people in the disability community.
Part 1: Being

1. Talila Lewis writes of late activist Ki’tay Davidson, “Ki’tay was a lot of things to a lot of people, organizations, and institutions: The voice of affirmation when you weren’t quite sure of your self-worth, dignity, or beauty. The voice of love and justice within institutions and organizations rife with oppression and violence.”
   a. Imagine the students at your school and the broader community—might anyone in that community have moments where they doubt their self-worth, dignity, or beauty, especially in the context of marginalized identities, including disability? Now consider your own privileges in those same areas; what is stopping you from being a voice of affirmation and love where it might make a difference?
   b. Lewis reminds us that Davidson, a fighter for the rights of trans youth of color, lived fully. What can we do to help the children we serve live fully?

2. When we write our reports, we often consider parents, teachers, and fellow student services professionals as our audience. We do not always consider the student’s experience reading these reports. In her essay, “There Is a Mathematical Equation That Proves I’m Ugly,” author Ariel Henley shared a heartbreaking but powerful story of discovering callous words written about her and her disability.
   a. How do we make children with disabilities feel with the words that we write?
   b. How can we ensure that children do not feel objectified or dehumanized by our words?

   a. Deerinwater describes the ways that the healthcare system erases Indigeneity, thus contributing to health disparities (e.g., higher rates of diabetes, suicide, autoimmune diseases). Where are such patterns mirrored in education?
   b. How do the questions we ask as evaluators fail to honor the full humanity of the children with disabilities that we serve? How might we better consider the full story of the children and families with whom we work?

Part 2: Becoming

4. Dr. Diana Cejas writes, “All that you’re really doing when you interview a patient is asking them to tell you a story. All the patient really wants is for you to listen to them. That’s what we all want, isn’t it? It’s one of our most fundamental drives. To be seen. To be heard. To be understood.”
   a. Think about a moment in your life when you’ve felt truly listened to (seen, heard, and understood).
   b. Now reflect on how the quote applies to your work as a school psychologist. How do you listen in your practice with students, teachers, and families?

5. Sandy Ho writes, “It is a privilege to never have to consider the spaces you occupy ... in the spaces formed by marginalized disabled people, my existence is allowed on our shared world map in a way that is liberating simply because here I am presumed whole.”
   a. What do you think it means to be presumed whole, and how can we resist making assumptions about physical and mental health in our interactions with colleagues, students, and families?
   b. Does your school provide opportunities for students with marginalized identities to be in community with one another?

6. Consider intersectional experiences of disability. Keah Brown writes, “I’m calling for inclusion that decenters whiteness.” She also writes, “Unfortunately, we live in a society that assumes joy is impossible for disabled people, associating disability with only sadness and shame. So my joy—the joy of professional and personal wins, of pop culture and books, of expressing platonic love out loud—is revolutionary in a body like mine.”
   a. What does antiracist, antioppressive inclusion look like?
   b. How can you emphasize liberation in your practice and facilitate opportunities for students to express the full range of their emotions, especially joy?
Part 3: Doing

7. Ellen Samuels notes that, “Alison Kafer, author of Feminist, Queer, Crip, says that ‘rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds.” I have embraced this beautiful notion for many years, living within the embrace of a crip time that lets me define my own ‘normal.”
   a. What norms and assumptions regarding time, scheduling, productivity, and so forth are harmful to those who do not have full able-bodied privilege? How can we cultivate a culture of understanding and flexibility in our schools?
   b. Do students at your school have the liberty to define their boundaries and the space to express themselves on their own terms?

8. Britney Wilson writes, “Long before respectability politics became a popular colloquial term, I thought education would help people recognize that my humanity and my disability aren’t mutually exclusive. Many people of color grew up hearing the ‘you must be twice as good’ speech as an antidote to racism; I got it as the antidote to both racism and ableism. I wanted to be taken seriously and I thought higher education would help.” With Britney Wilson’s experience in mind, why do you think it is important to apply an intersectional lens when engaging in social justice work? In other words, why is it important to acknowledge nuance in conversations about oppression and privilege?

9. Read Lateef McLeod’s poem “I Am Too Pretty for Some ‘Ugly Laws’” as a group and share the stanzas that stand out to you. What ableist assumptions and dehumanization does this poem call out and decry?

Part 4: Connecting

10. Representation of people with disabilities in the media can be harmful, especially when people with disabilities are not consulted in the process and when historical context is erased. Patty Berne (as told to and edited by Vanessa Raditz) writes, “The history of disabled queer and trans people has continually been one of creative problem-solving within a society that refuses to center our needs.”
   a. How can we center the needs of children with disabilities in our work?
   b. How can we move beyond tokenism and instead toward true inclusion?

11. The Harriet Tubman Collective writes, “The phrase ‘differently abled’ suggests that we are the locus of our disability when we are, in fact, disabled by social and institutional barriers. Not only is this term offensive, but it also reifies the marginalization that Black Disabled/Deaf people face on a regular basis by and within our own communities and oppressive state institutions.”
   a. Discuss why language is so important when discussing disability. How can you check yourself and make room for the people with disabilities in your life to determine how they identify and talk about their disability?
   b. Consider the intersectional experiences of disability and discuss why racial and disability justice are connected.

12. Stacey Milbern writes, “disability justice (and disability itself) has the potential to fundamentally transform everything we think about quality of life, purpose, work, relationships, and belonging.”
   a. Reflect on this statement and imagine a world that is equitably and universally designed for all people to live and thrive. What would this look like?
   b. What universal design principles are incorporated in your school’s physical and programmatic design?

Follow Up and Call to Action Meeting

- Reflect on what you have learned in your group.
- If this book group was a class, how would you grade your participation (not limited to letter grades!). How did you challenge yourself, contribute, and engage with your group members? You do not have to share out loud, but please write or think about this.
How has this book changed your perspective on your work as a school psychologist?

On what action steps have you made progress? What do you commit to continuing beyond this book group, and how will you hold yourself accountable?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Disability Visibility Project is an ongoing, active project. We highly encourage you to explore the podcast and more on the website.

- Learn more about the Disability Visibility Project at https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/
- Explore Community as Home Digital Portraits (https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/community-as-home-portraits/), a collaboration between artist Ashanti Forston (https://www.ashantifortson.com) and Alice Wong “centered on the joy, culture, and love of disabled people and how we create communities and homes for one another.”
- Communiqué will feature four brief articles outlining foundational information about disability justice for school psychology. Stay tuned!

REFERENCES


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