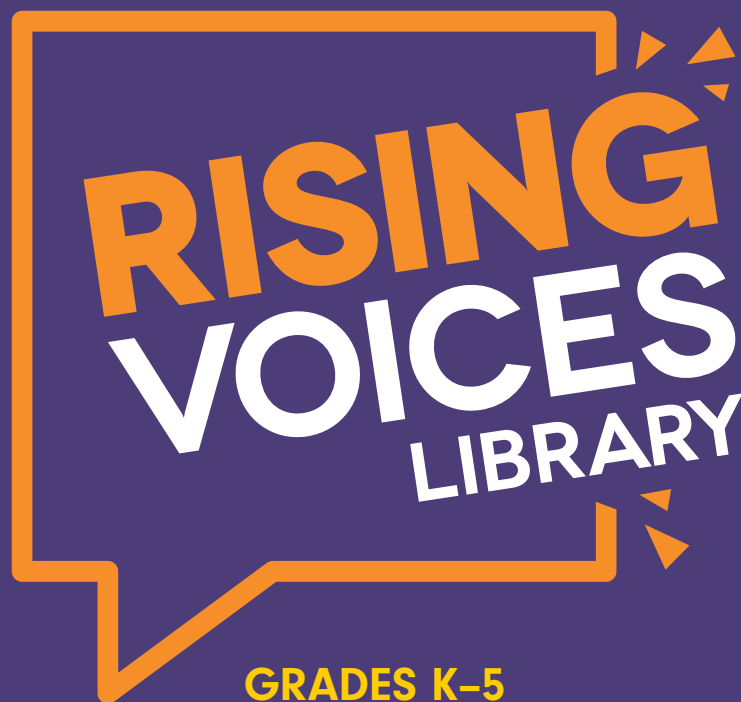




Books Empowering Girls in STEAM

SAMPLE TEACHER'S GUIDE



WELCOME TO YOUR SAMPLE TEACHER'S GUIDE!

The **Rising Voices Teacher's Guide** equips educators with the tools to successfully implement whole-class read-alouds, book clubs, and independent reading with the texts in this library. Prompts for conferring and connecting with families expand and increase engagement!

The Teacher's Guide supports educators with:

- **Implementation strategies** for integrating the texts into book clubs and whole-class, small-group, and independent reading
 - **Suggestions** on how to support English Learners
 - **Instructional supports** for building social-emotional awareness
 - **Engaging discussion** prompts based on Rising Voices themes
 - **Tips** for creating safe environments for difficult conversations
- 

The Rising Voices Teacher's Guide Sampler's

Table of Contents

Contents	1
Welcome!	2-3
Access and Equity	4-5
Rising Voices Themes and Anchor Texts (Grades K-2)	6-7
Rising Voices Themes and Anchor Texts (Grades 3-5)	8-9
Building Social-Emotional Awareness	10-11
Redefining Societal Norms via Literature by Estephania Mosquera-Ortiz	12-13
Where Dreams Begin by Tatyana Ali	14-15

Photos ©: cover: SDI Productions/Getty Images; 4: SDI Productions/Getty Images;
7: FatCamera /Getty Images; 10: Courtesy of Dr. Duriya Aziz SW; 12: Monkey Business Images/Shutterstock;
14: Courtesy of Dr. Oneeka Williams; 20: Courtesy of Estephania Mosquera-Ortiz; 28: Courtesy of Tatyana Ali;
33: SDI Productions/Getty Images; 34: Courtesy of Dr. Ronke Olabisi; 37: kali9/Getty Images.
Book cover illustration from *The Little Red Fort* copyright © 2018 by Sonia Sánchez. Published by Scholastic Inc.

Scholastic is not responsible for the content of third-party websites and does not endorse any site
or imply that the information on the site is error-free, correct, accurate, or reliable

No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, or stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording,
or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission,
write to Scholastic Inc., 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

Copyright © 2021 by Scholastic Inc.
All rights reserved. Published by Scholastic Inc.
Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN 978-1-338-77647-8

SCHOLASTIC and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.
Other company names, brand names, and product names are the property and/or trademarks of their
respective owners. Scholastic does not endorse any product or business entity mentioned herein.

Scholastic is constantly working to lessen the environmental impact of our manufacturing processes.
To view our industry-leading paper procurement policy, visit www.scholastic.com/paperpolicy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 40 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21

 Text pages printed on 10% PCW recycled paper.

Scholastic Inc., 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012

Contents

Welcome!	4
----------------	---

Access and Equity

Why Rising Voices?	6
What It Takes to Excel in STEAM and Why It Matters	8
Building Agency Through Literature by Dr. Duriya Aziz SW	10

Teaching With Rising Voices Books

Rising Voices in Your Classroom	12
The Power of Reading Aloud	13
See One, Be One, Inspire Many! by Dr. Oneeka Williams	14
Rising Voices Themes and Anchor Texts	16
Using the Anchor Texts and Teaching Cards	18
Redefining Societal Norms via Literature by Estephania Mosquera-Ortiz	20
Building Social-Emotional Awareness	22
Linguistically and Culturally Responsive and Respectful Teaching Tips	24
Where Dreams Begin by Tatyana Ali	28
Promoting Independent Reading	30
Writing and Other Creative Responses to Texts	31
Conferring With Students	32
Building Beyond This Rising Voices Library	33
The Power of Possibility by Dr. Ronke Olabisi	34

Additional Resources

Connecting With Families	36
To Learn More About Diversity	38
To Learn More About STEM and STEAM	39
Rising Voices Lessons at a Glance	40
Rising Voices Research Base	42
Bibliography	46

Welcome!



We live at a time when the potential for the positive impact of those who pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and math-related fields is ever expanding. There are few careers that do not require people to use and understand technology. Talented scientists, engineers, and mathematicians are the heroes who help us combat disease, protect our environment, and improve quality of life by designing better systems for cities, communication, and agriculture.

We need more of these heroes. And the children we are educating today need to know that they can develop the skills to excel in these disciplines. Since the 1970s, educators have been speaking out about the need for greater emphasis in our schools on what has been called STEM and now STEAM (the *A* reflects the enhancement of combining the creativity and visual impact of the Arts into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math endeavors).

In addition to offering all of our children the opportunity to engage with STEAM activities, we have to support them in developing the confidence that they can succeed in these arenas. However, children pick up on cultural and gender stereotypes at a very young age. Some of those stereotypes signal that girls and women are not as capable as boys and men are at performing well in STEAM activities. Sadly, these false beliefs seem to escalate as children grow. For example, when asked to draw a scientist, six-year-old girls often (70% of the time) drew a female scientist. As girls matured, however, fewer and fewer drew scientists who were female until, by age 16, only 25% drew female scientists. At every age, boys drew male scientists. And at every age, almost all children drew scientists who were white (Terada, 2019). It is therefore not surprising that there are far fewer women than men working in STEAM fields, and those women, particularly women of color, who do pursue careers in these fields very seldom attain leadership roles.

The common misperception still seems to be that “girls are better at reading and writing, but boys are better at science and math.” These stereotypes are perpetuated through media, including many of the books that children read, because they contain few examples of women, especially Latinas and Black women, succeeding and leading in STEAM careers.

Your Rising Voices Library addresses this gap by showcasing female role models who represent a variety of cultures, ethnicities, and STEAM interests. These texts and the discussions you and your students will have about them will help combat the false perception that girls and women cannot thrive in STEAM classes or careers. The Rising Voices Teacher’s Guide and Teaching Cards support using the library to foster literacy, success with STEAM concepts, and social-emotional learning. We hope this library will help all of your children develop a broader understanding of the importance of STEAM pursuits, and learn that they can become the STEAM leaders of the future.

Access and Equity

Equity requires that we provide all children with the resources they need to reach their full potential. As educators, our goal must be to build learning environments where we have high expectations for every student. Diverse books and culturally responsive and respectful learning supports are essential in helping to achieve this goal.

Why Rising Voices?

In 1990, Rudine Sims Bishop published an essay about the importance of providing all young readers with diverse books. She used the phrase “windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors” to emphasize the need for all children to experience diverse stories through the characters and real-life people they meet in books. When children read books that serve as mirrors, they see aspects of their own experiences and cultures reflected in texts. When children read books that serve as windows, they gain insights into the world beyond their own personal experiences. All children need access to diverse books that allow them to look in and look out, making text-to-self and text-to-world connections.

Ideally, every classroom would contain a robust classroom library, filled with hundreds of books that reflect the mosaic of our society. Yet, excellent texts with accurate, dignified, and appealing portrayals of people of color are still largely lacking from most classroom and school libraries (Thomas, 2018; Routman, 2018). And this lack of diversity takes a toll. Messages are embedded in the textual mirrors and windows. When children do not see themselves in books—or worse, see only distorted or stereotypical reflections—they can internalize negative views about their gender or culture and feel as if school is not a place where they matter. Positive textual images can change that, resulting in children who have higher self-esteem, better social-emotional functioning, and increased classroom engagement (Schwartz, 2019).

“It’s not just kids of color, kids from the margins who need diverse literature and media. It’s all kids who need stories about all kinds of people.”

—Ebony Elizabeth Thomas (2018)
Associate Professor, University of Pennsylvania
Literacy, Culture, and International Education

Your Rising Voices Library provides empowering and engaging fiction and informational texts that highlight one group of underrepresented literary protagonists: girls and women who excel in STEAM pursuits. Further, many of the books within the library tell the stories of Black and Brown girls and women, the most untapped potential in STEAM careers today. While the focus of this library is specific, it is a tool to support all learners. By fostering a classroom community that supports more positive representation and equity, children of all backgrounds will benefit as they build empathy, respect, and understanding.

Rising Voices...

- **provides 50 books per grade (25 titles, two copies of each)** selected by librarians and educators after reviewing more than 700 texts to ensure that each grade-level collection validates how the multifaceted identities, interests, and abilities of girls connect with STEAM pursuits.
- **includes texts that highlight the talents of authors and illustrators of color**—because the perspectives that authors and illustrators bring to the texts they create are also important windows and mirrors.
- **offers informational texts, biographies of accomplished women, and fiction about girls discovering the power and potential of exploring STEAM-related pursuits** so that all children can envision girls and women as leaders in these important fields.
- **is organized around five essential themes** (see pages 16–17) that children and teachers can use to explore the confidence-building themes related to success in STEAM careers and to make cross-text and cross-content-area connections within and beyond this library.
- **uses five anchor texts per grade, each supported by a robust Teaching Card**, to highlight each of the five themes, prompt comprehension, and scaffold higher-level thinking skills and deep discussion, as well as social and emotional learning.
- **offers Rising Voices stickers and bins** that can be used to identify each book as part of this special collection.
- **supplies print and online resources** for exploring STEAM-related content as well as countering gender bias and supporting culturally relevant and gender-inclusive responsive teaching. Find out more and access resources at www.scholastic.com/RVGirlsinS.T.E.A.M.



Rising Voices Themes and Anchor Texts

Rising Voices texts are organized by five themes that relate to STEAM-related concepts and that will resonate with children's own lives and interests. The themes provide a lens for reading that guides readers to appreciate the essential skills and the mindset that support many STEAM endeavors and will affirm children's own abilities and potential to succeed as they explore a variety of texts. In addition, you and your children will be able to use these themes to make connections between Rising Voices books, real-world examples, content-area learning, and other texts. Use Rising Voices books to help build discussion of these five essential themes within and across texts.

Connect to Texts and Expand Thinking

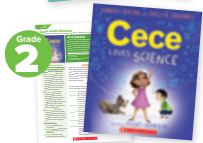
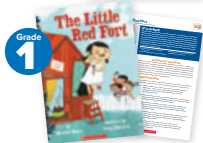
Anchor texts for each of the themes are intended to be shared through an interactive, teacher-led read-aloud experience. Teaching Cards for each anchor text provide discussion questions and activities that bring the theme to the forefront, promoting conversation and deep thinking. Building on anchor text instruction and discussion, you and your children can read on in the collection, continuing to make connections and deepen their exploration of each theme.

Anchor Texts	Theme	Connect to Texts	Expand Thinking
	Creative Problem-Solving <i>How does creativity help people understand a problem and figure out a solution?</i>	- What problem do the people in the book want to solve? - How do the people in the book show creativity? - How do the people in the book ask others for help or use special tools? - What makes these people good problem-solvers?	- How do you show creativity? - How can creative problem-solvers invent new ways of doing things that will help themselves and others? - What might the author want you to understand about how problems are solved? - Which of the people you read about is the most creative problem-solver? Support your answer with reasons. - Choose one of the problems you read about. Create your own solution to the problem.
	Curiosity <i>How do the people you read about show their curiosity by asking questions and searching for answers?</i>	- Why do the people in the book want to know more about something? - What kinds of questions do they ask? - How do they search for answers?	- What questions do I have about the world around me? - What can I do to find the answers to my questions? - How does having curiosity lead to new knowledge? - Investigate a "What if" question, such as "What if my pet could talk?" or "What if I had a superpower?" How will you show curiosity to explore the questions?

Anchor Texts Theme

Connect to Texts

Expand Thinking



Leadership and Collaboration

What can we learn from reading about what makes someone a good leader?

What can we discover from our reading about teamwork?

- Why do the people in this book form a team? What is their goal?
- How does the team decide who should be the leader?
- How does each person help the team? What is special about the leader?
- How do the team members react when there are problems? How do they communicate and share ideas?
- Compare and contrast two of the leaders you read about. What do they have in common? How are they different?

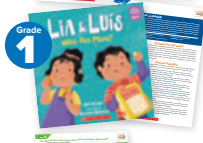
- How does a leader build a team that works together to reach a goal?
- Why is it helpful for different team members to have different skills?
- What kinds of projects would you like to work on with others? Would you want to be the leader?
- Who is the best leader that you read about? Support your choice with reasons.
- Survey your class. Ask them which person they read about is the best leader. Analyze the results.



Persistence

What qualities help people keep trying when they face challenges?

- What do the people in the book want to do? What gets in their way?
- Do people do the same thing again and again, or do they change what they do on different tries?
- What do you learn about people from how they keep trying to reach a certain goal?
- How do they feel when they reach that goal?
- How does self-confidence help people keep trying if they do not succeed right away?
- When was a time that you felt proud because you kept trying?
- What makes a goal important enough to keep trying to reach it?
- What have you learned from this book about why it is important to have confidence and believe that you can learn new things?
- Write or describe step-by-step instructions for how to do something you read about in one of the books.



Vision

How does observing carefully help people understand the world?

How can people use what they observe and their imaginations to visualize a better future?

- What do the people in this book notice that helps them understand something better?
- What tools do the people you've read about use to help them gather, save, and share information?
- How do people use what they already know to imagine what they want to look for or do in the future?
- How can observing carefully help you better understand the world?
- How can taking notes, drawing, and using math help you describe what you observe?
- Think about one of the discoveries you read about. How might you use observation to find out more about it or make new discoveries?

Rising Voices Themes and Anchor Texts

Rising Voices texts are organized by five themes that relate to STEAM-related concepts and that will resonate with students' own lives and interests. The themes provide a lens for reading that guides readers to appreciate the essential skills and the mindset that support many STEAM endeavors and will affirm students' own abilities and potential to succeed as they explore a variety of texts. In addition, you and your students will be able to use these themes to make connections between Rising Voices books, real-world examples, content-area learning, and other texts. Use Rising Voices books to help build discussion of these five essential themes within and across texts.

Connect to Texts and Expand Thinking

Anchor texts for each of the themes are intended to be shared through an interactive, teacher-led read-aloud experience. Teaching Cards for each anchor text provide discussion questions and activities that bring the theme to the forefront, promoting conversation and deep thinking. Building on anchor text instruction and discussion, you and your students can read on in the collection, continuing to make connections and deepen their exploration of each theme.

Anchor Texts	Theme	Connect to Texts	Expand Thinking
	Creative Problem-Solving <i>How does creativity help people assess and investigate a problem and develop a solution?</i>	- What problem do the people in the book face? - How do the people in the book demonstrate creativity? - How do they reach out to others for help, or use special tools? - What makes these people creative problem-solvers? - What steps does the character follow to solve the problem? - Compare two problem-solvers you read about. How did each use creative thinking to solve a problem?	- How do you express and demonstrate your creativity? - How can creative problem-solvers invent new ways of doing things for their own and others' benefit? - What might the author want you to understand about how problems are solved? - Identify a problem in your school or community. How might you apply one or more of the problem-solving approaches you read about to design a plan to solve the problem?
	Curiosity <i>How do the people we read about demonstrate their curiosity by identifying and asking questions and searching for answers?</i>	- Why do the people in the book want to know more about the topic? - What kinds of questions do they ask? - How do they search for answers? - How does having curiosity lead them to new knowledge?	- What questions do you have about the world around you? - What can you do to find the answers to your questions? - Analyze the strategies used by people in the books you read as they search for knowledge. Which strategies might you use to explore something you're curious about? Explain your choices.

Anchor Texts Theme



Leadership and Collaboration

What are the qualities of an effective leader?
What conclusions can we draw from reading about strong leaders and successful teams?

Connect to Texts

- Why do the people in this book form a team? What is their goal?
- How does the team determine who should be the leader?
- How does each person support the team? What differentiates the leader?
- How do the team members respond when problems arise? How do they communicate and share their ideas?
- What conclusions might you draw from the books about what happens when people work together to reach a goal?

Expand Thinking

- How does a leader construct a team that works together to reach a goal?
- Why is it helpful for team members to have different skills?
- Design a book group. Apply the concepts of leadership and teamwork you read about. What responsibilities will the leader have? What roles will others in the group have?
- Assess the skills of the leaders you read about. How might you apply those skills to become a leader or better teammate?



Persistence

What qualities help people keep trying again and again to achieve a goal, even when they face challenges?

- What do the people in the book want to do? What gets in their way?
- Do the people in the book keep doing the same thing again and again, or do they change what they do on different tries?
- What do you learn about people from how they keep trying to reach a certain goal?
- How do they feel when they reach that goal?
- What makes a goal worth striving for?
- When was a time that you felt proud because you kept trying?
- What have you learned about the importance of believing in yourself and having the confidence to try and learn new things?
- How is persistence demonstrated in the books? How does culture affect the types of challenges people face? How does it influence the way they work to achieve their goals?



Vision

How can applying prior knowledge, careful observation, and using their imaginations help people understand the world and construct a vision for a better future?

- What observations help people in this book assess and understand something?
- What tools do they use to gather, save, and share information?
- How do they apply what they already know to imagine what they want to look for or do in the future?
- What is the author's purpose for writing the book? How does it affect the way you interpret and respond to people and events?
- How might observing carefully deepen your understanding of the world?
- How can notes, drawings, and math help you present your observations to others?
- What problem in your school or community do you want to solve? How can you apply what you have read and observed, and ideas from your imagination to design a solution to the problem?

Building Social-Emotional Awareness

Researchers have reported that children who participate in social and emotional learning programs perform about 13 percentage points higher in their grades and standardized test scores (Taylor et al., 2017). The benefits of social and emotional learning extend beyond test scores. Examining the social and emotional skills displayed in the books they read may help children connect to what they're reading, and by discussing these skills as a class they can understand how reading can relate to real-life situations. Additionally, by connecting their reading to social-emotional learning, children are scaffolded to build a positive self-image as readers and learn valuable analytic and executive function skills.

Core Competencies

The social-emotional skills explored in the Rising Voices Library align with the tenets found in many SEL programs, including the CASEL framework. CASEL—the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning—identifies five core competencies that should be prioritized in children's social-emotional learning, as described in the chart below (CASEL.org).

CASEL Competency	Goals and Assessment	Focus
Self-awareness	The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset."	- Identifying emotions - Accurate self-perception - Recognizing strengths - Self-confidence - Self-efficacy
Self-management	The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations—effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.	- Impulse control - Stress management - Self-discipline - Self-motivation - Goal-setting - Organizational skills
Social awareness	The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.	- Perspective-taking - Empathy - Appreciating diversity - Respect for others
Relationship skills	The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.	- Communication - Social engagement - Relationship-building - Teamwork
Responsible decision-making	The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.	- Identifying problems - Analyzing situations - Solving problems - Evaluating - Reflecting - Ethical responsibility

Embedded Social-Emotional Learning

The embedded social-emotional learning in Rising Voices forms a link between social-emotional learning, literary texts, and life.

Under the “Build Social-Emotional Awareness” heading in the “Extend Learning” section of every Teaching Card, the teacher is offered a suggestion to tie the reading to something children can consider about their own lives and the world around them. For example, in the Grade 2 Teaching Card for *Shark Lady*, the teaching prompt says: “Eugenie started studying sharks at a young age and continued her studies, despite what other people told her to do. What details in the book helped you know that Eugenie was confident in herself and her ideas? How can having confidence in yourself help you work toward a goal or follow a dream?”. This focus on self-perception and self-confidence targets the core competency of self-awareness. Once children have had the opportunity to discuss among themselves, a few children should share their thinking with the class.

Social-emotional learning must be taught with a lens on equity. While working with diverse groups of children in the classroom, it is important to understand how culture and personal experience can have an effect on a student’s understanding of social-emotional skills. By reading STEAM-focused and culturally responsive texts and discussing them in context, children will be given a safe space to explore the core competencies of social-emotional learning. This practice also allows children the opportunity to apply these core competencies to their own lives inside and outside of the classroom.

“Social-emotional learning (SEL) skills can help us build communities that foster courageous conversations across difference so that our students can confront injustice, hate, and inequity.”

—Dena Simmons, EdD (2019)
Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

“Social and emotional skills matter for many areas of development, including learning, health, and general well-being. Furthermore, recent research has demonstrated that high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs produce positive outcomes for students, including reduced stress and improved behavior, attitudes, and academic performance.”

—Stephanie Jones, Katharine Brush, et al. (2017)
Harvard Graduate School of Education



Redefining Societal Norms via Literature

by Estephania Mosquera-Ortiz

As an educator in the seventh-largest school district in the United States, I've never had the opportunity nor the option to share stories centered around Black and Brown girls. Literature in which female characters of color are depicted as leaders, innovators, and/or creators is simply not a part of the core curriculum.

For so long, girls, in general, have been raised with the ideology that their life role is to become domesticated.

We see it in the toy section, where there are baby dolls, play kitchens, and dress-up and cosmetics kits. It is apparent in social settings, when they are encouraged to keep quiet, "act like a lady," and smile. At what point do we challenge those societal norms and encourage our girls to be more?

Rising Voices: Books Empowering Girls in STEAM offers a curated collection of wonderfully written books that help us introduce new norms into the classroom and challenge the old ones. The books in this collection highlight girls and women, including many Black and Brown main characters, placing them center stage in settings where they are often marginalized in the real world. It gives them a voice where they have been grossly underrepresented.

I grew up in similar circumstances to the students I serve, in which overcoming adversity was a part of everyday life. Often, books were my only means of escape. Reading about the possibilities and learning that there was more than my current environment was a beacon of hope for me as a child. We have a social responsibility as educators to provide that same hope and relevance to the children in our classrooms.

This Rising Voices Library offers children the crossroads between aspirations and endless possibilities. As educators, we know firsthand how impactful lessons we teach can be to our students. When students can identify with the main character, envision themselves in similar roles, etc., the lessons we teach become so much more. They become relatable and, most importantly, attainable. "I can..." becomes a part of our students' vocabulary, and they begin to believe that they can achieve the same successes they have seen via literature.

It is important to provide a safe space in which girls can see themselves as future scientists, IT experts, mathematicians, and engineers of the future—not only for them to believe that they are capable, but also to facilitate a learning environment in which success is normalized. Creating a classroom culture in which the minority of any gender or background is heard, seen, and welcomed normalizes diversity and cultural acceptance among students and their peers.

Rising Voices: Books Empowering Girls in STEAM not only exposes all children to the world of STEAM, it also teaches valuable life skills by having the main characters model them. Readers will be inspired, like the protagonists they meet in the library, to be critical thinkers, make inquiries, value their own observations, and problem-solve. These life skills are valuable in shaping students' ability to be accountable for their own learning. Children of all genders and backgrounds can build on and benefit from learning these skills.

ABOUT ESTEPHANIE MOSQUERA-ORTIZ

Estephania Mosquera-Ortiz is the founder of Beaut&Beast Co., a company dedicated to teaching women and children self-sufficiency and awareness. An important part of Beaut&Beast Co.'s mission is to empower children to build on such characteristics in hopes of living healthier, happier lives. This is accomplished via flash cards and workbooks aimed at teaching children cultural diversity, history, comprehensive vocabulary, and self-awareness.

Estephania uses her own personal story as not only a source of encouragement but also a testament to the impact of education and self-awareness. She is currently an elementary educator at a local achievement school. As a teacher, she actively promotes the importance of inclusion and cultural diversity. She also teaches students to become self-aware and to build mentally stimulating habits, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, positive thinking, and leadership skills. She has seen firsthand the effectiveness of representation, guided discussions, and self-identification in the classroom.



Where Dreams Begin

by Tatyana Ali

“Well, you’ll have school to fall back on.”

I heard those words again and again as a young person after explaining to others my desire to attend college after spending most of my childhood acting and singing. Yet why did everyone see my favorite pursuits—the performing arts and my education—as opposed, rather than complementary? Since then, experience has taught me that the arts enhance experimentation, and

that research deepens creative expression. In my career, I’ve sought to harmonize the creative and the intellectual, feelings and ideas—and to show our Black and Brown children that this path exists for them, too.

As an actor, I rely on external and internal observation. I observe and try to understand other people’s behavior, and I also pay attention to my own. My body and my feelings are the canvas that I work with; the way I feel, what makes me happy, what makes me angry, what makes me sad or scared, what makes me laugh, what makes me bounce around, and what keeps me still. I have to notice the way I walk, como una “negra tiene tumbao,” how it sounds when I talk, rapidamente para no olvidarme de mis pensamientos, y entonces, I have to take all of those parts of me and adjust them to the character I have imagined.

No less than my individual creative process, collaboration is essential for an actor. Collaborating with other artists—the writer, director, actors, lighting technicians, costume designers, and set designers—I experiment with the way my character moves, sounds, thinks, and feels. Together, we practice and play daily until we find just the right formula to make the characters and the imaginary world we’re creating feel real. To me, this interdependence shows how the discovery of knowledge is always a communal process, not simply the product of an individual.

A profound responsibility comes with this freedom to play. As an actor, I have had to turn down roles that were unacceptable to me because they only added to the devaluing images of Black and Brown girls and women. My education cultivated the discernment to say, “no.” If my creativity wields the power to create worlds, pull them apart, and rearrange them, then why would I misuse it so? All children should learn about the transformative power of their creativity.

This is why I am so honored to be a mentor for the Rising Voices Collection. These books tell the tales of Black and Brown heroes and demystify the processes involved in art and science, how similar they are in skill sets, and how much one depends on the other. Our duty is to meet children where their dreams begin. Instead of asking them to “fall back” into categories that make us feel comfortable, let’s share with them what it looks like to “rise up” into the fullness of their being.

ABOUT TATYANA ALI

Tatyana Ali is an actress, singer, producer, and writer. After childhood apprenticeships in the dramatic arts in NYC and LA, she received her BA in Government from Harvard University. She has won five NAACP Image Awards.

She was born to immigrant parents from Panama and Trinidad and Tobago, and her resume includes the series *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, the Pulitzer Prize Broadway production of *Fences*, *Sesame Street*, *The Young and the Restless*, and Disney’s *Glory Road*. Her discography includes the gold record *Kiss the Sky*, “Precious Wings” on the Grammy Award–winning children’s album *Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*, the EP *Hello*, and “Ghost Town,” a song for the United Nations for victims of human trafficking.

For Tatyana, being an artist is being a humanitarian. She speaks at schools across the country, is involved in Black Girls Rock!, and serves as a celebrity council advocate for March of Dimes.

Tatyana’s favorite roles are wife and mother of two amazing boys.



For more information, visit [scholastic.com/risingvoices](https://www.scholastic.com/risingvoices)