**Rationale**

Teenage years are a pivotal time in life when a flood of changes are taking place internally and externally. Teenagers scramble throughout most of their middle school through high school years trying to find a sense of “fitting in.” They explore different paths ranging from sports to clubs trying to create an outer self-image that contradicts their inner self. Internal conflicts are battles between the multiple personalities and voices that live within the mind. These inner voices are influenced by people’s judgments of outer identifications that are visible to the eye such as gender, ethnicity, race, and physical appearances. Many young adults are bullied for the way they look, behave, dress, talk, etc. However, the bully isn’t always outside but sometimes it’s a voice that lives in our own heads and makes us feel unworthy and powerless.

My focus is going to be on young adult novels about young male and female protagonists that example self-discovery and inner strength by not becoming victims to bullying and negative self-talk. Characters in these novels face various challenges having often to make difficult decisions but overcome them and recognize their self worth.

These books are filled with golden messages about life. I believe these stories would benefit young adults because they teach about overcoming limitations, negative self talk and celebrating the beauty of what makes each person special. Paving a path of less resistance for teenagers by presenting them with opportunities of learning about works that would ease their journey through these roller coaster years, guide and encourage healthy behavior should be the priority of teachers.

**Annotated Bibliography**

Alexander, Kwame. *Booked*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016.

Story told by verse. The main character Nick Hall loves soccer. His dad has forced him to be an expert in words because he is an linguist enthusiast. Nick is a clever kid. He deals with competitive sports, family issues, bullying and girls. He has a best friend who also loves soccer. Nick’s relationship with his dad is not great but it grows throughout the book. He struggles with two bullies whom he tackles with his use of words. The title of this book comes from a dictionary that Nick has made with the words his dad has taught him. This book has themes of identity and bullying.

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *SPEAK*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2018.

The protagonist Melinda Sordino is starting high school. Everyone at school including her friends are mad at her because she called the cops at a party over summer. There is a character referred to as IT who threatens Melinda to repeat what happened at the party. Melinda keeps mostly to herself and tries to be unseen and barely says much. Her relationship with her mother isn’t great. She struggles to keep up her grades because day by day the reason why she had called the cops is eating her up inside. She is scared to speak about the party incident. The Art teacher Mr. Freeman helps Melinda express herself through her different artworks of a tree. She eventually gains the strength to reveal that she was raped at the party. This story is about Melinda’s day to day life mainly from home to school as she’s trying to cope with the incident that changed her life. The main theme of this book is identity because Melinda feels guilty though she was the one who was physically abused. She struggles with trying to make sense of what happened and find a place where she can fit in and find peace.

Garvin, Jeff. *Symptoms of being human*. Balzer Bray, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2017.

This book is about a teenager named Riley Cavanaugh who is gender fluid. Riley has also recently attempted suicide and is struggling with anxiety and panic attacks. Riley’s father is re-running for an election so Riley has to attend a lot of fundraisers and take extra caution in hiding gender fluidity. The only person that knows about this is Riley’s therapist. At the beginning of the book, Riley is starting a new school hoping to have a better experience. Riley was harassed and ridiculed at the previous school for dressing like a boy on some days and a girl on others so at this school Riley dresses neutral. Riley’s therapist suggests starting a blog. Riley starts writing an anonymous blog which goes viral. There is a lot of positivity being received but the negative comments aren’t ones that can be overlooked and make Riley suspicious of maybe someone at this new school knowing about Riley’s gender fluidity. Riley has to make a tough decision of whether revealing his true identity by standing up and owning the blog or leaving it behind. This novel touches serious issues in a lighthearted way.

Hunt, Lynda Mullaly . *Fish in a Tree*. Turtleback Books, 2017. T

his story is about three kids, Ally, Keisha and Albert. The main character is Ally who has dyslexia. She doesn’t want to try at school and often get is trouble. Her lack of effort at school often leads to conflicts with her mother. Ally feels like an outcast and wants to fit in. Kids made fun of her inability to read words correctly. Her new teacher, Mr. Daniels sees the creative and bright side of Ally and brings it out. Ally has a sketchbook called “Book of Impossible Things” where she draws out things from her wild imagination. She calls this her mind movie. This book has a lot of similes and metaphors. Strong themes in this book are bullying, identity, friendship and teacher-student relationship. This book shows how a good teacher can influence and impact students’ lives in such a positive, life changing way.

Lai, Thanhha. *Inside out and back again*. HarperCollins, 2011.

Story told by verse. A Vietnamese girl named Ha who has immigrated to Alabama from South Vietnam with her mother and three brothers. Her father was captured a few years before by North Vietnamese men. In this new country she faces discrimination and bullying. Ha is teased about Buddha and called names. She has a temper which she learns to overcome. She struggles with guilt about something she has done and overtime heals. Despite the hard time she has fitting in, she also receives love, kindness, and compassion. This story is about how the Vietnam War affected the people that lived there and those who had to leave behind everything they knew and flee to a new country. Ha has to create a new identity as she tries to fit into and learn the ways of a new country.

Maguire, Gregory. *Wicked*. Harper, 2007.

Elphaba is born to a father, Frex who is a Unionist minister. Her mother, Melena is pretty far from the religious type. Elphaba’s arrival is highly anticipated by both parents but to their surprise their baby girl looks nothing like a normal human. Elphaba’s skin tone is green and she has a full set of sharp teeth and nails. Elphaba’s family is scared of her and a hard time taking care of her. Melena’s nanny visits to help care for Elphaba. During this time the land of Oz is being dictating by a cruel Wizard who is opressing various ethnic groups and Animals. This story has themes of politics, identity, and good vs evil. Elphaba never fit into her family. She becomes a part of a underground rebellion, after some incidents she joins a convent and then becomes a Witch. Elphaba’s journey consists of finding a sense of belonging.

Medina, Meg. *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*. Paw Prints, 2014.

Piddy Sanchez has recently lost one of her good friend because of her move to a new place. She is in high school. Piddy is gathering courage to find things out about her dad who she has never met. Her mother has burned all of his pictures and never talks about him. She is trying to keep up with her honorary classes and works at a hair salon on the weekends. One morning before school a girl tells Piddy that Yaqui Delgado hates her and wants to kick her ass. Piddy is unaware of Yaqui’s existence up until this point. Yaqui thinks Piddy is a stuck up show off and wants to steal her boyfriend. She also thinks Piddy isn’t Latin enough. Things get worse for Piddy as the days go on she suffers from different forms of bullying. Piddy starts spending most of her time at the hair salon. She is even afraid to leave her house. Joey, the boy she loves asks her to run away with him but Piddy refuses. She knows she has to stand up and speak for herself. This story has themes of bullying, belonging, respect, and overcoming fear. This book can be a great lead into a high school lesson on bullying. Any teen can in some way relate to this story.

Ness, Patrick. *A monster calls*. Klett Sprachen, 2015.

The protagonist Conor O’Malley, a young teenager battles to let go of his mom while combating a reoccuring monstrous nightmare that began around the time his mom’s disease was diagnosed. He is going through a roller coaster ride especially with the addition of his grandma’s presence more in his life and his dad’s visits from America. At school, Conor is bullied by Harry and his two friends who joke about his mom’s condition. Conor calls Harry “the Blond Wonder Child” because he is loved by all the teachers. This bullying started after Conor began getting the repeating nightmare. He feels invisible at school. Conor already has so much on his plate when visits from a yew tree add more spark in his life. After hearing the three stories narrated by the yew tree and revealing his own story Conor learns that things are not just good or bad they are usually in between. Conor realizes that he wasn’t wrong or bad to feel the way he was about letting go of his mom. He learns to see the grey parts of life and cope with the death of his mom.

Palacio, R. J. *Wonder*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2017.

A 10 year old boy named August Pullman, that was born with a rare genetic condition that caused facial deformity. He is nicknamed Auggie. He has had 27 different surgeries but his face still looks very unlike most other faces. He has been unable to attend school because of the many surgeries he’s undergone in only a span of 10 years. August is homeschooled by his mother until one day she tries to convince him to attend middle school. He is an extremely smart boy and shares likings similar to other boys his age. He has a spark of nerdiness and a passion for science. This story is told in multiple perspectives. It shows how powerful kindness can be.

Yang, Gene Luen., and Lark Pien. *American born Chinese*. Square Fish, 2010.

A novel that revolves around three main characters, Jin Wang-an American-Born Chinese who is in the pursuit of trying to fit in struggles discrimination and teasing that leads him into an identity crisis, The Monkey King-who forgets to be grateful for who is in trying to become someone greater, and Chin-Kee-known as the “ultimate negative Chinese stereotype” who acts in a way that continually embarasses his American cousin, Danny to the point where Danny has to change schools every year since the 8th grade after Chin-Kee returns to his home country. Each character is trying to be someone different, someone greater in the hopes of being happier by thinking it’ll help “fit in” but along the way forgets what makes a person great is who he/she truly is.Yang writes the stories of these three characters separately and interweaves them together to tell a bigger story. This story has a main theme of identity. All three main character are trying to become something they are not in order to fit in but later realize that they should be who they really are in the inside.