



# Small

# World

**Bringing a new vibe**

**Small Steps**  
A Q&A with Arrietty

**4 Ways to Build**  
relationships with your students

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# Letter from the editor



**Justin Culberson**

**W**elcome to the regular issue of *Small World* a magazine dedicated to give you the parents an inside look into the world of education for your children. First off I would like to give my sincerest thanks to Douglas Dabbs for handing of the reigns of the project over to me and have been busy with it since and am very excited to be the new editor for the latest issue.

It has been an honor to work on this project. It has become one of the pinnacle projects of my career. In this latest issue we discuss articles that involve giving children and teens the needed voice they deserve to have in the classroom as well as an article featuring an up and coming candidate for the Position of a member of the Bedfordshire School Board, Arrietty Clock and her opposing candidate Ms. Driver. Arrietty is a Borrower, so she might be small, but you shouldn't underestimate her. One step at a time she's leading herself and others to even greater success with her campaign.

Thank you for taking the time to read this current issue and I hope that you will continue to read the up and coming issues and take an even deeper dive into the *Small World*.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Culberson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



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# BRINGING A NEW VIBE

By: Kerry Hannon

Some educators are experimenting with their approaches to teaching to make course materials more relevant to various cultures and communities. This article is part of our latest Learning special report. We're focusing on Generation Z, which is facing challenges from changing curriculums and new technology to financial aid gaps and homelessness.

In high schools across the country, there have traditionally been a set of curriculum guidelines that teachers are hesitant to disturb.

But as the population in the United States becomes more ethnically and racially diverse, re-educating teachers about how to be aware of the cultural differences in their communities has been gaining traction.

Some educators are experimenting with new approaches of teaching to motivate students and to examine concepts like racism, social justice, inequality and discrimination. These teachers are re-imagining and shifting conventional curriculums to reflect their more diverse student bodies.

At the forefront are teachers like Christopher Emdin, 40, a science educator and the author of "For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood ... and the Rest of Y'all Too." He has been a leader in the #HipHopEd initiative, which integrates urban youth culture with learning. The Science Genius program, for example, uses hip-hop music and rhymes in teaching science.

Mr. Emdin — who said he did not like school growing up — co-founded an initiative in 2012 with the rapper GZA to use hip-hop to teach science in 10 New York City public schools. It is about "remixing education," he said.



**Lorena Germán teaches at Headwaters School in Austin, Tex.**

Today, he advises educators on ways to incorporate these techniques into their classrooms. “Writing these raps, poems over beats, is a way of giving students’ voice,” he said.

Louis Tavares, 17, a senior at Brooklyn Prep, said hip-hop motivated him to learn. “Before hip-hop, I would go to school and not really look forward to learning,” he said. But now with hip-hop, he said, “It brings a certain type of vibe to the classroom.”

Teaching Tolerance, the education arm of the Southern Poverty Law Center, has produced social justice teaching standards that many teachers are using, from kindergarten through high school, to guide curriculum development.

“We are beginning to address race and racism explicitly in the classroom,” said Lecia Brooks, a former teacher and a member of the senior leadership team of the Southern Poverty Law Center. “We are letting go of the false notion that it is too heavy, too much for children to talk about it head on.”

The change has been gradual. One factor: Teachers are still predominantly white even as the student population grows increasingly diverse, she said. While students of color are expected to make up 56 percent of the nation’s elementary and secondary public schools by 2024, 82 percent of public schoolteachers identify as white, according to a report by the United States Department of Education.

That figure has barely changed in more than 15 years. And only 7 percent of the nation’s public schoolteachers are black.

“It is such a hard nut to crack because the education system is so steeped in bureaucracy,” Ms. Brooks said. “We have had push back from administrators, who have seen our Teaching Tolerance materials as too radical, or too progressive.”

For Ms. Brooks, it is a sweeping shift that needs to roll out. “We believe in decolonizing the curriculum,” she said. “It can’t just be confined to language arts, or a holiday, or a month.”

Ms. Germán, who came to the United States as a child, teaches at the Headwaters School in Austin, Tex. She said she experienced

classroom racism as a child in Lawrence, Mass. “They wanted to bring us into a classroom that forced us to dismiss our way of being in order to assimilate as if ours had no value,” she said.

She rebelled. “I was a menace,” she said. “My chemistry teacher, for instance, would not speak to me or respond when I raised my hand.”

Today, after nearly two decades as an educator, she practices “activism every day in the classroom,” she said. “This is not about politics. This is about working toward social justice. I am constantly asking myself how I can model that thoughtfully in my classroom.”

Ms. Germán’s ninth-grade students, for example, study graffiti and debate questions such as: Is it vandalism? Where does it come from? What does it mean? What does it contribute to society? Does it count as text? Is there a message there?

The students read Gene Luen Yang’s “American Born Chinese,” a graphic novel that centers on issues of conformity, issues of identity, particularly around race, she explained. “The discussions get pretty heavy.”

“My students are really engaged with the content,” Ms. Germán said. “Over and over, they comment on how modern it is. What they are saying is that it’s very relevant to their lives.”

She is also a member of #EduColor, a platform that “seeks to elevate the voices of public school advocates of color on educational equity and justice,” according to its website.

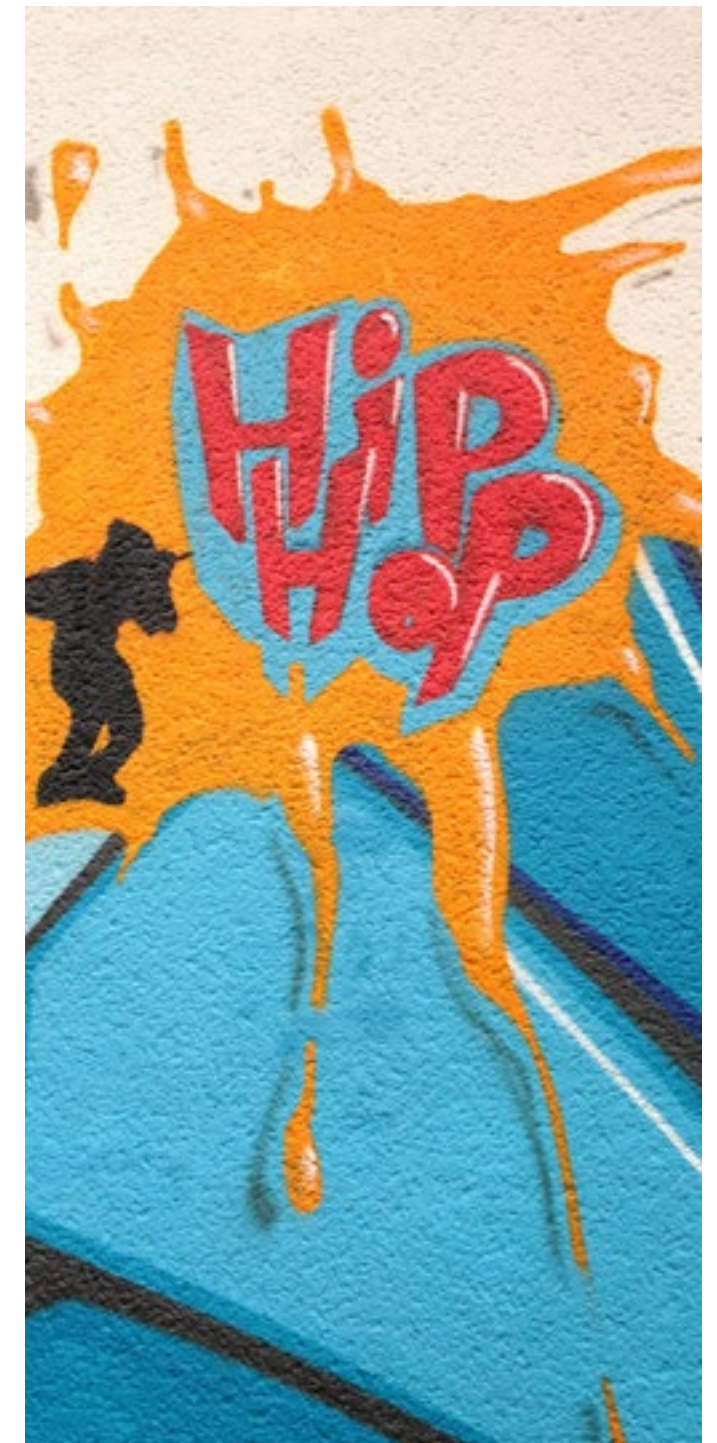
In 2018, she co-founded #DisruptTexts to help “teachers build a community and find alternatives to the white male-dominated literary canon,” she said. Tricia Ebarvia, whose parents immigrated from the Philippines, also helped found #DisruptTexts. She teaches AP English Language and Literature at Conestoga High School, outside Philadelphia. “Part of the work I have been doing is grounded in a deep belief in public education as being a transformative tool for social justice and for democracy,” she said. “That’s why I went into teaching.”

As an Asian-American, Ms. Ebarvia was “socialized in a white culture,” she said. “Through all of my K-through-12 education, I never read a text that addressed my racial identity. I internalized that, to be considered well read, I needed to read Shakespeare and Tolstoy and Nathaniel Hawthorne all the traditional greats. So initially, I taught those kinds of texts.”

“But I have worked against that in my classroom over the years,” she said. “For example, my 10th-grade class is reading ‘1984’ by George Orwell as part of our required curriculum. My goal, though, is to study truth. What does Orwell, this British man, have to say about truth, what is the perspective he is coming from with people in power trying to oppress others?” Students understand there are big problems in the world. “They want to be able to have an informed conversation,” Ms. Ebarvia said. “School is a place we can have these conversations and establish a habit of seeking multiple perspectives.”

The cultural classroom change is happening, but it is far from mainstream. Ms. Ebarvia said that there could be push-back among teachers but that was also encouraged by the growing number of those willing to engage in conversations about how to educate a generation.

To re-educate herself, Ms. Ebarvia is continually looking at racism in her own life. “To teach, I must do that self-reflection, and that’s hard work.”



“PART OF THE WORK I HAVE BEEN DOING IS GROUNDED IN A DEEP BELIEF IN PUBLIC EDUCATION AS BEING A TRANSFORMATIVE TOOL FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND FOR DEMOCRACY.”

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# Small Steps



**T**oday we have a special guest interview with Arrietty Clock. She is currently running as member of the Bedfordshire, England school board. Many people have underestimated her, mainly due to her size. Being only a foot in height and with her age being thirteen, she has had quite the different experiences due to her young age and size.

Being a member of the borrowers, small people that you just may find living in your home, has its own challenges. Growing up, Arrietty had it somewhat rough. Her parents were incredibly overprotective, refused to let her explore the outside world, and did not let her be herself. In this interview, she will explain the motives behind her campaign and how growing up like this drove her to have parents and teachers better their relationships with children.

Her rival, Mrs. Driver, has been making some headway in this campaign as well, she used to be a former chef and caretaker so it seems that she has more experience: however, these two have had their differences in the past.

Children are our future, so having a being a member of the school board is more important than people realize. A member of the school board must be incredibly knowledgeable and has to have the students' best interests at heart. With Arrietty being as young as she is, they believe she is

not qualified: however, she has gotten through to many parents.

Being a child herself, she understands better than anyone exactly what a child needs to be successful when it comes to their educational values, as well as values when it comes to building relationships regarding not only teachers and students but also student to student interactions.

Special needs education is also a topic that was introduced in this interview. Special needs kids require more attention than most and this was a subject we wanted to touch on. In the interview it was very clear that she deeply cares about all children, whereas candidates like Mrs. Driver seems to be much tougher on children and is enforcing much stricter policies. These types of policies could affect these children in a very negative way which could lead to her demise.

Without further delay, here is the Q&A with Arrietty Clock. The public has been waiting for the young, spunky, and kind-hearted teenager who is absolutely driven to build up each other and build up relationships, one step at a time.





**Q: So, in your campaign you talk about giving a child their own voice. What is the meaning behind that and what exactly inspired you to make this such a big part of your campaign?**

A: When I was growing up alongside my mother and father, my father was a borrower and got to explore all the time. It looked like every time he went out it was going to be such an adventure for him. I lived for the thrill of adventure but never got to experience it on my own. Both of my parents were incredibly protective of me and I always begged and pleaded to let me have my own adventure. They finally decided to hear me out and let me join on a borrowing adventure with me father. So, it's all about hearing out a child's needs.

**Q: What will you do with giving children more opportunities?**

A: One of the main goals of my campaign is to build the bonds between a student, their parent, and their teacher. As a teacher it's always important to listen to a child's needs in the classroom. My party will help encourage a teacher to cooperate more with a student, such as students helping teachers set up their grading scale. Another example would be giving students the opportunity

to help in labs: should the class have a lab? It's just about making sure that the student's getting needed attention.

**Q: Do you plan on running for a higher position in politics? Or are you more interesting in staying with the school board to continue supporting public schools?**

A: I truly believe my place is in helping public schools and other schools within my district. I feel like helping children's and teens is where I belong. I've been in their shoes before and know what it's like to not be heard and be ignored as a child, and to be walked all over like no one even knows that you're there.

**Q: What do you think is the primary work and function of the school board? Do you understand how important of a role a member of the school board is?**

A: Many people don't understand just how important a school board member is. The main responsibilities of the school board are to set a vision and goals for their district, as well as adopt policies that give the district direction to set priorities and achieve its goals is another. A lot of people don't know that the school

board is responsible for hiring a Super Intendant. Many people think that they have to run a campaign similar to a member of the school board. Overseeing the annual budget for the district as well is very important. I understand the importance of this job and its responsibilities that come along.

**Q: What visions do you have for your school district in the next five to ten years?**

A: My visions include seeing a world where everyone truly understands one another, a world where everyone builds each other up instead of tearing each other down and listens to one another. In that world, everyone's future is bright. We need to focus on creating that world, because the students are our future and we want make sure our future is not misunderstood.

**Q: So, besides the policies you're hoping to implement into the schools and having a voice being heard, what are some other reasons that made you want run for a member of the school board? Maybe some personal reasons or personality factors?**

A: One thing is challenge of becoming a member. While it seems like a very daunting and large task, I've never ran away from a challenge that was too large for me to face. So, I think mainly the challenges that go along with a campaign was a very interesting factor, especially given my height and age. I have a sound judgment, and a willingness to cooperate which are huge advantages in any campaign, not even just for the campaign I'm running. You can look at anyone who is running for politics and they'll need the same qualities: they must be able to cooperate, have incredible judgment, and a powerful vision ahead of them. All of these are the main factors that will go into any political campaign and are factors that will ensure any levelheaded politician and I'm hoping everyone can see that. So, in general I am rising to the challenge.

**Q: So, in terms of your rival Mrs. Driver, why do feel you're more effective for this position than she is? She's much older than you and seems she has more experience when it comes to this sort of this thing since she's taken care of kids in the past.**

A: While it is true that Mrs. Driver is much older than I am, I don't feel she would be fit for the job. She did help take care of a child in the house where my family and I resided, however, she did not raise that child to the best of her abilities. She was very cruel to him and he even had a medical condition. She treated him like she didn't even want him around. So, while she has experience in raising a child, she does not have their best interest at heart. Another reason is no matter what position you're running for you also must keep an even temper and stay level-headed given certain circumstances, and I can say from past circumstances she doesn't know how to. She attempted to run my family out of the boy's house and even dragged that boy around, and I don't think any child should have to be put through that.

## Fun facts about the Borrowers:

1. Borrowers are very small, only a foot tall.
2. They "borrow" in order to survive.
3. Items that you think are "useless" are very valuable to them.
4. They do a lot their borrowing at night.
5. Their families are named after where they live in the house. Arrietty Clock, lived under a clock.
6. Arrietty is one the smartest borrowers in her family.



**Q: What is your philosophy on special education?**

A: Special Education is just as important. I understand that there will be children that require certain needs and wants. I'll be there to help them along the way. I know from experience: children with conditions don't always have it easy and I want them to know that I'll do everything in my power to help them.

**Q: Do you see the inclusion of students as an asset or an obligation? Why?**

A: I see the inclusion as an asset and a necessity. In an educational environment we thrive off human interaction: it's how we grow as students, as teachers, and even humans too. We can't build up each other if we're missing out. Both the students and teachers must thrive off each other so they can understand each other. By doing this, the teacher can know what the student exactly needs and they can build that relationship with each other.

**Q: Do you think you will win this election?**

A: I truly believe that I have a very high chance of winning. I know that I have a child's best interest at heart. With everyone's help we can build each other up and strengthen relationships. I have had many obstacles in my way, but I have been able to get over each one of them. Right from the get-go I was told my age would affect my chances. No one believed in me because of my size, but I have proven that those things don't matter. I will continue to make the steps I've been making, and we will all take a step towards the goal I've set out to achieve.

I truly believe that I have a very high chance of winning. I know that I have a child's best interest at heart. With everyone's help we can build each other up and strengthen relationships. I have had many obstacles in my way, but I have been able to get over each one of them. Right from the get-go I was told my age would affect my chances. No one believed in me because of my size, but I have proven that those things don't matter.

Inclusion in the classroom truly seems to be her biggest motive. She also believes in building each other up as much as we can instead of tearing each other down. She's tired of students being walked all over and she believes she can make a change for the better. Despite her age she seems very knowledgeable on her position and knows it inside and out and knows the best interest at heart for her community.

**“In an education-based environment we thrive off of human interaction, it's how we grow as students, as teachers, and even humans too.”**

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# 4 ways

## To build relationships with your students

Justin Minkel

“Kids need to know that they are seen and heard.”

**1 Spend time with the “hard” kids and the quiet ones.**  
Sometimes when a child has driven me crazy all week, that’s the perfect time to have him join me and another student or two for lunch in the classroom. That time together often provides insights into the source of his behavior—a rough home life, a need for attention so deep he’d rather get negative attention than none at all—but it also gives us both a much-needed break from our usual patterns.

For that little oasis of time, I’m not correcting his behavior, threatening him with consequences, or trying to make him do things he doesn’t want to do. That time can do a lot to mend a fractured relationship.

**2 Build in lots of one-on-one and small-group time.**  
The inconvenient truth is that whole-class direct instruction will never provide our students with the depth of understanding they need. Children develop their abilities the same way babies learn language: one-on-one, guided by an adult who cares deeply about them.

I use only 10 or 12 minutes of each hour in my class for whole-group instruction. The rest of the time, I’m doing one-on-one conferences or pulling small groups. I’m taking notes, on paper and in my head, about what each child understands and what she still needs to figure out.

Developing our expertise on individual students will take hundreds of hours. We have to build that time into our day.

**3 Write individual notes to your students.**  
Each child in my class has a tiny envelope with their name on it. Once or twice a month, I write the children notes. I tell them what I liked about a story they wrote that week, or a new reading strength I noticed they’re developing. I ask them questions about their families and what they like.

Kids need to know that they are seen and heard. They often treasure these little letters that only take me a few minutes.

**4 Build relationships with families, too.**  
We have to show moms, dads, and grandparents the same curiosity and respect we show their complicated, infuriating, fundamentally lovable children.

Most of us teach because we love getting to know young humans, in all their messy radiance and flawed glory. If we make time to cultivate the relationships that sustain us and nurture our students, we will witness that annual miracle: a roomful of strangers becoming a kind of family.



**Oh joy, oh glory, oh freedom**  
-Arrietty Clock