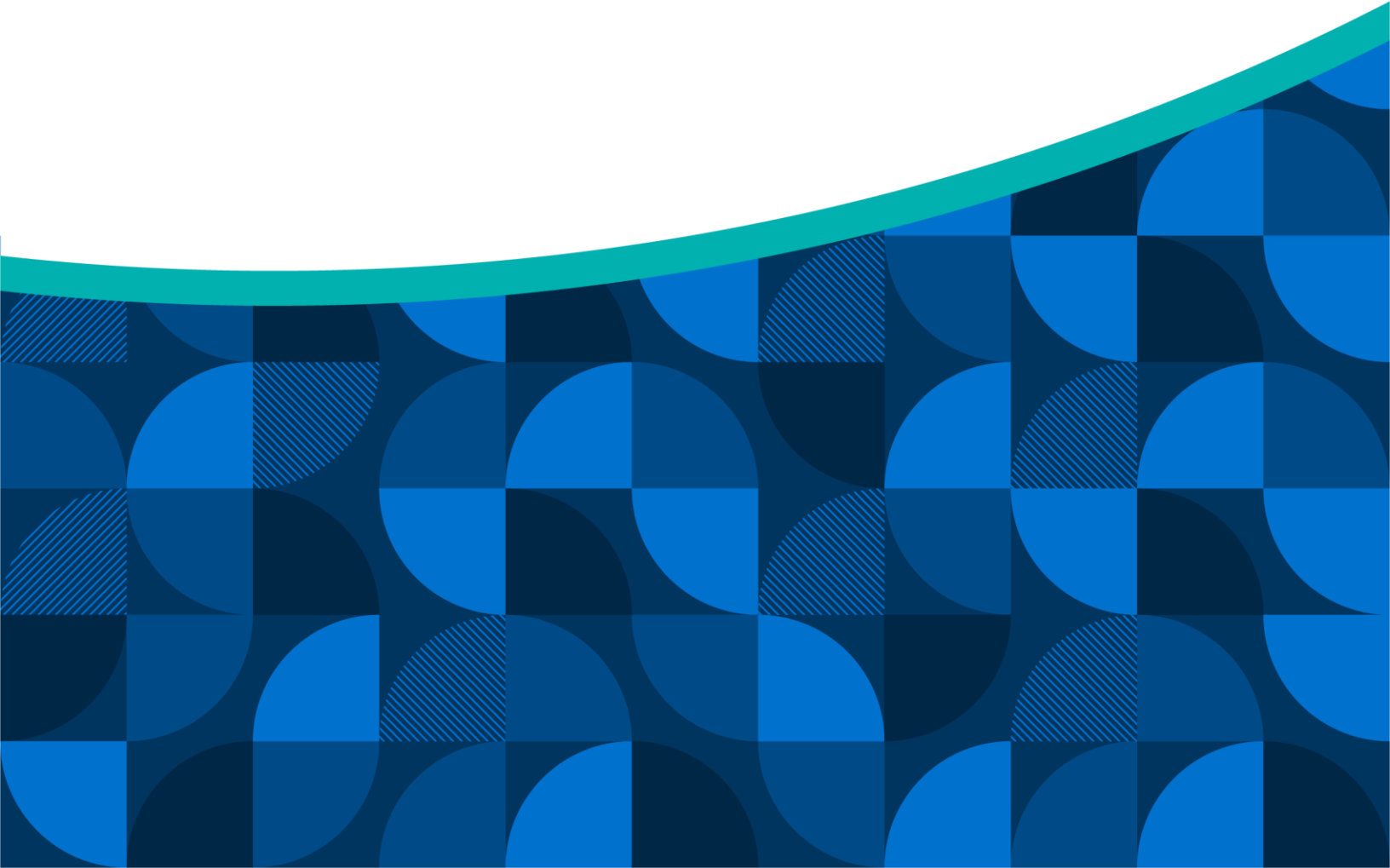# Promoting Inclusivity

Engaged Resource Toolkit

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Table of Contents

These Tools Address the Following Diagnostic Activities:

❑ *Teachers and/or staff at my school use classroom materials (e.g., lessons, books, worksheets) that accurately reflect students' identities, experiences, and lives.*

❑ *Teachers and/or staff at my school design academic lessons that are reflective of and relevant to students' lived experiences.*

❑ *Teachers and/or staff at my school ensure learning is connected to students' goals outside of school (e.g., careers, hobbies).*

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Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

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Creating Inclusive Classroom Environments

What Does it Mean to Be Inclusive?

▶ Inclusive learning environments are committed to cultivating environments that embrace and support every student regardless of their background, abilities, or unique characteristics. This helps promote psychological safety and positive behavior throughout their educational journey.

▶ Inclusive classrooms create a welcoming and supportive environment that caters to the diverse academic, social, emotional, and communication needs of all students. In these classrooms, students acknowledge and learn about the unique contributions of individuals from various backgrounds.

What are Examples of Social and Cultural Identities?

▶ Race
▶ Ethnicity
▶ Gender
▶ Sex
▶ Nationality

▶ Socioeconomic Status
▶ Sexual Orientation
▶ Disability
▶ Religion
▶ Language

Did you know? Students who feel safe at school tend to have better emotional health and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors (e.g., substance use, carrying weapons).

Inclusivity Promotes Identity Safety and Engagement

Identity safe classrooms are those in which teachers strive to view students' social identities are an asset rather than a barrier to success in the classroom. Classrooms where students feel valued and represented in their academic content and lessons also promote identity safety and encourage academic engagement.

Additional Resources on Inclusivity

K-12 Equity Self-Assessment and Implementation Guide: Use this assessment if you are looking to complete a broad assessment on the policies and practices in place at your district or school to support all students.

Source: Collaborative Classroom, "Introduction to Identity Safe Teaching Practices"; Diversity for Social Impact, "The Unseen Power of Inclusive Classrooms- A Complete Overview", 2023; Learning for Justice, "Identity Safe Classrooms and Schools", 2015; EAB interviews and analysis.

4 Ways to Improve Inclusivity and Identity Safety

Use the steps below to help create more inclusive approaches throughout your school and in the classroom. See the additional resources and tools in each section for more detailed information. Commit to taking at least one action to improve inclusivity and identify safety.

❶ Model Inclusive Language

Model inclusive language that acknowledges student differences and respects students of all identities. For example, use the term "Winter/holiday break" instead of "Christmas break" to acknowledge and respect the diversity of beliefs and traditions within the school community.

▶ Check out the Guide for More Inclusive Language (**pages 7-8)** for information on inclusive language and ways you can assess if you are using it regularly.

❷ Assess Classroom Materials for Inclusivity

Encourage staff to assess their curricula, classroom materials, and lessons for inclusivity to ensure students feel represented in the content they are learning.

▶ Check out our tools for Evaluating Curricula for Cultural Responsiveness (**pages 10-14**) for information on how to score learning materials.

❸ Promote Culturally Aware Teaching Practices

An inclusive and diverse curriculum can boost the self-esteem and confidence of underrepresented students. Cultural responsiveness can be fostered through practices that both surface and build on knowledge about students and their communities.

▶ See **page 9** for an overview of culturally responsive education and additional EAB resources on supporting that work.

❹ Plan Inclusive School Wide Events/Activities

The involvement and understanding of families in the school community is critical to creating a welcoming school for all students. Family programs are also a great way to open inclusive dialogue and discussion between parents/guardians and their children.

▶ Consider planning annual events that bring families together from your school community. See **page 17** for one way Pine Bush Central SD (NY) does this. For additional inspiration, see these examples from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation for event ideas.

Source: GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, "The Right to Establish a GSA in Public Schools: A Basic Primer", 2021; Learning Policy Institute, "Creating Identity-Safe Schools and Classrooms", 2022 Edutopia, "10 Powerful Community-Building Ideas", 2019; HRC, "Family Education and Community Building"; Learning Policy Institute, "Creating Identity-Safe Schools and Classrooms", 2022; EAB interviews and analysis.

Guide to More Inclusive Language

Use the resources on this page to learn more about inclusive language usage and when to implement a more inclusive term.

Guiding Principles of Inclusive Language States Terms Should...

Convey Respect to All	Communicate a Precise Message	Recognize Diversity	Involve Continuous Improvement
Inclusive language recognizes the humanity of all people and allows for self-determination of how people wish to be identified.	Limit metaphors and figures of speech to ensure language is precise and that the comparison drawn is does not lead to misconceptions.	Instead of minimizing differences, we can be sensitive to the differences everyone brings because of their identity and lived experience.	Language and preferences will continue to shift over time, and we must be ready to learn and shift with those changes.

Assessing Language and Terms for Inclusivity

Use this flow chart to decide if selected language is appropriate and when to adjust terminology
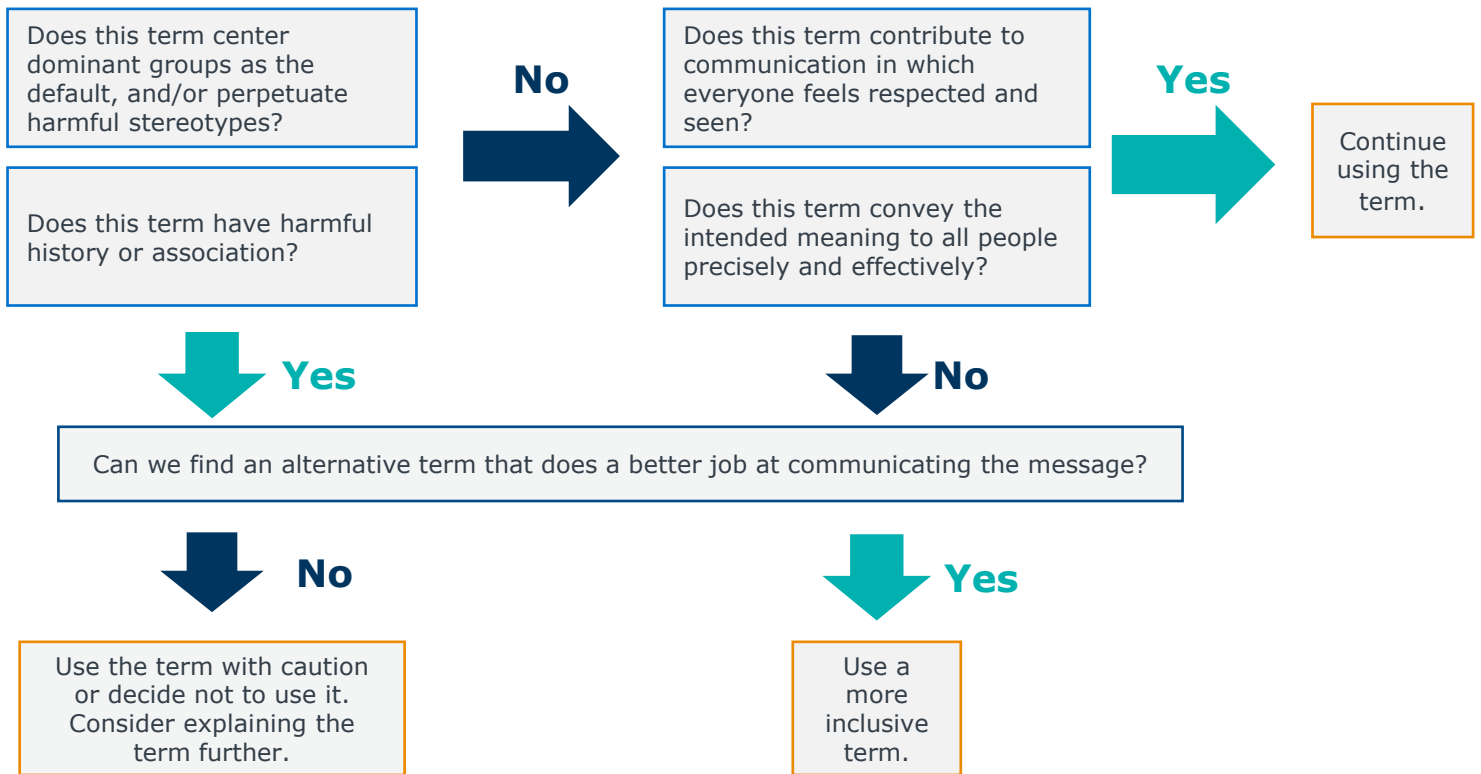
Does this term center dominant groups as the default, and/or perpetuate harmful stereotypes?

Does this term have harmful history or association?

No →

Does this term contribute to communication in which everyone feels respected and seen?

Does this term convey the intended meaning to all people precisely and effectively?

Yes →

Continue using the term.

Yes ↓

Can we find an alternative term that does a better job at communicating the message?

No ↓

Use the term with caution or decide not to use it. Consider explaining the term further.

No ↓ (from right side)

Yes ↓

Use a more inclusive term.

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Inclusive Terms Glossary

The [American Psychological Associate (APA) Inclusive Language Guide](#) works to dismantle harmful language. This guide helps acknowledge the power of language and explain why certain terms are harmful to marginalized communities.

Language Guide Outlines Appropriate Terminology in the Following:

- Inclusive language in writing

- Using terms related to equity and power

- Using person-first and identity first language

- Defining and using identity-related terms

- Limiting negative terms involving socioeconomic status

- Avoiding microaggressions

Sample Inclusive Term Usage

Inclusive Terms	Comment
Use of person-first and identity-first language	
• Person with a disability • Person who has a disability • Disabled person • Person with a physical	Use person-first or identity-first language as is appropriate for the community or person being discussed. The language used should be selected with the understanding that disabled people's expressed preferences regarding identification supersede language styles.
• Person with a mental disorder • Person with a mental illness • Person living with a mental health control	
• Deaf person • Person who is deaf • Hard-of-hearing person	The word "deaf" with a lowercase "d" is used to refer to audiological status, whereas "Deaf" with an uppercase "D" "refers to a particular group of deaf people who share a language.
• Blind person • Person who is blind • Person with low vision	People who have complete or almost complete loss of sight may be referred to as "blind." Other terms are acceptable for those with a vision-based disability. Some people object the term "visually impaired" because of the negative connotation of the word "impaired." If you are uncertain about how someone identifies, it is recommended that you ask what identity-first or person-first terms they prefer

Source: American Psychological Association, ["Inclusive Language Guide"](#), 2024

Inclusive Classroom Resource List for Teachers

Review the following resources to expand your knowledge on inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices. Provide teachers with this list and encourage discussion around this topic area.

Frameworks for Culturally Responsive Education
- NY State Education Department Framework for Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education
- Culturally Responsive Education: A Primer for Policy and Practice
- NYC Department of Education's Definition of Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education

Check if your State Education Department's website to offers advice around culturally relevant education aligning with your state standards.

Foundational Books
- The Dreamkeepers: Success Teachers of African American Children by Gloria Ladson-Billings
- Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice by Geneva Gay
- Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World by Django Paris and H. Samy Alim
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire
- For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood… and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education by Chistopher Emdin
- The Art of Critical Pedagogy by Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell

Instructional Practice
- Un-Standardizing Curriculum: Multicultural Teaching in the Standards-Based Classroom, edited by Christine E. Sleeter; Chapter 5: Transforming Intellectual Knowledge and Curriculum by James Banks
- Make Just one Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions by Dan Rothstein, Luz Santana, and Wendy D. Pueriefoy

Videos
- Getting Serious about Education: Culturally Relevant Teaching for New Century Students
- Our Culture Our Schools: Culturally Responsive Education in New York City

▶ **EJ Russell Elementary (NY) Library Systems Help Teachers Identify Inclusive Materials**

- Using Destiny Library Management System, library staff create resource lists organized by topic areas to help teachers have ease of access to more inclusive materials through the online system.

- Library staff flag all books with diverse characters, stories, or authors with a red star to help teachers and students identify them with ease when choosing books.

Inclusive Classroom Reading Materials Resource List

Use the following web resources to help find grade-level appropriate reading materials for your students.

Web Resources

Social Justice Books
- Identifies and promotes the best multicultural and social justice children's books and materials for educators.

1000 Black Girl Books
- A database and resource list compiled by 13-year-old Marley Dias that highlights stories with Black girls as protagonists.

We Need Diverse Books
- An organization that promotes diverse books and offers a categorized list of diverse booklists by theme.

Multicultural Children's Book Day
- Resource that celebrates and promotes diverse children's books and offers categorized lists such as countries, world religions, and experiences of refugee children.

Queer Books for Teens
- A comprehensive database of LGBTQIA+ young adult literature that focuses on the intersectionality of racial and sexual identities.

National Education Association
- Offers a categorized list of book lists by theme. Noteworthy lists include the Asian-American List and the Bilingual list.

Anti-Defamation League
- A leader in delivering anti-bias education. This resource offers a categorized children's book list by themes such as sexism, religious bigotry, social justice, and genocide,
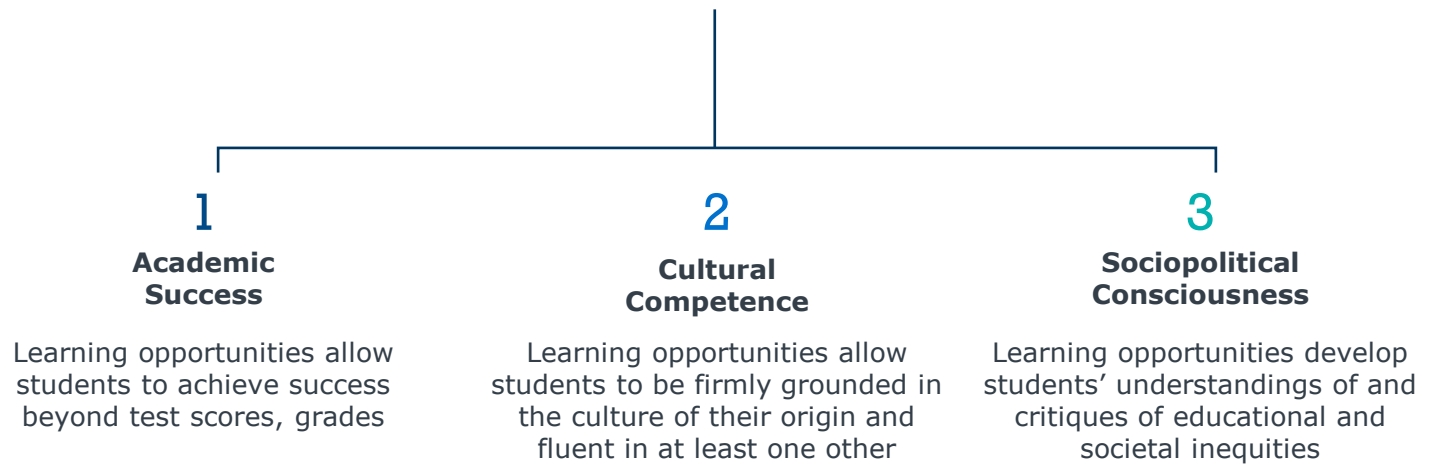
Writability
- Blog that provides a diverse book resource list the emphasizes characters with disabilities and explores the intersectionality of identities that include disability.

Using Culturally Responsive Approach to Academics

Use this page to learn more about the benefits of incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy into your school's teaching strategies.

What is culturally relevant pedagogy?

A conceptual framework that recognizes the importance of including students' **cultural backgrounds, interests, and lived experiences** in all aspects of teaching and learning within the **classroom and across the school.** It has three pillars:

1
Academic Success

Learning opportunities allow students to achieve success beyond test scores, grades

2
Cultural Competence

Learning opportunities allow students to be firmly grounded in the culture of their origin and fluent in at least one other

3
Sociopolitical Consciousness

Learning opportunities develop students' understandings of and critiques of educational and societal inequities

Check out [EAB's webinar](#) on using culturally responsive education as a way to teach students the tools they need to promote racially just communities.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Improves School Environment

Promotes Higher Expectations

Teachers shift their mindset away from what student *can't* do and learn to create more student-centered instruction by identifying students' assets. This teaching style helps improve student sense of belonging and student-teacher relationships.

Better Meets Students' Needs

Culturally responsive education helps better identify students' skills and limit overrepresentation. Underserved students may face implicit bias because of their identity (e.g., race, culture, language), which often skew both special education and discipline referrals.

Source: AMLE, "The Connection Between Belonging and Representation", 2024; Ladson-Billings, G., Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 32, No. 3, Autumn 1995, pp. 465-491; Understood, "What is Culturally Responsive Teaching", 2024; EAB interviews and analysis

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Evaluating Academic Content for Cultural Responsiveness

Provide school leaders or grade level leaders with the following steps as a guide for completing the steps of the representation scorecard on pages 13-16.

1 **Create Curriculum Evaluation Team**

Organize a team of at least 3 people of diverse identities (i.e., race, gender, age, sexuality, national origin) and roles (i.e., parent, student, teacher, admin, community member) who work together to evaluate curriculum. The team does not have to only include those with classroom education experience – the more input, the better!

2 **Select 1-3 Units, or Lessons to Analyze**

The units you choose should not focus specifically on diversity and multiculturalism; they should be typical units. If you can cover multiple areas, consider working across academic subjects or grade levels.

3 **Identify and Pull-Out Keywords**

Once you have selected your academic content, review the statements for the scorecard with which you will begin. Make sure the team understands each statement. Chart key words, ideas, and qualities from the statements that you will be looking for as you read the curriculum.

4 **Conduct the Evaluation**

The scorecard asks for your level of satisfaction with the curriculum on various measures. There is no right answer; this is just your opinion as someone who cares about culturally responsive education. As you answer each statement, use the Scoring Guidelines (page 8) to help you decide your rating.

5 **Score the Evaluation**

Tally your score for each section of the scorecard. A curriculum may excel in one area and fall short in another, it is important to record the differences. For example, an ELA scorecard will give a score for each of the following sections:

- ❏ *Character Tally (see page 14)*
- ❏ *Author Tally (see page 14)*
- ❏ *Representation (see pages 15-16)*

6 **Discuss Results with Curriculum Eval Team**

Discuss the process with your team: Did anything new come up? What was easy and what was hard? Did some items seem more important than others? Use this dialogue to strategize about next steps.

Culturally Responsive Scorecard: Representation Guidelines

NYU's Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools' Culturally Responsive scorecard helps determine the extent to which students in your school are reflected in their language arts curriculum, and the extent to which they are being exposed to a diverse group of authors, characters, identities, and cultures.

Explanation of Representation Scorecard

Character and Author Representation

This section of the scorecard captures the representation of characters from specific cultures. Use the tally to count the symbolic representation of characters and authors by race, gender, and ability.

Diversity of Characters

This section looks at how diverse people and cultures are portrayed in the curriculum–specifically the extent to which people of different cultures, skin tones, abilities, etc. are central to a story.

Accurate Portrayals

This section looks at the extent to which characters accurately reflect the histories and experiences of their cultures. Culturally responsive curriculum will position characters as multi-dimensional and portray characters in non-stereotypical ways.

Scoring Guidelines

Very Satisfied (+2)

If you are very satisfied, you should be able to provide an abundance of specific examples (stories, passages, illustrations, quotes, assignments, etc.) from the content to show how and why the statement is accurate. It is clear the content was designed to be culturally responsive. **Score this with two points.**

Satisfied (+1)

If you are satisfied, you should be able to provide some evidence from the curriculum that the statement is accurate. The text may not have been designed to be culturally responsive, but elements of CRE are apparent in most of the text. **Score this with one point.**

Unclear (-1)

If you are unclear, it is not evident to you whether there is evidence from the curriculum that supports the statement. **Score this with negative 1 point.**

Not Satisfied (-2)

If you are not satisfied, you feel there is little or no evidence in the curriculum that the statement is accurate. There is little or no evidence of cultural responsiveness. **Score this with negative 2 points.**

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Representation Scorecard Part 1: Character/Author Tally

Begin the scorecard process by evaluating your grade-level curriculum, lessons, or units for representation. Count a tally in each section characters and/or authors are represented.

Representation

Diversity of Characters

	Girl/Woman	Boy/Man	Non-binary	Unknown	Total
Middle Eastern					
Asian/Pacific Islander					
Latinx					
Native American/Indigenous					
White					
Black/African American					
People with Disabilities					
LGBTQIA+					
Animals					
Total Characters Depicted:					

Diversity of Author(s)

	Girl/Woman	Boy/Man	Non-binary	Unknown	Total
Middle Eastern					
Asian/Pacific Islander					
Latinx					
Native American/Indigenous					
White					
Black/African American					
People with Disabilities					
LGBTQIA+					
Total # of Authors:					

Representation Scorecard Part 2: Diversity of Characters

Next, use this scorecard section to look at how diverse people and cultures are portrayed in the curriculum, lesson, or unit. Specifically, look at the extent to which people of different cultures, skin tones, abilities, etc. are central to the story.

Statement	Very Satisfied (+2)	Satisfied (+1)	Unclear (-1)	Not Satisfied (-2)	Avg. Score (if you are working with a team)
The curriculum, lesson, or unit features visually diverse characters, and the characters of color do not all look alike.					
LGBTQIA+ characters are represented and are main characters.					
There are references to different ethnic and cultural traditions, languages, religions, names and clothing, abilities, and gender expressions.					
Diverse ethnicities and nationalities are portrayed.					
Diverse family structures (i.e., single parents, adopted/foster children, same-sex parents, etc.) are represented.					
Characters of color are main characters and not just side kicks.					
Total Score					

Additional Resources for Evaluating Curriculum

▶ Check out NYU Steinhardt's scorecards in additional formats and for different subjects. Including:

- **CRE STEAM Curriculum Scorecard**
- **A Qualtrics poll on scorecards results**

Representation Scorecard Part 3: Accurate Portrayals

Finally, use this scorecard section to look at the extent to which characters accurately reflect the histories and experiences of their cultures. Culturally responsive curriculum will position characters as multi-dimensional and portray characters in non-stereotypical ways.

Statement	Very Satisfied (+2)	Satisfied (+1)	Unclear (-1)	Not Satisfied (-2)	Avg. Score (if you are working with a team)
Character of color are not assumed to have low family wealth, educational attainments, and/or low income.					
Characters with disabilities aren't presented as the problem in the story, as bad, wrong or abnormal.					
Gender is not determinative in the storyline. Characters are portrayed with a variety of roles and gender expressions, not just the ones that align with traditional expectations.					
Characters of diverse cultural backgrounds are not represented stereotypically or presented as foreign or exotic.					
Characters with disabilities are represented with a full range of experiences and emotions, and not as inspirational because of their disability.					
LGBTQIA+ characters are represented with a full range of experiences and emotions, not exclusively for their gender identity or the oppression they face.					
Problems faced by people of color or women/girls are not resolved through the intervention of a white person or man/boy.					
Diverse characters are rooted in their own cultures and are not ambiguous.					
Total Score					

Connecting Learning to Students' Lives

Student Experience Journal Prompts

Use the following journal prompts as a writing activity with students to learn more about their lived experiences to inform teaching strategies.

Writing Prompts for Students

Community

• A Community is a group of people who share something in common. What communities do you belong to? How do people in your community express their care for each other?

• Write about an item (e.g., recipe, clothing, jewelry) that has been handed down to you. Why is it important to you? Why is it important to your family?

Diversity

• How are characters in the book you read unique? In other words, what qualities do they have that affect the way others perceive them?

• What quirks or attributes do you have that have ever made you feel like you have something in common with others? Anything that made you feel different?

• Write about an item (e.g., recipe, clothing, jewelry) that has been handed down to you. Why is it important to you? Why is it important to your family?

Legacy

• What do you want to remembered most for by others?

• What questions would you ask of your ancestors if they were here to tell you the answers? What do you think they would want to know about you?

Transition

• Write about a transition or period of change that you have experience? What was difficult about this change?

Hobbies/Interests

• Tell me about a fun day you had outside of school? Who were you with, what did you do?

• What is one sport, club, hobby, etc. that you want to learn more about?

Did you know? Research shows journal writing assignments can benefit students by enhancing reflection, facilitating critical thought, expressing feelings, and building strong writing skills.

Source: Oakland Public Education Fund, 2020

Host Annual Culturally-Focused Family Event

EJ Russell Elementary School (NY) hosts an annual "Diversity Day" where they invite their students' families to come into the school to speak on their family culture, countries of origin, and traditions.

Profiled District: Pine Bush Central School District (NY)

Diversity Day Overview

Before Event

- Diversity day **occurs early in the school year** to help get to know new families and welcome back returning families.

- Families are **invited to participate through schoolwide flyers and newsletters.**

- Families can. **sign up to either attend the morning or afternoon session,** making it only a half-day commitment for each family.

Day of Event

- Families set up in the gymnasium. **Many participants dressed in traditional attire** or brought reading materials for students.

- **Teachers rotate their classroom among the families present**, allowing students to hear from all the cultures in the room.

- **Students can ask families questions** and learn more about many different countries.

2023 Event Feedback

School leaders collected feedback from teachers to hear how the information was received by their students.

▶ **Teachers expressed students enjoyed learning about new cultures, but additional time with each presenter is needed** to ensure all students' questions were answered.

Updates for 2024 Event

▶ **Limit the number of classes cycling through the gymnasium at once** to allow students more time with each family presenter to leave enough time for students' questions.

▶ **Provide students with mock passports to help them keep track of the countries they learn about** and understand more about international travel.
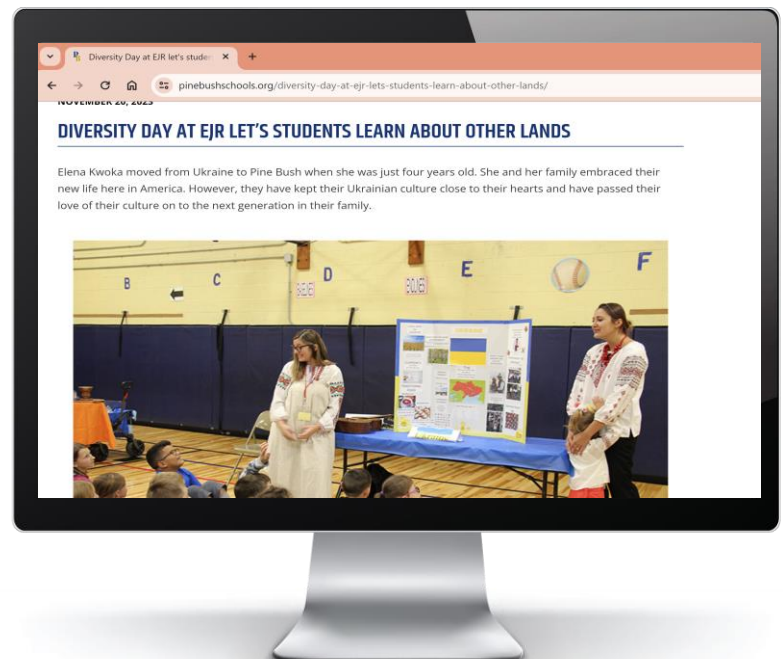
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