



# EQUITY AUDIT: CURRICULUM

Unit or Lesson:

Audit Date:

Check your print, digital, and other media sources, as well as the pedagogical practices, instructional approaches, foundational theories, and other practice-based components of your curricula.

| 1. INCLUSIVE, AFFIRMING REPRESENTATION  |                  |
|---|------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. How are people marginalized by social/structural inequity depicted? Look for patterns and pervasive messaging that may serve to reinforce stereotypes or bias.</li> <li>B. Omission or erasure of certain groups, their perspectives, contributions, and authentic accounts</li> <li>C. Who is depicted in subservient and passive roles, and who is in leadership and active roles?</li> <li>D. Asset-based vs. deficit-based framing: Who is helping, saving, and fixing, and who is in need? Who is proud, and who is pitied?</li> <li>E. Are the achievements of people based on their own initiative and work, or are achievements credited to something or someone else?</li> <li>F. Normalize Difference. Make sure that the books with Black characters in your classroom aren't all about slavery or sports, the books with Asian people aren't all about Japanese internment camps or Chinese New Year, and books that include people with disabilities aren't all about difference.</li> <li>G. Who might rarely (or never) see themselves reflected in their curricula? Who might only see themselves presented as slaves, victims, malicious, uncivilized, pitied, or through an otherwise deficit lens? Is this a pattern?</li> <li>H. How might students feel about the way their identity groups are (or are not) represented, and how might we proactively account for any feelings of hypervisibility, shame, or discomfort that may arise?</li> <li>I. How often are texts and media sources updated?</li> </ul> | <p>Findings:</p> |

## 2. MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Look for:

- A. Whose perspectives are presented as most significant, primary, or normal? Whose are presented as ancillary, an afterthought, or positioned as less important?
- B. Whose interest is the protagonist serving? Are protagonists defined according to the concepts of and struggles for justice appropriate to their group?
- C. Do conceptions of justice and heroism avoid conflict with dominant culture narratives?
- D. When characters from marginalized groups are centered, are they admired because their actions benefit those in power, or because of the same admirable qualities other heroes are credited with such as bravery, determination, kindness, generosity, and intelligence?
- E. Whose perspectives are missing?
- F. Are we actively seeking multiple stories to nuance student understandings about group identity and avoid stereotypes, essentialism, or overgeneralization?
- G. How are we ensuring students have access to different perspectives they might never encounter first hand?
- H. To what extent are we presenting conflicting perspectives and providing opportunities to engage in critical thinking and analysis about them?
- I. To what extent are we checking our own biases, perspectives, political leanings, and other factors that will influence how we present material? To what extent are our instructional choices communicating our personal values?

Findings:

| 3. AUTHENTICITY  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Check for inaccuracy and inappropriateness in the depiction of specific cultures and social groups</li> <li>B. Check for quaint, cutesy, exotic, or essentialized depictions. Are they oversimplified, or do they offer genuine insight into the character’s lives?</li> <li>C. Look for portrayals of individuals with unique aspirations, capacities, strengths, weaknesses, interests, values, goals, lifestyles, and beliefs vs. overgeneralization or reductionist depictions.</li> <li>D. Look for “single stories” that reinforce stereotypes, or rely on stereotypes to present an essentialized narrative about a group of people.</li> <li>E. Is one person from the group presented as having admirable qualities while all the others of the group are stereotyped (tokenism)?</li> <li>F. Are certain identities exaggerated and presented as a problem, caricature, or joke, while others are presented as normal and desirable?</li> <li>G. Is there an over-emphasis on describing the physical appearance of female characters?</li> <li>H. Do all people within a group look stereotypically alike or are they depicted as individuals with distinctive features?</li> <li>I. Are recent immigrants and people from the same ethnic group who were born in the United States portrayed in the same manner?</li> </ul> | <p>Findings:</p> |

| 4. ASSUMED COMMON EXPERIENCE   |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Assumptions about common perspectives, historical and political (eg. Columbus Day vs. Indigenous People’s Day; patriotism as a universal value)</li> <li>B. Assumptions about common access (to green spaces, available adults at home, positive role models, opportunities for enrichment etc.)</li> <li>C. Concepts of success and happiness (college; acquiring wealth; marriage and having kids as the norm; conquest as a goal)</li> <li>D. Relationship to animals; Relationship to nature; Perspectives about natural resources</li> <li>E. Assumptions about standards of beauty</li> <li>F. “Favorites” (foods, trips, sports, interests, places) or assumptions about access (transportation, tech at home, supportive adults, etc.)</li> <li>G. Values (individualism vs. collectivism; conquest vs. sovereignty; belonging vs. uniqueness)</li> <li>H. Does our unit of study assume common foundational knowledge, or common cultural experience?</li> <li>I. How are we providing multiple entry points for students to build their understanding of unfamiliar experiences and perspectives?</li> <li>J. In what ways does our unit communicate positive and negative connotations with different cultural expressions and values?</li> <li>K. Are there assumptions present about who knows what, for example, that all African American and Black people know the history of the Civil Rights Movement?</li> </ul> | <p>Findings:</p> |

### 5. STRUCTURAL IDEOLOGY

Criteria:

- A. Does this unit acknowledge the impact of inequity, past and present?
- B. Are individuals blamed for their own oppression or misfortune?
- C. Are individuals experiencing oppression in need of rescue, saving, or fixing, or do they have self-agency?
- D. Are all kinds of people presented as “normal,” or are some only represented as special, different, uncivilized, or burdensome?
- E. Does this unit serve to increase awareness of bias and dispel stereotypes?
- F. Are there expressions of colorblindness present? (“We’re all the same, and that’s all that matters.”)
- G. Is there an overt refusal to acknowledge the inequitable social contexts within which people operate?
- H. How are problems presented, and resolved?
- I. To what extent does this encourage passive acceptance or active resistance against inequity?
- J. Are the conditions facing oppressed groups represented as symptoms of systemic inequity, or blamed on individual or group deficit?
- K. Are problems faced by marginalized people resolved through the benevolent intervention of a dominant character?

Findings:

| 6. LANGUAGE  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Gender binary language: boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen, his or her, etc.</li> <li>B. Androcentric (male dominant) language: guys, forefathers, brethren, manpower, mankind, firemen, manmade, chairman, etc.</li> <li>C. Inclusion of accurate gender pronouns vs. “he/him” as a generic default</li> <li>D. Value-laden connotations with the word <i>white</i> and whiteness (beauty, cleanliness, innocence, virtue); and the word <i>black</i> or <i>dark</i> (evil, dirty, menacing)</li> <li>E. Person-first language when appropriate vs. an over-reliance on labels to define a person (homeless person, or person experiencing homelessness; Autistic person, or person with Autism)</li> <li>F. Terms that perpetuate an ‘us vs. them’ dynamic, or positions some as ‘normal’ and some as ‘other’</li> <li>G. Claims that people are ‘all the same’ or that one is ‘colorblind’</li> <li>H. Affirming, current terminology (BIPOC, IBPOC) and outdated, violent, inaccurate, or affirming terminology (colored, n-word, non-white, minority)</li> <li>I. Overuse of the word ‘diverse’, or use of the word ‘diverse’ to describe someone who is BIPOC</li> <li>J. Use of words like “crazy,” “bipolar,” “schizo,” “insane,” “suicidal,” “psycho,” to exaggerate a mood, state of mind, or behavior</li> <li>K. Harmful terms used to label people, define people through a deficit lens, or reduce people to a condition they experience</li> <li>L. Are there antiquated, offensive terms or language present?</li> <li>M. What purpose do they serve? Why have we chosen to preserve them in our unit?</li> <li>N. How necessary are they to the unit, and what is the impact on (all) students?</li> <li>O. What proactive, intentional considerations must we make when these words are present?</li> </ul> | <p>Findings:</p> |

| 7. RELEVANCE (PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE)   |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Relevant to individual students' lives</li> <li>B. Entry points for all students to access the learning</li> <li>C. Relevant to the experiences and contributions of diverse cultural groups</li> <li>D. "Mirrors" in which students can see themselves represented; "Windows" into the authentic experiences of different people and cultures</li> <li>E. Universal Design for Learning &amp; accessibility</li> <li>F. Culturally Responsive and Culturally Relevant Teaching - building on the funds of knowledge embedded in a student's life experience</li> <li>G. Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy - preserving and sustaining the cultural ways of being for communities of color</li> <li>H. Narratives that provide opportunities for relevant personal connections and empathy across difference</li> <li>I. What are the effects on a child's self-image?</li> <li>J. Are norms established that limit any child's aspirations or self-conceptions?</li> <li>K. Are groups of people presented in permanent, negative ways? For example, are overweight people presented as lazy, women presented as subservient, or people learning to speak English presented as deficit in general?</li> </ul> | <p>Findings:</p> |

| 8. AUTHOR OR ILLUSTRATOR AUTHORITY   |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. What qualifies the author or illustrator to deal with the subject?</li> <li>B. If they are not a member of the group they are depicting, is there anything in their background that would indicate their authority on the topic?</li> <li>C. What is the balance between primary and secondary sources?</li> <li>D. What does the copyright date indicate?</li> <li>E. Does the author fail to acknowledge or pay tribute to the source of the story? Does the author’s note obfuscate the origins of the story?</li> <li>F. Does the author rationalize major changes to a story?</li> <li>G. Does the author seek to justify a retelling from outside the culture by implying that the culture itself has disappeared?</li> <li>H. Does the author’s own cultural belief system overshadow the belief system of the people whose stories are being told?</li> <li>I. Is there cultural thievery or cultural appropriation present?</li> </ul> | <p>Findings:</p> |

**This tool draws upon the work of:**

Council on International Books for Children. (1980). *Guidelines for Selecting Bias Free Textbooks and Storybooks*. New York, NY: Council on Interracial Books.

Day, F. A. (1999). *Multicultural voices in contemporary literature: A resource for teachers* (1st ed.). New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into practice*, 34(3), 159-165.

Lin, G. (2016, March). Windows and Mirrors on Your Child’s Bookshelf. In *TEDx Conference* (Vol. 18).

Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium. (2018). Equity Audits. Retrieved from: <https://maec.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MAEC-Equity-Audit-1.pdf>

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 85-100.

Seale, D., Slapin, B., & Gonzales, R. (1995). *How to Tell the Difference: A Guide to Evaluating Children's Books for Anti-Indian Bias*. Oyate Publishing.

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