

# Characteristics of a *Meaningfully Multicultural Curriculum*

## **1. Delivery**

Delivery reflects high expectations through higher-order pedagogies and purposefully shifts power dynamics in the classroom.

- Vary instructional techniques, including:
  - Cooperative and collaborative learning
  - Dialogic pedagogy
  - Peer teaching
  - Deep inquiry
- Understand and respond to power dynamics to challenge privilege and oppression. Consider, for example,
  - How can power in the room be redistributed?
  - Who is seen as the expert in the room?
- Challenge the notion of Teaching as Mastery.
  - Ask students what they already know about a topic.
  - Ask students what they want to learn about a topic.
  - Ask students to participate in the teaching.

## **2. Content**

Content should be holistic and accurate, not only acknowledging contributions from various but groups, but reshaping the master narrative.

- Ensure that content is as complete and accurate. In some cases this will require looking outside mainstream sources.
  - "Christopher Columbus discovered America" is neither complete nor accurate.
- Avoid tokenism. Weave content about people of color, economically marginalized people, transgender people, and other people historically under-represented in the curriculum seamlessly rather than (or in addition to) teaching about them separately.
  - Do you present under-represented groups as "the other"?
  - Do you address these groups only through special units and lesson plans ("African American Scientists"; "Poetry by Women") or within the context of the larger curriculum?
  - Do you "celebrate" difference or study, explore, and acknowledge difference *and its power and privilege implications* as part of the overall curriculum?
- Study the history of oppression in curricula and ensure you are not unintentionally reproducing it.
  - Are supporting stereotypes (learning about Native Americans by making headdresses and tomahawks) or challenging them (learning about Native Americans through resources by Native Americans)?
  - Are you supporting or challenging the assumption that our society is *inherently* Eurocentric, male-centric, Christian-centric, heterosexual-centric, and upper-middle-class centric?

### **3. Teaching and Learning Materials**

Teaching and learning materials must be critically examined for bias.

- Examine all materials for bias and oppressive content.
  - Does the history book show stereotypical or inaccurate images of people from certain groups or eras?
  - Do science materials use male-centric language or imagery?
  - Do reading or literature materials have racist language or stereotypical images?
  - Does the language you use and the language your materials use assume heterosexuality, a 2-biological-parent household, or a gender binary?

### **4. Perspective**

Content should be presented from a variety of perspectives in order to be accurate and complete.

- Present content from a variety of perspectives, not only the dominant perspective.
  - How do we define “classic literature” or “great books” or “the classics,” and from whose perspective?
  - From whose perspective do we tell history? When is “westward expansion” the same as “genocide”? When are champions of “liberty” the same as slave owners?
- Present content through a variety of lenses, not just those of a few heroic characters. In the case of U.S. history, for example, you might use:
  - Slave narratives to teach about slavery.
  - Slave narratives to teach about colonial Virginia.
  - Native American narratives to teach about westward expansion.

### **5. Critical Inclusivity**

Students must be engaged in the teaching and learning process. Transcend the banking method and facilitate experiences in which students learn from one another’s experiences and perspectives.

- Bring the perspectives and experiences of the students to the fore in the learning experience.
- Encourage students to ask critical questions about information they receive from you and curricular materials, and model this type of critical thinking for them.
  - Who wrote or edited that textbook?
  - Who created that website?
  - Whose voice am I hearing and whose voice am I not hearing?
- Make content and delivery relevant for the students. Facilitate experiences in which they connect it with their everyday lives.
- Recognize your students as your most important multicultural resources.

### **6. Social and Civic Responsibility**

If we hope to prepare students to be active participants in creating an equitable society, we must educate them about social justice issues and model a sense of civic responsibility within the curriculum.



The Equity Literacy Institute is an EdChange initiative.

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- Starting with the youngest students, incorporate discussions about equity and inequity into lessons. This can be done across all subject areas.
  - How has misapplied science been used to justify racism?
- Look for ways in which recognized names in various disciplines used their work and stature to fight social injustices.
- When an opportunity arises to address racism, sexism, heterosexism, economic injustice, transphobia, or other forms of oppression, facilitate it.
- Have honest discussion with students about the history of privilege and oppression in your subject area, school, and society at large.
- Connect teaching and learning to local community and larger global justice issues.

## **7. Assessment**

Curriculum should be assessed for completeness, accuracy, and bias.

- Work with a cohort of teachers to examine and provide feedback one another's curricular units, lesson plans, and frameworks.
- Request and openly accept feedback from students.