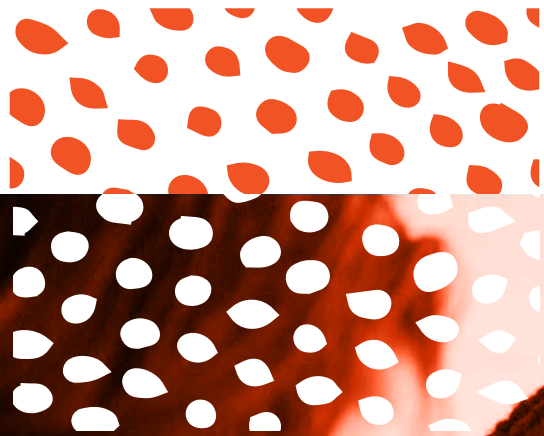


Evaluating Materials for Culturally Responsive Practices: **A Landscape Analysis**



Contents

A Note on Terminology	1
Executive Summary	2
Introduction	4
Findings	5
Implications for Educators and Criteria Developers	18
Methodology	20
Acknowledgments	23
Appendix	24



A Note on Terminology

In 2021, EdReports partnered with Education First to produce a [primer](#) on the role of materials in supporting educators to better reflect the diversity of student needs and culture. We found “culturally relevant pedagogy,” “culturally responsive teaching,” and “culturally sustaining pedagogy” to be the terms used most frequently by the teachers and district administrators we spoke to during our research. All of these terms value cultural attributes that students bring to the classroom as assets rather than deficits.

Each term has a unique, widely accepted academic definition, but educators and practitioners often use them interchangeably. For example, although not a representative sample of all educators, teachers in a focus group used the terms “culturally responsive” and “culturally relevant” interchangeably throughout a 60-minute conversation during the creation of the primer.

We found this trend replicated in the review criteria that we analyzed. The majority of instructional materials review tools refer to “cultural responsiveness” and “across the board, terms used in the tools were not grounded in a common language or shared definitions” (see [Finding 3](#)).

In an effort to reflect how educators are using related terminology and to not create another term, we are using “culturally responsive” as an umbrella term throughout this analysis. We do this while also recognizing that the way that we are using this term does not capture the differences, nuances, and innovations within the work pioneered by leaders such as Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings, Dr. Geneva Gay, Dr. Django Paris, Dr. H. Samy Alim, Paulo Freire, and Zaretta Hammond (see [Finding 4](#)).

Culturally Responsive

Cultural responsiveness is an extension of culturally relevant pedagogy with a “a stronger focus on teachers’ strategies and practices—that is, the doing of teaching,”¹ in contrast with cultural relevance, which some people describe as an understanding of the role that culture has on student learning. A primary goal of this analysis is to better understand how the education field is currently assessing instructional materials for how they address the diverse needs of students. Because cultural responsiveness focuses on “the doing of teaching”—which directly correlates to the application of materials—we believe the term most accurately reflects the core of what the tools evaluated in this analysis are looking for.

¹ New America, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Understanding Culturally Responsive Teaching* (2020)



Executive Summary

Evaluating Materials for Culturally Responsive Practices: A Landscape Analysis

Research shows that students learn primarily through their interactions with teachers and content, and this instructional core is the foundation for ensuring all students have the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in school and beyond.

While access to grade-level content is an imperative for all students, how content is designed and delivered matters greatly. High-quality materials should address the broad learning needs of students and represent diverse cultures and experiences. A recent study found that the content students have access to influences whether they feel included and affirmed. Curriculum that highlights multiple representations—including in texts, literature, media, and image—serve to engage all students through materials that are relevant and relatable.¹

Since 2015, EdReports has partnered with school districts across the country to improve how instructional materials are selected. Educators often want to know if there are review tools they can draw upon to support their local efforts, and we are regularly asked to provide feedback on rubrics and criteria used to assess instructional materials for priorities such as cultural relevance, responsiveness, affirmation, and sustainability.

In an effort to provide information about a range of review criteria designed to assess culturally responsive practices in instructional materials, we conducted a landscape analysis of 15 resources in use throughout the country. The goal of this analysis is to help educators become more aware of the trends in these review tools, understand what different sets of researchers, community groups, and education stakeholders believe is necessary when creating strong criteria, and gain inspiration for criteria they can use as they review materials.

This analysis does not rank or score criteria. Rather, it provides readers with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the range of tools currently available to evaluate culturally responsive practices in materials and to understand the opportunities and challenges that exist when reviewing curriculum for attributes that support culturally responsive practices.

The final analysis produced 12 key findings. Of particular note are:

TOOLS HAVE TWO DISTINCT PURPOSES:

1. **Evaluating resources for inclusion of culturally responsive practices; and**
2. **Informing practice/shifting mindsets regarding culturally responsive practices in materials.**

The majority of tools are rubrics or scorecards that require users to evaluate materials for adherence to predetermined criteria. Within this set of tools, there is **significant variance in the detail and depth** of how culturally responsive criteria were scored.

¹ Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, 6(3). Retrieved from: <https://antiracistfuture.org/care-research-briefs/>

INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS AND REVIEW TEAMS ARE THE PRIMARY COLLECTORS OF EVIDENCE FOR EVALUATIVE TOOLS; HOWEVER, TOOLS RARELY PROVIDE USER GUIDANCE FOR HOW TO RATE/SCORE MATERIAL, AND USERS ARE TYPICALLY INSTRUCTED TO RATE MATERIALS WITHOUT EXAMPLES OF WHAT THEY SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR.

More than half of the tools analyzed do not include definitions, nor do they provide framing to help users contextualize concepts of culturally responsive practices as they conduct reviews. By not ensuring users have a foundational understanding of what culturally responsive practices truly means, **it is hard to validate that individuals evaluating materials know what they are looking for** or why culturally responsive characteristics in materials are important.

In addition, **all of the tools require a tremendous time commitment from teachers and review teams.** We have found when processes require this level of lift, it can lead to review teams not collecting a full range of evidence for each indicator or prioritizing the indicators that are easiest to quantify.

A RANGE OF DEFINITIONS ARE USED TO DESCRIBE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES IN RELATION TO MATERIALS; HOWEVER, THE TERM “CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE” AND ITS DERIVATIVES ARE MORE COMMONLY USED.

Terms used in most tools are not grounded in a common language or shared definitions derived from research. The way terms are defined in tools can shape what the users look for and how the criteria are used. This finding is of particular importance now as the language of culturally responsive practices is being politicized with increasing impact on which materials are allowed to be adopted.

TOOLS VARY IN HOW THEY SEEK TO IDENTIFY EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION IN MATERIALS AND THE MANNER IN WHICH EVIDENCE IS USED TO DESCRIBE REPRESENTATION.

Representation appears in almost every tool in some fashion; however, there is **significant variance in how representation is defined.** Some tools simply define representation as the inclusion of diverse populations (e.g., a literal count of texts that featured Black or Latinx characters), while others highlight more nuanced aspects of representation that center on the ways diverse populations are portrayed in materials.

We invite you to explore the complete landscape analysis for a detailed explanation of each finding with links, where available, to the tools.





Introduction

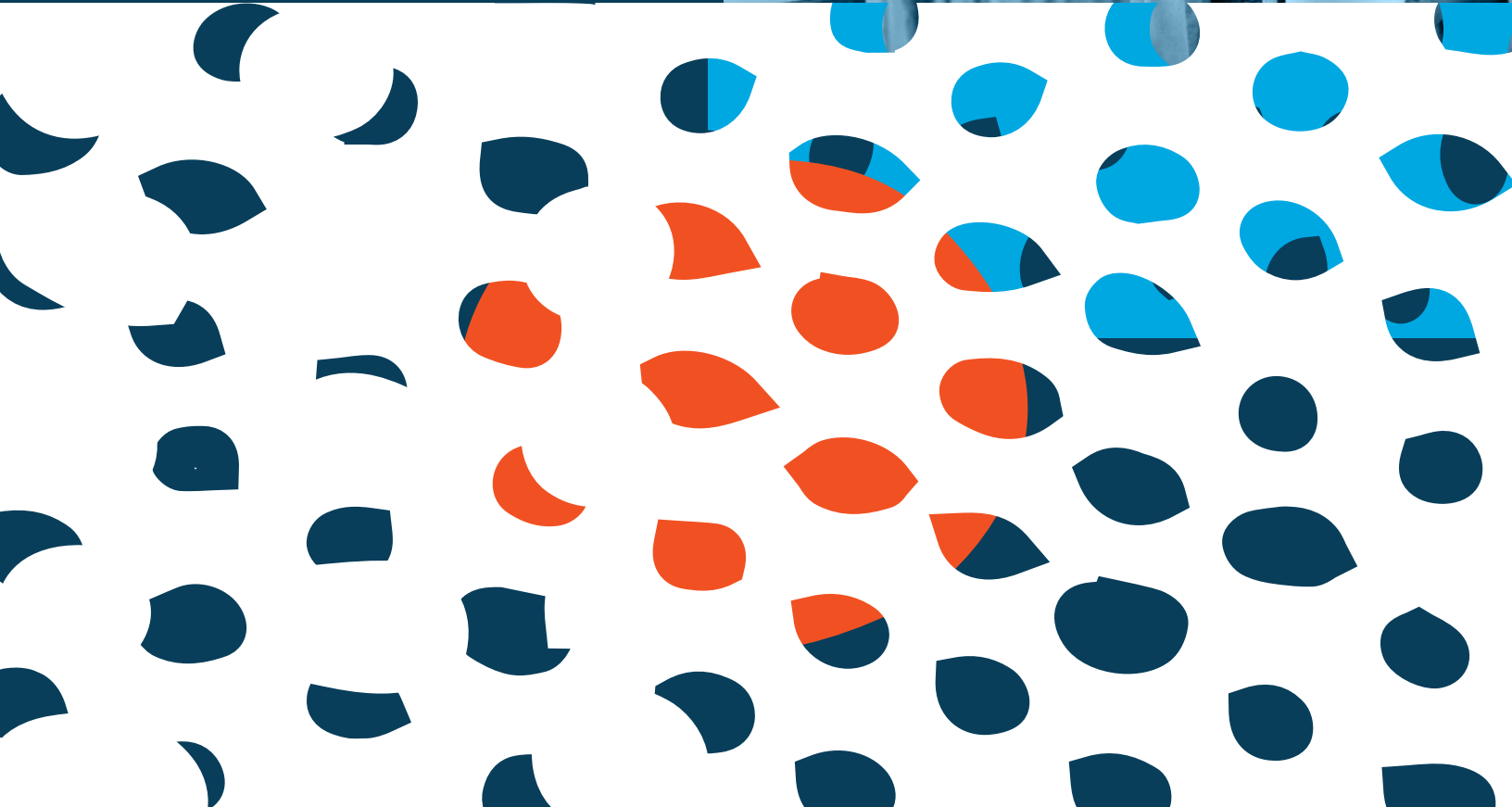
Conversations about how K-12 instructional materials address topics such as representation, student agency, and support for students with diverse backgrounds and needs are becoming more commonplace. As a result, educators, researchers, and communities are elevating the need to further explore how the education field views culturally responsive practices in curriculum.

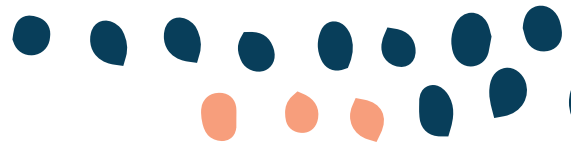
In an effort to further explore these concepts, EdReports—a nonprofit organization that reviews K-12 instructional materials in English language arts, math, and science—set out to identify and analyze tools that evaluate materials and/or provide guidance for educators and decision-makers about characteristics of culturally responsive practices in instructional materials. The goal of this analysis is to inform two primary audiences:

1. **Educators:** Educators can use this analysis to become more aware of the trends in existing review tools, understand what different sets of researchers, community groups, and education stakeholders believe is necessary when creating strong criteria, and gain inspiration for criteria they can use as they review materials.
2. **Tool Developers:** Those who are working to establish criteria for identifying how well instructional materials support culturally responsive practices—including relevance, representation, and engagement—can apply this analysis to understand other tools in use and what choices others have made while working on similar goals.

Findings

Twelve findings were identified through the analysis that provide insight into the range of tools available to help educators understand how culturally responsive practices are currently viewed in relation to instructional materials.





Finding 1: Tools have two distinct purposes:

1. Evaluating resources for inclusion of culturally responsive practices; and
2. Informing practice/shifting mindsets regarding culturally responsive criteria in materials.

DETAILS ON HOW TO SCORE CRITERIA VARIED GREATLY

Eight of the 15 tools evaluated were rubrics or scorecards that require users to evaluate materials for adherence to predetermined criteria. Within this set of tools, there is significant variance in the detail and depth of how criteria are scored. The spectrum of detail on scoring ranged between tools that provide guidance (three tools) and include context and instructions on what and how to score, and tools that do not include detailed information (five tools).

For example, the [NYU Steinhardt](#) tool instructs users to either tally or rate indicators, and users are provided guidance on how to assign overall ratings to groups of indicators based on their scores. Tallyed items include counts for diversity of characters and authors based on race/ethnicities, gender, and ability status. Rated items include 30 indicator statements with descriptors for representation, social justice orientation, and teachers' materials. This detailed tool provides a significant amount of information beyond these indicators that can be used to evaluate materials. For example, the tool's front matter includes framing to explain the significance of culturally responsive education (CRE) and the connection between CRE and curricula. Additionally, NYU Steinhardt has developed training opportunities and a [toolkit](#) for use of the tool along with supporting resources.

The [Elementary Mathematics OER](#) tool provides 28 indicators split among six categories, including one dedicated section for Inclusivity of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students. In this tool, users are asked to provide ratings for each indicator on a scale of 0 (does not meet) to 2 (fully meets). It refers to a district equity decision tool (which was unavailable for review) as an external resource and connection, and indicates connection to a larger priority that reviewers would have presumably have access to as they complete their work.

TOOLS DESIGNED TO INFORM PRACTICE

The seven tools that fall into the informing practice category are informational in nature and are generally intended to either educate users on characteristics of culturally responsive practices that should be included in materials and/or to provide guidance on how to identify these when surveying materials. Some name specific concepts, definitions and descriptions of what these concepts mean and provide guidance on how to identify and/or add the concepts to materials.

Resources designed to shift the mindsets and practices of educators around culturally responsive concepts in materials include the [Improving Representation and Diversity in OEM](#). This informational tool includes a table with descriptors of components and items to consider when examining representation and diversity in materials. The table also includes recommendations for actions to take when reviewing and/or editing materials.

The [Pathway to Equitable Math Instruction](#) tool provides users with guidance and links to downloadable resources to each of the tool's "5 Strides on the Path to Math Equity." Within each downloaded resource, users can access exercises, templates, and guiding questions that are aimed at helping them develop equitable math practices.

Finding 2: Evaluative tools rarely provide user guidance for how to rate/score materials. Users are typically instructed to rate materials without examples of what they should be looking for.

More than half of the tools analyzed do not include related definitions, nor do they provide framing to help users contextualize concepts of culturally responsive practices. The absence of contextual framing may be considered a weakness within tools that fail to provide users with a foundational understanding. The lack of framing highlights a missed opportunity to bring attention to the “what” and the “why” of culturally responsive practices in materials rather than just rating for what is or is not present.

Half of the tools are evaluative in nature and call on users to review materials for specific criteria. Typically, evaluative tools instruct users to assign numerical ratings based on descriptors in a rubric. Despite the need to rate and score materials, few tools provide users with guidance and “look-fors” to aid in scoring materials, which can lead to users scoring in subjective ways. **By not providing definitions and examples of what the criteria mean, there are risks that users will not interpret the criteria similarly.**

The **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Scorecard** [↗](#) tool is unique in that it includes a separate implementation guide with additional information to help users understand how they should evaluate materials. The guide provides framing and context explaining the importance of culturally and linguistically responsive materials and includes detailed descriptions and guiding questions for each criterion included in the scorecard.

Ideally, tools intended to score materials should include indicators and descriptors, as well as multiple examples of what to look for and reflective questions to ensure users are capturing the best information as they rate.



The lack of framing highlights a missed opportunity to bring attention to the “what” and the “why” of culturally responsive practices in materials rather than just rating for what is or is not present.



Across the board, terms used in the tools are not grounded in a common language or shared definitions.

Finding 3: A range of definitions are used to describe culturally responsive practices in relation to materials; however, the term “culturally responsive” and its derivatives are most commonly used.

Across the board, terms used in the tools are not grounded in a common language or shared definitions. The way culturally responsive terms are defined in tools can shape what the tools look for and how they are used.

Seven tools include definitions to frame the characteristics of what should be considered when evaluating materials. Across these seven tools, nine related terms are used. The term “culturally responsive” is used in three tools, and the related terms, “culturally responsive and inclusive” and “culturally responsive and sustaining” are present in two. EdReports’ 2021 [primer on culturally centered practices](#) found that terms such as “culturally responsive” and “culturally responsive and sustaining” have precise academic definitions, but are often used interchangeably in practice.

The [NYU Steinhardt](#) and Chicago Public Schools’ Equity Rubric tools similarly define culturally responsive education as the combination of teaching, pedagogy, curriculum, theories, attitudes, practices, and instructional materials that center students’ culture, identities, and contexts throughout educational systems.

“Culturally responsive” has a long history of use in the education landscape, so its prevalence is not surprising. Emerging terms such as “culturally affirming” and “anti-racist” did not appear prominently in any of the tools that were reviewed. The [Pathway to Equitable Math Instruction](#) is an exception. Although this tool uses “culturally relevant pedagogy” as its base throughout its linked resources, there are references to “anti-racism” in the context of the tool’s resources helping educators “as they navigate the individual and collective journey from equity to anti-racism.” Content within this tool is from as recently as May 2021, which could be a reason it includes more current terms and concepts.




The absence of direct research citations may provide an unintended signal that the origins of the review criteria may not be as important or relevant as the information (“look-fors”) contained in the tools themselves.

Finding 4: Half of the tools make an explicit connection to a specific research base. Of those, Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings is the most commonly referenced, appearing in five tools.

Although it is likely that most, if not all, of the tools are informed by at least one body of research, seven of the 15 tools do not mention connections to specific studies or researchers. Four of these tools are scorecards or rubrics, and the remaining three tools are informational. Even in the scorecards and rubrics that do reference research bases, the mentions of research are often citations and references without context.

The absence of direct research citations may provide an unintended signal that the origins of the review criteria may not be as important or relevant as the information (“look-fors”) contained in the tools themselves. Of the tools that do cite research, the works of Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings are referenced the most, appearing in five tools. Additional researchers are mentioned in several of the tools including Dr. Geneva Gay (3), Dr. Django Paris and Dr. H. Samy Alim (2), Paulo Freire (2), and Zaretta Hammond (2). Several tools draw on multiple research bases and synthesize the works of various authors to inform their grounding.

In addition to scholarly research, five tools cite other tools or resources that they drew upon when developing content and guidance. **Additional Review Tools to Support the Selection of a High-Quality Curriculum**  references both the NYU Steinhardt “Culturally Responsive Scorecard” and Great Lakes Equity Center’s “Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials” tools as the basis for the design of their Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Education tools. The **Chicago Public Schools Equity Rubric** cites multiple resources that were used to inform its indicators and descriptors, including the Council of the Great City Schools’ “Framework for Raising Expectations,” English Learners Success Forum’s “Teaching Resources of English Learners,” and the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment “Can Do Descriptors” as source material for indicators and descriptors related to supports for multilingual learners.



Educators at all levels are critical to the review process and should examine materials before decisions are made.

Finding 5: Individual teachers are the primary collectors of evidence for evaluative tools to inform their own decisions about materials and those of district leaders.

Teachers are mentioned as collectors of evidence for six tools, more than any other group (i.e., district leaders, school leaders, broader community, and review teams). Tools where teachers are the primary collectors of evidence tend to be created by state or regional entities. Similar to EdReports' educator-led review process, these tools are also more likely to be intended to empower teachers to make decisions about the materials they use.

The **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Scorecard (Implementation Guide)** [↗](#) created by the New Mexico Department of Education has an explicit goal to help teachers and empower them to “consider how they might adjust or refine their curricular materials to ensure they are as responsive as possible to all students’ cultural and linguistic needs.” The language throughout the guide frequently refers to teachers; however, it is possible other types of educators could use this tool. Guidance states that the tool is “most effective when used in collaborative teams—ideally ones that include educators from a wide range of backgrounds and identities.”

The regional tool **Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials** [↗](#) developed by the Great Lakes Equity Center “enables users to determine the extent to which developed standards and curricular materials reflect educational equity.” Teachers are intended to use this tool to engage in critical reflection about the materials they use and make recommendations for what they would like to see in materials.

Teachers should play a key role in evaluating materials; however, there is a disconnect in multiple tools around the roles of teachers and decision-makers. School and district leaders are rarely listed as evidence collectors; however, they are referred to as decision-makers in eight tools. Some tools call for teachers or review teams to collect or record evidence that would be shared with decision-makers, and others simply describe the role leaders play in making decisions about materials. Educators at all levels are critical to the review process and should examine materials before decisions are made.

The informational tool, **Guidelines for Improving English Language Arts Materials** [↗](#), does not require evidence collection. Instead, it is intended to provide guidance to a range of individuals who “play a role in ensuring teachers have access to curricular materials that are high-quality and consider the needs of all students, including English Learners (ELs).” The audiences referred to in this tool include content developers, professional learning communities, and education leaders considering new curriculum. The tool provides focus areas and descriptors of “look fors” in materials and states that “leaders may use the Guidelines as a tool for reflecting on current support for ELs, finding gaps, and determining appropriate actions to meet EL needs.”



[T]here are few tools that are intended to support [review teams] to develop a deeper understanding of materials or evaluate the materials that are used in their schools for characteristics of culturally responsive practices.

Finding 6: Although review teams are often tasked with evaluating and selecting instructional materials, tools rarely mention them or provide guidance for such groups.

Review teams, or groups of educators, leaders, and community members who reviewed materials, were listed as evidence collectors for three tools and implied as collectors for two additional tools. As with tools intended for use by individual teachers (**Finding 5**), the information collected by review teams could be used to inform the decisions of leaders. Despite review teams typically being a key component of the adoption process, there are few tools that are intended to support these groups to develop a deeper understanding of materials or evaluate the materials that are used in their schools for characteristics of culturally responsive practices.

The **School District of Palm Beach County's K-5 Content-based Literacy Evaluation Rubric for Core Instruction tool** [↗](#) can be used by multiple evaluators to rate the indicators included in the rubric. Information from the rubric can be compiled and shared with a review team and/or with school or district leaders to provide detailed evidence of various characteristics of materials.

The lack of inclusion of and guidance for review teams in multiple review tools highlights an opportunity to ensure that tools also include training on their use and the process users must go through to collect evidence and score materials.


Lack of guidance and the fact that nearly **all of the tools would require a tremendous time commitment from teachers and review teams** could lead to challenges in using the tools with fidelity. EdReports has found that when processes require this level of lift, it can lead to review teams not collecting a full range of evidence for each indicator or prioritizing the indicators that are easiest to quantify. Resources such as the **evidence guides** [↗](#) included in **EdReports review tools** [↗](#) would be beneficial for teams of educators looking to evaluate materials for culturally responsive content.



Most of the tools go beyond ensuring simple access to the curriculum and include drawing upon students' assets as a way to facilitate learning.


Finding 7: More than half of tools refer to resources that serve to support the needs of multilingual learners and culturally responsive practices, signaling the interconnected benefits that a culturally centered curriculum can play for students.

Support for multilingual learners is elevated in eight tools, signaling the importance of addressing the needs of this population of students through language supports, accessibility measures, and cultural relevance in the materials that are used to teach them. **Of particular interest is the specific calling out of the necessity of cultural and linguistic relevancy of materials for this particular group of students, in addition to its importance for the broader student population.** Most of the tools go beyond ensuring simple access to the curriculum and include drawing upon students' assets as a way to facilitate learning. One tool was designed solely to look at materials in terms of their appropriateness for multilingual learners.

This English Learners Success Forum's (ELSF) **Guidelines for Improving English Language Arts Materials**  was developed to provide "specific guidance to developers of English language arts (ELA) content on key areas of English language development that must be embedded across curricula, in units, and in lessons so that English Learner students (ELs) can access and engage in grade-level content." Within this tool, there are definitions of the various types of multilingual learners as well as guidelines and specifications aimed at elevating opportunities for "simultaneous language and disciplinary knowledge development in instructional materials."

The guidelines listed in this tool are divided across five areas of focus that contain descriptors of what materials should include:

- Interdependence of Oral Language, Disciplinary Writing, and Text Engagement
- Sustained Language and Content Support
- Learner Awareness (Metacognitive Strategies)
- Leveraging Students' Assets
- Formative Assessment

Other tools either include specific indicators related to multilingual learner support or include links to additional resources for aiding multilingual learners. The **Chicago Public Schools' Equity Rubric** includes links to multilingual learner resources such as the English Learners Success Forum's **Teaching Resources for English Learners** , which was used to inform indicators and descriptors included in the rubric. The Chicago tool includes multilingual learner-specific indicators stating that materials:

- Ensure English Learners are provided with support to access rigorous grade-level content.
- Provide ample opportunities for English Learners to engage in structured academic talk.
- Capitalize on their first/native language knowledge and provide different types of supports/scaffolds to meet their varied English proficiencies.



Finding 8: A limited number of tools include guidance that can be used when considering how to meet the needs of students from specific ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

In addition to specifically naming resources for supporting multilingual learners, some tools also mentioned aiming to support other populations and refer to them by name (i.e., Black/African American, Latinx, and Indigenous students). These tools include more detailed descriptors, “look fors,” and guidance educators can use to address the needs of students from diverse populations in a more nuanced way.

The **Pathway to Equitable Math Instruction** [↗](#) tool invites teachers to authentically include Black, Latinx, and multilingual students rather than make superficial curriculum changes. In the first of its “5 Strides on the Path to Math Equity,” this tool includes reflective activities for teachers around several questions aimed at helping them deconstruct racism in mathematics instruction.

Questions include:

- Who are my students?
- How am I authentically including Black, Latinx, and multilingual students?
- How do I engage students in learning?
- How do I dismantle power structures in the classroom?

The informational tool **Questions to Ask While Evaluating Resources** [↗](#) is unique in that it focuses on providing guidance around considerations for populations of students who are rarely centered in decisions and materials (i.e., Indigenous people and members of the LGBTQIA+ community). This tool includes guidance on “look fors” related to descriptions of people, specificity and relationships, and relationships to and descriptions of the land. It also provides users with an overview of what to look for and what to avoid when choosing indigenous resources. “Look-fors” include:

- Authenticity
- People of today and yesterday
- Diversity
- Respectful language
- Positive images
- Relevance



Representation appears in almost every tool in some fashion; however, there are significant variances in how representation is defined.

Finding 9: Tools vary in how they seek to identify equitable representation in materials and the manner in which evidence is used to describe representation.

Representation appears in almost every tool in some fashion; however, there are **significant variances in how representation is defined**. Some tools simply define representation as the inclusion of diverse populations (i.e., a literal count of texts that featured Black or Latinx characters), while others highlight more nuanced aspects of representation centered on the ways diverse populations are portrayed in materials (i.e., cultures, experiences, and backgrounds).

Tools also vary greatly in the type of information they ask users to collect to provide evidence of the presence of representation in materials. Some resources instruct evidence collectors to look for characteristics associated with identity and diversity. Others call for a focus on cultural awareness and/or visibility of diverse populations within materials. Balanced portrayals of individuals from diverse backgrounds are also a focus area of some resources.

The **Culturally Responsive English Language Arts Curriculum Scorecard (New York University)** [↗](#) tool includes a detailed and complex overview of what representation consists of in materials. In the “Explanation of Scorecard” section, the tool’s creators explain that “Representation can sometimes be just a token gesture putting non-White or female characters in place of White male characters. This numerical representation coupled with deeper indicators of presentation provides the first layer of CRE analysis.”

Within this tool, users are asked to tally character and author traits in addition to responding to prompts related to the diversity of characters and their accurate portrayals. Moving beyond representation, the guidance asks users to look at “the extent to which people of different cultures, skin tones, abilities, etc. are central to a story” as well as “the extent to which characters accurately reflect the histories and experiences of their culture.” This additional layer of evaluation of representation calls for users to reflect on more than just the presence or mention of diversity.

Across tools, the general trend for presenting the results or analysis involves providing a rating or score for the representation criterion. Some tools also instruct evidence collectors to provide scores and narrative summaries.

The **Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials** [↗](#) tool explicitly defines representation as “providing and having adequate presence of all when decision and choice making as to examine the patterns of underlying beliefs, practices, policies, structures and norms that may marginalize specific groups and limit opportunity.” It also includes multiple indicators that call on users to agree or disagree with statements that reflect aspects of representation in materials as part of its scoring rubric. Additionally, users provide a rationale or explanation for their ratings and make note of recommendations or considerations they may have to improve or enhance the materials.

Finding 10: A majority of the tools refer to student agency and focus on student choice or social justice.

Ten tools include criteria related to student agency with some consistency across two primary areas: student choice or social justice.

Student choice—or when students have a say in what and/or how they learn—emerged as a key area in multiple tools. These tools tend to include indicators and descriptors on how well materials include characteristics that allow them to meet student needs by being relevant or responsive, by having features that make them accessible to all students, or by creating opportunities for students to take charge of their own learning. Relevant and responsive materials can often pique the interest of students and can influence the choices they make around their own learning (i.e., selecting more difficult texts to read or persisting through challenging math problems).

Additionally, when materials are designed to ensure students can fully access content, students can have more agency in advancing their own learning. For example, the **New York State Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework** [↗](#) asserts that “New York State education stakeholders can contribute to a Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CR-SE) for students by believing that students and their families are individuals with their own assets, knowledge, and abilities who should be valued and consulted.” As part of the CR-SE framework, New York state views students as co-designers of curriculum to promote inclusive and assessment practices.

Tools evaluating social justice-related indicators include components that ask users to look for ways materials help students develop and/or use skills that can help them promote principles of equality. The **Social Justice Standards - The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework** [↗](#) consists of anchor standards and learning outcomes that are divided into four domains, one of which is Justice. The Justice domain includes student learning outcomes centered around topics such as recognizing stereotypes, analyzing the impact of bias and injustice, and identifying connections to social justice around the world. Within the tool, teachers are provided with grade-level outcomes for each anchor standard and anti-bias scenarios to bring the outcomes to life.



Finding 11: Tools are evenly split between those that were subject specific and those that are for general use.

English language arts-specific tools are the most common, with six out of 15 tools specifically intended for use with ELA and/or literacy materials. The ELA-specific tools tend to provide more detailed indicators that reflect academic connections (e.g., foundational skills, assessment).

Palm Beach **County's K-5 Content-based Literacy Evaluation Rubric for Core Instruction tool** [↗](#) is designed for use when reviewing ELA materials and includes several indicator groups around topics such as foundational skills instruction (phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency) and assessment in addition to the culturally responsive-related indicators.

Three tools are math specific, and only one of them is an evaluative scorecard/rubric. The **Elementary Mathematics OER Curriculum Adoption Selection Criteria** [↗](#) tool calls for users to score indicators related to the inclusivity of culturally and linguistically diverse students.


The remaining tools do not mention a specific subject and are intended to be used or adapted for use with any subject area.






Tools intended for the evaluation of resources for integration of culturally centered practices and those designed to inform practices and shift mindsets are aligned with EdReports' review criteria.

Finding 12: More than half of the tools include criteria that are similar to EdReports' usability indicators.

More than half of tools include indicators that are aligned to EdReports indicators, particularly indicators in the set of usability and design criteria ([Gateway 3](#) ). The majority of tools include some relationship or connection to the following EdReports review indicators:

- 3q: Materials provide strategies and supports for students who read, write, and/or speak in a language other than English to meet or exceed grade-level standards to regularly participate in learning English language arts and literacy/math/science.
- 3r: Materials provide a balance of images or information about people, representing various demographic and physical characteristics.
- 3s: Materials provide guidance to encourage teachers to draw upon student home language to facilitate learning.
- 3t: Materials provide guidance to encourage teachers to draw upon student cultural and social backgrounds to facilitate learning.

Additionally, a small number of tools provide guidance on using assessments with multilingual learners, which corresponds with EdReports review indicator 3l: "Assessments offer accommodations that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills without changing the content of the assessment."

Tools intended for the evaluation of resources for integration of culturally centered practices and those designed to inform practices and shift mindsets are aligned with EdReports' review criteria. EdReports review tools can be found [here](#) .

Implications for Educators and Criteria Developers

There are many ways that review criteria for culturally responsive practices might successfully incorporate the features described in this analysis.



School Districts

For states and districts that will use these tools to analyze culturally responsive practices in curricular materials, it is important to take their strengths and gaps into consideration. Every tool can have value for users; however, educators who make decisions about instructional materials should pay close attention to how well tools define the characteristics that are being evaluated as well as the guidance that is provided for how to best look for these characteristics. **When tools lack adequate details about what to look for and support for how to find it, it is likely that users will not get what they need from them.** It is also important for districts to approach the review process grounded in a common language or shared definitions of culturally responsive practices. This initial step is of particular importance now as the language of culturally responsive practices is being politicized to limit access to content and ideas.

Teachers

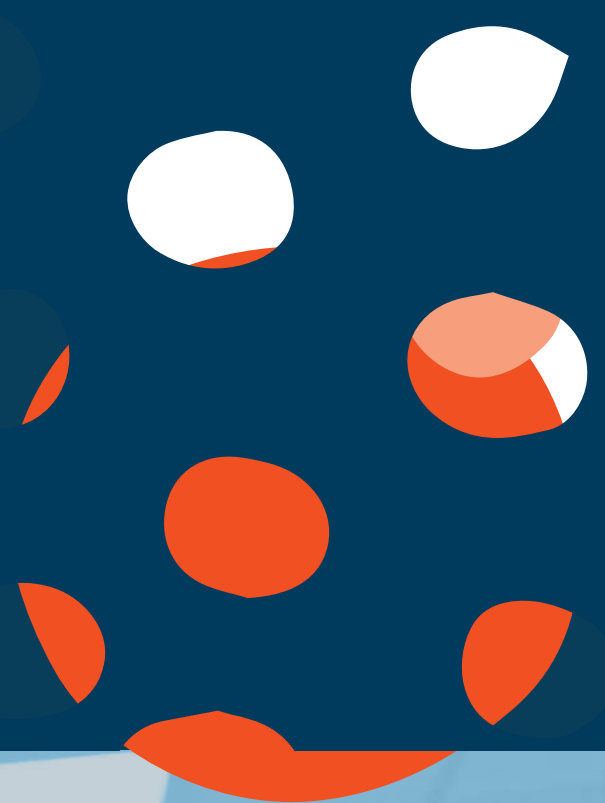
Teachers are mentioned as collectors of evidence during a review process more than any other group. However, without guidance for how to rate/score materials or examples of what quality looks like, this creates more subjectivity within the evaluation process. A review process demands a significant amount of time to do well—time that most teachers do not have. In order for a process to provide accurate and useful information, **teachers need a firm understanding of the criteria, support, and training to interrogate their own implicit biases, clear evidence of what high quality looks like in materials, and an honest assessment of the capacity necessary to complete the reviews.**

Tool Developers

Many organizations and education leaders have developed or are developing criteria to support the review of instructional materials for characteristics of culturally responsive practices. These developers range from technical assistance providers to academics to district administrators. As this body of work continues to grow, **developers can attend to the strengths and gaps identified in this analysis to build tools and processes to better assess the quality of instructional materials.**

Developers should develop their tool with precise definitions of terms in the design phase as well as in the final product. When applicable, these terms and concepts should link to the research base that underpins the importance of these characteristics and provides context for the origin of the characteristics. Finally, within implementation guidance, developers should provide “look fors” so the tool itself can be educative for those conducting reviews and support consistent application.

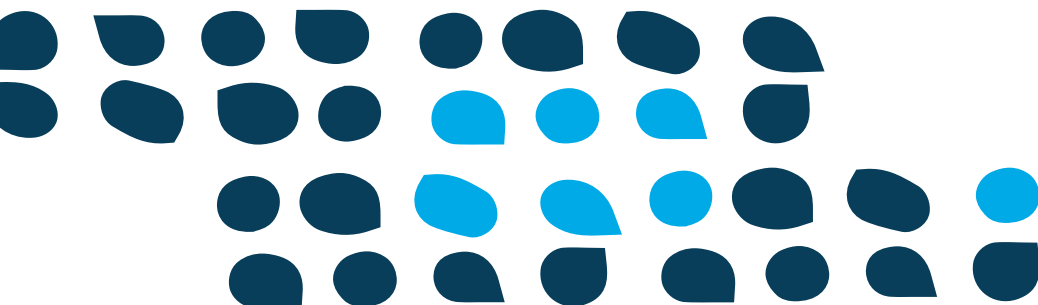
Methodology



Review tools were identified through recommendations from states and districts, recommendations from EdReports staff, and through online searches for review tools and resources. Reviews of references and appendices of select tools were also conducted to identify additional tools for study. The following 15 tools were reviewed and analyzed in detail (links are provided to publicly available tools):



- **Additional Review Tools to Support the Selection of a High-Quality Curriculum in Rhode Island** [↗](#) (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2020)
- **Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials** [↗](#) (Great Lakes Equity Center, 2017)
- **Baltimore City Evaluation Comprehensive Literacy** (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2020)
- **Chicago Public Schools Equity Rubric** (Chicago Public Schools, 2019)
- **CLR Scorecard for ELA Curricular Materials** [↗](#) and **Implementation Guide** [↗](#) (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2021)
- **Culturally Responsive English Language Arts Curriculum Scorecard** [↗](#) (New York University, Steinhardt, The Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative (EJ-ROC), 2021)
- **Elementary Mathematics OER Curriculum Adoption Selection Criteria** (Eugene, Oregon)
- **A Pathway to Equitable Math Instruction** [↗](#) (Equitable Math, multiple authors, 2020)
- **Fully Revised Culturally Responsive Danielson Rubric** (Centennial School District, Oregon, publication date unavailable)
- **Guidelines for Improving English Language Arts Materials for English Learners** [↗](#) (English Learners Success Forum, publication date unavailable (living document))
- **Improving Representation and Diversity in Open Educational Materials** [↗](#) (OpenStax, 2020)
- **K-5 Content-Based Literacy Evaluation Rubric for Core Instruction from Palm Beach County up-right-from-squarE** [↗](#) (The School District of Palm Beach County, The Coalition of Black Student Achievement, and the Hispanic Education Coalition, 2019)
- **New York State Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework** [↗](#) (New York State Education Department & The New York University Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, 2018)
- **Questions to Ask While Evaluating Resources Featuring Indigenous, POC, and/or LGBTQ People and Communities** (adapted by Queens University (Ontario, Canada) from Outreach Librarian (University of Toronto) Desmond Wong’s “Vetting Resources” presentation at the Symposium on The Importance of Indigenous Education in Ontario Classrooms (2018) and Dr. Cathy Gutierrez-Gomez’s “Tips for Choosing Culturally Appropriate Books and Resources About Native Americans” (2017)
- **Social Justice Standards - The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework** [↗](#) (Teaching Tolerance/ Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018)



Review Process Research

The following are examples of the questions that were used to analyze the set of review tools:

Resource Type:

- Rubric/Scorecard: Is the resource used to evaluate materials for potential adoption or use in classrooms?
- Informational Resource: Is the resource used to provide guidance on what to look for and/or include in materials but is not used in an evaluative way?

Audience Use: Who is the target audience for use of this resource?

Collectors: Which audience(s) collect information that goes into the resource?

Decision-Makers: Who determines how the information in the resource is used?

Culturally Responsive Practices Definition(s): What terms or definitions are provided to describe culturally responsive concepts?

Research Base: Which researchers are referred to in relation to culturally responsive practices-related definitions and concepts?

Related Resources: Which culturally responsive practices and materials-related resources (e.g., scorecards, rubrics, guidebooks, etc.) does this resource draw from?

Representation Indicators/Criteria:

- What language does the resource use for representation-related descriptors?
- Representation Type: How was representation mentioned in the tool?
- Representation Detail Type: How detailed or complex was the representation description?
- Evidence Collection Methods: How do collectors gather evidence to use the resource?

Student Agency Indicators/Criteria:

- What language does the resource use for student agency-related descriptors?
- Agency Type: How was student agency represented in the tool?
- Agency Detail Type: How detailed or complex was the agency description?
- Evidence Collection Methods: How do collectors gather evidence to use the resource?

Academic Indicators/Criteria: What language does the resource use for academic-related descriptors?

Evidence Collection Methods: How do collectors gather evidence to use the resource?

EdReports Alignment: What EdReports gateways, criterion, or indicators are also represented in the resource?

To learn more about the terms and definitions used throughout this analysis, please refer to “**Culturally Centered Education: A Primer** [↗](#),” a comprehensive collection of terms, their research base, and what they mean for instructional materials. The primer: 1. Defines key terms pertaining to culturally-based education; 2. Explains the implications these terms have for curriculum and instructional materials; and 3. Assesses the state of the culturally-based education field.

Acknowledgments

We extend our appreciation to the criteria developers who have shared or made available the review tools analyzed in this document. We are especially grateful to lead authors Jessica Faith Carter, Ph.D., and Margaret Overbagh-Feld. Their scholarly talents and classroom and school system experiences made them ideal research partners for this project.

We would like to recognize EdReports' Jess Box, Janna Chan, and Lauren Weisskirk for contributing to the writing, editing, and production of this report. We would also like to thank the many school districts, state departments of education, nonprofit organizations, and researchers who have contributed their time and expertise to ensure that all students have access to high-quality grade-level instructional materials that seek to reflect the diversity of student experiences.

About EdReports

EdReports is an independent nonprofit designed to improve K-12 education. EdReports increases the capacity of teachers, administrators, and leaders to seek, identify, and demand the highest-quality instructional materials. Drawing upon expert educators, our reviews of instructional materials and support of smart adoption processes equip teachers with excellent materials nationwide. EdReports and associated marks and logos are the trademark property of EdReports.org, Inc.

Limited Print and Electronic Distribution Rights

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution. Licensees may copy, distribute, display, and perform only verbatim copies of reports, not derivative works and remixes based on it, and must attribute and link back to EdReports.org.

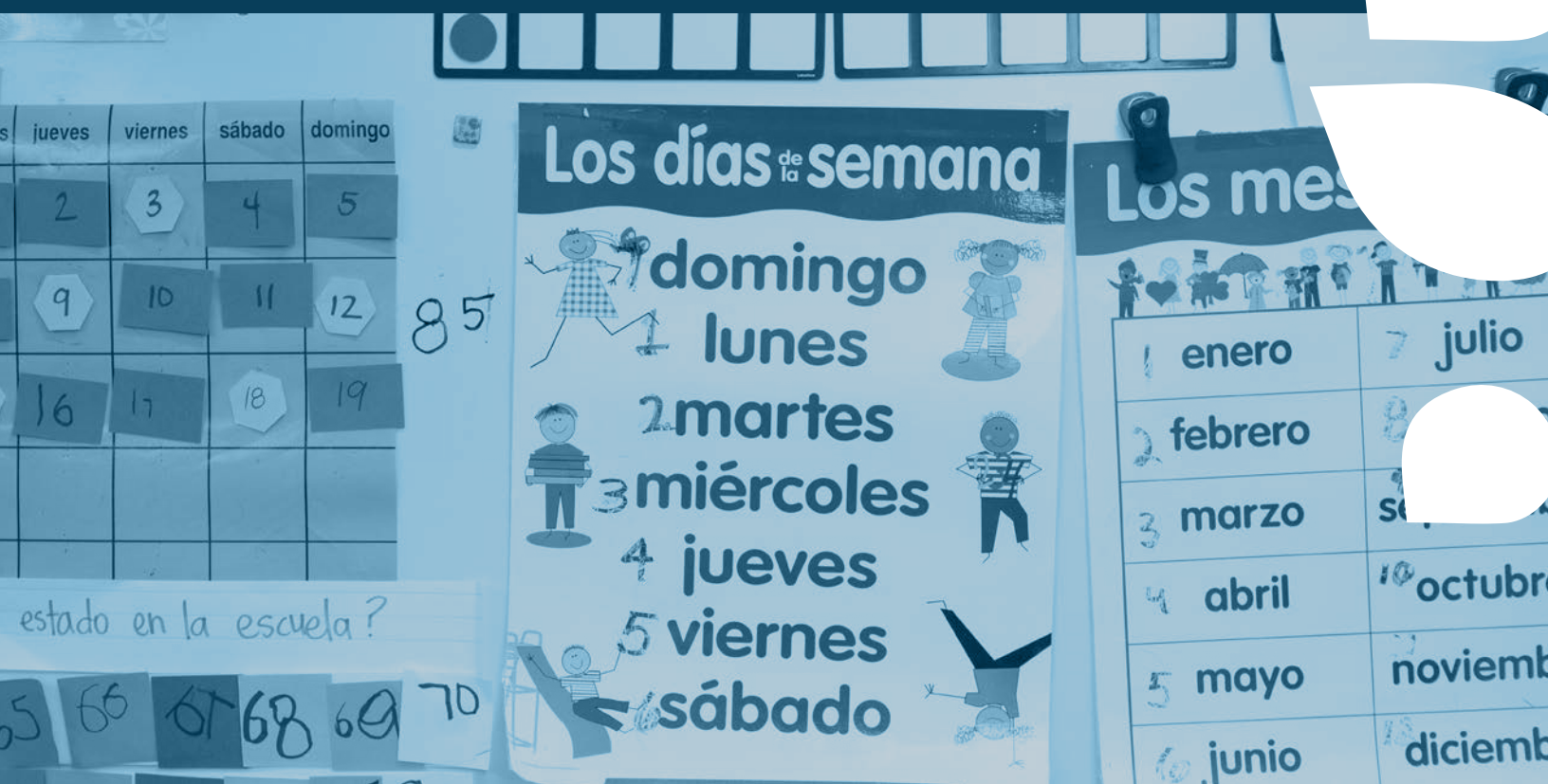
For more information on this publication, visit www.edreports.org.

© Copyright 2022 EdReports.org, Inc.



Appendix

The following is a brief description of the culturally responsive practice review tools EdReports analyzed in its landscape analysis. **This analysis does not rank or score criteria.** Rather, it provides readers with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the range of tools currently available to evaluate culturally responsive practices in materials and to understand the opportunities and challenges that exist when reviewing curriculum for attributes that support culturally responsive practices. Please note: *links to review tools are provided where available.*



Keys & Definitions

Intended Users

Those most likely to benefit from the information found in the review.

- **National audience:** educators and stakeholders nationwide
- **State audience:** educators and stakeholders within a single state
- **Regional audiences:** educators and stakeholders within a geographic area
- **Local audience:** educators and stakeholders within a single district
- **International:** educators and stakeholders outside of the United States
- **Curriculum writers:** individuals and/or teams that are responsible for writing curriculum for a school, district, or publisher

Information Collectors

Those tasked with completing the reviews

Decision-Makers

Those tasked with making decisions about what materials are selected.

Available Guidance

Tools include some level of contextual information or scoring guidance

Additional Review Tools to Support the Selection of a High-Quality Curriculum in Rhode Island

AUTHOR	Rhode Island Department of Education
YEAR PUBLISHED	2020
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Review Teams
INTENDED USERS	State
DECISION-MAKERS	District Leaders
SUBJECT AREA	Math, ELA
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	Yes

Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials

AUTHOR	Great Lakes Equity Center
YEAR PUBLISHED	2017
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Teachers
INTENDED USERS	Regional
DECISION-MAKERS	Teachers
SUBJECT AREA	All
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	Yes

Baltimore City Evaluation Comprehensive Literacy

AUTHOR	Baltimore City Public Schools
YEAR PUBLISHED	2020
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Review Teams
INTENDED USERS	Local
DECISION-MAKERS	District Leaders
SUBJECT AREA	ELA
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	No

Chicago Public Schools Equity Rubric

AUTHOR	Chicago Public Schools
YEAR PUBLISHED	2019
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Teachers, School Leaders, District Leaders, Vendors
INTENDED USERS	Local
DECISION-MAKERS	District Leaders
SUBJECT AREA	ELA
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	Yes

CLR Scorecard for ELA Curricular Materials and Implementation Guide

AUTHOR	New Mexico Public Education Department
YEAR PUBLISHED	2021
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Teachers
INTENDED USERS	State
DECISION-MAKERS	Teachers
SUBJECT AREA	ELA
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	Yes

Culturally Responsive English Language Arts Curriculum Scorecard

AUTHOR	New York University, Steinhardt, The Education Justice Research and Organizing Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard - EJ-ROC NYU Steinhardtollaborative (EJ-ROC)
YEAR PUBLISHED	2021
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Teachers
INTENDED USERS	National
DECISION-MAKERS	Teachers
SUBJECT AREA	ELA
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	No

Elementary Mathematics OER Curriculum Adoption Selection Criteria

AUTHOR	Eugene, Oregon
YEAR PUBLISHED	Unkown
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Unkown
INTENDED USERS	Unkown
DECISION-MAKERS	Unkown
SUBJECT AREA	Math
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	Yes

A Pathway to Equitable Math Instruction



AUTHOR	Multiple Authors
YEAR PUBLISHED	2020
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Teachers
INTENDED USERS	National
DECISION-MAKERS	Teachers
SUBJECT AREA	Math
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	No

Fully Revised Culturally Responsive Danielson Rubric

AUTHOR	Centennial School District, Oregon
YEAR PUBLISHED	Unknown
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	School Leaders
INTENDED USERS	Local
DECISION-MAKERS	Teachers
SUBJECT AREA	All
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	No

Guidelines for Improving English Language Arts Materials for English Learners

AUTHOR	English Learners Success Forum
YEAR PUBLISHED	Unavailable – (living document)
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	District Leaders
INTENDED USERS	National
DECISION-MAKERS	District Leaders
SUBJECT AREA	ELA
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	No

Improving Representation and Diversity in Open Educational Materials

AUTHOR	OpenStax
YEAR PUBLISHED	Unavailable – (living document)
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Curriculum Writers
INTENDED USERS	National
DECISION-MAKERS	Broader Community
SUBJECT AREA	All
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	N/A

K-5 Content-Based Literacy Evaluation Rubric for Core Instruction from Palm Beach County

AUTHOR	The School District of Palm Beach County, The Coalition of Black Student Achievement, and the Hispanic Education Coalition
YEAR PUBLISHED	2019
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Review Teams
INTENDED USERS	Local
DECISION-MAKERS	District Leaders
SUBJECT AREA	ELA
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	No

New York State Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework

AUTHOR	New York State Education Department & The New York University Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools
YEAR PUBLISHED	2018
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Teachers, School Leaders, District Leaders, Review Teams
INTENDED USERS	State
DECISION-MAKERS	District Leaders
SUBJECT AREA	All
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	No

Questions to Ask While Evaluating Resources Featuring Indigenous, POC, and/or LGBTQ People and Communities

AUTHOR	Adapted from Queens University (Ontario, Canada) from Outreach Librarian (University of Toronto) Desmond Wong’s “Vetting Resources” presentation at the Symposium on The Importance of Indigenous Education in Ontario Classrooms (2018) and Dr. Cathy Gutierrez-Gomez’s “Tips for Choosing Culturally Appropriate Books and Resources About Native Americans” (2017)
YEAR PUBLISHED	2017-2018
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Teachers, School Leaders, District Leaders, Review Teams
INTENDED USERS	International
DECISION-MAKERS	Teachers
SUBJECT AREA	All
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	N/A

Social Justice Standards - The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework

AUTHOR	Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018
YEAR PUBLISHED	2018
INFORMATION COLLECTORS	Teachers, School Leaders
INTENDED USERS	National
DECISION-MAKERS	Teachers, School Leaders
SUBJECT AREA	All
AVAILABLE GUIDANCE	No