



RCDSB RESOURCE REVIEW AND SELECTION GUIDELINE: ANTI-RACISM AND ANTI-OPPRESSION

CONTEXT

Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan, Equity and Inclusive Education policy, and the Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB) Strategic Plan require that resources in schools reflect the diversity of our learners, communities, and society. Specifically, RCDSB schools will allocate resources to enhance collections of learning materials to be more reflective of our diverse populations in our county, province, Canada and the globe. This includes consideration of representation, access, ability, interest, student voice and other factors that influence how students engage with resources based on their identity and lived experience. This should not just be an additive approach. Rather, school leaders and educators should be actively reviewing, no longer using and ultimately removing those resources that are biased, inaccurate, or otherwise harmful.

ANTI-OPPRESSION EDUCATION; CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND RELEVANT PEDAGOGIES

The principles of Culturally Responsive & Relevant Pedagogy ask educators to cultivate a socio-cultural consciousness. "Culturally responsive educators understand their position in our present social, historical and political context; through questioning their own attitudes, behaviors and beliefs, they come to terms with forms of discrimination which can affect the experiences of students and families in multiple ways." (EDU) Without a socio-cultural perspective of historical power and systemic bias, we continue to marginalize some students and families based on identity, and can create classroom climates that are not inclusive, positive or safe for all students. Using an anti-oppression lens requires us to disrupt and dismantle systems of oppression such as sexism, racism, heterosexism, ableism and classism.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

The purpose of the following questions is for educators to reflect upon a collection of resources used across a specific grouping (eg: a collection of resources used within a classroom, a division, a department, a library or a school). Questions have been adapted from [Harmony Movement](#) and the [Canadian School Libraries](#) organization. When reviewing the collection of resources, please consider the following:

WHO IS REPRESENTED?

- Does it include mostly dominant or non-dominant identities? (non-dominant or marginalized identities would include racialized and Indigenous peoples; women in non-traditional roles; 2SLGBTQI+ people; people of diverse faiths; people with disabilities and other underrepresented groups)
- Do resources represent, engage and connect with the students and communities we serve?

HOW ARE THEY REPRESENTED?

- Are these identities presented in an authentic way (i.e. with voice and agency; in empowering ways; by acknowledging complexity within a social identity group etc.); or in an incomplete or inauthentic way (i.e. in stereotypical or biased representations; tokenism; etc.)?
- Do resources reinforce or disrupt stereotypes?
- Do character representations reflect the interconnectedness of social categorization (i.e. race, ability, identity, power) or are they one-dimensional?
- Are the diverse characters portrayed in the role of protagonist or are they simply individuals being 'saved' or 'helped'? Do resources present a variety of narratives and perspectives to ensure groups are viewed as complex and not monolithic.

WHO IS NOT REPRESENTED?

- In the context of a single resource, which voices are missing?
- In the context of a larger collection, this question becomes a powerful driver to work towards equitable representation and authorship. There is an imperative to ensure that the collection of resources (classroom/department/course/school) we present/offer is varied, diverse and culturally relevant.

WHO HAS POWER? WHAT KINDS OF POWER DO THEY HAVE?

- Who has power, privilege and voice in the resource? How might this reinforce or challenge marginalization and oppression?

- Does the collection reflect a variety of authentic and complex lived experiences? Is the selection influenced by personal or institutional perspectives, biases, filters or privileges?
- Do resources empower and reflect student voice and choice?

WHAT IMPACT DO THESE REPRESENTATIONS HAVE ON STUDENTS?

- Is this resource representative of the diversity of the school and community? Which of your current students and their families would see themselves represented?
- Does the resource present an accurate and complete representation? Does it present global perspectives?
- Will students see themselves authentically represented in this resource? Will the resource expand students' worldview?

DATES OF PUBLICATION?

- In the collection you are reviewing, what publication dates are represented? Has anything in this collection been published in the last 10 years?
- For Indigenous resources, anything published before 2012 needs careful consideration based on language and content. We must include a conversation about terminology and how we are constantly learning more about what is the most respectful. We always endeavor to use the most appropriate term to refer to any person or group of people.
- Does the resource reflect current legislative and policy requirements?

WHO IS WRITING/ILLUSTRATING THE RESROUCE?

- Do the voices of the author/illustrator contribute to the authenticity of the narrative?
- Are resources written/illustrated by voices from the community being represented?

DOES THE COLLECTION ENSURE EQUITY OF ACCESS?

- Are a variety of reading levels, representing diverse characters and stories available for selection?
- Are a variety of resource available? (audiobook, ebooks, large print)
- Is age or grade level being used to prevent younger children from being exposed to diverse topics and characters?
- Does language play a role in creating barriers to equitable access of content?

INTENT VS. IMPACT

- Intentionally selecting resources that depict diverse identities in positive and varied ways ensures that students see themselves reflected in the curriculum.
- When choosing resources, educators must be conscious not only of their own pedagogical *intent*, but of the *impact* they have on students. For example, for students who have experienced racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination, resources that use discriminatory language are not neutral, and can cause harm in our classrooms. **Some of the resources that are currently required reading in our schools, employ language that perpetuate systems of oppression (eg: racism, heterosexism) and can do harm by their inaccurate, inauthentic or incomplete portrayals of racialized and/or marginalized identity groups.** Culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, including an awareness of trauma-informed practices are crucial. (eg: creating safe spaces, recognizing reactions may arise based on lived experiences, RCDSB Lead with Care (Tier 1) strategies)
- We must also be cognizant of our institutional power when there is no choice given to students to read or be assessed on their knowledge of a resource that may be harmful to them. Providing student choice in which students see themselves, educators will find their students to be more engaged and better able to interact more deeply with what they are reading.

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES & CONTEXTS

- Introduce multiple perspectives on a topic or issue to your students and provide opportunities for students to construct their own knowledge, respond to resources, and engage in critical discussions. When we share only one perspective, it becomes the sole authority for the topic being studied, and students may come away with a biased or inaccurate narrative. Introducing a diverse range resources helps to ensure that what students are learning about the world is more accurate and balanced.
- Educators have a responsibility to frame concepts and events with multiple historical and contemporary contexts and consider how they apply to global issues and realities.

INTENTIONAL PURCHASING TO SUPPORT DIVERSE REPRESENTATION & AUTHORSHIP

- School administrators and educators must invest in building resource collections that are reflective of diverse identities and perspectives. School leaders are strongly encouraged to put into place structures for all members of the school community to respond to resources used in the school, and to access funds to replace existing resources.

- Community partnerships should be considered particularly when they have put together resource or buying guides. Remember there is diversity even within any given community. For example, Ojibwe and Iriquois do not have the same history and Trans individuals may have had different lived experiences than non binary people. In addition, the RCDSB Indigenous Education and Equity, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression Departments can support. Please note: RCDSB has a similar document with examples related specifically to Indigenous Education.
- If a resource is about a certain group of people, those people must have been consulted in the creation of the resource or be the authors of that resource. We must move away from resources that have been put together by people outside of the community they represent (eg: Indigeous issues being written about from a non-Indigenous perspective, Black history being written about from a Non-Black perspective, gender issues being written about from a cis-gender perspective).
- As schools purchase new resources and critically examine existing resources, educators should not only review the diversity, accuracy, and equity of representation, but also of authorship. It is important to purchase books by authors who represent a diverse range of identities and lived experiences.
- Choose fictional resources that show diverse characters in diverse narratives. Avoid resources that reinforce stereotypes or are tokenistic.
- Non-fiction resources should represent the contributions of diverse groups considering aspects of identity such as race, ethnicity, ability, faith, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity and intersectionality.

WHEN REVIEWING OR 'WEEDING' THROUGH A COLLECTION OF RESOURCES

- Take stock and be aware of our own positionality and biases
- Acknowledge and remove resources that silence and misrepresent people and communities in the past and present
- Remove resources that engage in cultural appropriation and/or represent marginalized identities in a 'deficit lense'.
- Additional tool for doing so: [Equity Informed Weeding](#)

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [How to Navigate Your Privilege](#)
- [Wheel of Power & Privilege](#)
- [Intersectionality: What it is and why it matters](#)
- [Diversity Book Finder](#)
- [Canadian School Libraries: Recommended Booklist and Review Sites](#)



**The RCDSB Equity, Anti-Racism
& Anti-Oppression and RCDSB
Indigenous Education
Departments are available for
Support.**