



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING


GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** October 29, 2020

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors

**FROM:** Venessa A. Keesler, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent  
Division of Educator, Student, and School Supports 

**SUBJECT:** Tools for Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials

Believing in the ability of Michigan schools to uplift a community of diverse ideas that recognize and celebrate all the attributes that form children and hold true to the ideal that we are all created equal, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is highlighting tools to support districts in reviewing their curricular materials for greater inclusivity and less bias.

Michigan's 832 local school districts and 56 intermediate school districts can uphold the public's trust by fostering understanding, acceptance, respectful civic discourse, and inclusion among our students.

Textbooks, trade books, articles, novels, lessons, assignments, assessments, posters, and other media used in the classroom can provide opportunities and resources for students to understand their own identities and the identities of others. When children see their personal lives depicted in the characters and stories of curricular materials, they feel their own worth validated at school and in society.<sup>1</sup> It is important for district leaders and educators to understand the bias that may exist in these materials, which will inform how students can be engaged with the curricula.

In partnership with The Comprehensive Center Network Region 8, MDE is providing the following report: [Tools and Guidance for Evaluating Bias in Instructional Materials](#). Districts may use this report to identify tools and rubrics that will assess bias in local standards and curricular materials.

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<sup>1</sup> Stringfellow, L. (2019, August 4). *Sustaining readers through culturally responsive instruction*. National Association of Independent Schools. <https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-teacher/spring-2019/sustaining-readers-through-culturally-responsive-literacy-instruction/>

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The materials reviewed in this report provide insights into critical questions or approaches that ensure students will encounter materials that include and reflect a diversity of perspectives, narratives, and histories. The report unpacks findings from a scan of available resources. Additionally, it provides insight into whether the available resource is a tool (can be used as it stands) or a guidance document (is instructional and informative to the evaluation process).

For additional questions regarding the Michigan Department of Education's efforts, please contact Dr. Paula Daniels, director of MDE's office of educational supports, at [DanielsP1@michigan.gov](mailto:DanielsP1@michigan.gov).

cc: Michigan Education Alliance  
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors