Exercise: Address Important Questions About Access

An educator's job entails creating an inclusive environment in which students appreciate differences. Literacy can serve as a vehicle for expanding students' thinking and exposing them to the richness of the world. Through culturally responsive texts, they experience people, places, and situations perhaps previously unfamiliar to them. Engage in a discussion with your team to determine how you can all make classrooms more inclusive and literacy materials more diverse and culturally authentic.

Use the following questions to guide this exercise.

- Do we send unintended messages about student identities through our day-to-day instructional practices? If so, how might we reconsider our actions or words?

- Does our team exclude students from rigorous learning opportunities? Which students are pulled out and do not participate in grade-level classroom instruction as others do, and why do they not? How can we improve this situation?

- How can we positively shift our collective mindset and language we use when referring to students who need something different? What language can we adopt that shows an asset-based orientation?

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- Do the resources that we select, or that we are asked to use, authentically reflect the demographics of students in our classrooms? Do the resources show a balanced representation of students in our classrooms?

- Do the resources reflect diverse perspectives and experiences of others? Or, do the texts predominantly reflect one perspective? If they do, how can we positively adjust our plans to be more inclusive?

- How do we know our resources support diverse cultural experiences? Have we engaged with an ally of that demographic background? Have we considered the author of the text and to what degree the author's experience is authentic?

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