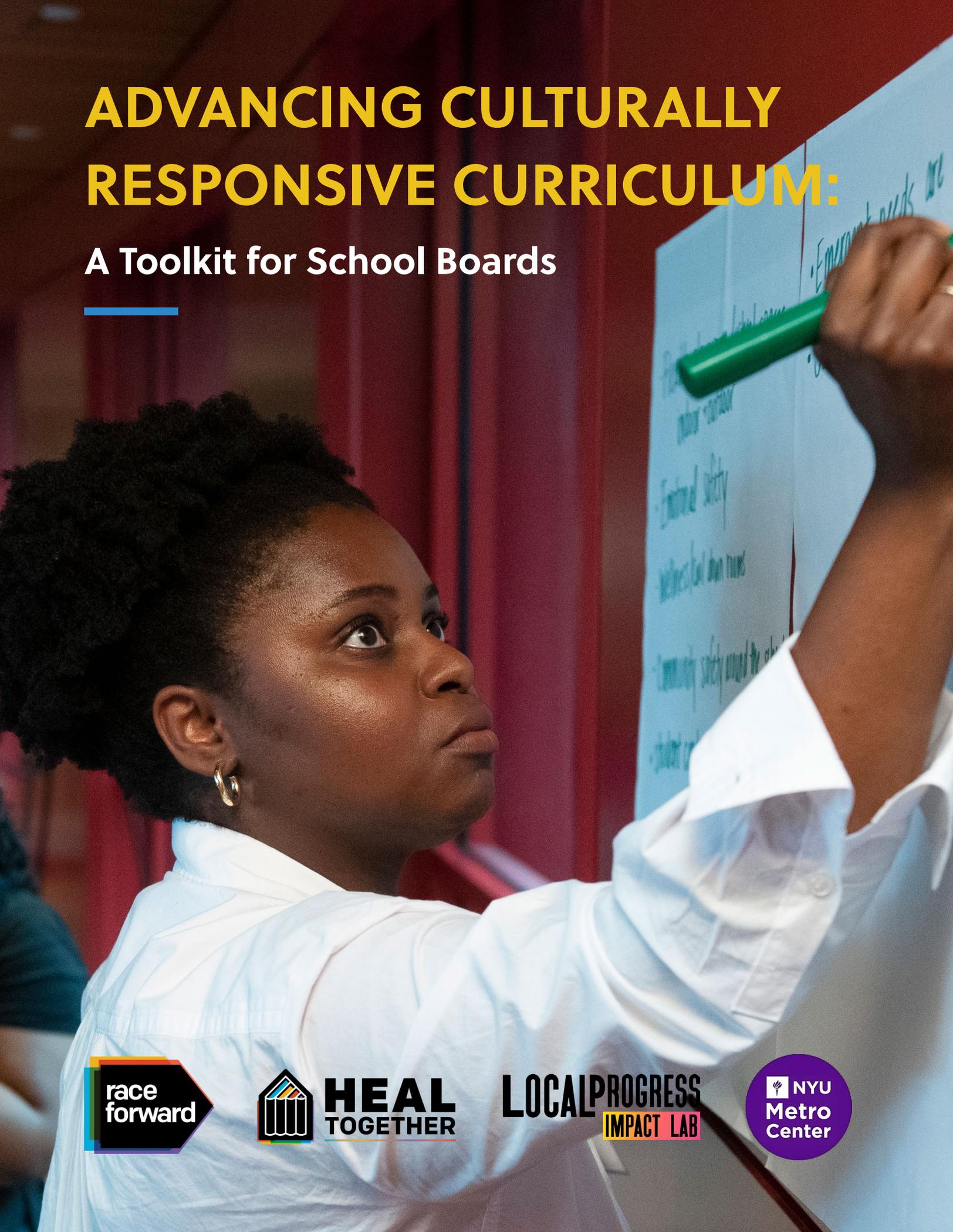


# ADVANCING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM:

## A Toolkit for School Boards



**HEAL  
TOGETHER**

**LOCAL PROGRESS  
IMPACT LAB**



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## Key



Digestible knowledge



Useful definitions



Readings



Resources



Questions to ask your board



Connecting resources



Reflection Questions

Please note that this toolkit is in its first version, which some call a “beta.” Input is welcome for future revisions, additions, and improvements. Contact [info@localprogress.org](mailto:info@localprogress.org) to provide feedback and additional resources.

## Glossary and Terms<sup>17</sup>

Race-related terms are continually evolving as understandings and social conditions change. For a more comprehensive list of race-related terms, we recommend the [Race Forward Glossary of Terms](#).

Term	Acronym	Definition
<b>Culturally responsive education</b>	<b>CRE</b>	The deliberate recognition and inclusion of all forms of student diversity as a pool of resources from which curriculum, instruction, and all aspects of school policy should be designed and with which they should align in order to maximize engagement, participation, growth, and achievement for all students in their educational settings and broader communities.
<b>Culturally responsive and sustaining education</b>	<b>CRSE</b>	CRSE expands the concept of CRE to include that schools should actively nourish and sustain the cultural identities and experiences of students and families, so that students gain knowledge and pride in their identities.
<b>Curriculum</b>		The term curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program. Curriculum typically refers to the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the <b>learning standards</b> or <b>learning objectives</b> they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course; and the tests, assessments, and other methods used to evaluate student learning.
<b>Grade-Level, Engaging, Affirming, and Meaningful</b>	<b>GLEAM</b>	Grade-Level, Engaging, Affirming, and Meaningful (GLEAM) is a framework used in education to describe instructional materials or learning experiences that are appropriate for the designated grade level, captivating for students, supportive of their identities and backgrounds, and relevant to their lives. These materials or experiences are designed to meet the academic standards while also fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment.  <a href="#">GLEAM is defined and trademarked by UnboundEd</a>

Term	Acronym	Definition
High quality instructional materials	HQIM	<p>High quality instructional materials refer to educational resources, such as textbooks, digital content, lesson plans, and supplementary materials, that are well-designed, accurate, engaging, and aligned with educational standards. These materials should effectively support teaching and learning, promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and accommodate diverse learning needs and backgrounds.</p> <p>States and districts across the country are focusing on materials that have been rigorously reviewed and deemed high-quality by <a href="#">EdReports</a>, the leading third-party curriculum reviewer (or, in Louisiana, by a Tier 1 designation). EdReports defines high-quality instructional materials as materials that are <b>closely aligned to rigorous standards</b> and <b>easy to use</b>.</p>
Term		Definition
Race		A social construct used to group people. Race was constructed as a hierarchal human-grouping system, generating racial classifications to identify, distinguish and marginalize some groups across nations, regions, and the world. Race divides human populations into groups often based on physical appearance, social factors, and cultural backgrounds.
Ethnicity		A social group who identify with each other based on a shared culture, religion, language, background, experiences, or other perceived shared attributes.
Culture		A collective set of values, beliefs, language, communication, and practices shared by a group.
Gender		Socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for a person’s biological sex.
Gender Identity		A person’s internal sense of being male, female, a blend of both, or neither.
Gender Expression		The way a person chooses to present their gender to others through physical appearance and behaviors, such as style of hair, dress, voice, or movement
Sexual Orientation		Refers to a person’s sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the behavior and/or social affiliation that may result from this attraction
Disability		A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more life activities as defined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation or a child in need of special education and related services as defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (“IDEA”).
Access		The elimination of all barriers that contribute to inequities relating to resources; qualified teachers; leaders; support staff; funding; technology; adequate facilities; equipment; quality education materials; challenging and creative courses; programs; and extracurricular activities.

Term	Definition
<b>Disproportionality</b>	The over-representation of a specific group in special education programs or disciplinary outcomes relative to the presence of this group in the overall student population, and/or the under-representation of a specific group in accessing intervention services, resources, programs, rigorous curriculum, and instruction relative to the presence of this group in the overall student population.
<b>Equity</b>	Each student has what they need to: (1) define and experience their own success, (2) experience joy in learning every day, and (3) see themselves reflected in the content of their learning, as well as the educators who serve them. It provides a climate in school that attends to race, ethnicity, language, culture, gender identity & expression, sexual orientation, religion, (dis)ability, weight, and socioeconomic status.
<b>Equity lens</b>	A process for analyzing or diagnosing the impact of the design and implementation of policies on marginalized individuals and groups, and to identify and potentially eliminate inequities.
<b>Cultural competence</b>	A set of values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices within a system, organization, program or among individuals which enables them to understand and respect values, attitudes, and beliefs that differ across cultures.
<b>Diversity</b>	Differences in social identities to include, but not limited to race; culture; language; ethnicity; color; religion; national origin; mental and physical ability; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; weight; economic status; and learning styles.
<b>Inclusion</b>	The process by which all students, families, and staff members feel valued, respected, appreciated, and involved and they see their unique identities reflected in all facets of the learning environment including staffing, curriculum, instruction, and activities.
<b>Historically marginalized</b>	Groups and communities that historically and systematically been denied access to services, resources, and power relationships, which has resulted in social inequities.
<b>Structural or Institutional Barrier</b>	Policies, practices, and other societal norms that benefit the dominant group, while systemically dis-advantaging marginalized groups.
<b>Dominant Group</b>	A social group that holds the greatest power and authority in society and determines how that power and authority may be acceptably used. Whether it is reflected in determining who gets the best jobs, whose history will be taught in school, or whose relationships will be validated by society, the dominant group has the greatest influence in determining the structure of the society.
<b>Structural/Systemic Racism</b>	A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other societal norms work in various ways to perpetuate racial group inequity.

Term	Definition
<b>Restorative Justice Practices</b>	Practices that empower students to resolve conflicts through inclusive processes, with a focus on repairing the harm and building interpersonal relationships within the school setting.
<b>Deficit Narratives</b>	Teachings that denigrate marginalized groups while elevating the dominant group and justifies systemic inequities and oppression that marginalized groups face.
<b>Anti-Racism</b>	A process of actively opposing racism and promoting racial equality through education and advocacy with the intent of changing oppressive systems, structures, policies, practices, and attitudes that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.
<b>Microaggression</b>	Microaggressions are the everyday slights, insults, put-downs, invalidations, and offensive behaviors that target individuals based on their marginalized group membership.
<b>Privilege</b>	An unearned advantage that favors and benefits members of certain social groups at the expense of other social groups.
<b>Intersectionality</b>	An analytical framework for understanding how an individual's various social identities intersect to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.
<b>Implicit Bias</b>	A form of bias that affects one's understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

# I. Understanding Culturally Responsive Curriculum



When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part.

— *Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop*



Culturally responsive education (CRE) is an instructional approach that respects and reflects students' cultural identities and prepares them to meet academic standards and excel in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. A culturally responsive curriculum in K-12 public schools must be grade-level and standards-aligned; integrate diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds in ways that ensure relevance and accessibility for all students; challenge students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills by engaging deeply with subject matter; and develop students' understanding of the world.

The pursuit of culturally responsive education and ethnic studies in K-12 education in the US is not new, spanning more than two centuries. From New York's African Free Schools in the early 1800s to Carter G. Woodson's scholarship in the early 1900s to the Indigenous language schools in the South Dakotas and the East LA Chicano walkouts of the 1960s, students, parents and educators of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds have always worked to ensure that their cultures, histories, and legacies are accurately represented in the curriculum.

## What are the evidence-based impacts of Culturally Responsive Education?<sup>1</sup>



- Increases academic engagement
- Improves attendance
- Increases graduation rates
- Increases civic engagement
- Increases positive self-image and self definition
- Increases critical consciousness

Curriculum not only prepares students to meet academic standards, it shapes students' understanding of the world.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the stories and books, the classroom activities, assignments and discussion questions in the curriculum play a vital role in preparing students (or not) for engagement in a diverse society. Through the content and skills students acquire, curriculum both reflects and shapes cultural norms and behaviors in the next generations.

Yet too many of the United States public school curricula do not reflect student populations or the diverse world that exists; most curricula still heavily rely on predominantly white, Eurocentric narratives. These narratives greatly shape how students perceive and interpret themselves and the world around them. In a country where the [growing majority](#) of public school students are students of color,<sup>3</sup> there is an urgent need for schools to embrace a curriculum that is rich in diversity, perspective, and cultural representation.

School boards can play a pivotal role and meet this urgent need to ensure that students are exposed to a curriculum that respects and reflects their identities. School districts are facing a political climate in which numerous states have passed bills restricting discussions of students' identities in classrooms and instances of classroom censorship are on the rise. In this climate, school board members wield significant power in resisting and reversing these trends.<sup>4</sup>

▶ For an example of how school board members are doing so, see the case study on Gwinnett County, Georgia down below.

To aid school board members in this endeavor, Local Progress Impact Lab and HEAL Together have collaborated to create this toolkit, offering guidance on how to initiate the necessary steps for advancing a culturally responsive curriculum.



**Culture is not only about the celebration, dress, and food traditions of different groups; it is a complex set of values, worldviews, ways of thinking, knowing, expressing oneself, communicating, and relating to others. — Education Justice Research and Organizing Coalition, NYU Metro Center**



### Culturally Responsive Education:<sup>5</sup>

Culturally responsive education (CRE) refers to the combination of teaching, pedagogy, curriculum, theories, attitudes, practices, and instructional materials that center students' culture, identities, and contexts throughout educational systems. Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay's scholarship is foundational to culturally responsive education. CRE is built on the three pillars of:

- 1 academic achievement, or students doing well in a range of school subjects;
- 2 cultural competence, or understanding and respecting people from different places and backgrounds; and
- 3 critical consciousness, or thinking about what's happening in the world and the reasons behind how the world works, especially as related to inequities.<sup>6</sup>

Traditional learning environments often focus on white, middle-class, and heteronormative ways of life, which can make it harder for Black and Brown students to feel welcomed, safe, and part of the school community, especially when most of their teachers are white and come from different cultural backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> This type of environment can make it difficult for students of color to thrive socially and academically. For school board members and parents, it's important to understand this so we can make classrooms welcoming and fair for every student, no matter their background.

When we prioritize racial equity, we acknowledge and actively work against the historical and ongoing inequities that disproportionately affect students of color. By integrating racial equity and CRE, we ensure that all students receive an education that respects and reflects their cultural identities, promotes their academic success, and empowers them to challenge and change unjust systems. This approach not only benefits students of color but enriches the learning environment for all students, including white students, fostering a more inclusive, just, and empathetic school and society. It is essential for school board members and parents to

understand that centering racial equity is not only about correcting past injustices but about building a stronger, more cohesive educational community where every student has the opportunity to thrive.

Ladson-Billings' framework shows how curriculum cannot be high-quality without being culturally responsive; and curriculum cannot be culturally responsive without being high-quality. In addition to teaching grade-level content and college and career-ready standards, high-quality instructional materials accomplish so much for students. High-quality instructional materials:

- 1 represent students' identities and histories;
- 2 ground the purpose of academic concepts and skills in students' everyday lives; and
- 3 guide teachers to make authentic, home-school connections.

Materials that do not address these factors are incomplete and do not fully meet the needs of culturally, ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse students.





## Suggested Readings

### ...❖ [Equity Literacy: More Than Celebrating Diversity](#)

A resource that addresses equity literacy and frames an understanding for how school districts approach diversity and inclusion with more intentionality.

### ...❖ [Reimagining School Board Leadership: Actions for Equity — Supplemental Guide Starting the Conversation](#)

A guide on how to address the impact of systemic racism in the US with a focus on equitable access to education for every student. Provides a “Questions for Boards to Ask Supplemental Guide” on how school boards can engage in conversations to drive this work forward.

### ...❖ [Peers and Pedagogy](#)

Peers and Pedagogy is a space for educators and those who support educators to share experiences, ideas, best practices, and challenges around what it means to ensure all students thrive academically and emotionally. The blog specifically focuses on supporting students’ learning through equitable classroom practice, instructional materials, and professional learning and interpersonal connections.

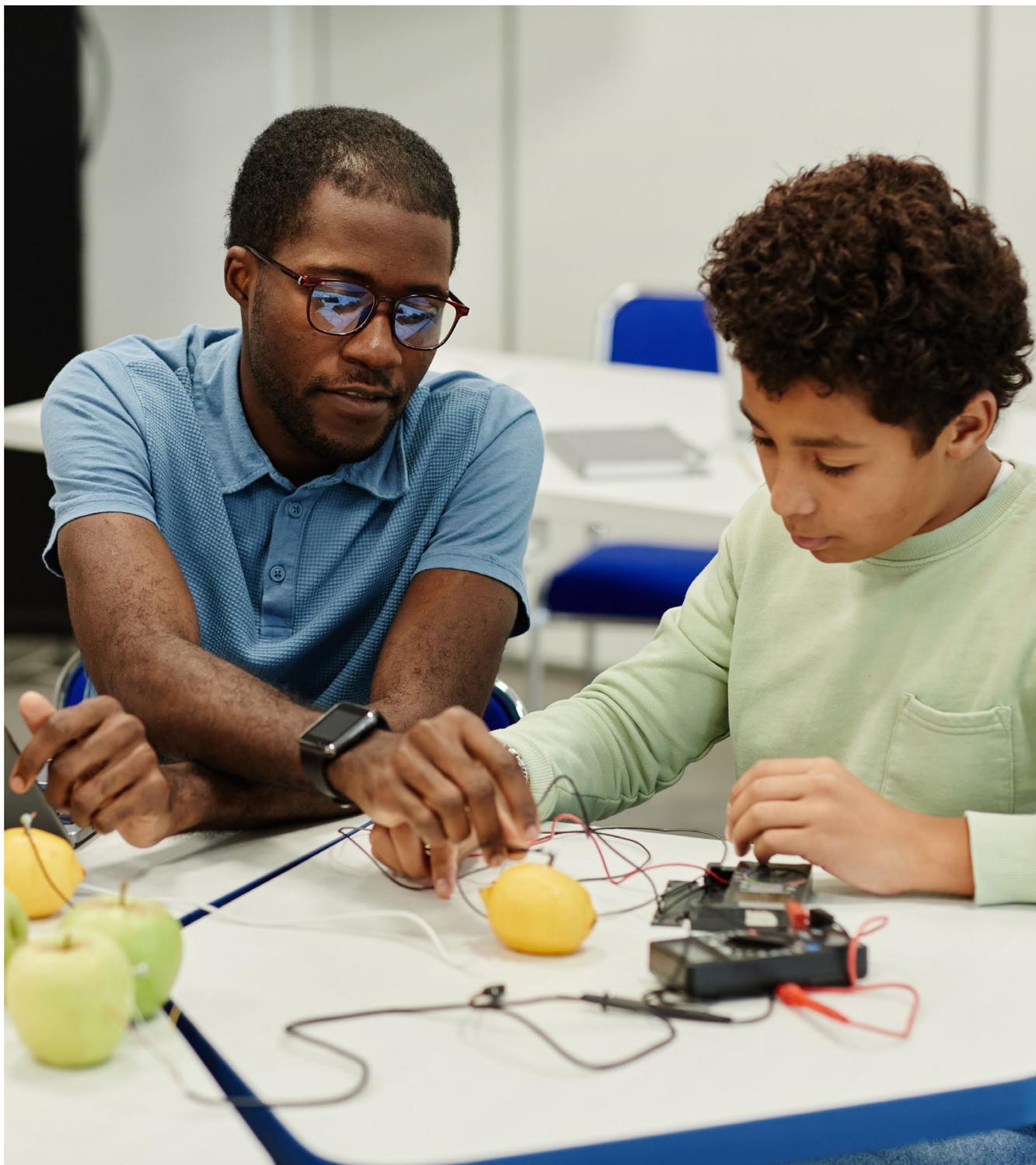


## Relevant Videos

- [Our Culture, Our Schools — Culturally Responsive Education in New York City](#)  
NYC parents, teachers, and students introduce the meaning and impact of Culturally Responsive Education.
- [Relearning History, Telling New Stories](#)  
How does representation (or a lack thereof) in curricula affect the way children view themselves? Two authors talk about how they ensure the stories of today are a more accurate illustration of history, truth, and lived experience.
- [The Power of Tribal History/ Shared History](#)  
Learn about Senate Bill 13, which authorizes the Oregon Department of Education to develop a statewide curriculum on the Native American experience in Oregon.
- [Practicing Culturally Responsive Education](#)  
Current and former teachers share their experience learning and practicing culturally responsive education in their classrooms and beyond.
- [Being Culturally Responsive as a White Teacher](#)  
Educator Erin Dunlevy shares what it means to be an ally who is responsive to community needs and honor community voices.
- [4 Ways to Elevate Cultural Responsiveness in a Materials Adoption](#)  
Dr. Jessica Faith Carter offers districts best practices for prioritizing cultural responsiveness when selecting new materials.

While curriculum is the subject of this toolkit, it's important to acknowledge that culturally responsive practices encompass many facets beyond curriculum—such as professional learning, retaining diverse educators, and positive

discipline practices—some of which might be more pertinent to your district's needs. This toolkit references additional resources in these areas, which can help to advance a holistic approach to fostering equity within educational settings.



## II. Getting Started with CRE Curriculum

The following sections identify a few ways that school board members who want to advance culturally responsive curriculum in their districts can do so.

### The Important Role of School Board Leadership

School boards are charged with ensuring the academic and social-emotional development of their districts' students, but are not directly responsible for the day-to-day operations of the schools in their districts. School boards approve curriculum but they typically do not write or identify appropriate curriculum materials for the district. School boards can evaluate how well superintendents implement equity-based policies and professional development goals for staff, but do not directly manage how those policies or goals are met. These restrictions on how school boards can be involved in the operations of their districts' public schools means that they must use creative strategies to advance culturally responsive curriculum.

No school board member can act alone in implementing any policy or practice in their district — no matter how important. Individual school board members must work together with their community, district leadership, educators, and other members of the school board in order to advance culturally responsive education.

School board members should be aware that there is no perfect, ready-to-go culturally responsive curriculum that districts can purchase. Major national curriculum publishers spend millions on writing curriculum every year, but have not prioritized culturally responsive approaches. To enhance culturally responsive teaching, educational leaders employ the strategies described in the image below from the New America report [Promising Strategies for State and District Leaders](#).

#### Off-the shelf

A district or school adopts a nationally available curriculum as a "turnkey" option with minimal modifications or supplements.



#### Hybrid

A district or school adopts a nationally available curriculum and localizes it with support of educators, curriculum experts, students, families, and other members of the school community.



#### Place-Based

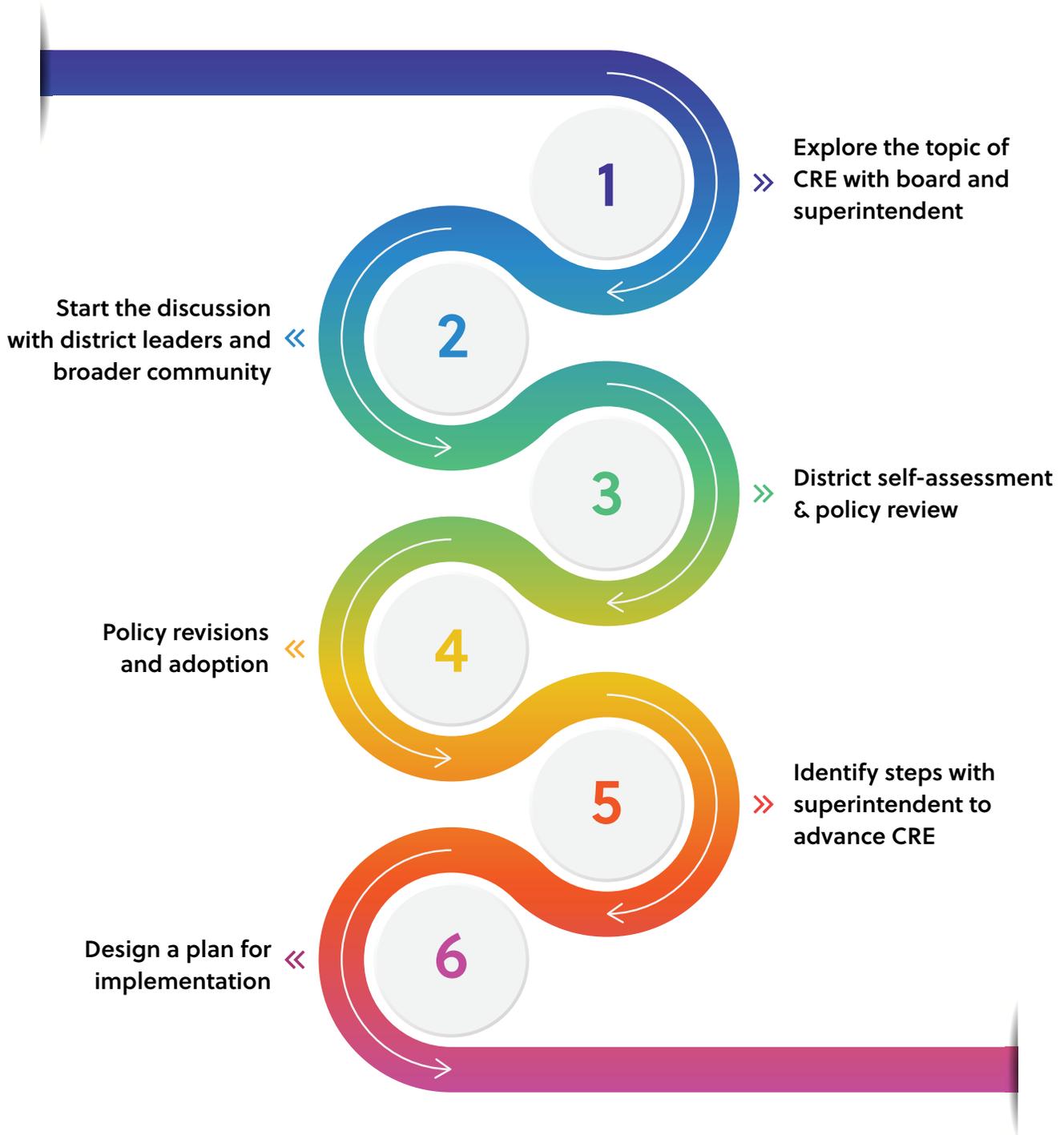
A district or school develops a locally rooted curriculum with the support of educators, curriculum experts, students, families, and other members of the school community.



*Source: Developed by New America based on insights from interviews with system leaders.*

The [graphic above](#) illustrates how districts use a spectrum of strategies for delivering culturally responsive resources to teachers. At one end, leaders use "off the shelf" materials, while at the other, they support the creation of locally rooted curricula through community input. In the middle, leaders adapt and supplement commercial core curricula. All of these require significant investment of time, leadership and resources from the school district, and usually involve working with the Curriculum Director, Curriculum Committee, stakeholders, and a team of educators who receive additional pay or release time to adapt and write curriculum.

## 6 Steps Towards Advancing CRE



The diagram above is a roadmap for how school board members can begin advancing CRE in their district. Start with Step 1 and use the questions starting on [page 18](#) to help guide your exploration. Note that depending on your district and community — and how much support you have from each— the order of the steps might change.

## STEP 1. EXPLORE THE TOPIC OF CRE WITH BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT



To gain widespread support for CRE, building trust is key. One-on-one conversations can help. Individual school board members cannot make decisions for the board, so if they want to introduce a topic for consideration by the board and district leaders, they must begin with one-on-one conversations to explore interest. A good place to start is to ask the superintendent for a one-on-one meeting to discuss CRE. In preparation, the interested school board member should come ready with information about the benefits of CRE and be prepared to answer questions.

During these exploratory meetings, it is important to build understanding that culturally responsive education and high-quality instruction are deeply connected to each other. A culturally responsive curriculum is not sufficient if it is not also aligned to grade-level standards; and a grade-level, standards-aligned curriculum is not sufficient if it is not also culturally responsive. There is much evidence-based research highlighting the positive impact of culturally responsive teaching on student engagement, academic achievement, and overall well-being. By framing the discussion around the benefits of high-quality instructional materials, school board members can encourage decision-makers to prioritize culturally responsive curriculum because it will foster a more rigorous, inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students.

### A few good resources to review beforehand are:

- [What is Culturally Responsive Teaching?](#)
- [Valuing Student Experiences: An Introduction to Culturally Responsive Education](#)
- [Implementing District and School Policies and Practices to Support Culturally Responsive Pedagogy](#)

After meeting with the superintendent — and if they are in agreement about the importance of exploring CRE as a district — a board member may want to ask the board to discuss the topic during a school board meeting, in order to share benefits to students and respond to questions. Invite community members and educators who are well-versed in CRE to offer public comment and answer questions. If after these exploratory conversations the board and superintendent are open to implementing CRE, a formal process of engaging the broader community can begin (see Step 2 below). If neither the superintendent nor the school board are receptive to the idea, school board members can use some of these same steps to collaborate with the community to elevate the positive benefits and build district support over time.

## STEP 2. START THE DISCUSSION WITH DISTRICT LEADERS AND BROADER COMMUNITY

District-wide changes that have budgetary and curricular implications like CRE require broad buy-in, so it is crucial to engage the broader community — parents, students, educators, unions, and other district leaders. A board member can ask the superintendent to present racially disaggregated data on student progress, or share with the board samples of current curricula used in the district. Institutions, whether on purpose or not, can produce outcomes that consistently favor or disadvantage certain racial groups. By reviewing how the district’s policies, programs, and curriculum impact student outcomes and well-being, the board and community can begin to engage with conversations about centering equity.

Some ways to engage families, students, educators, unions and the broader community are:



**Conduct a survey of students,** parents and community members to assess their opinions and priorities for the district’s curriculum.



**Invite community members** to attend an information session hosted by the superintendent to explain the benefits of a culturally responsive curriculum.



**Meet with the local unions of educators,** administrators and school service workers to build relationships and get their input.



**Attend meetings of local community organizations** to build relationships and solicit input on curriculum priorities.



**Engage educators in focus groups or workshops** to gather their perspectives, insights, and suggestions on curriculum priorities and culturally responsive teaching strategies.



**Initiate a demographic audit of the book list,** in collaboration with students and the community, to assess diversity and representation in the curriculum. A demographic audit will give you a rough idea of the *quantity* but not the *quality* of representation — you can use the Recommended Tools for Curriculum Review referenced on page 14 to assess quality and depth of cultural responsiveness in the curriculum.

It is important to collect input from multiple diverse constituencies, to identify champions, skeptics, and issues to address. For example, collecting testimonials from students about the lack of representation of their identities in the curriculum, and the impact that has on them, can help make the case for a culturally responsive curriculum.

▶ **For a resource list on how and why student perspective is vital, see our page 48 on Engaging Student Leadership.**

Some districts bring in consultants or organizational partners to help with this process.

▶ **For a list of helpful contacts, see our list on page 50 with suggested consultants and organizations to work with.**



## Ensuring Accessibility in School Board Outreach

### **Offer Multiple Opportunities:**

- Provide various avenues for engagement such as town hall meetings, community forums, online surveys, and social media platforms.
- Schedule events at different times of the day to accommodate varying schedules of community members, including evenings and weekends.

### **Convenient Locations:**

- Host meetings and events in easily accessible locations within the community, such as schools, community centers, or libraries.
- Consider rotating meeting locations to reach different neighborhoods and demographics.

### **Go to Their Turf:**

- Engage with the community on their home turf by attending local events, neighborhood gatherings, and cultural celebrations.
- Collaborate with community organizations and leaders to facilitate outreach efforts and build trust.

### **Translation and Childcare:**

- Provide translation services in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity for non-English speaking residents.
- Offer childcare services or reimbursements to alleviate barriers for parents and caregivers attending meetings.

### **Avoid Jargon:**

- Communicate in clear, plain language without the use of technical or educational jargon.
- Provide educational materials and resources that are easily understandable by all members of the community.

By implementing these strategies, school board members can effectively reach out to the community in an accessible way, fostering transparency, inclusivity, and collaboration in decision-making processes.

## STEP 3: DISTRICT SELF-ASSESSMENT & POLICY REVIEW

Doing a self-assessment and policy review can help the board gain an understanding of the assets, allies, challenges and gaps to be addressed. Below are some suggestions for how to do that.

### 3a. Know Your Community

Boards are responsible for creating and sustaining connections between major stakeholder groups. Building genuine relationships with community groups can help facilitate a deeper understanding of what the school district needs, informed by those most directly impacted.



#### Know Your Community — Questions for board members to ask

What is the socioeconomic status and racial/ethnic makeup of your student body?

Does your school board reflect the socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic makeup, and other diversities of your student body?

Do your district's parent organizations reflect the diversity of your student body?

Who are your district and community experts and leaders in diversity, equity and culturally responsive education? If you do not have any, who can you collaborate with? (It could be individuals or organizations.)

Some questions are drawn from the National School Board Association on [Reimagining School Board Leadership: Actions for Equity, 2021](#)



Keeping people isolated and disconnected and questioning their own instincts is a way to keep them disempowered. One of the fundamentals of organizing is bringing people together to let them know they're not alone. When people share issues and concerns, they can start building cross-coalitional solidarity. That's the work. — *Zakiyah Ansari, Co-Executive Director for the New York State Alliance for Quality Education and former parent organizer*



### 3b. Know Your Starting Point

Find out whether your district’s educators and administrators have the cultural and racial literacy necessary to effectively implement a culturally responsive curriculum.



#### Know Your Starting Point — Questions for Board members to ask

Do your board, educators, and administrators see the diversity and cultural differences in your student population as an asset?

How would you define “equity” within the context of your board’s operations, and is there a shared understanding of its significance and necessity among members?

Are your board, educators, and administrators familiar with and supportive of a culturally responsive curriculum?

What professional learning have the board, educators and administrators had on topics related to race, culture, and identity, if any?

Does your board actively monitor the outcomes of culturally responsive education? If so, how do you utilize this data to guide decision-making? If not, which board structures could be enhanced to provide greater oversight and inquiry into CRE outcomes?

Some questions are drawn from the National School Board Association on [Reimagining School Board Leadership: Actions for Equity, 2021](#)



### 3c. Know Your Policies

Find out what existing policies can help guide your journey toward a culturally responsive curriculum.



#### **Know Your District Policies** — *Guiding questions to begin the process*

What curriculum does your district use? Is that curriculum mandated throughout the district or do schools/educators have flexibility to choose their curriculum?

Does your district have a diversity/equity statement that articulates commitment to principles that are relevant to a culturally responsive curriculum?

Does your school district have policy statements about the commitment to diverse, culturally responsive education?

Does your school district have a process to periodically review school policies as they relate to cultural responsiveness, in collaboration with the school community?

Does your district have a curriculum or book selection committee?

Does your school district have staff and/or a department focused on equity? If so, are there clear connections between the work of that department and the work of the teaching and learning department?

#### **Know Your State Policies** — *Guiding questions to begin the process*

Does your state department of education have a diversity/equity statement that articulates commitment to principles relevant to a culturally responsive curriculum?

Does your state restrict or prohibit discussion of race, gender, or equity as a whole?

Do your state's curriculum standards include content specific to diverse and marginalized student populations?

Does your state have other policies or guidelines that are relevant to a culturally responsive curriculum?

What is the process and timeline for revision of state curriculum standards?

Some questions are drawn from the National School Board Association on [Reimagining School Board Leadership: Actions for Equity, 2021](#)



### 3d. Know Your Curriculum

Once you know what curriculum your district is using, conducting a demographic analysis of the curriculum or book list is an easy and accessible way to assess whether the curriculum texts reflect the demographics of the student body. This analysis can be a way to engage a diverse group of students, parents and community members in understanding the current curriculum and discussing the strengths and gaps. In recent years, curriculum developers and school districts have increasingly embraced the goal of high-quality instructional materials<sup>8</sup>, often referred to as HQIM. Across various states and districts, there's a growing emphasis on materials that have undergone rigorous evaluation and earned recognition as high-quality, typically assessed by organizations like [EdReports](#). These evaluations assess how curriculum upholds certain educational standards, but do not usually assess for culturally responsiveness. After vetting curriculum on Ed Reports, districts can use the tools suggested below to assess the curriculum for cultural responsiveness.

The first section of the [CRE Curriculum Scorecard](#) or the [Classroom Library Questionnaire](#) below can be used for simple demographic audits, while the other tools are designed for deeper, more comprehensive examinations. Before doing these analyses, it's important to ensure the evaluation committee has a strong, shared understanding of what culturally responsive education is and how it looks in a curriculum. It can be helpful to provide a workshop to ground participants in the foundations of CRE before analyzing curriculum together.

#### Know Your District Curriculum — *Guiding questions to begin the process*

Does your district have to use curriculum from a state-approved list, or do you have the freedom to choose your own curriculum?

If your district has a mandated/recommended curriculum, what is it?

What are your district's procurement guidelines and processes for instructional materials?

If your district does not have the freedom to choose its own curriculum, what is the process for selecting supplemental materials?

Does your district have a process to develop educators' deep understanding of the curriculum, grade-level content and rigor, and engaging pedagogy?



## Recommended Tools for Curriculum Review

- [NYU Metro Center's CRE Curriculum Scorecard](#)  
NYU Metro Center designed this tool to help parents, teachers, students, and community members determine the extent to which their schools' English Language Arts curricula are (or are not) culturally responsive. After you've reviewed curricula using the scorecard, check out next steps, here: [NYU Metro ELA Scorecard Toolkit](#)
- [Lee and Low's Classroom Library Questionnaire](#)  
A short questionnaire that analyzes classroom library book collections and determines where there are strengths and where there are gaps in diversity.
- [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Comprehensive District Self-Assessment](#)  
A CRSE self-assessment designed to support districts to develop and invest in culturally responsive school environments; it includes beliefs, policies, and practices critical to building and fostering culturally responsive and sustaining learning environments. (Pages 16-21 focus on a culturally responsive curriculum.)
- [Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool](#)  
The Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool (IMET) is a tool for evaluating a comprehensive textbook or textbook series for alignment to the shifts and major features of the common core state standards.
- [ELA/Literacy Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool](#)  
This Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool-Quality Review (GIMET-QR) is designed for use by professionals as a framework for evaluating the quality of instructional materials and choosing materials that are best suited to provide a coherent learning experience for students.
- [Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials](#)  
This tool provides guidance in reviewing standards and curricular materials using equity-oriented domains. It also includes a scoring and analysis guide to assist with the evaluation process.



## Useful Readings

- [Embracing Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Instructional Materials — Promising Strategies for State and District Leaders](#)  
This report explains how state and local leaders are taking initial steps to ensure culturally responsive materials are developed and delivered through two core strategies: (1) strengthening adoption processes to identify stronger instructional materials and push curriculum developers to deliver better options; and (2) enhancing existing curricular options by weaving in relevance without abandoning rigor.

The results of these assessments can be used to engage stakeholders and advance culturally responsive curriculum in some of the ways listed below.



Here are ways school board members can utilize data from these assessments:

**Identify Policy Gaps and Areas for Improvement:** Identify gaps in the district's policies, educator training, and curriculum, and prioritize initiatives to update or revise them.

**Inform Professional Development Initiatives:** Identify professional learning needs for educators and administrators to enhance cultural responsiveness among staff members.

**Engage with the Community:** Build genuine relationships with community members and stakeholders, hold discussions to understand their needs and ensure that their perspectives are reflected in the decision-making process.

**Monitor Progress and Accountability:** Monitor progress over time and hold the board and the district accountable for advancing culturally responsive practices.

- ▶ If you are interested in developing your own policy review or district self-assessment and need support, **please see the list of recommended organizations on pages 50 - 52.**



## STEP 4: POLICY REVISIONS AND ADOPTION

After completing an assessment and policy review, the school board can determine what policies must be developed and adopted in order to advance a culturally responsive curriculum. This may include policies that:

**Develop** the district’s instructional vision, highlighting the importance of investing in a culturally responsive approach

**Affirm** district support for culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy

**Require** that instructional materials be high-quality and culturally responsive

**Include** successful implementation of culturally responsive curriculum in criteria for hiring and evaluating the superintendent

**Establish** practices of community engagement in curriculum review and approval

**Create** a process for periodic review and revision of curriculum



### Sample School District Policies

- [Sample Template for Local Policy](#)  
Provides considerations and guiding principles for local and state policy development for culturally responsive curricula.
- [NYC DOE Definition of Culturally Responsive Education](#)  
New York City Department of Education’s definition of culturally responsive and sustaining education and how schools and districts should engage.
- [Equity Policy](#)  
Policy that highlights culturally responsive curricula as a part of ensuring a welcoming and safe environment for all students in Ossining Union Free School District, New York.
- [Model Policy for Reconsideration of Curricular, Instructional or Library Materials](#)  
This model policy aids school boards in constitutionally justifiable curriculum selection under The Freedom to Read Act, empowering librarians to curate diverse collections with wide latitude.
- [Culturally Responsive Schools and Central Offices Administrative Procedure 0102](#)  
An administrative procedure that outlines specific actions and strategies to support the Board of Education’s commitment to promote and sustain culturally proficient schools, central offices, and school community support systems in Prince George’s County Public Schools, Maryland.
- [Culturally Responsive Practices](#)  
A policy manual for introducing culturally responsive practices in Baraboo, Wisconsin.
- School Board Partners, at the time of publication of this toolkit, has a forthcoming CRE Curriculum Policy Template, which can be found here: [Policy and Resolution Exemplars](#)

Sample policies also taken from [HEAL — Equity Policies Toolkit for School Boards](#)

## STEP 5: IDENTIFY STEPS WITH SUPERINTENDENT TO ADVANCE CRE

Collaborating with your superintendent to establish a Curriculum Committee is a crucial stride in fostering cohesion among community members, students, educators, and administrators to elevate the district's curriculum. This section delves into the intricacies of roles, responsibilities, and best practices for implementing curriculum changes, underscoring the significance of diverse perspectives, professional development, and budget considerations in crafting an inclusive and impactful educational framework that lays the groundwork for integrating a culturally responsive curriculum.

### A. Curriculum Committee

Creating an evaluation curriculum committee stands out as a powerful tool for school board members, facilitating their ability to involve essential stakeholders and cohesive communities in governmental processes. Establishing such a committee offers a chance to foster collaboration among community members, students, educators, unions, and administrators, all with the shared goal of enhancing the district's curriculum. While a school board generally has the authority to sanction curriculum adjustments, it typically cannot provide recommendations for specific materials or resources. This responsibility often falls to the district's curriculum director, who collaborates with the curriculum committee, superintendent, and district leaders to propose changes in curriculum and instruction.

A curriculum committee may consist of educators, parents, students, and district staff. The curriculum committee and curriculum developers should receive clear guidance about the board's and district's vision for a culturally responsive curriculum, and opportunities for professional learning. Carefully and intentionally choosing members to be a part of this committee can deepen awareness around perspectives that are

often overlooked; for example age, gender, ability, ethnicity, and positionality impact interpretations of curriculum. When there is a diverse set of experiences involved in reviewing instructional materials, there are more opportunities for learning which stories get told, which perspectives are shared, and which experiences are portrayed accurately, authentically, and honestly.

▶ **For an example on how choosing diverse perspectives can impact policy and curricular review, please see our Engaging Student Leadership piece on page 44.**

Below is a general guideline of best practices for how curriculum changes are developed:<sup>9</sup>

### Components of an Effective Curriculum Development Process

- ❖❖❖ **Planning:**
  - Convene a curriculum development committee
  - Identify key issues and trends in the content area
  - Assess needs and issues
- ❖❖❖ **Articulating and Developing:**
  - Articulate a K-12 program philosophy
  - Define K-12 program, grade-level and course goals
  - Develop a sequence of grade-level and course objectives
  - Identify resource materials to assist with program implementation
  - Develop and/or identify assessment items and instruments to measure student progress
- ❖❖❖ **Implementing:**
  - Put the new program into practice
- ❖❖❖ **Evaluating:**
  - Update the program
  - Determine the success of the program

## B. Professional Development

Once school boards have identified that CRE is a priority, they can direct the superintendent to develop a comprehensive plan for the district that includes related professional development for educators, district staff, and administrators, and hold the superintendent accountable for implementation. This is important because even the most culturally responsive curriculum, in the hands of someone who is not prepared to teach it, can be harmful. Educators, staff and administrators need ongoing professional learning on curriculum content and rigor, culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy as well as on issues of institutional racism,<sup>10</sup> implicit bias,<sup>11</sup> explicit bias,<sup>12</sup> racism and anti-racism.<sup>13</sup> School boards must do the same for their own peers and take a leadership role in developing safe spaces for district staff to learn and grow.



### Practitioner-Facing Resources

- [Know Yourself, Know Your Students](#)  
Reflective prompts for teachers to consider teachers' own identity and those of their students.
- [Culturally Relevant Reflection Tool](#)  
A resource to prompt reflection while analyzing a lesson or unit.
- [Let's Talk!](#)  
A teacher facing guide to critical conversations with students.



### Resources for Educators on Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

- [Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Reflection Guide](#)  
This resource is intended to support the reflective practice and ongoing learning of culturally responsive teachers. It can help teachers assess their personal strengths and develop a plan to sharpen their practice.
- [Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices](#)  
Learn how the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) defines culturally and linguistically sustaining practices in their schools and classrooms. Examples and resources are provided to support this work.
- [A Guide to Evidence-Based Practices for Teaching All Students Equitably](#)  
Follow the research on how better teacher preparation is a major factor in solving the problems of underachievement. See how through proper training, teachers learn to bridge the gap between instructional delivery and diverse learning styles.
- [Research and Evidence-Based Best Practices for Preparing Educators for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading](#)  
This resource discusses how teacher preparation programs that successfully train culturally responsive educators attend to preservice teachers' (PSTs) mindsets and dispositions about race and power in schools and broader society.

## C. Budget Decisions

There are many budget implications for curriculum changes — from the purchase of resources and learning materials, to the evaluation of teaching practices, to the hiring and professional development of educators, and more. In many cases, CRE-related curriculum changes may be incorporated into existing budget categories, such as ongoing professional development or planned curriculum purchases. School boards may also need to consider where the district is in the state's funding cycle (if they are in a textbook adoption state),<sup>14</sup> and what trade-offs they must make to accommodate CRE implementation.

Budgeting practices that encourage input from the district and wider community — such as [participatory budgeting](#) — can help ensure that stakeholders are providing the school board and the superintendent with guidance about how to incorporate CRE-related budget expenditures. Regardless of the method, a school board will want to ensure that they are frequently communicating about the budgeting process to the public, and soliciting input along the way.



## STEP 6: DESIGN A PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

After the school board and superintendent have determined how to move forward culturally responsive curriculum, the school board can ask the superintendent to create and share a comprehensive implementation plan. The responsibility for designing and executing these initiatives sits squarely with the superintendent, and the school board is responsible for holding them accountable for execution.

The superintendent's plan for implementation<sup>15</sup> could include steps such as:

Prioritize curriculum offerings that are aligned with culturally responsive education and the district's instructional vision

Develop and implement a plan for ongoing professional learning to help educators adapt curriculum with a culturally responsive lens

Develop and implement a plan for ongoing professional learning for educators and district administrators to explore their biases and deepen understanding of CRE

Negotiate with curriculum developers to ensure that materials purchased by the districts are flexible and openly licensed to the extent possible

Regularly collect and analyze data on educator and student experiences to understand the impact of the curriculum and identify areas for improvement

Ongoing community engagement for buy-in, input and feedback on curriculum

Recognize and promote schools using culturally responsive materials to create positive incentives and support for CRE

Develop district policies that support CRE efforts, including hiring and supporting more educators of color, implementing fair discipline policies, and distributing resources equitably

A school board can also adapt the policy for evaluation of the superintendent so that it aligns with the instructional vision for a culturally responsive curriculum.

### Prepare for resistance and revision

Dealing with resistance is a common challenge for school board members, especially when making decisions that may be controversial or unpopular within the community. Based on your community's dynamics, you can make strategic decisions regarding the most effective entry points for conversations about culturally responsive curriculum and how to garner support. In certain districts, emphasizing high-quality instruction with a focus on a culturally responsive curriculum proves most impactful, while others may prioritize reducing the dropout rate, meeting equity mandates, or responding to demographic shifts. Effective strategies include relationship-building, advocacy behind the scenes, collaboration with key stakeholders, and exerting public pressure, all requiring discretion and thoughtful planning to navigate sensitive issues and ensure constructive dialogue and advancement. Here are strategies school board members can utilize to anticipate and address resistance:



### **Strategies for Addressing Resistance:**

- ✓ Foster a culture of continuous engagement by seeking input from the community early in the decision-making process, and making spaces for those who support CRE to be visible and vocal.
- ✓ Actively listen to concerns and incorporate feedback into decision-making whenever possible.

### **Build Relationships:**

- ✓ Identify and recruit support from allies who have credibility and respect in their communities, to validate and explain culturally responsive curriculum
- ✓ Establish strong relationships with community stakeholders, including educators, parents, teachers, and community leaders.
- ✓ Build trust and credibility through consistent and respectful communication.

### **Consistent Messaging:**

- ✓ Maintain consistency in messaging to the public, in order to avoid confusion.
- ✓ Ensure that board members are aligned in their communication and present a united front.
- ✓ Communicate openly and transparently about the goals and expected outcomes behind curriculum decisions and proposed changes.

### **Continuous Evaluation:**

- ✓ Regularly evaluate the impact of decisions and be open to adjusting strategies based on feedback and outcomes.
- ✓ Demonstrate a commitment to ongoing improvement to enhance credibility.
- ✓ Regularly collect and share data on the positive impact of CRE curriculum on students, before and after implementation.

If there is not enough buy-in in your district to advance a culturally responsive curriculum now, there is still plenty that school board members can do to reshape power dynamics and lay the foundation for future alignment. Building strong community allies, increasing understanding of CRE within the district, and identifying and elevating those educators and schools already implementing CRE can help raise consciousness and deepen investment.

Hiring a superintendent with a proven track record of actively engaging with CRE, equity, and belonging, as well as recruiting board members who authentically support these practices can help foster systemic change. Big changes require a long game. Maintain resilient hope and perseverance, and continue to educate and advocate for CRE as a protective factor and academic approach that shapes student achievement and outcomes.

# III. Conclusion and Key Talking Points

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Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of a larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. — *Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop*

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In the ongoing pursuit of an inclusive and equitable education system, the call for culturally responsive education echoes the voices of students and families who have historically advocated for their cultures, histories, and identities to be recognized and celebrated. As school populations grow more diverse and the need for all students to build the skills to navigate a multicultural world, school board members and district leaders can lead the way in creating a more inclusive educational system.

Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's poignant analogy underscores the profound impact of curriculum on students' understanding of themselves and their world. It is a reminder that the stories we tell in schools have far-reaching consequences, influencing cultural norms and shaping the behaviors of future generations. In embracing culturally responsive education, school board members have the opportunity to address systemic issues, dismantle inequities, and combat institutional racism within our society.

## 7 Key Talking Points

Here are 7 key talking points that school board members can use to discuss culturally responsive curriculum with their school community, district administration and colleagues:



### **Understanding Culturally Responsive Curriculum:**

Culturally responsive curriculum values and includes all students' cultural backgrounds in learning, providing them with the tools, skill sets and knowledge to pursue their full potential.



**Positive Impact:** Implementing a culturally responsive curriculum increases students' interest in learning, improves attendance, and prepares students to meet academic standards; it shapes students' understanding of the world.



### **Beneficial Components of Curriculum:**

Beyond the stories and books, the classroom activities, assignments and discussion questions in the curriculum play a vital role in preparing students (or not) for engagement in a diverse society. Learning about different histories, races, and cultures gives students mirrors that reflect their own identities and windows into the world.



**Historical Context:** The push for a culturally responsive curriculum in public education has been ongoing as part of Culturally Responsive Education for over two centuries, aiming to ensure that all students see their cultures and identities reflected and valued in their education, countering a history of exclusion.



### **The Risks of Non-Implementation:**

Without culturally responsive curriculum, we risk perpetuating a cycle of inequality in our schools in which curriculum heavily relies on predominantly white, Eurocentric narratives — instead of reflecting the full range of the student population or the diverse world that students must be prepared to encounter and live in.



**Role of School Boards:** School board members play a crucial role in championing culturally responsive curriculum, shaping an educational environment where curriculum is rich in diversity, perspective, and cultural representation.



### **Community Collaboration and Creativity:**

School communities are successfully moving through challenges like limited resources available, decimated budgets, and traditional ideas about curriculum by taking a collaborative, creative, and highly engaged approach. With community engagement, consistent investment, and capacity-building, culturally responsive curriculum can be successfully implemented in any district.

School board members seeking support can reach out to [info@localprogress.org](mailto:info@localprogress.org).



# IV. Case studies of districts pursuing culturally responsive curriculum

## Culturally Responsive Assessment Practices in Hawai'i: A Case Study

### STATE PROFILE:

State superintendent:  
**KEITH HAYASHI**

Number of students:  
**181,088** 

Number of teachers:  
**12,220** 

Teacher/pupil ratio:  
**1:15** 

Number of schools:  
**294** 

Graduation rate:  
**85%** 

Per-pupil spending:  
**\$16,564** 

### STUDENT BODY DEMOGRAPHICS:

26.1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

25.5% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander

17.6% Hispanic/Latino

11.3% White

1.4% Black/African American

0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native

17.9% of students are two or more races

36.1% of students are eligible to participate in the federal free and reduced price meal program

19.1% of students are English language learners

**Curriculum focus: Core Curriculum**



## INTRODUCTION

The push for culturally responsive education in the United States is essential in combating systemic inequalities and institutional racism. Hawai'i's journey in integrating its unique cultural heritage into its public education system provides an instructive and unique example. The Hawai'i State Department of Education is a large statewide school district of [294 schools](#) that are divided into seven smaller districts across the Hawaiian islands. This case study examines the role of the Office of Hawaiian Education and the significant strides in implementing a curriculum that honors Hawaiian culture, language, and values through [Nā Hopena A'o \(HĀ\)](#). Hawai'i's experience in implementing culturally responsive education offers a blueprint for other districts seeking to address inequities and institutional racism through education.



## HISTORY OF SCHOOL BOARD INVOLVEMENT

The Office of Hawaiian Education, established under the superintendent of Hawai'i's public schools, embarked on a transformative journey to integrate Hawaiian culture into the education system. This initiative was not just an addition to the curriculum but a fundamental rethinking of educational values and practices.

The integration of Hawaiian culture in education was significantly influenced by the Board of Education's policy audit, which led to the development of new policies centered around Hawaiian education. The audit began in 2013 when former Board of Education Member Cheryl Lupenui gathered various community and HIDOE representatives to participate in an audit and redraft of BOE Policy 4000, General Learner Outcomes. This audit resulted in the creation of a new policy known as E-3 or [Nā Hopena A'o \(HĀ\)](#), which was approved in June 2015. The HĀ policy is a framework aimed at developing skills, behaviors, and dispositions that reflect Hawai'i's unique context and honor its indigenous language and culture.

Kau'i Sang, as the Director, played a pivotal role in steering this change in more recent years. Sang approaches the work through a strong shared sense of 'Āina, or love of the land. Sang shares how 'Āina informs this work: "...there are tons of folks working in our community to elevate 'Āina as the central thing that keeps us connected — our relationship to that 'Āina and to that place...". This profound connection to the land and its significance in Hawaiian culture was a guiding principle in the development and implementation of the Department of Education's culturally responsive education framework.



## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

These policies, crafted with substantial input from the Hawaiian community, aimed to resonate deeply with Hawaiian culture and language. The board of education formed a workgroup that engaged in extensive research and community discussions. Initially, they used the values and language of the Hawaiian community to draft the outcomes. Subsequently, the board shared these

draft outcomes with the Hawaiian community during sessions where feedback was solicited. Community members were asked about their resonance with the outcomes, potential changes, concerns, and stories connecting them to these outcomes. This feedback was then incorporated to ensure the policies reflected and honored Hawaiian culture and language authentically.



[See: Nā Hopena A'o Statements HĀ: BREATH](#)



The HĀ Assessment for Learning project was a notable achievement on the journey. The project was initiated by a department of education team that worked with community members to develop [culturally responsive assessment practices](#). Project team members listened to students, educators, administrators, elders, and others for *mo'olelo* (generative storytelling) in order to create an inclusive assessment model that is representative of actual experience and wisdom. Pilot sites emerged at both local and state levels in order to iterate the project in multiple learning environments. There has been continuous progress since that project launched in 2019. The team has continued to engage with various stakeholders, including students, teachers, and community members, to gather stories that inform and shape the evolving assessment model.

## CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

One of the most challenging aspects of this endeavor was navigating political pressures and ensuring the curriculum authentically reflected Hawaiian identity and history. The approach to these challenges was both strategic and sensitive, focusing on sustainable implementation and leveraging community support, especially for language immersion students.

Sang shared a story about *'ohe* (bamboo) that reflects the importance of establishing a strong foundation and the value of patience and resilience in the growth process. The story underscores the need for nurturing the right conditions over time to achieve substantial and meaningful growth in both educational reform and policy development.



The acronym for the Office of Hawaiian Education is OHE. If you pronounce it, *'ohe* is the Hawaiian word for bamboo. When the Board of Education Policy passed, there was a woman that worked in my office named Dr. Gloria Kishi. She shared this story. She said she was of Okinawan descent, and the story that she had shared was about where her family was from in Okinawa. She talked about how when there would be storms that would come through. Now, the villagers would run to the bamboo forest and tie themselves to the bamboo because they knew that the foundation that was put in place in those bamboo forests were so well formed, that no matter the sort of storm or wind that blew through, that would be the thing that would allow them to be held in place. So, if you think about the way that *'ohe* or bamboo grows, you won't see above-the-surface growth of bamboo for four years. But if you continue to nurture the conditions that lead to a stronger foundation, in the fourth and fifth year you start to see bamboo just shoot up at really enormous rates. To me, that's a metaphor for why this work is a long game and how we have to invest in making sure that what we will do now is creating conditions that solidify a foundation that shifts the attitudes, the stuff that's below the surface, so that we can see growth over time.



## IMPLEMENTATION LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key lessons from Hawai'i's experience emphasize the importance of community partnership, respect for indigenous knowledge, and the necessity of adapting policies to local contexts. For those embarking on a similar journey, the practical advice is to plan inclusively and collectively, with sensitivity to the needs of schools and their communities. The following guiding principles are recommended for successful implementation of culturally responsive education:

- **Community Engagement:** Deeply involve local communities, especially indigenous groups, in the development of the curriculum.
- **Respect for Indigenous Knowledge:** Integrate indigenous knowledge systems into the educational framework.
- **Policy Adaptation:** Policies should be crafted and adapted in a way that they resonate deeply with the unique, local cultural and historical contexts, including generative storytelling in the case of Hawai'i.

- **Sustainable Implementation:** Focus on long-term implementation and adaptability, which may include developing a strategic plan that involves early adopters and various stakeholders, from teachers to community leaders, in defining how the framework shows up in their work.
- **Inclusive Education:** Ensure that the curriculum is inclusive and relevant to all students, including Indigenous students. This can be achieved by developing competencies that strengthen a sense of belonging, responsibility, excellence, and well-being.



### Reflection Question:

In places other than Hawai'i, similar concepts exist to the principles within Nā Hopena A'o (HĀ), like belonging, care, responsibility, well-being, excellence, and a sense of place. What are some deeply held values in your community that will be important to consider?





# Community-Driven Curriculum in Gwinnett, GA: A Case Study

## SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFILE:

District superintendent:

**DR. CALVIN J. WATTS**

Number of students:

**179,581** 

Number of teachers:

**24,000** 

Teacher/pupil ratio:

**1:15** 

Number of schools:

**139** 

Graduation rate:

**82.8%** 

Per-pupil spending:

**\$11,390** 

## STUDENT BODY DEMOGRAPHICS:

33.4% Hispanic/Latino

32.7% Black/African American

18.2% White

11.2% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander

4.2% Two or more races

0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native

0.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

22.7% of students are eligible to participate in the federal free and reduced price meal program

**Curriculum focus: Elective Courses**



## INTRODUCTION

The push for culturally responsive education in the United States is essential in combating systemic inequalities and institutional racism. Dr. Tarece Johnson-Morgan, a school board member and nonprofit executive for a national children’s organization, shared Gwinnett County, Georgia’s endeavor to develop a culturally responsive curriculum that caters to the diverse needs of students, setting a precedent for community-driven curriculum for other districts facing similar challenges. This case study examines Gwinnett County’s transition towards a more inclusive and diverse curriculum, highlighting the challenges, strategies, and outcomes of this critical work.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Gwinnett County School district is Georgia’s [largest](#) school district and the eleventh-largest and seventh-most diverse district in the U.S. The development of a Culturally Responsive Curriculum in Gwinnett County involved transitioning from a predominantly white-centric curriculum to one that represents a broader spectrum of cultures, including African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and Asian studies. The changes underway reflect Gwinnett County’s deep commitment to representing diverse voices in education, despite the fact that Georgia has several policies that ban discussions about race. Gwinnett County demonstrates that even in states where “race” and “equity” cannot be discussed freely, school board members can still advocate for a culturally responsive curriculum.

## DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A key step in this process was the development over three years of pilot curriculum models tailored to specific communities, like African American Studies, Black Studies, Hispanic/Latino Studies, Native American studies, and Asian studies. The positive reception of these pilot programs, such as the Black History and Asian American Studies, underscores the successful alignment of the curriculum with the community’s aspirations and the district’s educational goals, setting a promising path toward ongoing inclusive educational practices.

Dr. Tarece emphasized the importance of engaging a diverse group including students, teachers, administrators, and community members in this process to address both demographic realities and educational needs. She noted the power of students saying, “We want a curriculum that reflects us; we want teachers who look like us; we want teachers to speak our language.” This approach ensured that the curriculum development was inclusive and representative of the community’s diverse needs.

Community engagement has been formalized through the Gwinnett Educational Management System (GEMS) [Oversight Committee](#), which includes community and school system representatives charged with the review of the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum. The committee is open to parents, community members, and school district employees who can apply to join the committee several months before the review each fall. After the review, the committee recommends revisions and additions to the Superintendent for adoption by the Gwinnett County Board of Education.



## CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Navigating the political landscape (such as [HB 1084](#), Georgia’s “Divisive Concepts” law prohibiting teachers from discussing nine topics related to race) and aligning budget resources were significant challenges. Dr. Tarece candidly expressed, “If we weren’t in this climate of political pressure...we could do so much more.” Faced with resistance, a key strategy was for board members to engage with community members and highlight the educational benefits of a diverse curriculum, showing its alignment with academic success.

Julian Fortuna, a student organizer and former leader with Georgia Youth Justice Coalition said, “There was huge confusion among school districts about the intentionally vague law and how it applied. Most of the censorship was unreported self censorship of teachers, by design. The districts who succeeded in advancing culturally responsive curriculum did so by sending a strong signal from leadership (especially superintendents and school board members) that the district remained committed to CRE and would support any teachers who came under fire.” The Georgia Youth Justice Coalition also provided a [toolkit](#) as part of a

summit for educators with resources to mitigate the impact of HB 1084.

This approach aligns with Dr. Tarece’s perspective that courageous leadership has also been crucial in this endeavor, especially for existing board members to show willingness to advocate for new curriculum, and for new board members to begin building strong relationships with community members without compromising values. It was also important to have leaders who understood and represented the diverse student body. This was achieved through conscious recruitment and advocacy.

The school board has also carefully managed resource distribution, ensuring that funding supported the diverse needs of the curriculum. Gaining the trust of the community was challenging, but crucial, involving open communication, the establishment of the GEMS committee, and demonstrating the value of a culturally responsive curriculum through development and implementation. Continuous learning and adaptation to stay informed about educational trends and community needs were also key.





## IMPLEMENTATION LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Implement Culturally Specific Curriculum:** Develop curriculum that reflects the diversity of the student population, incorporating cultural and linguistic elements.
- 2 Increase Community Involvement:** Engage diverse community members in curriculum development, ensuring their voices are heard and acted upon.
- 3 Align Curriculum with Academic Success:** Connect the culturally responsive curriculum to improved academic performance metrics.
- 4 Recruit and Support Diverse Educators:** Focus on hiring educators who mirror the cultural and linguistic diversity of the students.
- 5 Advocate for Multilingual and Cultural Competence:** Ensure educational materials and communication cater to multiple languages and cultural backgrounds. Note: Cultural competence training is not yet underway in Gwinnett, but has been identified as a potential priority for advocacy by school board members.

- 6 Focus on Policy, Courageous Leadership, and Accountability:** Empower school board members to engage in effective policy making, budget alignment with strategic plan and priorities, and hold the educational system accountable.
- 7 Leverage Community Resources:** Collaborate with families, local businesses, and legislators to support curriculum development and resource allocation.



### Reflection Question:

Since 2021, many states have advanced restrictions in teaching critical race theory or limit how teachers can discuss racism and sexism. If your school community is subject to such restrictions, how can Gwinnett County's progress even under a "divisive concepts" law inspire you to keep moving forward on CRE?



# Culturally Responsive Education in Albuquerque Public Schools: A Case Study

## SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFILE:

District superintendent:

**DR. GABRIELLA DURÁN BLAKEY**

Number of students:

**70,400** 

Number of teachers:

**5,000** 

Teacher/pupil ratio:

**1:14** 

Number of schools:

**176** 

Graduation rate:

**64.6%** 

Per-pupil spending:

**\$12,041** 

## STUDENT BODY DEMOGRAPHICS:

66% Hispanic/Latino

20% White

5.3% American Indian

3.6% Two or more races

2.6% Black/African American

2.4% Asian

0.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

70.2% of students are eligible to participate in the federal free and reduced price meal program

19.6% of students are English language learners

**Curriculum focus: Core Curriculum**

## INTRODUCTION

In the heart of New Mexico, Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) serves a diverse student population of approximately 70,000, with 70% qualifying as low-income. This case study delves into the transformative efforts of APS and its school board to integrate Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) across the district. The work in APS showcases what is possible for CRE through strategic leadership and community engagement in driving educational transformation. Key initiatives included the implementation of governance plans and a strategic focus on leveraging opportunities towards culturally responsive practices. Despite challenges, the district has made significant progress in aligning its curriculum, policies, and instructional materials with the principles of CRE, setting a precedent for other districts aiming to achieve similar goals. For more information on APS's emerging stronger initiatives and goals and guardrails, visit:

- [Emerging Stronger at APS](#)
- [APS Goals and Guardrails](#)

## STRATEGIC GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In recent years, the APS school board has focused on primary responsibilities including budget approval, policy development, and superintendent accountability. A significant emphasis was placed on understanding the district's \$2 billion budget, particularly the allocation for instructional materials and personnel, ensuring expenditures over \$250k were meticulously reviewed. The efforts of APS's policy committee led to the rewriting of all policies related to academics and instruction, including material adoption, emphasizing standards alignment and cultural relevance, thereby laying the groundwork for a CRE-aligned curriculum.

## ADVANCING CRE THROUGH LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

In 2018, the state of New Mexico faced a critical equity lawsuit highlighting the underservice to English learners, low-income and students with disabilities and Indigenous populations. The APS school board responded by engaging community organizations, conducting surveys, engaging with local Tribes, and emphasizing the community's desire for students to "see myself in the stories" shared within the curriculum. The district worked to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities and Indigenous students, receive a fair and inclusive education.

APS was able to advance CRE through legal and policy frameworks, responding to equity challenges by incorporating language-sustaining services and multicultural education approaches into the curriculum and curriculum policies. In elementary, all content areas are taught in both English and Spanish equally over a period of time. At all grade levels, specific content classes taught in the target language with those cross-cultural linguistic connections. The district provides core materials to students in both languages, aligned to standards.

## MATERIALS ADOPTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The district's Curriculum and Instruction department rigorously evaluates the adoption of high-quality instructional materials, including their ratings on educational reports, [state standards](#), and alignment with CRE principles. Cultural responsiveness is an integral part of the APS Board Goals and Guardrails and the High Quality Instructional Materials ([HQIM framework in New Mexico](#)), which forms the bedrock of their most recent HQIM review processes and HQIM processes in general. High quality instructional materials refer to educational resources, such

as textbooks, digital content, lesson plans, and supplementary materials, that are well-designed, accurate, engaging, and aligned with educational standards. Teacher-inclusive and subject-specific steering committees and working groups developed rubrics and scoring tools, after receiving professional learning, to review HQIM options against criteria.

In moving to a “Student Outcomes Focused Governance framework,” the APS school board established and shifted to an accountability structure as part of their “Goals and Guardrails” [initiative](#). The initiative was designed to ensure progress monitoring and strategic planning adherence, and the framework includes regular meetings, a template for superintendent responses to data and training for board members on asking strategic questions, ensuring alignment with strategic goals, and coaching on how to stay out of administrative work.

## CHALLENGES AND OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

The APS school board has navigated numerous challenges, including political pressure and budget constraints. Strategies to address these challenges included focusing on the educational benefits of a diverse curriculum, ensuring equitable resource allocation, and fostering community trust through transparent communication. Challenges were managed by leveraging data to gain support and emphasizing the alignment of rigorous instruction with culturally responsive teaching. Additionally, when facing budget cuts, the board ensured guardrails were in place so equity and CRE could still be prioritized.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NEXT STEPS

While APS has introduced CRE-aligned materials, ongoing professional development for teachers remains a focus area. The board’s role includes ensuring that any assigned professional development aligns with the district’s CRE policy. Looking ahead, APS aims to further integrate CRE into all facets of its educational approach, from governance to classroom instruction.



## RECOMMENDATIONS AND LEARNINGS

- 1 Implement Strategic Governance Plans:** Transition governance from traditional models of governance and accountability to Student Outcomes Focused Governance framework and implement the community-informed Goals and Guardrails Initiative. Within the scope of this governance model, the board must understand and guide budget intricacies, particularly how funds are allocated towards personnel and instructional materials, and ensure that governance structures support CRE.
- 2 Develop and Implement CRE-Aligned Policies:** Rewrite existing policies to ensure that all instructional materials are standards-aligned, culturally and linguistically responsive, and reflective of the district's diverse student body. Policies should facilitate the adoption of technology and materials that are accessible and relevant to all students.
- 3 Engage Broadly with the Community:** Utilize surveys and direct engagement with organizations to understand community needs and desires. This engagement should focus on ensuring that students see their experiences and cultures reflected in their education, a key aspect of CRE. For example, the district held "dozens of community meetings and countless individual conversations in the fall of 2022 which yielded the school board's understanding that community members expect equity, support, quality instruction, voice, and engagement."
- 4 Provide Data to Ensure Leadership and Community Support:** Utilize compelling data about the benefits of CRE to students, to build support for this approach and overcome political and budgetary challenges. Transparent communication and community trust are crucial in this effort.
- 5 Prioritize Professional Development:** Ensure that professional development for teachers aligns with CRE policies, focusing on the training necessary to effectively deliver a culturally responsive curriculum. This is vital for the sustainable implementation of CRE practices.
- 6 Make Use of Available Resources, Information, and Partnerships:** Leverage partnerships with local businesses, academic institutions, and educational organizations to support curriculum development and resource allocation. The APS Business Committee, for example, became supportive of the common sense benefits of CRE for students in their future careers, which helped move the work forward. Both in-state and national resources such as Schoolkit and Ed Reports can provide valuable support and knowledge.
- 7 Continuously Engage and Learn:** School board members should commit to continuous learning about CRE and educational trends. This includes participating in training sessions and staying updated on research and community needs, going beyond what is required by policy into what is needed for the district to thrive. In particular, it is helpful for board members to have an understanding of the research base around High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM); benefits of CRE for all students, including white students; definitions of CRE; information on how to align budget decisions and trade-offs to CRE; and how to integrate CRE into superintendent evaluations.



**Reflection question:**

Are school board members in your district required to take trainings, and do those trainings include learning about CRE and educational trends? What kind of professional development would your school board and educators need in order to improve CRE policy and implementation of curriculum? Will it require going beyond what is required? If so, how can you build interest in and resources for that learning?



# Worksheet for School Board Members to Strengthen Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Recommendation	Current Status	Next Steps
<b>Gathering Information &amp; Building a Strong Foundation</b>		
Engage in one-on-one discussions with other board members and the superintendent to explore interest in culturally responsive curriculum.		
Prepare for discussions with the superintendent by reviewing resources and data on the benefits of culturally responsive curriculum.		
Undergo a formal policy review and district self-assessment to understand which policies need changes to accommodate culturally responsive curriculum.		
Initiate an evaluation and demographic analysis of the curriculum or book list to assess whether texts reflect the diversity of the student body.		
Conduct initial surveys among students, parents, and community members to gauge their opinions on the curriculum and gather insights on needed improvements.		
Leverage data to gain support and emphasize the alignment of rigorous instruction with culturally responsive teaching.		
Address and prepare for resistance by building relationships, engaging in advocacy, and maintaining transparent communication.		
<b>Engagement and Planning</b>		
Ask the superintendent to organize an information session on the current status and benefits of a culturally responsive curriculum for the school board.		
Engage with local community organizations to understand their perspectives and priorities regarding the curriculum.		
Collaborate with students and the community to conduct a book list audit, identifying areas for growth in diversity and representation.		
Consider a deeper analysis using a curriculum evaluation tool that goes beyond a demographic audit.		
Form a curriculum committee that includes diverse community representation to review and recommend curriculum changes.		
<b>Implementation</b>		
Develop policies that define and support the district's vision for a culturally responsive curriculum.		
Allocate budget resources to support curriculum changes, professional development, and the purchase of diverse learning materials.		
Include criteria for successful implementation of culturally responsive curriculum in hiring and evaluation processes for the superintendent.		
<b>Post-Implementation and Ongoing</b>		
Regularly evaluate the impact of decisions related to the curriculum and be open to making adjustments based on community feedback.		
Advocate for and support professional development for educators on culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy.		
Prioritize continuous engagement and learning about culturally responsive curriculum and educational trends for board members and educators.		

## Tools Worth Visiting

Resource	Notes
<a href="#">Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum</a>	<p>See what a culturally responsive curriculum looks like, developed by the Council of the Great City Schools.</p> <p>Please see pages 54-64, <b>Key Feature 5</b>, for a closer look at how districts' curricula support culturally relevant instruction and embrace respect and appreciation for racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity.</p> <p>...<a href="#">SEE EXAMPLE HERE</a></p>
<a href="#">Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Guide to Evidence-Based Practices for Teaching All Students Equitably</a>	<p>Research that speaks on teacher skills and student success when using culturally responsive practices.</p>
<a href="#">Educator-Diversity-Playbook</a>	<p>A playbook that briefly cites research, offers a district policy checklist, recommends indicators to track, and describes examples of New York school districts that are taking on equity, diversity and inclusion work.</p>



## Engaging Student Leadership<sup>16</sup>

Increasingly, we are seeing more student representation on local and state school boards, an important lever for promoting equity, diversity and inclusion (see recent actions by students in [New Haven, CT](#), [Chino Valley, CA](#), [Pennsylvania](#), and [Lake Oswego, OR](#)). Indeed, having students serve on school boards is itself an act of democracy in action and one that benefits adults and students alike. When youth are prioritized and valued, their participation and perspective is invaluable in policy making and practice.

Engaging students can look very different from school district to school district—you might partner with student groups already established in a school, or you might sit on a board committed to including a student representative, or you might live in a state where laws require student representatives on school boards (for example, [New Hampshire](#), [New Jersey](#), and Maryland). Whatever the reason, nurturing democratic citizenship is central to school board missions. Below we include resources from student-led groups and other organizations responding to new mandates to include student representatives.

### Resources

- [School Board Model Policy Template, Partnership for The Future of Learning](#)  
This resource offers a starting point for school board members interested in policy improvements that foster inclusive and ongoing engagement of students in public meetings.
- [Policy: Maryland Montgomery County Student Member Scholarship](#)  
Maryland legislation provides its Student Board Member with a scholarship equivalent to one year's worth of in-state tuition, mandatory fees, and room and board at the University of Maryland (approximately \$20,000).
- [Student Members on School Boards: A Toolkit for Schools and Districts](#)  
This toolkit is designed to inform the New Hampshire public about the state's new student representation requirement and provide resources and recommendations for elevating student voice in school and district governance.

### Recommendations from Advocates

- [Student Board Member Policy Recommendations](#), National Student Board Member Association (NSBMA)



### Student written articles on the importance of CRE:

- [Centering Students' Identities is Not Only Imperative For Equity — It Influences Our Academic Achievement and Personal Well-being.](#)

Sanaa Kahloon, first-year student at Harvard College, discusses how being student-centered is being culturally conscious.

- [I'm a high school student, and Culturally Responsive Education is needed in our schools.](#)

Daniel Hadi, an Arab-American high school student in Portland, Oregon, discusses how culturally responsive education is a direct solution to misinformation and intentional disinformation.



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While the student population in U.S. public schools is majority Black and Brown, 79 percent of public educators in 2017 were white. Centering the voices of students of color has been shown to help students think of themselves as valuable, leading to deeper student engagement. As student engagement expert Jal Mehta said best, “We have to stop seeing boredom as a frilly side effect. It is a central issue. Engagement is a precondition for learning....No learning happens until students agree to become engaged with the material.” As it stands, it’s nearly impossible for students to be engaged when their identities and voices are not heard, and when their lived experiences do not inform the system they are supposed to be learning from. — *Sanaa Kahloon, first-year student at Harvard College, discusses how being student-centered is being culturally conscious*



## List of Recommended Organizations:

Organization Name	Website	What they do
Local Progress	<a href="#">Local Progress</a>	Local Progress is a movement of over 1400 local elected officials (school board members, advancing a racial and economic justice agenda through all levels of local government). Our network includes school board members, mayors, county commissioners, and city council members — representing major cities, growing suburbs, and rural communities. As school boards across the country face rising threats and backlash, Local Progress is working to organize school board members around a multi-issue policy agenda and create a community of practice for progressive local leaders.
HEAL Together	<a href="#">HEAL Together</a>	HEAL Together is a movement led by students, educators, parents, and school board members in school districts across the United States who are committed to protecting honest, equitable, fully-funded public education. <b>HEAL Together provides tools and trainings to help communities</b> achieve their dream of public schools that reflect a just, multiracial democracy where we can all thrive.
Race Forward	<a href="#">Race Forward</a>	For more than 40 years, Race Forward has worked to dismantle structural racism by building collective community power and transforming institutions. Race Forward works with community organizations, the public sector, non-profits, government agencies and departments, philanthropic organizations, and others to ensure the voices and needs of those most impacted are centered in policy decisions in areas such as housing, education, climate justice, policing and the carceral state, and energy democracy.
NYU Metro Center	<a href="#">The Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative (EJ-ROC)</a>	Metro Center’s Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative (EJ-ROC) brings together parents, youth, educators and community organizers with researchers, data and policy analysts, to provide strategic support for the education justice movement. This is done by providing on-demand research and policy to support organizing campaigns; technical assistance to help education organizing groups lead campaigns that win research-based policies; and training and support for coalition-building among public school stakeholders.

Organization Name	Website	What they do
RE-Center Race & Equity in Education (RE-Center)	<a href="#">RE-Center</a>	RE-Center works with district administration, school boards, educators, parents and students to operationalize equity in schools, by providing professional development, curriculum development, coaching, strategic planning, facilitation and other forms of technical assistance.
Metro Center's CSS	<a href="#">Center for Strategic Solutions</a>	Center for Strategic Solutions (CSS) provides tactical support, applied research, and collaborative problem-solving to schools in the United States and abroad as well as agencies outside education. The central focus of their work is helping organizations to implement strategies that close equity gaps and lead to the improvement of student outcomes.
The Innovations in Equity and Systemic Change (IESC) at NYU Metro Center	<a href="#">Innovations in Equity and Systemic Change</a>	The Innovations in Equity and Systemic Change (IESC) at NYU Metro Center provides professional development, technical assistance, and consultancy to educational institutions and special education. Their mission is to disrupt, dismantle, and eliminate disproportionality by building the capacity of educators to implement Culturally Responsive Sustainable Equity-Based Systems that meet the needs of all students and families.
Student Achievement Partners	<a href="#">Achieve the Core</a>	Student Achievement Partners is a nonprofit organization that assembles educators and researchers to design actions based on evidence that will substantially improve student achievement.
NEA	<a href="#">Cultural Competence Training Program</a>	NEA offers a program that expands the capacity of educators to serve students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
Pipeline Fund	<a href="#">Pipeline Fund</a>	The Pipeline Fund supports critical leadership development work across the country. They are driving a long-term strategy focused on resourcing local groups to ensure that skilled, diverse, community leaders are fully supported to run for office, run campaigns, and pass progressive policies.
National Student Board Member Association (NSMBA)	<a href="#">NSMBA</a>	The National Student Board Member Association (NSBMA) works to connect, support, and educate student school board members and other educational stakeholders to strengthen student representation in education decision-making.
National School Board Association (NSBA)	<a href="#">NSBA</a>	National Board Association (NSBA) is a non-partisan association that leads through working with members, affiliates, and stakeholders to advocate for high-quality public education and school board governance with the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Organization Name	Website	What they do
School Board Project	<a href="#">School Board Project</a>	School Board Project provides school board candidates with campaign support, access to resources, and individualized coaching.
Culturally Responsive & Linguistically Affirming Curriculum Collaborative	<a href="#">CRLA Curriculum Collaborative</a>	The Culturally Responsive and Linguistically Affirming (CRLA) Curriculum Collaborative supports education leaders, educators, and communities to advocate for and ultimately implement grade-level culturally responsive and linguistically affirming literacy curriculum. They aim to do this by working to align all stakeholders on curriculum design principles and providing tools and resources to enact change.

**For a list of recommended consultants on CRSE curriculum, please contact [nyu-ejroc@nyu.edu](mailto:nyu-ejroc@nyu.edu).**

# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Sleeter, C. E., 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Curriculum refers to the content and plan for instruction, including learning goals and standards; units and lesson plans; assignments, activities and projects; and books and other materials used in class.

<sup>3</sup> students who self-identify as African American, Mexican American, Latinx, Asian, Native American, and/or a mix of the aforementioned racial identities.

<sup>4</sup> Education Week: Where Critical Race Theory Is Under Attack (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Definition Pulled from NYU Metro's ELA Curriculum Scorecard

<sup>6</sup> Scholars Django Paris and Samy Alim propose that education must not only reflect and respond to students' identities, but actively nourish and sustain those identities and cultures. This is referred to as culturally responsive and sustaining education (CRSE). In simplifying this toolkit's approach, we'll use CRE instead of CRSE, though CRSE captures a deeper understanding of the pedagogy and its field.

<sup>7</sup> Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Nieto, 2013

<sup>8</sup> These materials, as defined by EdReports, are closely aligned with rigorous educational standards and are designed for ease of use. They play a vital role in supporting effective teaching practices and fostering student engagement and achievement in classrooms nationwide.

<sup>9</sup> "A Guide to Curriculum Development: Purposes, Practices, Procedures," Connecticut Department of Education ([https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Health-Education/curguide\\_generic.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Health-Education/curguide_generic.pdf))

<sup>10</sup> Discrimination or unequal treatment on the basis of membership in a particular ethnic group (typically one that is a minority or marginalized), arising from systems, structures, or expectations that have become established within an institution or organization.

<sup>11</sup> Implicit bias, also known as implicit prejudice or implicit attitude, is a negative attitude, of which one is not consciously aware, against a specific social group. Examples include: Gender bias, or preferring one gender over another; confirmation bias; ageism, or age bias.

<sup>12</sup> Explicit bias is the traditional conceptualization of bias. With explicit bias, individuals are aware of their prejudices and attitudes toward certain groups.

<sup>13</sup> Anti-racism encompasses a range of ideas and political actions which are meant to counter racial prejudice, systemic racism, and the oppression of specific racial groups.

<sup>14</sup> Currently, 19 states and Washington DC prescribe textbooks at the state agency level, so all textbook purchases by districts in these states must align with the state's guidance. <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/10x-textbook-adoption>

<sup>15</sup> Many of these action steps are inspired by New America Report: Embracing Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Instructional Materials.

<sup>16</sup> Pulled from HEAL Together's "Equity Policies Toolkit for School Boards"

<sup>17</sup> The Ossining Union Free School District (OUFSD) equity policy includes many of the glossary terms seen here. To find definitions and more resources, please check the attached policy document.

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Please note that this toolkit is in its first version, which some call a "beta." Input is welcome for future revisions, additions, and improvements. Contact [info@localprogress.org](mailto:info@localprogress.org) to provide feedback and additional resources.