Exercise: Answer Important Questions About Access

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

Use the following questions to guide this exercise.

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

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

- Do the resources that we select, or that we are asked to use, reflect the demographics of students in our classroom in an authentic way? Do they reflect diverse perspectives and experiences of others?

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- As we audit the demographics in our classrooms, do the resources we use show a balanced representation of who is in our classrooms and the rest of the world? Or do texts predominantly reflect one perspective? If so, how can we alter our plans to appeal to our students' characteristics?

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

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