Washington Office of Superintendent of
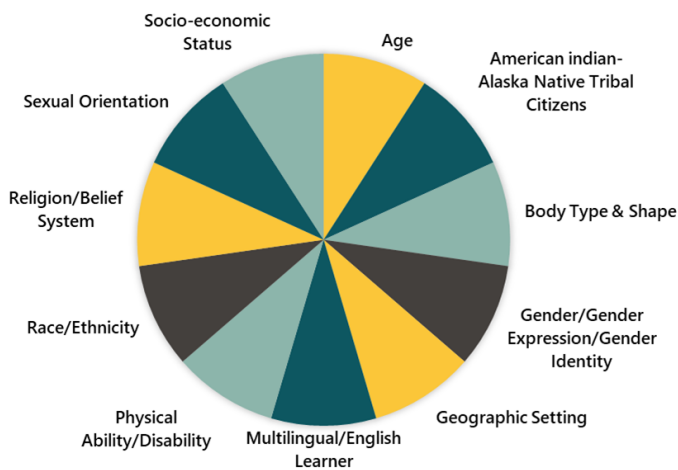**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

SCREENING TOOL FOR BIASED CONTENT

Title: _____   Developer/Author: _____

Content Area: _____   Grade Band: _____   Year Published: _____

Diversity and Representation

Representation in the instructional material should reflect the rich cultural diversity and lived experiences of all students. Below are some aspects of diversity to consider as you review the criteria in the screening tool.

Socio-economic Status • Age • American indian-Alaska Native Tribal Citizens • Sexual Orientation • Religion/Belief System • Race/Ethnicity • Physical Ability/Disability • Multilingual/English Learner • Geographic Setting • Gender/Gender Expression/Gender Identity • Body Type & Shape

Include other identifiers of students and families in your community *(e.g., military families, students experiencing homelessness, etc.)*:

_____

_____

_____

Variety of Roles and Character Traits

Criteria	Met 2	Part Met 1	Not Met 0	NA	Comments and/or examples where criteria are exhibited
Characters/figures central to the instructional material show diverse groups in a variety of roles and occupations.					
different genders and gender identities					
different races/ethnicities/cultures/tribal citizens					
persons with disabilities					
other identifiers important to our district					
When present in the instructional material, character traits such as courage, leadership, intelligence, integrity, etc., are distributed among diverse groups.					
different genders and gender identities					
different race/ethnicities/cultures/tribal citizens					
persons with disabilities					
other identifiers important to our district					

Criteria	Met 2	Part Met 1	Not Met 0	NA	Comments and/or examples where criteria are exhibited
Characters/figures are described by their behaviors, beliefs, and values rather than unnecessary socioeconomic descriptors.					

Multiple Perspectives and Contributions

Criteria	Met 2	Part Met 1	Not Met 0	NA	Comments and/or examples where criteria are exhibited
Biographical, contemporary, or historical materials infuse perspectives and contributions from members of diverse groups substantially, accurately, and respectfully.					
different genders and gender identities					
different races/ethnicities/cultures/tribal citizens					
persons with disabilities					
other identifiers important to our district					
The instructional material presents multiple sides of any controversial and complex issues related to the content area.					
When reviewing and adopting instructional materials for social studies and history, the Since Time Immemorial and tribally-developed curriculum resources (RCW 28A.320.170) are integrated.					

Multicultural Representation

Criteria	Met 2	Part Met 1	Not Met 0	NA	Comments and/or examples where criteria are exhibited
The instructional materials include literature, examples, or situations that accurately reflect the culture, languages, traditions, beliefs, values, and customs of people from diverse backgrounds.					
Any belief systems covered in the instructional materials are presented respectfully, accurately and with appropriate context.					
If belief systems are covered in the instructional materials, multiple belief systems/religions are presented. No one belief system is positioned as superior to others.					

Imagery and Language

Criteria	Met 2	Part Met 1	Not Met 0	NA	Comments and/or examples where criteria are exhibited
The instructional material uses imagery that promotes inclusion and belonging in real-life, contemporary contexts.					
The instructional material provides a range of text, examples, scenarios, and applications relevant to our district students' real-life experiences and cultural backgrounds.					
The curriculum features visually diverse characters, and the characters of color do not all look alike.					
Visual materials include people with disabilities, with various body types, and/or of advanced age.					
Illustrations depict different groups in roles of power and authority.					
All labels or captions of images use inclusive and gender-neutral language and avoid stereotypical descriptions.					
If the images/text in instructional material addresses a stereotype or bias, the historical, social or cultural context is relevant to contemporary issues.					

Family Representation

Criteria	Met 2	Part Met 1	Not Met 0	NA	Comments and/or examples where criteria are exhibited
When family depiction is present in instructional material, families exhibit a range of configurations in addition to the traditional nuclear family model - single parents, adopted and foster children, stepparents, same-sex parents, and/or relatives living with the family.					
When family references are present in instructional material, examples are sensitive to diversity in family dynamics and student experience of family and home.					

Teacher Guidance

Criteria	Met 2	Part Met 1	Not Met 0	NA	Comments and/or examples where criteria are exhibited
The instructional material provides strategies for teachers to elicit and instructionally respond to their students' prior knowledge, interests, and identities.					
Guidance is provided on opportunities to partner with students' families and caregivers to enhance lessons.					

Additional Considerations

Criteria	Y/N	Comments
Do you have any concerns about author bias? If so, provide evidence in the comments section.	Yes No	
Do you have any additional concerns about generalizations, stereotypes or misrepresentations in the instructional material? Please document in comments section.	Yes No	

Final Recommendations

Criteria	Y/N	Comments
Do you recommend the use of this instructional material from an inclusive and unbiased content perspective? *Note that this material will also need to meet the quality criteria for Washington State Learning Standards alignment as well as other state statutory requirements and district priority areas.* *Promising practices and resources can be found in the OSPI Course Design and Instructional Materials Toolkit.*	Yes No	

Name of Evaluator: _____

Signature of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

CRITERIA DISCUSSION AND EXAMPLES

Variety of Roles and Character Traits

Look for stereotypes. Some stereotypes can be overt – for example, depicting a male Latino teenager as a gang member. Other stereotypes may not be this obvious, look for variations which may demean or exclude characters because of their race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Look for:

- Diverse groups are shown performing similar work in related fields.
- People of different genders and gender identities are depicted in non-traditional as well as traditional roles in the family, at work, and in leisure activities.
- All ethnic groups are portrayed as equally independent/dependent, leaders/subordinates, peaceable/militant, open/secretive, thoughtful/impulsive etc.
- Characters from all ethnic groups are shown in a variety of settings and lifestyles in active, decision-making and leadership roles.
- Persons with disabilities are referred to by their names and roles rather than their disability.
- Characters of color are main characters and not just sidekicks.
- If there is conflict in the storyline, the characters of color are not mostly considered the problem.
- Characters of color are not assumed to have low income or education.
- Gender is not central to the storyline. Female characters are in a variety of roles that could also be filled by a male character.

Multiple Perspectives and Contributions

Look for:

- Instructional material features the stories, histories, and narratives of people of color, people of varying economic class, LGBTQ+ people, and females. These portrayals go beyond the cover or pictures in the material and are inclusive in the general formatting of the text.
- The curriculum recognizes the validity and integrity of knowledge systems based in communities of color, American Indian/Alaska Native and indigenous cultures, and faith systems inclusive of but not limited to Christian religions.

Content specific example:

Social Studies

- When reviewing and adopting instructional materials for social studies and history, integrate the *Since Time Immemorial* and tribally developed curriculum resources (RCW 28A.320.170).
- Recommendations for reviewed instructional material have been brought forward through the tribal consultation process.
- Significant representation of diverse historical figures and cultural groups is infused throughout materials. Tokenism can be very prevalent in state and national history textbooks, which tend to mention indigenous people very sporadically and only in relation to European or Euro-American exploits.

Multicultural Representation

Classrooms across the country display a vibrant mix of cultures, languages, traditions and experiences. Instructional materials should reflect this diversity.

Look for:

- Instructional material should respectfully portray different ethnic and cultural traditions, languages, religions, names and clothing.

- Diverse ethnicities and nationalities are portrayed – not all Asian families are Chinese, not all Latinx families are Mexican, etc.

Imagery and Language

- Characters of diverse cultural backgrounds are not represented stereotypically or presented as foreign or exotic.

- Groups which include male and females are referred to in neutral languages such as people, mail carriers, firefighters, or legislators.

- Images of American Indian and Alaskan Native peoples include photos and illustrations in contemporary contexts.

- Illustrations of children show them wearing a variety of clothing, colors, and hairstyles, as well as engaging in a variety of activities and play that go beyond traditional gender expectations and roles.

- Oversimplified generalizations about social classes and groups are avoided in text and illustrations.

- People with disabilities, illnesses, different body types, and/or advanced age are portrayed as capable in various ways, rather than portrayed as completely defined by disabilities, age, and illnesses

- Language and imagery in tasks, problems, and case studies includes diverse cultural names and experiences.

Note

Historical and primary documents – including letters, newspaper articles, treaties, journals, photographs, census reports, cartoons, and government documents – reflect the social, political, historical, and cultural contexts in which they were created, including the biases and prejudices. These documents can be used effectively in the classroom to examine the prevalence of certain biases at particular eras in history and to investigate how such views influenced public policies, institutions, and people's lives. Understanding the development and impacts of historical prejudices and other biases is a critical part of acquiring a more accurate and comprehensive picture of our history and our present circumstance.

WAC 392-190-055 Textbooks and instructional materials—Instructional materials policy—Elimination of bias

> …Nothing in this section is intended to prohibit the use or assignment of supplemental instructional materials, such as classic and contemporary literary works, periodicals, and technical journals, that are educationally necessary or advisable even though they contain bias.

Family Representation

Look for:

- Extended families are depicted, and emphasis is placed on roles and relationships rather than biological relation.

- People of all backgrounds and experiences are depicted as capable of loving.

- Family assignments are envisioned and explained in a sensitive manner.
    - A seemingly harmless activity, such as creating a family tree, can marginalize students whose biological relations are distant or unknown. Such assignments can be modified to recognize the key relationships in students' lives.
    - Some students may have family members in the military who may be absent due to deployment

Content specific examples

Sexual Health Education

- Representations of effective and healthy marriage include more than the traditional man and woman model.

- Derogatory and shaming language is avoided in reference to sexual activity

- Students with disabilities are included when discussing romantic relationships and sexual health

<div align="right">Back to Screening Tool</div>

Teacher Guidance

For this section, review team members should review the teacher's materials for the instructional material - this might include both a Teacher's Manual as well as any teacher guidance within the individual units or lesson plans.

Look for:

- Guidance on how to approach, enhance, and customize lessons for their student populations

- When appropriate. the instructional material provides guidance on how to make connections between academic content and the local neighborhood, culture, environment and resources, including guidance on sources for valid, non-traditional resources (e.g. oral histories) if available.

- Diverse student identities are seen as assets and strengths that can advance individual and group learning, rather than seen as challenges or difficulties to be overcome.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Key Terms

bias

Prejudice or preference toward a thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. Bias can be explicit/conscious or implicit/unconscious.[1]

belonging

More than tolerating and respecting differences, belonging requires that all people are welcome with membership and agency in the society. Belonging is vital to have a thriving and engaged populace, which informs distributive and restorative decisions-making.[2] *See Othering*.

culture

Encompasses the languages, customs, beliefs, rules, arts, knowledge, and collective identities and memories developed by members of social groups that make their social environments meaningful.[3]

cultural competency

Knowledge of student cultural histories and contexts, as well as family norms and values in different cultures; knowledge and skills in accessing community resources and community and parent outreach; and skills in adapting instruction to students' experiences and identifying cultural contexts for individual students.[4]

culturally responsive teaching

Teaching that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. Characteristics of culturally responsive teaching include positive perspectives on parents and families; communication of high expectations; learning within the context of culture; student-centered instruction; culturally mediated instruction; reshaping the curriculum; and teacher as facilitator.[5]

ethnicity

A social construct that further divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as a shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base.[6]

ethnocentrism

The attitude that one's own group, ethnicity, or nationality is superior to others.[7]

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[1] Race Forward. (2015, June). *Race reporting guide*.
[2] Balajee, S. S. *An evolutionary roadmap for belonging and co-liberation*.
[3] American Sociological Association. *Culture*.
[4] Model standards for cultural competency - RCW 28A.410.260
[5] Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: successful teachers of African American children.* Jossey-Bass Publishers
[6] Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
[7] Ethnocentrism. In *Merriam-Webster's dictionary*.

gender expression

The external ways in which a person expresses their gender identity to the world, such as through their behavior, emotions, style of dress, hairstyle, makeup, interests, or choice of toys, colors, or activities.

gender identity

A person's innate sense of their own gender—whether female, male, both, gender diverse, or other—regardless of assigned sex at birth. The most commonly used terms to describe gender identity include, but are not limited to, the following: cisgender, transgender, nonbinary.

identity

The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing or person is definitively recognized or known, or the set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group.[8]

LGBTQ+

An acronym used to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, and questioning communities. The + allows space for other diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression groups. While LGBT and LGBTQ are often used as short-hand umbrella terms meant to capture multiple sexual orientations and gender identities, LGBTQ+ is ideal due to its more inclusive nature.[9]

multiculturalism

Cultural pluralism or diversity (as within a society, an organization, or an educational institution) or as a multicultural social state or a doctrine or policy that promotes or advocates such a state.[10]

multilingual/English learners

Students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.[11]

nonbinary

An adjective that can be used to describe a gender identity that does not fall into one of the two traditional (binary) categories—male or female. It can indicate a gender identity that is something other than male or female, that is neither entirely male nor entirely female, or that blends elements of being male or female.

othering

To view or treat (a person or group of people) as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself. Opposite of belonging.

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[8] Schilsky, M. (n.d.). *Social justice standards: Unpacking identity*. Teaching tolerance.
[9] Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities. (2018). *Equity Language Guide*.
[10] Multiculturalism. In *Merriam-Webster's dictionary*.
[11] The glossary of education reform. (2013, August 29). *English-language learner*

racism

The belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race; a doctrine or political program based on the assumption of racism and designed to execute its principles; a political or social system founded on racism; racial prejudice or discrimination.[12]

sexual orientation

A collection of terms (e.g., straight, bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer, asexual, etc.) used to describe to whom one is emotionally, physically, and/or romantically attracted. Note: Gender identity terms (e.g., cisgender, transgender, nonbinary) are not sexual orientation labels.

stereotypes

False, oversimplified, prejudiced, or exaggerated generalizations about an individual or group.

transgender

An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth (e.g., someone who was assigned female at birth, but whose gender identity is male).

tribal consultation

Meaningful, timely, ongoing, open and free exchange of information and opinions between the district and tribal representatives inclusive of closest tribal nation(s), American Indian/Alaska Native education program family advisory members and leaders, and other identified parties.

Definitions from OSPI Culturally Responsive Style Guide

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[12] Racism. In *Merriam-Webster's dictionary*.