

Breaking the Cycle: Culturally relevant and Identity Affirming Text-Selection Framework for Future Teachers

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Abstract

This unit, Breaking the Cycle: Culturally relevant and Identity Affirming Text-Selection Framework for Future Teachers, is designed for high school seniors enrolled in a Future Educators Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. It equips aspiring teachers with the critical knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and practical experience necessary to select and teach diverse texts. By engaging with culturally relevant frameworks and reflecting on their own literacy experiences, students will learn how to evaluate literature through an equity lens and implement inclusive instruction in their student teaching placements. Through inquiry-based lessons, collaborative analysis, and direct fieldwork, this unit empowers students to become educators who affirm student identities, challenge dominant narratives, and foster meaningful learning experiences.

Keywords

Culturally relevant Pedagogy, Text Selection, Identity Affirmation, Future Teachers, Anti-Bias Education, Diverse Literature, Equity in Education, CTE Program, Literacy Instruction, Reflective Practice

Introduction

In preparing future educators, it is essential to equip them with the knowledge and skills to select and teach diverse texts that reflect the lived experiences of their students. This unit aims to provide high school students in a future teacher program with the theoretical framework, practical strategies, and hands-on experience needed to critically analyze and implement diverse literature in their student teaching internships. By engaging with culturally relevant pedagogies, anti-bias frameworks, and best practices for inclusive teaching, students will develop a deep understanding of how diverse texts can create meaningful learning experiences for all students.

Unit Content

This unit is designed to support high school seniors enrolled in a Future Educators Career and Technical Education (CTE) program as they participate in their student teaching internships. The unit focuses on building students' capacity to critically select and thoughtfully teach texts that reflect the diversity of PreK–12 learners. Grounded in principles of educational equity and culturally relevant pedagogy, the unit guides students through an exploration of their own reading experiences, introduces them to frameworks for evaluating diverse texts, and helps them develop the pedagogical skills to lead inclusive and engaging lessons. Students will be expected to reflect on their positionalities as future teachers, analyze a wide range of texts for representation and relevance, and design and deliver lessons in their field placements using selected works.

In the first week, students will explore the foundations of text selection by engaging with core concepts such as diversity, representation, and identity. Readings and discussions will center around the idea of

literature as “windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors” (Bishop, 1990), prompting students to reflect on the types of stories they have encountered throughout their education. Using videos such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s “The Danger of a Single Story” and excerpts from Gloria Ladson-Billings’ work on culturally relevant pedagogy, students will consider how their lived experiences and personal biases influence the texts they value and choose. This early part of the unit invites students to critically examine who is included and excluded from traditional literary canons and to begin developing a personal philosophy of equitable text selection.

In week two, students will shift from reflection to analysis as they develop criteria for evaluating texts for classroom use. They will be introduced to practical tools like the Lee & Low “Diversity in Texts” rubric and the New York City Department of Education’s “Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard.” These tools will help students assess both the content and context of a text—considering factors such as representation, complexity, voice, and potential harm. Students will analyze a range of sample texts, including *A Birthday Cake for George Washington* by Ramin Ganeshram, *In Dragonfly’s Tale* by Kristina Rodanas, and *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water* by Nikole Hannah-Jones and Renee Watson, focusing on the quality of representation and the opportunities each text offers for meaningful engagement with students. Students will present one diverse text of their choice, offering a rationale for its inclusion in a hypothetical unit and receiving peer feedback on how to strengthen its implementation.

Week three centers on the pedagogical practices necessary for teaching diverse texts effectively. Students will study methods for building community in the classroom, scaffolding instruction, and facilitating inclusive and respectful discussions. They will explore strategies for introducing complex topics such as race, gender, immigration, and identity in ways that honor students’ lived experiences and cultivate critical thinking. Through reading case studies and examining model lesson plans, students will anticipate and plan for possible challenges, including addressing parent concerns or navigating sensitive material. Students will begin developing their own mini-unit or detailed lesson plan around a selected diverse text, drawing on the tools and strategies introduced in the previous weeks. They will also hear from guest speakers—practicing educators and experts with experience teaching diverse texts—who will share stories, resources, and real-world examples.

In the final week, students will apply their learning directly to their student teaching internships. Each student will implement a lesson or learning activity in their field placement classroom using a diverse text they have studied and planned for. They will record or journal their experience, paying special attention to student engagement, classroom dynamics, and the outcomes of their instructional choices. Back in the CTE classroom, students will engage in a structured reflection and feedback session, sharing successes, challenges, and lessons learned from their teaching. These reflections will be accompanied by peer and instructor feedback, offering students opportunities to refine their instructional practice and deepen their understanding of culturally responsive teaching.

Student learning will be assessed through a combination of reflective journals, text evaluation write-ups, a finalized lesson plan portfolio, and a culminating presentation on their fieldwork experience. These assessments prioritize critical thinking, self-awareness, and the practical application of culturally responsive pedagogy. Throughout the unit, differentiation strategies will be embedded to support the diverse learning needs of students in the CTE classroom. Visuals, bilingual resources, modeling, and

opportunities for peer collaboration will ensure that students of varying backgrounds and learning preferences can access and engage with the material. In addition, students will have opportunities to select texts that resonate with their own identities and teaching goals, promoting voice and agency in their learning process.

By the end of the unit, students will be able to confidently evaluate and select texts that affirm diverse student identities, challenge dominant narratives, and open space for critical dialogue in the classroom. They will have taken meaningful steps toward becoming equity-minded educators who understand that the texts they teach matter, and that those choices have the power to shape not only what students learn, but how they see themselves and the world.

Rationale

The Education CTE program at Olney High School prepares culturally and linguistically diverse students, many of whom identify as Black, Latinx, and multilingual, to become future educators. These students bring unique perspectives and valuable experiences to the field of education. However, many of them have rarely encountered classroom texts that reflect their identities or communities.

This unit is a necessary intervention to break the cycle of underrepresentation in classroom literature and teaching practices. It responds to the urgent need for equity-minded educators who can evaluate texts not only for literary quality, but also for cultural relevance and inclusivity. By embedding culturally relevant pedagogy, this unit ensures that students will develop the critical consciousness required to teach in ways that validate, reflect, and uplift the identities of all learners, particularly those historically marginalized in educational spaces.

Problem Statement

Despite ongoing conversations about equity in education, many classrooms still rely on narrow literary canons that fail to reflect the diverse backgrounds of today's students. Pre-service teachers, including high school students in CTE programs, often enter the classroom with limited exposure to frameworks for evaluating literature through culturally relevant or anti-bias lenses. This gap leaves them unprepared to make text selections that affirm student identities, engage diverse learners, or navigate sensitive and complex themes.

There is a pressing need to provide future educators with both the theoretical foundation and practical tools to disrupt exclusionary practices in literacy instruction. Without this preparation, even well-meaning teachers may unintentionally reproduce harm or marginalization in their curriculum choices.

Content Objectives

[Education CTE CIP Codes](#)

205: Plan clear and thoughtful instruction aligned to standards.

208: Design culturally relevant learning that brings real world experiences into educational spaces/the classroom.

404: Discuss how social issues and relationships affect students.

405: Promote asset-based perspectives about differences.

603: Identify, deepen understanding of, and take steps to address bias in the system.

604: Communicate in linguistically and culturally relevant ways that demonstrate respect for learners, educators, educational leaders, and families.

605: Educate oneself about microaggressions and their impact on diverse learners, educators, and families.

606: Research culturally relevant and relevant practices in the design of an instructional activity or lesson.

Teaching Strategies

This unit is designed to be student-centered and highly collaborative. Its teaching strategies cultivate a learning environment where students feel empowered to share their ideas and learn from one another. These approaches are grounded in trust and affirm students' abilities to draw on their funds of knowledge, social capital, and lived experiences to enrich our learning community (Moll & González, 1992). The strategies prioritize discussion and group-based activities, which I will detail in the following section.

Because my school and Education CTE program serve a culturally and linguistically diverse group of students, these strategies also intentionally support English language development while engaging students in rigorous academic content.

Shared Reading

Shared reading creates a communal space where students engage with a common text, making it ideal for introducing challenging content and modeling reading strategies in real time. It supports equity by ensuring all students have access to the same material, regardless of individual reading levels, and promotes discussion through shared experiences. In the context of this unit, shared reading allows students to co-construct meaning, develop comprehension skills, and build community through collective exploration of diverse texts and perspectives (Altamimi and Ogdol, 2023).

Reader Response

Reader response encourages students to connect personally with texts, fostering engagement and deeper understanding. By inviting students to reflect on their experiences, values, and interpretations, this strategy supports culturally responsive teaching and helps students recognize the validity of their own voices (Mart, 2019). In this unit, reader response serves as a bridge between the text and students' lived realities, enriching academic discourse and promoting empathy and perspective-taking.

Think Alouds / Modeling

Think alouds are essential for modeling the internal cognitive processes that skilled readers and thinkers use to make sense of complex material. By verbalizing thought patterns—such as making inferences, asking questions, or monitoring understanding—I can help make abstract ideas concrete (Sönmez and Erkam Sulak). Within this unit, think alouds help demystify and put words to ideas and feelings that may arise when reading the diverse, non-diverse, or even problematic books we will read while building our framework. This strategy will also empower students to apply similar approaches independently, supporting metacognition and deeper learning when selecting books for their own lessons and considering the impact they will have on their elementary and middle school audiences. While think alouds are typically used to help students comprehend what they are reading, this strategy will be used in this unit to help students think critically about the YA texts they're engaging with in-the-moment.

Guided Inquiry

Drawing from the work of Carol Collier Kuhlthau et al., I will implement guided inquiry to structure students' exploration of diverse texts and representation in literature. Students will begin by formulating their own questions about equity in classroom texts—for example, “Whose voices are missing from the texts I read growing up?” or “How can a text affirm student identity?” As they engage with theoretical readings, model lessons, and real classroom texts, students will research and reflect on these inquiries. Throughout the unit, I will guide their process by providing curated resources (children’s books that range in authenticity), modeling analytical strategies, and offering feedback during checkpoints. This method empowers students to take ownership of their learning and construct deeper meaning as they connect theory with practice in evaluating and teaching culturally relevant literature.

Guided Practice (Content-Area Conversations by Fisher, Frey, and Rothenberg)

Guided practice, as outlined in Content-Area Conversations by Fisher, Frey, and Rothenberg, will be central to building students’ confidence and competence in lesson planning. Early in the unit, I will model how to evaluate texts using tools like the NYC Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard, thinking aloud as I make instructional decisions. Students will then engage in scaffolded practice, such as evaluating a text in pairs or drafting a section of a culturally responsive lesson plan with peer support. I will circulate to provide real-time feedback and ask prompting questions that push their thinking. This gradual release model ensures students develop mastery over time while also supporting multilingual learners and students who benefit from structured, interactive support.

Academic Discourse (Content-Area Conversations by Fisher, Frey, and Rothenberg, 2008)

Academic discourse will be embedded throughout the unit to strengthen students' communication and critical thinking skills as future educators. Using protocols and strategies from Content-Area Conversations, such as Think-Pair-Share, Take a Stand, and Paideia Seminars, students will engage in structured dialogue around complex topics including race, identity, and equity in text selection. These conversations will not only deepen students’ understanding of content but also model the types of respectful, inquiry-based classroom discussions they will eventually lead in their own teaching. I will provide sentence stems, discussion norms, and reflection prompts to support inclusive participation, especially for students developing academic English. By practicing academic discourse, students learn how to center student voice and facilitate rich, critical conversations in their future classrooms.

Jigsaw Reading

Jigsaw reading will be used throughout this unit to promote collaborative learning, deepen comprehension, and empower students as knowledge holders. In this strategy, students will be divided into small groups, with each group assigned a specific section of a text, rubric, or framework to read and analyze. After becoming “experts” on their section, students will teach what they learned to their peers, ensuring that the entire class gains a comprehensive understanding of the material. This approach not only fosters accountability and active participation but also supports multilingual learners by allowing them to focus deeply on a manageable portion of text before engaging in academic discourse with their classmates. By using jigsaw reading, students will build confidence in their analytical skills, learn to value each other’s contributions, and collaboratively construct a holistic understanding of culturally relevant and identity-affirming practices for selecting and teaching diverse texts.

Gallery Walk

Gallery walks will be used in this unit to create opportunities for students to engage actively with their peers' ideas, deepen their critical thinking, and synthesize multiple perspectives on complex topics. After completing group activities—such as evaluating texts using rubrics, creating posters of pedagogical strategies, or analyzing identity-affirming frameworks—students will circulate around the classroom to read and reflect on each group's work. During these walks, students will use sticky notes to pose questions, make connections, or provide feedback, fostering an interactive and reflective learning environment. This strategy not only values and showcases student thinking but also promotes movement, engagement, and academic discourse, as students build upon one another's analyses to broaden their understanding of culturally relevant teaching practices and inclusive text selection.

Classroom Activities

The classroom activities embedded in this unit are intentionally designed to center students as active participants in their own learning. Rather than relying solely on teacher-led instruction, the activities promote student voice, agency, and peer-to-peer engagement. By incorporating structured academic discussions, collaborative projects, and reflective practices, students are given the opportunity to explore diverse perspectives, articulate their ideas, and build upon one another's thinking in meaningful ways. These strategies not only deepen content understanding but also foster a classroom culture rooted in mutual respect, inquiry, and shared responsibility. In the spirit of collaboration, the learning environment becomes a space where all students feel valued, heard, and empowered to contribute, laying the groundwork for critical thinking and collective growth.

Throughout this unit, a variety of student-centered classroom activities will be used to promote engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking. **Paideia Seminars** will be used after shared readings of theoretical texts to foster deep, student-led dialogue around key questions such as “What makes a text identity-affirming?” or “How does literature uphold or challenge dominant narratives?” These seminars will model how to facilitate equitable, inquiry-driven discussions. **Think-Pair-Shares** and **Write-Pair-Shares** will be used regularly to scaffold academic discourse—particularly after viewing videos like “The Danger of a Single Story” or while analyzing sample texts—allowing students to process ideas individually, then articulate them with a peer before sharing out. **Take A Stand** will be used to introduce controversial or thought-provoking statements related to bias in curriculum or representation in literature. This activity will help students examine multiple perspectives and reflect on their own evolving beliefs. **Jigsaw Activities** will be employed when students explore different text-evaluation tools (e.g., Lee & Low rubric, CRE Scorecard), so each student can become an “expert” on one resource before teaching it to their peers. **Shared** and **Partner Reading** will ensure access and equity as students engage with challenging or unfamiliar texts. These collaborative reading structures support language learners and deepen comprehension by allowing students to co-construct meaning. Finally, **Text Analysis** will be central to the unit, with students using critical lenses and rubrics to evaluate mentor texts and diverse literature they may later use in their student teaching placements. These activities are intentionally designed to make space for all learners, elevate student voice, and prepare them for the real demands of culturally responsive teaching.

Overview

Essential Questions:

- How do the texts we teach shape student identity, engagement, and belonging?
- What does it mean for a text to be culturally relevant or identity affirming?
- How can future educators critically evaluate literature for use in diverse classrooms?
- What role does the teacher play in disrupting harmful narratives through intentional text selection?

Checkpoints:

Week 1: Reflective journal entries on personal reading experiences and “The Danger of a Single Story”

Week 2: Text evaluation using Lee & Low rubric or CRE Scorecard; peer presentations with feedback

Week 3: Drafted mini-unit or lesson plan with selected diverse text and rationale

Week 4: Field placement implementation with journaling or video reflection

End-of-Unit (EOU) Assessment:

For their culminating project, students will apply the text-selection framework developed throughout the unit to choose an authentic, diverse children’s book that aligns with culturally relevant and identity-affirming principles. Using this book, students will design a developmentally appropriate and engaging lesson plan intended for elementary students. As a capstone experience, they will travel to a local elementary school within our community to teach their lesson to a live group of children. After teaching, students will complete a structured written and/or video reflection analyzing the strengths, challenges, and impact of their lesson paying special attention to student engagement, their instructional choices, and how their understanding of culturally responsive teaching evolved through the experience. This project gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a meaningful, real-world context and positions them as change agents in their future classrooms.

Lesson Plans

Lesson #1 - Mirrors, Windows & Sliding Glass Doors
Objective: Students will reflect on their personal reading experiences and analyze how literature can function as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990). They will begin developing an understanding of the dangers of a single story (Adichie, 2009) and how this connects to equitable text selection.
Standards: (Education CTE CIP) <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 404: Discuss how social issues and relationships affect students.● 405: Promote asset-based perspectives about differences.● 603: Identify, deepen understanding of, and take steps to address bias in the system.
Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors” by Rudine Sims Bishop (excerpt and video)● “The Danger of a Single Story” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (video)● Excerpts from Gloria Ladson-Billings’ work on culturally relevant pedagogy● Reflection templates
Activities: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Do Now (10 mins):</u> Write - Pair - Share Prompt: “List 3 books or stories you read in school that left a strong impression on you. What do these stories have in common about characters, themes, or authors?” Students write silently for 2 minutes, share in pairs for 2 mins, then 2 - 3 groups will share what they discussed with the class.2. <u>Mini-Lesson (15 mins):</u> Introduce Bishop’s Framework. Script: “Today, we’re starting a powerful journey that will shape the kind of teachers you become. We’re going to think about the books and stories we teach and how they affect students’ sense of self, their identities, and how they see the world. I want you to think back to your own experiences as readers. When you were growing up, did you ever read a book where the main character was someone like you? Someone who spoke your language, looked like you, or lived in your community? How did that feel? Or maybe you never had that experience. How did that feel? This idea is so important that scholar Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop created a framework called ‘Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors.’<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Mirrors are books that reflect your own life and identity.● Windows let you see into someone else’s life and experiences.● Sliding glass doors allow you to step into that world and truly feel what it’s like to be there. When classrooms only have certain types of stories and we only see certain identities represented, we create what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie calls ‘The Danger of a Single Story.’ It can limit how students see themselves and how they see others. It can even make students feel invisible. As future teachers, you will have the power to choose books that affirm your students’ identities and help them feel seen, valued, and empowered. You’ll also choose books that expand students’ worlds and teach them about people different from themselves in a respectful and authentic way. Today, we will reflect on our own reading experiences to understand why it is so urgent that we think critically about what we put in front of students. We’re not just teaching books, we’re teaching

students about who matters, whose stories are worth telling, and who gets to be the hero.”

Then, Think-Pair-Share protocol using this prompt: “Can someone explain in their own words what a mirror text is? What about a window? Why might it matter for students to have both?” Use student responses to elaborate and address misunderstandings as needed.

3. Shared Reading & Think Aloud (30 mins):

Distribute Bishop excerpt and conduct a shared reading: teacher reads the first paragraph and takes student volunteers to read the remaining paragraphs. Pause along the way to check for understanding and emphasize Bishop’s ideas about books as “windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors.”

Conduct a Think Aloud, modeling how you process this text:

- “When she says literature can be a mirror, I think about the first time I read a book with a Black girl as the main character. I felt seen in a way I hadn’t before.”
- “When she talks about sliding glass doors, I imagine stepping into a world I don’t know, like reading a novel about undocumented immigrant families. It helps me feel what others feel, even if I haven’t had the same experiences as them in my own life.”

4. Video & Guided Inquiry (15 mins):

Introduce video: “We’re going to watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk, “The Danger of a Single Story.” As you watch, write down:

- One quote or idea that stands out
- One question you have
- One connection to your life or our reading today.”

Play video, pausing along the way to check for understanding as needed.

Conduct Write-Pair-Share using these questions:

- What is Adichie’s main argument?
- How does this connect to Bishop’s idea of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors?
- Whose stories are often missing in schools or media? Why does this happen?

5. Reader Response (15 mins):

Prompt: “Reflect on your reading experiences growing up. Did you mostly encounter windows, mirrors, or sliding glass doors? Whose single stories shaped your perception of certain groups or places? How does this affect you as a future teacher?”

6. Exit Ticket:

Distribute sticky notes. Prompt: Front - One takeaway from today / Back - One question you have about selecting diverse texts

Lesson #6 - Evaluating Texts for Diversity & Inclusion

Objective:

Students will learn how to evaluate texts using practical tools (Lee & Low Diversity in Texts rubric and NYC Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard) and begin applying these tools to analyze sample texts for representation quality, cultural relevance, and instructional value.

Standards: ([Education CTE CIP](#))

- 205: Plan clear and thoughtful instruction aligned to standards.
- 208: Design culturally relevant learning that brings real world experiences into educational

spaces/the classroom.

- 606: Research culturally relevant and relevant practices in the design of an instructional activity or lesson.

Materials:

- Copies of [Lee & Low Diversity in Texts rubric](#)
- Copies of [NYC Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard](#) (simplified for student use)
- Sample excerpts from:
 - A Birthday Cake for George Washington by Ramin Ganeshram
 - The 1619 Project: Born on the Water by Nikole Hannah-Jones and Renée Watson
 - In Dragonfly's Tale by Kristina Rodanas
- Chart paper and markers
- Projector or smartboard
- Sentence stem cards
- Sticky notes

Activities:

1. Do Now (10 mins):

Write - Pair - Share Prompt: "What makes a text culturally relevant or identity affirming? List at least three criteria or characteristics."

Students write silently for 2 minutes, share in pairs for 2 mins, then 2 - 3 groups will share what they discussed with the class.

2. Introduction (15 mins):

"Last week, we reflected on how the books we read shape how we see ourselves and others. Today, we're going to learn how to evaluate texts critically as future teachers to make sure what we choose affirms student identities, avoids harm, and promotes equity in our classrooms.

We'll use two tools that real educators and school districts use:

- Lee & Low Diversity in Texts rubric, which examines factors like representation, authorship, stereotypes, and accuracy.
- The NYC Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard, which helps evaluate if a text or curriculum is culturally relevant, relevant, and inclusive."

Think about this: If you were a teacher choosing a book for your students, how would you know if it uplifts them or potentially causes harm? Today, you'll learn how."

Then, Think-Pair-Share protocol using this prompt: "Why is it important to evaluate texts before teaching them? What could happen if we don't?" Use student responses to elaborate and address misunderstandings as needed.

3. Jigsaw Reading (30 mins):

Assign students to 4 groups, each responsible for one section of the Lee & Low rubric or CRE Scorecard (e.g., representation, authorship & voice, stereotypes & harmful content, instructional relevance).

- Distribute rubric copies to groups.
- Groups read their assigned section and discuss:
 - What does this section mean in your own words?
 - Why is it important when selecting a text?
- Poster Creation (10 min): Each group creates a small anchor poster summarizing their section

with:

- A title
- A simplified definition
- An example question teachers might ask for that criterion (e.g., “Who is telling the story? Is the author part of the community represented?”)
- Gallery Walk / Share Out (10 min):
 - Groups post their anchor charts around the room.
 - Students walk to each poster, read, and write one sticky note question or connection per poster.
- 4. Guided Practice – Text Evaluation (25 mins):
 - Project an excerpt from *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water*. Read aloud with expression and pause to highlight imagery and themes of resilience, forced migration, and cultural memory.
 - Conduct a Think Aloud Evaluation using one of the rubrics:
 - “Looking at the representation criterion, I see this text centers the voices of Black children and ancestors, written by Black authors with authentic lived experience and research grounding. This suggests it offers insider perspective and cultural accuracy.”
 - Distribute different text excerpts to student pairs:
 - *A Birthday Cake for George Washington* (noting controversies over its depiction of enslaved people)
 - *In Dragonfly’s Tale* (Hopi legend retelling by a non-Native author)
 - *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water* (for a second pair, to compare perspectives)
 - In pairs, students evaluate their assigned text using their chosen rubric. Prompt them to discuss:
 - Which criteria does this text meet strongly?
 - Where might it fall short?
 - What would be the impact on students if you taught this text?
 - Pairs write a brief rationale on chart paper: “We rated this text a ____ for representation because _____.”

7. Group Discussion & Debrief (10 mins):

Pose the following questions for whole-group discussion:

- What differences did you notice in how these texts represent their cultural topics?
- How can evaluating texts with these tools prevent harm or misrepresentation in classrooms?
- Why is it important to consider authorship and community voice when choosing books?

8. Exit Ticket:

QuickWrite Prompt:

“How might these tools help you make better text choices as a teacher? What is one question you still have about evaluating texts?”

Lesson #11 - Pedagogical Strategies for Teaching Diverse Texts

Objective:

Students will explore and analyze pedagogical strategies for teaching diverse texts effectively, with a focus on building inclusive classroom communities and scaffolding instruction to support critical conversations about identity, culture, and equity.

Standards: ([Education CTE CIP](#))

- 208: Design culturally relevant learning that brings real world experiences into educational

spaces/the classroom.

- 404: Discuss how social issues and relationships affect students.
- 405: Promote asset-based perspectives about differences.
- 606: Research culturally relevant and relevant practices in the design of an instructional activity or lesson.

Materials:

- Excerpts from *Cultivating Genius* by Gholdy Muhammad (Identity, Skill, Intellect, Criticality)
- Excerpt from Zaretta Hammond's *Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain*
- Printed pedagogical strategy cards:
 - Building community before complex texts
 - Scaffolding for rigorous content
 - Facilitating critical conversations
 - Addressing potential parent or community concerns
- Chart paper and markers
- Sticky notes

Activities:

1. Do Now (10 mins):

Write - Pair - Share Prompt: "Think about a time when a teacher introduced a topic about race, identity, or injustice. What made you feel safe and engaged in that conversation? **OR** what made you feel uncomfortable or disconnected?"

Students write silently for 2 minutes, share in pairs for 2 mins, then 2 - 3 groups will share what they discussed with the class.

2. Introduction (10 mins):

"Last week, we focused on how to evaluate texts for diversity, representation, and authenticity. But knowing how to choose a good text is only half the work.

This week, we're learning how to teach diverse texts effectively. Teaching a text about identity, oppression, or cultural pride isn't just about reading it aloud. It requires intentional strategies to:

- Build trust and community
- Scaffold understanding so all students can access rigorous content
- Facilitate conversations that might be emotional, complex, or controversial
- Address potential pushback from families or administrators

Today, you'll analyze different strategies teachers use to create brave, affirming spaces where students can engage deeply with diverse literature."

3. Pedagogical Strategy Carousel (25 mins):

- Set up four stations around the room, each with a pedagogical strategy card and guiding questions:
 - Station A: Building Community Before Complex Texts
 - Focus: How can teachers build relationships and trust before introducing topics about identity or oppression?
 - Station B: Scaffolding for Rigorous Content
 - What supports help students access challenging vocabulary, historical context, or cultural references in diverse texts?
 - Station C: Facilitating Critical Conversations
 - What norms and discussion structures make conversations about race, gender,

- or injustice safe and meaningful?
 - Station D: Addressing Potential Pushback
 - How might teachers respond if parents or administrators are concerned about a text's content? What rationale should they give?
- Divide students into groups and assign each to a starting station. Provide chart paper and markers for note-taking.
- At each station (5 minutes each):
 - Students read the strategy card and discuss:
 - What does this strategy look like in practice?
 - Why is it important when teaching diverse texts?
 - Groups write at least 2 key points on their chart paper.
- Rotate groups through all stations.

4. Gallery Walk & Debrief (10 min):

- Groups leave their final notes at each station.
- Students walk around silently to read peers' notes at all stations.
- Back at their seats, prompt whole-class discussion:
 - "Which strategy feels most natural for you as a future teacher?"
 - Which feels most challenging or new?
 - Why are these strategies essential for teaching diverse texts well?"

5. Exit Ticket:

QuickWrite Prompt:

"Which pedagogical strategy do you want to practice when planning your lesson for your field placement? Why?"

Resources

Below is a list of resources that students will engage with throughout this unit:

Adichie, C. N. (2009). *The danger of a single story* [Video]. TEDGlobal.

A powerful video that shows how stereotypes form when we only hear one perspective. We'll watch this early in the unit to kick off a conversation about identity, representation, and why multiple stories matter.

Ganeshram, R., & Brantley-Newton, V. (2016). *A Birthday Cake for George Washington* (1st ed.). Scholastic Press.

This book tells the story of George Washington's enslaved chef, Hercules, through his daughter's eyes. Students will evaluate how slavery is presented and whether it's appropriate to teach, using our critical text evaluation rubrics.

Hannah-Jones, N., Watson, R., & Smith, N. (2021). *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water*. Kokila.

Told in verse, this book helps students think about history from the perspective of Black children tracing their ancestry. Students will analyze it for cultural authenticity and impact, and discuss how it could empower young readers.

Lee & Low Books. (n.d.). *Diversity in Texts® rubric*. Lee & Low.

A simple rubric that checks for authentic representation, accurate language, and bias. Students will use this in small groups to evaluate our sample books and later apply it to books they choose for their own lessons.

NYU Steinhardt, Education Justice Research & Organizing Collaborative (EJ-ROC). (2023). *Culturally Responsive English Language Arts Curriculum Scorecard*. NYU Steinhardt.

<https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/2023-05/CRE%20ELA%20Curriculum%20Scorecard%202023.pdf>

This is a more detailed tool that helps students judge if a book or curriculum supports culturally sustaining teaching. They'll use it during gallery walks and to reflect on their own lesson plans.

Rodanas, K. (1992). *Dragonfly's Tale* (Kristina Rodanas, Illus.). Clarion Books.

A retelling of a Zuni legend by a non-Native author. Students will look at this book to explore who has the right to tell certain stories and how to recognize cultural appropriation or respectful storytelling.

References

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