Equity Tool #1

Photo by Allison Shelley for EDUimages

Educators and Instructional Support Staff as Partners

Estimated completion time: 3–4 hours

Objectives:

Learners who engage with this tool will be able to:

1. Engage in an asset-based review of demographic data to understand the local context and political reality that affects how students engage in learning in Washington.
2. Consider their local education agency's instructional framework to make informed decisions about the implementation of equity-focused social emotional competencies in academic instruction.
3. Use children's picture books to actively engage in critical self-reflection on their role as an adult supporting the social, emotional, and academic development of students in schools.
4. Reflect how their interactions with students support identity-affirming learning environments, regardless of students' social or cultural identity or background.
5. Align a personal understanding of equity and cultural responsiveness to a personal action plan to co-create identity-affirming schools and classrooms.

Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Table of Contents

This tool uses linked videos to engage you and provide context to what you'll learn and your reflections.

*Select the image or the link below for the video **Introduction to Tool #1**. In the video, Dr. Angela Ward introduces the **Essential Question**: As a teacher of record and support staff member, how do I contribute to the cocreation of a student-centered, culturally responsive elementary learning environment?*

Source: https://vimeo.com/816990968/ca829629f4

To Learn More
Read about Dr. Angela Ward's work in engaging adult educational professionals.

Defining Key Terms
Culturally responsive instruction is framed by scholars from multiple backgrounds, races, gender identities, gender expression, sexual orientations, etc., from the field of research in education.
For more information, see the appendix.

Setting the "Container" for Integration

This tool is an extension of Module 1, which focuses on **equity**-centered social emotional learning (SEL).

> *Note:* Language matters. To ensure we have a shared understanding of key terms, we have provided a glossary of bolded terms and sidebar notes about definitions to support your reflection.

Social emotional learning (SEL) is a process through which individuals build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships, and making responsible decisions that support success in school and in life.[1]

Equity-centered SEL sets a vision that focuses on core social emotional learning outcomes such as identity, agency, belonging, **affirmation**, collaborative problem solving, and curiosity. It is the construction of equitable learning environments that focus on redistributing power and increasing student engagement in school and civic life.[2]

Equity-centered SEL prioritizes students' needs through the development of identity-affirming classroom spaces. As an elementary school educator, you can support student's social, emotional, and academic development as they advance from primary to intermediate grade levels.

> **Defining Key Terms**
>
> An **educator** is the teacher of record in an elementary school classroom.

This tool is a self-paced professional learning resource that will help you:

- engage in critical self-reflection,
- highlight **equity** in your educational practice, and
- consider the needs of marginalized students so that all students can thrive in Washington schools.

INTRODUCTION

Time estimate: 60–90 minutes

To be **culturally responsive** and focused explicitly on equity, it's essential to recognize your personal **social identity** and how it might intersect—and, at times, conflict—with the social identities of your students.

In this tool, you will engage in activities with children's picture books that will help you to:

- reflect on your personal social identity, and
- think about and plan for instructional support staff to partner with you in creating culturally responsive classrooms.

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[1] *Appendix c Washington State Social Emotional Learning Implementation Guide*, n.d.
[2] Jagers et al., 2021

INVITING STUDENTS INTO THE CLASSROOM

You can use social emotional competencies to facilitate the academic success of students. Remember, too, that your own social emotional development is just as important as that of your students.

Why Children's Books?

The use of children's books in this tool is intended as a familiar instructional tool to engage you in critical self-reflection on your ways of being and ways of interacting with your students.

The children's books in this tool explore the idea of "difference" and highlight the assets that difference brings to the classroom. Understanding difference is a springboard to opening your space (your classroom space as well as the space in which you dialogue with adults) in ways that enhance your instructional planning and delivery to move toward equity-centered academic–SEL integration.

Book: *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson

Preparing to Read

During the Video: Questions for Reflection

Keep these reflections in mind as you engage with the video.

- Consider the Essential Question.

- Notice how you interact with the text.

- Ask yourself what is familiar and what is new or different to you in the text.

- What personal connection do you make to the text? Why?

- What do you wonder about?

- What troubles you?

- How might you and other adults use this book to talk about difference or how to support students who are different in your school?

Select the image or the link below for a video of the book The Day You Begin *read aloud.*[3]
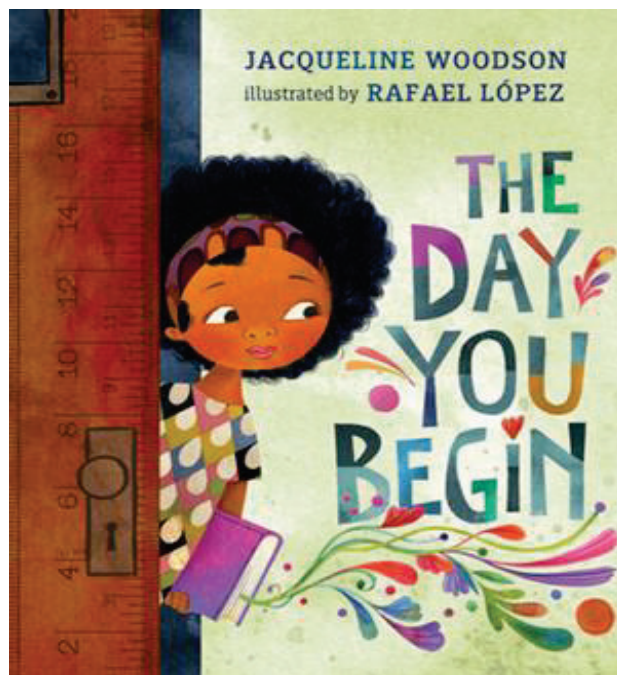
Source: https://youtu.be/KDs5d_qFbEs
Netflix Jr. (YouTube content creator)

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[3] Woodson, 2018

After the Video

Select the image or the link below for Dr. Ward's video response.

After The Day You Begin

01:28

Source: https://vimeo.com/816990992/d11076681b

After engaging with the read-aloud of *The Day You Begin* and reviewing the questions for reflection that follow, think about:

1. How you invite or exclude the assets of other adults who may be able to help you bridge any cultural gaps.

2. How you may be unintentionally creating barriers to your success with students academically, socially, and emotionally.

This tool is designed to support you as you develop and enhance your personal **equity consciousness**.

Take a moment to review the questions for reflection below.

➤ Choose one or more questions to respond to and think about them as you add to or enhance your daily planning and academic instruction.

> ### Defining Key Terms
>
> **Culture:** Everything you believe and everything you do that identifies you as a member of a group and distinguishes you from members of other groups. You may belong to more than one cultural group. Cultures reflect the belief systems and behaviors informed by ethnicity, as well as by other sociological factors, such as gender, age, sexual orientation, and physical ability. Individuals and organizations are defined by their cultures.[4]
>
> **Sphere of Influence:** What you can control, change or share. If you cannot control something, it is not in your sphere of influence.

Additional Questions for Reflection

- What makes **you** "fabulously different" from others you meet?

    o How might asking this question of your students invite them into the classroom space?

    o How might asking this question of an adult who supports student learning in collaboration with you invite them into the classroom space?

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[4] Nuri-Robins, et al., 2012

- What do you notice about the words the author uses to describe the teacher's invitation to the students? *(This is an invitation to consider the feelings evoked by the words the author has chosen.)*

- Is the teacher's welcoming of students similar or different from your own welcoming practice? In what ways?

- What might a daily journey look, sound, and feel like to students in your school? How do you know? How might you invite each child's journey and their story into the classroom?

- What does it feel like to look at people engaging in the world and notice that you are on the outside yet can't seem to find a way in?
  - How might noticing they are on the outside affect students who are different from you in the classroom environment?
  - How might this noticing feel to another adult in your classroom? How do you share the classroom space with other adults to invite new perspectives to enhance your students' learning?

- Why might an adult need to be brave to enter a classroom within which they are not the teacher of record? How might you invite their story(ies) into the classroom?
  - Whose voice is missing if their story(ies) are silenced?
  - What opportunities are missed in the classroom learning environment if their stories are silenced?

WASHINGTON SEL STANDARDS

Time estimate: 30–45 minutes

Rulers provide a good analogy for how we interact with the world. Sometimes we measure (compare) ourselves with others, and other times we measure ourselves against others' *expectations* of us. Sometimes this act of measuring limits our ability to learn and grow from others.

You must attend to your own social emotional needs before you integrate equity-centered SEL within academics. Equity-centered education requires critical self-reflection by the adults responsible for supporting students' transitions from elementary to middle and high schools, through graduation.

Through this tool, we invite you to consider how you partner with educators to broaden your perspective of the lived experiences of your students. In this section, we highlight Washington's high school standards as the minimal standard for adults supporting SEL in elementary, middle and high school. You will be asked to consider these standards and personally reflect on your own skills so that you are consciously aware of the skills you possess and those you need to enhance. The indicators below apply to the content in the children's books shared in this tool.

Adult SEL Standards

- Note your own personal indicators of growth.

- Take 2-3 minutes to jot down a few thoughts as you note areas of personal strength and needed growth. What comes up for you as you note these areas of strength and growth?

Standard 1: Self-Awareness
Indicator: Benchmark 1A
Adult

> *I can demonstrate the ability to analyze the effectiveness of actions I take to deal with my emotions and feelings.*

Indicator: Benchmark 1B

> *I can identify how my perspective affects interactions with others, especially those who are from different cultures and live with different experiences.*

Indicator: Benchmark 1C

> *I can evaluate and revise prior understandings, seek connections to my cultural stories, or formulate questions of interest while considering strategies within and beyond the current context.*

Take a Moment

*Select the image or the link below for Dr. Ward's video **Take a Moment.***

Source: https://vimeo.com/816990931/e0f5e69209

Questions for Reflection

- Who are you?
- With which **social identities** do you identify?
- What do you believe is the role of education?
- How does your belief show in your daily work?
- Does your belief include or exclude students who are different from you? Why or why not?

Critical Self-Reflection

Let's return to the **Essential Question**: As a teacher of record and support staff member, how do I contribute to the co-creation of a student-centered, culturally responsive elementary learning environment?

- Review your first answer to the Essential Question?

- Now consider:

  o the classroom culture you create daily,

  o your personal indicators for growth (see: Washington SEL Standards section above), and

  o the common terms defined so far in this tool.

- How would you answer this question now? What would you add or remove from your first answer?

INVITING STUDENTS INTO THE CLASSROOM

Time estimate: 30–45 minutes

The children's books in this tool offer opportunities for you to use a familiar instructional tool for critical self-reflection as you focus your attention on your ways of being and ways of interacting.

When your level of consciousness shifts to critical questions about your daily work, you are opening doors to perspectives that differ from your own. Reflecting on new perspectives can support your students and help them feel seen, heard, and valued.

Book: *The Proudest Blue* by Ibtihaj Muhammad

Preparing to Read

During the Video: Questions for Reflection

Keep these reflections in mind as you engage with the video.

- Consider the Essential Question.

- Notice how you interact with the text.

- Ask yourself what is familiar and what is new or different to you in the text.

- What personal connection do you make to the text? Why?

- What do you wonder about?

- What troubles you?

- How might you and other adults use this book to talk about difference or how to support students who are different in your school?

Select the image or the link below for a video of the read-aloud of *The Proudest Blue*.[5]
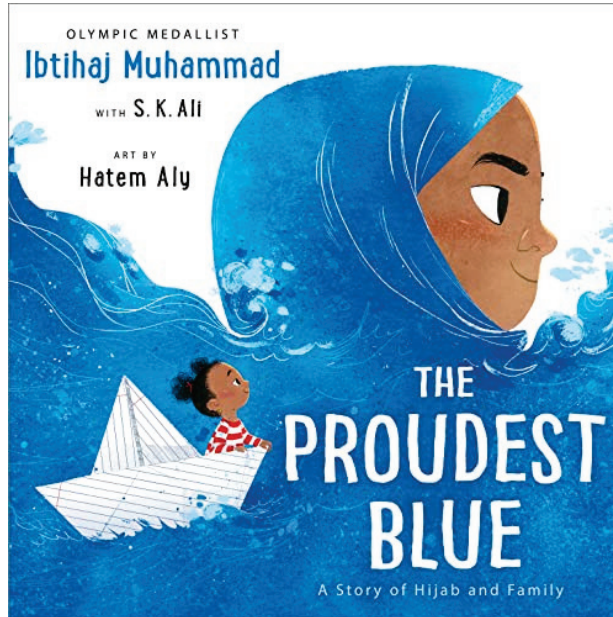
After the Video

The Questions for Reflection are repeated to help you reflect and compare themes and concepts across the books shared in this tool.

The additional questions below will help you work through the self-reflection required for the academic integration of equity-centered SEL. You may want to return to this section later as you develop and enhance your personal equity consciousness.

Take a moment to review the questions for reflection below.

⯈ Choose one or more questions to respond to, while the book is fresh in your mind. Think about the questions as you add to or enhance your daily planning and delivery of academic instruction.

Additional Questions for Reflection

A few themes emerged in the book: pride in identity, acceptance, difference, belonging, religion, and faith.

- In the book the author writes, "Mama: *Don't carry around the hurtful words that others' say.*

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[5] Muhammad, 2020

Drop them. They are not yours to keep. They belong only to those who said them."

- o In the society we live in, words are often used to intentionally hurt others, as in this book. Words also can be used out of ignorance.

- o Consider how you use words intentionally and unintentionally to invite or exclude other adults from sharing the classroom space with you and the students.

- Take an inventory of the books in your classroom library. Who and whose culture do the protagonists in these books represent?

- o Are students able to see in the experiences of the protagonists' connections to their personal lived experiences in the books available to them?

- Adults serve as models for students who are developing their social, emotional and cognitive awareness. In *The Proudest Blue*, the main character Faizah uses a strategy to stay aware of her surroundings: the number of steps it takes her to get away from hurtful interactions.

- o What strategies do you model for students to enable them to deal with hurt, harm, or difficult situations?

WHY EQUITY-CENTERED SEL?

Time estimate: 15–30 minutes

What Is Equity-Centered SEL, and Why Should I Model it in the Classroom?

Equity-centered SEL:

- provides a strong foundation on which to frame student support services in schools, and

- addresses disparities and **disproportionality**. [6]

Schools may use a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) to align all supports and resources for student success. As the MTSS is used to examine student needs, adults can reflect on the social, emotional, cognitive, cultural, and academic needs of students.

Equity-centered SEL is foundational to a successful MTSS. When you help students socially engage with adults and their peers and to recognize how their emotions support or limit their ability to learn, you nurture the skills necessary for their academic growth.

SEL work starts with you. As an educator, you create the conditions and space in the learning environment that allow students to thrive. You also need opportunities to engage in critically self-reflective dialogue to shift and enhance your thinking and reflect on your biases and assumptions. This helps ensure that all students receive empathy and have the ability to achieve their full potential.

Further, teamwork with other educators:

- broadens your reach,

- provides opportunities to connect with your colleagues in a new way, and

- allows you to connect with your students by opening windows and doors to their lived experiences in the classroom environment.

Educator Evaluation

As you engage in instructional design for the academic integration of equity-centered SEL, it is important to consider the common teaching practices in the Teacher/Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) instructional frameworks. Each instructional framework asks you to consider the context within which you teach and to select the strategy for that context while reflecting on, monitoring, and adjusting your instruction as you receive authentic feedback from your students.

As you engage with this tool, consider the instructional framework used in your local school. Be mindful of your local instructional requirements and begin to make connections to the work you do

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[6] Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d.

daily to support students. Think about how your daily work and the decisions you make support student social, emotional, and academic growth. The table that follows highlights entry points for each instructional framework that corresponds to the content in this tool.

Marzano's Teacher Evaluation Model
Domain 1: Observable Classroom Strategies and Behaviors **Criterion 5**: Safe, Positive Learning Environment 5.2 Reviewing expectations for rules and procedures 5.6 Displaying objectivity and control ***Domain 2: Planning and Preparing*** **Criterion 3**: Differentiation 3.2 Planning and preparing for the needs of all students ***Domain 4: Collegiality and Professionalism*** **Criterion 7**: Families and Community 7.2 Engaging in timely and professional interactions with parents and the school community **Criterion 8**: Professional Practices 8.2 Promoting positive interactions with colleagues

CEL 5D+ Teacher Evaluation Rubric 3.0
Criterion 3: Recognizing individual student learning needs and developing strategies to address those needs ***Student Engagement*** SE3: Capitalizing on students' strengths CP4: Differentiated instruction for students **Criterion 4**: Providing clear and intentional focus on subject matter content and curriculum **Criterion 5**: Fostering and managing a safe, positive learning environment **Criterion 7**: Communicating and collaborating with parents and the school community **Criterion 8**: Exhibiting collaborative and collegial practices focused on improving instructional practice and student learning ***Professional Collaboration and Communication*** PCC1: Collaboration with peers and administrators to improve student learning

Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2011)
Criterion 2: Demonstrating effective teaching practices

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities
4a: Reflecting on teaching

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation
1b: Demonstrating knowledge of students

Domain 3: Instruction
3e. Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness

Criterion 5: Fostering and managing a safe, positive learning environment

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities
4c: Communicating with families

Criterion 8: Exhibiting collaborative and collegial practices focused on improving instructional practice and student learning

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities
4d: Participating in a professional community
4e: Growing and developing professionally

Inviting Students into the Classroom

Time estimate: 60–90 minutes

Let's "read" one more book. Remember to critically self-reflect on your ways of being and ways of interacting with students. What themes and concepts emerge? What connections do you make to the first two books?

Book: *The Kindest Red* by Ibtihaj Muhammad

Preparing to Read

During the Video: Questions for Reflection

Keep these reflections in mind as you engage with the video.

- Consider the Essential Question.

- Notice how you interact with the text.

- Ask yourself what is familiar and what is new or different to you in the text.

- What personal connection do you make to the text? Why?

- What do you wonder about?

- What troubles you?

- How might you and other adults use this book to talk about difference or how to support students who are different in your school?

Select the image or the link below for a video of the read-aloud of *The Kindest Red*.[7]

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4AUYwgVOSE
Andersen Press (YouTube content creator)

After the Video

We provide additional questions below, to aid your reflection as you think about how to partner with the adults who share your classroom space for integration of equity-centered SEL. You may want to return to this section later.

Take a moment to review the questions for reflection below.

⟩⟩ Choose one or more questions to respond to, while the book is fresh in your mind. Think about the questions as you add to or enhance your daily planning and delivery of academic instruction.

Additional Questions for Reflection

- What structures and processes exist in your classroom space to invite other adults in?
    - o Consider how those structures and processes may limit the access of another adult and keep them from building the type of collegial relationship with you that would enable them to support you and the students socially, emotionally, academically, and culturally.
- Ms. Ramirez asks students what kind of world they want to live in, to draw it and give it a name. Faizah and Sophie are optimistic and reach out to the other children to be inclusive.

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[7] Muhammad, 2023

They make space for all the other children in their kind-powered world.

- o How do you work with adults to encourage and model for students how to pass on kindness to each other?

- o How do you pass on kindness to adults who support your students?

- o How do you know whether your definition of (or way of showing) kindness is similar to or different from the definition (demonstration) of the adults you work with?

Critical Self-Reflection

Let's return to the **Essential Question**: *As a teacher of record and support staff member, how do I contribute to the co-creation of a student-centered, culturally responsive elementary learning environment?*

- Review your answer to the Essential Question.

- How would you answer this question now? What would you add or remove from your first answer? Take 5–7 minutes for your review.

TAXONOMY APPROACH

Ways of Being

The books shared in this tool are invitations to consider the impacts of being in a world, school, or classroom that shows you daily that you are different. We offer children's books as a window into the world of people who might be different to offer you an opportunity to consider a different way of being in the world for someone unlike you.

Who you are informs the daily decisions you make for your students. These decisions are influenced by the background, values, biases, and beliefs that make you the unique individual that you are.

What might it look, sound, and feel like to create with other adults? With students? Consider your ways of being connected to:

- Instructional decisions you make
    - Curricular: what is taught and what resources are used to teach
    - Pedagogical: how you teach
- Interpersonal decisions you make
    - Classroom management style
    - Classroom environment
    - Trust building with students and adults
    - Relationship building with students and adults

Take some time to critically reflect:

- Review your decisions.
    - Revise or enhance your daily actions based on the review.
    - Reframe your actions to best support observed and articulated student needs.

Ways of Interacting

As you consider what your ways of being look, sound, and feel like to your colleagues and your students, think about how you interact with them daily.

- As you interact, do you measure yourself against the expectations of other adults?
- Do you give yourself permission to not know the answer and find ways to grow and learn to improve your craft?
- Now is a good time to consider the series of questions posed earlier in this tool. Your answers will support your equity consciousness and social emotional competency and,

ultimately, how you choose to reflect on your interactions in an equity-focused way.

- o Who are you?
- o With which social identities do you identify?
  - ▪ If this is your first time naming your social identities, how does it feel to name them? Why?
- o What do you believe is the role of education?
  - ▪ How does your belief show in your daily work?
  - ▪ Does your belief include or exclude students who are different from you? Why or why not?
- How do you share the classroom space: with students? other adults? families?

My Contributions to a Student-Centered, Culturally Responsive Classroom

It's a Process

Actions that contribute to the co-creation of a student-centered, culturally responsive elementary classroom happen through a process of ongoing:

- Dialogue with people who have perspectives different from your own.
- Critical self-reflection on your personal sphere of influence.
- Growing with and learning about your students to co-create- an inclusive classroom environment.

The items here represent multiple entry points that one must consider throughout the process.

Adapted from the research of Angela M. Ward, PhD.
Source: https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/75801

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