

Sample of a highly rated proposal from the 2023-2024 cycle.

Note - In the 2024-2025 cycle, some categories were combined/streamlined so not every aspect of the below proposal will match the current proposal.

Title of Project

Critically Examining Texts Through the Lens of Equity in the SPS Curriculum

Amount Requested

\$5000

Have you received a BU Consortium grant in the past?

No

Is this proposal for continuing funds for a Consortium-funded project?

No

District

Somerville Public Schools

Lead Contact Name

Lead Contact Position

Equity Literacy Specialist and special education English teacher (9, 12)

District Administrator Name

District Administrator Position

Director of Equity and Excellence

District Administrator Email

Certification of District Administrator Review

- By checking here, I (Lead Contact) certify that I have reviewed this proposal with the District Administrator named above. He/she endorses the project, recommends it for funding, and will support its implementation. The District Administrator will be copied on all grant correspondence.

School Name & Address

Lead Contact School Phone

Lead Contact Personal Phone

Lead Contact Email

Lead Contact Summer Contact Info

Additional Participating Teacher and/or Administrator Info (if applicable).

Participating Wheelock Faculty (if applicable)

Dr. Laura Jimenez

Abstract

Teams of first/second-grade teachers and middle-grade teachers will review the current texts in the English Language Arts/reading curriculum. Teams will consider texts for complexity; culturally responsive pedagogy; representation of authors, illustrators, and protagonists; opportunity for criticality; and volume of texts available. Teams will use tools to examine the texts in the curriculum; explore how the texts align with the curriculum frameworks for growth with phonemic awareness, decoding, and comprehension; consider what is needed, and provide recommendations for how to use the texts. The teams will work with school-based equity specialists and the district equity literacy specialist to collect and organize the findings and recommendations.

Project Goals

The project goal is to collect titles of texts used at each grade level band and collect findings for:
Representation: Race, gender and sexuality, families, culture, religion, disability, language, author/illustrator identities

Tropes and Story Development: stereotypes, deficit language and imagery, trauma stories, cultural specificity/generalization, anthropomorphism, graphic representation and connection to the text, content warnings

Provide recommendations for creating theme-based units that integrate current texts for interdisciplinary learning

Identify gaps in representation and variation. Provide recommendations (titles/authors)

Provide recommendations for how the units can engage students in criticality.

Consider Text Complexity for vocabulary, figurative language, character development, lexile level, knowledge demands, single v multiple themes, simple and complex themes/characters, single/multiple perspectives, inferential and direct analysis, cross-disciplinary opportunities

Provide recommendations for aligning theme-based units to the Learning for Justice standards

Provide recommendations for how the units will guide writing, speaking, and listening instruction

Activities & Timeline

July and August 2023:

Recruit and hire teachers for project work

Collect and organize text titles in shared spreadsheet

Review text evaluation tools to determine how texts will be analyzed.

Begin to collect titles and sort texts for analysis

Grade 1 and 2: Collect titles from the district scope and sequence and sort by order timeline books are read

Begin text analysis

September-October 2023

Grades 1-2: Reach out to teachers for supplemental texts and when they are used in individual classrooms.

Grade 6-8: Collect titles from school-based classrooms (1-2 teachers per grade level per school) and differentiate between mentor texts, supplemental texts, and independent reading favorites.

Continue text analysis.

November-December 2023:

Complete text analysis

Analyze Data: What texts stand out in all categories? What representation is missing? What content warnings are necessary to provide? How does the lexile level correlate with the text complexity?

January-April 2024

Collect and organize recommendations including

Text sets

Themes

Essential questions

Learning for Justice standards

Opportunities for interdisciplinary instruction

May and June 2024:

Finalize documents and provide recommendations to district leadership.

Educator Impact

The project will provide teachers with opportunities for learning about text selection, how to validate texts, and how to look beyond their own classroom and across grades to build learning. It will also encourage teachers to consider interdisciplinary approaches to text and multiple access points to texts and text sets. It will encourage teachers to question how the learning is impacting students and how the text(s) prepares students for future learning. Teachers will be able to grapple with and consider the through line for how curricula texts build student engagement. The project will provide access to a wide variety of texts encouraging teachers to investigate the scope of everchanging languages of literacy and literature for young people. Ultimately teachers will more confidently engage in critical literacy.

Student Impact

The outcomes of this project will build reading engagement and encourage students to build their own reading identities. By providing mirrors for students to feel seen in books and windows to encounter unfamiliar perspectives (Bishop, 1991) students' engagement will increase and their opportunities for criticality will be purposeful. Ultimately, students will uncover increased joy in reading and literacy. They will feel cared for and celebrated by their teachers, encouraging a sense of belonging. Students will internalize their own agency and celebrate their genius "the brilliance, intellect, ability, cleverness, and artistry that have been flowing through their minds and spirits across generations" (Muhammad, 2020), cultivating their agency.

Evaluation

The purpose of the project is to evaluate the texts in the 1-2, and 6-8 curricula critically, and provide recommendations for how texts can be incorporated into thematic units. The evaluation will consider how representation, text variation, and academic rigor will enhance the existing curriculum.

Using the agreed-upon text assessment tools, the team will collect data and submit a robust spreadsheet of findings of the texts assessed.

The team will create and provide a list of texts organized by thematic units and accompanied by Learning for Justice Standards.

All findings will be shared with the Assistant Superintendent for Academics, the Director of Equity and Excellence, the K-8 Curriculum Director(s), and The English Language Arts Department Head, grades 9-12.

Project Goals will be met when recommendations are approved and integrated into the curriculum map.

Inclusive Practices

Increase representative texts, ensuring mirrors and windows (Bishop, 1991).
Consider the representation of texts in our curriculum and who is missing (Park-Dahlen, 2018).
Lift culturally responsive texts to the surface. Elevate our students' identities and center culturally responsive literacy (Parker, 2022).
Increase opportunities for students to engage in productive struggle (learning how to learn) to increase brain power (Hammond, 2015)
Increase text sets cultivated to build skill, engagement, and students' identities/histories (Muhammad, 2020).
Increase criticality: Opportunities for the mentor text to interact with exercises, activities, and supplemental texts to engage students in culturally responsive discourse (Muhammad, 2020).

Stipends

- Participant 1 (1-2 grade teacher/literacy coach): \$1080 (36 hours at \$30 per hour)
- Participant 2 (1-2 grade teacher/literacy coach): \$1080 (36 hours at \$30 per hour)
- Participant 3 (middle grades literacy teacher): \$1080 (36 hours at \$30 per hour)
- Participant 4 (middle grades literacy teacher): \$1080 (36 hours at \$30 per hour)
- The rationale is to identify teachers/coaches working directly with students at the 1-2 and 6-8 grade levels who are committed to the work.

Materials & Supplies

- Published Scholarship to support text analysis \$230
- Single copies of texts to examine and recommend \$450

Total Expense Dollar Amount

Total Expense: \$5000

Are you able to complete your project if not fully funded?

If the project is not fully funded, the equity specialists will continue at a slower pace.

Are other funds/in-kind contributions supporting your project?

District funds are used to pay the (stipended) Equity Literacy Specialist and School Equity Specialists for their time and work.

How will you sustain the project or its impact beyond the funding period?

Beyond the funding period, we will incorporate the findings into the curriculum and seek additional grants to expand the literacy investigation.

Upload additional materials

- [Critically-Examining-Texts-SPS-Curriculum-Review.pdf](#)