

Source:

Mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors

Rudine Sims Bishop, 1990

Diversifying educational material



As young people grow and begin to make sense of the world around them, the stories they encounter—in books, films, posters, and other cultural materials—play a crucial role. These stories help shape identity, build empathy, and foster a sense of belonging. But only if all young people can see themselves in them.

That's why it matters what stories we choose to include. The metaphors of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors are powerful tools for thinking about representation in educational materials.



Mirrors: Reflections of our self and our experiences

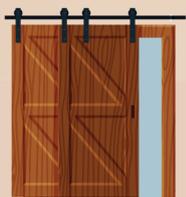
Books can reflect a reader's own identity, culture, and experiences. They say, You belong here. You matter.

When young people don't see themselves in the stories around them, it sends a message that their lives don't count. Representation isn't just nice—it's necessary.

Windows: Books also offer views into lives and worlds different from our own.

They open up understanding: How many of the stories we teach include women? LGBTQ+ people? People of color? Immigrants? Disabled people?

Windows invite curiosity, compassion, and awareness of the broader human experience.



Sliding doors: Some stories do more than just show—they let readers step into another world.

They help readers feel what it's like to live someone else's reality.

This immersive experience builds deep empathy and a richer understanding of the world's complexity.



Use these metaphors as a lens when choosing educational content.

Ask:

- Who is being represented?
- Who is missing?
- Who gets to tell their story?

Representation in education isn't about checking boxes. It's about shaping a future where every student can see themselves—and others—with dignity and depth.



Civil Connections
Building robust communities



CURRICULUM PLANNING WORKSHEET

Subject:		Grade Level:	
Date / Duration of Lesson:		Core Theme/ Objective:	
Selected material			
Title:		Author/Creator:	
Type of Material			
Representation Audit			
Aspect	Yes / No / Unsure	Notes / Observations	
Reflects students' identities			
Offers new perspectives			
Avoids stereotypes			
Authentically voiced			
Promotes empathy & inclusion			
Mirror, Window, or Sliding Glass Door			
Mirror (Self-reflection): How might this material affirm the identity of your students?			
Window (Insight into others): What new experiences or cultures are students exposed to?			
Sliding Glass Door (Empathy & immersion): Does the material allow students to imagine living a different experience? How?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is not represented in this unit or curriculum? • What stories, authors, or perspectives could be added to fill this gap? • What is your next step to make your materials more inclusive? 			
Student Engagement Ideas	Identity mapping Book comparison (mirror vs. window) Journal response: "Where did you see yourself?" Class discussion: "What surprised you?"		

