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Guidelines for Recognizing Diversity and Promoting Respect

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General Criteria

A. *Do the program documents and supporting materials contain either implicit or explicit statements, examples which promote understanding and respect for individuals and groups?*

B. *Do the program documents and supporting materials help each student to nurture a personal positive self-image by taking an essentially positive approach to human similarities and differences?*

C. *Do the program documents and supporting materials convey that human endeavour and achievement may be found in different ways in all human groups?*

D. *Do the program documents and supporting materials take advantage of content and strategies that can assist the teacher in dealing positively with understanding and respect for others?*

E. *Do the program documents and supporting materials implicitly and explicitly promote the skills of critical thinking and their application in examining people and their actions?*

When developing resources for students and teachers, one must consider the Recognizing Diversity and Promoting Respect criteria to ensure that all references, including visuals, promote respect and understanding for all members of society as listed in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Resources used as instructional material, which includes subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion or human sexuality, may require notification to parents under "Notice to parent", section 50.1, of the School Act.

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Notes on "General Criteria"
[Based on "Guidelines for Tolerance and Understanding" – October 1984]

Note: *Minority groups may refer to different groups as related to age; gender; national or cultural/ethnic origin; colour; religious, spiritual, secular and political beliefs; physical/mental condition or social-economic status.*

Introductory Comments

As noted in *Background and Introduction*, the curriculum review's task was to "determine the adequacy of the ways in which tolerance, understanding and respect for minority groups and individuals are addressed and fostered; identify specific areas where changes are required and recommend appropriate follow-up action to be taken." ("Committee on Tolerance and Understanding – Final report", p. 68) The criteria were developed originally to identify shortcomings that arise from what is included in the curriculum and what is not, which led to the development of the general criteria and the questions that define them further.

By exploring the congruency between the resource and the criteria, the reviewer/developer will be able to discover whether or not, or to what extent the resource meets the Recognizing Diversity and Promoting Respect (RDPR) Criteria.

A. **Do the program documents and supporting materials contain either implicit or explicit statements, examples that promote understanding and respect for individuals and groups?**

Where applicable to the learning context, do the program and its supporting materials and learning resources:
1. present minority groups in a variety of professional or executive roles, vocations, or other gainful occupations?
2. provide a balanced presentation of descriptions or depictions of people from various minorities involved in non-traditional activities?
3. authentically portray minority groups within the setting and period of history presented?
4. contain references to, or illustrations of, minority groups approximately evenly (in both number and importance), except as limited by accuracy or special purpose?
5. present the achievements of minority groups as based on factors apart from their age; gender; national or cultural/ethnic origin; colour; religious, spiritual, secular and political beliefs; physical/mental condition or social-economic status?

Criterion A – Reflection and Guidance Notes
1. Often, textual and visual references contain statements supporting or reflecting the RDPR Criteria, such as, "This interactive resource presents Canada's multicultural society in such a way as to encourage children to be proud of their own background and interested in the heritage of other people." Teaching resources may list several positive RDPR statements among their general and specific learning outcomes. In videos and fiction, characters often make positive comments.

2. & 3. If the resource is designed to present society as a whole (e.g. modern world history), are the various minorities represented to a realistic extent? Are both traditional and untraditional roles portrayed? Are options presented and valued (in resources depicting societies where there are such alternatives)? There is a place for diversity: the woman who trains to be an astronaut, the househusband, the housewife, the Jewish couple who follows the orthodox customs and the Cree family with the father who is a lawyer, the mother who is a social worker, and the children who go to a school where Cree customs are taught.

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B. Do the program documents and supporting materials help each student to nurture a personal positive self-image by taking an essentially positive approach to human similarities and differences?

Where applicable to the learning context, do the program and its supporting materials and learning resources:

1. present a fair proportion of both minority and majority persons in mentally active, creative and problem-solving roles?
2. present a fair proportion of both minority and majority persons succeeding or failing in various circumstances?
3. limit the depiction of minority groups only to the root culture or are depictions of these groups within the mainstream of Canadian life included?
4. portray minority groups in such a way that members of the groups would approve of the way in which they are portrayed?
5. include examples of minority heroes; and, if so, are they admired only for the same qualities that have made majority heroes famous and because what they have done has benefited the majority culture?

Criterion B – Reflection and Guidance Notes

1. Are majority groups included? To what extent should they be represented in the resource? When determining if any group has been omitted inappropriately, consider such factors as: the purpose, the degree of detail or depth provided in portrayals, the setting, the type of activity and the number of people. Some resources focus so much on the problems of minority groups that they fail to offer any credit to majority groups.

2. Look for mentally active, creative, problem-solving roles in resources where there are seniors, teens, children, women, people in developing countries, religious groups, people with disabilities and unemployed people. For example, a person with disabilities writes a letter to Parks and Recreation asking for wheelchair-accessible washrooms. A grandmother is pictured comforting a child. Sometimes, a resource has many negative references, such as people portrayed as victims of prejudice; however, the intensity of their struggle reveals positive attributes that far outweigh the effect of the undesirable behaviours and situations.

3. When answering the question about whether minority group portrayals are limited to depictions of the root culture, ask yourself, "What should be included?" If modern Canadian society is being depicted, then, unless a particular context provides reasons for an exception, minority group members should be depicted in the mainstream of Canadian life, as well as in the root culture. It may be necessary to check the title of the resource, the introduction, or the rationale in a text or guide to determine whether the resource was designed to present or represent a society or a community. Some resources are created specifically to depict a particular group, a specific culture or family.

4. Consider the passage, "portray minority groups in such a way that members of the group portrayed would approve." If you do not belong to the group, put yourself in the shoes of the person or persons described. Would you like to be depicted that way? Do you know of factors that could account for some or all group members reacting to the portrayals differently from the way that you would initially expect?

5. Inclusion of minority role models, e.g., Terry Fox and Chief Dan George, is an effective strategy to help students that belong to the hero's group feel that this resource is for and about them. Does the resource portray heroes that are less famous and more contemporary? The two mentioned above are so well known that their inclusion is perhaps not as beneficial as the presentation of a less renowned person. Do the minority heroes fit more than one RDPR category? For example, a biographical sketch in a Career and Technology Studies resource, tells of a woman who founded her own business and has become very wealthy. She sold eggs at five years old to help support her family, is the daughter of a Kwakiutl

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chief, was seriously disabled for several years, and is actively involved in Indigenous rights issues. People from several minority groups might consider her their role model.

C. **Do the program documents and supporting materials convey that human endeavour and achievement may be found in different ways in all human groups?**

Where applicable to the learning context, do the program and its supporting materials and learning resources:
1. present the achievements and contributions of minority groups to life and culture in Canada or the world?
2. identify, as role models, members of minority groups who are making important contributions to present day society?
3. suggest that minority people can positively influence the society in which they live?
4. accurately depict the contributions made by minority cultures, nationalities, ethnic groups and people with disabilities?
5. suggest that people from various social and/or economic and political groups of Canadian society can positively influence the society in which they live?

Criterion C – Reflection and Guidance Notes
2. & 3. Mini-biographies and profiles frequently present role models of ordinary members of minority groups collaborating with other minority and majority groups, struggling in untraditional roles and succeeding. Digital and print profiles and stories can often offer great role models representative of both groups. Individuals cooperate, contribute and/or positively influence society. For example:
   • A First Nations Elder is invited to talk to students about cultural perspectives,
   • teens are involved in dialogues with their MLA about ways youth can assist in solving political issues,
   • a person with disabilities inspires students to explore their own strength rather than dwelling on weaknesses.

4. When contributions of a particular cultural or religious group are listed, it is important that they are contextualized and presented as a result of hard work and dedication. Look for omissions of contributions. Some resources will only list the scientific and historical achievements of the European tradition, completely omitting the discoveries and inventions of Africans, Eurasians, Indigenous Peoples and others. Some First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) groups' democratic concepts were adapted into the American constitution. Unless the focus is on the past, make sure that, when describing contributions of FNMI Peoples, the resource does not limit description to bygone eras, implying by omission that these groups have nothing to offer modern society. FNMI Peoples developed medicines that are still in use today. Modern psychotherapy uses theories similar to those developed by Indigenous Peoples in the past. Some traditional FNMI Peoples' educational theories and methodology are currently being used in classrooms and explored by educational theorists and practitioners, as illustrated in the section *Indigenous Pedagogy* within the website *Walking Together: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum.*

D. **Do the program documents and supporting materials take advantage of content and strategies that can assist the teacher in dealing positively with understanding and respect for others?**

Where applicable to the learning context, do the program and its supporting materials and learning resources:
1. authentically describe beliefs and customs of minority groups and help students to realize that these beliefs and customs are important and meaningful to the groups who hold them?

2. supply an accurate and sound balance in the matter of historical perspective, making it clear that all cultural, ethnic, political and religious groups have mixed heritages, which can well serve as sources of both pride and group humility?

3. promote the understanding that we must accept each other on the basis of individual worth, regardless of gender, cultural, ethnic, religious, political, or social and/or economic background?

4. portray minority groups in society in such a way as to build positive images—mutual understanding and respect, acceptance, and commitment to ensure equal opportunity for all?

5. include a variety of cultural symbols to which all students can relate?

Criterion D – Reflection and Guidance Notes
1. Note that validation by someone knowledgeable about a particular group or topic may be necessary, if:
   - you do not know whether a description is authentic or suspect that an inaccuracy is possible,
   - the resource contains much detail about an event, tradition, symbol, etc. likely to be important to a particular group.

2. Does the resource reveal both the positive and negative behaviours and attitudes of the various groups portrayed? For instance, if a video details war atrocities committed by the Nazis, does it also point out that before World War II, German government's policies substantially strengthened the country's economy? Resources dealing with world history sometimes focus on the ways in which the developed nations have exploited the developing countries. Some Canadian history print and digital resources dwell on the mistreatment of FNMI Peoples by Caucasians and do not include any examples of non-FNMI individuals or groups actively opposing this type of treatment. Without omitting or glossing over the many instances when members of one group have cruelly wronged persons of another group, the resource should attempt to provide some balance by presenting factors causing the behaviour or portraying positive qualities exhibited by members of the group that have acted inappropriately. Asking students to suggest ways in which members of these groups can collaborate or could have cooperated to bring about positive interaction and understanding of one another can be a valuable strategy.

3. Does the resource promote acceptance of all individuals? In some resources, characters make statements showing a lack of respect, but the individuals' behaviour and the presentation by the developer, including the use of critical questions and activities, will give the overall impression that respect for others is important and desirable. Other resources may suggest their philosophy, rationale and content aligns with the Alberta RDPR criteria and learning outcomes, yet the message given through examples or instruction is that a particular group is not as worthy of respect as others. Some resources may include references denigrating particular groups; e.g., people who are overweight or vegetarians. Examine the tone of the resource. A resource with an authoritarian or condescending tone is unlikely to promote respect and understanding. Suggestions and options promoting creativity and respect are more congruent with the RDPR criteria than directions and regulations, and are preferable where appropriate. In some situations, such as presenting rules of safety and legality, the directive mode is suitable. Some resources approach topics and students negatively; e.g., "Do not do that." or "Students will fail unless..." Appropriate resources offer information and activities in ways that invite students to endeavour and succeed; e.g., "You may wish to try…", "You may enjoy…" or "We encourage you to…"

4. Look very carefully at the resource to see if the questions, images and activities are actually likely to bring about increased understanding and respect through positive images of people.
   a. Some materials, usually videos, CD-ROMs or DVDs may contain attempts at humour that actually denigrate people.

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b. Does a video present teens or members of any group frequently quarreling or putting down one another rather than cooperating? If there is no valid reason (e.g., critical thinking activity) for such negative images, these portrayals are likely to promote low self-esteem.

c. If people in history or literature behave negatively, activities can be included which ask students to find the causes of such conduct, and to suggest alternative actions or to put themselves in the character's place.

d. An over-emphasis on problems may result in: a lack of understanding, fear, distrust or distress in learners who are not developmentally equipped to deal with such complexities. Certain resources about environmental issues preach gloom and doom, rather than suggesting that all individuals should cooperate as responsible caregivers of our earth. They could incite fear and helplessness. An inappropriate graphic or scenario on the topic of sexuality could lower self-esteem, embarrass or confuse a young student. After viewing a resource designed to warn primary students to be cautious with strangers, some children may be afraid to interact with other people. Some content and strategies have even more potential to inadvertently harm sensitive students if their personal experiences are similar to those depicted in the resource. For example, a refugee youth who fled violence in her or his homeland may be further traumatized by a video depicting war.

5. If there is any reason to doubt the accuracy of a visual or print symbol, be sure to document your concern.

E. Do the program documents and supporting material implicitly and explicitly promote the skills of critical thinking and their application in examining people and their actions?

Where applicable to the learning context, do the program and its supporting materials and learning resources:
1. assist in motivating students to examine their own values and attitudes towards minority groups?
2. assist students to recognize clearly the basic similarities among all members of the human race, and the uniqueness of every single individual?
3. help students to understand and appreciate that all people build on knowledge across time and across cultures and that the future depends upon our ability to live together in an increasingly interdependent world?
4. go beyond over-simplifications or stereotypes and offer genuine insight into another culture?
5. subject doctrine or propaganda to assessment through the process of critical thinking?

Criterion E – Reflection and Guidance Notes
3. Many resources present, explicitly or implicitly, through statement or example, the ideas that all people build on knowledge across time and across cultures, and that the future depends upon our ability to live together in an increasingly interdependent world. A mathematics online resource may depict mathematicians' contributions from many different nations, cultures and ethnic groups.

4. Look carefully at such strategies as role-play and game activities. Role-play may occasionally reinforce stereotypes, rather than lead to increased insight, if students are not encouraged to do research or ask questions about their roles or simulated situations.

5. A resource may present doctrine, propaganda or bias. A developer or reviewer who has an impression that a resource is problematic, although few specific negative references are identified, should check carefully for bias. The following considerations can be useful in detecting bias:

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a. Very often, bias is presented most subtly through emotionally loaded words, or even through the punctuation; e.g., the title: *Sacred Trust? A history of Brian Mulroney and the Conservative Party*.

b. Does the resource include stereotypes? Bias through stereotypes is found frequently in proposed curriculum materials.

c. The passive voice can make an incident or description seem unimportant, although it may be very relevant to a particular group; e.g., a statement such as: "The Canadians were killed on the first Tuesday in November."

d. Using the past tense too frequently when describing an ethnic group's culture can present the impression that the culture no longer exists.

e. Using such qualifiers as *intelligent*, *courteous* or *articulate* too often to describe a particular group can make it seem that these qualities are unusual, and not attributes found among all people.

f. Use the technique of putting yourself in the other person's shoes to check for bias. If there is a bias, does it present the people described favourably or unfavourably? If you were that person, would you prefer to be described as a "money-hungry exploiter of resources" or as a "businessperson contributing to productivity and development"?

g. Look at the people profiled in the resource. What values do they exemplify or encourage? Are there questions or activities about their life style or achievements?

h. Are other points of view or pertinent factors omitted? Occasionally, the reviewer or developer may ask to have a particular topic or excerpt examined by someone who is an expert in that area to ascertain whether bias exists.

i. If the resource presents only one side of an issue, are there critical thinking questions designed to promote student awareness and examination of the bias, doctrine or propaganda? Are these questions likely to get the desired result?

j. Sometimes a resource was originally developed to present a certain viewpoint. For example, a resource intended to promote the benefits of cooperation as more desirable than competition in physical education.

k. Frequently, resources published by governments, associations or businesses strongly promote a particular viewpoint; e.g., a resource developed by a lumber company might discuss the history and current situation in the forest industry, without a hint of the fact that some people are concerned about the destruction of trees and animal habitats. Only the benefits are presented. Until the reviewer or developer reflects on personal knowledge of the topic, the omission of negative factors such as disadvantages, problems, or situations that need improvement may be difficult to notice.

By reflecting on the congruency between the resource and the RDPR criteria, reviewers and developers can discover whether or not and to what extent the materials promote recognition of diversity and respect for self and others.

Bibliography for "Notes on "General Criteria"

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Guidelines for Tolerance and Understanding. *Alberta Education, October 1984.*

Populot Educational Resources, *Detecting Prejudice: A Handbook for You on Discrimination in Visual Materials*, Toronto, Williams and Wallace Productions International, 1979.

Saskatchewan Education Community Education Branch, *Beyond Bias: Informational Guidelines for Reducing Negative Bias in Instructional Materials,* Regina, Saskatchewan, Community Education Branch, Saskatchewan Education, 1984.

Background and Introduction – Section I, unpublished, Alberta Education.

Focus Statements

[Adapted from *Guidelines for Tolerance and Understanding* – October 1984]

AGE REFERENCES

The materials:
a) present persons of all ages in a range of vocational and avocational pursuits;

b) present the achievements of persons as based on factors in addition to ages (e.g., competency, skill, knowledge);

c) contain balanced references to, or illustrations of persons belonging to all age groups, except as limited by accuracy or special purpose;

d) present the impression, through illustrations or suggestion, that health, activity and skill are attributes of all age groups;

e) present people of all ages in ways that members of these groups would probably approve.

GENDER REFERENCES

The materials:
a) recognize the contributions of both males and females to society;

b) portray males and females in writing and illustrations in ways which accurately reflect society at the time being studied;

c) present the writing in a style which acknowledges males and females without resorting to cumbersome conventions (e.g., his/her);

d) portray decisions made by males and females relative to career choices, roles, etc. in ways which reflect a range of options available in contemporary society.

CULTURAL/ETHNIC REFERENCES

The materials incorporate culture, ethnicity, colour and/or nationality in ways that:
a) portray lifestyles, institutions, and society so that they reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of Canada;

b) portray cultural, ethnic and national groups so as to reflect current knowledge in the social sciences (as opposed to negative myths, stereotypes, patronizing overtones, etc.);

c) represent cultural, ethnic and national groups within literature, art, history, etc. in ways which reflect accurately the norms and context of the time period being studied;

d) reflect the positive, creative contributions of cultural, ethnic and national minority groups to Canadian society (e.g., economics, arts, politics, community life).

RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL REFERENCES

The materials present in sensitive and respectful ways the:
a) elements of religious/spiritual beliefs and practices (such as faith, creation, worship, deity);

b) religious/spiritual beliefs of minority groups (such as fundamentalist views of creation);

c) religious/spiritual practices of minority groups (such as non-Christian worship and celebrations);

d) views of those who profess no religious/spiritual beliefs.

REFERENCES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The materials:
a) depict people with disabilities in ways that do not overemphasize their differences, and that do not demean or patronize them, either through description or terminology;

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b) present people with disabilities in a variety of professional or executive roles, vocations, trades or other gainful occupations as well as being recipients of social services;

c) portray authentically those persons with disabilities within the setting and period of history being presented;

d) assist students to recognize the basic similarities and worth among all members of the human race, and the uniqueness of every individual, including those with "differences".

SOCIAL AND/OR ECONOMIC REFERENCES

The materials:
a) reflect, through descriptions and illustrations, the broad range of social and/or economic levels present in society(ies) without promoting specific groups;

b) depict minority people in the same range of social and/or economic settings as are persons of the majority group;

c) present the achievements and contributions of persons from a range of social and/or economic levels;

d) depict or describe a range of social and/or economic settings, rather than focusing on a single setting or lifestyle as representative or as a societal norm.

POLITICAL AND/OR BELIEF SYSTEM REFERENCES

In their portrayal of various political groups, the materials:
a) reflect the existence of many philosophies, ideas or political beliefs, in society;

b) present the right of individuals in a democratic society to hold whatever philosophies, ideas and political beliefs they choose provided the rights of others are not infringed upon;

c) accurately reflect the society being studied at a given point in time;

d) distinguish between beliefs and facts.

OTHER ISSUES REFERENCES

When materials include controversial issues, they should:
a) promote respect for and protection of individuals, groups, animals, and the environment;

b) consider students' sensitivities, and avoid graphic, unnecessary, potentially disturbing references (e.g., terminal illness, death, violence, sexuality, relationships, bullying);

c) respect privacy of students and families, and refrain from singling out a particular group;

d) use humour, if applicable, in a manner that is sensitive and that does not offend or denigrate individuals or groups.

References

Walking Together: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum
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Controversial Issues

[From *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*, September 2015]

Controversial issues are those topics that are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs. They include topics on which reasonable people may sincerely disagree. Opportunities to deal with these issues are an integral part of student learning in Alberta.

Studying controversial issues is important in preparing students to participate responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic society. Such study provides opportunities to develop the ability to think clearly, to reason logically, to open-mindedly and respectfully examine different points of view and to make sound judgements.

Teachers, students and others participating in studies or discussions of controversial issues need to exercise sensitivity to ensure that students and others are not ridiculed, embarrassed or intimidated for positions that they hold on controversial issues.

Discussing or studying controversial issues provides opportunities to:
- present alternative points of view, subject to the condition that information presented is not restricted by any federal or provincial law
- reflect the maturity, capabilities and educational needs of the students
- meet the requirements of provincially prescribed and approved courses and programs of study and education programs
- reflect the neighbourhood and community in which the school is located, as well as provincial, national and international contexts.

Controversial issues that have been anticipated by the teacher, and those that may arise incidentally during instruction, should be used by the teacher to promote critical inquiry and/or to teach thinking skills.

The school plays a supportive role to parents in the areas of values and moral development and shall handle parental decisions in regard to controversial issues with respect and sensitivity.

Human Sexuality Education
Human sexuality education is mandated by the Human Sexuality Education Policy and is taught at several levels in Alberta, including the Grade 4 to Grade 9 Health and Life Skills program and the senior high school Career and Life Management (CALM) course.

Human sexuality education shall be taught within the normal school day and may be offered through different instructional structures. The learning outcomes outlined in current programs (Health and Life Skills and CALM) for human sexuality are prescribed, but they need not be offered exclusively through those courses. Many schools have developed programs through family life or religion classes.

Exemption from Human Sexuality Instruction
The School Act requires boards (including charter schools) and private schools to provide parents with notice where courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instruction or exercises, include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion or human sexuality. Where a parent makes a written request, a student shall be exempt, without academic penalty, from such instruction, course of study, educational program or use of instructional material.

For more information, see the Human Sexuality Education Policy, Notice under Section 50.1 of the School Act, or contact the Programs of Study and Resources Sector – Sciences and Wellness.

Use of Human Tissue and Fluid in Educational Programs
Alberta Education firmly believes that the safety and well-being of students, teachers and other school staff should be a first consideration in the selection of materials for study. Therefore, all activities involving the extraction and analysis of samples of human fluid or tissue are prohibited in Alberta schools.

For more information, refer to Safety in the Science Classroom available on the Alberta Education website.