



March 2025

To: The Michigan House of Representatives Committee on Education

From: Teach Plus Michigan Teacher Policy Fellowship,
Literacy and Culturally-Affirming Curricula and Materials Working Group

We are a group of educators from across Michigan and members of the Teach Plus Michigan Teacher Policy Fellowship, a highly selective leadership opportunity for outstanding Michigan teachers looking to deepen their knowledge of education policy and gain a voice in decisions that affect their students and the teaching profession. We strive to ensure that our state systems and policies benefit our diverse population of students. This is especially true when it comes to bringing culturally affirming curricula to Michigan students.

Policy Goal: Bring culturally responsive and affirming literacy programs and materials to Michigan schools.

Why This Issue Is Important:

Michigan students need to:

- + Feel seen and heard during their educational experience, leading to better engagement with the learning.
- + Be exposed to and learn about different cultures, which will help them be better prepared to be critical thinkers in their communities.

*“Culturally responsive teaching is one of our most powerful tools for helping students find their way out of the [achievement] gap.” -Zaretta Hammond, **Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain***

What the Evidence Shows:

- + Culturally relevant instruction [increased attendance rates, student GPAs, and the effective support of at-risk students](#) at a school in San Francisco.
- + The current body of research on culturally inclusive curricula in the U.S. shows that it is linked to [higher literacy rates and greater emotional well-being](#).
- + That same body of research also shows that integrating Indigenous histories has led to [higher graduation rates and increased school pride](#).

We Recommend:

- + Introduce legislation similar to Senate Bills 1145, 1146, and 1147 (2024 session). These bills would require the teaching of diverse histories in Michigan classrooms, provide training for teachers in how to deliver this content, and set up a "cultural history advisory board" within the Michigan Department of education.
- + Ensure that the Literacy Achievement Committee considers culturally-affirming curricula when making its recommendations.
- + Support effective implementation of PA146, ensuring that all schools have equitable access to the literacy coaches mandated by that legislation.
- + Provide training for all elementary teachers in the LETRS program

What We Stand to Gain:

- + Improved Student Outcomes: Increased engagement, higher literacy rates, and improved academic performance, especially for historically marginalized students.
- + Higher Graduation Rates: Culturally responsive curricula have been linked to lower dropout rates and increased college enrollment.
- + Increased Teacher Effectiveness: Training in culturally responsive teaching equips educators with strategies to better support diverse learners.

Considerations:

- + Funding is needed to create, review, and adopt culturally affirming literacy materials. [North Carolina allocated \\$10 million in the first year and \\$19 million annually for the subsequent seven years](#) to support the selection of high-quality, standards-aligned, and culturally responsive core curriculum resources, as well as to prepare teachers to effectively use those resources. Given Michigan's comparable size and educational infrastructure, a similar investment is needed.
- + \$87 million was already allocated in last year's School Aid Budget for the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to create a [Committee for Literacy Achievement and allocate funding based on a rankings list of materials](#).
- + To ensure equitable access to literacy coaches as mandated by PA146, Michigan would need to allocate funds for hiring, training, and deploying these professionals. Specific figures would require a detailed analysis.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eric Colwell, Oak Park Schools; Allison Soderberg, Forest Park School District; Brandon Frazer, Detroit Public Schools Community District; Angela Flounory, Detroit Public Schools Community District; Tracie Osborn, Sault Area Public Schools; Alice Bowe, Traverse City Area Public Schools