

## CULTURALLY SUSTAINING LIBRARY WALK<sup>1</sup>

The Culturally Sustaining Library Walk is designed to be a collaborative tool for administrators, librarians, and teachers to assess the library’s responsiveness to the needs of the school’s Black Indigenous Youth of Color (BIPYOC). The goal of the Culturally Sustaining Library Walk is to identify strengths, to discover areas that need improvement, and to develop a path to achieve a culturally sustaining library program. It is an observation and planning document informed by research on culturally sustaining pedagogy and is based on the philosophy of creating a student-centered library program. The Culturally Sustaining Library Walk steps are listed in order with observation sheets attached.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. FORM A TEAM:** To be most effective, a team must conduct the culturally sustaining library walk. Members might include the school administrator, librarian, teachers, parents, and/or BIYOC. It is critical that BIYOC be part of the team.

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- 2.
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<sup>1</sup> This tool was adapted by Sandra Hughes-Hassell, Casey Rawson, and Amanda Hitson from “The Library Learning Walk” developed by the New York City Department of Education, Office of Library Services, June 2004. Retrieved March 1, 2013 (<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/LibraryServices/EducatorResources/ProgramPlanning/default.htm>).

**2. COLLABORATIVE BELIEFS / VISION OF A CULTURALLY SUSTAINING LIBRARY PROGRAM:**  
(Conversation among Team): What is the school community's vision for a culturally sustaining school library program?

**3. CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURALLY SUSTAINING LIBRARY PROGRAMS:** Creating a culturally sustaining library program that fulfills your beliefs and vision involves developing quality in the areas included in the following graphic (observation sheets are attached with fuller descriptions of each area):

**EFFECTIVE LIBRARY SPACES ARE:**

Affirming	Responsive	Welcoming
Respectful	Comfortable	Flexible

**EFFECTIVE LIBRARY POLICIES ARE:**

Context-Specific	Equitable	Student-Centered
Explicit	Collaborative	Compassionate

**EFFECTIVE LIBRARY STAFF MEMBERS ARE:**

Caring	Committed	Courageous Advocates
Encouraging	Accountable	Culturally Competent

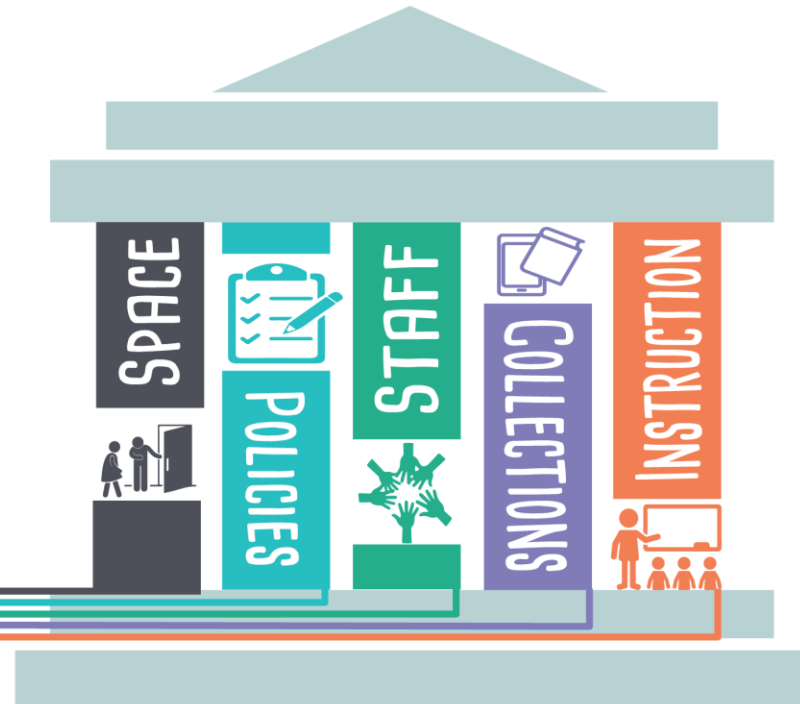
**EFFECTIVE LIBRARY COLLECTIONS ARE:**

Meaningful	Reflective	Validating
Relevant	Enabling	Inclusive

**EFFECTIVE LIBRARY INSTRUCTION & PROGRAMMING IS:**

Challenging	Authentic	Collaborative
Engaging	Asset-Based	Culturally Sustaining
Empowering	Relevant	Student-Centered

**EFFECTIVE LIBRARY SERVICES  
FOR DIVERSE CHILDREN & TEENS**



**4. FOCUS FOR CULTURALLY SUSTAINING LIBRARY WALK:** The walk will be more effective if it is focused around **one or two Focus Areas or questions**. For example: How well do the library resources meet the needs of our Native American students? As a team, decide which area(s) above are most critical to effectively move your school toward your vision of a culturally sustaining library program.

1.

2.

**5. OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS:** For each focus area, look at the examples of indicators that you might observe on the relevant observation sheets below. As a team, discuss the indicators until everyone has a shared understanding of what you might observe, or what information you might gather, to give a clear picture of what is happening in that area of focus. Blank space is provided at the end of each list of indicators for you to write in additional features as necessary.

**6. CULTURALLY SUSTAINING LIBRARY WALK:** Once you have scheduled the Walk and assembled the team (including the librarian, principal, teachers, external educators, parents, students, or others), you will want to **pick the appropriate focus sheets** and make individual observations. You may choose to follow up the time in the library by going to a classroom or two to interview a few students and teachers (using the interview sheets on pages 21-22).

**7. DEBRIEFING / LONG-TERM PLANNING:** Once the Culturally Sustaining Library Walk has been completed, reassemble the team to share each participant's Wonderings/Observations and then look at the observations in relation to Beliefs/Vision and research on culturally sustaining pedagogy. Together, team members decide the library's Next Steps and outline a plan for continued development of the library program by filling out the **Long-Term Planning Sheet** on page 20.

**FOCUS AREA: LIBRARY SPACE**

**Objective:**

The library’s physical and digital space should provide a welcoming environment that respects individuals and their cultures and allows diverse students to express their learning and individuality.

**Characteristics:**

Effective library spaces are:

- *Affirming:* They celebrate diversity and highlight positive, non-stereotypical representations of diverse children and teens.
- *Responsive:* They adapt in response to changing student demographics, needs, and interests.
- *Welcoming:* They invite BIYOC, their families, and community members into the space and communicate that they are valued.
- *Respectful:* They adopt an asset-based stance toward BIYOC, and include authentic representations of their cultures.
- *Comfortable:* They invite BIYOC youth to linger in the space.
- *Flexible:* They are able to be used for a variety of purposes and by a variety of user types (individuals, small groups, classes, etc.).

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<p><b>Affirming:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Images in the library and used in marketing the library are representative of the range of BIYOC served by the school</li> <li>➤ The website includes positive and non-stereotypical images of the range of BIYOC served by the school</li> <li>➤ Booklists found on the library website contain culturally relevant titles</li> <li>➤ Book displays and other highlighted resources feature positive, non-stereotypical representations of diversity</li> </ul>		

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Student work is prominently displayed in the library</li> <li>➤ The library website contains the work of BIYOC</li> </ul> <p><b>Responsive:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Students have forums for making suggestions</li> <li>➤ Current and relevant bulletin boards display activities and events involving diverse communities</li> <li>➤ The library website connects BIYOC to resources related to their interests as well as academic topics</li> <li>➤ The library website changes in response to student feedback</li> <li>➤ The library website can be accessed using mobile devices, thus recognizing the access issues many marginalized youth face</li> </ul> <p><b>Welcoming:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Signage is in multiple languages and includes images that are culturally relevant</li> <li>➤ The library website reflects the language and cultural diversity present in the school</li> <li>➤ The library is open to families and community members</li> <li>➤ Self-checkout is available</li> </ul> <p><b>Respectful:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Signage uses positive language (for example, “Quiet Zone” instead of “No Talking Here”)</li> <li>➤ The school’s anti-bullying policy is visible and enforced</li> <li>➤ The space and the website is ADA compliant</li> </ul>		

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<p><b>Comfortable:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Comfortable seating is provided</li> <li>➤ There is space available in the library for students to “hang out”</li> <li>➤ Signage, furniture, and arrangement of the library encourage visitors to linger in the space</li> </ul> <p><b>Flexible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The library is open before and after school for student use</li> <li>➤ A variety of work spaces are available (individual, group, loud, quiet, etc.)</li> <li>➤ Some space is set aside to allow food and beverages</li> <li>➤ Furniture is movable so space can be changed to accommodate student needs</li> </ul>		

## FOCUS AREA: LIBRARY POLICIES

**Objectives :**

Library policies should describe and support the mission and operation of an equitable, inclusive library program.

**Characteristics :**

Effective library policies are:

- *Context-specific:* They are written for a specific community at a specific point in time, and reflect a deep understanding of the community’s assets and needs.
- *Explicit:* Equity and inclusion are referred to explicitly as foundational values and as rationales for individual policies.
- *Equitable:* They account for disparities and take into consideration the lived experiences of youth and their families / communities.
- *Collaborative:* They are developed by a team of library stakeholders, including BIYOC.
- *Student-Centered:* They prioritize the needs and interests of students.
- *Compassionate:* They are positive rather than punitive.

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<p><b>Context-Specific:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Library policy document includes a mission statement that is specific to the community served by the library</li> <li>➤ Library policy document includes current data about the population served by the library, and/or references a current community analysis document</li> </ul> <p><b>Explicit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Library policies explicitly reference diversity, inclusion, and equity as foundational values and as rationales for relevant individual policies</li> <li>➤ Materials selection policies include criteria related to diversity and equity (for example, positive reviews by reviewers of color)</li> </ul>		



Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Materials selection policies include non-traditional selection tools that focus on diverse titles, for example We Need Diverse Books or Rich in Color</li> </ul> <p><b>Equitable:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Library policies are developed with attention toward their potential impacts on BIYOC and their families and other marginalized communities, such as students experiencing homelessness</li> </ul> <p><b>Collaborative:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Library policies are developed collaboratively; BIYOC are given an opportunity to provide feedback on the policies</li> </ul> <p><b>Student-Centered:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Library policies recognize and respect the needs of all children and teens to socialize and “hang out”</li> <li>➤ Library resources are available for checkout over school breaks and in the summer</li> <li>➤ Library use policies allow for movement of furniture, support collaborative work, and permit conversation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Compassionate:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Library policies are positive, not punitive (they do not focus on potential “bad behavior” by library users)</li> <li>➤ The library does not charge fines for late materials</li> </ul>		

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps

**FOCUS AREA: LIBRARY STAFF**

**Objectives :**

Library staff members should interact with BIYOC as individuals, set high expectations, and develop agency. Library staff members should advocate for students, value their voices, and continually work to improve their own knowledge.

**Characteristics :**

Effective library staff members are:

- *Caring:* They build positive relationships with BIYOC and genuinely care about their well-being.
- *Committed:* They demonstrate a sustained engagement in equity work.
- *Courageous Advocates:* They are champions for BIYOC and their families, and persist in equity work despite possible resistance.
- *Encouraging:* They believe in the potential of BIYOC and communicate that belief through their library practice.
- *Accountable:* They continually evaluate and take steps to improve their own professional practice related to equity and inclusion.
- *Culturally Competent:* Their practice is grounded in a foundational understanding of race, culture, diversity, and inclusion.

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<p><b>Caring:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Enforces the school’s anti-bullying policy in the library</li> <li>➤ Knows students’ names and how to pronounce them</li> <li>➤ Is bilingual or knows a few key phrases in each of the languages represented in the school</li> <li>➤ Interacts positively with culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families</li> </ul> <p><b>Committed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Belongs to a PLN focused on understanding and meeting the needs of BIYOC</li> <li>➤ Belongs to a professional association such as REFORMA or BCALA</li> <li>➤ Has attended Safe Zone training</li> <li>➤ Sponsors or co-sponsors the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance and/or Equity Team</li> <li>➤ Conducts action research on issues related to library services to BIYOC</li> <li>➤ Reads community newspapers (for example: <i>La Conexion</i> and <i>The Triangle Tribune</i>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Courageous Advocates:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regularly discusses race, culture, and equity with students and staff.</li> <li>➤ Leads professional development for teachers and staff focused on culturally sustaining pedagogy</li> <li>➤ Introduces teachers, staff, and students to resources that offer multiple cultural perspectives and viewpoints</li> <li>➤ Serves on school / district diversity committees</li> </ul>		

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Attends school board meetings to advocate for the needs of BIYOC</li> </ul> <p><b>Encouraging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Attends community events</li> <li>➤ Respects the student’s home language and recognizes the value of code-switching</li> <li>➤ Serves as a mentor to BIYOC</li> </ul> <p><b>Accountable:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regularly assesses own professional practice related to inclusion and equity</li> <li>➤ Includes equity-related goals on official Professional Growth Plans</li> </ul> <p><b>Culturally Competent:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Understands racial identity development and is engaged in personal racial identity development work</li> <li>➤ Exhibits affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, seeing resources for learning in all students rather than viewing their differences as problems to overcome</li> <li>➤ Adapts classroom management strategies to match and affirm the cultural background of the students</li> <li>➤ Reads widely in literature pertaining to culturally sustaining pedagogy</li> <li>➤ Subscribes to publications such as <i>Teaching Tolerance</i> that provide up-to-date information on issues related to diversity and culturally sustaining pedagogy</li> </ul>		

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps

**FOCUS AREA: LIBRARY COLLECTIONS**

**Objectives:**

Effective library collections should nurture the resolve of BIYOC, help them reconcile their different identities, and imagine their place in the world.

**Characteristics:**

Effective library collections are:

- *Meaningful:* They help BIYOC understand themselves and their world.
- *Reflective:* They positively and accurately represent BIYOC; all students can see themselves in the collection.
- *Validating:* They affirm the value of diversity.
- *Relevant:* They relate to the lived experiences of BIYOC.
- *Enabling:* They empower youth to make positive change in their own lives and communities.
- *Inclusive:* They reflect the broadest possible spectrum of diversity in terms of content and authorship.

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<p><b>Meaningful:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ BIYOC youth have input into collection development decisions</li> <li>➤ Culturally sustaining, award-winning multicultural literature is purchased</li> </ul> <p><b>Reflective:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Members of the community and BIYOC are asked to help check resources for authenticity</li> <li>➤ Books, videos, library newsletters, program flyers, etc. are available in diverse students' home languages</li> <li>➤ Resources offer multiple cultural perspectives and viewpoints</li> <li>➤ Resources represent the diversity within racial and cultural groups</li> <li>➤ Resources include both “mirror” and “window” texts</li> </ul> <p><b>Validating:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Newspapers and magazines in the students' home languages are available</li> <li>➤ Culturally relevant materials are included in book displays, on recommended reading lists, and in booktalks</li> <li>➤ The website contains links to culturally relevant resources and information in the home languages of BIYOC</li> <li>➤ Resources have been evaluated based on language, pictures and stereotypes</li> </ul>		

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<p><b>Relevant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Culturally diverse community resources are utilized (e.g. civic leaders, business leaders, artists, writers, members of police/fire department, etc.)</li> <li>➤ Technologies such as laptops, iPads, eReaders, and wi-fi hotspots are available for checkout</li> </ul> <p><b>Enabling:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Resources are provided that allow students to express themselves— e.g. blogging platforms, video and audio recording tools / software, word processing tools</li> <li>➤ Librarians mediate texts with students, helping them relate texts to their lives and interests</li> <li>➤ Collection includes resources that support youth activism and civic engagement</li> </ul> <p><b>Inclusive:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Collection development policy includes criteria for evaluating and selecting culturally relevant and enabling texts</li> <li>➤ Collection includes resources that are written by members of marginalized communities (#OwnVoices)</li> </ul>		

**FOCUS AREA: LIBRARY INSTRUCTION & PROGRAMMING**

**Objectives:**

Library instruction and programming should connect to the real world and support BIYOC’s action in their own communities. It should employ an inquiry-based model of instructional strategies that builds on strengths and interests of BIYOC and leads to improved academic achievement.

**Characteristics:**

Effective library instruction and programming is:

- *Challenging:* High expectations are set for all students.
- *Authentic:* It accurately represents and reflects the breadth and complexity of diverse communities.
- *Collaborative:* It is developed in partnership with other librarians, teachers, community members, and/or students.
- *Engaging:* It is designed to encourage participation among all learners.
- *Asset-Based:* It builds on BIYOC’s prior knowledge, including cultural knowledge.
- *Culturally Sustaining:* It integrates students’ cultures in an authentic and meaningful way that validates students’ identities.
- *Empowering:* It prepares BIYOC to take action to improve their own lives and communities..
- *Relevant:* It is connected to students’ daily lives and/or community issues.
- *Student-Centered:* It prioritizes BIYOC’s needs, interests, and input.

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<p><b>Challenging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Book discussions revolve around essential questions that engage students in critically examining issues such as identity, racism, power, etc.</li> <li>➤ The librarian makes high expectations clear to BIYOC</li> <li>➤ The librarian, mentors, and other students provide support and feedback for BIYOC</li> </ul>		



Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The librarian provides students with clear guidelines in the form of instructions, examples, rubrics, etc. that let them know what they are expected to do</li> </ul> <p><b>Authentic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Programming and instruction go beyond the superficial aspects of culture (i.e. celebrating holidays or months such as African American History Month)</li> <li>➤ Book groups include quality fiction and nonfiction that authentically depicts BIYOC communities</li> </ul> <p><b>Collaborative:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Programs are developed collaboratively with BIYOC, parents and community members to build on the meaningfulness between home &amp; school experience</li> <li>➤ Family programs are held to introduce parents to library resources, literacy practices, Web 2.0 tools, etc.</li> <li>➤ The librarian co-teaches with members of marginalized communities</li> <li>➤ Instruction is planned collaboratively with teachers in person or via email/social media</li> </ul> <p><b>Engaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The librarian utilizes a research model that builds on student interests and needs</li> <li>➤ Programs and lessons relate to the interests of BIYOC</li> </ul>		

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The librarian provides opportunities for students to interact with diverse professionals such as scientists, doctors, lawyers, etc. either face-to-face or via social media such as Skype or Twitter</li> <li>➤ The librarian makes use of primary resources and manipulative materials</li> </ul> <p><b>Asset-Based:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Instruction &amp; programming is based on current data about BIYOC’s home lives and builds on funds of knowledge that are identified</li> <li>➤ The librarian uses multiple techniques to elicit prior knowledge</li> </ul> <p><b>Culturally Sustaining:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Author visits include authors/illustrators from marginalized communities</li> <li>➤ The librarian utilizes culturally sustaining images, examples, and texts in instruction</li> <li>➤ The librarian utilizes performance assessments that build on BIYOC’s strengths</li> </ul> <p><b>Empowering:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Programs and instruction focus on cultivating voice (e.g., Spoken Word contests, video assignments, etc.)</li> <li>➤ Programming and instruction provides BIYOC with opportunities to take authentic actions toward social equity in their school, community, state, or nation.</li> </ul>		

Examples	Observations/Wonderings	Action Steps
<p><b>Relevant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The purpose and value of participation in programs and lessons is explicitly explained</li> <li>➤ Programs and instruction are related to community issues—fundraising or volunteering for local organizations; changing school district policy, etc.</li> <li>➤ The librarian uses culturally familiar speech and events</li> </ul> <p><b>Student-Centered:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Programs and lessons are interactive, focus on topics of interest to BIYOC, and allow students to take action in their lives and communities</li> <li>➤ Students are allowed to work collaboratively</li> <li>➤ The librarian asks students how they would like to be evaluated/assessed</li> <li>➤ The librarian allows students to offer feedback and/or help others understand material and learn to use tools/resources</li> <li>➤ The librarian provides wait time for students from all backgrounds to foster increased class participation</li> <li>➤ The librarian provides explicit instruction on using resources and offers group and one-on-one assistance both in and out of class to students who need additional help</li> </ul>		

### Long-Term Planning

Focus Area (s)	Desired Outcomes	Next Steps

## CULTURALLY SUSTAINING LIBRARY WALK: TEACHER INTERVIEWS

1. How familiar are you and your students with the resources available through the library?
2. How does the library program meet the curricular and everyday life information needs of your school's BIYOC? How does it support their passions?
3. How do you and the librarian plan and teach together to meet the needs of your school's BIYOC?

Name:	Date:
Name:	Date:
Name:	Date:

## CULTURALLY SUSTAINING LIBRARY WALK: STUDENT INTERVIEWS

1. Why do you come to the library?
2. What do you like most about your library?
3. What do you not like about your library?
4. How does the library help you learn?
5. How does the library meet your everyday life information needs?
6. How does the library reflect your culture?

Name:	Date:
Name:	Date:
Name:	Date: