

## **Facilitation Notes – Mirrors and Windows: Diversity in the Curriculum (Informed Level)**

### **Slide 1 – Title slide**

- Inclusion Wellbeing & Equalities Professional Learning Framework – Mirrors and Windows: Diversity in the Curriculum
- This professional learning is pitched at an informed level and is suitable for anyone working with children, young people and adult learners in an educational context.

### **Slide 2 – IWE Professional Learning Framework**

- All of the professional learning in the framework first into one of these four themes. The four themes are interconnected and interdependent.
- This activity forms part of the professional learning in the Rights and Equalities theme.

### **Slide 3 – How to use this resource**

- *[Option to skip this slide as instructions for facilitators only. No need to read to audience]*
- These slides can be used to facilitate professional learning in a group or whole-setting, or as a self-directed learning activity as an individual.
- Facilitation notes are included at the bottom of each slide
- Please do not remove or change any of the slides included.
- Facilitators are welcome to add slides or activities relevant to your own setting, to support discussion and exploration of the topic. Facilitators will know their participants' needs best.
- Anyone who works in an educational setting can be a facilitator and use these slides.
- For reflection or discussion activities, it is important to establish a safe space which encourages respect and honesty to ensure that everyone is able to participate.

### **Slide 4 – National model of professional learning**

- This professional learning resource follows the national model for professional learning and is designed to help you gain more knowledge and have a deeper understanding of inclusion, wellbeing and equalities.
- You will have the opportunity to consider how to take this learning forward on your own and with others and, on completion of the professional learning, you will be asked to consider what your next steps will be.
- Please take some time to consider the reflective questions at the end of this resource

Links: [The National Model of Professional Learning](#)

### **Slide 5 – Welcome**

This session aims to provide an opportunity to:

- Consider the importance of embedding diversity and equalities in the curriculum.
- Explore a practical and simple approach – Mirrors and Windows – to embedding diversity in the curriculum.

### **Slide 6 – Scotland's Curriculum: Totality of Learning Experiences**

Scotland's curriculum is defined as the **totality of all that is planned for children and young people from early learning and childcare, through school and beyond** (Scotland's Curriculum: <https://scotlandscurriculum.scot/4/>).

Scotland's curriculum is not restricted to curriculum areas and subjects. It isn't restricted which texts we teach and what happens in a classroom. It also includes opportunities for personal achievement, interdisciplinary learning and the ethos and life of the learning setting.

Scotland's Curriculum is designed to be a coherent, flexible and enriched curriculum that is adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of individual learners and which reflects the uniqueness of their communities. It is important that all children and young people are represented, see themselves in the curriculum and recognise that it is relevant to them.

As such, everyone who works with children and young people can contribute to embedding diversity and equalities in curriculum. This includes Pupil Support Assistants, janitors, caterers, police officers and more.

### **Slide 7– When Diversity is Lacking in the Curriculum**

When diversity is lacking in the curriculum...

1. **Perspectives are missing.** The curriculum is incomplete and inaccurate. Knowledge is shared from a monocultural, monolingistic, narrow perspective of the world. The dominant perspective (often white, male, middle class, cisgendered, heterosexual, able-bodied, neurotypical, English-speaking, Christian...) is seen as "normal" and everything else is considered "other."
2. As a result, learners put in a lot of effort to fit into the narrow "norm." This often means spending a lot of time **masking their diversity** (e.g. pretending to be neurotypical, not speaking any other language than English, hiding their religion/home culture and food, changing their name and accent, pretending they don't experience or provide care, pretending they aren't experiencing poverty, etc.)
3. Diverse learners also risk **internalising stereotypes** and negative messages about themselves that limit their potential and their aspirations (e.g. choosing career paths based on gender, race, social class, etc., believing they can't do well in X subject because of their diverse identity, etc.)

4. Every learner risks **absorbing biases and prejudiced ideas** that exist in a curriculum that lacks diversity (e.g. believing stereotypes about groups that don't share the same identities as them and developing unconscious/implicit biases about girls, LGBT people, Black people, Jewish people, etc.)
5. As a result of prejudiced ideas and narrow perspectives on diverse people, learners have **less empathy and less of an understanding** of the lives and perspectives of diverse people
6. This can lead to an increase in **discrimination and bullying**.

### **Slide 8 – What do we mean by “diversity” and “diverse people”?**

In this session, we refer to diversity and diverse people. It's helpful to clarify first what we mean by diversity. What do you understand by "diversity"? What do you understand by "diverse people"?

(If there is time in a group setting, you can pause here for a short discussion of participants' understanding of those terms)

### **Slide 9 – Exploring “Diversity”**

When exploring the concept of “diversity” and embedding diversity in the curriculum, it is worth considering this diagram illustrating some of the features of diversity.

Look at the types of diversity illustrated on the diagram (linguistic; religious/faith; ethnic/cultural/racial; gender/sex; sexual orientation, family; age; neurodiversity; disability; socioeconomic). For each feature of diversity, there are different groups of people and issues to keep in mind. For example, diversity of family can include care-experienced learners, young carers, LGBT families, lone parent families, religious and cultural diversity in families and more. Issues linked to these groups can include, for example, homophobia, racism, antisemitism and isolation.

Are there any types of diversity that you would like to explore further?

*[If there is time, feel free to expand using the other Diversity resources on the Education Scotland Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equalities Professional Learning Framework. Otherwise, signpost the resource for future learning and development.]*

### **Slide 10 – Normalising Diversity**

Sometimes people assume there is a "normal" and that diversity is something to be feared or hidden, or that our differences are a reason to hurt or bully another person. The curriculum can help learners understand the ways in which we are the same and the ways in which we differ from one another. The curriculum can help learners see this as something to accept, respect and also like about themselves and others.

A curriculum which represents everyone involves normalising diversity within the curriculum so that learners routinely see language, content and imagery that reflects the diversity of culture, identities, and experiences, including their own.

This 'normalising' is more powerful than one-off lessons, activities or events that explore diversity or celebrate difference. The latter can have the unintended consequence of 'Othering' those who are not from the group which is in the majority (e.g. Black and minority ethnic people, LGBT people, disabled people, care-experienced people, etc.) and in some cases this can lead to increases in prejudice-based bullying.

As celebrating difference may reinforce stereotypes, careful consideration is advised. Normalising diversity within the curriculum, as opposed to normalising the majority groups, gives every learner the important message of being valued and belonging.

You can normalise diversity using the concept of Mirrors and Windows.

### **Slide 11 – Mirrors and Windows**

African-American scholar, Dr Rudine Sims Bishop, coined the term “Mirrors and Windows” in her 1990 essay on multicultural literacy. (<https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>)

In her essay, Dr Bishop explains that children need to see themselves in books, otherwise they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in society. She also argues that books can also serve as windows to give readers a glimpse into the lives and experiences of others.

The concept of Mirrors and Windows has become a useful practical approach to embed diversity and equalities in the curriculum. While Dr Bishop's essay focuses on multicultural literacy and books, the concept of Mirrors and Windows can extend to all aspects of the curriculum, such as the wider ethos and life in a learning setting, as outlined in the slide on the Curriculum as the Totality of Learning Experiences.

*[The following 5min video of Dr Rudine Simms Bishop can be shown if there is time:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAu58SNSyc> ]*

### **Slide 12 – Mirrors: Learners See Themselves**

**Mirrors** ensure that diverse audiences of learners can see themselves reflected in their learning, and see others like them.

Mirrors can help learners:

- Develop a positive self-image and sense of identity, which increases confidence, self-esteem and general wellbeing
- Feel seen, better understood and safer
- Reduce feelings of shame, of exclusion and of needing to mask their diverse identities to be accepted
- Decrease the internalisation of negative stereotypes and biases about themselves
- Learn about their own rights and freedoms (Equality Act, UNCRC and human rights)
- Be their true and authentic selves.

Mirrors have the potential to be included in every aspect of the curriculum and the totality of the learners' experiences: in posters, books, stories, media, role models, historical figures, the staff in the setting and more. These should be naturally included.

### **Slide 13 – Windows: Learning and Normalising Diversity**

**Windows** provide learners with the opportunity to look through the curriculum and learn about the experiences of different groups of people, build empathy and understanding.

Windows can help learners:

- Learn about the experiences and perspectives of different people
- Understand and normalise diversity and difference
- Build empathy and a shared sense of humanity
- Respect the rights and freedoms of others (Equality Act, UNCRC and human rights)
- Identify and challenge stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and bullying.

Windows also have the potential to be included in every aspect of the curriculum and the totality of the learners' experiences: in posters, books, stories, media, role models, historical figures, the staff in the setting and more. These should be naturally included.

### **Slide 14 – Distorted Mirrors and Windows**

A note of caution. Some Mirrors and Windows in the curriculum can contain outdated representations and negative stereotypes. When diverse representation is provided but it could have a negative impact on learners' perceptions of themselves or others, these can be described as 'distorted Mirrors and Windows.'

If those representations go unchallenged and learners are not encouraged to think critically about what might be wrong or missing in those representations, distorted Mirrors and Windows can be harmful for all learners. Diverse learners might internalise negative and limiting messages about themselves. Other learners might absorb biases and prejudiced notions about a diverse group of people. If they act upon those biases, they might discriminate and engage in harmful behaviours (whether conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional).

To avoid this, it is best to include more, and a wider variety of, Mirrors and Windows. This can reduce the risk of tokenism, othering and stereotyping. Moreover, encouraging learners to think more critically about the representations they see can help address distorted Mirrors and Windows.

Further reading and guidance on encouraging critical thinking about diversity can be found here:

[A curriculum which reflects diversity – Promoting Race Equality and Anti-racist Education \(glowscotland.org.uk\)](https://www.glowscotland.org.uk/curriculum-which-reflects-diversity-promoting-race-equality-and-anti-racist-education)

[Literacy and English – Promoting Race Equality and Anti-racist Education \(glowscotland.org.uk\)](https://www.glowscotland.org.uk/literacy-and-english-promoting-race-equality-and-anti-racist-education)

### **Slide 15 – Where are the Diverse Mirrors and Windows in your Curriculum?**

A learning walk of a setting can be considered to audit where the Mirrors and Windows already are in a curriculum and how they might be strengthened.

The following questions can be discussed and worked on individually, in groups or in departments/teams:

- Where are the diverse Mirrors and Windows in our curriculum? Can learners see themselves reflected in what they are learning (Mirrors), and can they look out to wider society to learn about the experiences of others (Windows)?
- Are there any distorted Mirrors and Windows? How might these be addressed? Is it necessary to remove them, or can they be complemented with additional resources and critical thinking?
- Are there any aspects of diversity in the diagram missing in your curriculum? Do we have Mirrors for all learners, and do we provide Windows to learn about all diverse characteristics?
- What could be strengthened? Where could Mirrors and Windows be added? What resources could be used to do this?

### **Slide 16: Reflection**

*[Participants can do this in groups.*

*Encourage participants to look at reflection questions and consider how they may be taken forward in enquiry.*

*Consider the impact of the actions on learning.]*

From what you have learned so far, think about:

- How has this made you feel?

- What has this made you think about?
- What one action would you like to take forward?
- How can you link what you plan to do with others in your setting?
- How you will know that this learning has made a difference?