



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** January 14, 2021

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors  
Michigan Pre-K-12 Educators

**FROM:** Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., State Superintendent   
Sheila A. Alles, Chief Deputy Superintendent 

**SUBJECT:** Building Mirrors and Windows Virtual Conference

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is excited to announce and host a free virtual conference for educators and administrators, **Building Mirrors and Windows: Children Seeing Themselves and Others in the Literature that We Teach**, on February 25, 2021.

The conference will focus on how to increase the amount of diverse literature available to students and how to use the materials for instruction and student engagement. The conference will also include ideas of how to provide children with a variety of inclusive literature to read outside the classroom.

Student engagement with literature increases in part as students see themselves in their literature. There is a power to children seeing themselves (mirrors) and others (windows) in their reading. Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop explains the terms mirrors and windows, as well as sliding glass doors, in this short [YouTube](#) video, as she notes the importance of children seeing reflections of themselves in literature as well as seeing a diverse representation of other people.

Dr. Gholdy Muhammad will be the keynote speaker. She is the author of *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*. Dr. Muhammad earned her Ph.D. in literacy, language, and culture at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research has focused on the social and historical foundations of literacy in African American communities and how literacy development can be reconceptualized in classrooms today. Dr. Muhammad will inspire participants to increase the amount of diverse literature to which students have access. She will share ways to intentionally expand school and classroom materials and address ways educators can use inclusive literature for instruction.

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Following the keynote, participants will have a choice of one session focused on the K-5, 6-12, or building/district administrator level. The breakout sessions will be led by Michigan educators and the MDE literacy team. Educators will share their experiences related to increasing the amount of diverse literature offered to students. Each breakout session will address ways to increase engagement with literature that allows students to see themselves (mirrors) and others (windows) in their reading. The sessions will include time for questions and answers.

The conference will run from 9:00 a.m.—noon. Participants can view the conference flyer, register for the conference, and sign up for updates by visiting the [MDE Literacy](#) website.

For more information, please contact [mde-earlyliteracy@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-earlyliteracy@michigan.gov).

cc: Michigan Education Alliance  
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors