

Affirming and Equitable Representations in ACT Reading: A Roundtable Discussion Series



By Kelly Smith with Shannon Karm



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Project Overview

It is ACT's mission to help all people achieve education and workplace success. With our mission in mind, ACT designed an initiative to ensure that ACT reading assessment materials are supportive and reflective of the many communities of learners we serve.

In 2021 and 2022, ACT held a series of roundtable discussions exploring how diverse representation in ACT reading passages can support and engage students. The effort brought together equity thought leaders, educators, and researchers working with diverse student populations.

Each roundtable entailed close readings of passages drawn from ACT's pool of materials in development. The roundtables focused, respectively, on passages that center Black, Latinx, Native American, and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) authors and perspectives. The roundtables provided an opportunity for the English Language Arts (ELA) development team to ensure that ACT reading passages are calibrated in ways that are supportive to students, and to continue to improve in the ways we honor the diverse perspectives and experiences students bring to the assessment context.





Ensuring Rigor and Fairness in the ACT Reading Assessment

Diverse representation has long been understood as essential to the rigor, fairness, and integrity of ACT reading as a predictor of college readiness. Information about the ACT reading assessment can help illustrate the context for this understanding.

ACT reading measures a student's ability to read closely, reason about texts using evidence, and integrate information from multiple sources. It is one of the four ACT section tests of education achievement; English, mathematics, and science make up the remaining three, along with the optional writing test.

The ACT reading section test features four individual units, which each consist of a passage (approximately 750 words in length) and nine to 11 multiple-choice questions. The passages are excerpted from externally published, real-world texts that are comparable, in their complexity and perspective, to what students will likely encounter in their coursework in grades 11 and 12 and in their first year of college. One of the four selected units is based on a literary narrative excerpted from a work of fiction, essay, or memoir. The remaining three passages feature informational texts from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.¹

The ELA development process ensures that the four units selected vary both in subject matter and cultural perspective. Just as it wouldn't be fair or appropriate for all three informational passages to focus on a single topic, such as astrophysics, or music composition, no single cultural context or tradition should dominate among the four selected passages.

ACT reading measures a student's ability to read closely, reason about texts using evidence, and integrate information from multiple sources.

In this context, diverse representation is intrinsic to the fairness of the ACT reading assessment. In addition to seeking passages covering a wide array of topics, the ELA development team seeks materials that vary in the personal, social, economic, and cultural realities they depict. While, with only four passages each, no individual assessment could possibly reflect the rich variety of perspectives that students bring to the assessment context, cultivating a diverse pool of developed materials helps ensure that no test taker is systematically advantaged by prior knowledge or familiarity with a passage's area of focus.

Diverse representation is also intrinsic to the rigor of the assessment itself as an evaluation of reading comprehension and a predictor of college readiness. Part of what can be so illuminating and instructive about postsecondary education is the frequency with which students encounter previously unfamiliar perspectives and ideas. Representing a range of diverse perspectives and subjects provides an authentic gauge of students' potential to constructively use their critical reading skills in that postsecondary context.

¹Further information about the specifications for the ACT reading assessment can be found in the [ACT Technical Manual](#).



Equity by Design

ACT's approach to ensuring diverse and equitable representations in its materials exemplifies our commitment to [Equity by Design](#). Equitable design acknowledges that equity doesn't happen by chance, but instead emerges out of discipline, intentionality, and consistency. ACT is working intentionally, integrating Equity by Design across our organization, as we thoughtfully address the systemic barriers that hinder success for so many. Our focus includes:

- A way of approaching education reform that puts the learner at the center of the policies and practices contributing to disparities in education achievement and abstains from blaming students and educators for those accumulated disparities.
- A commitment to design solutions that honors the input from diverse stakeholders, meets the needs of all learners, and is achieved through collaboration where influence is distributed and shared.
- The practice of purposefully involving those being served as key players throughout a design process ensuring that diverse voices directly affect how the solution will address inequities and achieve the prescribed goal.



By embracing a comprehensive focus on Equity by Design, ACT demonstrates a consistent, deliberate, and transparent commitment to serve all students well and make significant progress toward advancing opportunity and outcomes for all.



Using “Windows” and “Mirrors” in ACT Reading

The inspiration for the roundtable discussion series, known colloquially among ACT team members as “the Windows and Mirrors project,” comes from a metaphor borrowed from children’s literature expert Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop. Bishop observed that texts can serve as “windows,” permitting views of other experiences and perspectives, and “mirrors” that reflect the lived realities of the reader. This insight has been a guiding concept to think about the kinds of perspectives ACT reading passages can offer students.

The “windows and mirrors” metaphor also highlights the challenge of navigating potentially sensitive references in passages that acknowledge topics such as systemic forms of inequity, racial discrimination, and economic disparity. Because charged subject matter can distract students from the assessment task, one key consideration is determining how those acknowledged realities may affect students whose experiences are “mirrored” in the text. Exploring ACT reading passages with input from equity experts offered further insight into potential sensitivity concerns in passages that might otherwise provide rich reading experiences.

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Concept and Planning

The primary goals of this roundtable discussion series were to further refine ACT’s best practices in incorporating texts that recognize the complex mix of experiences that students navigate and to create culturally affirming reading experiences for students engaging with the ACT reading assessment.

In structured discussions, panelists were invited to provide feedback on each selected passage’s suitability for use in an assessment, reflecting on which elements of the text had a strong potential to be culturally supportive to students, and on whether any other factors in the text had the potential to undermine that support.

With this format, the roundtables reproduced the process of close reading undertaken by the ELA development team when determining whether a passage is suitable for use. Engaging in that process with equity-focused researchers, leaders, and educators with student-centered perspectives provided a rich opportunity to explore how our materials can reflect a broader range of specific cultural contexts, epistemologies, and lived experiences.

ACT’s ELA development team worked alongside [ACT’s Center for Equity in Learning](#) to administer the roundtables. This collaboration combined the ELA development team’s content expertise with the Center’s extensive relationship with researchers, educators, and thought leaders in the equity and education arenas.

We identified the following areas of expertise as top priorities in selecting panelists:

- Classroom or research-based perspectives on student experiences of the identity group of focus (Black, Latinx, Native American, or Asian American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander).
- Equity perspectives on student success.
- Experience teaching literature or English Language Arts.
- Research perspectives on cultural studies related to the identity group of focus (Black, Latinx, Native American, or Asian American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander).

In addition to their research and student-centered perspectives, each panelist's background corresponded to the identity group of the roundtable's focus.

The team at ACT's Center for Equity in Learning, led by Vice President Tina Gridiron, contacted equity-focused organizations, including [Excelencia in Education](#) and [APIA Scholars](#), among others, to identify and invite potential panelists to participate.

ACT's ELA development team selected the sample passages to be discussed and created outreach materials for panelists. The panelists, once confirmed, were sent the selected passages and other materials to support advance preparation, including an overview of ACT's ELA development process, so that the discussion could be grounded in a shared understanding of the team's requirements for passages.



Roundtable #1: Passages Featuring Black Authors and Perspectives

In both the literary narratives and the informational texts the ELA development team considers for use, it's not unusual for authors to acknowledge key aspects of inequities created by anti-Black racism in the U.S. In considering these texts, the team strives to ensure that any materials that acknowledge these subjects are likely to be supportive to Black students. Therefore, in this roundtable, we wanted to explore: In what contexts are these acknowledgements likely to have an affirming, explanatory power? Alternately, are there scenarios in which these acknowledgments may instead have an unintended negative effect on Black students?

Three panelists convened for this discussion:

- A scholar and leader in inclusion and equity in higher education.
- A professor of psychology whose research focuses in part on diversity, stereotypes, and intergroup relations.
- An equity thought leader and social entrepreneur who consults widely in philanthropy, business, nonprofits, and journalism.

What we heard from our panelists was that narrative and journalistic framing are essential considerations in determining whether a passage would likely provide an affirming reading experience.

The cognitive framework of “asset framing,” introduced by one of our panelists, provided key context for considering the viability of passages. Asset-framed representations introduce people according to their assets and aspirations rather than perceived deficit-associations or negative social factors. This framework derives from the idea that it is inherently stigmatizing for one group to be consistently associated with negative social factors. The stigma and inequity of negative representations are deepened when other groups that are not consistently represented in association with stigmatizing social factors are seen, in contrast, as normative.

One consensus that emerged was that asset-framed representations don't avoid authentic acknowledgments of setbacks and challenges, but rather, it's a matter of emphasis. To *primarily* focus on the setbacks and challenges of a person or a group creates a deficit-frame that isn't consistent with the objective to provide texts that are supportive to students.

Responding to a question about how the legacies and inequities resulting from anti-Black racism may appropriately be depicted in ACT reading passages, this panelist responded, “About your question about ‘a strong focus on inequity’: it doesn’t matter if it’s strong. A consistent weak focus on these things—it’s like that drop of water that’s always eroding something.”

He advised that, not only does it create stigma to consistently associate Black experience with negative factors such as racism and inequity, but also, this negative focus elides and distorts the realities of Black joy, community, normativity, and achievement. Introducing and representing people primarily in terms of their aspirations and achievements gives the brain a richer and more authentic set of associations and narratives.

Another panelist observed that inequity and racism are inherently charged topics that have the potential to distract students, noting that “you can talk about inequity and emotionally charged issues, but that’s not the purpose of the test,” advising that the question of appropriateness “needs to move beyond debate” to include empirical research that can gauge and quantify potential effects on student performance.

Panelists and facilitators discussed how the values of asset framing can provide a framework for evaluating whether a passage is engaging with complex realities in a way that avoids stigma and creates a positive representation. One consensus that emerged was that asset-framed representations don’t avoid authentic acknowledgments of setbacks and challenges, but rather, it’s a matter of emphasis. To *primarily* focus on the setbacks and challenges of a person or a group creates a deficit-frame that isn’t consistent with the objective to provide texts that are supportive to students.

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The roundtable panelists engaged critically in reading the passages’ journalistic framing, evaluating the degree to which Black perspectives, cultural institutions, and traditions were truly centered in the text. In one informational passage discussed, for example, a Black playwright’s significance was framed in terms of his success with historically white institutions and the white audiences that were enlightened by his work. The panelists noted that this framework centered those institutions as arbiters of the playwright’s validity as an artist, undermining the journalist’s apparent goal of lifting up the work of a celebrated Black artist.

Concept and Planning: Adjustment

In planning the pilot roundtable focused on Black authors and perspectives, the ELA development team selected passages that would allow a sustained focus on questions related to representations of racism and inequity. One drawback of this strategy was that the passages represented a narrow and not entirely representative sample of the materials in ACT's pool. In hindsight, this felt like a missed opportunity that hindered our ability to gather feedback on other potential issues and questions. Moving forward with planning the Latinx-focused roundtable, the team chose a broader selection of passages that more accurately reflected the range of materials considered for use.

Another change was that, in the pilot roundtable, the ELA team developed and assigned one specific focus question per passage, to be discussed by panelists in addition to their other feedback. However, we found that those questions didn't always align with the issues and priorities for discussion that the panelists identified. For the Latinx-focused roundtable, the panelists were instead sent a general list of potential focus questions to support their preparation, with the understanding that their responses to the texts would ultimately drive and determine the focus of the discussion.





Roundtable #2: Passages Featuring Latinx Authors and Perspectives

One of the primary goals of this roundtable was to provide a representative sample of Latinx-centered passages from the pool of available materials to see how well the ELA development team is calibrated in identifying Latinx-focused materials of high quality.

This roundtable also provided an opportunity to learn how ACT's ELA development team might broaden the range of positive associations in representations of Latinx experiences and how to better identify potential tropes and stereotypes to avoid.

Three panelists convened for this discussion:

- A professor and equity leader in higher education focused on Latinx student support in the Florida College System.
- A Chicana writer and distinguished professor of humanities focused on the literature and cultural traditions of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.
- A linguistics scholar researching the language and literacy experiences of students of color, particularly multilingual Chicanx and Latinx youth.

Panelists repeatedly emphasized what one panelist referred to as “the diversity of Latinidades.” As another panelist advised, “being able to identify across nationality ... is difficult to do. You say ‘Latinx,’ but there’s so much difference there.”

The panelists commented appreciatively on ACT’s commitment to seeking authenticity in passages that represent the Latinx community, while also noting that this is almost a contradiction in terms. As one panelist noted, “‘Latinx’ masks and subsumes tremendous heterogeneity and diversity. That diversity gets collapsed and seems like the elephant in the room. One of the key challenges of inclusivity is that no single text can capture the heterogeneity of the Latinx identity and experience.”

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With these points in mind, the focus of the discussion frequently returned to considerations of how a passage’s nuance, specificity, and authenticity could function to make a piece accessible across different Latinx communities and identities.

Themes of family and connection were largely deemed effective, in the context of the selected passages, in honoring Latinx identity and experience. Panelists noted that depictions of intergenerational communication have the potential to powerfully resonate across a broad variety of ethnicities and communities, even though individual traditions and practices may vary. The passages' depictions of multilingualism and code-switching seemed accessible and also reflective of real-world usage.

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Two informational passages featured profiles of visual artists, and feedback was appreciative of representation of Latinx individuals pursuing creative careers in “a space not usually given to them,” beyond “good jobs in STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math].”

A profile of a contemporary Chicana painter received positive comments about how the passage highlighted her positionality and how she pushed back against conventional racializing and stereotyping labels. The other artist profile was not received as positively, as the panelists noted a potentially sensitive framing of the Caribbean's colonial past. Allusions to the artist's family wealth and elite cultural status undermined the passage's relatability; the panelists commented that the representation resonated more in terms of class than with Latinx identity.



Concept and Planning: Adjustment

The first two roundtables were two hours in length, but in both cases, the passage discussions went longer than planned, leaving only a few minutes for the question and answer period intended to conclude the session. For the third roundtable, the event was lengthened to two-and-a-half hours.



Roundtable #3: Passages Featuring Native American Authors and Perspectives

As with the Latinx-focused roundtable, the roundtable focused on Native American authors and perspectives provided an opportunity to gather feedback on a representative selection of passages to see how well the ELA development team is calibrated in the ways Native American experience and culture are represented in the passages.

The team also hoped to explore how to better find texts that: center Indigenous epistemologies; avoid tropes and stereotypes specific to representing traditional culture and connection to the land; and portray contemporary Native American cultures and experiences in affirming ways.

Three panelists convened for this discussion:

- An education professor and Native American student cultural center director.
- An educator, writer, and curriculum designer specializing in Native American history.
- A professor of English and American Indian studies who is also an Anishinaabemowin language teacher.

One primary theme of this roundtable discussion was the importance of specificity as a way to honor and highlight the great diversity and distinct cultural traditions of the 574 federally recognized tribal nations. As one panelist commented, “There are so many Native cultures and differences, but with specificity, you learn.”

An informational passage that profiled a Native American photographer provided a strong example of how specificity in characterization and description can indirectly reflect different kinds of values, epistemologies, and traditions in ways that avoid stereotype or cliché.

As one panelist commented, “There are so many Native cultures and differences, but with specificity, you learn.”

Though this passage did not explicitly focus on traditional culture, it showed how this photographer’s Native heritage and culture were integrated into his life’s work in a personal and specific way. The profile noted the artist’s interest in the geology of his homelands and how he took photographs of his community’s traditional dances and ceremonies. With these details, one panelist observed that this was “a profile of a photographer whose broader culture informs his work” in a way that “resonates with the way students want to incorporate Native identity into their lives.”

In contrast, a passage that presented a ranging overview of different Indigenous perspectives on local ecosystems served as an example of the kinds of generalities that should be avoided. Panelists advised that this passage's sweeping generalizations across nations were inappropriate: "We wouldn't talk about Europe as 'Europe' unless we're talking about the EU." As another panelist remarked, generalizing references such as "Native American stories" can be "an overused trope, and, when mentioned in isolation, they can reinforce lingering stereotypes." Moreover, one panelist noted that the "uncomfortable subtext" of the piece was that it framed Indigenous knowledge in terms of "how it might serve the majority."

(This passage, it can be noted, was drawn from a pool of undeveloped materials that were pending consideration for use; the ELA development team selected it for this roundtable to get feedback on this type of framing.)

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The panelists explored a potentially sensitive reference in a passage relating an author's childhood experience of learning traditional language. This passage described how the author was reprimanded for speaking his traditional language at school and was made to apologize to the teacher. One roundtable panelist, whose research and teaching focuses in part on Indigenous language revitalization, noted that while this did seem like a potentially sensitive part of the passage, "the value of telling an authentic story of language reclamation and language suppression" outweighed the potential concern.





Roundtable #4: Passages Featuring Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Authors and Perspectives

In selecting passages for this discussion, it became clear that East Asian perspectives predominated the representation in the ELA development team's pool of available materials, as did narratives that centered the perspectives of first- and second-generation Americans. And so, in addition to providing insight and feedback on the selected passages, the roundtable presented an opportunity to learn more about how to broaden and expand the range of AANHPI representations.

Four panelists convened for this discussion:

- A professor of education and Asian American studies whose research and leadership focuses on equity and access in higher education.
- An education professor and researcher with an equity-based focus on literacy practices.
- A professor of English and gender studies specializing in Asian American literature.
- A professor of education whose scholarship has focused on culturally relevant and responsive education and Asian American and Pacific Islander education.

Panelists did note that many of the selected passages focused on first- and second-generation perspectives. While acknowledging that these perspectives remain an important part of the story, panelists also advised that, for many AANHPI students, passages that depict multigenerational perspectives (third generation and beyond) may be more resonant.

Panelists observed that “there are certain divisions within the diaspora that are generational,” and that some historical and cultural references might not resonate as much with U.S.-born communities and students. One panelist reflected that, as a fourth-generation Asian American, he sometimes has a hard time connecting to first-generation narratives, but he noted that some students may make a connection to a narrative because of their parents’ or grandparents’ experiences.

The panelists’ feedback highlighted how featuring first- and second-generation experiences may unintentionally put an emphasis on cultural alienation, on being “between two cultures,” and experiencing a sense of otherness. One panelist noted that, for people who are multigenerational, “you don’t see yourself as different; of course you’re American,” and so it is strange “to see yourself as ‘othered.’” These themes of “otherness” can be challenged with stories of multigenerational Asian Americans and perspectives that reflect and embrace identity and belonging.

A passage that featured a multigenerational perspective received positive feedback from the panelists as “the most inclusive representation and the most ‘Asian American’” among the those discussed. Though the narrator recounted complex experiences, the tone of the passage was primarily warm and appreciative of the value of family connection. As the panelists affirmed, it’s important for students to read things that are positive and not always centered on struggle.

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The panelists did observe the disproportionate representation of East Asian perspectives among the passages. One panelist commented that this is indicative of a larger trend, in that East Asian perspectives can feature disproportionately in representations of Asian American experiences, generally. The panelists encouraged the ELA development team to expand the range of representation with more texts focused on South Asian, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, and multiracial perspectives.



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Key Takeaways and Findings

The importance of journalistic and narrative framing emerged as a key concept across all four roundtable discussions.

As the consensus of the assessment industry shifts to a more critical regard of the idea that assessment stimuli might provide “neutral” reading experiences, the construct of “asset framing” provides a robust alternate starting point for evaluating passages. It is the ELA development team’s goal to provide authentic and engaging materials, yet, with authenticity comes the potential for charged subject matter and references. Asking whether the overall emphasis of the piece highlights a person’s or a community’s assets and achievements can provide clarity about whether the passage is likely to be supportive to readers.

This concept was reinforced throughout the roundtables as panelists offered insights regarding potentially sensitive topics and acknowledgments in the passages. References to certain harsh realities did not, on their own, raise significant concerns among panelists. Tone, character development, and framing seemed to be the primary determining factors in whether those references seemed problematic.

Asking whether the overall emphasis of the piece highlights a person’s or a community’s assets and achievements can provide clarity about whether the passage is likely to be supportive to readers.

One passage discussed highlighted the challenge of judging whether something is reinforcing of stereotypes or if it rather represents a culturally appropriate and authentic experience. The ability to gauge authenticity and specificity can be limited by one’s own cultural knowledge and perspective. Asset framing provides an anchoring standard to help evaluate texts in this context.

While the roundtable discussions were planned to primarily focus on diverse representation, panelists also helped identify how allusions and tropes associated with Euro-centric and majority-white cultural and intellectual traditions can exert a value within the context of a passage. In two separate instances, for example, panelists identified where passages created false binaries between a majority-white cultural tradition and a comparable tradition associated with a diverse perspective. This is a framing that can serve to inadvertently position whiteness as a legitimizing standard where no legitimization is needed.

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In addition to helping ACT's ELA development team meet the overall goal to provide representation across a broad range of communities and identity groups, the roundtable conversations further highlighted new priorities for providing a deeper and more nuanced range of positive associations within those broader categories of identity. Panelists consistently emphasized the heterogeneity within each broad identity group. Based on these discussions, some of the priorities and considerations for future passage finding will include:

- Specific representations of the diverse diaspora of nations within the Asian American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Latinx, and Native American identity groups.
- Further representation of intersectional and multiracial identities.
- Perspectives grounded in a wider range of socioeconomic and family education levels.
- Multigenerational experiences and perspectives.
- Contemporary depictions of Native American people that center present-day innovations and achievements.



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Results and Outcomes

This series of roundtable discussions further inspired and energized the ELA development team in their passage-finding efforts. In the time since the pilot roundtable in August 2021, we have seen an unprecedented increase in the number and range of diverse passages added to our working pool of development materials for the ACT reading assessment. This increase puts our pool of materials in better alignment with the great demographic diversity of the 3 million-plus students who take the ACT each year.

After each roundtable, a teamwide follow-up meeting provided the opportunity to discuss and establish consensus about the major takeaways of the discussions. As a result of both the roundtables and the teamwide follow-ups, the team acquired significant soft knowledge about the kinds of representations to prioritize. Moreover, essentially, this series of discussions created a context to question the positionality and the assumptions that may unintentionally inform development work.

With this project, we have established a process for bringing external equity experts into conversation with ACT's content development team in a way that complements and builds on ACT's existing best practices* to further ensure the fairness and rigor of our materials.

Finding and engaging panelists with student-centered perspectives on diverse representation was key in ensuring the effectiveness of the discussions. While many of the panelists were secured through outreach from ACT's Center for Equity in Learning, some were identified through dedicated ELA team research efforts and had no prior connection to ACT. The panelists' active participation, insightful feedback, and thoughtful resource suggestions during each roundtable discussion served to underscore the value of the roundtable series and its potential benefit to students. Furthermore, as a follow up to the discussion, a number of panelists generously sent lists of recommended authors and publications for the ELA development team to explore as potential passage sources.

Across the assessment industry in general, and perhaps within content development contexts in particular, a pragmatic culture focused on deliverables can prevail. One of the helpful shifts afforded by this project was in conceiving this sustained engagement with equity-based experts and perspectives as a kind of "deliverable" that is critical to our ongoing work to continuously improve in the ways ACT serves learners.



Appendix

Participants

ACT would like to thank all of the roundtable panelists for participating in this endeavor with such generosity of time and spirit and for sharing their expertise in this critical work in support of students.

- **Dr. Belkis Cabrera**, project director, Miami Dade College
- **Dr. Norma E. Cantú**, professor emeritus, University of Texas at San Antonio
- **Dr. Alma Clayton-Pedersen**, CEO, Emeritus Consulting Group
- **Dr. Betina Hsieh**, professor, College of Education, California State University Long Beach
- **Dr. Rachel Lee**, professor of English and Gender Studies, University of California, Los Angeles
- **Dr. Matthew Makomenaw**, director, Native American Cultural Center, and assistant dean, Yale College
- **Dr. Ramón Antonio Martínez**, associate professor, Stanford University
- **Dr. Margaret Noodin**, professor of English and American Indian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- **Dr. Valerie Pang**, professor emerita, School of Teacher Education, San Diego State University
- **Dr. Valerie Purdie Greenaway**, professor of Psychology & special advisor to the Executive Vice President for Arts and Sciences, Columbia University
- **Mr. Edwin Schupman**, manager (retired), *Native Knowledge 360°*, The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian
- **Mr. Trabian Shorters**, CEO of BMe Community
- **Dr. Robert Teranishi**, professor of Social Science and Comparative Education, the Morgan and Helen Chu Endowed Chair in Asian American Studies, and co-director for the Institute for Immigration, Globalization and Education at University of California, Los Angeles



*Best Practices for Fairness

The discussions and takeaways from the project roundtables provide further scope and context to ACT's existing standards and practices for ensuring the fairness and rigor of ACT's assessment materials.

It has always been the case that in addition to multiple rounds of internal review, materials for the ACT assessment undergo two separate rounds of review by independent, external content and fairness reviewers of geographically and culturally diverse backgrounds. For ACT reading, content reviewers are English Language Arts educators working at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. Fairness reviewers are education professionals with research- and classroom-based expertise on diversity and equity.



More information about ACT's standards for content and fairness reviewing may be found in the [ACT Technical Manual \(2.4.4, "Review of Items"\)](#).



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Adrienne Dieball's leadership, support, and commitment to excellence in content have been essential to making this initiative a reality.

From the very start, Christina Gordon has been a guiding voice in shaping the concept and course of the work and telling its story.

Thank you to Megan Alter for supporting this work and contributing so helpfully along the way.

An ELA working group focused on diversity and inclusion in content first identified the need for this series of discussions, and the group's ongoing work helped drive the project's vision and implementation. The working group members are indicated by asterisks, below. In their roles as program leads, Stacy Dreyer and Mariah Steele provided essential guidance throughout. The participation of the entire ELA team, listed below, helped realize the transformative potential of these discussions.

Tara Acton, Alyssa Asquith, Danielle Benesh, Rachel Cieslak*, Chris Dolle*, Stacy Dreyer, Nathan Eilers, Harmony Hanson*, Charles Hull, Jeremy Jackson, Ann Kaska, Renee Kelly*, Kathleen Lyons*, Pamela Mackinson, Heather Marshall*, Caitlin McCleary, John Melby-Oetken, Katharina Mendoza, Christine Olson, Jessica Pannell, Andrew Ritchie, Matthew Schaeffer, Mariah Steele, Roxanne Swim, Robynn Upton, Jordan Walker*, Rachel Weaver, and Laura Zieglowsky





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