

Soft Skills for the School Librarian • Developing Cultural Competence

## Community Exploration

After you have spent time reflecting on your own cultural background, begin to closely observe the mix that makes up your school community. As the video discussed, you can learn about your community both quantitatively, by researching your school's demographic breakdown, and qualitatively, by speaking directly with students and their families. Read "Reaching All Learners in the School Library" by Karla Collins.

In her article, Collins discusses a process of driving through the neighborhoods in her district as a way to visualize where students come from when they arrive at school. Reflect on what method would work for you to learn more about where your school's community members are coming from and give it a try. Here are some ideas:

**Interviews** – Take advantage of informal conversation opportunities or set up formal interviews to learn more about students' families. Engage in the conversations with an authentic desire to learn.

**Community Walks** - Similar to Collins's driving activity, spend some time walking through your school's community with an eye to what representations of culture you see present. What do you see that you haven't noticed before?

Document what you learn and then consider: how is your library instruction and collection including representations of the various cultures present in your community?