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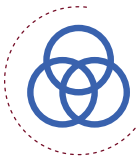
Positive Behavioral
Interventions & Supports

DISCUSSING RACE, RACISM, AND IMPORTANT CURRENT EVENTS WITH STUDENTS:

A Guide with Lesson Plans and Resources

CENTER ON PBIS

July 2021



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Discussing Race, Racism, and Important Current Events with Students: A Guide with Lesson Plans and Resources

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs
and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Introduction

In the Spring of 2020, our country was in the midst of a global health pandemic that resulted in school closures when the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery occurred, in close succession. Although many school districts across the country have been working to improve equity and inclusion in their schools, many were caught off guard without a plan to respond to anti-Black racism, incorporate anti-racist work in schools, and give more voice to students. The Center on PBIS is focused on creating safe, predictable, and positive learning environments, and this work is an essential component of the PBIS framework. This guide is intended to be a start to an ongoing teaching process for educators, students, and their caregivers, not a one-time lesson to “check the box.” They were developed for educators with an express interest and some background knowledge in (or desire to learn more about) racial injustice, discrimination, and bias in schools. We recommend that district and school leaders encourage and support but not mandate educators to teach this content, which could lead to more harm than good if facilitated naively. We hope these materials are helpful in getting difficult work started or extending the work that has already begun.

Purpose

This guide is intended to increase the frequency and quality of conversations about race, racism, and current events regarding race in K-12 classrooms to support students and provide voice and self-reflection. It includes recommendations and tips for creating

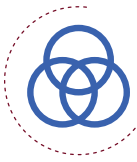
statements of support, preparing for and facilitating constructive classroom discussions, addressing harmful statements, and designing lesson plans and units for ongoing learning. Any can be modified to fit the local student and school context. The guide’s content is designed specifically for discussing issues related to anti-Black racism, but it is also applicable to broader issues of racial or ethnic discrimination (e.g., violence against AAPI communities).

Intended Users

Intended users are district and school teams supporting K-12 teachers and other educators who are interested in supporting their students through providing the opportunity for students to share their voices and listening to their concerns and ideas. However, individual teachers who want to do this work can use it on their own as well. A lack of structures or institutional support for this work shouldn’t stop individual educators from using this guide in their own classrooms or schools in line with district policies.

Rationale

It is easy to avoid discussing bias, racism, and current events regarding race in schools. However, students are already getting information (sometimes incorrect) about race and racism through media and other sources. Ignoring current events and aspects of racial justice can harm student-teacher relationships and student learning. Students need to feel heard and know that teachers care about them. In addition, to become contributing members of an increasingly diverse society, students need skills for understanding



Student Voices about Race

A powerful way to build support for holding these conversations is to give adults the opportunity to watch students describe their experiences. Below are a few videos of students describing the importance of discussing race in the classroom.

- [Black Student Voices: Reflecting on Race and Racism in Schools](#)¹ (Education Week)
- [Why is it Important to Have Conversations on Race with Students?](#)² (Jefferson County Public Schools)
- [Young, Gifted and Black](#)³ (San Diego County Office of Education)

These videos can be used as an entry point into understanding some students' experiences and an example for filming local students or holding student panels. These videos showcase how students can voice their truth in safe, respectful spaces and how adults can help create those spaces.

their reactions to important events in society, communicating their feelings, and engaging with each other in difficult conversations.

How to Use this Guide

This guide can be used to leverage existing systems to develop a comprehensive plan (either at the classroom, grade-level or departmental team, school, or district level) and teach lessons discussing race and racism. Teams could use this guide to develop their own lessons tailored to their local contexts or prepare a short guide for educators in using the lesson plans in the appendices. Teams can also refer to it to identify what supports would help prepare those teaching lessons for success and the ongoing learning of students and adults alike.

Multiple Points of Entry for Individual Educators

We acknowledge that educators will feel varying levels of confidence in their skills in addressing race

in the classroom. Fortunately, there are many ways for individual educators to begin the conversation. For those just getting started on the journey, acknowledging students' experiences and identities is an important first step. Regardless of individuals' confidence in leading discussions, potential discomfort should not get in the way of supporting students. Options include the following:

- 1. Share a statement.** State your care for your students and their lives, say you acknowledge and appreciate our different lived experiences and that some of us might be feeling many things (e.g., fear, anxiety, pain, guilt, shame, anger), and encourage students to talk with you after class or in passing periods (See sample lesson plans in [Appendices A and B](#)).
- 2. Facilitate a class discussion.** Host a class-wide dialogue about race and racism in school and society (see sample lesson plans in [Appendices C, D, and E](#)).
- 3. Use existing lesson plans.** There are existing lesson plans that can be used in [Appendix F](#).



1. Build an ongoing set of lessons and dialogue.

Create space and structure and build skills for ongoing conversations about racial justice and incorporate student voice into projects and classroom PBIS systems development (see Emdin, 2016, for one example). [Appendix G](#) provides steps for teams or teachers to design their own scope and sequence of lesson plans.

The Foundations of this Work

In our efforts to center equity in PBIS, we acknowledge that many scholars of color are originators of the ideas we leverage. Their lived experiences with oppression and academic scholarship make it possible for us to better understand and incorporate ways to support students who have been historically marginalized in society and our educational systems. Discussing race in schools is one way to continue understanding the conditions in which Black and brown students experience life inside and outside of schools. Constructively and inclusively discussing race-related issues provides opportunities to build positive learning communities and engage students in the democratic process in ways where all benefit and are afforded the opportunity to be a part of the much-needed change they want to see in ways that create new and more socially just spaces in our world. If we are to achieve racial equity, we must first acknowledge inequities and find productive and transformative ways of discussing them. We must also ensure that we honor the foundational work of scholars of color and reflect the equity spirit. Thus, this guide was intentionally developed by a racially diverse group of scholars and draws from scholars who reflect the diversity we have in our schools. Many of the resources and tools in

this guide are rooted in asset ideology and liberating practices from the seminal work of scholars of color, such as but not limited to Kimberlé Crenshaw, Paulo Freire, Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Pedro Noguera, Django Paris, Charles Payne, and Beverly Daniel Tatum.

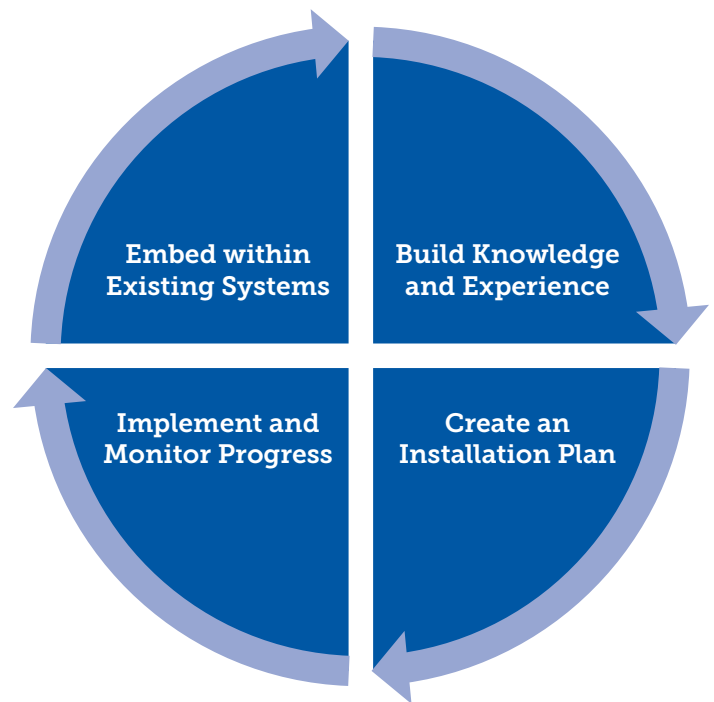
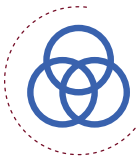


Figure 1. A process of installation and action.

A Recursive Process for Deep Implementation

Figure 1 provides a visual of how a deliberate process of supporting conversations focused on race and racial equity could unfold, informed by implementation science and stages of implementation (Fixsen et al., 2013). Although there are many points of entry, it can be wise first to consider how to support the work by locating it within local teams and structures (Embed within Existing Systems) and considering



what educators need to know (Build Knowledge and Experience) and what support structures and anticipatory guidance are needed to be successful (Create an Installation Plan) before lessons are taught (Implement and Monitor Progress). However, it is important to note that this process is not linear. Teams may find different ways to make progress based on the context and local resources or needs. In some districts, individual educators already holding discussions could seek a community of practice that can increase institutional support. In any case, each

set of actions can inform the next. For example, during implementation, a team may learn that staff believe they need more support in answering questions from students or families, so the team would then identify additional resources for building knowledge. Similarly, the team may receive feedback from stakeholders that indicates the need to do more outreach in lesson plan development. This continuous improvement process exists to help teams plan for sustained work instead of single events or reactive actions.



Embed this Work within Existing Systems

To maximize implementation, scale, and sustainability, this work is best done within existing collaborative teaming structures (e.g., professional learning communities, district professional development providers and coaches, PBIS teams) instead of creating new teams. Utilizing existing structures allows us to leverage systems to help build capacity and endorsement of this work (Sugai & Chafouleas, 2021). Some recommendations are provided here.

Situate this Work in an Existing Team

One of the first recommendations in this work is “don’t go it alone.” Teaching and discussing race related topics can bring up discomfort and resistance. Working within a team structure allows individuals to learn together as a community, pilot and get feedback on ideas, and lean on the influence and backing of team members to support the work going forward.

Leverage existing teams. It is important to consider utilizing current teams and workgroups instead of creating a new team. Are there existing teams that would be willing to make discussions about race a priority? If there are, start with those groups rather than creating a new team that could lead to siloing and fragmenting of the work. Common teams for this work are district PBIS teams, climate or wellness teams, equity teams, or existing professional learning communities (PLCs).

Use current meeting structures and processes.

When working as a team, it is helpful to use existing and consistent [meeting structures](#)⁴ (e.g., meeting agreements and expectations, structured meeting

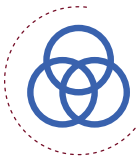
agendas, regular meeting times, meeting roles). These structures will help the team be focused and effective, while relying on past positive experiences.

Situate the team’s work within formal school or district improvement processes. Additionally, to the greatest extent possible, fit the work into the formal district improvement planning and curriculum development processes, such as district equity or school climate plans. Doing so will keep the work of discussing race in the forefront of district leadership, further enshrining the work into district long-term goals and objectives.

Bring Others on to the Team

Although starting with an existing team is often advantageous, it is useful to consider expanding the team to increase its effectiveness and influence. This process can involve identifying existing allies or accomplices in administrators, respected school members, and other groups (e.g., PTO/PTA members, community group representatives). Efforts may start with a core committed group with a singular goal, but it is important to consider who may bring more voice and support. Work to ensure that the team has multiple individuals who bring the following elements:

- **Commitment.** Identify who is already committed to equity and possibly engaging in similar efforts. There may be advocates or allies in various roles who can join.
- **Expertise.** Identify individuals with needed expertise (e.g., lesson planning, culturally responsive pedagogy) and willingness to work collaboratively to enhance capacity building.

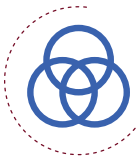


- **Representation by racial/ethnic identity and role.**

Inclusion of multiple and diverse stakeholders and perspectives on teams ensures the likelihood of equity. Therefore, members of this team should be diverse in both identities and roles. Regarding diversity in identities, it is critical to include members from the racial/ethnic groups that are most affected by inequities, beyond general racial diversity in membership. Key roles include students, community members, caregivers and parents, teachers, support staff, building leaders, district leaders, board members, and cabinet leaders. Both types of representation are needed. Far too often, teams have diversity in role but

not in racial/ethnic identity. Consider including family or community members, especially if school or district personnel are not representative of marginalized student groups.

- **Decision-making leadership.** This team will need access to resources and influence to be able to fulfill its aims. Ideally, this team is positioned to enact change in policies, practices, resource allocation, and hiring. It is important to consider that this initiative will take considerable time and effort, and it is important to be able to operationalize how this team will get this work completed.



Establishing Commitment to Discussing Race

Here are a few resources for exploring how to increase commitment and have productive conversations regarding race.

FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

- [Conversations on Race with Adults⁵ and Students⁶](#) (professional development modules from Jefferson County Public Schools, KY)
- [How to Teach Kids to Talk about Taboo Topics⁷](#) (TED Talk by Liz Kleinrock)
- [Leading Equity⁸](#) (podcast focused on supporting educators promote equity in their schools)
- [Let's Talk: Facilitating Conversations with Students⁹](#) (guide from Learning for Justice)
- [Social, Emotional, and Academic Development Through an Equity Lens¹⁰](#) (report by The Education Trust)
- [Speak Up at School: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias, and Stereotypes¹¹](#) (guide from Learning for Justice)
- [Talking About Race¹²](#) (resources from the Smithsonian National Museum on African American History and Culture)
- *Teaching About Race: How to Help Students Unmask and Challenge Racism* (book by Stephen Brookfield)
- [Understanding Race and Privilege: Suggestions for Facilitating Challenging Conversations¹³](#) (guide from the National Association of School Psychologists)
- [How to Change the Story about Students of Color¹⁴](#) (article by Dena Simmons)

FOR FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

- [Becoming Upended: Teaching and Learning about Race and Racism with Young Children and their Families¹⁵](#) (NAEYC article by Kirsten Cole and Diandra Verwayne)
- [The Black Families' Guide to Talking about Racism¹⁶](#) (free ebook)
- [Raising Little Allies to Be¹⁷](#) (guide for children ages 3 to 7 years-old)
- [Talking to Children After Racial Incidents¹⁸](#) (article by Howard Stevenson)
- [Talking to Young Children about Race and Racism¹⁹](#) (PBS Kids website)
- [Teaching Young Children About Bias, Diversity, and Social Justice²⁰](#) (Article by Jinnie Spiegler on Edutopia)



Critically Examine Systems Already in Place

Although it is helpful to use existing systems, it is also important to explore how those systems may perpetuate racial/ethnic inequities. If educators want to address racial disparities, it is necessary to engage in explicit and ongoing conversations about race and equity (Carter et al., 2017).

Review school policies and procedures. Consider which student groups are benefiting most from the current systems and which are not. With attention to written policies, the team can identify what barriers are in place to greater racial/ethnic equity.

Assess representation. School leaders can examine efforts by identifying not only who is on the team but also who has voice and agency in decision making. Consider who is most affected by the current system and therefore stands to benefit most from the work. Are they on the team and do they have meaningful participation? It is critical to involve individuals from marginalized student groups in planning (Chen et al., 2014; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009).

Assess team decision making processes. It is important to examine the operating procedures for this team and other teams in the organization. Are there processes for soliciting and acting upon input from marginalized voices? Is there a commitment to shared authority or collaborative decision making? Can this group model a collaborative approach to decision making for the broader organization?

Assess use of race-specific language. Teams can attend to the specific language team members and

stakeholders use regarding race and whether this language facilitates or inhibits improvement efforts. If open discussion of race is limited, the capability of the group will be limited (Payne, 2005). Because school organizations are likely to reflect social structures from the dominant racial group, it is important to encourage members to openly and intentionally communicate knowledge that challenges the status quo (Irby & Clark, 2018).

Cultivate capacity. Leaders committed to this work can work persistently to cultivate the capacity of other group members by providing training in the skills necessary to engage in these discussions about race. The [Build Knowledge and Experience](#) section provides resources for individuals and teams to increase their knowledge and skills in this area.

Review existing academic curricula for bias and representation. The team can examine district and [school curricula](#)²¹ and [imagery](#) around the school to identify bias and representation that may exist. It may also be possible to empower students to take on steps of examining the curriculum and posted materials (Levenson, Smith, McIntosh, Rose, & Pinkelman, 2021).

Partner with Administrators, Families, and School Boards

Although it can be tempting for individual educators to move quickly, communicating with and involving key stakeholders (e.g., administrators, families, school boards) is critical to ensuring wide and sustained dialogue regarding race. Administrators and school board members can provide vision, increase priority, and allocate key resources to these efforts. Also, when

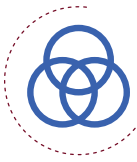


they are brought in as learning partners, they can be better positioned to support teachers' decisions to discuss race in the classroom if students, families, or other community members express concerns. Similarly, proactively notifying families or caregivers can allow their active participation through engaging students in further conversations at home.

Develop a plan to seek agreement and institutional support.

If there is not current policy enabling this work or support from district or school leadership, consider developing a plan for obtaining support before rolling out the lessons. Reaching out to a person or a group in power can be intimidating, especially if these stakeholders are perceived to hold viewpoints that may challenge moving this work forward. Nonetheless, extending a true invitation to participate in the learning can build trust and facilitate installing and implementing this work. Consider the following suggestions to facilitate partnerships:

- **Provide a clear rationale for the need to engage in this work.** Although the team may be committed to these efforts, others may require convincing to come on board. Having a brief, written, and tailored rationale for why this work is necessary will be useful when the reasons for the work are questioned. For example, teams can stress the critical importance of understanding the societal barriers that Black students face to be able to support all students effectively, as well as the social and economic benefits of equipping every student with the skills to engage in constructive dialogues about diversity and equity.
- **Use existing school data.** Assess school and district data pertaining to climate and student wellbeing (e.g., discipline data, school climate surveys, universal screening data, differences in staff vs. student racial/ethnic makeup, community data) to understand the school context and make a data-driven case for a specific initiative on discussing race in the classroom.
- **Ask stakeholders.** In addition to quantitative data, ask students and families to share their experiences of marginalization and meaningful involvement. These powerful stories can increase commitment as well as cultivate shared ownership by involving them early in the decision-making process.
- **Connect to existing district and school goals and improvement plans.** This work will become more important if the team can point to how this work will meet specific organizational priorities or action plans. For example, any initiatives related to equity can be strengthened with a plan for open conversations about race and greatly hindered without it.
- **Leverage standards and academic curricula as a source of support.** It can also be compelling to describe how these discussions about race, history, and current events align with learning standards and content regarding critical thinking skills. Any way to note that this work will help students meet these standards will be more compelling to some than general appeals to improving school climate. Learning for Justice has a set of [Social Justice Standards](#)²² as a reference.



Establishing Commitment to Discussing Race

The following resources can assist teams in working with school boards to promote racial equity.

- [Centering Equity Together in Critical Collaborative Partnership: School Boards and District Leaders](#)²³
- [Considerations for Cultivating Equity-Centered School Boards](#)²⁴
- [Transformative District Change Requires an Equity-Focused School Board](#)²⁵

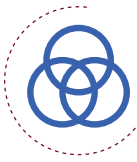
Proactively communicate with families. Early, ongoing, and clear communication with families is essential for a successful initiative. Make sure to review district policies and guidelines to inform parents in advance of lessons. Such efforts can prevent or mitigate negative reactions.

Consider creating a webpage of resources. It can be helpful to provide a curated set of resources regarding race and racism for educators, families, and students. Although a webpage will not reach all stakeholders, it can enable visitors to access resources on their own time. In addition to general resources (see [Build](#)

[Knowledge and Experience](#)), the district plan, lesson plans, and educator-developed resources can be posted for review.

Anticipate educator discomfort and plan proactively.

It is important to acknowledge that uncertainty about this work is to be expected. Although it is tempting to mandate these lessons, requiring that all educators teach lessons before they have the experience and skills to do it could be harmful. Instead, it can be helpful to allow those who are uncertain about actions to stand aside and observe others with more confidence pilot the work in a smaller group. Leaders can reiterate that this work is important, affirm the district or school commitment to support each educator to grow their skillsets in this area, and assess underlying reasons for discomfort to inform an installation plan. Common reasons include lack of knowledge about the topics, uncertainty about proficiency to lead discussions, fear of making mistakes, or uncertainty about district support if concerns are raised in the community. The [Create an Installation Plan](#) section details how to support educators in delivering the lessons successfully.



Build Knowledge and Experience

Ongoing critical self-reflection is necessary for engaging students, embracing diversity, and fostering belonging in classrooms. This process is ongoing and cannot be obtained in an instant. As such, it requires a commitment to lifelong learning instead of a small number of events or trainings.

The following activities are intended for adults on the team to complete individually or as a team first,

then with staff, so educators can be more prepared before facilitating with others. Some may be completed with students as well, but most of these activities are within lessons in [Appendix F](#). Some videos, readings, and activities may require active facilitation, so it is recommended to trial them as self-reflections to gain understanding of and prepare for potential discomfort or harm. A more extensive list is included in [Appendix H](#).

Areas for Learning

HISTORY OF SYSTEMIC RACISM IN THE U.S.

Watch: [Let's Get to the Root of Racial Injustice](#)²⁶ (Ted Talk by Megan Ming Francis)

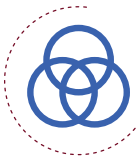
Read: [Historical Timeline of Public Education in the US](#)²⁷ (article on Race Forward)

Reflect:

- What are my personal views on racism and systemic racism?
- What effects might systemic racism have on my students' health, behavior, achievement, and wellbeing?

My next steps:

1. _____
2. _____



EXPLORING PRIVILEGE

Watch: [The Disturbing History of the Suburbs](#)²⁸ (segment on redlining from Adam Ruins Everything)

Read: [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)²⁹ (article by Peggy McIntosh)

Reflect: When was a time when I felt discriminated against? What was the impact? If I can't think of one, why is that the case?

My next steps:

1. _____
2. _____

UNDERSTANDING BIAS (AND HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS)

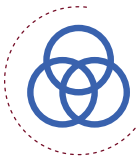
Watch: [How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them](#)³⁰ (Ted Talk by Verna Myers)

Read: [Teachers are as Biased as Everybody Else, Study Shows](#)³¹ (article by Madeline Will in Education Week)

Reflect: Complete the [Race Implicit Association Test](#)³² (note: this activity should be done with careful facilitation because it can raise strong emotions and has not been shown to produce reliable scores). What did my results tell me about my biases? How can I use this learning to help others?

My next steps:

1. _____
2. _____

**IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

Watch: [I'm Tired of Talking about Race](#)³³ (Ted Talk by Jasmine Roberts)

Read: [Race and Racial Identity](#)³⁴ (article from the National Museum of African American History and Culture)

Reflect:

- Complete a racial autobiography activity (see [Appendices I](#) and [J](#)). What insights surfaced?
- How does being Black or brown in the United States shape the learning experiences for my students?
- What are my students' prior experiences and frames of references when it comes to race in the United States? What are mine?

My next steps:

1. _____
2. _____

INTERSECTIONALITY

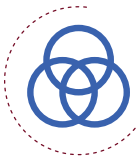
Watch: [What is Intersectionality?](#)³⁵ (brief video featuring Kimberlé Crenshaw)

Read: [Teaching at the Intersections](#)³⁶ (Article by Monita Bell in Learning for Justice)

Reflect: Complete a [social identity wheel activity](#).³⁷ What identities have the greatest effect on how I perceive myself? What identities have the greatest effect on how others perceive me?

My next steps:

1. _____
2. _____



CULTURAL AWARENESS

Watch: [With Different Eyes](#)³⁸ (talk by Django Paris)

Read: [From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools](#)³⁹ (article by Gloria Ladson-Billings)

Reflect:

- What was my first awareness of racial differences, and how old was I when it happened?
- How has my view of racial differences changed over time?

My next steps:

1. _____
2. _____

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Watch: [How to Be a Racial Justice Ally](#)⁴⁰ (video from Jefferson County Public Schools)

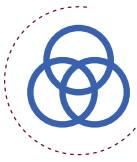
Read: [Speak Up! Responding to Everyday Bigotry](#)⁴¹ (guide from Learning for Justice)

Reflect:

- Think about a time of witnessing unjust treatment of someone based on race. How did I respond and what drove that response? What might I do differently?
- What are ideas for changing the condition of racial justice in my community? How can I get others involved?

My next steps:

1. _____
2. _____



Guidance for Moving Self-Reflection into Action

After engaging in individual learning on systemic racism, current experiences of Black students and other students of color, and our own identities and values, it can be helpful to assess comfort level in discussing topics related to racism. How confident am I on a scale of 1 (not confident at all) to 5 (very confident) in talking about racism with students? What might be the reasons for having less confidence? Is it because of a need for more information on a particular topic? Is it

concern about how to handle certain types of student responses? The Learning for Justice [Let's Talk Guide](#)⁴² (Learning for Justice, n.d.) can be used to explore areas of less confidence. It is normal to feel uncomfortable discussing new topics and those that are charged with emotions. As such, it can be productive to uncover specific areas of discomfort and collect the resources to help feel more prepared.



Create an Installation Plan

The next step of the process is to develop an installation plan for discussions that will maximize success before formal implementation occurs (Saldana et al., 2012). This process might begin with the initial team holding conversations and creating a scope and sequence, then leading others through the work, including other district staff, then school staff, and possibly with small groups of student leaders, before a full rollout of conversations with all students. This approach of initial testing and gradual expansion builds confidence and provides ongoing opportunities to obtain feedback that can improve the full rollout.

Plan for Supporting Productive Conversations

Develop the purpose and expected outcomes of the conversations. Facilitators (e.g., leadership team members) should consider their objectives in hosting formal conversations around race or specific racially focused events and issues. The purpose and outcomes should be communicated to all stakeholders to ensure a shared understanding. For example, school administrators may want to describe these conversations as one example of communication and decision-making regarding difficult topics among a staff community.

Provide common language and definitions of key terms. Some members of the group may have passion about the topic but not the knowledge, experience, and skills to make important decisions. Common language, defined and shared, is the first step to creating advocates for the work. See [Appendix K](#) for a

sample glossary of terms with K–12 friendly definitions and [Appendix L](#) for activities.

Examine the local historical context of race. Consider historical and current community contexts and issues related to race that might be addressed in formal conversations, paying special attention to the school district's history in particular. Take into consideration the impact this history may have on the stakeholders (e.g., staff, students, families). For example, has the district or school had historical patterns of discipline disproportionality, segregation, or other marginalization? For suggestions on how to understand and address any historical context, see [Build Knowledge and Experience](#).

Establish community agreements for engaging in challenging conversations. Review existing team expectations to ensure norms for conversations about race are aligned (see [Appendix C](#) for a sample lesson plan for staff). Ideally, they are embedded within existing school-wide expectations/values. For example, “Listen to learn from others’ experiences” may be an example that fits within the common expectation of “Be Respectful.” Teams might be open to conversations that reflect the need to revisit existing school-wide expectations/values (e.g., “Be Respectful” to “We are Respectful”). As a team, take care to make sure all voices are heard and used to draft possible agreements. Once drafted, the team should reach consensus on the agreements the team will use amongst themselves and introduce and review with



additional stakeholders. The team should be open to having the agreements revised when introduced to additional stakeholders. After the group has come to consensus, the stakeholders can practice using them.

Considerations for practicing community agreements:

- Thank participants for their participation and willingness to be a part of the conversation, as uncomfortable as it may be.
- Share the impact of the conversation on yourself and ask for others to share their thoughts to close, such as something learned, or something they will be leaving the conversation with.
- Encourage follow up with trusted others to continue learning outside the conversations.
- At the end of the session, review the agreements and report specific, positive examples of following them.

Plan to provide emotional and instructional support for staff. Identify emotional or safety needs for staff so they can hold productive conversations with each other and students. Consider that there may be varying needs at different levels (e.g., students, classroom teachers, school administrators). Then develop a plan for supporting all staff and individual staff as needed throughout the process. Some recommendations for developing this support are as follows:

- **Consider materials that may be helpful.** Review content in [Build Knowledge and Experience](#) and [Appendix H](#) for resources that could help staff.
- **Provide opportunities for staff to practice.** Help individual staff identify their comfort levels on the topic to determine the extent of support needed. Consider allowing opportunities for staff to roleplay lessons in a safe environment prior to

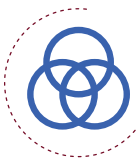
rolling out with students. Individuals can discuss concerns with other educators in or outside of the school or district.

- **Consider co-teaching.** Those with higher needs for support could start by co-teaching lessons with a teaching partner or member of a grade-level or department team. Include follow-up coaching for personnel so they can teach lessons independently.
- **Provide reassurance.** Confidence and competence will come with experience, through repeatedly teaching the lessons and trying out the lessons as a staff beforehand. Allow staff to ask for ongoing coaching when teaching lessons.

Identify a Scope and Sequence for Discussing Race with Students

Establish learning objectives and outcomes for the student lessons. Start by identifying the desired outcomes, then build the objectives, followed by building the scope and sequence. For example, if the desired outcome as a school is for school personnel and students to be able to feel comfortable about having conversations about race in the school, the school team will then need to identify what is needed for school personnel and students to meet this goal (learning objectives). Once the learning objectives are identified, the final step is to identify the lessons needed to teach to meet the learning objectives.

Identify existing resources for possible use. There may already be resources from the district and this guide to support planning, including lesson plans and other instructional materials. Connect with existing curriculum resources and resource standards, as well as any existing district equity plan resources. This



guide includes lessons on establishing norms and introducing communication skills with school personnel and students (see [Appendices C and D](#)), specific lesson plans regarding race and racism (See [Appendix F](#)), entire units or lesson plan collection (see right), and steps for developing new lesson plans (see [Appendix G](#)). There are many other free resources available, and it is wise to consider how each could be adapted for better fit with the local context.

Use stakeholder input to inform development. Early in the process, gather perspectives (e.g., through surveys, focus groups) from students, families, and communities about local needs and experiences to identify relevant resources, experiences, and lessons to organize a coherent scope and sequence that reflects the needs of stakeholders. Share the plan with key stakeholders to get feedback and support prior to rolling out the lesson plans. Make revisions based on feedback.

Provide a draft scope and sequence to stakeholders for feedback and refinement. Refer to district policies about notifying stakeholders (e.g., families, school board) about the developed scope and sequence (see [Embed within Existing Systems](#)).

Install a Careful Process for Rollout

Once the scope and sequence has been refined based on feedback, initial rollout may begin. A careful process starts with self-study to build knowledge, practice with staff, and piloting with a small group of students. After each practice session, engage in self and group reflection to inform learning and make any necessary revisions before full implementation.

Lesson Plan Collections

The following websites contain multiple lesson plans for consideration.

- [Anti-Defamation League](#)⁴³
- [Facing History and Ourselves](#)⁴⁴
- [Learning for Justice](#)⁴⁵
- [Morningside Center](#)⁴⁶
- [Underrepresented](#)⁴⁷
- [USC's Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege](#)⁴⁸
- [Zinn Education Project](#)⁴⁹

Pilot with a small group first (initial rollout) before expanding. Consider implementing the lessons first with a small group (e.g., leadership team, PBIS team, counselors, school social workers) in each school to build confidence and obtain feedback. This initial rollout could continue with increasingly larger groups (e.g., department or grade level, student leaders, specific class). Schedule time for the team to meet following these lessons to make revisions prior to rolling out with students.

Consider using affinity groups. In addition to whole group work, it may be helpful to utilize affinity groups. Affinity groups are spaces for individuals (e.g., school personnel, students) with shared characteristics or identities (e.g., racial groups) to learn from and support one another. They are used to allow individuals to communicate more freely and openly about common experiences and struggles that they may feel



uncomfortable discussing in diverse groups. These discussions may provide opportunities for healing and community building to help minimize racial trauma and support positive identity exploration before or between (but not in place of) whole group sessions. For example, facilitators may use a large group format for presenting an overview or new content and then shift to breakout groups for deeper discussions. If affinity groups are planned, it is important to seek input in advance and inform participants how affinity groups will be used (and the rationale for their use) prior to meetings.

Create a repository of resources for implementation.

Include lesson plans and needed materials in an online folder to make lessons easier to teach.

Develop a schedule for rolling out the scope and sequence.

Review the school's existing organization and master schedule to identify specific times when lessons may be delivered (e.g., morning meetings, advisory, assemblies, field trips). Conversations can be standalone sets of activities, but it can be helpful to prioritize teaching during existing academic periods instead of creating new times and/or through connections to content in the existing curriculum (e.g., literature, civics, history, science, fine arts). Consider the best organizational way to roll out the scope and sequence for additional staff (e.g., professional learning communities, grade/team level meetings, full staff meetings) and the support some staff may need to implement the plans. It can be helpful to allow choice to partner with a trusted peer in delivery.

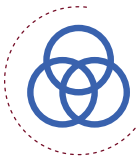
Socratic Seminar

The Socratic Seminar is a popular method of engaging students in their learning through encouraging dialogue in a way that works better than a standard lecture. Here are some resources:

- [Introduction to the Socratic Seminar format](#)⁵⁰ (video)
- [Planning Guide](#)⁵¹ (online resource from Facing History)
- [Socratic Seminar: Teaching Strategy](#)⁵² (online guide from Learning for Justice)
- [Racism in To Kill a Mockingbird and in Modern Day](#)⁵³ (article)
- [When You DO Want Them Talking: The Ins and Outs of Socratic Seminar](#)⁵⁴ (podcast episode from Teaching Beyond the Gradebook)

Communicate the rollout plan. Providing clear expectations that the lessons (or at least the class statement) will be delivered, coaching or other assistance for those who need it, and a master schedule for timing of lessons will make teaching easier and help provide shared accountability for implementation.

Develop a two-way communication system. Creating a formal process for obtaining input allows for stakeholders to provide insights or suggestions to inform a continuous improvement process. Identify time to revisit this conversation with school board



members, families, and community to introduce the scope and sequence and rollout plan to ensure ongoing feedback and responsiveness. Any helpful school or classroom modifications can be communicated to the district team for incorporation into a broader plan.

Plan to provide ongoing emotional support for

students. As with staff, it is important to consider the support needs for students as difficult conversations are held. Some students may need additional space

(e.g., individual or group access to school counselors or social workers, affinity group sessions) to process events and emotions regarding racism that occur before, during, or after conversations are held. Having support structures in place before rollout begins will allow school personnel to share resources proactively with students and be aware of ongoing student needs. Staff can also benefit from access to these supports as well.



Implement and Monitor Progress

Once the plan is created, it is time to teach the lessons to all students in the school. In addition to a thoughtful plan, anticipating and addressing some common issues will help the process run smoothly.

Prepare for Lesson Delivery

Conversations about race and racism are met with varying degrees of discomfort, and yet it is important to take action to improve student outcomes. It can be helpful to anticipate possible challenges and structure the lesson or environment to maximize positive outcomes. The following list of suggestions can help prepare facilitators:

Set a purpose. Explicitly state that you care and identify why you are having this conversation or teaching this unit. Sharing a clear rationale at the start will help students understand why the lesson is important to their education.

Leverage the school-wide expectations. Anchor lessons and any guidance to students to the school-wide language. Refer to them frequently and label which expectations new skills or agreements fall under. For example, “share the air” could fit within Respect, or “speak what is true to you” could fit within Responsibility or Integrity.

Teach and model expectations but be flexible.

Be prepared to teach, reteach, and review norms related to classroom discussions. As with any behavior mistakes, it is more helpful to respond with encouragement to follow agreements than announce and try to punish violations. Some students will be

more equipped to have calm discussions, and that could come from the privilege of not experiencing regular racial microaggressions.

Recognize racial justice advocacy and allyship in your classroom. Use existing school-wide or classroom acknowledgment systems for promoting prosocial and expected behaviors, such as incorporating advocacy as a positive, prosocial behavior.

Accept and proceed through initial discomfort. These conversations are inherently uncomfortable, but discomfort should not be a reason not to have these conversations. If you are uncomfortable discussing these issues, consider the discomfort students may be experiencing on a daily basis and how discussions could make a positive change. It is a compassionate act to share in the discomfort that our students may be feeling and push past discomfort and preferences to do what’s right. With support from others, moving out of our comfort zone and learning to sit with discomfort is a part of the growth process in this work.

Acknowledge that you don’t have all the answers.

Students will have questions that cannot be answered. Instead of feeling like we need to respond, it can be beneficial simply to provide space to hear student voices. Sometimes the best thing we can do as teachers is listen to our students. Providing this space allows students to reflect, contemplate, and research concepts to bring back to the conversations. It is educational to encourage students to use their investigative skills and be curious to deepen or clarify their understanding.



Be a facilitator and not a lecturer. Students will come in with their own experiences and learning that can enrich the learning. One important outcome of these lessons is to allow students to express themselves, which may create new and unexpected points of learning that diverge from a lesson plan. Cultivate a culture and mindset of curiosity.

Model humility and openness. Teachers have the role of passing down values and modeling how to be responsible and empathic adults. Equip students to exchange perspectives and facilitate conversations that may not result in immediate solutions. In doing so both students and educators can process current situations in the community, while also explicitly practicing the relational skills necessary to listening and understanding diverse viewpoints as well as respectfully expressing your own. Daily interactions in school create natural opportunities to challenge our frame of references and the relational skills necessary to address prejudice, inequality, and discrimination.

Be sensitive to trauma. Consider any trauma students may have experienced when developing the lesson. Avoid examples or other visuals that may unnecessarily retraumatize students. For example, if talking about the murder of George Floyd, it is not necessary to show his last moments of life. Instead, show images of his life and then discuss the issues related to his murder. Media images of these murders may dehumanize the person. A better approach is to focus instead on the person's life or the impact of their murder on others, which maintains their humanity.

We will all make mistakes. Acknowledge at the outset that we may say things that are not intentionally harmful but still cause harm. It can be helpful to apologize at the outset with a statement such as, "I apologize in advance if any of my words cause hurt to you." Model being a learner. Be prepared to listen, acknowledge the feedback, and move forward. A simple, "I'm sorry I did that to you" can be powerful.

Avoid Harmful Ideologies

Some messages and terms, even if used with positive intent, can have a powerfully negative impact on students. It is helpful to understand why these harmful ideas might seem supportive but can damage relationships.

Avoid colorblind ideology. Although many educators were raised during a time where the attitude of White culture was that we should not see or acknowledge race, this perspective can be deeply harmful. When we say things like "I don't see color," we are saying that we do not see a key part of our students' identities. If we think that society will treat students differently based on their color, pretending not to see it is to deny that there is bias in the world.

Avoid deficit thinking. A deficit thinking lens centers the cause of inequitable outcomes on perceived individual shortcomings of students, their families, and their communities instead of systematic lack of access to resources. Adopting systems thinking allows us to recognize that institutional racism presents barriers to success and removes access to or recognition of community cultural strengths.



Avoid “All lives matter.” The term “all lives matter” arose in use only after Black Lives Matter was introduced. Although those who promote this phrase claim to care equally about all individuals regardless of race, it directs attention and resources away from systemic racism against Black individuals. The phrase is also problematic because it presents a false dichotomy: supporters of Black Lives Matter have never argued that Black lives are the only lives that matter. Rather, supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement argue that Black lives matter just as much as anyone else’s, a position warranted because African American/Black individuals in the U.S. have been treated unjustly since before the country’s formation. Even if said from a caring perspective, these words can invalidate students’ identities and be hurtful.

Avoid “White savior syndrome.” For White educators, it is important to give voice and agency to students to voice their concerns and identify solutions instead of feeling compelled to solve problems on behalf of students. Regardless of positive intent, the impact can diminish the power of students and communities of color. Holding the discussions and centering student voice is more powerful.

Be Ready to Respond to Harmful Comments

Before teaching any lesson, it is helpful to consider what comments might arise and how to respond to them, especially overtly racist statements and behaviors by students or other adults. If we do not respond when these statements are made, students may assume you feel that way too. Instead of having to figure out how to react on the spot, have a

practiced response at the ready. By having a response at the ready, it’s possible to take positive action to interrupt bias instead of responding ineffectively or ignoring it. See the [Speak Up at School Guide](#)⁵⁵ (and the accompanying [Pocket Guide](#)⁵⁶) from Learning for Justice that describe the challenge and strategies for responding. Some examples are provided here:

Use a neutralizing routine. A neutralizing routine is an alternative response to a harsh or snap-decision response to unwanted behavior, especially when our implicit biases may affect responses. Although many adults use neutralizing routines regularly (e.g., take three deep breaths, pause and ask a different way), it is effective to develop, teach, and practice a school-wide neutralizing routine (e.g., TRY; Take three deep breaths, Reflect on your Feelings, You got this [i.e., try again]) that both adults and students can use as replacement responses (Cook et al., 2018; McIntosh et al., 2021; McIntosh et al., in press).

Consider calling in vs. calling out. When harmful comments are made, it is worth considering whether to [respond privately or publicly](#)⁵⁷ (known as “calling in” or “calling out”). In some situations, it may be more effective for promoting behavior change to share concerns privately, especially if the individual is another adult. However, it may be necessary to respond publicly, especially to communicate that harmful comments are not acceptable and maintain a safe classroom environment. Alternatively, there may be an in-between response that is effective, such as “I have a different perspective that I’d like to share with you after class,” which can signal the words are unacceptable but keep the discussion private.



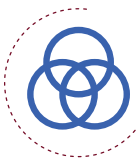
Teach specific skills or responses. It is also helpful to teach how to respond to being the recipient of a hurtful comment, as well as being called out for saying hurtful things (Jana & Baran, 2020). A protocol like “[ouch and oops](#)”⁵⁸ can be used to provide easy communication in the moment (i.e., “ouch” when hearing a hurtful comment, “oops” when being told “ouch”) and allow an opportunity to follow up with deeper conversation after the whole group discussion (Diversity & Inclusion Center, 2014, January).

Establish a community agreement to pause conversations when needed. When introducing the

lesson and establishing agreements for conversations, consider adding an agreement that the conversation can be paused if a discussion becomes too heated. Teach both words and an accompanying hand signal (e.g., “time out” with a T symbol) so that anyone can use a gesture if speaking becomes too difficult in the moment.

Anticipate and prepare. In addition to deciding on a practiced response or statement, it may be helpful to brainstorm possible statements during discussions and think about how to handle those situations (adapted from the [Learning for Justice Let’s Talk Guide](#)⁵⁹).

Statement	Other Student Responses	My Response, Statement, Action
All lives matter.		
I am not racist. I do not see color.		
My parents say...		
We shouldn’t destroy our history.		
(sharing personal story) Somebody called me this or did this to me.		
(sharing personal story) An adult in the school that did something or said something racist.		



Reflect on Lessons and their Delivery

After each lesson, it is important to reflect on the lesson, with particular attention to the instruction and any needed changes in teaching procedures, student responsiveness, progress toward objectives, and actions for following up. The following questions can be helpful:

1. What went well?
 - What parts of the lesson and delivery were particularly effective?
 - What elements of preparation helped it go well?
2. What could be improved?
 - What parts of the lesson and delivery did not seem to work as well?
 - What might need to be changed for the next time?
3. What's next?
 - What ongoing support do students need?
 - What ongoing support do educators need?
 - What self-reflection activities would be helpful?
 - What will the next lesson(s) cover?

For both implementation and continuous improvement, it can be helpful for teachers and students to complete surveys or reflection forms following the lessons. This activity can not only monitor fidelity of implementation but also obtain feedback on the lessons for further refinement.

Monitor Outcomes

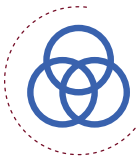
How will everyone know if these lessons are working? For quantitative progress monitoring, teams can use the free [School Climate Survey Suite](#)⁶⁰ on PBISApps.org once or twice per year. The site allows instant disaggregation of results by race to obtain a quick assessment of student perceptions about the school. There are many additional options, including surveys of school personnel beliefs regarding equity and inclusion and use of student or family advisory groups to assess progress and next steps.

Expand the Work

Once the lessons are taught, feedback is received, and plans are modified for continuous improvement, the next steps are to determine how to grow the work. As students gain fluency in activities, they can be provided opportunities to lead sessions and join the planning team. For educators, communities of practice (e.g., professional learning communities) are ideal for providing space for reciprocal learning and support among colleagues. As confidence grows, the work will expand to more and more conversations, both in classrooms and in communities.

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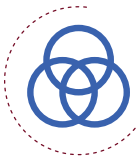
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Appendix A: Classroom Statement on Race and Racism Lesson Plan (Primary Students)

The purpose of this lesson is to show to students that you care about them and their feelings, care about the issues that affect them, and maintain positive student-teacher relationships.

Lesson Details

- **Participants:** Students in kindergarten through second grade
- **Time:** 5 minutes
- **Preparation:** Make sure you have taught and practiced class-wide behavior expectations.
- **Materials needed:** None

Steps

1. **Share a statement of caring and affirmation.** For example, say, *"I want all of you to know that I care for each of you. You all are both similar and different in many ways and that is what makes our classroom special and beautiful. Our world is also filled with people from many different places that all love their families and friends, just like we do. Our classroom is not a place where we treat people differently because of the way they look or what they believe or how they speak (such as race, religion, or the languages you speak at home). I want to make sure all of you feel safe and cared for here every day."*
2. **Let students know you are there for them.** For example, say, *"I also want you to know that if you don't feel good about something going on in our classroom or in our world, that I care and would like to listen when we have a break. I am here for you."*

Following On

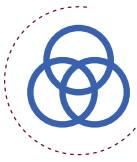
Reaffirm the statement with your students periodically, especially after racially-charged events.

Alternatives

- Consider having the principal provide a similar message to all students before teachers follow up with this statement.
- Consider holding a group discussion or ongoing circle with students about race and racism (see [Appendix C](#) for a sample).
- Consider co-teaching this with other teachers or a coach who may be more confident in the work.

Tips

- It's good to acknowledge that you don't have all the answers but want to provide space to hear student voices. Sometimes the best thing we can do as teachers is listen to our students.
- Avoid statements like "I don't see color" or "All lives matter." Even if said from a caring perspective, these words can invalidate students' identities and be hurtful.



Appendix B: Classroom Statement on Race and Racism Lesson Plan (Intermediate to Secondary Students)

The purpose of this lesson is to show to students that you care about them and their feelings, care about the issues that affect them, and maintain positive student-teacher relationships.

Lesson Details

- **Participants:** Students in intermediate and secondary grades
- **Time:** 5 minutes
- **Preparation:** Make sure you have taught and practiced class-wide behavior expectations.
- **Materials needed:** None

Steps

1. **Share a statement of caring and affirmation.** For example, say, *"I want you all to know that like many of you, I have been noticing events of racial bias in our community and society and see the hurt they cause. I want you all to know that I care and will not tolerate acts of racism in this school. I want our classroom to be a place where each student feels safe and respected, and I recognize that some of you may feel unsafe as a*
result of these events. I want to take the steps to help you feel safe here."
2. **Let students know are there for them.** For example, say, *"I'd like to talk with any of you who would like to discuss more, share your feelings, or learn more about it after class or any time you'd like. I am here for you."*

Following On

Reaffirm the statement with your students periodically, especially after racially-charged events.

Alternatives

- Consider having the principal provide a similar message to all students before teachers follow up with this statement.
- Consider holding a group discussion or ongoing circle with students about race and racism (see [Appendix C](#) for a sample).
- Consider co-teaching this with other teachers or a coach who may be more confident in the work.

Tips

- It's good to acknowledge that you don't have all the answers but want to provide space to hear student voices. Sometimes the best thing we can do as teachers is listen to our students.
- Avoid statements like "I don't see color" or "All lives matter." Even if said from a caring perspective, these words can invalidate students' identities and be hurtful.



Appendix C: Preparing for Difficult Classroom Conversations Lesson Plan (for School Faculty and Staff)

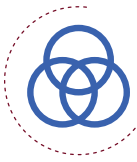
The purpose of this lesson is twofold: (a) to provide an opportunity to try out the difficult classroom discussions lesson plan before teaching it to students, and (b) to give faculty and staff sample community agreements and skills to use with each other in difficult conversations.

Lesson Details

- **Participants:** School faculty and staff
- **Time:** 45 to 60 minutes
- **Preparation:** Complete work to prepare yourself for this lesson (see Chapter 2). Have a practiced response ready for any challenging comments. Identify a respected teacher to try out the student lesson ahead of time and share out their experiences.
- **Materials needed:** Copies of the Preparing for Difficult Classroom Discussions lesson plan ([Appendix D](#)). Posters of agreements and skills for difficult classroom conversations that could be used with students. Writing materials or devices for a writing activity. Flipchart paper for a T-chart activity.

Steps

1. **Introduce the lesson and its purpose.** For example, say, *"To become successful members of society, students need to be able to have conversations about difficult topics. It's not easy for us adults either, but it's important for us as a community of learners. To support our students in building these skills, we are rolling out a specific lesson for having difficult classroom conversations. Because it may be new for our students, we are going to walk through the lesson plan as a group, so we can get some practice before we teach it and also have a protocol for having difficult discussions as a group of adults as well. That way we will be able to model the skills we teach and be a higher-performing team here."*
2. **Complete a free-write warm-up (or partner activity).** For example, say, *"Just as you'll see in the lesson plan, please spend the next 3 minutes writing about a time when you felt [insert school-wide expectations, such as respected] by a colleague here at this school. What was the other person(s) saying and doing that made you feel that way?"*
3. **Discuss.** Invite participants to share their responses with the whole group. Ask participants to identify similarities and differences. For example, ask, *"What are you noticing about what others have offered? What similarities or differences did you hear? Is there something that never occurred to you?"*
4. **Anchor norms for discussion to the school-wide expectations.** For example, say, *"It's important for us to anchor this work in our school-wide expectations, so students can see how they can pertain to group discussions. I'm going to role-play this with you all now. Who can give me an example of what it looks and sounds like to show respect when others are talking in a whole-class discussion, and why is it so important?"* Provide both examples and non-examples.
5. **Introduce a purpose for the activity.** For example, say, *"We want to be clear about the purpose of this lesson. Here is a suggested introduction: We are a community of learners. Some of our classroom discussions might be controversial for us, which provide*



an extra challenge. For these discussions, we will use some additional agreements and communication skills to keep the high levels of respect and care for each other that I know we can expect from each other.”

- 6. Try out a set of community agreements or norms for engaging in challenging conversations.** For example, say, “Within our schoolwide expectations, it can be helpful to have a set of agreements or specific examples of following our expectations during difficult classroom conversations. Here is an example that you can use or adapt for your classrooms, and we will try them out here as a staff for our conversations as well. We will use four agreements.

- **Experience Discomfort** [an example of showing Responsibility]. Some of our topics may make us uncomfortable. Being uncomfortable is not a bad thing because we can learn from it. So it’s okay to be uncomfortable at times when we talk.
- **Speak What Is True to You** [another example of showing Responsibility]. Each of us has our own experiences, and those experiences might be different from others. And so we will share our perspectives and know that other perspectives are just as valid. We do that using I statements, where we speak only for ourselves.
- **Expect and Accept Non-closure** [an example of showing Respect]. We need to recognize that some issues are big and have been around a long time. We may not get our discussion settled today or this month, and we have to be okay with that.
- **Make Mistakes** [an example of showing Safety]. Each of us, including me, will use the wrong words, get our facts wrong, or misinterpret situations. Because we are a community of learners, we use any mistakes as an opportunity to grow. Because some of these are abstract, it’ll be important to ask students for examples and non-examples. What are

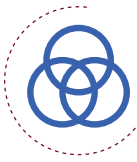
some you think they would say?”

Ask faculty to provide examples of what following these agreements looks and sounds like, providing performance feedback as needed.

- 7. Teach a set of communication skills.** These skills will be helpful in navigating difficult topics. Here are some examples: “In addition to the agreements, there are a few communication skills that will be helpful. Here are four skills we recommend for communicating with respect.

- **One Mic.** One of us will speak at a time, using a talking piece. When you have the talking piece, you have the floor, and the rest of us will listen to understand, staying quiet until our turn.
- **Pass.** At any time, you can pass the piece or choose not to answer in front of the group.
- **Ouch.** If someone says anything that hurts our feelings, we can simply say Ouch, and others will stop what they are saying or doing, regardless of why.
- **Thumb Check.** Anytime I ask for a thumb check, hold your thumbs out. Up means I agree or I’m comfortable with that. Down is I disagree or I’m very uncomfortable with that. And sideways is something in between. There will be times when we aren’t all in agreement, and we may need to move on. Students will need practice using them, and we will practice them in our discussions as well.”

- 8. Provide a teaching testimonial.** Identify a respected teacher who has already taught the student lesson. Ask them to share out their experiences with the group, including positives and recommendations they would have for the group, and allow time for questions and answers.



- 9. Discuss and debrief.** Ask teachers to review the lesson plan in grade-level teams and job alikes, identifying how they would use or modify these lessons, agreements, and skills to meet their needs. Consider using a t-chart activity for identifying things that might help and hinder successful teaching of the lesson plan. Ask what support teachers would need to teach the lesson successfully. Examples could be co-teaching the

lesson, roleplaying with other adults, viewing a video of an actual lesson.

- 10. Close the session.** For example, say, *“Thank you for your time and energy in helping to create a trusting and respectful community of learners. As adult models for the students, we can practice these agreements and skills regularly with each other so we build our confidence in leading students in class-wide discussions about difficult topics.”* Provide clear directions for when the lessons are to be taught.

Following On

- Refer to the agreements periodically in staff meetings, labeling when colleagues follow them and providing constructive feedback when not.
- Practice using the communication skills with more and more difficult topics (e.g., staff discussions on gender, instructional philosophy, race; see [Appendix E](#)).
- Use strategies to ensure lesson implementation, such as using a common schedule or lesson log to sign off when the lesson is completed.
- Provide any additional support teachers identify as needed to be successful.

Alternatives

- Consider using your school-wide expectations to frame conversations in place of adding specific community agreements or norms.
- Consider using roleplays of the student lessons in grade-level teams.
- Consider piloting this lesson first with a smaller group (e.g., leadership team, PBIS team) for fine tuning before using it with the whole staff.
- Consider co-teaching this lesson with a coach from the district or another school who may be more confident in the work.

Tip

Have a practiced response ready when colleagues share statements that violate the expectations or agreements and need to be addressed in front of the group (e.g., to maintain a safe and respectful learning environment). Treat it as a teachable moment and model how to respond in lessons with students.



Appendix D: Preparing for Difficult Classroom Conversations Lesson Plan (Intermediate to Secondary Students)

The purpose of this lesson is to provide an opportunity to learn and practice discussion ground rules and communication skills to support the classroom in discussing potentially challenging topics.

Lesson Details

- **Participants:** Students in intermediate and secondary grades
- **Preparation:** Make sure you have taught and practiced class-wide behavior expectations, with student input as appropriate. Complete work to prepare yourself for this lesson (see [Embed within Existing Systems](#)).
- **Time:** 45 to 60 minutes
- **Materials needed:** Posters of classroom matrix, agreements, and skills for difficult classroom conversations. Paper and writing utensils for a free-write activity.

Steps

1. **Complete a free-write warm-up (or partner activity).** For example, say, “Please spend the next 3 minutes writing about a time when you felt [insert school-wide expectations, such as respected] by a teacher or other classmates. What was the other person(s) saying and doing that made you feel that way?”
2. **Discuss.** Invite students to share their responses. Ask students to identify similarities and differences. For example, ask, “What are you noticing about what others have offered? What similarities or differences did you hear? Is there something that never occurred to you?” It may be useful to model for students with a think aloud.
3. **Revisit expectations for classroom behavior for whole group activities.** For example, say, “Who can give me an example of what it looks and sounds like to show respect when others are talking in the whole group, and why is it so important?” Provide both examples and non-examples.
4. **Introduce a purpose for the activity.** For example, say, “We are a community of learners. Some of our classroom discussions might be controversial for us, which provide an extra challenge. For these discussions, we will use some additional agreements and communication skills to keep the high levels of respect and care for each other that I know we can expect from each other.”
5. **Share a set of community agreements or norms for engaging in challenging conversations.** The following is an example using agreements adapted from Singleton (2015): “In this class, we will use four agreements.”
 - **Experience Discomfort.** Some of our topics may make us uncomfortable. Being uncomfortable is not a bad thing because we can learn from it. So it’s okay to be uncomfortable at times when we talk.
 - **Speak What Is True to You.** Each of us has our own experiences, and those experiences might be different from others. And so we will share our perspectives and know that other perspectives are just as valid. We do that using I statements, where we speak only for ourselves.
 - **Expect and Accept Non-closure.** We need to recognize that some issues are big and have been around a long



time. We may not get our discussion settled today or this month, and we have to be okay with that.

- **Make Mistakes.** *Each of us, including me, will use the wrong words, get our facts wrong, or misinterpret situations. Because we are a community of learners, we can apologize and use any mistakes as an opportunity to grow."*

Consider asking students to provide examples of what following these agreements looks and sounds like, or provide explicit instruction with examples and non-examples. Although it may feel contrived, it can be helpful to practice offering sincere apologies before the need arises.

6. **Teach a set of communication skills.** These skills will be helpful in navigating difficult topics. Here are some examples: *"We have four skills we are going to use to communicate with respect.*

- **One Mic.** *One of us will speak at a time, using a talking piece. When you have the talking piece,*

you have the floor, and the rest of us will listen to understand, staying quiet until our turn.

- **Pass.** *At any time, you can pass the piece or choose not to answer in front of the group.*
- **Ouch.** *If someone says anything that hurts our feelings, we can simply say Ouch, and others will stop what they are saying or doing, regardless of why.*
- **Thumb Check.** *Anytime I ask for a thumb check, hold your thumbs out. Up means I agree or I'm comfortable with that. Down is I disagree or I'm very uncomfortable with that. And sideways is something in between. There will be times when we aren't all in agreement, and we may need to move on."*

Practice each of these, either as a class or in small groups, until students give a thumbs up that they are confident they can use them correctly.

7. **Close the session.** For example, say, *"We're going to practice these agreements and skills regularly so we build our confidence in having class-wide discussions about difficult topics."*

Following On

- Refer to the classroom discussion agreements periodically, labeling them when students follow them and providing constructive feedback when not.
- Practice using the communication skills with more and more difficult topics (e.g., gender, politics, race; see [Appendix E](#)).

Alternatives

- Consider forming small groups of students for initial discussions.
- Consider the use of virtual platforms for students to share their comments, but make sure to moderate comments instead of projecting them automatically.
- Consider co-teaching this with other teachers or a coach who may be more confident in the work.

Tip

Have a practiced response when students (or other adults) share statements that violate the expectations or agreements and need to be addressed in front of the class (e.g., to maintain a safe and respectful learning environment).



Appendix E: Discussing Race and Racism Lesson Plan (Intermediate to Secondary Students)

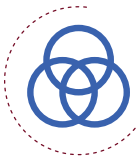
The purpose of this lesson is to provide students with an initial opportunity to share their experiences and feelings and feel heard regarding race, racism, and current events. Additional purposes are to acknowledge potential trauma and provide space for student voice in the classroom.

Lesson Details

- **Participants:** Students in intermediate and secondary grades
- **Preparation:** Make sure you have taught and practiced both class-wide behavior expectations and agreements and skills in having difficult classroom discussions ([Appendix D](#)). Complete work to prepare yourself for this lesson (see [Implement and Monitor Progress](#)).
- **Time:** 45 to 60 minutes
- **Materials needed:** Posters of classroom matrix, agreements, and skills for difficult classroom conversations. Paper and writing utensils for a free-write activity.

Steps

1. **Revisit expectations for classroom behavior for whole group activities.** For example, say, “Who can give me an example of what it looks and sounds like to show respect when others are talking in the whole group, and why is it so important?” Provide both examples and non-examples.
2. **Introduce a purpose for the activity.** For example, say, “We are a community of learners. Some of our classroom discussions might be controversial for us, which provide an extra challenge. For these discussions, we will use some additional agreements and communication skills to keep the high levels of respect and care for each other that I know we can expect from each other.”
3. **Revisit the agreements for engaging in challenging conversations taught in the previous lesson** ([Appendix D](#)), such as Experience Discomfort, Speak What Is True to You, Expect and Accept Non-closure, and Make Mistakes. Ask students to provide definitions in their own words and examples and non-examples.
4. **Practice any previously taught communication skills** ([Appendix D](#)), such as One Mic, Pass, Ouch, and Thumb Check. Ask students to share examples and non-examples.
5. **Complete a free-write activity.** For example, say, “Please take the next 5 [or so] minutes to write for yourself your thoughts about or experiences with race and racism. These are for your reference. I will not be collecting them, so please write freely.” Alternatively, you could collect these statements and read selected comments anonymously. Possible prompts (either for free-writing or discussion) include:
 - Please share what you are thinking or feeling right now about [recent event].
 - Write about a time when you were treated unfairly because of the way you looked. What happened, and how do you feel about it now?



- 6. Hold a discussion.** Use your discussion norms (e.g., talking stick in a classroom circle) to invite students to share their experiences. Reaffirm that students should use their discussion skills (e.g., One Mic, Pass, Ouch). Make sure to model these skills for students. Use Ouch if you can perceive that a statement hurts students, but they don't say it themselves. Use thumbs checks as needed but do not enforce an expectation of consensus or closure. Allow students to speak and be open to where the conversation goes, even if it ends prematurely.
- 7. Let students know are there for them.** For example, say, *"I'd like to talk with any of you who would like to discuss more, share your feelings, or learn more about it after class or any time you'd like. I am here for you."*
- 8. End the session with positive feedback.** For example, say, *"Thank you for being honest and engaged in this conversation. This is not easy, and I appreciate how you've treated each other in this discussion."*

Following On

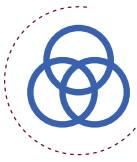
Consider what the next lesson or discussion should be (see [Appendix G](#)). Identify whether individual students may benefit from individual dialogue and support.

Alternatives

- Use a specific current event (e.g., a local or national incident of racism) as a concrete starting point for students to share their feelings in Step 5.
- Consider the use of virtual platforms for students to share their comments, but make sure to moderate comments instead of projecting them automatically.
- Consider forming small groups of students for initial discussions.
- Consider co-teaching this with other teachers or a coach who may be more confident in the work.

Tips

- Have a practiced response when students (or other adults) share statements that deny racism or other comments that need to be addressed publicly (e.g., to maintain a safe and respectful learning environment).
- Accept the fact that discussions can be helpful but will not solve all problems. There will likely be unknowns and uncertainty about how to move forward.
- It can be helpful to acknowledge that you don't have all the answers but want to provide space to hear student voices. Sometimes the best thing we can do as teachers is listen to our students.
- Avoid statements like "I don't see color" or "All lives matter." Even if said from a caring perspective, these words can invalidate students' identities and be hurtful.



Appendix F: Recommended Individual Lesson Plans

Note: These are a subset of recommended individual lesson plans among many options that exist outside of this guide.

ELEMENTARY

VOCABULARY

Vocabulary Matching Worksheet ([Appendix L](#))

This sheet includes activities for defining terms based on the glossary in [Appendix K](#).

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE AND RACISM

[Many Shapes and Sizes](#)⁶¹

Learning about individual differences and why it is important to celebrate those differences.

[Lonnie Chavis of 'This is Us' Writes about Racism](#)⁶²

For upper elementary or middle schoolers to hear one young activist and actor's perspectives on racism.

HISTORY OF SYSTEMIC RACISM IN THE U.S.

[The Civil Rights Memorial](#)⁶³

Learn about racially unjust issues of past and present and complete a project to propose a new civil rights memorial.

[White Anti-Racist Biographies: Early Grades](#)⁶⁴

Four White Anti-Racist biographies and related activities (Note: teach along with lessons on Black leaders to avoid perceptions about White saviors).

[Timeline of School Integration](#)⁶⁵

Students develop and conduct interviews of elders to learn about why schools were segregated and how that changed.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

[What is a Hate Crime?](#)⁶⁶

Understanding when acting on hate is criminal.

STUDENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

[My Family Heritage: A Lesson for Honoring Cultures](#)⁶⁷

Students learn about different cultures in addition to their own.



Racial Autobiography ([Appendices I and J](#))

Students (and staff) complete a racial autobiography tool to explore how race has shaped their lives.

THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

[Student Voices on COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter](#)⁶⁸

Sharing student comments around the topic and discussion about how students relate to the comments.

SECONDARY

VOCABULARY

Vocabulary Matching Worksheet ([Appendix L](#))

This sheet includes activities for defining terms based on the glossary in [Appendix K](#).

[Talking About Race and Racism](#)⁶⁹

*Defining terms and having conversations about the terms (Note: the lesson connects to the book *The New Jim Crow*, but it can be completed independently).*

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS

[Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege](#)⁷⁰

Introduction to facilitating conversations around identity, power, and privilege.

CURRENT EVENTS AND MEDIA

[Ferguson Protests](#)⁷¹

Lesson plan (from Listenwise, requires free account) using audio news clips (e.g., from NPR) and classroom discussion questions.

[Listening Circle on George Floyd](#)⁷²

Holding a listening circle around a current event (e.g., George Floyd's murder).

[Running While Black](#)⁷³

Lesson plan (from Listenwise, requires free account) using audio news clips (e.g., from NPR) and classroom discussion questions.

[Systemic Racism Drives Protests](#)⁷⁴

Lesson plan (from Listenwise, requires free account) using audio news clips (e.g., from NPR) and classroom discussion questions.



[Why Are People Out in the Streets?](#)⁷⁵

Lesson plan discussing protests in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

HISTORY OF SYSTEMIC RACISM IN THE U.S.

[Facing History: Race in US History](#)⁷⁶

Lesson plans and resources focused on the fight for racial equity in the U.S.

[Understanding the Message of The Civil Rights Memorial](#)⁷⁷

Connecting Civil Rights to current issues and memorials.

IMPLICIT BIAS

[When Perception and Reality Collide: Implicit Bias and Race](#)⁷⁸

Lesson on the psychology of implicit racial bias.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

[Dismantling Racial Caste](#)⁷⁹

Racial justice and developing plans to "Do Something"

[Becoming an Ally](#)⁸⁰

What does it look like to be an ally who seeks to understand and support different identity groups?

[Racial Disparity in the Justice System](#)⁸¹

Understanding implicit bias and discrimination specific to the justice system.

STUDENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

[Creating a Learning Environment Where All Kids Feel Valued](#)⁸²

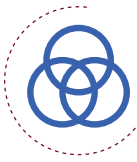
Examining how aspects of one's identity impacts their interactions in society.

[Helping Your Students Identify Their Values](#)⁸³

Facilitating students to identify the values and principles that guide their lives.

[Identity and Names](#)⁸⁴

Discussing the importance of an individual's name in contributing to their identity.



Identity Charts⁸⁵

Provides an explanation on how to use a graphic tool to help students understand their identity.

Racial Autobiography ([Appendices I and J](#))

Students (and staff) complete a racial autobiography tool to explore how race has shaped their lives.

Who Am I?⁸⁶

Students share their names and create identity charts.

THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

Black Lives Matter: From Hashtag to Movement⁸⁷

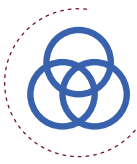
An introduction to Black Lives Matter and its history as an activist movement.

Black Lives Matter⁸⁸

Understanding myths and misconceptions about Black Lives Matter and connections to previous Black civil rights organizations.

Study.com: Black Lives Matter Lesson Plan⁸⁹

Collection of lesson plan materials to describe the development of Black Lives Matter.



Appendix G: Steps for Designing Your Own Units and Lesson Plans

This appendix provides a step-by-step process for developing new units and lesson plans. There is a list of websites on [p. 22](#) that include existing units, and [Appendix F](#) includes links to lessons that have already been developed. Teams can select the options that will best match existing resources and meet student needs.

Tough and often enlightening conversations that directly address race and racism are necessary if we are to prepare students for the world. However, we can make it a bit easier for ourselves if we reflect and prepare for these lessons and conversations. Below are a few steps to support the start of developing, planning, and implementing lessons: (1) scope and sequence, (2) lesson topic, (3) reflection, and (4) scheduling. This guidance can provide some structure and encouragement to deliver these lessons.

Identify a Scope and Sequence

Teaching students about the many facets of race, racism, and social justice takes more than one lesson or incidental classroom discussions. What do you want to cover regarding experiences with race and racism? It is helpful to consider how to form individual lessons or discussions into a coherent unit that builds upon prior lessons, such as a lesson per month. When developing a scope and sequence, begin with the end in mind. First determine what your students know and what you want them to know by the end of the unit. Next, design single lesson topics that cover objectives leading to your unit goal. Then develop your lessons with attention to time available, developmental level, resources needed, the school and classroom context, and promoting discussion and engagement. Finally, schedule your unit implementation with regards to time of day, length of each lesson, and calendar days. It may be wise to build

in reflection and discussion time in your professional learning community between lesson delivery. Below are example Scope and Sequence Units across grade bands. [Page 22](#) has links to existing units. It can also be helpful to review Learning for Justice's [Social Justice Standards](#).⁹⁰ Each could be improved by reviewing with your team and stakeholder groups for fit with the local context and adaptations as needed.

EXAMPLE: PRIMARY (K-2) 7-LESSON UNIT ON FAIRNESS (DELIVERED ACROSS A 9-WEEK BLOCK)

Lesson 1: Statement of Concern. Share a statement of concern for students (see example in [Appendix B](#)).

Lesson 2: Fairness and Empathy Activity. Say, "We are going to do a short lesson on treating people with fairness." Give students, at random, a red card or a blue card (select volunteers or include the whole class), say that students with a red card can get some privilege (e.g., preferential seating, receive a small snack, or go to free play first). After a brief period of waiting (1-2 minutes), invite the students with the blue card to receive the same privilege. Alternatively, the lesson could be taught through the use of dolls or with older students demonstrating the lesson. If your classroom has a mix of lighter and darker-haired students, the lesson could also be completed by dividing students into one of two groups by hair color. After the demonstration lesson, have a classroom discussion on fairness. How did



the students (or dolls) with the red cards feel? How did the students with the blue cards feel? Are people sometimes treated this way in real life by the way they look? What does this look like or feel like? What is this called?"

Lesson 3: Vocabulary. Teach equity-specific words (see [Appendix K](#) for a glossary and [Appendix L](#) for a set of activities) just as with any other vocabulary words. Teach through asking for examples of terms, creating word maps, teaching root words, using context clues, and using children's fiction books to illustrate the concepts (King et al., 2018; Stevenson, 2014). Consider teaching students some of the science behind a term like race by introducing the concept of melanin. Reviewing books or images or looking at our skin can illustrate the point that we all have different colored skin and that skin color is darker or lighter as a function of more or less melanin or pigment accumulation. Any discussion can clarify that race is a social construct, and we are all people, but race and racism affects lives differently. For young students, a simple additional illustration of race could include showing students a dark colored and a light-colored egg and asking questions of students about them. Then, cracking both eggs to show that they are both the same inside even though the shells are slightly different. This can also be an opportunity to raise the point that diversity is a wonderful thing and how boring our world would be if we all looked and acted the same.

Lesson 4: Culture and Identity: Lead the class through lessons related to culture and identity. These lessons could include the story and meaning of your name (see

example: [Identity and Names](#)⁹¹) and lessons on student cultures (e.g., languages, foods, traditions, religion; see examples: [My Family Heritage](#)⁹² and [Culture Case](#)⁹³)

Lesson 5: Look out for Examples. Share books and media examples or have students look through materials to find different ways they show people or characters of color, of different religions, or abilities in stereotypical or unflattering depictions (e.g., Black people as dangerous or criminals, characters with disabilities as helpless). Discuss how what we see in various forms of media can influence our thinking.

Lesson 6: Being an Upstander. Discuss everyday situations when acts of racial discrimination or unfairness can occur, either with real-life examples or through children's literature. Have students consider how they might respond or intervene if they hear or see someone treating another person unfairly because of race and emphasize it's safe to speak up (e.g., "That's not fair," "We need to treat each other with respect"). Decide on and practice to skill to fluency through modeling and roleplay.

Lesson 7: Take Action. In addition to being an upstander when students see acts of bias, lead the class through identifying actions students their age can take to make their school, community, and society fairer. For example, students could write letters or draw pictures or help run fundraisers for specific charities.

For an additional primary example, [see this video from Naomi O'Brien](#).⁹⁴



EXAMPLE: INTERMEDIATE (5TH-8TH) TO SECONDARY (9TH-12TH) UNIT ON DISCUSSING RACISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Lesson 1: Statement of Concern. Share a statement of concern for students (see example in [Appendix C](#)).

Lesson 2: Difficult Conversations. Teach a lesson on ground rules and communication skills for discussing challenging or controversial topics (see example in [Appendix D](#)).

Lesson 3: An Initial Conversation on Race. Hold a discussion on students' experiences regarding race and racism, either in general or in response to a specific event (see examples in [Appendices E](#) and [F](#)).

Lesson 4: Vocabulary. Teach equity-specific terms (e.g., bias, equity, systemic racism; see [Appendix A](#)) just as you would any other vocabulary words. Teach through asking for examples from literature and current events and using social studies or historical events to illustrate the concepts. Have students incorporate the terms in written projects (King et al., 2018; Stevenson, 2014).

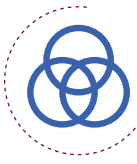
Lesson 5: Being a Critical Consumer. Have students share and identify examples of stereotypes of various groups

in books and media examples. Discuss how what we see in various forms of media can influence our thinking.

Lesson 6: Cultural Frames. Lead the class through developing a cultural frame by sharing one's own example and guiding students through it. See [Appendix F](#) for a few sample lessons.

Lesson 7: Interrupting Acts of Bias. Discuss everyday situations when students may witness acts of racial discrimination or unfairness, either with real-life examples or through literature. Have students consider (privately) whether or how they have responded to acts of racial bias in the past, and how they could intervene effectively (e.g., "That's not fair," "We need to treat each other with respect"). Decide on and practice a response to fluency through modeling and roleplay.

Lesson 8: Take Action. In addition to noticing and interrupting acts of bias, lead the class through identifying how students can advocate for more equitable systems in school, the community, and with their friends and family. Brainstorm and select from a list of actions students could take over the course of the school year. For example, students could write letters or run fundraisers for specific charities.



Unit Development Worksheet

1. IDENTIFY A SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Which topics related to race and racism will I intentionally discuss with student this year?

2. DEVELOP LESSON TOPIC AND SUMMARY

For each lesson in your unit, clearly state the main the point here. Also, include the objectives and goals for your lesson.

Example Topic: Social and Racial Justice in Schools

Example Summary: This lesson will orient students to social justice issues in schools and differentiate between racism, being non-racist, and being actively antiracist

Topic: _____

Summary: _____

3. CREATE OBJECTIVES

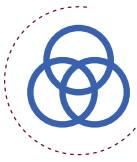
What are you hoping students will learn or gain from the lesson? How will you know the lesson is meaningful?
What would students be able to explain afterwards?

Example: Students will be able to (a) describe social justice, (b) define racism and antiracist, and (c) discuss social and racial justice issues impacting schools

Objective 1: _____

Objective 2: _____

Objective 3: _____



4. SCHEDULE FOR THE LESSON(S)/UNIT

When will I deliver the lesson? _____

How much time will be needed for the lesson? _____

What is the plan and time between subsequent lessons? _____

5. CREATE READINESS

Materials and pre-work for the lesson

What materials do I need (e.g., video, reflection journals), and have I viewed or read them in entirety before the lesson? _____

What support do I need (e.g., co-teacher, counselor present)? _____

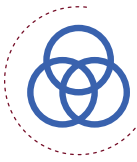
SETTING CLASS UP FOR THE LESSON ([APPENDIX D](#) PROVIDES A SAMPLE FIRST LESSON IN A UNIT)

1. Set or review expectations for the lessons. Options include the following:

- a. School-wide expectations:** Use existing school-wide expectations (e.g., Respect, Responsibility, Safety) to anchor discussions.
 - **For example, 'Respect'** can be a useful expectation to review in reminding students to respect each other's different backgrounds and differences of opinion.
 - **Review specific examples of following expectations during discussions.** Reinforce any additional expectations needed for discussing race and topics where individuals disagree strongly. Precorrect any anticipated issues that may arise (e.g., asking for a pause to the whole discussion or a pause from the discussion).
- b. Community Agreements:** Consider creating a set of ground rules or norms for difficult discussions. The following agreements come

from *Courageous Conversations About Race* (Singleton, 2015):

- **Experience discomfort.** These conversations may make you uncomfortable. Acknowledge that and examine why that may be the case.
- **Speak your truth.** Talk about the issues as YOU understand it or are thinking about it, not what you have heard from someone else.
- **Expect and accept non-closure.** These issues are big and have been around a long time. We may not get our discussion settled today or this month, but we are working on it.
- **Stay engaged.** Honor the people around you in this conversation; stay with it even if it's hard. Don't check out.
- c. Discussion skills:** Consider teaching a set of explicit conversation skills for having respectful dialogues. For example:



- **One mic:** One person speaks at a time (Emdin, 2016).
- **Ouch and Oops:** Include an [easy way to express hurt feelings](#)⁹⁵ or that a mistake has been made. This is helpful for students less likely to express why they are upset or their regret (Diversity & Inclusion Center, 2014, January).
- **Use “I” and “Me” statements:** Draw from your experience rather than stating what others might feel.
- **Confidentiality:** What’s shared stays, what’s learned can leave.
- **Speak for yourself:** Use “I” statements.
- **One person speaks at a time:** Everyone else listens, except during open chat.
- **No advice-giving:** No follow-up questions, unless requested.
- **Share the air time!**
- **Assume positive intent:** Give each other grace. However, acknowledge that a statement with positive intent can have a harmful impact.

d. Discussion Consensus/Agreement Skills:

Prepare students with necessary skills for engaging respectfully and managing disagreements. If not in place, teach students a method for determining class comfort level, agreement, or consensus on a topic. Examples:

- **Thumb check:** Hold thumb up, to the side, or down (Learning for Justice, n.d.).
- **Fist to 5** (fist up = No comfort or agreement and 5 fingers up = full agreement; Learning for Justice, n.d.).

- **Anonymous polling:** Submit a written note with thoughts or use electronic polling.
- **Agree to Disagree:** When an agreement cannot be reached, come up with a phrase to move forward or come back to a topic later.

2. What combination of formats would work best for teaching this lesson?

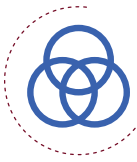
- a.** Individual work
 - b.** Small groups
 - c.** Whole class discussion (e.g., community circle)
 - d.** Combination (e.g., free write individually and discuss in table groups, think-pair-share?)
-
-

3. Notify administrators, families, and the school board ahead of the lessons and discussions (see [Embed within Existing Systems](#)).

Date to send: _____

4. Schedule and plan your next follow-up lesson or discussion.

Date for next lesson/discussion: _____



Appendix H: Additional Resources for Building Knowledge and Experience

Below is a list of additional materials for filling wells of knowledge on key topics, but there are many other options that exist outside of this guide.

History of Systemic Racism in the U.S.

WATCH

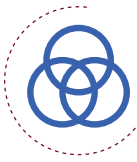
- [American Denial](#)⁹⁶ (PBS documentary)
- [Race: The Power of an Illusion](#)⁹⁷ (PBS documentary series)
- [Segregated by Design](#)⁹⁸ (segment from documentary based on *The Color of Law*)

READ

- [The 1619 Project](#)⁹⁹ (New York Times article series by Nikole Hannah-Jones)
- [Resources to Understand Racism in America](#)¹⁰⁰ (article from Smithsonian)
- *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents* (book by Isabel Wilkerson)
- *Schooling for Critical Consciousness: Engaging Black and Latinx Youth in Analyzing, Navigating, and Challenging Racial Injustice* (book by Scott Seider and Daren Graves)
- *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (book by Richard Rothstein)
- *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (book by Heather McGhee)
- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (book by Michelle Alexander)
- *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* (book by Beverly Daniel Tatum)

LISTEN

- [About Race](#)¹⁰¹ (podcast by Reni Eddo-Lodge)
- [A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America](#)¹⁰² (episode of NPR's *Fresh Air* featuring Richard Rothstein)



Exploring Privilege

WATCH

- [How to Recognize Your White Privilege - And Use It to Fight Inequities](#)¹⁰³ (Ted Talk by Peggy McIntosh)
- [Redlining](#)¹⁰⁴ (segment from the PBS documentary *Race: The Power of an Illusion*)
- [White Like Me: Race, Racism & White Privilege in America](#)¹⁰⁵ (documentary featuring Tim Wise)

READ

- *White Fragility* (book by Robin DiAngelo)
- *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* (book by Tim Wise)

LISTEN

- [Understanding White Privilege](#)¹⁰⁶ (podcast episode from NASP)

Understanding Bias (and How We Make Decisions)

WATCH

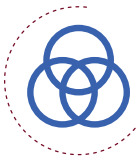
- [Bias](#)¹⁰⁷ (feature-length documentary)
- [Implicit Bias Video Series](#)¹⁰⁸ (short videos by Jerry Kang)
- [Implicit Racial Bias 101](#)¹⁰⁹ (short videos by the Kirwan Institute)

READ

- *Bias* (book by Jennifer Eberhardt)
- *Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People* (book by Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald)
- [Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials](#)¹¹⁰ (article from the Great Lakes Equity Center)

LISTEN

- [Expelled! Racial Inequality in School Discipline](#)¹¹¹ (podcast episode from Why We Do What We Do)
- [Ref You Suck!](#)¹¹² (podcast episode from Against the Rules)



Identity Development

WATCH

- [The Accidental Tourist](#)¹¹³ (Ted Talk by Omekongo Dibinga)
- [Under our Skin](#)¹¹⁵ (video series from the Seattle Times)
- [Color Blind or Color Brave?](#)¹¹⁴ (Ted Talk by Mellody Hobson)

READ

- [White Racial Identity Development Models](#)¹¹⁶ (book chapter by Ponterotto et al.)

LISTEN

- [Code Switch](#)¹¹⁷ (podcast from NPR)
- [Teaching while White](#)¹¹⁸ (podcast)

Intersectionality

WATCH

- [The Urgency of Intersectionality](#)¹¹⁹ (Ted Talk by Kimberlé Crenshaw)

READ

- [What is Intersectionality and What Does It Have to Do with Me?](#)¹²⁰ (article in YW Boston)

LISTEN

- [List of podcasts on intersectionality](#)¹²¹



Cultural Awareness

WATCH

- [The Danger of a Single Story](#)¹²² (Ted Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)

READ

- [On Educating Culturally Sustaining Teachers](#)¹²³ (article by Django Paris)
- *Waking up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* (book by Debby Irving)

LISTEN

- [Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice](#)¹²⁴ (podcast episode featuring Django Paris)

Social Justice

WATCH

- [America to Me](#)¹²⁵ (documentary series)
- [RaceForward](#)¹²⁶ (YouTube Channel)
- [Teacher Perspectives on Supporting Students to Feel Welcome and Safe in Politically and Socially Challenging Times](#)¹²⁷ (interviews with educators from the Great Lakes Equity Center)

READ

- [Ally & Accomplice: Two Sides of the Same Coin](#)¹²⁸ (article from the Great Lakes Equity Center)
- [Caring and Affirming Educational Environments](#)¹²⁹ (article from the Great Lakes Equity Center)
- [Creating Caring Classroom Communities](#)¹³⁰ (article from the Great Lakes Equity Center)
- *How to be an Antiracist* (book by Ibram X. Kendi)
- [List of Social Justice Books](#)¹³¹ (website)
- [School Community Stakeholders as Allies and Accomplices: Playing a Role in Social Justice Advocacy](#)¹³² (article from the Great Lakes Equity Center)
- *This Book is Anti-racist: 20 Lessons on How to Wake Up, Take Action, and Do the Work* (book by Tiffany Jewell)
- *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March* (book by Cynthia Levinson)

LISTEN

- [Beautiful Humans: The Social Change Cast](#)¹³³ (podcast bridging behavior analysis and social justice)
- [Pod Save the People](#)¹³⁴ (podcast discussing news, culture, social justice, and politics)



Appendix I: Racial Autobiography Lesson Plan (for School Faculty and Staff)

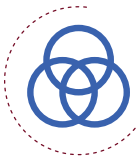
The purpose of the racial autobiography is to allow participants a chance to examine their lives and key moments of their lives that focused on race (or alternatively, culture) and the impact of these events on who they are now.

Lesson Details

- **Participants:** School faculty and staff
- **Preparation:** Facilitators should complete their own racial autobiography and be prepared to share it with participants. The format of the facilitator example should match the format participants will complete.
- **Lesson Time:** 45 to 60 minutes
- **Materials needed (individual):** Blank autobiography template. There are two versions, one that uses text boxes to fill in (see [example on p. 57](#)) or a version in which there is time for participants to find pictures to use in their autobiography.

Steps

- 1. Introduce the lesson and its purpose.** For example, say, *"Race [or culture depending on lesson] is one of those things in the human experience that, for some of us, impacts our daily lives and for others, is seldom if ever noticed or thought about directly. This activity is a chance for us to examine our lives now and identify places in our lives where race [or culture] has impacted us and who we are now in our professional lives. In just a moment you will be asked to complete a racial autobiography that we will use for an activity. I will explain the parts and then model for you what one looks like so you can then complete your own. For some of you this may be easy, for some of you this may be hard, so I am going to ask you to complete as much as you can in the time allotted and as much as you get done will be perfect."*
- 2. Instruct staff to look at the chart.** For example, say, *"To start, at the center, you will put your name. If there is a story behind your name and how it was selected, please keep that in mind for when it's your turn to share. Next, in the spaces around your name, identify four adjectives that describe you. Then, in the outer boxes on the form, identify ten times in your life* (starting with the earliest) *when race impacted your life and who you are today."*
- 3. Share the example chart.** For example, say, *"Here's my example that I want to share with you."* Proceed to model for participants your own autobiography. Begin with your name and any meaning it may have. Acknowledge that for some people naming takes on a great significance. Next, identify the adjectives that describe you now (e.g., parent, child, advocate, learner, questioner, contemplative). Lastly, share the experiences with race [or culture if you choose to allow that discussion] that impact who you are (those four adjectives) today.
- 4. Instruct staff to complete the chart.** For example, say, *"Now you will have time to complete your chart. I will be here to help if you have any questions."* Generally, allow 10-15 minutes before you check in to see if more time is needed. Be prepared with some prompts to help those who may be struggling.
- 5. Once staff members have completed their charts, anchor norms for discussion to the school-wide expectations, community agreements, and staff norms.** For example, say, *"This identity work*

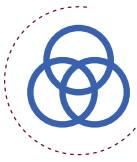


could lead to potential disagreements or difficult conversations. To move the work forward, can we all agree to use our [insert expectations/community agreements/staff norms here] to ensure a respectful, honest, and productive conversation?"

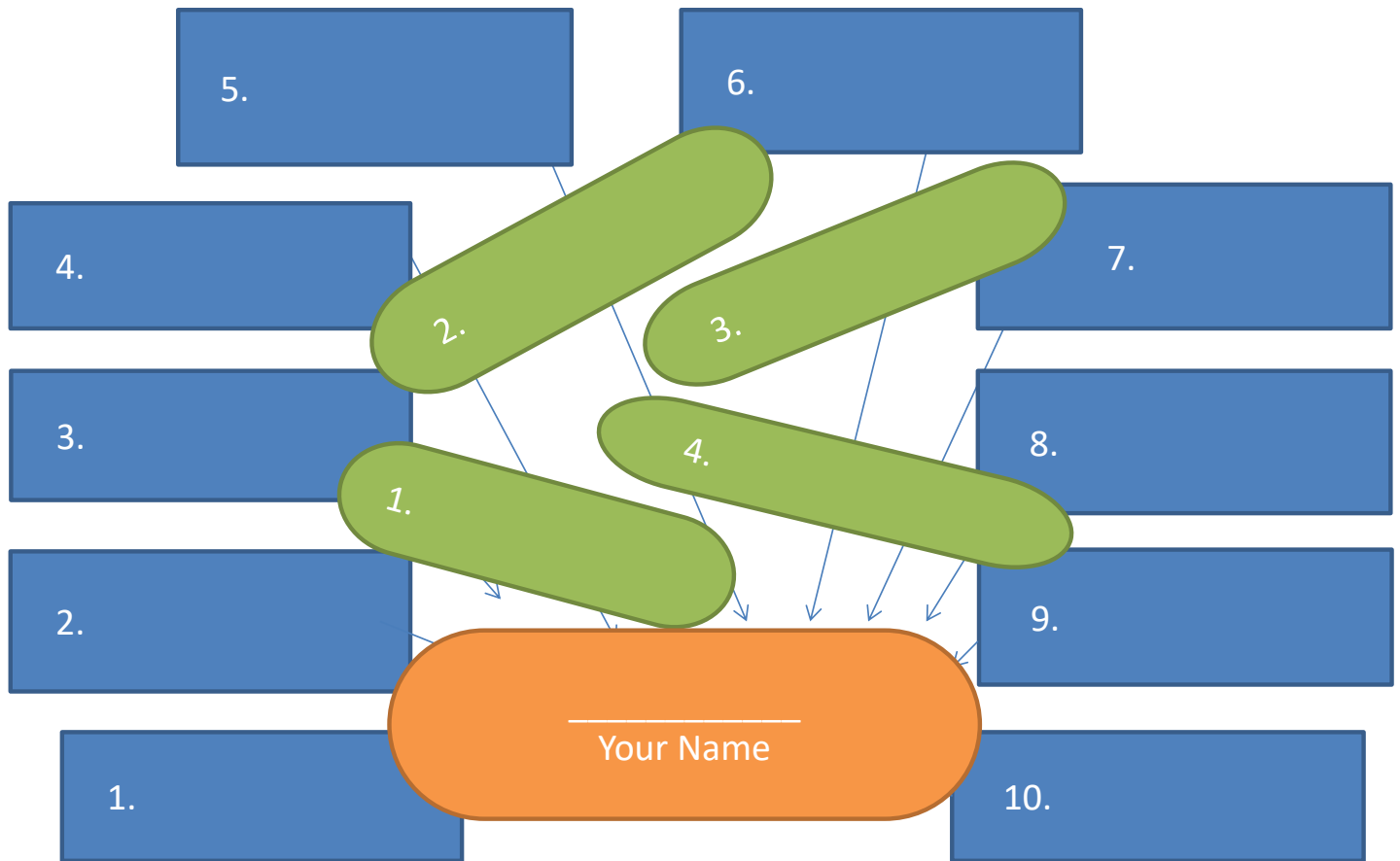
6. **Prepare staff to share their autobiographies.** For example, say, "In just a moment you will be asked to share your autobiography with someone you don't know well. We will ask you to make a silent appointment with someone (pair up with someone you make eye contact with that you don't know well) or you will be paired with someone at random [if using a virtual platform]. You will each be given 7 minutes (or however many you determine) to share with your partner your autobiography as you saw me do. When you are sharing, we ask the listeners to give you their undivided attention and not interrupt until you indicate you are done. (Pause a bit for effect) Quick question. How many of you experienced some sense of anxiety, fear, dread or nervousness or all of a sudden decided to use the restroom or got an important call at the thought of sharing this with someone you don't know? Keep that reaction in mind. For this activity you are free to share as little or as much as you are comfortable. HOWEVER, keep in mind that for many of our marginalized students in schools, they are not given choices that give them comfort; they are asked to behave in ways or participate in ways that they are not comfortable with on a daily basis, many times a day. Be mindful of
7. **Process the lesson,** allowing for roughly 15 minutes. Consider asking, "How much difficulty did you have in identifying those ten places in your life where race was a key factor in defining who you are today? Why was it (or wasn't it) difficult for you? What did you notice about these events in your life that impact who you are now? How unsettling was it for you in sharing your autobiography with someone you don't know well and why? When thinking about students being asked to act in ways that may make them uncomfortable as this activity may have made you, how can you take that into account by design and not by accident?"
8. **Close the session.** For example, say, "Thank you for your time and energy in completing and sharing your autobiographies. Once we have examined who we are, what we value, and the influence of race on our lives, we can work to ensure that our system is reflective of multiple experiences including those of our students and their families." Identify how you and the staff will continue this work (e.g., PBIS universal team meetings, leadership team meetings, grade level team meetings).

Following On

- Identify your [stage of racial identity development](#)¹³⁵
- Connect your stage of racial identity development to [corresponding beliefs/thoughts/actions and resources](#)¹³⁶ to dig into wherever you are on the continuum.
- Examine your identity through [this checklist of daily effects of white privilege](#)¹³⁷ (Peggy McIntosh)
- [Complete the Implicit Association Test \(IAT\)](#):¹³⁸ Log into Project Implicit Social Attitudes with your email address and select *Race IAT* on the next screen.



Example Autobiography Template





Appendix J: Racial Autobiography Lesson Plan (for Students)

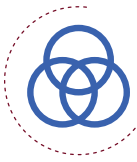
The purpose of the racial autobiography is to allow students a chance to examine their lives and key moments of their lives that focused on race (or alternatively, culture) and the impact of these events on who they are now.

Lesson Details

- **Participants:** Students in intermediate and secondary grades
- **Preparation:** Teachers should complete their own racial autobiography and be prepared to share it with students. The format of the teacher example should match the format students will complete.
- **Lesson Time:** 45 to 60 minutes
- **Materials needed (individual):** Blank autobiography template. There are two versions, one that uses text boxes to fill in (see [example on p. 57](#)) or a version in which there is time for students to find pictures to use in their autobiography.

Steps

1. **Introduce the lesson and its purpose.** For example, say, “Race {or culture depending on lesson} is one of those things in the human experience that, for some of us, impacts our daily lives and for others, is seldom if ever noticed or thought about directly. This activity is a chance for us to examine our lives now and identify places in our lives where race [or culture] has impacted us and how we see the world around us. In just a moment you will be asked to complete a racial/cultural autobiography that we will use for an activity. I will explain the parts and then model for you what one looks like so you can then complete your own. For some of you this may be easy, for some of you this may be hard, so I am going to ask you to complete as much as you can in the time allotted and as much as you get done will be perfect.”
2. **Instruct students to look at the chart.** For example, say, “To start, please put your name at the center of the handout. In many cultures, there can be a great amount of thought and meaning that goes into naming a person. If there is a story behind your name and how it was selected, please keep that in mind for when it’s your turn to share. Next, in the spaces around your name, identify four adjectives that you think describe you best right now – these might be different tomorrow or in a year, and that’s okay. Then, in the outer boxes on the form, identify ten times in your life (starting with the earliest) when race impacted your life and who you are today. For some of us this may be more challenging than for others. That’s ok. Just do your best.”
3. **Share the example chart.** For example, say, “Here’s my example that I want to share with you.” Proceed to model for students your own autobiography. Begin with your name and any meaning it may have. Acknowledge that for some people naming takes on a great significance. Next, identify the adjectives that describe you now (e.g., parent, child, advocate, learner, questioner, contemplative). Lastly, share the experiences with race [or culture if you choose to allow that discussion] that impact who you are (those four adjectives) today.
4. **Instruct students to complete the chart.** For example, say, “Now you will have time to complete your chart. I will be here to help if you have any questions.” Generally, allow 10-15 minutes before you check in to see if more time is needed. Be prepared with some prompts to help those who may be struggling.



5. Once students have completed their charts, anchor norms for discussion to the school-wide expectations and/or community agreements. For example, say, *“Talking about identity could lead to difficult conversations or potential disagreements. For example, some of us may have experienced our early years of school differently than others. Each person’s experience is just as real and just as valid as another’s. To move the work forward, can we all agree to use our [insert school-wide expectations/community agreements here] to ensure a respectful, honest, and productive conversation?”* Provide brief practice if needed.

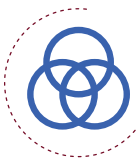
6. Prepare students to share their autobiographies. For example, say, *“In just a moment you will share your autobiography with a classmate that you may not know very well. We will ask you to make a silent appointment with someone. Pair up with someone that you don’t know well by making eye contact only (alternatively, you can pair up randomly or ahead of time). You will each be given 7 minutes (or however many the teacher determines) to share your autobiography with your partner as you saw me do. When you are sharing, we ask the listeners to give you their undivided attention and not interrupt until you indicate you are done. (Pause a bit for effect) Quick question. How many of you experienced some sense of anxiety, fear, dread or nervousness or all of a sudden decided you might need to run to the restroom at the thought of sharing this with someone you don’t know? Keep that reaction in mind. For this activity you are free to share as little or as much as you are comfortable. HOWEVER, I recognize that there are many times at school that you are not given choices that reflect your comfort level, and you might be asked to behave or participate in ways that are not comfortable to you, maybe even on a daily or hourly basis. Please consider ways that adults like me can make school more comfortable for ALL students as*

you go through this activity and consider sharing those ideas with me. I promise I will do my best to listen and take action on your suggestions. Now, please find your partner, and when your groups are set, we will start the clock.” When all participants are in dyads or triads, start the clock. When time is up for both people or you see conversation slowing down, bring the group back together.

7. Process the lesson, allowing for roughly 15 minutes. Consider asking:

- *“How hard was it to identify those ten times in your life where race was a key factor in defining who you are today?”*
- *Why was it (or wasn’t it) difficult for you?*
- *What did you notice about these events in your life that impact who you are now?*
- *How unsettling was it for you to share your autobiography with someone you don’t know well and why?*
- *When thinking about schools asking students to act in ways that may make them uncomfortable, what advice do you have for the adults who are in charge of these systems?”*

8. Close the session. For example, say, *“Thank you for your time and energy in completing and sharing your autobiographies. Once we have examined who we are, what we value, and the influence of race on our lives, we can work to ensure that our classroom and school is reflective of multiple experiences.”* Identify how you will continue this work (e.g., PBIS universal team meetings, leadership team meetings, grade level team meetings).



Following On

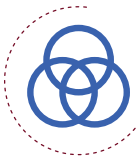
- Have students identify their [stage of racial identity development](#)¹³⁹
- Connect the stage of racial identity development to [corresponding beliefs/thoughts/actions and resources](#)¹⁴⁰ to dig into wherever you are on the continuum.
- Examine identity through [this checklist of daily effects of white privilege](#)¹⁴¹ (Peggy McIntosh)
- [Complete the Implicit Association Test \(IAT\)](#):¹⁴² Log into Project Implicit Social Attitudes with an email address and select *Race IAT* on the next screen.

Alternative

There is a variation of this that de-centralizes the written word and lifts up storytelling as a teaching method. In this variation, students are asked to use pictures to identify both their adjectives but also life experiences. For this to work, though, the activity needs to be handed out at least a week prior for students to be able to go through images to use. One note: if picture options are to be used, make sure that norms related to respect are reiterated recognizing that this form can be more vulnerable in sharing. Also, as some students may not have access to pictures, you will need to plan an accommodation ahead of time (use of magazine photos, for example).

Tips

- Allow ample time for sharing, and be flexible. The time to share and process can vary widely from what is allocated.
- Prepare some coaching questions to help students who are stuck examine how race (or culture) played a role in a memory or situation.
- This activity works best when the teacher models it authentically. It gives students permission to be in the moment and share their stories in the ways they want or need without worrying about “getting it right.”
- Be as ready as you can for difficult conversations. This activity may bring up difficult conversations about race related to current events. Have a plan for how you will validate student comments and questions, as well as gently redirect potential arguments or deeper, specific inquiries. Be sure that your plan includes time and space for follow-up conversations.

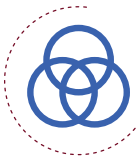


Appendix K: Glossary of Terms

There are many existing glossaries of terms that are useful for discussions, such as the [Racial Equity Tools website](#).¹⁴³ The following glossary includes definitions with readability more suitable for students.

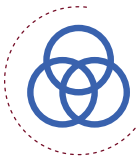
Term	Definition
Allyship	Building relationships with people who are marginalized and following their lead to act against racism. An ally will also take actions to support marginalized groups and disrupt harmful and inequitable systems.
Bias	A positive or negative attitude about people, places, or things. Sometimes people know they have a bias (explicit bias) and sometimes they don't (implicit bias).
Culture	The knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors that are shared by a group of people.
Colorism	Inequitable or unfair treatment based on skin tone, from a belief that light skin is better than darker skin.
Discrimination	When a person is treated unfairly because of how someone perceives them.
Diversity	The presence of individual differences.
Dominant race or culture	The race or culture that has the most political, economic, and/or social power within a given context.
Equality	When all individuals receive the exact same treatment, quality or amount of something, regardless of need.
Equity	Justice or fairness; providing resources and support so that all individuals can participate equally.
Ethnicity	A group of people who share a common language, geographic region, nationality, religion, or culture.
Inclusion	When individuals are treated as valued members of a community and supported to participate equally.
Inequity	Injustice or unfairness that prevents all individuals from participating equally.
Intersectionality*	The specific challenges faced by individuals whose identities reflect multiple marginalized groups.
Marginalized group	A group that is treated unfairly because of a lack of economic, political, and/or social power.

**These terms draw from advanced concepts and may be more appropriate to discuss with older students.*

**Term****Definition**

Microaggression*	The everyday insults and indignities experienced by individuals who belong to a marginalized group.
Oppression	The use of power and authority to maintain inequality and retain power.
Prejudice	A predetermined judgement or opinion against an individual or a group.
Privilege	Advantages that come from group membership, including the lack of barriers that other groups experience; having greater access to power and resources.
Race	An arbitrary social category that is based on common physical characteristics.
Racism (internalized)	Feelings of inferiority that come from individuals from oppressed groups experiencing racism.
Racism (interpersonal)	Interactions between individuals that reflect their beliefs and biases regarding race.
Racism (institutional)	Policies, practices, and norms that maintain racial inequalities.
Racism (structural)	Historical policies, practices, and norms that maintain racial inequalities.
Social justice	The fair treatment of all people in a society (Dictionary.com).
Stereotype	An inaccurate belief about a group of people.
Systemic racism	The ways that dominant culture, laws, and practices combine to create unjust outcomes for marginalized racial groups.
Tone policing*	When someone tries to weaken or dismiss a person's message by criticizing the way it was communicated. Commonly used to avoid conversations about social justice.
White supremacy	Political, economic, and social practices that prioritize the beliefs, preferences, and comfort of White people.

**These terms draw from advanced concepts and may be more appropriate to discuss with older students.*

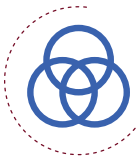


Appendix L: Vocabulary Matching Activities

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Draw a line between the word on the left and its correct definition on the right.

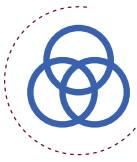
Term	Definition
Culture	An arbitrary social category that is based on common physical characteristics.
Discrimination	When a person is treated unfairly because of how someone perceives them.
Equity	The fair treatment of all people in a society (Dictionary.com).
Ethnicity	Justice or fairness; providing resources and support so that all individuals can participate equally.
Prejudice	A group of people who share a common language, geographic region, nationality, religion, or culture.
Privilege	The knowledge, beliefs and behaviors that are shared by a group of people.
Race	Advantages that come from group membership; having greater access to power and resources.
Social justice	A predetermined judgement or opinion against an individual or a group.
Stereotype	An inaccurate belief about a group of people.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Write a definition for each term in the space provided on the right.

Term	Definition
Allyship	
Bias	
Colorism	
Culture	
Discrimination	
Dominant race or culture	
Equity	
Ethnicity	
Inequity	
Intersectionality	



Term	Definition
Marginalized group	
Microaggression	
Prejudice	
Privilege	
Race	
Social justice	
Stereotype	
Systemic racism	
Tone policing	
White supremacy	

See these Quizlets for More Ideas

[Culture and Diversity Flashcards¹⁴⁴](#)

[Race and Ethnicity Flashcards¹⁴⁵](#)

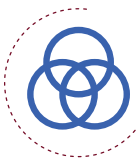


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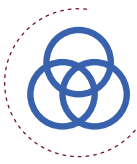
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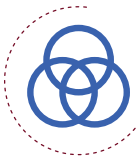
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