

Strategies for Creating Racial Equity In Classrooms and Schools

Short-Term Strategies

"How can I respond in the MOMENT to situations related to race or racism in my classroom?"

Breathe

Take a breath to pause and ground yourself before responding to a challenging situation. Continue to breathe throughout your conversation. Be aware of body language and tone.

Affirm the Child

Affirm the humanity of each child, even when it is necessary to re-direct or hold a child accountable. Validate that each child is seen and heard.

- "That's a really great question/observation."
- "Good question. I know that sometimes adults have trouble figuring it out..."
- "That's a good observation. Sometimes I wonder the same thing..."
- "Yes, and..."
- "Thank you for saying/asking that..."

Inquire

Ask questions to get more information about what is going on in a situation. Apply active listening to hear what is being said, and what isn't being said.

- "What do you mean by...?"
- "What are you feeling?"
- "Can you tell me more?"

Continue The Conversation

Think about whether or not it's the appropriate time to continue the conversation. Sometimes emotions are high and it might be best to come back to the conversation at a later time. Once you are ready to have the conversation, open it to other perspectives, including your own. Bring your own racial identity into the conversation and share with students your perspective based on that identity.

- "Sometimes in society..."
- "How do other people feel...?"
- "As a (*insert racial identity*) person, my perspective is....."
- "Where do you think we learn these messages?"
- "How do you think we can change that?"
- "I want to think more about this and will get back to you."

Intervene

Some situations require intervention without conversation—especially when students' immediate physical or emotional safety is at stake. That said, use this type of intervention sparingly, and remember that you can still ensure emotional safety while allowing yourself and your students to take risks that may feel uncomfortable in the moment.

Apply a Racial Equity Lens

Be mindful of how institutional, interpersonal or internalized racism is manifesting in the particular situation, and how the students may be consciously or subconsciously responding as a result. Applying a racial equity lens allows for uncovering the structures, policies and behaviors that sustain unequal outcomes for students based on race.

Follow Up

Though racial prejudice or racism may show up in the classroom in the form of a comment or action, this behavior is only a symptom of a larger system of racial oppression in society. Ensure ongoing follow-up to address the larger systemic racism and to promote racial equity in your classroom and school community.

Long Term Strategies

How can I Promote Racial Equity in my Classroom and School?

Continue to Educate Yourself about Race and Racism

- Continue to learn about the history of race and racism in the United States
- Explore how racial privilege and/ or oppression (including internalized racism) has affected you. Become aware of your own triggers around race and racism.
- Think about how race or racial bias has played a role in your life as an educator: What impact has it had on your curriculum, your pedagogy and the way you relate to students, colleagues and families?

Create Dialogue about Race and the Impact of Systemic Racism

- Have intentional conversations among the adults at your school (through professional development, learning circles, working groups)
- Explore how racism is impacting your schools and communities on a systemic level
- Create affinity spaces that can provide spaces for deeper dialogue about the affects of racism and strategize for change

Analyze School Structures through a Racial Equity Lens

- When exploring curriculum, ask yourself: Whose story is being told through my curriculum? Whose stories are not being told?
- Apply a racial equity lens when discussing disciplinary policies, opportunities for youth and parent voice, professional development offerings

Build Alliances

- Create intentional opportunities to discuss the impact of race and racism
- Create structures that will help with accountability around issues of race and racism
- Form alliances within your school community (across and within racial groups)
- Connect to a larger network of racial justice educators, organizers and advocates