

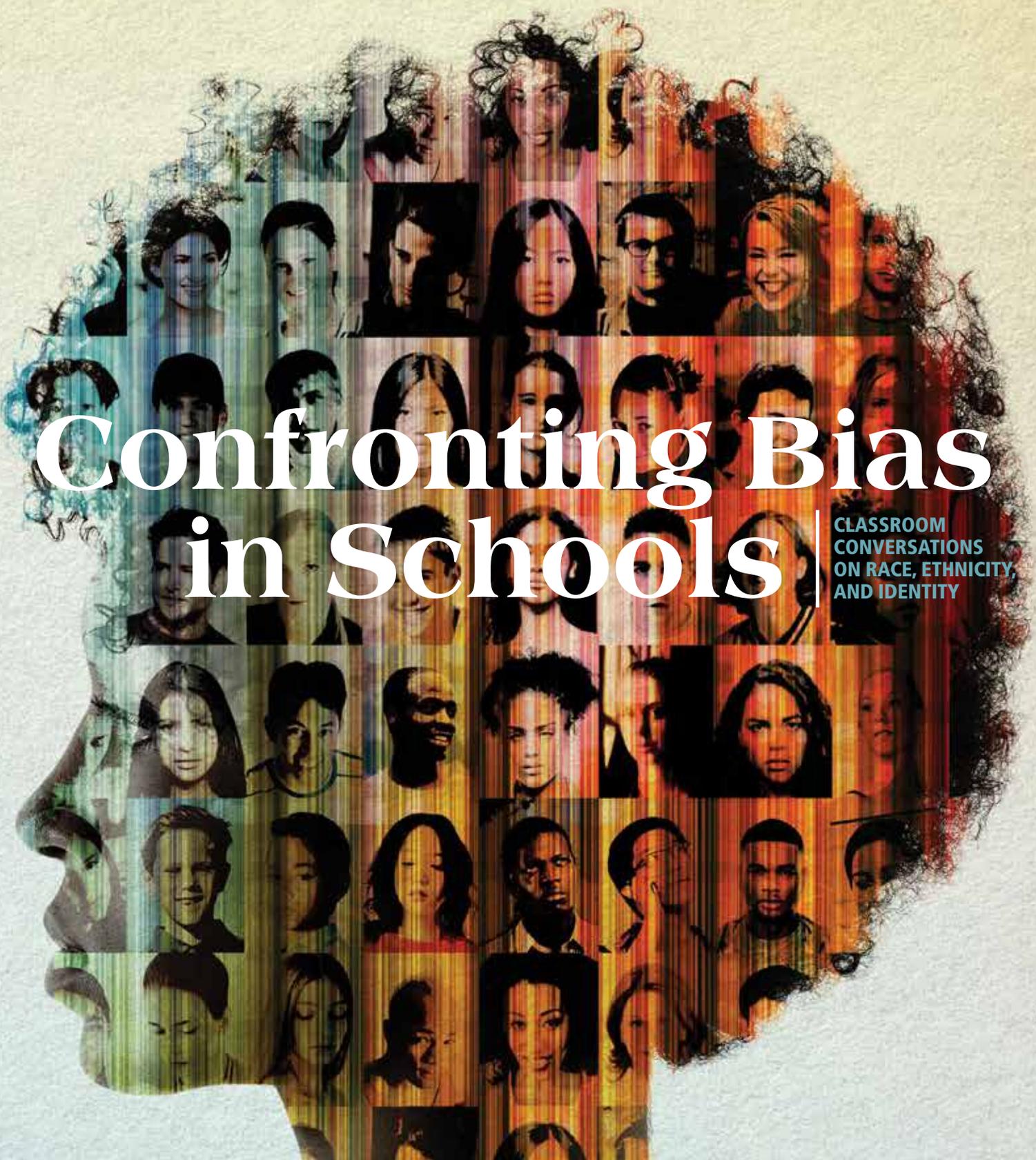


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AMERICAN Educator

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IDEAS



Confronting Bias in Schools

**CLASSROOM
CONVERSATIONS
ON RACE, ETHNICITY,
AND IDENTITY**



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A Defining Moment for Democracy

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

TEACHERS HAVE ALWAYS had a huge responsibility for the next generation: To teach and nurture students so they have the opportunity to live fulfilling lives. To make our classrooms and schools safe and affirming. To help young people develop the skills, confidence, and sense of responsibility to be engaged citizens.

Today the role of America's teachers has expanded—they are called on to be guardians of democracy and cultivators of decency because, while our democracy and society have never been perfect, today their very underpinnings are shaken.

President Trump has trampled rights enshrined in the Constitution and waged a war on truth. He has fanned biases that aim to dehumanize “the other” and that erode our democracy. He is enamored of despots, and distances our allies. He has put commerce and greed over human rights.

Trump boasts that the economy is the “best ever,” but nearly all of the benefits of economic growth have gone to the wealthiest Americans and large corporations, while millions of Americans tread water. Forty percent of Americans say they couldn't cover a \$400 emergency. More than 28 million Americans are uninsured. Today's average wage has the same purchasing power as in 1978. The median American family has just \$5,000 saved for retirement. Americans hold \$1.6 trillion in student debt. And teachers, who routinely spend their own money on supplies for their students, are paid almost 20 percent less than similarly educated professionals.

Yet Trump is not addressing these problems. Instead, he is stoking America's divisions in order to exploit them.

Our very moral character as a nation is tested when government leaders portray immigrants and asylum seekers not as people in need, but as invaders so threatening and worthless that the government's inhumane treatment of them—denying even children adequate

food, sleep, and hygiene—is somehow deserved. It is tested when the president attacks the freedoms of his political enemies and calls an entire religion disloyal over political differences.

In a civil society, there is no “both sides” on matters of human dignity, equal rights, tolerance of diversity, truth, or the rule of law. These are not options against which other beliefs can be regarded as equally worthy. But today these values need defending.

Americans must be clear-eyed about the perilous time we are in. We must think seriously about what we can do to take a stand, and about the implications of doing nothing. We can't ignore Trump's bigotry and cruelty, or the fact that his erratic behavior is intended to create chaos and confusion. And we can't assume things won't get worse.

That is why this summer I gave a speech to 1,200 educators at the American Federation of Teachers' TEACH conference about the gravity of our situation. While this is not the first time our democracy has been at risk, today educators play a crucial role in its survival. Why? Because our members are at the nexus of public education and the labor movement, which provide direct pathways to broad-based prosperity and pluralism, and a better life.

The fight to safeguard democracy begins in America's classrooms and schools, where we both embrace America's diversity and forge a common identity. Our public schools are where young people develop the skills they need to be engaged and empowered citizens—voice, latitude, and the ability to think for oneself. Teachers must have the freedom to teach these skills—which may not be measured on standardized tests, but which are the measure of a vibrant citizenry.

When classrooms are freed from the tyranny of standardized testing and lockstep pacing calendars, there is time

for extended classroom discussions and debates—where disagreements are over ideas, not people, and dissenting views are respectfully heard, not shouted down; and where opinions need to be supported with logical arguments and evidence, not simply asserted.

The president is leading a homegrown hate movement.

I welcome the exploration of racism in this issue of *American Educator*, and how our schools can counter bias and help young people value members of other groups. It is especially important in the aftermath of recent massacres—in El Paso, where the shooter drove 600 miles with the intent to kill Latinos; and the targeting of black churchgoers in Charleston, and of Jews attending a synagogue in Pittsburgh.

Our public schools play a vital role in creating a more perfect union because, at its best, public education provides a ladder of opportunity, a path out of poverty, and a place where America's great pluralism is celebrated. Democracy in education has always been the foundation for providing education *for* democracy.

When this moment in history is written, let it be said that Americans defended what is best about our country, and fought the worst. That hope won against fear, aspiration over frustration, and humanity over cruelty. That we defeated demagoguery. And that our public schools were a sturdy cornerstone helping to preserve our democracy.



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OUR MISSION

The American Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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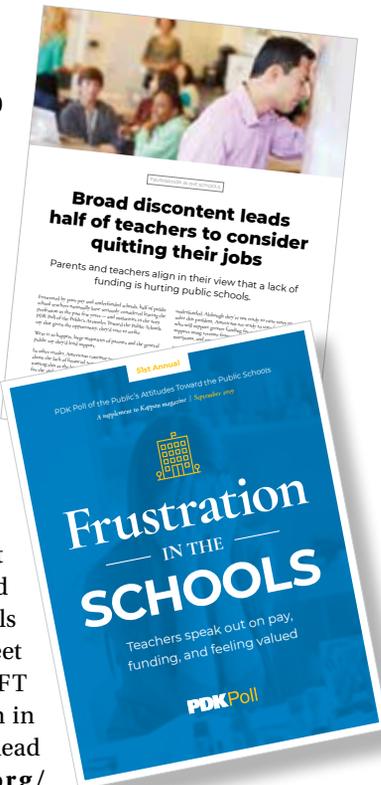
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2019 PDK POLL INCLUDES EDUCATORS

For the first time in nearly 20 years, the PDK Poll—the survey that measures public opinion about America’s public schools—has included teachers in its responses. As the AFT has been emphasizing for years, the survey shows that although parents support educators, teachers feel undervalued (half of them have seriously considered leaving the profession) and long for more voice in the education decisions that impact their classrooms. “Parents and educators agree public schools need far more investment to meet the needs of kids,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten in response to the poll results. Read more at <http://go.aft.org/ae319news1>.



LEADERS SPEAK OUT AFTER MASS SHOOTINGS

After the mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, AFT President Randi Weingarten, Ohio Federation of Teachers President Melissa Cropper, Ohio Nurses Association Interim CEO Kelly Trautner, and Texas AFT President Zeph Capo joined El Paso AFT President Ross Moore and Socorro AFT President Veronica Hernandez in releasing a joint statement. Weingarten said, “We are at a tipping point in America. In a country that has represented tolerance and hope for so many, the 250 shootings this year, on top of so many more in recent memory, have shown that no place—not schools, houses of faith, recreational centers, or locations where we shop and meet—is safe from hate in the form of a bullet from a gun.” Read the full statement at <http://go.aft.org/ae319news2>.

WALMART TO REDUCE AMMUNITION SALES

In the wake of the tragedy in El Paso, AFT President Randi Weingarten sent a letter to Walmart’s CEO Doug McMillon asking him to take a number of actions to keep our communities safe. On September 3, McMillon announced that Walmart will discontinue the sale of certain ammunition, and he publicly requested that customers refrain from openly carrying firearms in stores even where state law allows it. “This is what collective action looks like,” Weingarten said. “Between the AFT and our partners, we had thousands of people sending letters, tweeting, and even showing up to Walmart stores. Walmart felt the public pressure and knew it had to change course.” Keep the pressure on Congress to expand background checks for gun sales by sharing our new action at <http://go.aft.org/ae319news3>.

AFT DEFENDS IMMIGRANTS

The AFT has been deeply involved in immigrant advocacy this summer: AFT President Randi Weingarten and Executive Vice President Evelyn DeJesus, along with educators and nurses from several states, traveled to McAllen, Texas, to check on the condition of children in immigrant detention centers. Although they were turned away by border patrol agents, the activists distributed donations to a relief center. AFT volunteers have also helped reunite families and distribute food and supplies to people detained after the Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in Mississippi. “At the end of the day, compassion and dignity and decency should be the watchwords of the United States of America,” Weingarten said. “That is who we are, and that is what we demand of our government.” Read more at <http://go.aft.org/ae319news4>.



The AFT would like to thank the following organizations and companies for their support of our members and public education as sponsors of TEACH 2019.

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Assessing—and Interrupting—Intolerance at School



BY MAUREEN COSTELLO AND COSHANDRA DILLARD

Three years ago—during and immediately after the presidential campaign—we documented a surge of incidents involving racial slurs and symbols, bigotry, and the harassment of minority children in the nation’s schools. We called this phenomenon the “Trump Effect,” because it appeared that children were emulating the racist, xenophobic, and coarse language Donald Trump was using on the campaign trail.

Indeed, teachers told us in two informal surveys that in many cases Trump’s name was invoked, or his words parroted, by children who were harassing others based on their race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. They noted a disturbing uptick in incidents involving swastikas, derogatory language, Nazi salutes, and Confederate flags. Teachers reported that children of color were worried for the safety of themselves and their families.

Now, reports of hate and bias in school emerge regularly in the news media. Captured by cell phone cameras or described on

social media, disturbing incidents—slurs, graffiti, swastikas, or chants of “Build the wall!” aimed at Latinx athletes—travel swiftly from schools to the front page.

In recent months, several such stories have caught the attention of audiences nationwide. In Baraboo, Wisconsin, dozens of male high school students, almost all white, were seen giving a Nazi salute in a prom photo. In Idaho, elementary school staff dressed up as Mexicans and Trump’s wall on Halloween. At an elite private school in New York City, a video went viral showing two sixth-grade girls wearing blackface and swinging their arms around like apes. There have been numerous stories about African American or Latinx athletes being taunted by white students.

The reality is that while these media reports pop up with alarming regularity, they represent just a tiny fraction of the hate and bias incidents that educators are encountering in the classroom.

In our recent report, *Hate at School*, from which this article is excerpted, we identified 821 school-based incidents that were reported in the media in 2018. By comparison, the K–12 educators who responded to a new questionnaire reported 3,265 such incidents in the fall of 2018 alone. We found that:

- More than two-thirds of the 2,776 educators who responded to the questionnaire witnessed a hate or bias incident in their school during the fall of 2018.
- Fewer than 5 percent of the incidents witnessed by educators were reported in the news media.

Maureen Costello is the director of Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, and a member of the center’s senior leadership team. Coshandra Dillard is a staffwriter for Teaching Tolerance. This article was excerpted with permission from their 2019 report, Hate at School, which is available in full at www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/tt_2019_hate_at_school_report_final_0.pdf.

- Racism appears to be the motivation behind most hate and bias incidents in school, accounting for 63 percent of incidents reported in the news and 33 percent of incidents reported by teachers.
- Of the incidents reported by educators, those involving racism and anti-Semitism were the most likely to be reported in the news media; anti-Latinx and anti-LGBTQ incidents were the least likely.
- Most of the hate and bias incidents witnessed by educators were not addressed by school leaders. No one was disciplined in 57 percent of them. Nine times out of 10, administrators failed to denounce the bias or reaffirm school values.

The picture that emerges is the exact opposite of what schools should be: places where students feel welcome, safe, and supported by the adults who are responsible for their well-being.

But schools are not hermetically sealed institutions. They are not immune from the political and socioeconomic forces gripping our nation.

In fact, this outbreak of aggression aimed primarily at students of color and LGBTQ children reflects what is happening outside school walls.

Hate crimes are rising. The president himself engages in childish taunting on social media and is shattering the norms of behavior observed by generations of American leaders. And the racism, bigotry, and misogyny of a virulent white nationalist movement are being parroted by mainstream political and media figures.

Schools cannot simply ignore these problems.

To ensure students are safe from harm, educators must take vigorous, proactive measures to counter prejudice and to promote equity and inclusiveness. And they must act swiftly and decisively to address all incidents of hate and bias when they happen, with a model that emphasizes communication, empathy, reconciliation, and support to those who are harmed.

How Bias at School Affects Students

We've long known that discrimination has measurable, adverse effects on the health of those who are targeted. Researchers first connected racism to hypertension in African American subjects in the 1990s.¹ And there's no shortage of studies on the effects of discrimination on young people's health in the years since. We know that when students are targeted for their sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, race, ethnicity, or other identities, their mental and physical health suffer.² These students are more likely to report symptoms of stress, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), risk-taking activities, school avoidance, and more.³ Recent research suggests that racial-ethnic discrimination can cause behavioral problems for children as young as 7.⁴

These effects vary based on whether the bias comes from school personnel, peers, or others.⁵ Students bullied by peers deal with both physical and emotional fallout that can follow them throughout their lives.⁶ Studies show the damage is compounded when the bullying is based on one of their identities.⁷ And when students are targeted for more than one of their identities (e.g., race and disability), they are even more likely to report negative effects.⁸

Discrimination and biases from educators also have long-lasting effects. "Children who experience discrimination from their teachers are more likely to have negative attitudes about school and lower academic motivation and performance, and are at increased risk of dropping out of high school," reports the Migration Policy Insti-

tute. "In fact, experiences of teacher discrimination shape children's attitudes about their academic abilities above and beyond their past academic performance. Even when controlling for their actual performance, children who experience discrimination from teachers feel worse about their academic abilities and are less likely to feel they belong at school, when compared against students who do not experience discrimination."⁹

But the harm of a toxic school culture, where students are singled out for hate and bias based on their identity, isn't limited to students who are targeted. The authors of a 2018 study published in *JAMA Pediatrics* surveyed just over 2,500 Los Angeles students and asked them to report their concerns about "increasing hostility and discrimination of people because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation/identity, immigrant status, religion, or disability status in society." They found that the more concern or stress students reported feeling, the more likely they were to also report symptoms of depression and ADHD, along with drug, tobacco, or alcohol use. Unfortunately, it appears student anxiety may be rising: In 2016, about 30 percent of surveyed students reported feeling "very or extremely worried" about hate and bias. By 2017, that figure had jumped to nearly 35 percent.¹⁰

Schools are not immune from the political and socioeconomic forces gripping our nation.

The Hierarchy of Hate in School

Whether looking at news media reports or reading educator stories, it's clear that hate and bias are national, not regional, issues. We saw both media and educator reports from all 50 states and Washington, D.C., in 2018.

Within schools, hate and bias aren't limited to one location in a building. Most of the incidents that educators reported took place on school grounds, with nearly a third happening inside the classroom, presumably in full view of teachers. Few educators see hate and bias incidents on social media, but social media—videos, posts, chats, and screenshots—are often at the center of the stories that get reported on the news.

Most incidents of hate and bias happen at the secondary level, in middle and high school. In elementary school, students tend to stay with the same group, often in the same classroom, and work closely with a small number of adults. Most elementary schools emphasize socialization and learning to get along. In secondary schools, adolescents are trying out new identities, changing classes and teachers, and vying for attention and peer approval. They are also more active online, where ugly content gets amplified and it's easy to fall into a cesspool of hate.

In our study, we catalogued the types of bias incidents reported by teachers. We found that racial and ethnic bias were the most



The anti-immigrant beliefs expressed by young people closely follow the rhetoric coming from the White House.

common, followed by incidents motivated by bias against the LGBTQ community, immigrants, Jews, Muslims, and “other.”

Race and Ethnicity

Racial bias—of all sorts—is the most common driver of incidents, making up 33 percent of the number reported by educators and 63 percent of those reported in the news media. Black students are the ones targeted in an overwhelming percentage of these incidents, though Asian students are also singled out. Teachers also reported a handful of incidents involving name-calling directed at white people. Racist incidents, often involving slurs, also dominate the news reports.

Administrators appear to be sensitive to racist incidents and, compared to other episodes of hate and bias, are more likely to take them seriously. These episodes are also more likely to result in disciplinary action. According to educators, in 59 percent of racial incidents they saw, someone was disciplined. And administrators are more likely to communicate with families, staff, and students when race is involved; in 35 percent of cases reported by educators, school leaders denounced the act and reaffirmed the school’s values. In 25 percent of the incidents, school leaders provided support of some kind to the targeted groups.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Incidents based on sexual orientation or gender identity comprised 25 percent of those reported by educators but just 10 percent of those reported in the news media.

Although we found a small number of incidents directed toward cisgender girls—including a fair amount of sexual innu-

endo—the overwhelming majority of incidents in this category targeted people who identify outside of cisgender or heterosexual identities. This form of harassment and bias starts in elementary school and ratchets up in middle and high school.

Anti-LGBTQ hate starts where it always has, with the use of “gay” and other adjectives as pejoratives.

Anti-Immigrant

Animus toward people perceived to be immigrants led to a significant amount of harassment in schools; about 18 percent of the incidents that educators reported were directed toward people seen as “foreign.” This category comprised 4 percent of the incidents reported in the news media.

Many educators reported hearing slurs—including some they thought had been long abandoned. While most of the abuse targeted Latinx students, anyone who was “foreign-looking” was subject to being targeted.

The anti-immigrant beliefs expressed by young people closely follow the rhetoric coming from the White House. One Texas elementary school teacher dryly noted that “Mr. Trump’s ‘wall’ has encouraged a series of remarks.”

Compared to other incidents, hate directed toward those perceived to be immigrants in school was less likely to make the news. Educators reported that anti-immigrant incidents they witnessed made the news at a rate of about 2 percent—less than half the average.

These incidents were also less likely to provoke a response from administrators. When confronted with anti-immigrant misbehavior, administrators rarely investigated. And, when immigrants were targeted, few administrators chose to make public statements denouncing the harassment or supporting members of the targeted group.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism was involved in 11 percent of the incidents reported by educators and 18 percent of those reported in the media.

In our tracking of news reports, we noticed an uptick in anti-Semitic incidents toward the end of the year. A total of 82 were reported in the last three months of 2018 alone.

Anti-Semitism often came in the form of slurs or hate symbols; 68 percent of incidents reported in the news included swastikas. In our survey, we were told of swastikas scratched into bathroom tiles, carved into desks, painted on parking lots, burned into football fields, and inked on skin. Several schools saw photos posted of students aligned in a swastika formation. And educators from two schools—one in Mississippi and one in New Jersey—reported that graduating seniors drew swastikas in the yearbooks of Jewish classmates.

Educators also told us they were hearing jokes about the Holocaust and a resurgence of Holocaust denial from students. Anti-Semitism was explicitly tied to white-power messaging, as well. For example, a high school teacher in California reported that a student stated, “Jews need to die, and Puerto Ricans should go back to their country.”

When faced with anti-Semitic incidents, school leaders were more likely to respond in multiple ways. Educators told us that school leaders were more likely than average to communicate with families, denounce the act, make a public statement, and investigate to assess whether the school climate was hostile to Jewish students.

Anti-Muslim

Anti-Muslim incidents numbered the fewest among the five categories reported by educators (6 percent) and reported in the news. Altogether, we identified more than 200 anti-Muslim hate and bias incidents. The vast majority of these—almost 88 percent—came from educators, not news reports. Teachers reported hearing Muslim students—or those perceived as Muslim—called names such as “terrorist,” “bomber,” “Osama,” or “ISIS.” One educator told us of classmates pressuring a student to translate the phrase “Death of America” into Arabic. Another told us of a student who complained that a poster illustrating a young woman in a hijab in front of an American flag was “offensive to him.”

These incidents weren’t limited to students. An educator in Wisconsin told us about families going to the school board to protest an eighth-grade English language arts unit based on the book *I Am Malala*. A teacher in Illinois told us that parents contacted school leaders after seeing a Muslim parent take pictures outside the school. Some of them demanded that the parent be investigated.

Anti-Muslim incidents reported by educators were far less likely than average to make the news, and educators reported that they’re also less likely to result in disciplinary action. While school leaders responded to anti-Muslim hate at about the average rate, only about a third of the incidents resulted in disciplinary action. Anti-Muslim hate was also the least likely to prompt communication with parents or public support of the targeted group.

It Doesn’t Have to Be This Way

Although the problem is widespread, not every school is affected. About one-third of the educators reported witnessing no incidents in the fall of 2018. Some noted that school had been in session for only a few months, but many others explained why their schools were hate-free.

Leadership is important. An elementary teacher in Maryland listed several school-based anti-bias initiatives and added, “Our principal is very strong in supporting [the initiatives], ... and is determined to get more shareholder support from staff, students, and community. I feel fortunate to be working in a school with such a forward-thinking anti-bias attitude and community.”

In Arizona, a teacher at a preK–8 school wrote, “I consider my school a safe and tolerant place. Our administration is on top of behavior that may cause issues.”



And it’s not just administration. Everyone needs to be on board. “We have an amazing, supportive staff,” a Colorado high school teacher wrote. “This is a great place for students and staff!”

Others cited specific programs—including the Anti-Defamation League’s No Place for Hate, Teaching Tolerance’s Mix It Up at Lunch Day, Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports strategies, and the Second Step anti-bullying program—as evidence of the beneficial steps that administrators were taking to set the right tone and expectations.

Many connected the need for a “welcoming” and “inclusive” school with the fact that their students represent traditionally marginalized populations. A Missouri elementary educator wrote, “We are a welcoming school and support and help our new immigrants.” Others noted that they serve LGBTQ families, have elementary students transitioning to a different gender, or work in trauma-sensitive schools.*

How We Can Turn Things Around

Every American must take steps to make our schools and our communities safe and more accepting:

- Elected leaders need to unequivocally denounce white supremacy and racist, xenophobic, and anti-LGBTQ words and actions.
- Educators need to address these issues in their classrooms.
- We should all look at our local school boards and governments and ask if everyone in our community is represented, and we should work to hold local school authorities accountable for school climate and student safety.
- When we witness harassment, bullying, or bigotry, we must be upstanders—modeling courage, compassion, empathy, and civility.
- People of conscience—regardless of race or ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, or gender identity—must stand up for what is right. Bystanders contribute to the problem; upstanders help stop it. Apathy is not an option.

If we lead this work in each of our communities, we will begin to be knit together by our common support for each other. As educators, parents, and students begin the new school year and candidates wage political campaigns, let us all respect America’s great diversity and reject hatred and division. □

Endnotes

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*For more on trauma-sensitive schools, see “Supporting Students with Adverse Childhood Experiences” in the Summer 2019 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/summer2019/murphey_sacks.

Developing Inclusive Youth

How to Reduce Social Exclusion and Foster Equality and Equity in Childhood



BY MELANIE KILLEN

In the past two decades, psychologists, educators, and economists have shown that social stratification creates social inequalities that have long-term detrimental effects on children's physical, emotional, and academic development.¹ The segregation of social networks, as well as experiences of social inequality in the form of prejudice and bias, contributes to negative developmental outcomes for children over and above unequal access to material resources.² Unfortunately, hate and bias crimes have increased significantly over the past decade, turning the clock back on progress toward just and fair treatment of individuals.³ For the past 25 years, my colleagues and I at the University of Maryland have researched the emergence of children's conceptions of fairness and equality, their experiences of prejudice, and children's likelihood to perpetuate bias, to help us understand how to improve children's lives.⁴

We have learned a number of lessons about what helps to reduce prejudice and to foster an understanding of the need to treat others fairly and equally. Based on our extensive research findings over the past two decades, we developed an intervention program for elementary school classrooms, *Developing Inclusive Youth*, which includes

Melanie Killen is a professor of human development and quantitative methodology, and the director of the human development doctoral program, in the College of Education at the University of Maryland. The author of Children and Social Exclusion: Morality, Prejudice, and Group Identity, and more than 200 publications, she researches children's and adolescents' social and moral reasoning, peer relationships, the origins of prejudice and bias, and the role of school contexts for promoting positive social development.

a web-based curriculum tool and teacher-led discussions, to reduce prejudice and social exclusion, support socioemotional well-being, promote friendships among children from diverse groups, and increase children's motivation to succeed academically.⁵

Understanding Bias among Children

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, K-12 schools are the most cited locations for discrimination and bias-related harassment.⁶ Most commonly, children discriminate against and harass other children because of their race/ethnicity, gender, immigration status, or religion.⁷ These reports are consistent with extensive developmental research that has shown that children are both the recipients and perpetrators of prejudicial attitudes.⁸ Implicit and explicit biases emerge as early as the preschool period and become more pervasive by late elementary school.⁹ Explicit biases refer to stereotypes and generalizations about individuals based solely on group memberships. Implicit biases refer to negative attitudes toward other social groups that the beholder is unaware of, such as subconscious or automatic responses.*

Considering how prevalent bias-based harassment is among children, it is crucial that educators better understand how children develop these biases and how these biases can be reduced.¹⁰ The high rates of bias among children underscore the importance of schools as settings for changes in attitude and behavior, and elementary

*For more on what educators should know about implicit bias, see "Understanding Implicit Bias" in the Winter 2015-2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/taats.

school classrooms as the most developmentally appropriate venues for leveraging change among young children to reduce prejudice in adulthood. The consequences for children who *experience* discrimination (e.g., name-calling, bullying, exclusion, relational aggression) as a result of prejudice include compromised health and well-being, stress and anxiety, and low academic achievement.¹¹ Moreover, children who *perpetuate* bias (i.e., hold biases about social groups that restrict their social interactions) also experience stress associated with negative intergroup relationships in school settings. Thus, reducing prejudice and bias in childhood has positive academic, health, and attitudinal outcomes for *all children*.

One of the most explicit ways in which stereotypes and biases have an impact on children's development is when children experience social exclusion and discrimination from peer groups because of stereotypes and biases held by their peers. Inclusion and exclusion from social groups is already a complex arena, contributing to social rejection and isolation for many children, with negative consequences such as depression and anxiety. To effectively reduce prejudice, interventions must facilitate: (1) social and moral reasoning about intergroup relationships and attitudes, (2) experiences of positive intergroup friendships, and (3) adult-child discussions regarding the unfairness of social exclusion and prejudicial attitudes.

Social and Moral Development

Unlike an act of physical harm where children receive consistent messages about what makes it wrong (“You shouldn’t hit someone; how would you feel if someone did that to you?”), messages about social exclusion from groups generate a range of responses and vary depending on the specific parameters of the exclusion. For example, most people view it as legitimate to exclude a slow runner from a track team. One has to run fast to be on the team and contribute to its success; the criteria of speed and endurance are agreed upon as appropriate by most individuals. Thus, even if the slow runner feels bad about being excluded, it is understood that speed and endurance are legitimate exclusion criteria.

Yet, if someone is excluded from the track team because of his or her religion, race, or ethnicity, many people would view it as unfair. The reasoning is that one’s religion, race, or ethnicity is not related to the agreed upon criteria for being accepted to the track team. Thus, the exclusion in this case is unfair because it is unrelated to the group goals and, importantly, involves the unfair treatment of others.

Children also understand these distinctions, but such understanding emerges slowly over the course of childhood. Children often demonstrate inconsistent judgments about the fairness or unfairness of exclusion. For example, children 4 to 6 years of age often view exclusion of someone because of his or her gender as wrong and unfair (“Girls can play with trucks, too”; “It’s not fair to tell the boys that they can’t play with dolls”) but also demonstrate gender-specific play preferences (“Let’s play with the girls and not the boys because they’re mean”; “Girls can’t play with us ‘cause they’ll just cry”).¹²

When children view social exclusion based on group membership as unfair and wrong, they cite moral concerns to justify this stance (“It’s not fair to treat her differently”). However, in situations with ambiguity or complexity, children justify exclusion based on traditions (“We’ve never ‘mixed’ before”), conventions (“It’s not done that way”), or stereotypic expectations (“Girls aren’t good at science”). Children and adolescents also refer to

group identity as a basis for social exclusion (“They don’t belong to our group”; “He won’t fit into our group”; “She doesn’t know how we do things because she’s from a different place”).

What we have learned is that children actively reason about the social world and consider issues of group identity, group norms, and morality. Concepts about both group identity and morality emerge early in development. Morality involves judgments about the fair, equal, and just treatment of others,¹³ which emerge during the preschool years. At the same time, children form a group identity that involves affiliating with a group that provides support and friendship.¹⁴ However, group identity can lead to in-group preference (“My group gets more than your group”), which has the potential to create prejudicial attitudes.¹⁵ What turns in-group preference into prejudice is when out-group dislike or distrust manifests. Many children identify with a group without simultaneously identifying or showing dislike for an out-group. However, when forms of threat exist, then in-group preference can turn into out-group dislike, resulting in prejudicial attitudes and behaviors.¹⁶ Forms of threat often surface when resources are limited or competition is high. In these cases, individuals (including children) can align themselves with their own group to compete with other groups, creating derogatory attitudes about the out-group. Further, when adults convey negative messages about groups (such as gender, race, and ethnicity), or when stereotypes are perpetuated and reinforced through the media, then children often turn their in-group alliance into out-group distrust.

The high rates of bias among children underscore the importance of schools as settings for changes in attitude and behavior.

Group dislike extends beyond the literal dislike of a group to mistrust of someone who is affiliated with a specific group. The process becomes one in which children (and adults) assume homogeneity of the out-group. One way to reduce these types of biases is to help children understand that groups are heterogeneous and that attributing traits to an individual based solely on group membership (or identity) is unfair and prejudicial. Experiences that are most effective in reducing assumptions of homogeneity come in the form of positive intergroup contact.

Experiences of Positive Intergroup Friendships

Under optimal conditions, positive contact between groups can reduce prejudicial attitudes.¹⁷ Optimal conditions for reducing prejudice are met when those in the advantaged and disadvantaged group (or in-group and out-group) begin the interaction with *equal status* and share *common goals*, when *authority figures* support contact for the goals of mutual respect, and when *cross-group friendships* can be formed. In fact, the most robust finding in developmental (and social) psychological research pertains to the condition of cross-

group friendships.¹⁸ Such friendships enable individuals to have personal experiences that refute stereotypes disseminated in the media and elsewhere in society (“My friend is not like that”).

These conditions are not easy to achieve given the pervasive pattern of racial and ethnic segregation in the United States and many places around the globe. (For more on the importance of school integration, see the article on page 26.) Further, in many contexts, ethnic minority group status is associated with socioeconomic status, with low-income groups more often associated with ethnic, racial, and cultural minority status backgrounds. These pervasive demographics that result from social status hierarchies make it difficult to achieve equal status in schools and workplaces. Even though positive change regarding different forms of status have occurred across ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds over the past 50 years, positive intergroup contact remains difficult to achieve naturally due to persistent residential segregation patterns. Fortunately, schools can foster positive intergroup contact and encourage relationships that reflect equal status.

Cross-group friendships enable individuals to have personal experiences that refute stereotypes.

Some examples of positive outcomes of cross-group friendships include students using moral reasoning in their rejection of race-based exclusion, students wanting to be friends with students of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds when they had previously excluded them, and students experiencing a reduced rate of negative implicit bias. Moreover, two forms of cross-group friendships have been shown to be effective: direct (actual positive interactions between individuals) and indirect (hearing or reading about two other individuals, one from one’s own group and one from another group, who have become friends). Developmental research has also shown that the promotion of a common inclusive group identity (e.g., a shared nationality or school identity) rather than a singular exclusive group identity (e.g., only identification with being either an ethnic majority or minority) can reduce children’s biases against those from other group affiliations.

Teacher-Child Discussions about Intergroup Relationships and Bias

While students are often the perpetrators of bias in the classroom, teacher bias has been identified as a source of promoting prejudicial experiences for children.¹⁹ Teacher biases about children’s ability and aptitude have been demonstrated through research on stereotype threat as well as for an array of academic decisions, such as assessment. Stereotype threat is when students feel at risk of conforming to stereotypic expectations, which negatively impacts their own academic performance.²⁰ Most of this research is experimental in nature, and little work has focused on incorporating teacher bias in interventions designed to change children’s attitudes about peer

group social inclusion and exclusion. Some school districts ask teachers to take online implicit bias tests to become aware of their own biases. This is helpful for discovering one’s own implicit biases, often unbeknownst to the beholder. This realization, however, does not equip teachers with the tools necessary to address bias and social exclusionary practices that they observe in school settings.

What is needed, then, are curriculum programs designed to promote intergroup friendships and reduce social exclusion and prejudice in childhood as well as to provide teachers with a vocabulary to discuss social exclusion, bias, and stereotypic expectations (recognizing that teachers have their own biases about social groups). Further, measuring teacher bias needs to be included in a program designed to reduce student bias. Moreover, programs must be designed with an awareness of the social, cognitive, and emotional developmental levels of participating students. An intervention study that focuses on diverse group categories and multiple grade levels will enhance the effectiveness and generalizability of the program.

Promoting Intergroup Friendships and Reducing Prejudice

Our team at the University of Maryland created Developing Inclusive Youth, an interactive in-classroom program that has two components to it: a web-based curriculum tool and a teacher-led classroom discussion session that immediately follows students’ use of the tool. The goals of the research-based program* are to provide children with the experiences of viewing both inclusive and exclusive behaviors by characters similar to their peers. These characters are diverse in gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and immigrant status to increase the chances that one of them will reflect children’s own identity. This will provide an experience that will be relevant for most of the children in the classroom. We chose to focus our program on 8- to 11-year-old children because children younger than 8 may be unfamiliar with certain types of diversity. Further, we know that children acquire an understanding of group dynamics (in-group and out-group) between 7 and 9 years of age. Also, we wanted to include an age group that had an emerging understanding of group dynamics and when groups might hold norms that individual members would reject. Finally, we wanted to focus on children prior to middle school (ages 12 to 14), when dating and romantic relationships enter into peer group dynamics, creating new sets of issues that we wanted to avoid.

In the Developing Inclusive Youth web-based tool, shown in Figure 1 on page 11, children progress through eight scenarios, one per week. The interactive design of the tool allows children to watch simulated peer interactions that involve social exclusion. Children are then asked to make decisions, form judgments, and observe the outcomes of their own decision making (these responses are recorded in the tool and produced as a file for statistical analyses). Decisions include whether it is all right or not for several students (in the scenario) to exclude another child, how the different characters will feel, whether the group should include or exclude, and the reasons for doing so. To capture reasoning, children are presented with four different reasons for their decisions and asked to pick one (reasons include unfairness, group functioning, stereotypes, and group norms).

*We are currently evaluating the effectiveness of the program, and our preliminary analyses reveal statistically significant effects. When our analyses are complete, the tool will be made available to school districts for implementation. To learn more, visit www.killenlab.umd.edu.

The focus of the program is not on children’s behavior in the classroom but on the consequences and outcomes of prejudicial attitudes in social relationships at the group level. This focuses the learning opportunity away from the potentially self-conscious focus of individual behavior in a public forum (public reprimands of negative behavior) and instead toward group discussion about the negative dimensions of prejudice and stereotypes. Moreover, the intervention focuses on the common group and shared interests held by children from different backgrounds. Previous research has shown that children use group membership, such as ethnicity, as a cue for friendship. But when they are made aware of salient common interests, such as hobbies and values, then these interests take priority over ethnicity. When children exclude others based on group membership alone, there is a missed opportunity to find a friend with shared goals and interests. To that end, the intervention program focuses extensively on shared goals and interests, such as play activities, hobbies, and values, displayed by children from different backgrounds.

In designing the tool, we used a narrator with voice-over to control for individual differences in children’s reading levels. The tool is also interactive; at multiple points, the action freezes and participants make a choice, a judgment, and/or a rating, providing an online record of their responses to the different facets of each exclusion scenario. For example, in the “Science” scenario, four children have to create a science project. Three boys are sitting next to a girl, and one boy says to another boy that he wants to make a robot. The girl asks to join the boys, but one boy whispers to his friend that girls are not good at science. The boy whispers back that his sister is good at science, but this is dismissed by the first boy. The action freezes and the narrator asks the student to make a decision as to whether the boys should include or exclude the girl. Then the student must pick a reason for his or her decision and how each character will feel. The action unfolds and the student watches what happens. The student also has a chance to see what happens when the other choice is made (inclusion or exclusion). The student then

responds to new probes about the characters’ expected feelings and the group’s reasons for the act of inclusion or exclusion.

Each week (for eight weeks), the program addresses prejudice for multiple group categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, immigrant status, and socioeconomic status), which removes the focus from only one group of participants in the role of potential victims. This optimizes the probability that all participants will identify with at least one of the eight scenarios and relate to both the excluded character and the perpetrator roles in different scenarios. Thus, each week, a new character makes decisions related to including or excluding others.

To illustrate, each week involves an exclusion situation with multiple viewpoints expressed (one child advocates for exclusion, another child advocates for inclusion, and another child is the excluded target). For the first week, the “Recess” scenario features two girls jumping rope who must decide whether to include or exclude a “new kid” at school—a situation that everyone can relate to. The second week’s scenario, “Science,” mentioned earlier, includes a science project in which boys must decide whether to include or exclude a girl from their task. In the third week’s scenario, “Park,” the action centers around a tire swing where some white boys decide whether to let a Latino boy join their game (one boy tells the Latino boy to play with his friends from Mexico, and the Latino boy tells him that he was born in the United States and doesn’t know anyone from Mexico).

In “Bowling” the fourth week’s scenario, some girls must decide whether to invite an immigrant girl from Poland to their bowling party (debating whether she can learn how to bowl). The fifth week’s “Arcade” scenario involves exclusion based on wealth status (whether a character has enough money to play games at the arcade), while the sixth week’s scenario, “Dance,” focuses on two white girls unsure about including a black girl in their ballet group. The seventh week’s scenario, “Party,” features a Korean boy and his Korean friend deciding whether to invite a non-Korean boy to a birthday party (thinking that he might not like Korean food).

Figure 1. Portal for beginning the Developing Inclusive Youth tool, revealing the eight scenarios, one per week for eight weeks: Recess, Science, Park, Bowling, Arcade, Dance, Party, and Movie.



ILLUSTRATIONS: © JOAN K. TYCKO; DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE YOUTH: © MELANIE KILLEN, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND



Finally, the eighth week's scenario, "Movie," involves two boys, one Arab and one non-Arab, watching a movie with negative stereotypes about Arabs. While the non-Arab boy enjoys the movie, the Arab boy wants to do a different activity, and the two friends must decide whether to continue watching the movie or not. Watching each of the eight scenarios and responding to the prompts takes students about 15 minutes.

The teacher-led classroom discussion, which lasts for 30 minutes, is the second component of the intervention program. After each child has had an opportunity in the classroom to individually complete the scenario of the week using the web-based curriculum tool, teachers engage students in a discussion regarding the choices and decisions presented in each scenario. Teachers lead this discussion without knowledge of, or reference to, students' own individual decisions. However, teachers are provided with a sequence of questions designed to foster discussion. Teachers also ask students to discuss their own experiences relevant to the scenario. The issues surrounding each scenario are about social inclusion and exclusion, stereotypic expectations, biases, peer relationships, friendships, shared interests, and common goals. Thus, the scenarios depicted in the web-based curriculum tool provide the basis for substantive teacher-led, face-to-face classroom discussions.

Overall, the intervention program creates both indirect and direct intergroup contact. The *indirect contact* in the intervention program occurs with the use of the animated intergroup scenarios in the web-based curriculum tool (which children use in the classroom). Children watch peer exchanges in which children like themselves become friends with those from different backgrounds, and they learn that these peers have common goals and shared interests. The *direct contact* occurs in the program when children discuss their views of the peer scenarios in class with children from different backgrounds, and when these discussions occur among peers. The use of both direct and indirect intergroup contact, as well as including characters from diverse backgrounds, means that this program can be applied in schools with both homogeneous and heterogeneous student bodies.

Through this web-based tool, we hope to promote positive intergroup friendships to reduce prejudice and increase socio-emotional well-being. To date, very little research exists on how to change children's attitudes among diverse groups in the context of everyday interactions in school. Yet, exclusionary behavior has extensive negative outcomes, such as the denial of opportunities (e.g., belonging to school clubs that are educational as well as social) and the denial of friendships. One of the expectations of

our program is to change children's behavior and attitudes, which in turn will foster healthy child development.

Currently, we are conducting a randomized control trial of third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders in six schools to determine if the program is effective, and our preliminary results are very promising. Overall, students in the intervention program are statistically more likely to desire to play with peers from different ethnic and racial backgrounds following the program than are children in the control group. In addition, children in the intervention group are statistically more likely to feel a sense of classroom support from their peers.

Children's Voices

In implementing this web-based tool, the most poignant discussions arose when the teacher asked children to talk about whether they had experiences like the characters in the scenario of the week. For example, one week, a third-grade African American girl stated, "Some kids said, 'No you can't play with me because you're a different skin color.'" A European American girl sitting next to her said, "That's not nice," and rubbed her back. The teacher then focused the discussion on what can be done when someone says something like this. Other statements that arose were personal experiences of identity, such as when a third-grade Korean boy said, "People assume I'm Chinese, but I'm Korean, and it makes me feel sad because they are judging me by my looks, my nationality." The teacher followed up by asking others what they thought should be done to address this.

Sometimes children reflected on how it must be for other children who are not white, such as when a third-grade European American girl said, "I feel bad about color because white people used to be mean to black people." The teacher responded to this statement with, "Courage is doing right when everyone around you is doing wrong." Regarding gender, children had lively discussions about equality. A fifth-grade boy said, "Give everybody a chance. Your gender doesn't define you. Just because she's a girl doesn't mean she's bad at science." Children also debated gender differences. One fourth-grade girl said, "We have different thoughts. Boys like to mess around, and girls like to get things done." A boy responded with, "That's kind of rude to boys." Other boys chimed in to agree with the girl's statement. The teacher then asked the class to consider what basis they had for thinking about boys and girls differently, and to think about what they shared and had in common.

Enabling children to communicate their attitudes, judgments, and reasons with one another in a supportive classroom is important for progress toward mutual respect and equality. Discussions provide children a chance to hear what their peers are thinking and to challenge or accept their ideas. Teachers provide a framework for encouraging children to listen to one another and generate solutions to problems and negative attitudes. In our feedback from teachers, they often told us that they learned things about their students that they never knew they had experienced, and this helped them understand their perspective and foster a more inclusive environment.

Prejudice and discrimination observed in adults often originates in childhood.²¹ Research on child development has investigated the origins of prejudice, how it evolves, and what factors both accelerate and diminish prejudice. At the same time, children develop concepts about fairness, equality, and rights, and apply these concepts to their daily interactions with peers.

(Continued on page 40)

Race to Improve Teacher Education

Building Awareness for Instructional Practice



BY H. RICHARD MILNER IV

Throughout my career studying the relationship between race and teachers' instructional practices,¹ I've learned that many teachers may not fully realize the importance of this relationship or how it plays out in the classroom. For instance, one science teacher I worked with told me that when he first began his teaching career, he wanted to focus solely on teaching his content: "I just want them to get excited about science," he explained. However, he was a white teacher working in an urban school with students of color living below the poverty line. Often, students called him "racist," questioned his authority, expressed that he did not "know" them, and demanded that he change.

Although I highlight here the interactions between only one teacher and his students, I have observed such racial tensions in other classrooms as well,² and they tend to stem from a racial divide between teachers and students. The evidence is clear that white teachers can be and are successful teachers of students from varying racial backgrounds.³ However, the research shows that they are successful because they build not only their knowledge of content and instructional skills but also their knowledge of how race and racist acts still influence society and education.

H. Richard Milner IV is a Cornelius Vanderbilt Endowed Chair of Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. The author of numerous articles and seven books, his research focuses on urban education, teacher education, and African American literature.

As challenges related to race* intensify in schools, I stress the necessity for teachers (prospective and practicing) to (1) build knowledge about race, (2) talk more often about race, and, consequently, (3) plan and enact curriculum and instructional practices focused on race with students of all races and backgrounds in schools.

Because of the range of teachers' grade levels and subject matter expertise, I cannot recommend exact instructional practices for each and every age. Nor would I suggest giving teachers a list of such examples, since building the knowledge committed to combating racism goes beyond some predetermined instructional script. But I can offer a few ideas. For instance, in developmentally appropriate ways, teachers can share video clips from the hit TV series *What Would You Do?* (available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWlph_xlTbY), which provides real-life racial experiences that people respond to. Such exposure allows students and teachers to think through the complexities of situations and to strategize about what they themselves might do. Moreover, there are many historical examples, such as slavery and Jim Crow, that students can learn about to better understand racism in society and education. As a practice, I would strongly encourage all students to engage in writing autobiographies that allow them to deepen their knowledge about their racial and cultural history. Learning about when they first came to understand differences

*As I have written previously, race is constructed physically, contextually, socially, legally, and historically. The meanings, messages, results, and consequences of race are developed and constructed by human beings in society, not by some predetermined set of scientific laws or genetics. Genetically and biologically, individuals are more the same than they are different.



related to race can help them build knowledge about themselves, their families, and others. Educators can encourage students to talk with their parents, grandparents, and other family members to help them build these insights.⁴

I have found that many educators tend to be “race-blind” in their classroom practices, which can make it difficult for them to recognize the many ways in which race and racism hinder learning opportunities and outcomes for students of color. By race-blind, I mean that educators avoid examining, thinking about, or acknowledging the ways in which race contributes to systems and structures of oppression and other forms of discrimination. Race-blind practices in schools include:

- Not recognizing the overwhelming number of black students referred to special education.
- Not recognizing the underwhelming number of black students referred to gifted education.
- Not recognizing that the majority of office referrals and consequent suspensions and expulsions are for black students.

Increased Significance of Race

Although some may believe issues of race are improving in the United States, one could argue that we are regressing as a nation. White supremacist organizations are bolder, more vocal, and more overt in their racist attacks than they were years ago. The violent protests in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017 are a case in point. Recent examples of the intensification of race and what might be considered racial divisiveness can be substantiated with the reactions to Colin Kaepernick’s decision to exercise his right to kneel during the national anthem before NFL⁵ games to protest the police killings of unarmed black people, such as Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and Walter Scott. We also have seen an increase in media reports related to race, as white people call law enforcement on black people at appalling rates for seemingly mundane acts.

Inside of schools, we see continued trends that also point to the need to increase our focus on race. During the 2011–2012 school year, although black students represented only 18 percent of preschool enrollment, they made up 42 percent of the preschool students who were suspended once and 48 percent of those suspended more than once.⁶ More current data show that although black students repre-

sented only 19.5 percent of preschool enrollment in 2013–2014, the year for which most recent data are available, they made up 48.6 percent of the preschool student population who were suspended once and 53.4 percent of those suspended more than once.⁷

Research shows that most office referrals originate in the classroom, and that African American students are more likely to be referred to the office for what have been described as more subjective infractions, while white students are more likely to be referred to the office for more objective ones.^{*8} Moreover, research still shows that black students are not proportionately referred to gifted programs⁹ and are overwhelmingly referred to special education for behavior challenges, compared with white students.¹⁰ Although teachers tend to have good intentions, the point is that some of these practices result from implicit biases[†] that I believe teachers should work to address. Thus, to change these practices that are intentional or unintentional manifestations of discrimination, educators must become more aware of their implicit biases.

Yet, in spite of these findings, I have heard educators across the United States boast about the fact that they do not, have not, and will not address race in their talk, curriculum, and instructional practices, or in their work more broadly. In my analysis of their feedback, they share that (1) they believe race is inconsequential to their practices,¹¹ (2) they must focus on teaching math or English language arts for the upcoming state test,¹² (3) they believe we are living in a postracial society given that President Barack Obama served two terms,¹³ or (4) they believe the issues they face are mostly about poverty and not race,¹⁴ and not even the intersection of race and poverty.¹⁵ But, I contend that to address some of the patterns of bias I’ve outlined both inside and outside of school, educators must build their knowledge to teach to, for, and through an understanding of race.

Building Teachers’ Racial Knowledge

Research consistently finds that what teachers know manifests in what they actually teach.¹⁶ In fact, one researcher¹⁷ reminded us that it is difficult for any of us to teach what we do not know. Content knowledge researchers such as those who study math, science, social studies, or English language arts in education stress the need to deepen teachers’ knowledge in these domains because they have found that teachers’ practices are enhanced when they deeply understand their content. Knowledge related to subject matter disciplines has been classified as teachers’ content knowledge. Relatedly, teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge concerns the ways in which teachers understand their teaching of their content. In other words, teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge consists of teachers’ knowledge about their content and their ability to convey—that is, actually teach—that content to their particular students.¹⁸

Other forms of essential knowledge for teachers include their practical knowledge and their classroom knowledge.¹⁹ For instance, one researcher explains that practical knowledge is shaped by “teachers’ personal history, which includes intentions and pur-

*For more on racial disparities in school discipline, see “From Reaction to Prevention” in the Winter 2015–2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/skiba_josen.

†For more on implicit bias, see “Understanding Implicit Bias” in the Winter 2015–2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/staats.

poses, as well as the cumulative effects of life experience.”²⁰ Another researcher²¹ maintains that teachers make complex decisions that are not always connected to content knowledge. These complex decisions may not always seem logical, but teachers rely on their past practices to construct the most innovative learning environments for students. Teachers’ practical knowledge allows them to develop a plan of action appropriate to particular situations, and they rely on what they have experienced in the past to help them make the most appropriate pedagogical moves.

Teachers’ classroom knowledge allows them to examine the classroom²² milieu and overall ethos of their classroom space. Classroom knowledge is not solely about the organization of a classroom, such as where desks are placed. Classroom knowledge focuses on who students are in the space and what materials are available to them, including human resources and capital.²³ That is, teachers’ classroom knowledge reflects their understanding of the classroom setting, the school, and the community. Classroom knowledge allows teachers opportunities to make curricular and pedagogical decisions relevant to their environmental realities.

Elsewhere, I have described the racial knowledge teachers need²⁴ and also display in real classrooms²⁵ with students in order to address the structural and system imperatives I describe above, such as the over-referral of students of color to the office for punishment. By racial knowledge, I mean knowledge about societal and educational experiences and realities that are shaped and influenced by race, racism, and racist acts. This knowledge is informed by historical and contemporary moments that inform policies and practices inside and outside of school. However, educators building knowledge about race and racism is insufficient in the grand narrative of what it takes to transform schools into spaces of racial justice, where policies and practices are designed and enacted to cultivate fairness and equity. Ultimately, racial justice centers on leveling the playing field through equitable practices to provide opportunities and access for those who have been unfairly and unjustly treated. Educators need to be equipped to practice racial justice throughout the school day and across different social contexts.

Teachers work within organizational structures and systems that can either propel their knowledge or hinder it. Building racial knowledge requires educators to more deeply understand aspects of themselves and others, structures and systems, and mechanisms and practices that perpetuate and/or maintain the status quo. The research supports the idea that if teachers build racial knowledge in their pre-service teacher education programs, they can bolster that knowledge in their actual practices when they start teaching in-service.²⁶ Building racial knowledge requires teachers to rethink what they thought they understood previously; at times, educators may be frustrated by the process. But they understand that racial knowledge construction is lifelong work that can elevate over time. Because the experiences of individuals and society are dynamic, teachers must continue to probe and build insights about how race and racism operate both in and out of school. With increases in technology and shifts in popular culture, educators must consistently reflect on what is happening at particular moments in society and education. Thus, racial knowledge development in pre-service teacher education is likely insufficient for the kinds of learning and development teachers—especially white teachers—need to move their knowledge into practice. Features of constructing racial knowledge include:

- Studying the complex history of race. On college campuses, ethnic studies programs tend to offer important insights that traditional teacher education programs may be underprepared to offer.
- Critiquing and questioning white privilege and white supremacy.
- Examining how equity can improve the educational experiences of all students. Good examples include funding formulas in districts where per-pupil spending in schools varies significantly based on race.
- Interrogating how punitive disciplinary policies and practices, such as in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion, can actually do more harm than good by causing students to miss important instructional opportunities.
- Investigating alternative practices, such as restorative justice,[†] to resolve conflicts and help students and educators heal and work together.^{§27}
- Listening to families and communities who are different from the mainstream culture and have mostly been silent in traditional programs that prepare teachers. Families and communities are the experts of their experiences, and when educators listen to their personal and collective stories and build on their strengths, they are better able to deepen their racial knowledge.

Racial knowledge requires educators to be in the trenches advocating for equity with and on behalf of their students.

- Recognizing and building insights about how to explicitly disrupt inequity. In other words, racial knowledge requires educators to be in the trenches advocating for equity with and on behalf of their students. This requires educators to actually do something to disrupt racism.
- Drawing from successful practices of educators who work with diverse students.**

Learning from Successful Educators

In observing the effective practices of teachers who understand the centrality of race and building relationships in their work, I have come to believe other teachers can learn from such practices. Several years ago, I observed Ms. Shaw, a black middle school social studies teacher who exhibited what I call *relationship-centered teaching*.²⁸ One day, Christine, a student in Ms. Shaw’s fifth-period

[†]For more on restorative approaches to school discipline, see “Learning to Switch Gears” in the Winter 2015–2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/dubin.

[§]For more on building relationships, see “It’s About Relationships” in the Winter 2015–2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/ashley.

**For more on working with students of color, see “The Need for More Teachers of Color” in the Summer 2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/summer2015/vilson, and “The Case for a Teacher Like Me” in the Fall 2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2016/preston.

class, walked into Ms. Shaw's second period with an assignment sheet from in-school suspension. Christine looked confused and sad, and it was obvious that she had been crying:

Christine: Ms. Shaw, fill this [assignment sheet] out. They [the administration] put me in ISS [in-school suspension]. [Christine begins to cry.]

Ms. Shaw: Christine, what's going on?

Christine: I just don't like her [referring to one of her other teachers].

Ms. Shaw: Well Christine, you will meet a lot of folks in your life you don't like. You've got to learn to work with people you don't like. It's going to be all right, though, because you are smart, and you've got to let that situation roll off your back.

Christine: I knew you were going to say that, but I still don't like her.²⁹

Language misunderstandings between teachers and students can hinder students' opportunities to learn.

Christine continued to look seriously troubled and hurt either by being sent to in-school suspension or by the situation she experienced with the teacher, whom she declared she "doesn't like." While gathering assignments to occupy Christine's time in suspension, Ms. Shaw studied the worried look on her student's face. Christine was clearly upset.

Ms. Shaw: OK, Christine, sit down. Just hang out in here with me for a while. You don't need to go to suspension in this [mental] state. How are your sisters doing? You know I have taught all your older sisters, and you are all smart girls. What would Tonya say if she saw you all upset like this?

Christine: She would tell me to calm down.

Ms. Shaw: Exactly. Just shake off this situation, Christine. It is *so* not the end of the world. You will bounce back from this. How is Tonya?

Christine: She is fine. She just got married.³⁰

By the time Ms. Shaw finished posing questions to Christine about her sister and reassuring her that she was indeed "all right," Christine had calmed down. In fact, by the end of her exchange, Christine looked like a completely different person. She was now ready to move forward with her in-school suspension punishment. When I talked to Ms. Shaw about the interaction, she said she was worried that had she allowed Christine to leave her room in the state she was in, she would have run into even more problems and "trouble." She felt responsible for Christine while she was at school—not only when Christine was taking her class—and wanted to be sure she was in a space to move forward. Ms. Shaw was teaching in that moment with Christine and demonstrating

relationship-centered pedagogy, although the interaction was not in a formal classroom setting. Ultimately, the point of this interaction is that any teacher—whether a teacher of color or not—could and should do what Ms. Shaw did to reduce the perpetual referral of black students, such as Christine, to the office.

Increasing and Nuancing Race Talk

We build our knowledge when we engage in conversation with others. Especially where race is concerned, teachers need to experience discussions about race at different times, in a range of locations, and with a diverse cadre of people. This talk about race should be both formal and informal, and it should run the gamut from academic to professional to social. Teachers need opportunities to talk about what they have experienced, what they have heard, what they have read, what they have seen, and how they have historically and presently experienced race and racism in their lives.

One of the most important texts about the intersections of race, talk, and teaching often used in teacher education programs to support prospective and practicing teachers' learning and development is Lisa Delpit's *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*.³¹ Although the book was published more than two decades ago, it is still relevant because Delpit's analysis centers on language, instructional moves, race, class, and power in ways that encourage teachers to reimagine what teaching and learning could and should be for all students. Delpit profoundly outlines differences in parental communication styles and cultural conflicts that can emerge in the classroom with mostly white teachers when outside-of-school realities, such as parenting styles, are not considered inside the school context. Other outside-of-school realities that have racial implications include gentrification; access to healthcare; toxins that students may interact with, such as lead paint; nutrition and quality of food; and parks and recreation centers available to students.

Language misunderstandings between teachers and students can also hinder students' opportunities to learn. For instance, in her book, Delpit stresses that she is not stereotyping any particular group of parents, students, or teachers. Rather, she explains the ways in which language and communication styles may be misunderstood in the classroom and how students—usually students of color—are penalized for communicative misunderstandings. For instance, if a black student is accustomed to more direct expectations at home, and if teachers have a more indirect way of communicating expectations at school, miscommunication can emerge. If a student is used to being told by an adult explicitly what is expected at home, and teachers take more indirect, implicit approaches in their requests, students, especially younger ones who have not yet learned how to navigate these different communicative environments, may have a difficult time making the adjustment. One researcher explained that "language is not an innocent reflection of how we think. The terms we use control our perceptions, shape our understanding, and lead us to particular proposals for improvement."³² The point is not to generalize or stereotype but to understand that there are different ways of communicating that can put some students at a disadvantage in schools.

Curriculum and Instructional Practices Focused on Race

In teacher education programs, we need to prepare teachers to promote discussions of race across different content areas. Moreover, such discussion is not only about teaching a formal or informal cur-

riculum. It is also about taking care of students from diverse backgrounds and students of color, like the one Ms. Shaw helped. From the very beginning of the academic year, teachers can strive to design a classroom ethos that is open to questioning and hearing varying perspectives, and that expects and encourages discussion.* Establishing an environment of respect (even when conversations get heated) is essential to encouraging students to interrogate and grapple with tough issues in general and race conversations in particular.

Teachers can reflect on and balance their own views and positions on race and societal occurrences. The goal should not be to indoctrinate students into believing or embracing a particular point of view. Neither should the goal be to push their own agendas as much as it is to nuance points related to race with students in order to sharpen their analytical and critical-thinking skills. Teachers should offer counterviews to students' positions as they participate in classroom discussion. People often have different views and interpretations of the same experience. For instance, some see the killings of unarmed black men by police as just, because they believe law enforcement is always right. Others believe that law enforcement must be held accountable for violence against unarmed citizens.

In addition, teachers can identify and centralize the facts based on evidence from varying sources and multiple points of view.† They can encourage and require students to explore different sources of information and to consider positions and standpoints inconsistent with their initial thinking on topics related to race. Teachers should also expect students to draw from sources (including their own experience) in expressing their views and positions on issues of race.

Teachers cannot be expected to achieve all of the above without support. They must be prepared to engage in conversations on race as they emerge. They should be encouraged to build networks to support student needs that fall outside of their toolkit by working with school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and so forth. Teachers should recognize and nurture the affective and socioemotional dimensions of students. Students could feel very strongly about a racial topic or issue and could become emotional as conversations develop. Teachers should be supported to build knowledge and skills to acknowledge and validate these students' feelings, so they can respond to them with affirmation and sensitivity.

Teachers should learn how to talk to and partner with parents, community members, and school administrators about their views and expectations regarding race-centered conversations and develop strategies to bolster and complement discussion inside and outside of the classroom. To do this work, teachers must be supported in building knowledge and skills related to racial literacy.³³ Indeed, the work of race talk in the classroom involves joint commitment among faculty, staff, and students committed to engaging in tough conversations in order to improve their schools and hopefully (eventually) their communities and the world.

*For more on making elementary school classrooms LGBTQ-inclusive, see "Reading and Teaching the Rainbow" in the Spring 2019 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/spring2019/hermann-wilmarth_ryan.

†For more on fact-checking and providing evidence for arguments, see "The Challenge That's Bigger Than Fake News" in the Fall 2017 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2017/mcgregor_ortega_breakstone_wineburg, and "For the Sake of Argument" in the Spring 2018 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/spring2018/friedrich_bear_fox.



Finally, once students have engaged with the issues and deepened their knowledge and understanding, teachers can help them consider their role in working against racism currently and in the future by thinking about broader ways to build conversations. In other words, what can students do to fight against discrimination and racism in the collective and beyond the walls of the school? Historically, teachers have fought for what they believe in. For instance, before the *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954, black educators collectively demonstrated their commitment to justice and equity by advocating for black students and their schools and by joining organizations established to fight racism, such as the NAACP.³⁴

The work I describe here requires us to think seriously about teacher education programs. We cannot assume that teacher candidates have the time or the knowledge to prepare for discussing race on their own. As a result, teacher education programs must support teachers as they build the knowledge they need to lead productive conversations about race in the preK–12 classroom. While discussing race is difficult, we must encourage educators to talk about race not only for their own learning and development but also for the learning and development of their students. □

Endnotes

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(Continued on page 40)

Engaging in Meaningful Conversations

The Need to Foster Ethnic-Racial Identity in School

BY DEBORAH RIVAS-DRAKE AND ADRIANA J. UMAÑA-TAYLOR

Ethnic-racial tensions in U.S. society are not new.* They bubble up in all types of places, from rural communities in California to the multicultural mecca of New York City’s neighborhoods. We can look to historical and current events that not only reflect our society’s tense atmosphere concerning ethnic-racial relations at any given point in history but also continue to ignite and exacerbate such tensions. For instance, the U.S. government has passed immigration policies to exclude individuals from certain countries. This was true in 1882 with the Chinese Exclusion Act and in 2017 with Executive Order 13769, also known as the Muslim ban.

Our society has also forced ethnic minorities to choose between their culture and their survival. We have seen this with the government-imposed boarding schools for American Indian children and in English-only legislation that persists despite well-documented evidence of the benefits of bilingualism. Moreover, we have consistently witnessed the disproportionate use of force and violation of basic human rights as the default in how law enforcement approaches communities of color. These issues persist and make their way into the lives of our young people.

To some, these tensions convey that there is a devaluing of members of groups that do not represent the historically dominant group (i.e., white, European descent, Christian, economically advantaged). This devaluation is like salt in a wound for those who are all too acutely aware of social inequalities that have pervaded U.S. society since its founding. Indeed, there are myriad disparities in the life outcomes of members of marginalized groups compared to members of the dominant group. To others, however, these tensions are thought to be blown out of propor-

tion, exaggerated, or of no relevance to their lives. There is a sense that those who are actively voicing their concerns about the racial tensions are being too sensitive.

In the United States, one does not need to go far to encounter situations in which racial and ethnic dynamics are at work. Youth are bombarded with messages about race and ethnicity in their everyday lives. Such stories, images, situations, and broader conversations often evoke fear, pain, and guilt among even the most socially conscious adults who consider themselves well-versed in the complexities of ethnic-racial relations in U.S. society. It’s challenging to reconcile the disparate perspectives on these ethnic-racial tensions, much less have open dialogue about them,

*Throughout this article, we use the term “ethnic-racial” to acknowledge individuals’ experiences with ethnicity and race, as these are often difficult to disentangle.



Deborah Rivas-Drake is a professor of psychology and education at the University of Michigan. Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor is a professor of education in the Harvard Graduate School of Education. This article is excerpted with permission from their book, Below the Surface: Talking with Teens about Race, Ethnicity, and Identity (Princeton University Press, 2019). All rights reserved.

but our social fabric is weakened by not engaging in meaningful dialogue about these issues.

In our book, *Below the Surface: Talking with Teens about Race, Ethnicity, and Identity*, from which this article is excerpted, we openly discuss many current ethnic-racial disparities and tensions about which conversations are usually stifled. Here we briefly discuss why these conversations are challenging but of the utmost importance.

Why Focus on Youth?



From a child development perspective, children have a strong preference for equality and fairness, and they demonstrate an increasing concern for fairness and others' welfare with age.¹ Scholars such as Melanie Killen, Adam Rutland, and their colleagues have shown the prevalence of children's moral concerns regarding equality and justice.² Children's moral concerns about fairness and justice are in direct opposition to the realities of various manifestations of inequality in society. As youth become increasingly aware of the disconnect between their moral ideals and the unequal opportunities afforded to nonwhite Americans, adults have an important choice to make. We can be silent, teach them to blame the victimized groups for the oppression they experience, or choose to have the difficult conversations that expose the imperfections of our society. The last option is likely the most challenging for adults who themselves have not explored these topics in great depth; however, this approach shortchanges youth. To paraphrase noted scholar bell hooks, we cannot empower young people to critically examine the inequalities they perceive in society without personally facing these issues in ways that may make us feel vulnerable, too.

Young people understand this vulnerability all too well. As they mature during the course of adolescence, youth are thrust into a meaning-making process about society's racial and ethnic zeitgeist. They must develop a sense of who they are and who they can be in a deeply conflicted society, and the experiences and knowledge gained during childhood serve as the foundation for this process. Making sense of diversity in a developmentally attentive way involves helping adolescents grapple with the question "Who am I, and how do I fit in this diverse world?"

To best foster the development of skills and competencies that will help adolescents make sense of their identities and of the diversity that exists in society in productive ways, adults must engage in the difficult conversations—both among ourselves and with our youth. Indeed, some of the most significant opportunities to engage in these conversations occur during adolescence. During this developmental period, youth gain more freedom to explore the world outside their immediate family and gain the cognitive abilities to think about more complex and abstract social issues, such as racism and societal hierarchies.

Events that highlight ethnic-racial tensions and inequality, such as those that are well publicized in the national news—as well as those situations taking place closer to one's community that are less well publicized—strike a chord because we may have uncritically accepted the rhetoric that we live in a colorblind society where individuals are judged by their merits and treated in a just and fair manner. In fact, following the 2016 presidential election, many of us, Democrats and Republicans alike, were shocked to learn that white nationalism is not a relic of the past

and, quite to the contrary, is a thriving movement that had enough momentum to shape the discourse during the election.

Undoubtedly, parents, educators, and others who work with young people want them to reach their full potential; the problem, however, is that many of us struggle with how to best help our youth understand the complicated issues that arise as a function of ethnicity and race. The activities of a white, award-winning former English language arts teacher in Texas, Emily E. Smith-Buster, provide an excellent example of the potential challenges

Making sense of diversity involves helping adolescents grapple with "Who am I, and how do I fit in this diverse world?"

for educators. In a speech to her colleagues at the time, she explained her evolution from being an excellent teacher who was hesitant to talk about race to one who accepted the challenge of questioning her own views on race and ethnicity; this consequently transformed her pedagogical approach so that it more fruitfully met the needs of her Latino, black, and white students:

Things changed for me the day when, during a classroom discussion, one of my kids bluntly told me I couldn't understand because I was a white lady. I had to agree with him. I sat there and tried to speak openly about how I could never fully understand and went home and cried, because my children knew about white privilege before I did. The closest I could ever come was empathy.

My curriculum from then on shifted. We still did all of the wonderful things that I had already implemented in the classroom, except now the literature, the documents, the videos, the discussions, the images embodied the issues that my children wanted to explore. We studied the works of Sandra Cisneros, Pam Muñoz Ryan, and Gary Soto, with the intertwined Spanish language and Latino culture—so fluent and deep in the memories of my kids that I saw light in their eyes I had never seen before. We analyzed Langston Hughes' "Let America Be America Again" from the lens of both historical and current events and realized that the United States is *still* the land that has never been.

Looking back, I think that my prior hesitation to talk about race stemmed from a lack of social education in the classroom. A lack of diversity in my own life that is by no means the fault of my progressive parents, but rather a broken and still segregated school system. Now that I'm an educator in that system, I've decided to stand unflinching when it comes to the real issues facing our children today. I've decided to be unafraid to question injustice, unafraid to take risks in the classroom—I am changed. And so has my role as a teacher.



I can't change the color of my skin or where I come from or what the teacher workforce looks like at this moment, but I can change the way I teach. So *I am* going to soapbox about something after all. Be the teacher your children of color deserve. In fact, even if you don't teach children of color, be the teacher America's children of color deserve, because we, the teachers, are responsible for instilling empathy and understanding in the hearts of all kids. ...

So teach the texts that paint *all* the beautiful faces of our children and tell the stories of struggle and victory our nation has faced. Speak openly and freely about the challenges that are taking place in our country at this very moment. Talk about the racial and class stereotypes plaguing our streets, our states, our society. You may agree that black and brown lives matter, but how often do you explore what matters to those lives in your classroom?³

As demonstrated by Smith-Buster's comments, understanding others' ethnic-racial experiences can be critical for developing an

The Identity Project Intervention

One approach that has demonstrated promising results for fostering youths' ethnic-racial identity development is the Identity Project intervention program.¹ The Identity Project was developed specifically to provide adolescents with tools and strategies that would help them learn more about their ethnic-racial background via an eight-week program in which students meet once a week for about an hour. Because developing a clear sense of who one is, with respect to race and ethnicity, is an important part of development for all youth, the intervention was developed to be relevant to youth from any ethnic-racial background—not specific to any one group. This aspect of the program also makes it easier to use in a variety of settings. Although, at this point, the program has only been carried out in the school setting, it was developed in a way to make it easily adaptable to any group setting in which youth regularly meet with an adult facilitator at least once a week for eight consecutive weeks.

The primary objectives of the Identity Project are achieved via a series of eight lessons that include brief lectures, classroom activities, and large-group discussion of homework assignments. During each session, students are introduced to basic concepts, such as stereotypes and discrimination, and they actively participate in activities that help them learn about their own ethnic-racial heritage. For example, students create a family tree that describes

the heritage of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. They complete this activity partly in class and partly as a homework assignment. This is because students have to talk to their parents and other extended family to find out things, such as where their maternal and paternal grandparents were born and the ethnic identification of those family members.

Via this process, students not only learn about their family history, but also have an opportunity to engage their family members in discussions about their heritage. In a sense, this activity can ignite and facilitate teachable moments with family members regarding ethnic-racial identity. Back in the classroom setting, students use the information they gathered from their families to create a poster board that depicts their family's heritage. Students then work in pairs, with their peers, to share their family history and discuss how their own ethnic-racial self-identification is similar to and different from the self-identification of other members of their family. By engaging in these activities, students are actively exploring their background while also thinking about how they self-identify and why.

In another homework assignment, students interview a person—a grandparent or neighbor, for instance—who shares their ethnic-racial heritage. During the interview, students gather information about the person's background and traditions, and, in

a subsequent classroom-based activity, connect the experiences of the person they interviewed to their own experiences and attitudes. Examining their own identity in relation to another person's helps students think more deeply about why they identify the way that they do. Back in the classroom setting, students engage in a large-group discussion in which they reflect on their interviews with one another. A common theme of this discussion is the many different ways that individuals identify, and different reasons for how they choose to identify themselves in terms of their ethnic-racial background.

An initial test of the Identity Project intervention program was carried out in a large ethnically and racially diverse high school in the Southwest.² To test the program, we randomly selected four classrooms in the school to receive the Identity Project curriculum (i.e., the *intervention*) and four classrooms to receive a different curriculum (the *nonintervention control group*) that had nothing to do with identity.³ Before the program began, students in all eight classrooms completed surveys in which they answered questions about how much they had previously explored aspects of their ethnic-racial background and whether they felt that they had a good sense of what this aspect of their identity meant to them.⁴

Exactly 12 weeks after the initial survey (and after experiencing the intervention or

understanding of one's own ethnic-racial identity. With an informed sense of one's own self, one can begin to align diverse perspectives of ethnic and racial dynamics.

Fostering the development of ethnic-racial identity in *all* young people can provide building blocks with which they can begin to reconcile the diverse ways in which race and ethnicity matter in U.S. society. We provide this information with the goal of helping to advance conversations about not only widely publicized incidents in which race is acutely salient to youth (for instance, the police brutality inflicted on black people that is widely articulated on a seemingly daily basis online and in media reports) but also more subtle, everyday instances in which ethnic and racial dynamics bubble to the surface.

Can Youth Have a Strong Ethnic-Racial Identity and Still Value Other Groups?

At this point, you may be thinking, "OK, that's great. Everyone needs to feel good and proud about their ethnic-racial group

membership. But won't this just lead to more divisions because, by feeling more connected and proud of our own group, don't we have to downgrade the value of other groups?" You are not alone in this logic. For many, the concept of ethnic-racial identity conveys a sense of pride in a particular group, and only that group. Working from this perspective, it may be difficult to imagine how promoting ethnic-racial identity can help promote positive intergroup relations. This may be why public and academic communities alike continue to wrestle, uneasily, with the presumed tension between a desire to support youths' ethnic and racial identity, on the one hand, and promoting positive interracial interactions, on the other hand. At first glance, these two goals seem to be at odds with each other, but they need not be.

First, in work conducted by Jean Phinney and her colleagues,⁴ adolescents from Latino, black, Asian, and white backgrounds who had thought more about their ethnic-racial identities actually reported more positive views about engaging with others who were from different ethnic-racial groups, a skill that has been referred to

the control curriculum), students once again filled out surveys.⁵ We found that students in the Identity Project classrooms had increased their exploration of their ethnic-racial background—such as by reading books or searching the Internet to learn more about their heritage. By contrast, the exploration behaviors of students in the nonintervention classrooms had not changed at all.⁶

Six weeks after that, we surveyed students once again and found that those in the Identity Project classrooms now had a greater sense of clarity and understanding of their ethnic-racial background. Again, these changes did not happen for students in the nonintervention classrooms. It is also important to note that these findings were similar for adolescents who were members of ethnic-racial minority groups (such as Asian, Latino, black, and American Indian adolescents) and the ethnic-racial majority (i.e., white).⁷

As with many structured programs,⁸ the Identity Project provides students with an opportunity to spend time learning more about their background in a setting that is facilitated by a knowledgeable adult, and the lessons (which are delivered during the regular school day) provide youth with a dedicated time and space where they can discuss potentially sensitive topics. These elements of the program enable youth to engage in the important, though sometimes challenging, work of

figuring out their identities and answering the important "Who am I?" question that is so central to the developmental period of adolescence.

—D. R.-D. and A. J. U.-T.

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2. A. J. Umaña-Taylor et al., "A Small-Scale Randomized Efficacy Trial of the Identity Project: Promoting Adolescents' Ethnic-Racial Identity Exploration and Resolution," *Child Development* 89, no. 3 (2018): 862–870.
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4. Also assessed in the study were students' sense of self-esteem, whether they were experiencing any depressive symptoms, what their grades were, and other indicators of adjustment that are typically assessed in surveys with adolescents.
5. The first posttest took place the week after the program had finished.
6. Before the program began, there were no significant differences between students in the two groups on any of the ethnic-racial identity variables, nor on any of the indicators of adjustment; this meant that we could conclude that any differences that emerged between the groups after the intervention were a result of the different programs that the students received—the Identity Project or the control.
7. A little over a year later (67 weeks after the initial survey), we conducted our final posttest and found that the increases that we found in ethnic-racial identity exploration and sense of clarity at the 12- and 18-week posttests led to statistically significant decreases in depressive symptoms and statistically significant increases in self-esteem, grades, and adolescents' sense of understanding their overall identity. These findings are consistent with the positive effects that others have found for instruction regarding the history of different ethnic-racial groups on academic outcomes, such as reductions in school dropout rates and increases in grades.
8. For an example of a structured course in college designed to promote ethnic-racial identity development among students of color and multiracial students, see K. A. Ford and V. K. Maloney, "I

Now Harbor More Pride in My Race': The Educational Benefits of Inter- and Interracial Dialogues on the Experiences of Students of Color and Multiracial Students," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 45, no. 1 (2012): 14–35.

Primary Objectives of the Identity Project Intervention Program

- Help students understand that their identities are made up of many different factors, and that their ethnic-racial background is one of these.
- Expose students to different strategies that they can use to learn about their background.
- Increase students' understanding of the existence of stereotypes and discrimination for members of different groups in the United States across history.
- Expose students to the idea that diversity exists both within groups and between groups.
- Increase students' awareness and understanding of ethnic-racial identity development as a journey that does not have a "right" or "wrong" course and that does not unfold in the same manner for everyone.



Having a secure sense of one's ethnic-racial identity can actually help to promote positive intergroup experiences.

as “ethnic-racial competence,” or the ability to behave in ways that invite positive relationships with peers from other ethnic groups.⁵ Second, having a positive sense of one's ethnic-racial identity promotes social competence with peers, such as the ability to productively navigate social interactions and form friendships.⁶

In Denise Newman's work with American Indian youth, those who were more interested in learning about their culture were more likely to have prosocial relationships, and less aggressive interactions, with their peers. Thus, rather than impeding the ability to interact or engage with others, a stronger ethnic-racial identity actually promotes competencies in youth that help them engage in more positive relationships with their peers.

In addition to adolescents' ethnic-racial identity informing positive social relationships with peers, in our own work, we also find that having more ethnic, racially diverse friendship groups promotes increases in ethnic-racial identity exploration among middle school boys and girls six months later.⁷ Furthermore, in our focus group discussions with black, white, Latino, and Asian American high school students, they explained that the process of learning about their own ethnic-racial background was facilitated by learning about others' ethnic-racial backgrounds.⁸ Thus, when youth engage in dialogue or share experiences with each other regarding either person's background, this engages peers in their own ethnic-racial identity development process. (For more on fostering ethnic-racial identity development, see the sidebar on page 20.)

We also know from the work of Patricia Gurin and her colleagues that young people of diverse backgrounds need to engage in intergroup dialogue to develop an understanding of their iden-

ties, not only on a personal level but also within a broader context of power and oppression. Doing so comes with many benefits. In their own words:

IGD [intergroup dialogue] also promotes understanding one's racial-ethnic, gender, and other social identities as well as understanding those of others. ... Furthermore, these identities are located in systems of power and privilege, which are not viewed as static but rather as dynamic and allowing for change. ... Thus, ... a critical analysis of inequality and commitment to social responsibility and action are tied to identities as central issues in intergroup dialogue.⁹

In their work, Gurin and colleagues emphasize the need to keep social identity at the forefront and intentionally use teaching methods that encourage students from different backgrounds to learn about one another both as individuals and as members of social groups.

In sum, theory, research, and practice suggest that having a secure sense of one's ethnic-racial identity can, under the right conditions, actually help to promote positive intergroup experiences through increased understanding of ethnic-racial injustices and the emergence of ethnic-racial empathy. Furthermore, the extent to which young people have engaged in examining their ethnic-racial identity is, for many, intertwined with their awareness of prejudice, because in the process of learning about themselves, they learn about the status of their group compared to others. Drawing from everything we have learned from our work and that of many others, we conclude that not only can youth have a strong ethnic-racial identity and still view other groups positively, but having a strong ethnic-racial identity actually makes it possible for youth to have a less superficial or more genuine understanding, and therefore value, for other groups.

Indeed, the title for our book was inspired by the idea posed by the famous social psychologist Gordon Allport in his seminal work, *The Nature of Prejudice*. Briefly, he commented that for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice, it must be based on experiences that help us get beyond the superficial and toward those that allow us to form meaningful common bonds. We believe that providing opportunities for youth to figure out their ethnic-racial identities together is a kind of meaningful connection that is essential for positive intergroup relations. □

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Responding to Anti-Muslim Bias

A Q&A with Debbie Almontaser

For 25 years, Debbie Almontaser worked as a special education teacher, literacy trainer, multicultural specialist, and diversity adviser in New York City public schools. Today, she is a professor in the school leadership program at the College of Staten Island's School of Education and the founder and CEO of Bridging Cultures Group, which provides cultural diversity training for both the public and private sector. She is the author of *Leading While Muslim: The Experiences of American Muslim Principals after 9/11* (Rowman & Littlefield). Below, she shares what prompted her to write the book and what she hopes readers will learn from it.

—EDITOR

Q Why did you write *Leading While Muslim*?

A My book actually was inspired by my own personal experience. I was the founding and former principal of the Khalil Gibran International Academy in Brooklyn, New York. The school is an Arabic and English dual language school that opened in 2007. It was named after the poet Khalil Gibran. I was tapped to lead the school because of my background in public education and my work with the Arab community and the interfaith community in New York City in the wake of September 11.

In 2001, I was teaching at P.S. 261 in Cobble Hill in downtown Brooklyn, which was the heart of the Arab American community in New York. In the days after September 11, many Arab and Muslim families were afraid to bring their children to school. I helped establish an escorting system so that non-Muslim neighbors whose children attended the school could volunteer to take Arab and Muslim students to P.S. 261 and also pick them up after school. I'm proud to say the effort was successful, and it even grew to include other neighborhoods and neighboring schools. Non-Muslim families also volunteered to accompany Arab and Muslim families when they went shopping and visited the doctor. It was a time when the community came together, showed solidarity, and provided a safe haven for children and families.

A few years later, New Visions for Public Schools, a nonprofit educational organization in New York City, asked me to establish a school to teach Arabic. I was thrilled at the

prospect. The school was to be a full-fledged public school for grades 6 through 12, with an international curriculum. In February 2007, the district gave its final approval of our school, the Khalil Gibran International Academy, along with many other new public schools, to open in the fall. I had spent the summer putting together my team of educators from every race and religious background. We were so excited and we celebrated. But the blogosphere went viral with people aggressively portraying the school as a madrasa, an Islamic school.

For several months, critics publicly attacked me. They asked me Islamophobic questions such as, "Are you going to teach the children to hate Christians and Jews? Are you going to separate the boys and girls and lead prayer? Will the school be closed for Muslim holidays?" It was awful. All my responses were: "It's a New York City public school. It will abide by the same calendar. There is no halal kitchen because it's a public school." To try to quell the controversy, we publicly released our curriculum and the textbooks we would use to teach Arabic.

Right before the school opened, things had started to settle down. Seventy students had enrolled, and my entire staff was hired. We had bought all our supplies: materials, tables, chairs, everything you can imagine. Then all of a sudden, the *New York Post* and other media outlets called the New York City Department of Education and asked about a T-shirt. Apparently, there was a press release that our critics, who called themselves the "Stop the Madrasa Coalition," put out about a T-shirt with the words "Intifada NYC." The coalition made a tenuous connection between the creation of the T-shirt and me. They publicly accused me of condoning the T-shirt and supporting it because the organization that created it was sharing office space with another organization that I sat on the board of.

The Department of Education called me and asked that I give an interview to the *New York Post*, which wanted to run a story, even though they knew I didn't feel comfortable speaking to the *Post*. I agreed to do it with a press officer, and we thought the interview went well. But the reporter took my words out of context. To make a long story short, I was forced to resign from the school, which opened without me. I was heartbroken.



After the school opened, several lawyers contacted me because they thought I had a case against the school district. A lawyer named Alan Levine took my case pro bono. He filed a First Amendment lawsuit and a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and in 2010 it ruled in my favor, finding that I was forcibly removed from my position based on my ethnicity, nationality, and religion.

At the time, I was the director of special needs at Benjamin Banneker Academy, a public high school in Brooklyn, and I had started my doctoral program at Fordham University. I had entered the program wanting to do more research on dual language programs. But one of my colleagues suggested I write about American Muslim school leaders. I went to the library and found very little—only several articles that were written about yours truly. The data and literature I did find was actually on Muslim teachers and school leaders in private Islamic schools. But I found nothing on the experience of Muslim educators in public education. So I wrote my dissertation, which I turned into a book on the subject.

I wanted to find out whether the political discourse, global events, and the media coverage of Islam and Muslims were affecting the school leadership and the spirituality of Muslim principals. I found 20 individuals to interview across the United States, but only 14 agreed to be in the study. They were six men and eight women, all public school principals. Six were African American Muslim school leaders, and another six were Arab Americans from various parts of the Middle East: Yemen, Syria, Egypt, and Palestine. The other two individuals were from Pakistan and Tanzania. I had to beg and plead with them for interviews and promise them anonymity.

The other six, particularly a couple from New York, never responded to my emails and phone calls. I understood at the time that they probably feared speaking to me because they saw what happened to me with the Department of Education.

Q For those who agreed to be in your study and your book, what are some of the challenges they have faced as Muslims post-9/11?

A Many of them have faced discrimination and have experienced fear from constantly feeling insecure about their jobs and always thinking twice about how they conduct themselves and watching what they say so they are not perceived as being a “Muslim radical.” It was really sad to see that.

For instance, one of the principals I interviewed hired a couple of teachers who were Muslim. When they asked him to schedule their classes so they could attend Friday prayer, he created a flexible schedule for them. At the same time, he also had Muslim high school students who wanted to pray at the local mosque, and he allowed them to do so after they brought in permission slips signed by their parents. He would also walk them to the mosque to

ensure their safety. He was then reported to the district for promoting Islam, and the school district investigated him. District officials interviewed him, his teachers, and his students. He spent the school year thinking he would lose his job.

At his disciplinary hearing, he was told he could no longer accompany the students to the mosque, and he was devastated by that. Although he was not fired and kept his job, he ended up becoming very guarded. He didn’t want to have anything to do with his Muslim students, so he distanced himself from them. It was sad for the students because they knew he didn’t want to associate with them or serve as their role model. He also didn’t want to engage the teachers in any conversations about Islam or being Muslim.

Q What do you hope non-Muslim educators and policymakers can

AFT Resolution

Opposition to Anti-Muslim Bigotry, Discrimination, and Violence

In May, the AFT passed the following resolution opposing anti-Muslim bigotry and affirming its solidarity with Muslim educators and students:

WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers was founded on, among others, the principles of solidarity, equality, opportunity and justice, and those principles have guided our work for more than 100 years; and

WHEREAS, over the course of our history, these principles have led us to fight against racism and religious bigotry, and to protect those who have been targets of discrimination and violence motivated by hate and bigotry; and

WHEREAS, in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the AFT and the United Federation of Teachers played an important role in providing teachers with educational tools and resources to fight prejudice and bigotry against Muslims in the United States and to promote an inclusive view of Muslims as part of our pluralist democracy; and

WHEREAS, today, Muslims in the United States continue to be the targets of bigotry, discrimination and violence; and

WHEREAS, according to FBI reports, hate crimes against Muslims in the United States, such as arson of mosques and violence against individuals identifiable as Muslim, have tripled over the last decade, and have risen at a rate that has outstripped the overall dramatic increase in hate crimes since the start of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign of 2015–16;¹ and

WHEREAS, there is good reason to believe that FBI statistics considerably understate the extent of these hate crimes, since they rely upon local law enforcement reports, which are too often incomplete and inaccurate—for example, no hate crime homicides were reported to the FBI from Oregon in 2017, even though a man was indicted for fatally stabbing two Portland men and seriously wounding another after they came to the defense of two Muslim American girls who were being physically threatened by a man shouting anti-Muslim and racist slurs;² and

WHEREAS, most recently, during the holy month of Ramadan, a mosque in New Haven, Conn., was seriously damaged by arson, making it one more in a series of Islamic places of worship that have been subject to such attacks; and

WHEREAS, this dramatic increase in hate crimes and acts of discrimination against American Muslims since 2015 is attributable, in significant

measure, to the climate created by the inflammatory, hateful rhetoric and discriminatory acts of Trump, both as a presidential candidate and as president; and

WHEREAS, Trump’s campaign calls for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States,” and his administration’s Muslim travel ban, have been among the acts that have fueled this climate; and

WHEREAS, this climate of anti-Muslim hate has taken on an international character, as seen in the mass slaughter of 51 Muslims in the March 2019 attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, by an individual who declared his support for Trump as a “symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose” in a manifesto explaining his murderous actions; and

WHEREAS, in this post-2015 climate, Muslim students and educators have been the target of an increasing number of incidents of anti-Muslim hate speech, discrimination and violence in our schools;³ and

WHEREAS, educators in our schools have found the well-being of their Muslim students to be an increasing concern, as these students struggle with questions of self-image and self-worth in the face of attacks on their identity and being; and

learn from these experiences that you describe?

A I want them to see that, just like them, American Muslims aspire to be the best leaders they can possibly be. Teaching is not a very well-paying job, but people make these sacrifices because they want to serve and cultivate a generation of leaders in our society. The fact that they're not supported and feel under attack is really unfortunate.

One thing I highlight in my book is the importance of non-Muslims becoming allies and interrupting Islamophobia and interrupting anti-Muslim sentiments and working closely with their communities and Muslim leaders to make sure Muslims don't feel isolated. Allies can advocate for school district policies that incorporate curricula and teaching about Islam and can also encourage school districts to connect with non-

profit organizations to provide cultural diversity training.

Q Are there any programs or school districts currently doing a great job of building bridges between cultures?

A In Nashville, Tennessee, an Islamic center holds an annual teacher training program. I was recently there, and the center actually purchased a hundred copies of my book to give to teachers, the superintendent, and the school district staff, as well as their university partners. The Muslim community there consists of Arab Americans, South Asians, and Bengalis, and the center has been holding this program for some time.

Q In the spring, the AFT's executive council passed a resolution (shown below) opposing anti-Muslim bigotry, discrimination, and violence. Why do you

think such a resolution is needed, and what can it do to help?

A This resolution is a safeguard for teachers, students, and entire school communities. It makes them feel supported, and its creation is really amazing. I'm especially pleased the resolution calls for the development of a Muslim caucus within the AFT. When I was teaching, I had hoped to try to convince American Muslim colleagues to join me in establishing a Muslim caucus within the United Federation of Teachers, but I was unable to galvanize Muslim teachers' support. Many of them felt nervous and were concerned about putting themselves out there, so I never got a chance to do it. But now that this resolution is coming from the national union, I believe Muslim teachers from all across the country will really feel encouraged and safe enough to want to do it. □

WHEREAS, these struggles are compounded for Muslim students by fear, anxiety and depression that the Muslim travel ban could lead to permanent separation from family members and friends, and even be an omen of expulsion from the United States;⁴ and

WHEREAS, in this post-2015 climate, the long-standing issue of textbooks and educational materials providing stereotyped, prejudicial portraits of Muslims, reinforcing biased views found in the mass media, has become a more urgent issue for action;⁵

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers affirms our unequivocal opposition to bigotry, discrimination and violence against Muslims, which is in keeping with our historic legacy of opposing all manifestations of bigotry and racism; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT affirms our solidarity with Muslims in our ranks, and with the Muslim students, patients and citizens we serve. To those who attack them, we say: You have attacked all of us, and we will respond as one; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT condemns the climate of intolerance and hate toward Muslims that has been enabled by the

inflammatory and bigoted rhetoric of President Trump and his followers; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT condemns the Muslim travel ban as a policy that is based not in our national security but in prejudice and irrational fear, and that constitutes a violation of our First Amendment protections of freedom of religion for all; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT supports the inclusion of Muslim students in existing protections of the educational civil rights of students from minority and oppressed populations; and

RESOLVED, that through its educational arms and programs, the AFT will continue to disseminate educational materials and resources that provide factual, non-prejudicial information about Muslims and their religious faith, and support the democratic values of inclusion, nondiscrimination and religious freedom for all; and

RESOLVED, that through its educational arms and programs, the AFT will continue to disseminate educational materials and resources that assist teachers in meeting the pedagogical and social-emotional needs of Muslim students; and

RESOLVED, that through its educational publications, the AFT will publish an analysis of textbooks in use in U.S. education that identifies instances in which Muslims and their religious faith are portrayed in stereotyped and prejudicial ways, using inaccurate and incomplete information, and instances in which they are portrayed in accurate, inclusive ways; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT recognizes the need and value of Muslim educators to organize themselves, and affirms the right of Muslim members of the AFT to establish a formal caucus, as members of other religious traditions have done.

Endnotes

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School Integration

How It Can Promote Social Cohesion and Combat Racism



PHOTO BY WARREN K. LEFFLER, COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

BY RICHARD D. KAHLBERG, HALLEY POTTER,
AND KIMBERLY QUICK

Public schools have always been meant to provide all children with the skills and knowledge to become successful participants in the economy. But in the age of Donald Trump, a second important purpose of public education has become more salient: to promote social cohesion in a diverse and fractured democracy. As ugly and naked racism in America is further unveiled, how can schools be a tool for combating racism and promoting unity?

Ideas on a way forward can be found in the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The court was explicit in describing the damage that school segregation

inflicted on children of color. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in the unanimous opinion, "To separate [black students] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone."¹

Less discussed, both in the court opinion and in public discourse, is the body of research that outlines the educational and moral damage that segregation inflicts on white children. In the Appendix to the Appellants' Briefs submitted by the NAACP, psychologists and social scientists warned that segregation teaches white children to "gain personal status in an unrealistic and non-adaptive way," preventing them from developing the skill of self-evaluation based on their own merits and abilities. The researchers noted that white children, in an effort to square the racial caste system they witness with the messaging of a meritocratic "American dream," often internalize false narratives and develop unhealthy coping mechanisms "in an attempt to protect themselves from recognizing the essential injustice of their unrealistic fears and hatreds of minority groups."²

The researchers go on to state that this misalignment of stated American values and shown American racism causes some children to respond by intensifying hostility toward people who are different than them, or by "developing an unwholesome, rigid, and uncritical idealization of all authority figures—their parents [and] strong political and economic leaders." In short, school

Richard D. Kahlenberg, a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, is the author of Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy (2007) and a coauthor of Why Labor Organizing Should Be a Civil Right (2012). Halley Potter is a senior fellow at The Century Foundation and a coauthor, with Kahlenberg, of A Smarter Charter: Finding What Works for Charter Schools and Public Education (2014). Kimberly Quick is a student at Harvard Law School and a former senior policy associate at The Century Foundation. This article draws upon three Century Foundation reports: A Bold Agenda for School Integration, Fostering Intergroup Contact in Diverse Schools, and Integrating Classrooms and Reducing Academic Tracking.

segregation—an anti-democratic and racist practice—develops these same negative traits in the children who experience it.

Segregation harms both students of color and white students, and it damages the social fiber of the nation. This country's refusal to un-design the systems devised to separate and marginalize has resulted in racial animus, social discord, and cultural ignorance. But this need not be our inheritance. Just as segregation causes and is caused by racism and white supremacy, school integration can be a powerful anti-racist tool.

At a time when our democracy is fractured along the fault lines of race, ethnicity, and religion, and when social mobility has stalled, high-quality integrated public schools could take us on a better path forward. Racial and socioeconomic school integration has proven to be one of the most powerful strategies known to educators to improve the lives of students and reduce national division.

School Integration Produces Civic and Socioemotional Benefits for All Students

Racially and socioeconomically diverse schools offer students of all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds important socioemotional benefits by exposing them to peers of different backgrounds. The increased tolerance and cross-cultural dialogue that result can help build social cohesion and strengthen civil society. A robust body of evidence backs this up.

Attending a diverse school can help reduce racial bias and counter stereotypes. First, studies indicate that attending a diverse school can help reduce racial bias and counter stereotypes. Once formed, attitudes and beliefs about groups with different identities become harder to change as one becomes older, meaning that early exposure to difference offers the greatest chance for bias and stereotype reduction. In fact, white people who report having meaningful contact with black people during their childhoods report lower levels of racial prejudice in adulthood.³ Similarly, longitudinal research revealed that, at least for white children and teens, a greater number of cross-race friendships predict more positive attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities over time.⁴ Due to the duration and consistency of children's time in schools, these settings are the perfect venues to expose children to people of different backgrounds.

Long-term studies of high school and university students from the United States, Europe, and South Africa confirm that positive contact between students from different racial and ethnic groups predicts lower levels of anxiety in relations with them.⁵ Reduced racial anxiety directly and favorably impacts people's willingness to engage across race and avoid subscribing to stereotypes. Empathy toward other groups also develops through intergroup contact.

Students who attend integrated schools are more likely to seek out integrated settings later in life. Young children's experiences with intergroup contact have long-term consequences: research shows that plentiful, positive early cross-group interactions result in increased comfort living and working in diverse environments as adults.⁶

Particularly for young people, the ability to form cross-cultural relationships in school settings can be extremely powerful. Friendship bonds, even when developed at an individual level, actually transform people's understandings of relationships between groups. This means that as young people develop friendships with people of different backgrounds, they are more likely

to treat members of their friends' groups as well as they would treat members of their own.⁷ Moreover, white children in diverse schools are more likely to believe that children from different ethnic backgrounds can become friends, and they are more likely to select children from other ethnic groups as their own friends.⁸ Regarding diversity, the impressionability of youth is an asset to progress: research suggests that merely seeing classmates of their same race interacting with classmates of other races can create greater comfort and exposure that increases young people's interest in interacting with people of different backgrounds.⁹

Critically, this openness and resistance to stereotyping carries forward into adulthood. Several studies have found that students who attend racially diverse schools are more likely to express interest in having neighbors of different races and to live in diverse neighborhoods.¹⁰

Segregation harms both students of color and white students, and it damages the social fiber of the nation.

Integrated classrooms can improve students' satisfaction, intellectual self-confidence, and leadership skills. Research on diversity at the college level¹¹ shows that when students have positive experiences interacting with students of other backgrounds and view their campus' racial and cultural climate as affirming, they emerge with greater confidence in their own academic abilities. In a 2005 study conducted at the University of Michigan, students with more "diversity" experiences—enrollment in diversity-related coursework and interactions with diverse peers—scored higher on measures of academic self-confidence, social agency, and critical thinking.¹² This increased confidence is founded in the evidence: the rich environment provided by integrated school settings allows learners to think more critically, hear and analyze a multitude of perspectives, and learn to work collaboratively.

Diverse educational environments also help grow and develop leadership skills in young people, largely because prejudice reduction is a key component to leadership in the 21st century. A longitudinal study of college students found that the more often first-year students were exposed to diverse educational settings, the greater their "gains in leadership skills, psychological well-being, intellectual engagement, and intercultural effectiveness."¹³ Exposure to diversity also helps to improve civic engagement, such as participation in community activities and organizations. A 2011 study tracked students for 13 years after their graduation from college and found that diverse experiences were positively related to personal growth, purpose in life, and volunteering.¹⁴ A meta-analysis of 27 studies on the relationship between diversity and civic engagement found that college diversity experiences are positively related to increased civic engagement. This same analysis indicated that while coursework that focused on underrepresented people or discussed diversity was posi-



Morris Jeff Community School

tive, it neither replaced nor had as strong an effect on student outcomes as did actual face-to-face cross-racial interaction.¹⁵

Unlocking the Social and Emotional Benefits of School Integration

A substantial body of evidence both indicts segregation and illuminates the many ways that school integration can be a step toward racial healing. These well-documented benefits, however, are often stymied when schools achieve only numerical diversity without truly taking steps to maximize relationship building across racial and economic difference.

In order to realize the benefits of integration, many demographically diverse schools have taken important steps to ensure that their commitment to integration transcends superficial demographic measures. These schools have purposely implemented structures and programs to foster greater contact between people of different backgrounds, to focus on equity and justice, and to block the re-creation of segregated spaces within classrooms.

Fostering Meaningful Intergroup Contact within Diverse Schools

Schools and systems that successfully move beyond numerical diversity to encourage meaningful interactions across lines of difference typically have (1) well-established, supportive norms, and (2) plentiful opportunities and encouragement of cross-racial and cross-class friendships, as well as academic/pedagogical practices that reaffirm cross-cultural cooperation.¹⁶

Supportive Norms

When visiting Morris Jeff Community School, a small unionized charter school in New Orleans, the genuine affection that the students have for each other stands out, perhaps even more than the school's rigorous arts program or International Baccalaureate curriculum. Children of different races, economic circumstances, cultures, and ability levels learn and play together effortlessly, romping in the gymnasium during a morning meeting and giggling together in the cafeteria, surrounded by flags from around the world. Yet, according to the faculty, creating this ease was far from easy; the school's commitment to building a foundation of inclusivity and support was baked into its model from the beginning.

For students, school-fostered supportive norms signal the value and expectations that the school community places on forming cross-

group friendships.¹⁷ These standards are disseminated both through direct programming with students and, critically, through the culture set by the adults in the building, which students closely observe.

To maximize the benefits of integration, schools should work to establish a culture that normalizes and encourages relationships across lines of difference in educational settings. Successful schools dedicate time and resources to ensure that teachers, staff, and administrators have the tools to model positive intergroup contact—with an emphasis on ensuring that such contact prioritizes equity by making space for and critically listening to the voices of marginalized populations. Secondly, these schools recognize the role of the institution within its surrounding community by showing students the challenges, joys, and importance of understanding community dynamics when forming relationships and making choices.¹⁸

One such tool is simply clear, shared definitions and goals. Terms such as diversity, inclusion, integration, anti-bias, and anti-racism carry different meanings to people with different values and experiences; therefore, schools should consider having internal conversations about the significance, bounds, and definitions of each of these terms in order to productively establish norms and procedures. Simultaneously, all adults who interact with children and/or make administrative decisions should be prepared to model healthy and meaningful intergroup relationships. In order to ensure that this happens, schools must first take inventories of their racial climates, strongly incentivize or mandate appropriate training and conversation, and implement structures that solidify equitable and meaningful communication practices.¹⁹

Finally, in working to establish norms of inclusivity and justice, schools need to acknowledge that the challenges of cross-cultural and cross-racial engagement do not end at the schoolhouse door. Public schools are community actors whether or not they intentionally engage with these issues—that is to say, schools can both reflect and alter neighborhood demographics; school buildings occupy critical spaces within a neighborhood; and, depending on admissions procedures, schools typically educate and offer services to children and families in their surrounding areas. As such, a school that engages in constant outreach with its surrounding community fosters an environment in which students from diverse backgrounds are better understood and can see positive examples of cross-racial adult communication and relationships.²⁰

Additionally, this models democratic principles and emphasizes that the school itself is part of a diverse society, and that it is obligated to respect a variety of perspectives, elevate the voices of marginalized groups, and evaluate its position in a multiethnic community.

Encouraging Friendships and Academic Cooperation

Teachers and school leaders have found creative ways to ensure that students in diverse schools have social time that is also structured, supervised, and productive. Supportive, intentionally diverse assigned spaces help anchor students' days in the values of inclusion and multicultural interaction. Some examples of methods include:

- “Advisories”—or special homeroom or flex periods curated for racial, economic, linguistic, and ability diversity—can help students connect both with one another and with a teacher mentor/adviser. These periods can be used for fun group-building activities, personal or political discussions, or time for teachers to check in on students.

- Several schools use “morning meetings,” brief all-grade gatherings prior to the start of classes, to set a tone of team building, cordiality, and democracy.
- Other integrated schools encourage or facilitate playtime by organizing small group outings for students and parents who would otherwise be unlikely to interact.

Throughout these programs, it is critical that teachers and administrators pay particular attention to how existing student relationships cross lines of similarity and difference and respond accordingly. Teachers can mitigate homogeneity by assigning diverse teams for games and activities, or by designating buddies for homework or other assignments.

Combating “Second Generation” Segregation

In order to harness the full set of academic, social, and civic benefits that racially and economically mixed settings have been shown to offer, schools with diverse student bodies should also have integrated classrooms.²¹ Even at schools with diverse enrollment, though, this is not always the case: academic tracking can create situations in which students learn in siloes among lines of race and class.²²

Academic tracking—and the racial and socioeconomic segregation it often creates—raises a number of concerns about equity. First, academic tracking and other forms of homogeneous ability grouping, such as gifted programs, frequently do a poor job at the main goal they are designed to achieve: sorting students by ability. Research suggests that, aside from their academic preparedness and ability, students’ degree of privilege²³—in the form of families’ resources, access to test prep, and social capital, as well as the implicit biases of staff and teachers—may come into play.²⁴ Second, data shows that academic tracking harms students assigned to lower tracks, who show reduced achievement and increased gaps over time as compared with peers with similar initial achievement assigned to higher-level courses.²⁵ Third, when classrooms are skewed by race and class, students are robbed of some of the peer interactions and access to social networks that diversity can provide.²⁶ Finally, when rich and poor students, or white students and students of color, are by and large in different academic programs, the equalizing power of integration—which helps to promote equal distribution of resources—is weakened.

By contrast, when differentiation in integrated classrooms is done well, it is possible to reduce the achievement gap while maintaining or increasing the performance of all student subgroups.²⁷ In these settings, all students have access to a challenging curriculum, and the instructional methods, not the standards, are differentiated to meet students’ needs.²⁸ Two particularly promising approaches are schoolwide enrichment and an open/embedded honors option.

Schoolwide Enrichment in Queens

The Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), developed by University of Connecticut professors Joseph Renzulli and Sally Reis, is an approach to teaching and learning that draws from the pedagogy of gifted education to enhance opportunities for all students in a school. SEM identifies “gifted behaviors,” including above-average academic abilities, creativity, and task commitment, rather than attaching to students a binary (“gifted”/“not gifted”) label. “Enrichment clusters” are one of the core elements of SEM.

These enrichment opportunities, which can be pull-out groups or whole-school programs, bring together students who share a broad common interest—such as math, athletics, or social action—guiding students in developing specific topics and projects to undertake within that umbrella theme. Although the groups are organized around a shared interest, they are heterogeneous in terms of ability, and creative lesson designs allow students to bring individual strengths and interests to shared group projects. Some of the students in an enrichment group might show high ability in the targeted area, whereas others might show deep interest or creativity.

In Queens, New York, two recently founded public schools use SEM as a core part of their approaches: BELL Academy, a middle school that opened in 2007, and Veritas Academy, a high school that opened in 2013.

Schools with diverse student bodies should also have integrated classrooms.

All students at these schools participate in enrichment clusters—which at BELL happen concurrently during a schoolwide enrichment cluster block and at Veritas are scheduled throughout the day as electives. The schools develop the topics for enrichment clusters by asking staff—including teachers, administrators, social workers, community resource specialists, and others—about skills, experiences, or hobbies they have that could form the basis of a cluster, and then matching those with student interests. Cheryl Quatrano, one of the cofounders of both schools, emphasizes three important elements for successful enrichment clusters:

- *Student voice in shaping topics and projects.* In Quatrano’s words, “students [should be] writing curriculum with their teachers.”
- *A culminating product that gives back to the community.* For example, students in one school’s photography enrichment cluster decided to sell notecards featuring their photographs. They used the profits to purchase a camera, which they donated to a children’s hospital for young patients to use.
- *Ways for all students to contribute.* “It creates equity and access for all—students with disabilities, ESL [English as a second language] students, struggling students, [and] advanced students,” Quatrano explains.²⁹

At BELL and Veritas, teachers are also trained to infuse SEM methods into the regular curriculum to help them differentiate instruction. In order to challenge and engage students at appropriate levels, both schools’ teachers keep student interests (compiled through surveys) and academic assessment data in mind. Teachers use an online database to find individualized reading materials that match each student’s reading level and topics of interest.

Open Honors at Harvest Collegiate

At the high school level, one method of meeting the needs of students at different academic levels within integrated classrooms is to offer an “open honors” or “embedded honors” option. In this model, all students take a class together, but students who choose to may take the class for honors credit by completing extra assignments. This model offers two major advantages for students: they have access to heterogeneous classes in which students can learn with and from a diverse group of peers, and students do not have to rearrange their schedules to have access to more challenging or advanced coursework.

Harvest Collegiate High School, an unscreened, diverse New York City public school, serves around 500 students and offers an open honors program in all classes except for Advanced Placement classes.³⁰ At the beginning of the year, students can apply for open honors in any of their classes—a process which usually consists of writing a short statement about their interest—and they can switch in or out of honors during a monthlong add/drop period at the beginning of the course.

Open honors work might include developing math functions to advocate for a public policy that students are interested in, serving as a peer writing tutor for an English class, or researching an additional historical event for a social studies class. Students have the opportunity to capitalize on certain interests as they arise during the school year; for instance, one year, the school supported a group of honors students from several global history classes who decided to host a daylong human rights conference for the whole school. About 25 percent of students participate in open honors over the course of the academic year. Teachers and administrators monitor the enrollment numbers and demographic makeup of the students who participate in the program, and they will intervene if and when they notice disparities.

Segregation inhibits imagination, robbing children of the ability to see and experience the fullness and potential of this nation. It stifles productive civic engagement by negatively influencing who kids see as equal and worthy citizens. And it teaches children that America lacks the will and resiliency to correct and progress beyond its original sins of racism and subjugation of those lacking power.

Our schools—how equitable, diverse, and just they are—both reflect this nation’s values and create them in the next generation of Americans. The good news is that school integration, when followed through with strategies fostering intergroup contact and detracking, gives children the social, emotional, and interpersonal tools to combat racism and build a better nation. □

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Harvest Collegiate High School



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(Continued on page 40)

Demystifying the “Safe Space”

How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom



BY MATTHEW R. KAY

The first, and ultimately most important, magical concept to be demystified is the *safe space*. Among progressive educators, no goal is more holy. In each classroom, students are to feel comfortable enough with their various identities to be honest, open, and vulnerable. Conveniently alliterative, the term *safe space* captures our best dreams of what classrooms can be: havens; calm harbors; shelter from our students' stormy home lives, neighborhood violence, or school drama. The dream is so powerful that naming it has become a staple of our introductory spiel.

“My name is Mr. Kay, and I want you to consider this classroom a *safe space*.”

This assertion is offered with a magician's *Voilà!*—*I have said it, therefore it is so*. And with these magic words, bullies are tamed and introverts peek from their shells. We are suddenly ready to lead conversations about sensitive topics, because our students are magically now eager to take risks. If, over the course of the year, they forget our first-day pronouncement, we eagerly remind them: *Remember, everyone, this is a safe space*.

Matthew R. Kay teaches his students English at the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia and is the founder and executive director of the Philly Slam League. This article is excerpted with permission from his book, *Not Light, but Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom*, published by Stenhouse Publishers. Copyright 2018, Stenhouse Publishers. All rights reserved.

In order to nurture hard conversations about race, first we must commit to *building* conversational safe spaces, not merely *declaring* them. The foundation of such spaces is listening. When facilitating professional development sessions, I often ask teachers to describe a moment when they felt truly listened to. How did they know that the listening was authentic? *Eye contact, patience, engagement, focus*. How did that moment make them feel? *Valued, important, safe*.

Without prompting, colleagues often share moments when they were not listened to, and how it made them feel. *Ignored, unimportant, unsafe*. It stands to reason, then, that we should create a culture of *listening*—an act that can be broken into discrete, practicable, and measurable skills.

This is the first of many times in my book, *Not Light, but Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom*, from which this article is excerpted, where I offer an approach that is by no means a panacea. Teachers, as some of the most creative people on earth, can create listening activities that fit their own style and pedagogical vision. I share only what has worked for me, hoping simply to shift the *safe space* conversation from the realm of magical thinking to a more practical skills-based approach.

Before I do so, however, there is one key understanding: students and teachers might spend their entire lives learning how to listen. It is one of our hardest self-improvement missions, and can be the most costly—ask family and relationship counselors. We must understand this, and orient our approach to student discipline accordingly. Students learning how to listen to one another might show the same symptoms of those who are “being bad.” But when we manage both issues equally, we scuttle students' opportunities to develop key listening skills. We can no more punish our way into a conversational

safe space than we can conjure one from thin air—so we must instruct where we used to admonish, encourage where we used to excoriate, and carefully track what we used to ignore.

In my classroom, the conversational safe space is established with three discussion guidelines: listen patiently, listen actively, and police your voice. After their introduction, each is practiced explicitly over the first few weeks—a period of time that I like to think of as a conversational “training camp.” This camp works as an extended norming that I reference for the rest of the year.

Listen Patiently

The more we care about a topic of conversation, the more we rush to speak. The less we care, the less we feel obligated to pay attention to conversational partners who do. In both instances, we often fail to show others that we are listening patiently to them. This display is important, as people cannot access your brain to measure your level of focus. Social cues are necessary to show people they have our attention.

Practicing this skill requires a shift. Normally, after a teacher calls on a student to speak, we give most of our attention to the respondent. We shift our attention away only when someone else calls out, or behaves in some way that we deem disrespectful. But to help students listen patiently, we must invest considerable focus on the students who are *not* speaking. And in doing so, offer some rules: First, *hands should not be raised while someone is still talking*. When a teacher calls on one student to speak, the rest of the hands in the room have to go down. Any student who does otherwise is communicating to everyone in the room that they don’t care about the person who is still talking. That raised (and sometimes waving) arm is saying, “I wish you would *shut up!* I have my own thing to say!” This behavior sparks an unnecessary rush for respondents, causing them to speak as if trying to squeeze comments in under the wire, before their teacher dumps them for the other raised hands.

Second, listening patiently means that students should never be interrupted. This is not new. Many teachers have variations of “one voice at a time.” The problem is that too many of us frame the rule as more disciplinary necessity than skill development. Students who have an impulse to interrupt each other care deeply

about what is being discussed—this is a win! Calling out signals impatience, not meanness. Something in the student’s brain is boiling, and the lid couldn’t hold it, but students must be taught that (1) their big *eureka* might be influenced by what is currently being said, and (2) patient listening is transactional—and when they speak, they will want their classmates to keep the lid on too. (This is more difficult when students come from environments that define safety as *students are quiet*. Dialogic classrooms offer so much new stimuli that it’s easy to get wired. Also, students might not trust that they’ll ever get a turn, so they try to squeeze their points in before the teacher shuts down the conversation.) We don’t interrupt for any reason, including affirmations and agreements, both of which still have the unintended effect of drawing focus from the speaker.

Beyond these nonnegotiable rules, there are countless suggestions. Try for eye contact. Try nodding. Try smiling. Try pursing your lips in thought. Students should reflect on what they appreciate from a listener and try to mimic those behaviors when someone else is speaking. Regardless of whether or not they are in doubt, they should ask each other if they feel “listened to.”

Listen Actively

Each idea can inspire another, can inform, and can be the reason that no two classroom conversations are exactly the same. As such, ideas should not just be shared, but built on. In order to build, ideas must be actively collected before they dissipate. Toward this end, we must design structures that require students to engage each other’s ideas and listen actively. In my class, this means notebooks, where students are encouraged to write down classmates’ comments that intrigue them. Student teachers, or occasionally student volunteers, do the same on the whiteboard.

As teachers, we can offer just as much praise to students who thoughtfully build on classmates’ ideas as we offer to those who say cool things. In the early days of a school year, I like to follow the thread of a conversation, maybe even illustrate it on the board: “Joe said _____, which inspired Mike to tell this story, which Marcia thought related to this character in the play. After she made this connection, Tanya told us about this book she read that seems to back up Joe’s thesis. I love the way you all are building.” After a few examples of this, students find themselves eager to cite each other.

I teach them transitional language, my favorite being a simple, “Building on [classmate’s name]’s point ...” By the middle of the year, I can tell how well my students are listening actively by how often the comments appear daisy-chained together by citation. Of course, I must also model appreciation for the original speaker, working hard to extrapolate points they might not be clearly articulating. This type of synthesis and modeling does require a lot of mental energy from the teacher, but it’s work that transfers in a fairly short time.

Police Your Voice

The focus shifts here, but still places listening at the forefront. If your classmates have to listen both patiently and actively to you, you must make it easier for them to do so by *policing your voice*. The teacher is no longer the prime audience, a fact that I make clear to students by pointing to their classmates and saying, “Speak to them.” Early on in the school year, I constantly nudge my students to turn their faces away from me when answering a question, look-



ing instead at peers. The reminder is gentle, and often excited, as if I am trying to say, *What you are saying is too good for just me to hear. Let's get everyone else in on this stuff!* Classmates are often surprised to have a speaker address comments to the larger group. Many perk up immediately because they are used to one-on-one student/teacher exchanges that they'd felt free to check out of. This encourages the golden moment: when a student, without teacher prompting, asks classmates for their opinions on an issue. Whenever I hear this, I know they are nearly ready to keep each other safe during meaningful race conversations.

The second part of policing your voice is understanding that students (and teachers) should speak succinctly. This means that, as a speaker, you are humbly aware of how much space you are taking up at any given moment. Class time is limited. Students should not speak forever; they should not repeat themselves or deliver sermonettes. Transgressions happen. Our students are young, impulsive, and, we hope, impassioned. But there are ways to redirect that build community and respect instead of just shutting kids down.

House Talk

Students might not be as afraid to discuss race as we often make them out to be, but this does not mean that they are eager to do so with *us*. Consider the following: I run an afterschool poetry club. The first few minutes of every meeting are normally set aside for unstructured conversation because it gives exhausted students a chance to unwind after a long school day and to build community with each other. I sit with them but generally keep my mouth shut, unless I'm directly asked to participate.

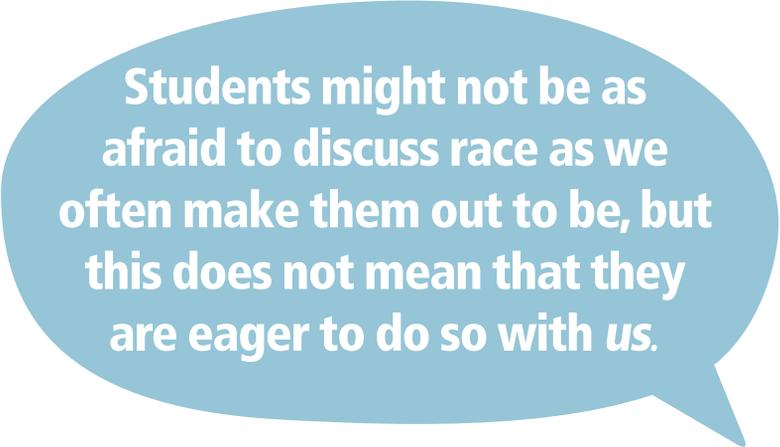
In the fall of 2014, one of these conversations took an intriguing turn. One student had just left a class where they'd discussed that summer's protests in Ferguson, Missouri, which flared after the fatal shooting of Michael Brown, a young black man, by a white police officer, Darren Wilson. Apparently, one of her classmates had made a statement about the protesters that she'd found inappropriate. She became frustrated when her teacher didn't "step in," and she aired these grievances in poetry club. Her fellow poets shared similar stories, some dating back to middle school. Over the next few minutes, two camps formed: students annoyed about having to discuss the protests in a diverse environment, especially in conversations facilitated by white teachers, and students of all colors who were frustrated by the lack of Ferguson conversations in their classes.

I pointed out the obvious conundrum. I asked our young poets, *What's a white teacher to do?* According to these students, white teachers were supposed to avoid discussing the Ferguson protests with students of color—an act that opened them to harsh criticism from the same minority students they were trying not to offend. A poet in the latter camp shrugged, then explained that the protests were monopolizing their social media, which made images from Ferguson constantly top-of-mind. Their school subjects seemed trite by comparison, and they appreciated that their teachers wanted to directly address the elephant in the room.

A poet in the former camp offered a quick rebuttal to this cliché. "I don't want to talk about Ferguson with white people. No matter how liberal they are, it's still going to be just... academic for them. But it's our actual lives. We really have to be black when this stuff is going on. I don't have the energy to explain my emotions every time a teacher decides to talk about race." There was near-universal

agreement, and the implications of her comment were not lost on me. Listening, as emphasized in the last section, is already hard. But it takes even more effort to both listen *and* be heard when your conversational partners (or facilitators) don't have the same emotional sensitivities, investment, or cultural background. This exertion tempts minorities to just keep their mouths shut, rather than enter into exchanges that would otherwise sap their energy.

This debate, I told them, made me think of something. When I was growing up, my parents used the term *house talk* to label conversations that I was not to share with anyone else. This term implied that people outside of our family wouldn't understand, and involving them would annoyingly complicate things—or cause actual trouble. I asked this latter group of student-poets if they felt that race conversa-



Students might not be as afraid to discuss race as we often make them out to be, but this does not mean that they are eager to do so with *us*.

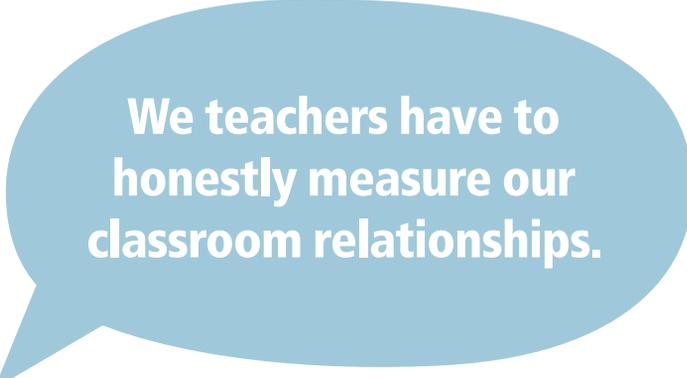
tions were better kept as house talk. When they agreed, I asked them to explain. Interestingly, a white poet spoke first, sharing that during such conversations, she was often wary of offending classmates of color—not because she disagreed with them, but because she wasn't always as articulate as she wanted to be. There seemed to be a thousand ways to be misinterpreted. Ask a question the wrong way and one might be chastised for one's ignorance. Disagree with a minor point, and one might be charged with leveling "microaggressions." Occasionally, it seemed that her expected job was only to absorb the anger and frustrations of her classmates.

One of their fellow poets, a black boy, answered this by sharing how he felt the need to soften such anger as to not offend well-meaning white classmates or teachers. After prodding, he admitted that he also was inclined to disguise his strong disinterest in the empathetic anger of white allies and pretend that it just doesn't frustrate him. At this, some admitted that, when tensions are highest—as they'd been during the height of the summer's protests—it's sometimes hard to look a white person in the face, even when that person is smiling.

This last bit was rough to hear, a brutal honesty that was followed by silence. As I figured out where to go next, a few parallels came to mind. First, I considered classroom conversations about street harassment. By the time many of my female students reach ninth grade, too many of them have been repeatedly called the foulest words in the ugliest manner possible by complete strangers. In my role as mentor, I rail against this and do my best to affirm my female students when I can. However, I am not a woman, and as such, I recognize that I might look and sound like the man who tried to touch them this morning on the way to school. It would

be hubris for me to expect every girl to feel comfortable sharing their anger, embarrassment, or shame with me. What is academic to me is visceral to them. At certain times, some would rather discuss their frustrations with a woman, who might better understand the violence of being objectified, the fear of late nights and lonely street corners. It's equally understandable if these girls don't want to deal with the annoyance of reassuring male classmates who might answer "Not All Men" to their protestations.

As the seconds ticked away, I thought about how often I had mis-handled conversations that I couldn't viscerally identify with. A few years earlier, I had been teaching Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*. For this unit, I'd wanted students to engage the countless propaganda tools used by Nazis during the Holocaust. Early in the text, the protagonist has to attend the BDM (the Hitler Youth for Girls), which inspired me to find out how adults tailored their propaganda to influence young girls. If I found primary sources, my students could then analyze their use of propaganda techniques. A quick Google search turned up a collection of anti-Semitic children's fables called *Der Giftpilz*, which begins with a famous story called "The Poisonous Mushroom." In the tale, Jewish citizens are compared to mushrooms that appear harmless, but are capable of killing little boys and girls who can't distinguish them from less evil vegetables.



We teachers have to honestly measure our classroom relationships.

I ordered it. For a teacher who had just spent a unit having students analyze and create allegories, it was a gold mine. Eighteen illustrated stories laying out the structure and intentions of anti-Semitism. When I showed it to my students, I haphazardly voiced my history-nerd enthusiasm. My exact words may have been, "This is a *beautiful* thing!" The kids giggled—all but one, Adam, who raised his hand to say, "Beautiful?" His great-grandparents, he told me, had escaped the Holocaust. I apologized immediately, though the import of my recklessness came at me in waves. How could I even make this mistake? I organize trips to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., every year, and I have invited survivors to talk to my classes. I make certain to frame our Holocaust studies around resistance so as to not make the genocide just about victimhood. Every step of the unit planning is thoughtful, meant to respect the varied humanity of everyone who experienced the era's trauma. Yet, I was still capable of such a terrific blunder, one that I would be considerably less likely to make if I were Jewish, and not merely a well-meaning black ally.

In tough times, minority communities often believe that we're all we've got, so we more thoroughly invest in each other's well-being. Our struggles directly, and maybe even subconsciously, influence the language we use with each other. (This became

mortifyingly clear during the more publicized police shootings, as I noticed black students leaving each other with a handshake and a reminder to "stay safe.") With this in mind, it should be easy to understand why minority students might prefer to discuss racial issues only within an intimate community of shared experiences. However, daily cultural exchange with students from different races has duped many teachers into assuming an intimacy that does not exist. We reason that since students from different backgrounds are comfortable discussing occasional racial topics with us, they are automatically eager to join us in "unpacking" their deepest racial anxieties, anger, and confusion.

Yet there has always been a difference between collegial banter and house talk, between the water cooler and the dining-room table. It is dangerous to invite ourselves to the latter because we are tolerated at the former. We must, if we value our students' right to determine healthy relationships, never accept invitations unless they have been proffered. We must, through earnest humility, earn our seats. Just as we cannot conjure *safe spaces* from midair, we should not expect the familial intimacy, vulnerability, and forgiveness needed for meaningful race conversations to emerge from traditional classroom relationships.

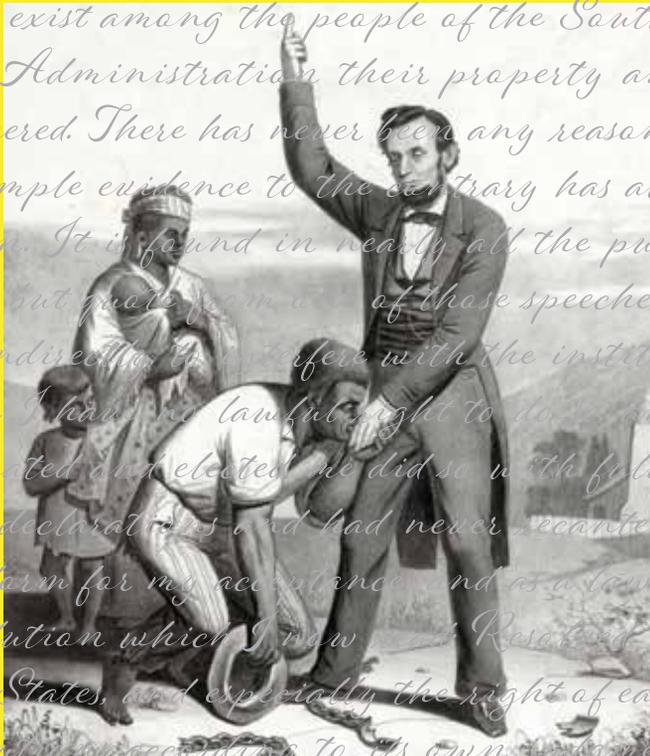
To this point, we teachers have to honestly measure our classroom relationships. A good place to start is to reflect on our classrooms' stated and implied priorities. Familial intimacy depends on both parties feeling like a priority to the other. We do not tend to feel close to those who continually treat us like afterthoughts. To preserve our emotional well-being, healthy people draw specific parameters around these relationships, saving our vulnerability for those to whom we are the greatest priority. This extends to the classroom, where most students consider their teachers only tangentially invested in their lives beyond their academic performance. Traditional classroom conversations rarely trouble this perception, as most of the discourse is directly related to course content. Notre Dame's former vice president for public relations James W. Frick famously claimed, "Don't tell me what your priorities are. Tell me how you spend your money, and I'll tell you what they are." It is the same, with a slight variation, for teachers: allot more time for a particular activity, and that is what students will think you value most. By this reasonable metric, students generally understand our course content to be the most important subject in the room. So while students may believe that we mean them no active harm, and that we would generally prefer that they were happy, their personal lives rarely feel like a *priority*.

This is problematic when it comes to discussions of race, where teachers suddenly find themselves asking students to pry open wounds; be honest about fears, hopes, and anger; and mine their own lives instead of assigned texts for source material. Teachers here break a tacit agreement to keep our class conversations detached. This paradigm can be changed, but only through the effort and practice of building genuine *house talk* relationships.

We may not always be invited to engage in house talk, but our odds increase once we create an environment of humility and genuine interest in each other's lives and passions. This is the sort of real safe space I try to build in my classroom, a not-so-magical notion that has opened the door to rich and meaningful race conversations—and deep, empathetic learning. □

Teaching the Complex History of Abolition and the Civil War

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that I have no purpose, directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this and many similar declarations, and had never recanted them; and more than this they placed in the platform for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now so Resolved. That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to



BY ADAM SANCHEZ

Every year, I start teaching about slavery and the Civil War by asking my high school students, “Who freed the slaves?” Without fail, the vast majority, if not the entire class, answers “Abraham Lincoln.” Holding back my desire to immediately puncture this simplistic narrative, I continue questioning: “Well, if Lincoln was the Great Emancipator and freed the slaves, what do you think he said in his first speech as president?” My students throw out various hypotheses that I list on the board: slavery is evil, immoral, unjust; people should have equal rights regardless of color; it’s time to get rid of slavery; slaveholders should be punished; and so on.

We then turn to Lincoln’s actual first inaugural address and students are shocked to read that Lincoln stated that he had “no inclination” to “interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists,” that he promised to uphold the Fugitive Slave Act, and that he expressed support for the Corwin Amendment, which would have prevented Congress from ever tampering with slavery in any state. For many students, this is a rupture of

epic proportions. “Were we lied to?” they ask. “Did Lincoln really free the slaves?” “If he didn’t, who did?” “What else have we been lied to about?” These kinds of questions can ignite deep learning and historical engagement.

The real story of slavery’s end involves one of the most significant social movements in the history of the United States and the heroic actions of the enslaved themselves. Revealing this history helps students begin to answer fundamental questions that urgently need to be addressed in classrooms across the country: How does major social change occur? What is the relationship between those at the top of society—presidents, Congress, elites—and ordinary citizens? What kind of power do “leaders” have? What kind of power do we have?

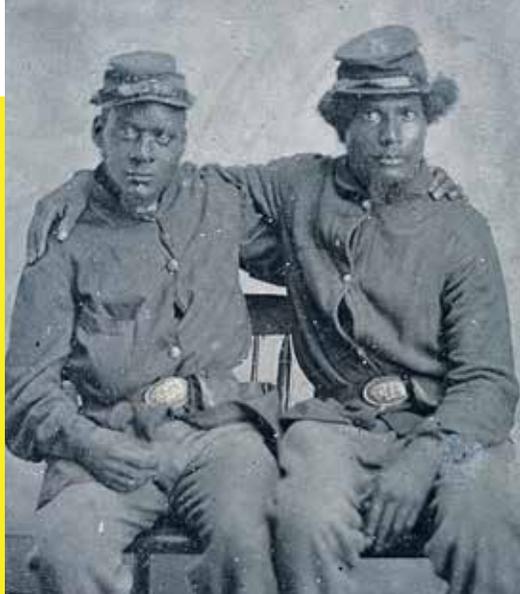
If problematic, simplistic historical narratives—like Lincoln freed the slaves—persist, our students will confront the world without understanding how change happens. What could be more important than learning how one of the country’s greatest evils was ended? It’s in this spirit that my colleagues and I at the Zinn Education Project have prepared the 10 lessons and materials in a new resource for educators, *Teaching a People’s History of Abolition and the Civil War*, from which this article is excerpted.

Rethinking Lincoln, Emancipation, and the Civil War

Of course, Lincoln’s views on slavery and black rights did not start or end with his first speech as president. As an Illinois congress-

Adam Sanchez teaches social studies at Abraham Lincoln High School in Philadelphia. He is the editor of Teaching a People’s History of Abolition and the Civil War (Rethinking Schools, 2019), www.rethinkingschools.org, from which this article is excerpted with permission. All rights reserved.

PHOTO: WORLD HISTORY ARCHIVE/LAMY STOCK PHOTO;
TEXT: FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN



Left: Two African American Union soldiers during or shortly after the Civil War. Right: Escaped slaves outside a cabin in 1861.

man, Lincoln endorsed state laws barring blacks from voting, holding office, serving as jurors, and marrying white people. Lincoln strenuously opposed extending slavery into the U.S. states and territories and denounced the institution as a “monstrous injustice,” but he also did not believe that the Constitution gave the federal government power to interfere with slavery where it existed. His preferred strategy was one of gradual emancipation, compensating slaveholders for their loss, and sending free blacks to be colonized outside of the United States.

But by his second inaugural address in 1865, Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation and campaigned for the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery without compensation or colonization. In this speech, he was much less conciliatory toward the South. He painted an image of divine retribution against slavery’s horrors by stating that “every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn with the sword.” It’s the Lincoln of 1865 that has been memorialized as the Great Emancipator. But what prompted Lincoln to change his public position?

To start, in order to demythologize Lincoln, it’s important to demythologize the North. At the start of the war, Lincoln was under immense pressure from Northern bankers who had financed slavery and from Northern businessmen whose profits depended on their financial ties with the South. The entire U.S. economy—not just Southern plantations—was built on the labor of enslaved blacks. Although by 1860 enslaved people made up less than 13 percent of the population, their economic worth (in dehumanizing capitalist terms) was valued at more than the factories, banks, and railroads combined. This is why in 1861, shortly after the South seceded, Mayor Fernando Wood suggested to the New York City Council that the city should also secede. The Northern financial and industrial elite were determined to keep their profitable relationship with the South. When compromise failed, they turned to war. The 1860 Republican platform recognized that “to the Union of the States this nation owes ... its rapid augmentation of wealth.” Now that wealth was in danger. The new Confederacy nullified \$300 million in debt the South owed Northern creditors, and Northern elites were determined to recover their losses. As Lincoln asked in a July 1861 message to Congress, justifying waging war for union, “Is it just ... that creditors should go unpaid?” When Lincoln insisted repeatedly during the early years

of the war that he was fighting the Civil War not to end slavery but to restore the Union, he was not only worried about the border slave states that had remained in the Union defecting to the Confederacy. He was also signaling to the capitalists of the North that the war would be waged in their interests.

But there were other interests that Lincoln was forced to consider. The abolitionists and, most importantly, the enslaved themselves understood that slavery was so monstrous that it needed to be completely eliminated. For decades prior to the war, abolitionists—black and white, male and female—petitioned the government, organized rallies and public meetings, produced antislavery pamphlets and books, ran candidates for public office, built new political parties, and created a vast network to harbor runaways and resist slave catchers. By the time of the war, abolitionist ideas had seeped into the new Republican Party. When Republicans swept the 1860 election, antislavery activists nevertheless continued their familiar tactics and criticized Lincoln’s and Congress’ half-measures. Yet now they reached a new, enlarged audience that included those in the halls of power. Formerly derided as radical extremists, the abolitionists seemed prophetic as it became clear to many that the war could not be won without destroying slavery.

The enslaved, who had fought back in various ways since slavery began, escalated their own resistance during the Civil War. As soon as the Union Army came within reach, enslaved people freed themselves—by the tens of thousands. As historian Vincent Harding wrote:

This was Black struggle in the South as the guns roared, coming out of loyal and disloyal states, creating their own liberty. ... Every day they came into the Northern lines, in every condition, in every season of the year, in every state of health. ... No more auction block, no more driver’s lash. ... This was the river of Black struggle in the South, waiting for no one to declare freedom for them. ... The rapid flow of Black runaways was a critical part of the challenge to the embattled white rulers of the South; by leaving, they denied slavery’s power and its profit.

These runaways also created opportunities for the all-white Union Army, in desperate need of soldiers and laborers. Lincoln realized that the Union needed black soldiers to win the war. Although it is possible to interpret Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation as an exceptionally cautious document, declaring the enslaved free in only these parts of the Confederacy where Lincoln had no direct control, and exempting the border slave states and other Union-controlled areas in the South, it was nonetheless an acknowledgement of the changing public opinion in the North and the reality of self-emancipation on the frontlines. The proclamation officially opened the army to African Americans for the first time. With black soldiers now taking up arms against the Confederacy, Lincoln's war for union was transformed into a war for liberation. The emancipation of 4 million people from slavery ushered in a revolutionary transformation of U.S. society led by African Americans.

The reason corporate curriculum and conservative textbooks so often hide or distort this history is because truly understanding the causes of the Civil War, and how that war was transformed, requires an approach that questions those in power and emphasizes collective resistance. As historian Howard Zinn explained:

When I look at the history of the United States, what I see is that whenever anything good has been accomplished, whenever any injustice has been remedied, ... it has come about only when citizens became aroused. That's how slavery was abolished. Slavery was not abolished because Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Slavery was abolished because the slaves, the ex-slaves, the escaped slaves, and some white abolitionists got together and formed a movement against slavery. That movement grew from a small group of people into a national movement that committed acts of civil disobedience and violated the law, violated the Fugitive Slave Act, which required the government to return escaped slaves to their masters. People broke into courthouses, broke into police stations; they rescued slaves, and all kinds of acts of civil disobedience took place. Only then did Lincoln act, only then did Congress act, to abolish slavery, to pass constitutional amendments. And we see this all through American history.

To understand abolition and the Civil War then, is to understand how ordinary citizens—with ideas that seem radical and idealistic, taking action together, breaking unjust laws, pressuring politicians to act—can fundamentally change society. There is no more important lesson that our students can learn from studying history.

The purpose of *Teaching a People's History of Abolition and the Civil War* is not to simply dethrone Lincoln as the Great Emancipator. There have been many worthwhile defenses of Lincoln's record, his anti-slavery intentions, and his actions. No doubt, when put into historical context and seen through his point of view, Lincoln can be a sympathetic figure. But the popular narrative that a single white politician ended an institution that formed the economic backbone of U.S. society is simply inaccurate, racist, and dangerous. It took the courageous actions of hundreds of thousands to crush such a profitable system of brutal exploitation. Our job as educa-

Our job as educators should be to expand the viewpoints through which our students look at history.

tors should be to expand the viewpoints through which our students look at history. As Zinn pointed out, "Lincoln was a politician. ... We are citizens. We must not put ourselves in the position of looking at the world from their eyes and say, 'Well, we have to compromise, we have to do this for political reasons.' We have to speak our minds." I've found that students are capable of complex thinking around the role that Lincoln played in the abolition of slavery. However, students' conclusions about Lincoln are less important than their ability to develop an understanding that the abolitionists and the enslaved fundamentally shifted the political terrain that Lincoln was operating on—in other words, a more complex historical narrative that puts ordinary citizens, like themselves, at the center.

Furthermore, it was not simply Lincoln who was transformed during the war. Opening the Union Army to blacks had profound effects on white soldiers and the Northern white public. In the Freedmen and Southern Society Project's book *Free at Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War*, the editors write, "Nothing eradicated the prejudices of white soldiers as effectively as Black soldiers performing well under fire. ... General James S. Brisbin, who supervised the recruitment of Black soldiers in Kentucky, described to his superiors how the 'jeers and taunts' of white soldiers were silenced by their Black comrades' bravery." And maybe nothing reveals the rapid shift in public opinion more than the warm welcome white New Yorkers gave the 20th U.S. Colored Infantry, the first black regiment formed in New York City, as they paraded down the city streets in February 1864. Only seven months earlier, blacks had been brutally beaten and murdered during the draft riots. While racism survived the abolition of slavery, the bold actions of black men and women in securing and defining freedom, and the changing racial attitudes of white citizens in response, laid the foundation for postwar antiracist politics. As abolitionist Wendell Phillips wrote to Senator Charles Sumner, "These are no times for ordinary politics; they are formative hours. The national purpose and thought ripens in 30 days as much as ordinary years bring it forward." This concept—that people's ideas can change, and sometimes change rapidly—is crucial for students who have grown up in a world full of racism, sexism, warmongering, and climate denial.

We need a curriculum that surfaces the moments of solidarity, resistance, and courage that made this a more just, more inclusive society. Students often feel alienated from history and politics because they are told that great (usually white) men make history. Too often, students arrive in my classroom cynical about the possibility for social change. There are countless stories of collective struggle that are antidotes to cynicism. Let's tell them. □

Confronting Bias and Addressing Issues of Prejudice

As the research shows, implicit biases pervade our culture, yet people are often unaware they even hold them. For adults, these biases can be difficult to navigate. For children of color, their effects can be detrimental. Implicit biases toward minority students can result in difficulties with peer acceptance in school, more teacher-student conflict, more frequent and unequal punishments, and challenges with academic performance.

As educators, we already face an uphill battle when it comes to tackling both implicit and explicit biases in our schools. But when incidents of prejudice, stereotyping, and even hate make headlines each day, the job of teaching and caring for all students becomes even more difficult. And while this topic can feel overwhelming at times, the teachers and contributors at Share My Lesson have some tips for how you can support students who encounter bias on a regular basis—whether in school or at home.

Create a Safe Space

How safe is your classroom? As educators, we of course strive to create spaces that allow students to feel like they can honestly be themselves, but when bias enters the classroom, that feeling of safety may fade. Among the first steps in creating a welcoming classroom culture is to understand implicit bias.

For more on its impact on individuals and school communities, check out “Patterns and Perceptions: Breaking Down Implicit Bias,” a webinar by the Anti-Defamation League, a Share My Lesson

contributor. This resource suggests ways teachers can establish and maintain the idea of a safe space in their classes, such as being public and purposeful about being inclusive of all students; explicitly teaching about our differences, stereotypes, and biases; and establishing and promoting clear values about respect and regard for others. Another resource, “Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate: A Guide for Educators and Families,” features lessons on teaching students about empathy and positive self-esteem development, as well as engaging them in discussions of overcoming prejudice.

Honor and Respect Feelings

With so many reports of hate in the news, students are hardly immune to what they are reading on the Internet and hearing from their friends. As a result, it’s important that students have opportunities to engage in honest and open discussions about their feelings (if they wish to discuss them) and feel like they are being heard. To that end, the following resources may help: “Addressing Racism & Stereotyping with Students,” “Helping Students Make Sense of News Stories about Bias and Injustice,” and “When Hate Is in the Headlines: Resources for K–12 Educators.” Also, be sure to check out the webinar featured in the last resource, hosted by experts from the American Federation of Teachers and the Anti-Defamation League, as well as other Share My Lesson contributors, such as Facing History and Ourselves and the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance project.

In particular, Facing History and Ourselves offers tips such as the need to engage in culturally responsive teaching and the importance of knowing your students’ backgrounds and understanding where your identities do and do not intersect. Additionally, educators are encouraged to “be a student of yourself,” meaning that you examine and understand your privilege and your potential blind spots.

Classroom conversations on bias are times when, as a teacher, you can and should be learning more about yourself as well. Your students will appreciate your willingness both to engage in these discussions and to be open with them. Finally, don’t forget to look through Share My Lesson’s “Today’s News, Tomorrow’s Lesson” section to find more ideas for talking to your students about bias and hate in the news.

We hope these resources empower you in teaching children the need for tolerance, safety, and respect in all our lives. If you have additional ideas or requests, please reach out to us at content@sharemylesson.com.

—THE SHARE MY LESSON TEAM

Recommended Resources

Patterns and Perceptions: Breaking Down Implicit Bias
<http://go.aft.org/ae319sml1>

Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate: A Guide for Educators and Families
<http://go.aft.org/ae319sml2>

Addressing Racism & Stereotyping with Students
<http://go.aft.org/ae319sml3>

Helping Students Make Sense of News Stories about Bias and Injustice
<http://go.aft.org/ae319sml4>

When Hate Is in the Headlines
<http://go.aft.org/ae319sml5>

Today’s News, Tomorrow’s Lesson
<http://go.aft.org/ae319sml6>



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COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: PEOPLE AND PLACES TRANSFORMING EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES

"It's nearly impossible for any one person to meet the needs of all children by themselves." This straightforward observation comes from a new book about a collaborative and effective education reform strategy that has gained ground in recent years: community schools.

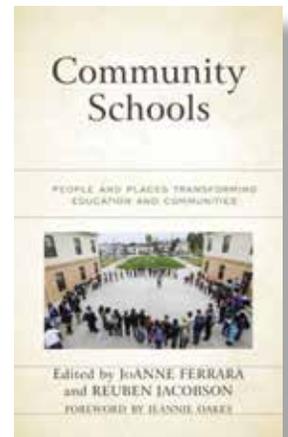
Community schools purposefully partner with social service agencies, food banks, higher education institutions, health clinics, youth organizations, and businesses to meet the academic and nonacademic needs of students and families. By meeting such needs, community schools make it possible for teachers to do what they do best, which is to teach, and for students to feel supported enough to focus on what they need to do in school, which is to learn.

Few understand the point of such schools better than JoAnne Ferrara and Reuben Jacobson, the editors of *Community Schools: People and Places Transforming Education and Communities* (Rowman & Littlefield). Ferrara is the associate dean of undergraduate programs and a professor at Manhattanville College specializing in community schools and university partnerships. Jacobson is the director of the Education Policy and Leadership program at American University and previously served as the deputy director of the Coalition for Community Schools. Together, they solicited chapters from people with direct experience working in the more than 5,000 estimated community schools across the country or researching

the various roles that make community schools successful.

One such role is the community school coordinator, who coordinates resources and partnerships and shares leadership with the school's principal, and also works closely with teachers, students, and families. Thanks to Chapter 5 by Lissette Gomez, readers come away with a sense of all that coordinators do. A day-in-the-life "snapshot" of her job as director of a Children's Aid community school in New York City includes meeting with families to discuss their needs, working with the principal to ensure that the afterschool program aligns with the school day, and visiting officials from a local shelter to learn how the school can support homeless students, among her other myriad responsibilities.

At the heart of Gomez's work—and the work of community schools in general—is building relationships. As a result, those interested in establishing community schools must understand the roles that everyone in such schools must play. "If we believe in the idea of the African proverb that 'it takes a village,'" Ferrara and Jacobson write, "then this is the book that answers, 'who are the village people?'"

**WHERE TEACHERS THRIVE: ORGANIZING SCHOOLS FOR SUCCESS**

Throughout her 40-year career in education, Susan Moore Johnson has learned that workplace conditions and school environments play crucial roles in ensuring that teachers and their students succeed. But too often, she contends, such roles have been overlooked. In *Where Teachers Thrive: Organizing Schools for Success* (Harvard Education Press), Johnson, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, writes that education reform's focus on recruiting highly qualified individuals to the teaching profession, rewarding them to ensure they stay in the classroom, and firing those deemed ineffective has been misplaced.

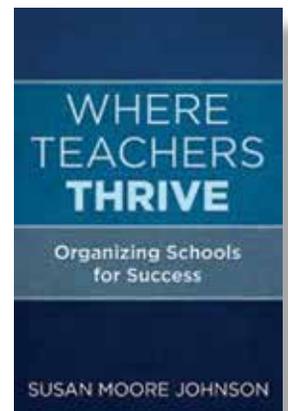
Instead, educators must be provided with resources and supports to improve their instruction and student learning—yet rarely are they given what they need. That's because reformers have ignored a simple truth: that a teacher's success depends very much on the school environment where he or she works. "It is as if the features of schools that teachers regularly report matter to them—for example, the knowledge and skills of the principal, the effectiveness of schoolwide order and discipline, how time is used, whether they have a curriculum and what it is—have no influence on teachers' practice or their ability to successfully educate their students," she writes.

Johnson bolsters her point with case studies of 14 schools she and her graduate students included in three major studies of public schools in Massachusetts. Instead of interviewing one or two teachers about their working

conditions, Johnson and her team visited schools themselves and spoke with diverse groups of teachers, administrators, and other staff members who work there.

In chapters devoted to hiring practices, teacher leadership, decisions on curriculum and instruction, teacher evaluation, and teacher pay, among other topics, the book provides a comprehensive analysis of how the elements of teacher working conditions ultimately influence student learning conditions. It also includes several lessons for administrators and policy-makers seeking to improve schools. Among them are that collaboration among teachers is vital and that "educators must have sufficient autonomy as a group to make key decisions about staffing, budgeting, curriculum, and the schedule."

Another of Johnson's compelling points is that strengthening schools "can't be done on the cheap." The years of disinvestment in public education have especially hurt disadvantaged students, not to mention those who teach despite the notoriously low pay. As Johnson writes, "Only when our society acknowledges and funds the costs of a first-class education system will our schools and teachers succeed in providing it."



Assessing Intolerance at School

(Continued from page 7)

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Page 4: Right, Aurora Samperio/NurPhoto via Getty Images
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Developing Inclusive Youth

(Continued from page 12)

Group identity, though, along with negative messages from adults and the media, often perpetuates in-group preference, which fosters out-group dislike. It is of paramount importance to determine how best to reduce prejudice early in life, not only because by adulthood prejudice is deeply entrenched and difficult to change, but also for facilitating healthy development and motivating children to enjoy school and achieve academically. □

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School Integration

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