

TOOLS

DEFINING ANTIRACISM IN EDUCATION

I wrote this definition of antiracism, grounded in critical race literature and my years of experience as an educator, to provide our staff with an anchor to determine what it looks, sounds, and feels like in practice:

Antiracism is the purposeful act of actively addressing systemic racism and systemic inequities personally, professionally, and socially.

Antiracist educators are conscious and aware of their personal bias, their worldview, and how they are privileged or marginalized racially.

An educator is antiracist when they actively disrupt systemic racism and inequities from their own sphere of influence and they partner with other antiracist educators to enact collective disruption of institutional racism and systemic inequities

(Ward, 2020).

— Angela M. Ward



Put antiracist commitments into action

BY ANGELA M. WARD

As racial violence in America took on an international focus in summer 2020, many began to make pledges and statements against racism. As an antiracist educator, I asked myself and those I work with: What is a pledge? What is a statement? People make personal pledges and commitments all the time, often to honor a cause or historical event. Educators pledge to the United States of America daily. In Texas, we also pledge to the state flag. But what comes after the pledge?

When a pledge to become antiracist or culturally proficient lacks actionable goals tied to the daily work of education, it is nothing more than a gesture or an empty promise. The families of Black and Brown children deserve more from us.

In 2020, I began to hear multiple outcries for support from teams of school principals in my school district who wanted to do more than make a statement. We have been engaged in dialogue about race and the impacts of racism on our work as educators. As I lead antiracist reflection and learning,

I have seen over the last 10 years that individual principals desired to do this work but weren't making critical connections to the larger issue of systemic racism.

I recognized that groups of schools impact a community of families, elementary to secondary, yet that group of principals wasn't sharing practice in ways that shift the experiences of the students and families they impact collectively.

Now the principals wanted to send a message to their communities that they were operating in solidarity with the #BlackLivesMatter movement and that they were committing to make their campuses safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for students and families.

Last July, I led the first of five antiracist leadership learning sessions with more than 80 school principals from all racial backgrounds. In the series, we use the cultural proficiency framework (Lindsey et al., 2019) to ground our work in research and accountability to ourselves and the collective.

As a first step toward putting commitments into action, the initial three-hour session served as a place for principals to critically self-reflect, gain understanding of the impacts of whiteness (not white people) on their daily work, confront the realization that they have a direct role in perpetuating or dismantling systemic racism, and get comfortable about naming race for themselves personally.

First, group members negotiated what they needed from the five-session series, both as a learning community and in their respective campus planning teams. In this work, it is important to set personal learning intentions as you critically self-reflect on how to shift inequity from your personal sphere of influence.

The tool featured here was designed as a planning and critical self-reflection tool for principals to complete individually and for their vertical teams to complete collectively. The tool is anchored in the essential elements of cultural proficiency: assess culture, value diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, adapt to diversity, and

institutionalize cultural knowledge (Lindsey et al., 2019).

The essential elements serve as "standards for personal, professional values and behaviors, as well as organizational policies and practices" (Lindsey et al., 2019) and are one of four tools of cultural proficiency that guide our antiracist work to create identity-safe schools for students and workplaces for the adults who support them.

REFERENCES

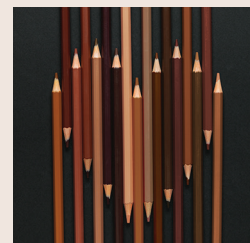
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JOIN A LIVE CONVERSATION WITH ANGELA WARD

Doing the work to build equity takes reflection, raises questions, and is best done in collaboration and conversation with others. To support you in this work, Angela Ward, creator of this tool and author of the Equity in Focus column, will facilitate a live, online discussion at 1 p.m. Eastern time on March 29. During this special opportunity exclusively for Learning Forward members, Ward will discuss how to go beyond equity statements, how to use the tools shared in this issue, and more. Come with your questions. For more information and to register, visit bit.ly/2NWRxQX.



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ANTIRACIST LEADERSHIP: Critically self-reflective commitment

Antiracist reflection is most effective in community with others. Use this tool with your full vertical team of leaders or at least two other people. Consider which colleagues you work with daily and the mutual benefit of engaging in ongoing dialogue with them.

Vertical team name:

Members in attendance:

Vertical team antiracist statement: What actions/commitments did you make (or will you make)?

Individual campus antiracist statements: What actions/commitments did you make (or will you make)?

Campus name	Actions/commitments made to school community

ANTIRACIST LEADERSHIP: Moving beyond the statement

Cultural proficiency is an inside out approach to the way we do our work in schools. As educators develop critical self-reflective practice, it is important to understand our roles in the context of the larger school system and our teams, as well as our roles as individuals with power to make decisions for the students and families in our care.

Educators interested in leading from an antiracist lens must first engage in critical self-reflection. The traditional professional learning offered in schools isn't designed to nurture the personal educator praxis required to begin an antiracist journey. The professional learning session with the checklist of dos, don'ts, and strategies doesn't exist.

To lead from an antiracist lens, one must make a personal plan of action that guides your critical self-reflection. The chart here shows the essential elements of cultural proficiency and the behaviors and practices of school site administrators associated with each element. Use these to guide your self-reflective preplanning.

Review the reflective questions shared and work with the team members you listed to identify what learning the team needs to lead with an antiracist lens. After working with the team, use the reflective questions shared to personally reflect on your needs as you begin your journey to lead with an antiracist lens.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CULTURALLY PROFICIENT SCHOOL LEADERS

Cultural proficiency essential element	Behaviors and practices of school site administrators	Learning intentions for the team To lead with an antiracist lens, our vertical team needs:	Learning intentions for the individual To lead with an antiracist lens, I need:
Assess culture	Assess the culture of the school, and articulate the cultural expectations to all who interact there.		
Value diversity	Articulate a culturally proficient vision for the school. Work with educators and staff to establish standards for holding one another accountable for the vision.		
Manage the dynamics of difference	Provide professional learning and support systems for conflict management. Help faculty and staff learn to distinguish between behavioral problems and cultural differences.		
Adapt to diversity	Examine policies and practices for overt and intentional discrimination, and change current practices when appropriate.		
Institutionalize cultural knowledge	Model and monitor schoolwide and classroom practices.		

Source: Adapted from Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 150.

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ANTIRACIST LEADERSHIP: Personal antiracist reflection

Use the following questions to begin the first pages of your personal antiracist educational leadership reflection journal. Creating a reflection journal is a great first step to building your antiracist leadership lens. Journaling provides me with the inside space to reflect on experiences and decisions I make based on those decisions. Reflecting in a written or electronic journal will also provide you with a historical narrative of your growth in this work.

What are the necessary first five steps to make the vertical team or your campus team commitment a reality?

What resources and support might you need to honor those commitments?

What learning do you need to act on your commitments?

What learning does your campus community require to understand your leadership commitments?

How will you communicate your antiracist leadership plan?

Who will need to be involved in the antiracist leadership plan? Why?

What checkpoint(s) will you set for the spring, summer, and fall?

How will you engage your campus advisory group and PTA in your plan?