

Roger Williams University

DOCS@RWU

Education Faculty Publications

Education

2020

A Resource Guide for Schools and Districts: Addressing Racism in the Education System

Joi Spencer

Kerri Ullucci

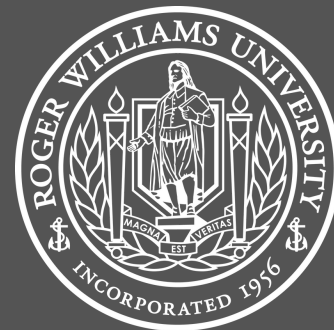
Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.rwu.edu/sed_fp



Part of the [Education Commons](#)



Photo by James Eades on Unsplash



A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS

ADDRESSING RACISM IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are reaching out at this moment because the sickness leading to the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor (and so many others) extends beyond police departments. Many American schools have either actively harmed Black children or been silent in the face of their struggles, under-education and mistreatment. While we know that there are many within these spaces who are working to support Black children, there are many others who ignore families, minimize youths' concerns and believe that taking a colorblind stance will solve the problem. None of these tactics will help to undo the damage exacted upon our children in schools. This resource guide is designed for schools (public, private, charter, online, home, etc.), and school districts. We imagine it as a jumping off point for professional development about issues of equity, justice and anti-Blackness. Inside, you will find sources and readings to help us better understand and support Black youth. These resources can be used for ongoing professional development, for teacher book groups, with teacher leadership teams, as part of new teacher mentoring, and/or with administrative teams as they are charting new ways to support Black youth in your school.

This guide is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to assist your organization with initial steps towards repairing schools so that they are humanizing and actualizing institutions for African American young people. We want to remind you that simply accessing and reading these resources will not be enough to undo the racism that our youth endure. This knowledge must be translated into deliberate investments (money, time, sacrifice) and long-term action.

To white and non-Black POC who care about these issues, this is the time to redouble our efforts. We know there are dedicated educators who want to do the work and are committed to change. We know that different communities face their own challenges, and that those challenges (sexism, anti-Semitism, transphobia, discrimination against immigrants, refugees, Spanish speakers) are real and need attention. That said, anti-Blackness is deeply entrenched in the US; we have 400 years of evidence. Think of concrete ways in which your support can extend beyond words. School leaders play a particularly important role in which to model attention to injustice. Keep these issues on your agendas consistently, in ways that challenge racism and uplift Black youth in your care.

Finally, we want to give particular praise to African American principals, teachers, coaches, cafeteria workers, custodians, librarians, district leaders, social workers, superintendents, families and communities who have been fighting this good fight for so long. **We see you** and appreciate the countless unseen ways that you support and love Black children every day.

In Gratitude:

Joi Spencer, PhD

Interim Dean and Professor
School of Leadership and Education Sciences
University of San Diego

Kerri Ullucci, PhD

Associate Professor
Roger Williams University



GENERAL

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE

Courageous Conversations provides extensive resources for talking about race and racism as well as adopting anti-racist practices in schools. The organization offers online and face-to-face professional development.

RETHINKING SCHOOLS

Rethinking Schools was founded by teachers and publishes a wide array of resources to address the critical needs of children in public schools.

RACIAL EQUITY TOOLS

Extensive tools to address racism and issues around power, for groups in all phases of development. They offer a broad selection of sources.

TEACHING TOLERANCE & TEACHING ABOUT RACE, RACISM, AND POLICE VIOLENCE

Teaching Tolerance is a leader in this work and has a wealth of reliable, meaningful materials. They also have an important magazine you can subscribe to. This is a special edition curation of their work on police violence.

TEACHING WHILE WHITE

Blog and podcast to explore Whiteness in education.

STEM-RELATED

BENJAMIN BANNEKER ASSOCIATION

Website devoted to math advocacy and issues particular to Black youth and their experiences with math.

BLOOD ON THE TRACKS: WHY ARE THERE SO FEW BLACK STUDENTS IN OUR SCIENCE CLASS

Practical article from Rethinking Schools about racial inequities in science.

STEM STORIES: THE POWER OF THE INFLUENCER

Digital storybook featuring contemporary people of color in STEM fields. Designed and written entirely by high school students.

GIRLS WHO CODE

Girls Who Code provides access to coding for girls of color. The organization addresses the gender gap in technology with the goal of changing the image of who can code.

HISTORY SPECIFIC

THE BLACK HISTORY BULLETIN

Published by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, this journal provides high quality, easily accessible lessons and resources on the teaching of African American history in schools.

FACING HISTORY

A guide for teachers on discussing George Floyd and facilitating traumatic discussions

ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE AND HISTORY (ASALH): FOUNDERS OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Founded by Carter G. Woodson, this organization documents the African American experience through an expansive array of resources, books and research studies.

RECONSTRUCTION: AMERICA AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

Four-part documentary series exploring the pivotal years of American Reconstruction and the lasting impact of its failures on the lives of African Americans today by Dr. Henry Louis Gates.

FREEDOM'S UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

Highly accessible, inquiry-based high school textbook and teaching guide centered on the experiences of African Americans during the Civil Rights Era. Rich with primary sources.

ZINN EDUCATION PROJECT

A race-forward site on teaching social studies and history with an eye on equity. Check their Facebook page for timely links to useful materials (Tulsa Riots).

READING, LITERACY & BOOK SELECTION

SOCIAL JUSTICE BOOKS: A TEACHING FOR CHANGE PROJECT

This site provides a consistently updated list of the best children's, Young Adult and educators books on social justice.

WE NEED DIVERSE BOOKS

Excellent resource for finding books that represent all children. Useful for diversifying text choices/library offerings.

REPORTS ON BLACK YOUTH/EDUCATION

SUCCEEDING IN THE CITY: A REPORT FROM THE NEW YORK CITY BLACK AND LATINO MALE HIGH SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT STUDY

This report, based on 400 face-to-face interviews with Black and Latino male high school students, documents the Expanded Success Initiative in NYC.

BLACK GIRLS MATTER: PUSHED OUT, OVERPOLICED AND UNDERPROTECTED

Important look at school discipline and the ways in which Black girls are particularly targeted.

GIRLHOOD INTERRUPTED: THE ERASURE OF BLACK GIRLS' CHILDHOOD

Explores the idea of "adultification" and the ways in which black girlhood is constructed

THE BLACK SONRISE

Report on the Oakland School District's Manhood Development Project.

AMERICA'S LEAKY PIPELINE FOR TEACHERS OF COLOR

Report on the demographic mismatch in schools and reasons why people of color do not choose teaching.

THE COUNTER NARRATIVE: REFRAMING SUCCESS FOR HIGH ACHIEVING BLACK AND LATINO MALES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Report from Black Male Institute on reframing the academic narrative for Black and Latino males.

*Addressing Racism in the Educational System by Joi Spencer and Kerri Ullucci is released under a
CC-BY-NC license.*



GENERAL

JAMES ANDERSON	<u>THE EDUCATION OF BLACKS IN THE SOUTH</u>
MICA POLLACK	<u>EVERY DAY ANTI-RACISM</u>
LISA DELPIT	<u>OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN</u>
JONATHAN KOZOL	<u>SHAME OF THE NATION</u>
RICH MILNER	<u>START WHERE YOU ARE BY DON'T STAY THERE</u>
RETHINKING SCHOOLS	<u>TEACHING FOR BLACK LIVES</u>
GARY HOWARD	<u>WE CAN'T TEACH WHAT WE DON'T KNOW</u>
TYRONE HOWARD	<u>WHY RACE AND CULTURE MATTER IN SCHOOLS</u>
MONIQUE MORRIS	<u>PUSHOUT: THE CRIMINALIZATION OF BLACK GIRLS IN SCHOOLS</u>
EVE EWING	<u>GHOSTS IN THE SCHOOLYARD: RACISM AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS ON CHICAGO'S SOUTH SIDE</u>
THERESA PERRY, CLAUDE STEEL & ASA HILLIARD	<u>YOUNG, GIFTED, AND BLACK</u>

STEM-RELATED

JACQUELINE LEONARD & DANNY MARTIN	<u>THE BRILLIANCE OF BLACK CHILDREN IN MATHEMATICS</u>
DANNY MARTIN	<u>MATHEMATICS TEACHING, LEARNING AND LIBERATION IN THE LIVES OF BLACK CHILDREN</u>
RETHINKING SCHOOLS	<u>RETHINKING MATHEMATICS</u>
AMY LINDHAL	<u>BLOOD ON THE TRACKS: WHY ARE THERE SO FEW BLACK STUDENTS IN OUR SCIENCE CLASS</u>
ANDREA BEATY	<u>ADA TWIST, SCIENTIST</u>

HISTORY

JAMES ANDERSON	<u>THE EDUCATION OF BLACKS IN THE SOUTH</u>
IBRAM KENDI	<u>STAMPED FROM THE BEGINNING: THE DEFINITIVE HISTORY OF RACIST IDEAS IN AMERICA</u>
NELL IRVIN PAINTER	<u>THE HISTORY OF WHITE PEOPLE</u>

WHAT CAN WE DO NOW? PUTTING RESOURCES INTO ACTION.

SCENARIO

A

AUDIENCE

A self-selected group of middle school teachers, across content areas, who have joined a teacher book club.

*****Can be done remotely/online*****

GOAL

In response to the racial injustice of 2020, White teachers in your majority White school are interested in learning more about racism and Whiteness.

PLAN OF ACTION

1

Have teachers engage in the online survey “How much racism do you face every day?” This interactive survey allows participants to self-assess how much their identity “shows up” in their everyday activities. It then allows them to compare against the experiences of Black youth. This is often an eye-opening step, in rendering the invisible visible.

2

Using whichever platform is best (email, zoom) have your teachers discuss how they experience race/racism and how that compares with African American youth. This can be done via written response through an email string/online Forum or through an in-person discussion, based on the norms of the group.

3

Teaching While White has a super blog that is filled with timely, relevant entries to better understand how Whiteness functions in schools. Read 4 posts.

4

In a follow-up posting/zoom meeting, discuss the following questions:

- Which blog post stood out the most to you and why?
- Are you surprised by how often Black students faced racism? Why or why not?
- How has your race shaped how you experience your life?
- Is our goal as teachers to be race-conscious or color-blind?

WHAT CAN WE DO NOW? PUTTING RESOURCES INTO ACTION.

SCENARIO

B

AUDIENCE Curriculum planners/teams in high school.

GOAL Analysis of diversity in literacy offerings. You want to inventory students' access to literature by diverse authors.

PLAN OF ACTION

1

Baseline data collection. Ask each teacher of English in your building as to the core books they teach. Ask librarians as to the diversity of their collections. Do a general analysis as to the degree of diversity represented in the books available to youth. Do the books provide both mirrors (opportunities for students to see themselves) and windows (opportunities to see others' experiences)?

2

Identify gaps: Whose perspective is missing from your collections? Think about the diversity of Black youth widely here (immigrant children and US born; English speakers and speakers of additional languages; Muslim youth; youth in foster care; youth in various family configurations; etc).

3

Refer to We Need Diverse books as a jumping-off point for remedying holes. Also see Coretta Scott King Book award winners for additional resources.

WHAT CAN WE DO NOW? PUTTING RESOURCES INTO ACTION.

SCENARIO



AUDIENCE New teachers to your district/building.
*****Can be done remotely/online*****

GOAL To begin to see how content that is frequently seen as “difficult/sensitive” can be incorporated into their teaching. In doing so, we make space for students whose experiences/histories are often left out or marginalized.

PLAN OF ACTION

- 1** Via Flipgrid, have teacher each upload a one-minute post of them discussing a content area/topic/subject that they find difficult to discuss with students. Ask them to focus on social issues/history/ideas that are challenging to raise.
- 2** Read Teaching Tolerance’s guide Let’s Talk: Facilitating critical conversations with students.
- 3** Review Teaching Hard History: American slavery. This is Teaching Tolerance’s resources collections on slavery, niched to students throughout the k-12 grade span. There is a huge array of materials here; professional development videos, articles, podcasts, webinars, and classroom activities. This can be used as a case-study of ways in which to engage complex topics. Have each teacher read/view 4-6 sources.
- 4** Returning to Flipgrid, have teachers do 2-3 minute videos of them laying out the topic they originally struggled with, and offering suggestions as to how they might teach the topic differently in the future. Use both the Let’s Talk guide and the Teaching Hard History resources as models/inspiration.
- 5** Ask teachers to review one another’s second Flipgrid videos as a form of collaborative learning.



WHAT CAN WE DO NOW? PUTTING RESOURCES INTO ACTION.

SCENARIO

D

AUDIENCE

You are working with a group of teachers who are concerned about math teaching at your school.

GOAL

You are concerned about the math achievement scores of your Black students. Over the last few years, your outcomes have not moved at all.

PLAN OF ACTION

1

Host a small group discussion between teachers:

What is the role of racism in the teaching and learning of mathematics? How does racism impact the teaching and learning of mathematics? What is the role of culture in mathematics classrooms and/or at your school? Does bias impact how Black students experience mathematics? How might you find out? Do we expect excellence in mathematics from our Black students? How might you find out?

2

For middle and high school teachers, read *The Racialization of Mathematics Education* (an article) in grade-level teams. For elementary school teachers, read *The Brilliance of Black Children* in grade-level teams.

Suggested chapters to focus on: A Critical Review of American K-12 mathematics Education, 1900-Present: Implications for the Experiences and Achievement of Black Children; The Mathematical Lives of Black Children: A Sociocultural-Historical Rendering of Black Brilliance; Not "Waiting for Superman": Policy Implications for Black Children Attending Public Schools; and Tapping into the Intellectual Capital of Black Children in Mathematics: Examining the Practices of Pre-Service Elementary Teachers.

WHAT CAN WE DO NOW? PUTTING RESOURCES INTO ACTION.

SCENARIO

D

continued

3

Discuss the major themes of the readings including the following:

- It is often argued that mathematics is color-blind. In what way do race/racism show up in the readings?
- It is often argued that mathematics is culture free. In what ways does culture show up in the readings?
- In what ways have policies undermined the success of Black students in mathematics?
- In *The Brilliance of Black Children*, what examples do you encounter where Black children have a positive mathematics identity? How is this identity promoted/achieved?

4

Interview some of your African American students, focusing specifically on their experiences in mathematics classrooms. You should interview both students who are and are not successful in mathematics. Sample questions to ask:

- Tell me about your experiences in mathematics class (not just this year, but since you began school).
- What are some of your interests and hobbies? In what ways is mathematics connected to or related to these interests?
- Who do you go to if you need help in your mathematics class? How is this person helpful?
- What are some of your future goals?
- What would you like to learn about in school that we are not currently teaching?

WHAT CAN WE DO NOW? PUTTING RESOURCES INTO ACTION.

SCENARIO

D

continued

5

Along with your leadership team, think about and document the following:

- How are decisions made about student placements in mathematics classrooms? Be very specific in detailing this process.
- Who makes the final decisions regarding which mathematics courses students are placed in? What are their perspectives on students of color?
- What alternative ways (ways beyond test scores) are used and can be used to determine what students know in mathematics?
- What additional experiences do students in your school have with mathematics (games, sports, elective courses)?
- What opportunities do students have to be creative and have fun with mathematics?
- What opportunities do students have to interact with people of color in STEM fields?
- How do you actively interrupt the long held stereotype that Blacks are not good in math?