

ALLIED TEACHER'S CHECKLIST

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Anti-racist teachers genuinely wish to be part of the solution in dismantling systemic racism. This work requires teachers to deeply evaluate their own biases and assumptions of race-based differences. A transition toward allyship will require a decentering of privileges that create a conscious or unconscious advantage over racialized people. Teachers who are authentic allies for diversity and inclusion can be very effective at interrupting the power imbalance associated with racism.

5 WAYS TO BE A GOOD ALLY

1 ACTION: BUILD AN INFRASTRUCTURE

EXPRESSION:

Establish the characteristics of an anti-racist ally and seek out like-minded allies.

Create anti-racism or social justice groups to build community based on common interests to increase collective action.

Create a Black community safe space: for listening, not for providing unsolicited solutions or judgments.

Network with anti-racism educators, consultants and specialists to compile resources.

2 ACTION: BE PERSONALLY AND CULTURALLY CONSCIOUS

EXPRESSION:

Assess your own bias before demanding changes to others or institutions.

Be prepared to acknowledge your emotions, such as guilt, resistance, denial, judgment, discomfort and uncertainty.

Consider whether you benefit from unearned advantages because you are not a person of colour.

Address your resources:

- Critically assess why you are considering resources that present the N-word.
- Remove resources that contain racial bias (even subtle forms); unflattering imagery; race-related humour; exaggerations of character, physical traits and oppressive archetypes.
- Present prominent representations of Black scientists, mathematicians, literary artists, historians, musicians, athletes and cultural icons.

Establish credibility of a narrative:

- Investigate resources to ensure the voice and perspective is that of a Black person.
- Be conscious of sensationalized portrayals of Black people to exaggerate negative cultural experiences.

Assess and dismantle unchallenged norms and biases in your classroom:

- Be conscious of the stereotype that Black students are more disruptive in your classroom.
- Don't assume that Black students are foreign born or newcomers.
- Challenge beliefs that Black students perform lower academically or are less suited for STEM programs.

Acknowledge individual and multigenerational trauma:

- Recognize that Black people experience forms of trauma that you may not easily recognize.
- Consider that Black people may be vulnerable to multigenerational trauma perpetuated by a 24-hour news cycle and media images of unjust killings, protests and incarcerations.

3 ACTION: SUBSCRIBE TO LIFELONG LISTENING AND LEARNING

EXPRESSION:

Listen with humility to others with lived experiences of racism:

- Seek faculty and community members that you can ask meaningful questions to, to support your role as an ally.

Learn:

- Understand the history of Black people as it relates to your subject area to add dimension to what you teach.
- Reject sensationalized stories, controversies and current events that reinforce negative stereotypes of Black people.

Be responsible to educate yourself about racism:

- Black people are not responsible to teach you about racism.
- Challenge long-held beliefs with discourse and critical thought.

4 ACTION: DECENTER YOUR ROLE AS AN ANTI-RACIST TEACHER

EXPRESSION:

This is a racism renaissance; remember that you're playing catch up:

- This situation is centuries old, yet many people are only now being enlightened about the history of racism.
- Racism is not a contemporary issue; it has affected generations of people.

Avoid portraying yourself as a saviour based on your anti-racism actions.

Honour narratives with humility:

- Historic and contemporary stories should not be sensationalized.
- Don't use racist stories to overgeneralize life lessons.

Avoid setting an agenda for the racism to end:

- Group initiatives shouldn't be based on a feel-good outcome; racism will still exist.

Recognize that there are no rules about racism:

- Occurrences of racism are dynamic and ubiquitous.

5 ACTION: BE A RESPONDER NOT A REACTOR

EXPRESSION:

Respond by:

- Sustaining your efforts over a long period of time. Don't wait for an act of discrimination to have to prove that you oppose racism.
- Calling out racism when you see it.
- Focusing on progress in the fight against racism and not redirecting attention to assign blame.
- Modelling behaviour that is anti-racist by demonstrating diversity, equity and inclusion in all areas of teaching and learning.

Avoid reacting by:

- Denying when racism is happening; macroaggressions, unconscious bias and gaslighting make it difficult for Black people to express when they are experiencing racism.
- Internalizing the racist offense; no matter how disturbing the acts of racism are, this is not about you.
- Saying racist acts were unintended, accidental or a joke.
- Offering hugs and comfort words as a solution to Black people.
- Competing with stories of your own experiences with racism.
- Viewing cultural and ethnic festivals as solutions to racism.

What should a teacher or school leader do if they witness racism or experience it themselves?

If a teacher witnesses racism they need to call it out. Speak to the individual to see if they are aware of what they are doing and why, and help them understand why the action or comment is unacceptable.

If you experience racism yourself, tell the person to stop the behaviour and tell them why you will not accept that kind of behaviour directed at you. Calling out behaviour sends a message that it will not be tolerated.

If the behaviour continues after you've spoken with the individual, inform them of your intention to raise your concern with proper officials.

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