

LHU Board of Directors Regular Meeting

January 15 6:30 PM
Sterling Montessori Academy and Charter School
202 Treybrooke Drive, Morrisville, NC 27560
Virtual via Google Meet

1. COMMENCEMENT

Call to Order and Board Attendance w/Determination of Quorum
At 6:30pm

Quorum Present with following Board Members in Attendance:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Present</u>		<u>Name</u>	<u>Present</u>		<u>Name</u>	<u>Present</u>
Rachel Richardson	x		Dwayne Jones	x		Daphne Coulter	
Kevin Hughes	x		Keisha Pressley	x		Andrea Williams	x
Jessi Fasola	x		Elizabeth Uzzell	x			
Ryan Hill	x		Susan English				

Reading of Mission Statement:

"The mission of Sterling Montessori is to create a diverse educational community, grounded in the Montessori philosophy and teaching practices, that fosters curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking in its students. We strive to empower each student to become life-long learners who respect themselves, others, and their environment."

Conflict of Interest Statement

"At this time, we ask all board members to make a statement to be recorded in the minutes should they know of any conflict of interest or appearance of conflict with respect to any matters coming before them during this meeting. It is the duty of each board member to abstain from discussion and voting on such matters."



Native Land Acknowledgement

"The LHU Board recognizes that Sterling Montessori sits on the ancestral land of the Tuscarora, Lumbee and Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Tribes. As we strive to become better stewards of the environment, we also strive to provide a more equitable and culturally responsive environment for all students, but especially Black and indigenous students of color."

Agenda Items:

Including any related consent agenda items or discussion items added to agenda prior to consent vote.

Consent Agenda:

- Approval of November 20, 2024 Regular Meeting minutes
- Approval of December 21, 2024, Special Meeting Minutes
- Approval of calendar with requested edits from the Director team

Discussion Items:

- DEI Committee recommends vote to approve DEI Consultant
- Policy Committee requests discussion on student discipline and current policy
- Strategic Planning committee requests vote to approve final draft of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan document

Closed Session:

- Closed per NCGS To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating (i) the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease; or (ii) the amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract. [N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(5)]



Approval of Agenda

At 6:35p, Rachel Richardson moved to approve the agenda. Approved

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Ri...	M				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter			
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams			
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell	x							
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Please hold community comments until the end of ALL presentations. Board members may ask clarifying questions at this time of the presenter. Any board member may move to refer further discussion or other action back to the committee, with a vote.

Executive Director's Report – presented by Fay Masterson

- Fay presented highlights of the report, reading through the report enclosed.
- Ryan asked if there is any information from state regarding the Powerschool data breach. There has been no information received by the school, as yet.

Development Committee Report – Keisha Pressley

- Did not meet in December
- Stephanie gave financial update that December was the highest grossing month since the annual fund was started with about \$14,500. Development fund is now at approximately \$106,000. At about \$32,000 raised this fiscal year, putting us really close to our \$35,000 goal.

Strategic Planning Committee Report - Ryan Hill

- Met and discussed approval of Strategic Plan and the communications around the plan for discussion with the board.



- Recommending work with Development to support a “State of School” event in February or March. Strongly consider joining the date of the Student Council “Fun Run” expected to be March 20th and is a fundraising event.
- Include NLI outdoor environment sharing visuals, vision and design plan.

Communications Committee Report - **Ryan Hill**

- Meeting this Friday, 1/17/25 at 2pm
- Survey launch as main agenda item.

Finance Committee Report - **Jessi Fasola**

- Jessi presented highlights of the report.
- Ryan asked about the communications plan for the 10 month salary change. Jessi has examples of what to use and will consider follow up communications.

DEI Committee Report - **Dwayne Jones**

- Dwayne presented highlights of the report.
- Elizabeth called out the celebration of Justin, Sara and Kim presenting at the AMS Conference.
- Rachel called out the adding of Belonging to our DEI effort.

Policy Committee Report - **Kevin Hughes**

- Kevin presented highlights from the report.

Governance Committee - **Keisha Pressley**

- Did not meet in December
- Met first week of January

Search Committee Report - **Elizabeth Uzzell**

- Presented details of meetings, mainly closed due to discussing candidates.

Community Comments (3 minute time limit)

Members of the public are now invited to provide comments on issues or concerns related to the school. To indicate your interest in speaking, please raise your hand. The Board Secretary will record names of speakers with a brief summary of comments. The board will not directly respond to any comments during this time. Please provide contact information to president@lhuf.org to allow for follow-up by the appropriate officer or committee chair. Formal comments may be emailed to president@lhuf.org ahead of any regular meeting to be considered for agenda/discussion.

Speakers are welcome to offer comments or criticism directed at substantive ideas, actions, or procedures of the school and LHU Board. In the interest of maintaining civility and decorum, however, speakers are encouraged to refrain from criticism or personal attacks directed at specific members of the Board, school staff, or members of the community.

The laws and policies of North Carolina provide that issues or concerns involving individual personnel matters are confidential, and, therefore, not appropriate for public comment settings. Concerns related to personnel issues may be addressed through appropriate school leadership, the Sterling grievance policy, or other applicable policies.

Speakers may discuss issues and matters of general concern but must refrain from discussing confidential student information. Concerns related to confidential student matters may be addressed through school leadership, the grievance policy or other applicable policies.

Comments:

- No Community Comments
-

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Consent agenda items are non-controversial items unanimously recommended for approval by all involved parties and have already been reviewed by the board and Executive Director. Any board members or the Executive Director may request to pull items off the consent agenda.

Approval of Consent Agenda Items.

- Approval of November 20, 2024 Regular Meeting minutes
 - Approval of December 21, 2024, Special Meeting Minutes
-



At 7:19p Rachel Richardson moved to approve Consent Agenda Items. Approved.

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Richardson	M				Dwayne Jones	x							
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Daphne Coulter			
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- DEI Committee recommends vote to approve DEI Consultant
 - Rachel asked Gloria to provide an overview of the director requests. Dr. Gloria stated that the director team would like to hear from multiple other consultants for the best selection. Additionally, do some work at the school level.
 - Elizabeth added that she understood that there was a desire to understand what is happening at Sterling and understand more of the need.
 - Rachel asked clarifying questions on who would do the “internal work” at the school and how it all fits with a consultant.
 - Dr. Gloria: What does DEIB look like at Sterling - what are we currently doing in this area? Who are we at Sterling? How many cultures and understand who we are? This is basic information that can be shared and start on a practical level. This work can happen concurrently.
 - Elizabeth - when we are talking about culturally responsible practices are we understanding how this is all baked into Montessori.
 - Kevin - based on what Dr. Gloria has said. He can see the value in a consultant assisting with this work. All for a consultant. His concern is that voting for a



contract. Doesn't believe that's the best presentation by the board rather than the administration.

- Dwayne responded that Maati would be able to meet the need and adapt based on the school's needs.
- Ryan: Are we in line with the accreditation standards? Kevin assisted to clarify if we are meeting the minimum standards.
- Dwayne clarified that DEI is weaved into all of the standards but there is a 10 hour requirement stated. We've done this work over the last five years. Stated that we've gotten a good grasp on who we are over the last five years. He clarified that the goal of presenting this is to keep us on mission with the direction we have been headed with DEI as a priority. She may not just be the best one to assist us with where we are but for assistance in the long term. She offers more than just DEI training and provides much more than this. He clarified that timeline is not the issue, but that the intent is to stay on mission. Restated the history of the work.
- Ryan clarified his understanding that approving a contract would be a board action and Kevin clarified that it's the school leadership responsibility to advocate and ask for the contracts that they need; it's not the role of the board to sign and bring contracts to the school. The school leadership takes the lead.
- Ryan stated that he hears that the work will continue but it's just being stated that it's being done differently, the value of Maati and her background.
- Kevin further talked about the board role and when the board takes action and spends money, it should be for the board needs not to get involved in telling the administration what personal development should be for the staff/teachers.
- Kevin asked what money is in the budget in the spending on what is left over from peaceful schools, but unsure if there are any dollars in the board development or strategic planning expenditures.
- Ryan voiced concerns about locking up funds if there is a more prioritized need in another area of PD.
- Dwayne reviewed the history of what got us here and understanding of what is consistent with the DEI mission.
- Policy Committee requests discussion on student discipline and current policy
 - Kevin gave background and overview of the concerns presented. Noting that there are behaviors in a few classrooms from a few students that involves EC population. Additionally gave overview of the policy currently enforce and the options that leadership has to take. Is this a concern with policy or is there room



in the policy, we should look at practices. It is our understanding that the policy meets the administration's needs.

- Elizabeth stated that she doesn't see a change at the policy level and we want to maintain proper approach to equitable treatment.
- Keisha asked if this is more a practice issue rather than a policy issue. Kevin clarified that there is some concern about consistency across the school.
- Ryan gave
- Gloria discussed that this is a practices issue and that is the focus of
- Kevin stated that there isn't much for the board to do regarding policy and told Dr. Gloria to present any resource needs to the board.
- Strategic Planning committee requests vote to approve final draft of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan document
 -

APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS

Consent Item –

At 8:32pm, Ryan Hill moved to approve 2025-2030 Sterling Montessori Strategic Planning document.

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Richardson	x				Dwayne Jones	x							
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Daphne Coulter			
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Ryan Hill	M				Susan English	x							

Closed Session

Closed Session

At 8:34pm, Rachel Richardson moved to go into closed session To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating (i) the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease; or (ii) the amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract. [N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(5) .

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Richardson	M				Dwayne Jones	x							
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Daphne Coulter			
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

Return to Open Session

At 8:43pm, Rachel Richardson moved to return to open session.

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Richardson	M				Dwayne Jones	x							
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Daphne Coulter			
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							



Consent Item – Approval of Executive Director Contract

At 8:44p, Rachel Richardson moved to approve the Executive Director contract to Fay Masterson and to negotiate specific terms within the approved budget. Approved

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Richardson	M				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter			
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell	x							
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

Consent Item – Approval of Consultant, Maati Wafford

At 8:52p, Dwayne Jones moved to approve retaining Maati Wafford as board consultant up to \$7,000. Approved

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Richardson	x				Dwayne Jones	M				Daphne Coulter			
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell		x						
Ryan Hill		x			Susan English	x							



ADJOURNMENT

At 8:54p, Rachel Richardson moved to adjourn. Approved

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Richardson					Dwayne Jones								
Kevin Hughes					Keisha Pressley					Daphne Coulter			
Jessi Fasola					Elizabeth Uzzell					Andrea Williams			
Ryan Hill					Susan English								

Attendance:

* **Meet**

* **Meeting code: ffy-hkiq-ovk**

* **Created on 2025-01-15
18:30:18**

* **Ended on 2025-01-15
20:57:15**

Full Name	First Seen	Time in Call
Andrea Williams	1/15/2025 18:30	2:26:55
Denise Kimball	1/15/2025 19:08	1:26:58
Dwayne Jones	1/15/2025 18:30	2:26:56
Elizabeth Uzzell	1/15/2025 18:30	2:26:56
Ellie Shameli	1/15/2025 18:30	2:05:56



**STERLING
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LAURA HOLLAND UZZELL FOUNDATION

A nonprofit organization

Fay Masterson	1/15/2025 18:30	2:05:31
Gloria Jones	1/15/2025 18:30	2:05:52
Jessi Fasola	1/15/2025 18:30	2:26:10
JoAnne	1/15/2025 18:30	1:19:53
Keisha Pressley	1/15/2025 18:30	2:26:00
Kevin Hughes	1/15/2025 18:32	2:24:10
Rachel Richardson	1/15/2025 18:30	2:26:19
Rick Plumley	1/15/2025 18:30	0:34:58
Ryan Hill	1/15/2025 18:30	2:26:56
Stephanie Deming	1/15/2025 18:31	1:48:25
Susan English	1/15/2025 18:33	2:23:30



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Executive Director LHU Board Report - January 2025

School News

- A representative from Children's House, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary and Middle School presented their Section's MTSS Intervention Model during our December Faculty meeting. Staff will engage in deeper dives and discussions in breakout interdisciplinary teams during subsequent faculty meetings.

Exceptional Children

- The EC Department has partnered with two staffing agencies (ProCare and Soliant) to procure staff for hard-to-fill EC teacher positions. Following four interviews with prospective teachers, Sterling contracted for the following:
 - 1) Danielle Polk - EC Resource Separate Setting (C12)
 - 2) Jennifer Calerano - EC Resource LE/CH (C3)
- EC Population: 79 students with IEPs 10 students in the referral process.
- To date, the EC Department has added 18 students with IEPs who are new to Sterling.

Children's House

- **ENROLLMENT/ADMISSIONS**
 - Rolling admissions- historically November and December we have families that pull out and we need to fill those spots for families to start when we return after the holiday break in January.
 - CH will be starting 4 new students
 - Conducting tours and answering phone calls helping prospective pre-k and K families decide to attend Sterling.
 - Tour on Monday, December 16, 2024 for prospective families from out of town who are in town for the week.
 - Tour on November 13th- 19 families attended
 - Many were rising K families and many were pre-K3 and Pre-K 4 families interested in the 2024-2025 school year

- Typically applications for the 2024-2025 school year will begin to pick up in January.
 - We hear from families that it is a challenge to have to come back up to the school to drop off the application and the application fee.
 - Prospective parents would like a way to pay the application fee on line
 - No BIG tour in December historically low attendance
 - Conducting 1 tour a week until lottery closes
- **CHILDCARE LICENSING/SANITATION**
 - The unannounced Sanitation visit was last week in December before we went on break. Did well had to make one minor adjustment to the cleaning solution and steps.
- **Parent Engagement**
 - Classrooms have parents read to their children's classroom on special cultural events and holidays.
 - Preparing for our February Parent engagement evening: Come See my work
 - February 6th (4 classrooms)
 - Feb 13th (4 classrooms)
- **CLASSROOM STUDENT SUPPORT**
 - On-going in classrooms every day
- **CLASSROOM TEACHER SUPPORT**
 - On- Going in classrooms everyday
 - Progress reports are being completed and edited.
- **PARENT/GUARDIAN SUPPORT**
 - Fresh Perspectives continues. The last one was on helping children through the Holiday season and demonstrated a lesson in packing a suitcase.
 - On-Going, supporting families as needed.
- **TRAINING/WORKSHOPS**
 - We just completed our NeuroDiversity workshop in December, very helpful. The work will continue as we will incorporate what we have learned in all of our discussions about students.
 - The trainer will be coming into the classrooms in January to observe and offer feedback on how teachers can better address the needs of their students specifically in the areas of what we learned in Circle of Security

and the Neurodiversity workshops. Once the trainer observes she will meet with me and each teacher.

Lower Elementary

- Enrollment: LE has 1 new open spot, will be filled January 7th.
- Admissions: Lauren E and Liz M. gave a tour today for a family that is interested in their child attending Sterling for the 2025-2026 school year. They will be moving here from the Maryland area.
- LE Holiday classroom events happened in LE classrooms in December: Crafts, Project presentations, Pot Luck Feasts and more. Lead teachers will send out detailed information via ParentSquare.
- Dee is working closely with students and the lead teachers to meet MTSS needs.
- Middle of the Year iReady testing will take place January 16-23rd. All parents were notified by teachers.
- Progress reports will go out on
- Family Ed Night is scheduled for February 13, 2025-lead teachers will send out details in their weekly messages.
-

Upper Elementary

UE Numbers:

- 2 more students offered placement - when will offers no longer be offered? It may skew our numbers next year if we continue to make offers.
1 student starting in January

Recent Events:

- 2 Individual tours with families (neither signed on)
- Helped Cinwain with interviews for subs
- Supported operations by helping to schedule time for a new sub-orientation
- UE Occupations before the break was a success. Will do this again in January
- Desdeanna and Nila (MS resource teacher and student) visited UE to give presentations on what it is like to live with Autism.

Teacher Support:

- Facilitated PLCs take place monthly. Overlooked Power-Hour. Will spend the next few weeks after January I-ready restructuring the groupings for Power Hour.
- 4 UE leads in training. They express feelings of overwhelm - training is a lot and a large financial burden for some. Understanding and flexibility is an important part of supporting them as they navigate this journey.
- Preparing for progress reports which will need to be finished in mid-January

- New Assistants to Sterling are working through online courses for Positive Discipline and on how to be an effective Elementary Assistant - these will be due by the end of April.

MTSS:

- Utilizing a Power Hour to support students receiving supplemental interventions. This will be restructured - in January after the next I-Ready
- Meetings continue with Carrie more than once a week to accommodate the demand for students needing extra support.
- Dee Philips - Interventionist - has an almost full schedule working to support students who need intensive support and some who need additional supplemental support. Dee is currently out for 4 weeks. We have a sub to fill this role.
- UE Team including Assistants have read and discussed "Data without Tears". The team continues to work together to simplify goalsetting and interventions to provide good data needed to evaluate their progress.
- The team is working on creating a document to align what we consider T.1 and T2 processes.

What's New:

- Staff training - Protecting Our Students ([Session Law 2023-128/HB142](#) and [G.S. 115C-105.57\(2a\)](#)). This will be shared with UE/MS students in January
- Liz participating in Autism Support Team led by Mary Williams with the goal of supporting teachers in learning more.
- In January/February Liz will work on becoming certified to teach Positive Discipline to parents through an online facilitators course.
- Student Council - Discussion about organizing a fun run for the school on March 20th with benefits going to the Annual fund.



Middle School & Testing

- Completed High School Q&A on December 5 for all MS families
 - Alumni panel
 - Local high school guidance counselor
 - Mary Williams - school counselor
 - **20 families in attendance**
- Poe Center Health and Sex Ed sessions for all MS students took place January 10
 - Healthy Relationships Class: Setting and communicating personal boundaries, identifying warning signs of unhealthy relationships, and identifying societal influences that impact relationships

- Changing Lanes Class: explores the development associated with puberty, the structure and function of the male and female reproductive systems, the menstrual cycle, and conception
- Facts of Life: addresses the facts of puberty and the male and female reproductive systems so participants can review the menstrual cycle, fertilization, and implantation
- Myth Busters: breaks those myths by discussing the facts about STI's (including HIV/AIDS) and FDA approved contraception methods while stressing the importance of Abstinence as a positive choice for young people
- Staff training - Protecting Our Students ([Session Law 2023-128/HB142](#) and [G.S. 115C-105.57\(2a\)](#)).
 - Students receive training January 24
- iReady Middle of Year Diagnostics for Reading and Math for all MS students - January 13-15
- Martin Luther King Jr. Intersession for all MS students January 17
 - Students plan and carry out [service projects](#)
- Testing:
 - ACCESS Testing for Multilingual Learners (ML) taking place February and March
 - WIDA Multilingual Learner (ML) Screening for new-to-Sterling students who list languages on their home surveys other than English
 - Scores determine ML services in four areas (reading, writing, speaking, listening)

Specialists and Student Services:

Specials:

Specials:  The Specials Connection Dec. 6 ,  The Specials Connection Jan. 10

MS Band Porch Performance on Dec. 17

UE Band Porch Performance on Dec. 18

Band students performing in classes on Dec. 19

Sterling Stars performing in classes on Dec. 20

Mr. David and Mr. Daniel went to the Statewide PE conference, NC SHAPE, on Dec. 5 and 6. They presented at the conference. The Director of the conference, a gentleman named Artie Kamiya, told David and Daniel he enjoyed their presentation very much and wanted to know if we (Sterling) would consider being a host site for other PE teachers to come to our school and watch how we do our PE classes. David has reached out to Gloria to see if this could be an option.

Middle of Year goal setting this week

MTSS:

18 student in LE

16 students in UE
10 in MS

504 Students

25 students
3 going through the eligibility process

ML:

63 Students
ACCESS testing will be done in February

BTSP

Had joint mentor/mentee holiday celebration on Dec. 9
Their middle of year PDP is due this month

Homebound Learning:

2 students in homebound learning, 1 very close to returning

Operations

Current School Enrollment - 2024-2025

	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
	51	69	77	83	82	73	69	65	48	48	59	724

Post Lottery Applications for 24-25 school year since December:

PreK 3 (5) 1 offer out, 1 offer accepted today (waiting on paperwork), 1 starting in Jan,
2 starting in February

PreK 4 (0)

K (0)

1st (3) 1 Enrolled, 1 waiting - 1 - accepted today (waiting for paperwork)

2nd (1) Waiting

3rd (1) Enrolled

4th (3) 2 declined, 1 accepted today - (waiting on paperwork)

5th (1) Enrolled

6th (0)

7th (2) Enrolled

8th (1) accepted today (waiting on paperwork)

Open Lottery enrollment for 2025-2026 is now open. Lottery went live January 9, 2025

LOTTERY APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AS OF 1/14/2025

<i>Current Grade</i>	<i>Grand Total</i>
0	130
1	16
2	17
3	16
4	13
5	7
6	17
7	4
8	3
Grand Total	223

Intent to Return

Intent to Return emails were sent out to families between January 6-7, 2025. A weekly notification will be sent to all families who have not yet submitted their intent to return for the 2025-2026 school year. The deadline date for submission is 2/10/2025.

Intent to Return Submission as of 1/15/2025

	<i>Intent to Return</i>		
<i>Current Grade</i>	No	Yes	Total Intent to Return Submitted
0		44	44
1		42	42
2		39	39
3		33	33
4		24	24
5	1	24	25
6		21	21
7		16	16

Grand Total	1	243	244
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- Solar Panels - Project is completed! Sterling went Live yesterday, and the school is producing some of its own electricity. There will be a final walkthrough at the end of the month with 8M Solar and Todd.
- Infinite Campus (Replacing Powerschool) - The team will meet with the Infinite Campus Project Team throughout the year to complete tasks required for the implementation of Infinite Campus for the 2025-2026 school year.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting Report - January 14, 2024

Committee Actions:

None

Minutes from January 14, 2025 Meeting:

Attendance and Call To Order

(Virtual)

Chair: Jessi Fasola

Board Members:

Others: Betty Warren, Fay Masterson, Gloria Jones and Denise Kimball

Meeting was called to order at 12:16pm

- **10 Month Salary Change**
 - Betty wants to make sure we get it out by end of this school year, we have time
 - Memo still in progress, aiming for this spring
- **Staffing Updates**
 - Contracted two EC teachers - \$70/hours through end of the year
 - In meantime, still looking for full-time teachers
 - 1 TA in Lower El that resigned, will we fill the position or keep floater in that position?
 - 4th TA also being hired
 - These positions are in the budget
- **Budget Review**
 - Funding for growth with ADM - We do not know when it would be paid. We cannot plan on it. This year another school got it in December.
 - Denise asked clarifying questions about funding for next year and how calculated.
 - ADM history - 633 was highest ever, in general has been around 600 for last 8 years.
 - Next year - what positions we want, what we need, etc.
 - Technology was cut pretty hard this year, if we have surplus at end we can go back and review this and see if anything should be added back.
- **Amounts owed to Sterling from previous employees**
 - Working on it
- Question from Fay on signing bonuses and if quit

Closure and Next Steps:

Meeting was adjourned at 12:41pm; Any follow-up actions noted above.

Next Meeting February 11, 2025 at 12:00pm

Sterling: 2024-25 Budget	2023-24 Estimated Year			2024.25 Working Budget	Total 12.31.24	50%
ADM	631			633		
State Funding per ADM	6,329			6,543		
EC ADM	73			-		
State EC Funding per ADM	5,309			-		
State Funds - per 20th day ADM	3,993,782			4,141,586	1,879,082	45%
State EC Funds	387,580			407,747	203,874	50%
State - NCVPS	(1,986)			(4,843)	(4,843)	100%
State - LEP	56,091			72,174	36,087	50%
State - Literacy Intervention - PRC 085	-			19,650	-	0%
State - Other	62,664			24,940	24,940	100%
Total State Funding	4,498,131			4,661,254	2,139,140	46%
Wake County	1,916,964	500	3,961	1,979,610	778,746	39%
Durham County	299,233	72	4,336	312,192	137,758	44%
Chatham County	97,341	19	4,468	84,884	40,247	47%
Johnston County	6,417	3	2,182	6,545	562	9%
Harnett County	1,328	1	1,355	1,355	-	0%
Granville County	4,582	2	2,337	4,674	1,044	22%
Chapel Hill	31,335	3	5,560	16,680	8,721	52%
Total County Funding	2,357,200	600	24,198	2,405,940	967,078	40%
PRC 060	107,518			119,476	45,200	38%
PRC 070	18,195			-	-	0%
PRC 118	1,100			1,100	-	0%
Total Federal Funding	126,813			120,576	45,200	37%
Tuition - CH Academic Day	1,220,658	113	\$ 10,080	1,139,040	588,635	52%
Tuition - Staff Children	6,031	7	\$ 4,030	28,210	13,299	47%
Tuition - CH After Care	166,058	62	\$ 2,835	175,770	90,816	52%
Tuition - CH Before Care	10,964	7	\$ 1,281	8,967	5,125	57%
New Student / Application	45,475			25,000	23,050	92%
Next Prep	1,895			3,825	177	5%
Total Tuition	1,451,081			1,380,812	721,102	52%
Sales Tax Refund	46,326			30,000	-	0%
Development	48,621			45,000	25,050	56%
Interest Income	192,778			150,000	96,415	64%
After School Activities	-			10,000	5,170	52%
Other Income	149,171			8,000	7,000	88%
Rent Income	492,000			492,000	246,000	50%
Total Other Revenue	928,896			735,000	379,635	52%
Total Revenue	9,362,121			9,303,582	4,252,155	46%
Salaries	5,186,781			5,408,492	2,682,336	50%
Wages - BASC	79,709			80,209	36,723	46%
Wages - After School Activities	-			7,500	5,118	68%
Bonus - Christmas	11,806			9,745	9,745	100%
Bonus - TA Montessori	3,000			1,500	-	0%
Bonus - Other	16,990			27,500	13,750	50%
Personal Leave Pay	11,764			12,000	1,416	12%
PRC 016	-			12,642	12,642	100%
Contracted EC Services	132,859			140,000	30,865	22%
Contracted - Technology	78,870			84,000	26,600	32%
Health Insurance	581,503	72	8,274	572,019	280,822	49%

Sterling: 2024-25 Budget	2023-24 Estimated Year			2024.25 Working Budget	Total 12.31.24	50%
Vision Insurance	4,916	76	72	5,436	2,372	44%
Dental Insurance	56,260	76	778	59,128	28,485	48%
Life Insurance	12,000			12,345	6,173	50%
Retirement - 403b ER match	45,306			64,902	30,059	46%
Retirement Plan Fees	15,000			1,500	375	25%
Unemployment Insurance - SUTA	6,562			7,500	1,587	21%
FSA Expense	2,071			3,528	1,974	56%
FICA / Medicare	373,046			387,320	194,165	50%
Workers Comp Insurance	8,796			12,000	7,379	61%
Total Personnel	6,627,239			6,909,265	3,372,585	49%
Instructional Materials	150,101			120,800	71,373	59%
Technology	173,107			175,890	71,410	41%
Hospitality	31,084			24,290	10,752	44%
Professional Development	226,392			74,567	42,771	57%
PRC 070	18,195			-	-	0%
PRC 085	-			19,650	-	0%
PRC 118	1,100			1,100	-	0%
Total Instructional	599,979			416,297	196,306	47%
Copier	37,531			40,000	20,293	51%
Accounting Software Support	5,495			5,769	5,769	100%
Office Supplies / Postage / Bank fees	39,370			50,000	29,499	59%
Dues / Licenses	1,675			2,000	1,529	76%
Sales Tax Expense	46,326			30,000	12,665	42%
Legal Services	13,916			20,000	4,245	21%
Audit Services	24,000			26,500	23,000	87%
Interest Expense	203,279			192,400	97,058	50%
Principal on loan	281,019			290,290	143,699	50%
Development	22,177			45,100	6,309	14%
Other Expenses	1,012			2,000	-	0%
Total Office and Administrative	675,800			704,060	344,066	49%
Rent	492,000			492,000	246,000	50%
Custodial	97,753			103,185	53,334	52%
NCDOT associated cost for trees	-			-	-	0%
Building Repairs and Maintenance	251,059			234,185	177,095	76%
Property and Liability Insurance	71,098			69,000	28,597	41%
Utilities - Electric	66,999			70,000	20,068	29%
Utilities - Gas	2,686			3,000	750	25%
Utilities - Water / Trash	37,587			38,000	17,428	46%
Telecommunications	25,513			26,000	9,322	36%
Total Facilities	1,044,695			1,035,370	552,594	53%
Snack Expense	10,810			12,000	3,968	33%
Free and Reduced Lunch	9,507			11,000	271	2%
Total Food Expense	20,317			23,000	4,240	18%
Surplus Expenditures	464,279			77,301	-	0%
Total Expenses	9,432,309			9,165,293	4,469,791	49%
Net Income / (Loss)	(70,188)			138,289	(217,636)	
Add: Capitalized Items (previously expensed)	362,266			159,823		
Add: Principal Payments	281,019			290,290		
Less: Depreciation	-			-		

Sterling: 2024-25 Budget	2023-24 Estimated Year			2024.25 Working Budget	Total 12.31.24	50%
Less: PL accrual	-			-		
Change in Net Assets	573,097			588,403		
Add: Interest Expense	203,279			192,400		
Add: Depreciation	-			-		
Add: Debt Service Reserve (up to \$100K)	-			-		
Total #1	776,376			780,803		
Current portion of LT debt - prior period	281,019			290,290		
Interest Paid	203,279			192,400		
Total #2	484,298			482,691		
Debt Coverage Ratio-Total #1 / Total #2	1.60			1.62		
Amount of additional income needed to meet DCR requirement of 1.05				\$ (273,978)		



STERLING
MONTESSORI
EST. 1997

Executive Director LHU Board Report - January 2025

School News

- A representative from Children's House, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary and Middle School presented their Section's MTSS Intervention Model during our December Faculty meeting. Staff will engage in deeper dives and discussions in breakout interdisciplinary teams during subsequent faculty meetings.

Exceptional Children

- The EC Department has partnered with two staffing agencies (ProCare and Soliant) to procure staff for hard-to-fill EC teacher positions. Following four interviews with prospective teachers, Sterling contracted for the following:
 - 1) Danielle Polk - EC Resource Separate Setting (C12)
 - 2) Jennifer Calerano - EC Resource LE/CH (C3)
- EC Population: 79 students with IEPs 10 students in the referral process.
- To date, the EC Department has added 18 students with IEPs who are new to Sterling.

Children's House

- **ENROLLMENT/ADMISSIONS**
 - Rolling admissions- historically November and December we have families that pull out and we need to fill those spots for families to start when we return after the holiday break in January.
 - CH will be starting 4 new students
 - Conducting tours and answering phone calls helping prospective pre-k and K families decide to attend Sterling.
 - Tour on Monday, December 16, 2024 for prospective families from out of town who are in town for the week.
 - Tour on November 13th- 19 families attended
 - Many were rising K families and many were pre-K3 and Pre-K 4 families interested in the 2024-2025 school year

- Typically applications for the 2024-2025 school year will begin to pick up in January.
 - We hear from families that it is a challenge to have to come back up to the school to drop off the application and the application fee.
 - Prospective parents would like a way to pay the application fee on line
 - No BIG tour in December historically low attendance
 - Conducting 1 tour a week until lottery closes
- **CHILDCARE LICENSING/SANITATION**
 - The unannounced Sanitation visit was last week in December before we went on break. Did well had to make one minor adjustment to the cleaning solution and steps.
- **Parent Engagement**
 - Classrooms have parents read to their children's classroom on special cultural events and holidays.
 - Preparing for our February Parent engagement evening: Come See my work
 - February 6th (4 classrooms)
 - Feb 13th (4 classrooms)
- **CLASSROOM STUDENT SUPPORT**
 - On-going in classrooms every day
- **CLASSROOM TEACHER SUPPORT**
 - On- Going in classrooms everyday
 - Progress reports are being completed and edited.
- **PARENT/GUARDIAN SUPPORT**
 - Fresh Perspectives continues. The last one was on helping children through the Holiday season and demonstrated a lesson in packing a suitcase.
 - On-Going, supporting families as needed.
- **TRAINING/WORKSHOPS**
 - We just completed our NeuroDiversity workshop in December, very helpful. The work will continue as we will incorporate what we have learned in all of our discussions about students.
 - The trainer will be coming into the classrooms in January to observe and offer feedback on how teachers can better address the needs of their students specifically in the areas of what we learned in Circle of Security

and the Neurodiversity workshops. Once the trainer observes she will meet with me and each teacher.

Lower Elementary

- Enrollment: LE has 1 new open spot, will be filled January 7th.
- Admissions: Lauren E and Liz M. gave a tour today for a family that is interested in their child attending Sterling for the 2025-2026 school year. They will be moving here from the Maryland area.
- LE Holiday classroom events happened in LE classrooms in December: Crafts, Project presentations, Pot Luck Feasts and more. Lead teachers will send out detailed information via ParentSquare.
- Dee is working closely with students and the lead teachers to meet MTSS needs.
- Middle of the Year iReady testing will take place January 16-23rd. All parents were notified by teachers.
- Progress reports will go out on
- Family Ed Night is scheduled for February 13, 2025-lead teachers will send out details in their weekly messages.
-

Upper Elementary

UE Numbers:

- 2 more students offered placement - when will offers no longer be offered? It may skew our numbers next year if we continue to make offers.
1 student starting in January

Recent Events:

- 2 Individual tours with families (neither signed on)
- Helped Cinwain with interviews for subs
- Supported operations by helping to schedule time for a new sub-orientation
- UE Occupations before the break was a success. Will do this again in January
- Desdeanna and Nila (MS resource teacher and student) visited UE to give presentations on what it is like to live with Autism.

Teacher Support:

- Facilitated PLCs take place monthly. Overlooked Power-Hour. Will spend the next few weeks after January I-ready restructuring the groupings for Power Hour.
- 4 UE leads in training. They express feelings of overwhelm - training is a lot and a large financial burden for some. Understanding and flexibility is an important part of supporting them as they navigate this journey.
- Preparing for progress reports which will need to be finished in mid-January

- New Assistants to Sterling are working through online courses for Positive Discipline and on how to be an effective Elementary Assistant - these will be due by the end of April.

MTSS:

- Utilizing a Power Hour to support students receiving supplemental interventions. This will be restructured - in January after the next I-Ready
- Meetings continue with Carrie more than once a week to accommodate the demand for students needing extra support.
- Dee Philips - Interventionist - has an almost full schedule working to support students who need intensive support and some who need additional supplemental support. Dee is currently out for 4 weeks. We have a sub to fill this role.
- UE Team including Assistants have read and discussed "Data without Tears". The team continues to work together to simplify goalsetting and interventions to provide good data needed to evaluate their progress.
- The team is working on creating a document to align what we consider T.1 and T2 processes.

What's New:

- Staff training - Protecting Our Students ([Session Law 2023-128/HB142](#) and [G.S. 115C-105.57\(2a\)](#)). This will be shared with UE/MS students in January
- Liz participating in Autism Support Team led by Mary Williams with the goal of supporting teachers in learning more.
- In January/February Liz will work on becoming certified to teach Positive Discipline to parents through an online facilitators course.
- Student Council - Discussion about organizing a fun run for the school on March 20th with benefits going to the Annual fund.



Middle School & Testing

- Completed High School Q&A on December 5 for all MS families
 - Alumni panel
 - Local high school guidance counselor
 - Mary Williams - school counselor
 - **20 families in attendance**
- Poe Center Health and Sex Ed sessions for all MS students took place January 10
 - Healthy Relationships Class: Setting and communicating personal boundaries, identifying warning signs of unhealthy relationships, and identifying societal influences that impact relationships

- Changing Lanes Class: explores the development associated with puberty, the structure and function of the male and female reproductive systems, the menstrual cycle, and conception
- Facts of Life: addresses the facts of puberty and the male and female reproductive systems so participants can review the menstrual cycle, fertilization, and implantation
- Myth Busters: breaks those myths by discussing the facts about STI's (including HIV/AIDS) and FDA approved contraception methods while stressing the importance of Abstinence as a positive choice for young people
- Staff training - Protecting Our Students ([Session Law 2023-128/HB142](#) and [G.S. 115C-105.57\(2a\)](#)).
 - Students receive training January 24
- iReady Middle of Year Diagnostics for Reading and Math for all MS students - January 13-15
- Martin Luther King Jr. Intersession for all MS students January 17
 - Students plan and carry out [service projects](#)
- Testing:
 - ACCESS Testing for Multilingual Learners (ML) taking place February and March
 - WIDA Multilingual Learner (ML) Screening for new-to-Sterling students who list languages on their home surveys other than English
 - Scores determine ML services in four areas (reading, writing, speaking, listening)

Specialists and Student Services:

Specials:

Specials:  The Specials Connection Dec. 6 ,  The Specials Connection Jan. 10

MS Band Porch Performance on Dec. 17

UE Band Porch Performance on Dec. 18

Band students performing in classes on Dec. 19

Sterling Stars performing in classes on Dec. 20

Mr. David and Mr. Daniel went to the Statewide PE conference, NC SHAPE, on Dec. 5 and 6. They presented at the conference. The Director of the conference, a gentleman named Artie Kamiya, told David and Daniel he enjoyed their presentation very much and wanted to know if we (Sterling) would consider being a host site for other PE teachers to come to our school and watch how we do our PE classes. David has reached out to Gloria to see if this could be an option.

Middle of Year goal setting this week

MTSS:

18 student in LE

16 students in UE
10 in MS

504 Students

25 students
3 going through the eligibility process

ML:

63 Students
ACCESS testing will be done in February

BTSP

Had joint mentor/mentee holiday celebration on Dec. 9
Their middle of year PDP is due this month

Homebound Learning:

2 students in homebound learning, 1 very close to returning

Operations

Current School Enrollment - 2024-2025

	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
	51	69	77	83	82	73	69	65	48	48	59	724

Post Lottery Applications for 24-25 school year since December:

PreK 3 (5) 1 offer out, 1 offer accepted today (waiting on paperwork), 1 starting in Jan,
2 starting in February

PreK 4 (0)

K (0)

1st (3) 1 Enrolled, 1 waiting - 1 - accepted today (waiting for paperwork)

2nd (1) Waiting

3rd (1) Enrolled

4th (3) 2 declined, 1 accepted today - (waiting on paperwork)

5th (1) Enrolled

6th (0)

7th (2) Enrolled

8th (1) accepted today (waiting on paperwork)

Open Lottery enrollment for 2025-2026 is now open. Lottery went live January 9, 2025

LOTTERY APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AS OF 1/14/2025

<i>Current Grade</i>	<i>Grand Total</i>
0	130
1	16
2	17
3	16
4	13
5	7
6	17
7	4
8	3
Grand Total	223

Intent to Return

Intent to Return emails were sent out to families between January 6-7, 2025. A weekly notification will be sent to all families who have not yet submitted their intent to return for the 2025-2026 school year. The deadline date for submission is 2/10/2025.

Intent to Return Submission as of 1/15/2025

	<i>Intent to Return</i>		
<i>Current Grade</i>	No	Yes	Total Intent to Return Submitted
0		44	44
1		42	42
2		39	39
3		33	33
4		24	24
5	1	24	25
6		21	21
7		16	16

Grand Total	1	243	244
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- Solar Panels - Project is completed! Sterling went Live yesterday, and the school is producing some of its own electricity. There will be a final walkthrough at the end of the month with 8M Solar and Todd.
- Infinite Campus (Replacing Powerschool) - The team will meet with the Infinite Campus Project Team throughout the year to complete tasks required for the implementation of Infinite Campus for the 2025-2026 school year.

Policy Committee

December 5, 2024 Meeting:

Attendance and Call To Order

Virtual via Google Meets

Chair: Kevin Hughes

Board Members:

Others: Gloria Jones, Denise Kimball, Cinwain Garner

Leslie Hamilton (parent)

Meeting was called to order at 12:05pm.

Agenda

- EHB changes for salary step increase language

Discussion Items:

EHB changes to reflect Salary Step Increase timing.

- At the November LHU meeting, the Board approved setting a policy for when step increases will take effect.
- EHB needs to be updated to include that language. Policy committee can review any changes. BOD does not need to review if it's merely implementing a previously approved Board action.

Other business—Parent suggestion

- Parent Leslie Hamilton addressed the committee. Leslie is worried about a decline in appropriate behavior she has seen in some classrooms. Some students appear more disruptive (damaging property or using foul language) or violent (hitting teachers) than she has experienced in the past.
- Leslie is worried about the impact this behavior has on students in the classroom and on teacher morale and retention. Leslie is also concerned with student and teacher safety.



- As currently drafted, the kind of behavior noted by Leslie runs afoul of the school's discipline policy. However, that policy gives the administration a set of options that the teacher and school administration can implement, up to and including possible suspension from school.
- Leslie has urged that the school revise the discipline policy to mandate that certain behavior (e.g. hitting a teacher) must result in a suspension. Possibly, other behavior should have other required disciplinary consequences.
- Kevin noted that the current policy was recently adopted at the request of the administration. The Board typically defers to the administration to identify whether changes to policies like this should be made. On behalf of the administration, Dr. Gloria questioned whether any changes are required.
- Dr. Gloria does not feel that the current policy does not give the administration all of the tools necessary to address improper behavior. She feels that the administration is also implementing the policy consistent with our Montessori principals.
- Kevin stated that he would address this further with the full director team to get a sense of their position on this. Do they feel that any changes should be made at this time.
- In addition, Kevin stated that this would be addressed at an upcoming Board meeting discussion agenda. On behalf of the Policy committee, Kevin did not believe that the Board should be requiring any changes to this policy, and we will follow the administration's direction.
- After the meeting, Leslie provided additional thoughts to the Policy committee on possible changes to policy and practice. She has recommended how the policy can be incorporated into the admissions process to establish clear expectations with new families. She also recommends certain family and student action within the discipline process (family attendance at meetings, student reflection assignments). These ideas will be presented to the administration.
- The administration was also consulted at a directors meeting. None of the directors expressed the belief that the policy should be changed. Rather, they all believe that the policy gives them the appropriate options for them to use to manage behavior. Additionally, a recommendation was made to collaborate within the director team so that the policy is interpreted and applied with consistency.
- This will be discussed in the next Board meeting. I believe it's appropriate to get a sense of the Board's desire to require a change in the policy. Unless the majority of the Board believes that the Board should step in and require changes, the Policy committee recommends that the Board continue to follow the administration's lead, with support from the Board for the administration's decisions.



February Meeting Agenda Items

Closure and Next Steps:

- Next meeting scheduled for February 6 at 12:00

Recommended Board Action

- None

Meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm.



Minutes and Board Report from January 13, 2025 Meeting:

Attendance and Call To Order

Virtual via Google Meets

Chair: Ryan Hill

Board Members: Andrea Williams, Keisha Pressley

Others: Stephanie Deming

Meeting was called to order at 4:00pm.

Discussion Items:

- Final document review for presentation to the board.
 - <https://online.flipbuilder.com/rryanh/qkpvt/>
 - Present to the board
- Recommendations on publication and announcement - announce in February and create event that is potentially aligned with the Student Council fun run fundraising event. "Come for a run - stay to learn more".
- Communications Meeting scheduled for Friday, 1/17 at 11a or 2p to be confirmed.
- Next work of the committee to partner with Development for a "State of School" event and then create tracking metrics related to the strategic plan.

Closure and Next Steps:

Meeting was adjourned at 4:52p.

Up Next:

- Approval of the Strategic planning document to the full board on January 15, 2025.
- Join the Development Committee for joint meetings to create the state of school event.

Minutes from December 4, 2024 Meeting:

Attendance and Call To Order

Virtual via Google Meets

Chair: Keisha Pressley

Board Members: Jessi Fasola, Andrea Williams

Sterling Staff: Stephanie Deming,

Meeting was called to order at 12:00 pm.

Recap of progress since last meeting:

- **Giving Stats for 2024/25 (as of 12/3/24)**
 - Board 64%
 - Admin 36%
 - Staff 29%
 - Community 23% (taking into account Garden Day/Spirit Wear, etc. sales)
- **Balance of Development Acct = ~\$96,000** ○

General Updates:

Annual Day of Giving - 12/3 (Giving Tuesday)

- Successful! Grateful for the participation of the parents and families
- Considering extending Giving opportunity until Friday

Giving Tuesday Stats:

- Raised - 65% of \$15,000 goal with a total of \$9,798 raised
- Approx 3,027 said to be matched - TBD

Next Step:

- Continue to ask for participation from all Board members and Staff to give to Sterling, no amount is too small but we would like to be at 100% . We know that this confirms engagement with the community when we go out to ask for donations, contributions, or matching.
- Ask Ryan for student stories gathered by SAM to potentially add to the weekly message.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:16 pm.

EQUITY EXAMINED

HOW TO DESIGN SCHOOLS AND TEACHER
EDUCATION PROGRAMS WHERE EVERYONE THRIVES



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY

EQUITY EXAMINED

**HOW TO DESIGN SCHOOLS AND TEACHER
EDUCATION PROGRAMS WHERE EVERYONE THRIVES**



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY

education that transforms lives

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PART II: EQUITY AUDIT

Equity Examined

How to Design Schools and Teacher Education Programs Where Everyone Thrives (first edition)

Equity Examined essays (page 5–page 48): copyright 2023 American Montessori Society

American Montessori Society DEI/ABAR Assessment Tools for Montessori TEPs and Schools (page 49–page 377): copyright pending 2022, Dr. Valaida Wise Consulting, LLC

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AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY ANTI-BIAS, ANTIRACIST STATEMENT

The American Montessori Society is committed to interrogating ourselves and investigating our past practices, recognizing, addressing, and eradicating all current forms of racism and systemic oppression within our organization, and supporting our members in doing the same in their schools, programs, and practices. We recognize that an understanding of racism and bias varies across individuals, and engaging in transformational change requires courage, trust, empathy, and understanding.



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY
education that transforms lives

INTRODUCTION

By Munir Shivji, Executive Director, American Montessori Society

IN 2018, the American Montessori Society Board of Directors voted to make Inclusion and Equity a strategic priority. We realized that speaking out against oppression and inequality when we saw it was not enough. Instead, we wanted to signal that our organization would be *actively* anti-racist, and that we would create tools, policies, and systems to support these efforts on a global level.

And while this work takes all of us, I'd like to first acknowledge the Black and Indigenous educators who have been doing diversity, equity, and inclusion and anti-bias, antiracist work in Montessori spaces long before DEI and ABAR were familiar acronyms. Thank you.

I also want to thank AMS board president, Dr. Amira Mogaji; former AMS board member Sandra Stevenson; AMS consultants Dr. Derrick Gay and Dr. Valaida Wise; and AMS director of equity and engagement, Maati Wafford. Your diligent expertise has challenged me and helped me grow as I evolve in my own personal journey, and I am deeply grateful for the ways in which you support equitable education in Montessori and beyond.

Finally, AMS owes deep gratitude to Wend Collective. Their generous funding support allowed us to quickly move our DEI initiatives forward in intentional and respectful ways.

Four years ago, the AMS board defined the Inclusion and Equity strategic priority with the following statement: *AMS will model and ensure the advancement of principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion by creating an environment in which all feel welcomed, respected, valued, and empowered.*

What do these words look like in practice? Well-intentioned organizations often slap inclusive messaging on social media accounts, and draft policies that sound good in theory but lack the concrete evidence of real work. We did not want to fall into this same trap. We knew we must recognize that we, the AMS board, were not the experts on diversity, equity, and inclusion. It takes all of us being willing to learn and unlearn, to grow and challenge, to question and liberate to be able to move forward in positive ways where all feel welcomed, honored, and appreciated in Montessori spaces.

When our team embarked on this journey, we had to start by asking ourselves a series of questions, including:

- How are our members feeling about this work?
- How are the staff, commissioners, board, volunteers, consultants, and other stakeholder groups feeling about this work?
- What is the current state of AMS's DEI and ABAR initiatives?
- How do our mission, vision, and values reflect ABAR practices?

- Is our nondiscrimination statement strong enough?
- What should be included in an anti-bias, antiracist statement?
- Are our hiring practices equitable?
- How can we show action beyond words?

As we grappled with these questions, we developed a structured plan to assess our culture, policies, and practices as an organization. Our team recognized that this work involves **all** of us, not just those who sit on a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee or those who are formal members of the DEI staff and consulting team. As such, we started conversations with the rest of our staff and board. We hosted DEI and ABAR trainings. We spoke to our community members and we listened to their stories, feedback, ideas, and concerns.

I am proud to say that through these efforts, AMS has:

- Released a comprehensive benchmarking tool (the audit you'll find in these pages) to assess diversity, equity, and inclusion for Montessori schools and teacher education programs
- Developed and adopted an AMS anti-bias, antiracist statement and revised our nondiscrimination statement
 - **AMS Anti-bias, Antiracist Statement:** The American Montessori Society is committed to interrogating ourselves and investigating our past practices, recognizing, addressing, and eradicating all current forms of racism and systemic oppression within our organization, and supporting our members in doing the same in their schools, programs, and practices. We recognize that an understanding of racism and bias varies across individuals, and engaging in transformational change requires courage, trust, empathy, and understanding.
 - **AMS Nondiscrimination Statement:** The American Montessori Society does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, culture, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, ancestry, national or ethnic origins, or any other legally protected status.
- Outlined a plan to further diversify the composition of the AMS Board of Directors, Teacher Education Action Commission, and School Accreditation Commission, in order to broaden perspective and understanding of the societal context in which AMS exists
- Determined systems and standards necessary for accountability for diversity, equity, and inclusion reporting
- Designed an ABAR Certificate Program for teacher educators, credentialed Montessori teachers, and school administrators
- Updated the AMS Handbook for Teacher Education Program Affiliation to require 12 hours of training on equitable classroom practices to support teacher educators and ensure future cohorts of adult learners have access to this learning in teaching their students in a more just way

Our work is just beginning. I am pleased to share that we are continuing to use rubrics, surveys, and focus groups to inform the directions and outcomes of this strategic priority. We are continuing to implement DEI systems and standards for teacher education programs, school accreditation teams, and annual reporting measures. And, of course, we are utilizing the Montessori Equity Audit you'll find in this publication to assess diversity, equity, and inclusion in our schools and teacher education programs.

In the pages that follow, you'll find personal essays from members of our AMS community that offer a variety of perspectives and worldviews while emphasizing the importance of anti-bias, antiracist education for all of us. We hope you'll discover something in these essays that resonates with you, or makes you see the world in a new way. After the essays, you'll find the audit, along with detailed instructions as to how to use it and share it within your school or teacher education program.

We invite you to share the content of this publication with your community (provided you include the copyright line on the cover on any reproductions, and that you not use the material for commercial purposes).

It is our hope that this book provides you the tools you need to denounce racism, intolerance, and exclusion while also disrupting bias and creating systems that evaluate processes and programming, allowing you to make decisions based on DEI best practices.

We know that Montessori education has the power to bring about positive change in the world. We see this in the natural evolution of our practice and the way this teaching philosophy transcends time. Concurrently, we recognize the need to adapt to the world in which we are living. While AMS's role is to protect and advocate for the highest professional standards that inform Montessori education as practiced in AMS-accredited schools and taught in AMS-recognized teacher education programs, it is crucial to recognize AMS is not a scripted curriculum. Instead, AMS is a public trust.

As your public trust and your professional membership organization, we sincerely hope that we will be able to collaborate as individuals and as communities to move forward the critical work of unpacking our prejudices and creating environments where all students, educators, and administrators can thrive. Thank you for being part of this lifelong work.

PART I: THE ESSAYS





Identity and Exploration



STEREOTYPE AND THE SINGLE STORY

By Tatenda Blessing Muchiriri

BEING a Montessori African educator has been an odyssey. Coming from Africa, much of the rest of the world saw me as outside of civilization. Further, they could not grasp how I would have access to the European method of Montessori. I had to face others' misconceptions of who I was and am before I even began to grapple with the many layers of my own identity.

My adventure begins in 1985, just five years after the dismantling of Rhodesian apartheid. As a black African boy from a working-class family, my first years of education were largely untouched by the early childhood curriculum. Rather than attending preschool, I spent time outside with everyone in my community. My formative years were a pastiche of episodes that alternated between town and rural country life. My mother loomed large in my development, along with my five brothers and a complement of extended family. I remember it as the best of times, though many would quickly point out the resource disparity that would continue to plague my upbringing in the new Zimbabwe—between blacks and whites, middle- and working-class people, and rural and urban dwellers. Nonetheless, I made it to the University of Zimbabwe, where I studied Theater Arts.

Fast forward a few years: I was living in Asia and teaching Montessori. My identity and “diverse” background were constantly chafed by the ignorance of a community that was only just “discovering Africans.” People were barely equipped to deal with the fact that I was African, let alone a Montessori educator. I never knew that an arrogant question tinged with a “National Geographic filter” could cut so deep, and make me confront my faith in humanity. Many people who'd worked hard to build their careers as Montessorians would subtly express doubt that I had also made a similar valid effort. They couldn't conceive that a respectable working-class existence in Zimbabwe could produce an individual with just as much capacity or capability as their education had. The one upshot of my time in Asia was the support of my family and friends—and meeting Yuchen, who would become my husband.

The Chinese crucible was just a start. After moving to the United States, I was disappointed to find myself facing similar perceptions and biases. I settled in Colorado, where the community's generosity came tinged with subtle shades of prejudice, which made me doubt my decade-long experience as an educator. The eagerness to rope me in to fill diversity quotas in mostly-white educational spaces only brought me an awareness of the all-too-familiar disparities between the different sides of town. I found it especially jarring because the wrong side of the tracks—where people who looked like me lived—was only one freeway over, but an entire world away.

My ultimate takeaway from all this is that no matter where I am, some people will always hold unconscious bias, and will misunderstand me. I realized that I can only truly change the world by educating the child. Slowly,

I found my footing and became the change I wanted to see in my new home. I began tinkering with interventions to bring awareness to Montessori education and make it equitable to BIPOC communities, and especially African immigrants like me. I founded Montessori on Wheels, an enrichment program that uses a Montessori and Southern African indigenous pedagogical lens (including cross-cultural stories that children hear and create) to nurture the social-emotional development and intellectual growth of children from the BIPOC community. I feel that my charges are lucky to have my experience as an educator on three continents.

The back end of education—where administration, policy, and biases intersect—often reflects values increasingly out of touch with the future. I have done great personal work to ensure that I bring none of my prejudices to the classroom. Building culturally prepared environments in our schools and creating equity-conscious school cultures are critical, as is co-designing space in a way that invites and welcomes children, families, and community members and celebrates everyone's backgrounds, languages, and culture. In the years to come, as economies integrate, the cost of travel decreases, and the gap between the developed and developing world narrows, I hope that my global, cross-cultural experience will be seen as more valuable.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Maria Montessori began her work with children that other people thought were less than, or deficient, but whom she took time to observe, value, and learn from. How can we use that approach in our conversations and interaction with people who look or sound different from us? How can we take the learning path instead of the judging path?

In a TED Talk, the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie discusses the danger of having only one perspective and internalizing stereotypes. Power ultimately lies with the person or the culture or the organization that presents the lesson and gets to tell the story.

How have you or could you reject single stories in your professional practice?

BEING UNAFRAID

By Jessica Honer

I am a white, femme, Queer person who uses she/her pronouns. I wouldn't mind going gender neutral, but my self-expression doesn't hinge on it. I have found over the years that my identity is fluid. What once was "bisexual" for me became "gay" which then became "lesbian" (which I immediately rejected!), then "gay" again, then "pansexual", then back to "bisexual" and now I have happily and committedly landed on capital-Q "Queer"—for now. I grew up in a time when the adults around me only knew the words "gay" and "lesbian" and defined them as being attracted to the same sex, period. It took the work of many feminists, especially Audre Lorde and the late and beloved bell hooks, to help me expand and reimagine what my gayness, bisexuality, lesbianness, queerness, whatever-you-may-want-to-call-it-ness, had to offer to my life and to the world at large. As a Montessori teacher of adolescents, I find respite and love among my students, who continuously reinforce my own evolution of identifying as Queer. They inherently understand "queerness" as a set of values, a spirit, a way of being, and know that Queer folx belong to a history of rebellion and community activism. Somehow, they understand Queer as being far more than simply "gay," far more than a word that describes only one's sexual orientation. They see it as a major intersection on the vast roadmap of social identities, and respect how it gives dimension to peoples' worlds. I have to say, the kids are all right.

Most adults, on the other hand, are of a different time and vernacular. I have two fears when coming out to them: tokenization and reduction. Admittedly, I am not a good "token gay." I don't adhere to any of the stereotypes thrust upon the Queer community. I am hetero-passing, have a biological daughter, and am passionately critical of the modern Pride parade (it's absolutely a gentrified experience of what was once a radical, Black, trans, feminist movement). The reduction of my Queer identity to the simplistic understanding of "gay" as a sexual orientation makes me uncomfortable. For many years, I felt embarrassed and self-conscious talking about my queerness. I had impostor syndrome; I didn't look a certain way, or talk a certain way, and being gay didn't really *feel* like anything—even after I experienced the epiphanic revelation (whoa, I'm gay... now what?) that put my worldview into perspective. It took decades of exploring myself and befriending people from other minority cultures to discover what was so hard to put to words: the essence of Queerness has nothing to do with sexual orientation at all, but is actually an expression of something much richer, exciting, and, quite frankly, something dangerous to our current paradigm: being Queer, at its heart, is a radical noncompliance to the systems that exploit us all.

Queerness means vulnerable self-exploration and honesty. It means bravery in the face of adversity. It means vision and imagination. Queerness rejects forced norms and assimilations; it rejects anti-Blackness and misogyny; it rejects pigeonholed notions of what a family looks like, how much love is allowed between friends, who must perform what in society because of preconceived notions of what a "man" or a "woman" is supposed to be. It is the brave

act of turning totally inward to find truth with a quiet and listening mind *and* to express that resounding truth with unapologetic zeal. In essence, being Queer is so... *Montessori*.

I hope that when you imagine the Queer space inside my classroom, you don't think closet, but instead, see after-school Writer's Club. Young teens talk freely and passionately about their world and how angry their circumstances make them. They are unafraid of my eyes and ears on them, unafraid that their critiques could be misunderstood as teenage angst. Our Queer space means autonomous young people unafraid to oppose their teacher's thoughts, unafraid to tell me I am wrong. It is young people feeling safe to take intellectual risks, knowing that I will not stifle them with the narrow expectations they have come to know from the other adults in their lives. It is unthreatening. It is passionate. It is open tenderness and free love. My kids know without a doubt that they are seen with love, and that I will never measure them by their mistakes, but instead will encourage them to go after their truths. Being Queer has made me brave, being brave has made me vulnerable, and being vulnerable has led me to a rich and unique relationship with my classroom that I could never have forged without the queerness of my spirit leading the way.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The author talks about being unafraid. What fears do you have about having a conversation with someone who has shared their true self with you?

- How can you bridge the gap between your fears and engaging in a meaningful dialogue?
- What fears do you have about doing or saying the wrong thing with students or parents?
- What steps can you take to move forward anyway?

The author has created spaces for students to be their authentic selves.

- How can you create those spaces/activities for your own students, your teachers, your instructors, your parents?
- What examples have you seen of this in other classrooms, schools, or teacher education programs?

MONTESSORI AND DISABILITY

By Sid Mohandas

TRACING THE ROOTS

A good place to start to talk about disability and Montessori is to return to the roots of the Montessori pedagogy. Montessori began her work with disabled and neurodivergent children at the University of Rome's psychiatric clinic. In her speech at the 1898 Pedagogical Congress of Turin, contrary to the dominant scientific beliefs of the time that positioned disability and neurodivergence as a pathology requiring medical interventions, Montessori addressed disability and neurodivergence as chiefly a pedagogical issue: the system of education was seen to fail children. That she addressed systemic issues here marked an important shift.

UNCOVERING WHITENESS

While this shift is noteworthy, Montessori's views were simultaneously problematic, as they relied on the notion that disability and neurodivergence was a deviation from the "normative human" experience, and was something to be rectified. Critical disability scholars as well as postcolonial, decolonial, and anticolonial scholars identify the "normative human" as being shaped by the Western bourgeois model of "human." The Jamaican scholar and poet Sylvia Wynter (2003) refers to this as the "overrepresentation of Man": that is, the white, non-disabled, neurotypical, cisgender and heterosexual Man "overrepresents itself as if it were 'human.'" Montessori's developmental perspectives, along with other Western developmental theories that emerged contemporaneously, were shaped by wider colonial capitalist rhetoric on development, in which colonial violence was justified as a civilizing mission—the imposition of a particular view of development on Indigenous and non-Western people—and where the "rational economic non-disabled Man" was placed at the apex of civilization (Rollo, 2018; Mohandas & Osgood, forthcoming).

Contemporary critical disability scholarship and activism has contested the medical model that pathologizes the individual. Instead, a greater emphasis has been placed on how societies, knowledge systems, and institutions disable or enable bodies. Therefore, a disabled person is disabled by the society, and a non-disabled person is enabled by the society, because the society is designed and constructed with the non-disabled and neurotypical person in mind. Discrimination in favor of non-disabled and neurotypical people is called ableism. Understanding what institutions, knowledge systems, and practices do to bodies is fundamental to addressing ableism.

ADDRESSING ABLEISM

Addressing ableism is integral to dismantling whiteness. We must start from the premise that Montessori as a pedagogy and institution (similar to most other pedagogies and institutions) is ableist. Simply adding disabled people

to existing ableist institutions and practices does not constitute inclusion, nor does mobilizing interventions that seek to change the disabled person to conform to narrow definitions of what constitutes “normative.” At the core of addressing ableism is interrogating what constitutes “normative” and identifying ways in which existing structures uphold normativity.

Recent scholarship highlights how capacities and abilities of bodies are enabled or disabled only in relation to the nonhuman world (Feely, 2016). For instance, introduction of stairs can enable some people to access different levels, but can disable others who may be enabled by instituting ramps for wheelchair use. What a body can do is always contextual. This means there are no static solutions; rather, addressing ableism is an ongoing endeavor that requires continual dialogue with those in disabled communities, where decisions must always take place in the presence of those who will bear their consequences.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

We label ourselves in different ways. For example, one individual might say “I am autistic,” while another might say “I am a person with autism.” We also apply labels to people who are different from us: “That person is disabled.” “That event is just for the deaf community.”

What does it mean to give someone a label? What does it mean when someone gives themselves a label? In what ways do or can labels support the concepts of ableism, and in what ways do or can labels support understanding or community?

What labels have you given yourself? What labels have others given you that you have internalized? What impact did this have on you?

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Consider these words, from Koren Clark, about personal transformation:

I definitely say that there is a formula for the self-preparation that people need to look at. They really need to do the transformative work that's necessary. Not everybody is willing to do that. But once you do that self-transformative work, it shows up in everything you do. Education is transformative.

As educators, we cannot defend the psychic and spiritual development of a child without defending and raising humanity. It takes a child with a liberated spirit to autonomously solve problems on the shelves in their classroom and in the social conditions of their world.

-KOREN CLARK

PAGAN MONTESSORI AND DISRUPTION

By Melissa Kelly

AS a pagan, I believe that humans are not separate from nature. There's no such thing as an objective observer; we are all united with matter and energy, and magic is a real force in the universe. So it's weird that I'm the physical science teacher for my TEP, right? Why would a person who thinks magically teach a subject that deliberately delegitimizes and condescends to subjective, traditional ways of knowing the world?

The European story of scientific thought is linear—it tracks progress from “primitive” ways (traditional cosmologies that unite magical thinking with human curiosity and discovery) to “advanced” thinking (Western, reductionist, objective, empirical). This story is evident in our albums. When we repeat this story in our teaching, we make the mistake of leading children to the old lie: that knowledge progresses in a vertical line from simple to complex, with Western society's mindset and modes of operation as the end goal.

Most science stories are tales of seventeenth- to twentieth-century European men who isolated and studied one aspect of nature. We ignore and don't teach about a whole swath of human population because we don't consider what they were doing to be “pure” science. It makes sense why this happens: we exist in an industrialized, materialist culture that values the relatively recent divorce of the scientific method from the subjective experience of natural phenomena. However, even in Europe, before the eighteenth-century advent of Materialism, experimentation wasn't disconnected from the awe and wonder humans felt for nature. The early alchemists, like Roger Bacon and Nicolas Flamel, believed that experimentation with elements influenced the purification of the human soul. Isaac Newton himself considered gravity to be awesome evidence of divine intervention.

Reverence for the magic of nature is precisely what draws me to science. I share the children's curiosity and drive to explore. I want them to know that the personal experience of finding a pattern and investigating it is a truly human endeavor, practiced by people in all places throughout time. The Cosmic Curriculum provides an ideal bridge between my pagan lens and science. Physical laws are presented in a way that recognizes intricate connections between humanity and the universe, respecting traditional ways of knowing. Teaching “cosmically” allows me to show that seeking to understand nature is a timeless human tendency.

So what if we all teach from this perspective? We can start by placing the scientific method firmly on the human timeline as *one* way of “doing science,” thereby acknowledging the experience of other cultures. Then we can do what Montessorians do best: tell stories. There are tales of ingenuity from all groups and eras for each topic in our physical science and biology albums (atoms, botany, classification, chemistry, magnetism, medicine, simple machines, and more!) We can seek out these stories and share them, bringing life to the patterns and ideas we want the children

to uncover. Generally, the method by which people discover the world and explain it is connected to their culture. Framing lessons in this way connects our Science curricula to History and Geography.

Here are a few guiding questions for planning cosmic Science stories:

1. *Who are the “firsts”?*

For example, who was the first culture to make a discovery or an invention? A bit of research can help locate the originators of an idea. Some examples: When teaching electricity and batteries, go beyond Alessandro Volta and tell stories of the Inca and their knowledge of electric eels, or the practice of electric fish-based medical shock therapy in ancient Egypt and Iran. As an introduction to magnetism, discuss the ways in which lodestone was used in China. When discussing taxonomy and classification, go beyond Linnaean classification to share ways the Tzeltal of Mexico or the Hanunuo of the Philippines classify plants according to their own sacred hierarchical systems¹.

2. *How can we practice “Ecology of Place”?*

Ask: “What life forms are native to our location?” “What human stories or inventions are historically related to this ecosystem?”² “How can we include native voices in our lessons?” “Who can we contact to share with us firsthand?”

3. *How can we balance lessons in our classrooms in a way that shares joy in ageless human scientific exploration while also communicating modern modes of scientific discovery?*

Understanding how science relates to human culture has helped me reframe my approach to teaching. I deliberately use a deep history lens. I seek out science stories that honor the ingenuity of humanity. Teaching discoveries in this context can open up new ways of thinking for children who up to this point have only heard about science from a Western perspective. Like me, they may not see themselves reflected in traditional Western science curricula, but with a broader view, they will come to understand that people just like them innovate all the time. Science does not have to be divorced from nature, from the divine, from magic. What better way to “keep it cosmic”?



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do you honor who you are and not lose yourself while also honoring the culture of your students or adult learners? How much of yourself do you need to share with colleagues or parents if you want your personal choices or your life choices to be private?

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Learning and Unlearning

COUNTERING MYTHS IN MONTESSORI EDUCATION

By Maati Wafford and Mira Debs

“The very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining over and over again your reason for existing.”

–TONI MORRISON (1975)

THE influence of race and racism in our countries, in our education systems, and in Montessori education deeply impacts the environment surrounding each individual Montessori educator and their students. In this dialogue, we (Mira Debs, a sociologist who researches Montessori education, and Maati Wafford, a Montessori practitioner) will address three common myths that we have encountered about Montessori education’s “special” status as an anti-bias, antiracist form of education. We argue that Montessori is not automatically an anti-bias, antiracist method, but rather is influenced by teacher and social contexts of racism and other forms of systemic bias. We have a responsibility to learn about race and racism in our Montessori settings and in the wider world of our own countries and abroad, and then use this knowledge to change our practices.

Montessori Myth #1: “Montessori education is automatically culturally affirming because it follows the individual child.”

In our research and practice, we have repeatedly heard Montessori educators assert statements like, **“I’m a Montessori educator. I see each child as an individual; I don’t see color!”** They suggest that because they follow Maria Montessori’s guidance and their own training in viewing each child as an individual, they are not influenced by race, and are certainly not racist! While the practice of observation without judgment is immensely powerful, it is rare for any of us to be able to turn off the prisms of race around us. The sociologist Eduardo Bonilla DeSilva calls this response to “not see race” **colorblind racism**; being able to “ignore” race in this way is more often a benefit of those at the top of the racial hierarchy. Through asserting a colorblind view, educators do not examine the way their own small, everyday actions may continue to perpetuate racism.

MIRA: There is a long history of structural racism in the United States and other countries around the world; this influences each of us. Structural racism means that power structures, including institutions, laws, and daily practices, give power to one group over another. In many countries around the world, people have constructed racial hierarchies that have placed Black and Indigenous people at the bottom of the social system. In the United States, where slavery was legal from 1619 (with the arrival of the first enslaved people) until 1865,

discrimination against Black people was part of the economic structure of both the North and the South, was written into founding documents like the Constitution, was the central conflict over the Civil War, and still remains unresolved today, despite the efforts of so many activists. Indigenous people of sovereign nations were repeatedly murdered and removed from their land. Today, they still fight for the recognition of their tribal sovereignty, and the preservation of their languages and ways of life.

Schools, as a major social institution, are part of this pattern of structural racism. This means that schools are both places that work to expand opportunities to individual students *while also* following discriminatory practices that result in unequal treatment for students. Structural racism has been present in American education throughout history; its impacts endure today. The academic framework of critical race theory, used in both legal studies and education research, has been a space for identifying where and why these patterns persist, although critical race theory has also been weaponized by those who oppose conversations about race and racism, arguing that it blames individuals and creates greater divisiveness among groups.

Here are a few examples of some of the ways that structural racism has existed and still exists in American education:

- In the 19th and 20th centuries, Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to boarding schools where they were stripped of their language and culture and often abused. Many died while in custody (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014).
- The 1950s and 1960s saw violent resistance to school segregation. In some states, like Virginia and Arkansas, laws passed that closed schools rather than implement desegregation. As predominantly Black schools closed, Black teachers across the South lost their jobs (Rooks, 2017).
- Systems of local control fund schools based on the wealth of the surrounding community. Racial segregation and government redlining has increased the values of neighborhoods with white residents while undervaluing communities of color (Rothstein, 2017).
- Residential (white) gentrification in many cities displaces BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) families from their neighborhoods and community schools (Posey-Maddox, 2014).
- Urban schools that close today are overwhelmingly in predominantly Black neighborhoods (Ewing, 2018).
- Beginning in preschool, Black and Latinx children are disproportionately disciplined and suspended from school (Morris, 2016).
- Within racially diverse schools, white and Asian American students are disproportionately placed in higher-track programs (Tyson, 2011).
- In 2018, 79% of US public school teachers are white, despite a public school student population that is over 50% students of color/students of the global majority (NCES 2022a, b).
- Laws passed recently in a number of U.S. states limit/prevent discussion and teaching about race and racism and LGBTQ issues (Mervosh, 2022).

If you live in a country other than the U.S., how does race/racism impact schooling environments? How does educational inequality map to specific ethnic, religious, gender, and caste groups? What are differences between rural and urban students and by social class?

MAATI: Montessori education is not by default an anti-bias anti-racist or culturally affirming space or method of learning for BIPOC children. As I work with Montessori leaders, educators, and adult learners each and every day, I often lead with words from scholar Lerone Bennett Jr. who stated, “An educator in a system of oppression is either a revolutionary or an oppressor.” I find it necessary to apply this same logic to Montessori schools as a way to dispel the myth that a Montessori education equates to liberation for all children simply because we earned a credential and believe in following the child. It is not enough to align with Montessori pedagogy. If our spaces are not explicitly prepared to dismantle oppressive systems and bias, then we are doing a disservice to our students and families. We are also not following Montessori’s vision of adults working with children to save humanity.

In reflecting on how these structural issues impact each of us, Montessori educators must commit to truly “seeing” their students. Yes, they are individuals and each of them need to be seen in all of their Blackness (and in all of their queerness, in all of the ways in which they think and process information differently, in all of ways in which their physical bodies function differently, in all the ways their religious beliefs call into question what is considered “normal,” and so on). I challenge educators to ask themselves, “What parts of their identity must my students hide when they are in my classroom or school community?”

Montessori Myth #2: “Yes, racism exists in traditional education. But Montessori is different because Maria Montessori focuses on peace and social justice.”

We have been inspired by the eagerness of Montessori educators to participate in antiracism training and lend support to endeavors like Montessori for Social Justice and the Black Montessori Education Fund. We have also experienced Montessori educators who defensively state that Montessori is a special, protected space separate from bigger social problems, and issues of racism and bias do not apply here.

It can be painful to acknowledge that there is also racism in Montessori education, and this comes out in a variety of ways, including restricted access to who can participate in Montessori education and how fidelity becomes a marker of status for certain organizations, schools, and families.

MIRA: While Maria Montessori is often described in heroic terms in the Montessori community, it’s important to discuss that she made racist statements in her letters about Mexicans she met while traveling and Indians she taught while working in India in 1939. These statements were reflective of her Eurocentric views (Hawthorne, 2019; Debs, forthcoming), and her biases are also reflected in some aspects of the Montessori curriculum.

Renewing the Montessori Curriculum is a group of Montessori practitioners who have put together an e-book to update the Montessori curriculum, using the Montessori Method's liberatory principles to a lens of equity and



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cultural responsiveness for all students. The group is also considering what current practice needs to shift to meet Dr. Montessori's original vision through rewriting lessons and stories, creating new lessons and stories, and developing Montessori material to be used in classrooms. Scan the QR code below for more information.

Montessori educators, following the lead of Maria Montessori, have historically emphasized preserving the fidelity of the method through an emphasis on teacher training, the use of Montessori materials, and following Montessori classroom practice. While this emphasis on fidelity has maintained a coherence of the method, it has had racialized consequences in who can access Montessori education in the United States and elsewhere. A significant result of fidelity has been its gatekeeping function: it has kept out people who were not able to afford training or Montessori materials, or who live in places that do not have local Montessori training and materials manufacturing.

Today, based on data from the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector and AMS respectively, there are 565 public (free-tuition) Montessori schools and well over 4,000 private Montessori schools in the United States. Around the world, while there are some pockets of government-supported Montessori programs in the Netherlands, India, and Thailand, the majority of Montessori schools are private (Debs, forthcoming). The fact that the majority of Montessori schools charge tuition is a serious equity issue, as it limits access to Montessori to wealthier families. Who has allowed these programs to stay this way?

Even when a Montessori school is public or government-funded, there are still obstacles that can make it hard for some families to enroll. In many cases, Montessori is a “opt-in” choice school that families need to know about, and there are often barriers to enrollment that restrict access (waiting in line to register, paying for private preschool in order to access the public elementary program, providing their own meals and transportation to schools, which are often located in gentrifying neighborhoods). In fact, the desirability of Montessori programs can even fuel gentrification and displacement. One Oklahoma teacher told me that after a public Montessori school opened in her city, property values around the school increased more than 50% in a single year.

Even beyond enrollment challenges, some of my initial research suggests that Montessori educators can emphasize qualities that may not appeal to all families, with racialized consequences. For example, when Montessori educators talk about putting children in charge of their learning, emphasize the non-academic aspects of Montessori, or don't assign homework, this can lead to a perception that Montessori is not academically rigorous. As a result, choosing Montessori can feel risky for families with histories of being denied educational opportunities. How can educators speak about Montessori in a way that is accessible to *all* families?

MAATI: When you look closely at Montessori philosophy, you find that it incorporates much of the cosmologies of people of the global majority. Reverence of the child, grounding education in the development of the senses and practical life, seeking out one's cosmic task for the greater good—this is how entire cultures of people have been living since the beginning of human life. As a Black mother, Montessori philosophy drew

me in for the ways in which I was able to see my worldview uplifted. On the other hand, my first visit to a Montessori classroom gave me pause. I did not sense a connection right away. I saw a very sterile space that felt very focused on order and quiet, and I wondered about that.

As I began Montessori teacher training, I learned more about how Montessori classrooms are informed with children's development in mind, including, sensitive periods for order and coordination, etc. At the same time, through my study as a social worker and my own lived experiences, I also understood that within our sociopolitical context, perfectionism, power, oppression, and control definitely penetrates any prepared environment. Our Montessori spaces are permeable. They also reflect the larger system of education. In the United States, dominant narratives about race, class, culture, ability, etc. set the norms. For example, we see mostly white women teaching BIPOC children. Montessori is not exempt from any of these societal issues as relates to bias and inclusion in curricula and classrooms. When the conversation is about fidelity, my focus as an equity practitioner is how authentic and faithful we are as we ensure justice.

Montessori Myth #3: “Montessori is just starting to become more diverse.”

MIRA: Another way that we see racism impacting Montessori education is through the erasure or failure to commemorate Montessori educators of color who were critical to Montessori education in the United States from the 1960s onwards. These educators were visionaries, but because of racist lending practices, they often lacked access to substantial capital to institutionalize their schools. As I document in my book, Roslyn Williams, a Black educator, founded CHAMP (the Central Harlem Association of Montessori Parents) in 1967, and in 1968, she created the first Black-led AMS-accredited Montessori training program in New York. In 1964, Mae Arlene Gadpaille created the Montessori Family School in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood, received Ford Foundation grants, and collaborated with architect Buckminster Fuller on a plan for a Black housing community centered around a Montessori school for children age birth to 18. Despite extensive fundraising, she was unable to raise the \$4 million to make her vision a reality. Moreover, both Williams and Gadpaille were attracted to Montessori because they saw a method that could be culturally affirming and an antidote to racism in their communities.

Latina teacher Dina Paulik created the first Montessori classroom in Dallas, which grew into the city's first public Montessori program. In Denver, Latina principal Martha Urioste created the first public Montessori program in the city in 1985, leading to a cluster of public Montessori schools. In both cases, public Montessori was a vehicle to create racially and socioeconomically diverse public schools that attracted students from neighborhoods around the city.

Although all these educators are beloved in their communities, they are often not well known in the broader Montessori community. For example, the AMS Living Legacy is an annual award that dates back to 1993. However, it was not until 2022 that AMS named its *first* Black honoree, longtime Miami public Montessori educator Juliet King, co-founder of Coral Reef Montessori Academy.

When I was researching my book, I was surprised to hear people talk about Montessori “recently becoming more diverse,” suggesting that Montessori education was only beginning to be adopted in communities

of color. They were unaware of the long history of these educators of color embracing Montessori for their communities. Addressing the history of bias and racism in Montessori means that we learn and recognize these histories, and pay attention to contemporary racial dynamics in the Montessori community (Debs, 2019; Murray et al., 2020).

MAATI: As Mira mentioned, one aspect of not being seen is that there is a largely white/dominant culture view that doesn't recognize or make space for BIPOC Montessorians by a process of omission or erasure. Another aspect of not being seen is that in many cases BIPOC communities *intentionally* situate themselves, their classrooms, and their schools under the radar—something that has also happened in many community-led Montessori schools that served BIPOC children.

For many historically marginalized communities, operating schools for their children was part of a strategy of self-determination: BIPOC-majority environments provided physical and psychological safety, which were essential to children truly flourishing in any prepared environment. In contrast, diverse spaces can present challenges to BIPOC students. Understanding the white gaze and making adjustments while in white spaces or, as it was described in my family, being in “mixed company,” played a huge part in how I have been socialized. Growing up in the South, this began at a very young age, as I grappled with the nuances of how I was to behave in front of “these white folk”—not necessarily because they upheld higher standards, or because we thought of them as “better than,” but because of the consequences of being seen by them, which could lead to further targeting and marginalization.

As I reflect on visionaries of color who have not been celebrated in Montessori education, I think of these very intentional, subversive practices of operating under the radar of mainstream society, particularly as it relates to how we educate young children. I am reminded how people of color are able to claim and reclaim their wholeness and function as self-determining people even while living in racist and oppressive conditions. Much of this required and still requires self-respect, agency, and setting clear boundaries among students and teachers alike.

I say all of this to articulate the fact that BIPOC communities have long utilized Montessori education as a way of educating children. It never depended upon nor has it ever needed validation from white people. What it did need, and often did not get, were fair and equitable business practices and access to educational funding and sustainability.

WHAT CAN I DO AS AN EDUCATOR?

Self-reflection: Engage in what Montessori described as “systematic study of self.” Once we earnestly seek to engage in deep self-reflection—the type of reflection that requires humility and radical truth-telling—we then begin to understand how we as educators can (and often do) hinder or harm our students. Believing wholeheartedly in Montessori philosophy, having a credential, and creating beautiful prepared environments means nothing if we have not sought to disrupt our own prejudices and internalized racism. This is truly the adult transformation that must guide our practice if we are to say that Montessori is truly about liberation and following the child.

Preparing your environment: Ask yourself these questions: What in fact am I preparing the environment for? How can I prepare the environment in my classroom, and, more broadly, in my school/organization/society as a whole, to allow BIPOC students to flourish? Throughout every aspect of our school and classroom spaces, there should be an emphasis on liberation.

Consider:

- the many ways you can thoughtfully embed liberation and justice throughout the curriculum, materials, libraries, and visual decor. Think: **Who is being silenced? Whose voice isn't being heard?**
- your evaluation, assessment and observation processes. Think: **What criteria is being used and why?**
- your school's policies, programs, and procedures. Think: **Who is part of the decision-making? Who benefits? Who is burdened?**

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We are all in different places in our development when it comes to anti-racist learning. Consider these words from Dr. Vanessa Rigaud; how can we all continue to grow?

...cultural differences are actually things we should celebrate and not see them as differences, because it brings a unique tapestry of what makes us who we are [as a people, nation, world]. And if we can begin to have those conversations that are deep and really acknowledge and honor that people are coming from different walks of life, like different places in their development, different places, in understanding ABAR, then we can begin to do something really meaningful and really powerful. In order for that to happen, people need to work on themselves and ask themselves, "How can I continue to grow?"

DR. VANESSA RIGAUD

THE ROLE OF UNLEARNING IN JUSTICE AND EQUITY

By Luz Casquejo Johnston

“ALL learning is unlearning.” This quote from scholar and social justice advocate Kevin Kumashiro brought my work as an Elementary Level Coordinator for the teacher education program at Saint Mary’s College of California into focus. During Kumashiro’s *Leading for Justice* workshop, I met other leaders in schools of education across the U.S. and Canada who were committed to creating programs that would help teachers create liberated learning environments.

It is the job of our teacher education programs to facilitate the transformation of the teacher that Dr. Montessori wrote about: “An ordinary teacher cannot be transformed into a Montessori teacher, but must be created anew, having rid herself of pedagogical prejudices. The first step is self-preparation of the imagination, for the Montessori teacher has to visualise a child who is not yet there, materially speaking, and must have faith in the child who will reveal himself through work.”

This is a whole learner approach. This is intellectual work, spiritual work—and it is hard. Kumashiro’s workshop challenged us to “trouble” notions of education—to investigate the foundations of the U.S. education system and its political underpinnings. If we want to understand what a system is meant to produce, we have to simply look at the products. If the products are inequitable outcomes and experiences, we have to change the systems. Training programs train guides to be scientists (as Montessori wrote, “the vision of the teacher should be at once precise like that of the scientist...”) who observe the environment and continuously look to improve it. If what a Montessori environment produces are inequitable outcomes, we are charged to prepare for equitable outcomes instead.

Montessori learning environments are not immune to biases and cultural preferences. While data suggests that Montessori schools fare better in terms of statistics that measure inequitable outcomes for children of the global majority, there are still gaps and preferences highlighted in the numbers. Just as one example, a study of discipline data (Brown and Steele, 2015) revealed disproportionate rates for African American students enrolled in Montessori school and traditional schools in the U.S. Southeast as compared with their White peers. While the relative rate index was lower in Montessori schools, there was still some disparity.

When faced with this data, I realized I had to unlearn what I had learned about our Montessori commitment to peace education. I knew that I had to trouble my notion of peace and how to get there. I began to dig deeper into works that called for justice. I studied the work of Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Beverly Daniel Tatum. The common thread I found amongst these writings was that we Montessorians needed to connect more deeply to ourselves and to our students.

For me, that meant troubling my identity as a cisgender, educated, middle-class, Christian, Asian woman. I had to understand how I benefited and profited from the culture of white domination in this country that separates us into false hierarchies. I had to understand how the struggle of other marginalized peoples was my struggle too. I had to understand how liberation for all was liberation for me as well. True connection happens when we look beyond prescribed notions of who we are based on our racialized identities and identity structures. Once I was clear on who I was, I understood who I was called to be. Once that was clear, I knew what I was called to do.

JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, inclusion) work is universal work. I had to unlearn that this work could be done in containers—for example, in a single session in a course, or in a single course in a program. JEDI work had to become what I was and who I was. I began by thinking about every class I taught—History, Mathematics, Classroom Leadership. I wondered and reflected on how to focus on justice in each class. I troubled who was in the curriculum and who was not. I was fortunate to work with colleagues at Saint Mary’s College who had already radically reimaged and shifted the way they delivered their own curriculum (for teacher educators in the state high school credential program)—by focusing on embedding readings, assignments, and assessments to foster the development of critical consciousness. This was not just a class, but a way of being (Raygoza et al., 2020). It helped me to be in community with these colleagues as I reenvisioned how to create a program that developed critically conscious Montessori educators.

While my journey in my TEP was cut short when our program closed in 2019, my work has just begun. As Co-Chair of the AMS JEDI Committee, I hope to help leaders throughout our organization and movement understand how to unlearn, how to trouble, and how to change.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

As this reflection mentions, Montessori learning environments are not immune to biases and cultural preferences. Innovation takes place when we commit to questioning, dialogue, and discussion. Much of our learning is actually unlearning.

What are the ways in which your classroom or school community is rooted in bias or exclusion?

How can you see the past as an opportunity to learn and understand history without being stuck in that history, or allowing history to get in the way of continuing to learn, develop, and evolve using a critical lens?

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Luz Casquejo Johnston discusses how peace may not be enough when it comes to true ABAR work, and why knowing oneself is an important step:

When we talk about justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, there's this tension between what is and what is not. And when we focus sometimes on peace, we're only focusing on "keeping the peace," which can be a way to silence dissenting voices and also a way to avoid any discomfort when it comes to implicit or explicit biases.

My training is in the Lower Elementary plane—children ages 6 to 9. When I think about my goal, I ask, How do I facilitate this unfolding of consciousness, this unfolding of purpose? I have to think about deeply knowing that child. For me, that means deeply knowing myself. What are my implicit and explicit biases, based on my own context, the context in which I grew up (which means cultural, generational, societal, religious)? All of those things, all of those pieces inform how I am in the world. And my job is to question how those things will inform my practice, which will then affect the children in my classroom.

If we can distill it into "This isn't about myself, this is about the child," I think that we can get past this discomfort because we can do anything in service to the child. I mean, the service of developing and unfolding human potential. I can be brave in that. I can say, okay, this makes me uncomfortable. For example, I am a cisgender Asian woman. I am always viewed in the world as Asian, based on my facial features. What does that mean for me? As a teacher of children who identify as Latinx, who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, what do I need to do in order to walk beside the children in my classroom? What are the brave steps I need to take in order to do that?

—LUZ CASQUEJO JOHNSTON

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ERASURE: AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

By Sinuda Kapalczynski

MY experience is unique, just like yours. As an Akwesasne Mohawk, I grew up in the seat of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Onondaga language and culture classes were an integral part of my elementary school experience at the Onondaga Nation School. My family embraced traditional community practices and much of my identity stems from these foundational years of my life.

For many years, Indigenous language and culture have been successfully passed on to generations of children, but fewer and fewer people speak fluently. Some Indigenous communities have already Indigenized Montessori, and use the Method as a tool that enhances existing language and culture programs. However, there is still so much work that could be done in education and curriculum, especially by non-Indigenous peoples. Language and culture erasure did not happen overnight, but were structured government-endorsed assimilation programs that took place across the continent (and in most colonized places across the Earth); this continues to impact generations of Indigenous people.

For centuries, Indigenous Peoples of North America have been beaten and killed in efforts to “Kill the Indian, save the man,” as proclaimed by Captain Richard H. Pratt, the founding director of the most infamous assimilation program at Carlisle Indian School, a Pennsylvania institution that boarded children forcibly stolen from more than 140 tribes. Historically, throughout Canada and the United States, these Indian boarding schools and assimilation programs intentionally warped and corrupted the spirit of Indigenous children with the goal of erasing Indigenous identity. Because Indigenous children were censored or punished any time they tried to express their language and culture, they learned to smother and deny their identity in order to survive. The result? Thousands of Indigenous children were taught to hate themselves, their languages, their cultures, their identities. This collective intergenerational trauma is an unwanted legacy that has not been healed, and continues to create serious dysfunctions in Indigenous identities, families, and communities.

According to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, approximately one Indigenous language dies every two weeks. On the other hand, the Forum also declares that if Indigenous language, culture and educational “programs are designed specifically around decolonizing learning methodologies and prioritizing Indigenous perspectives, traditional Indigenous beliefs can be integrated into curriculums to preserve valuable cultural and historical views.”

Maria Montessori knew the importance of nurturing the child's spirit and growing sense of identity and the Montessori method evolved to support and protect this delicate time of human development. She reminds us that "children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future." It's time to work to repair the damage that dominant and colonizer culture still inflicts on Indigenous Peoples—it's time to Indigenize Montessori. It's time to be intentional, culturally sensitive, and to take "an intentional, culturally sensitive, and appropriate approach to adding Indigenous ideas, concepts, and practices into curricula, when and where it is appropriate."

The time is now to give due respect to Indigenous identities; our role as prepared adults can empower both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in their developing love for language and culture. We must do our best to be an ally to Indigenous Peoples today by purposefully sharing Indigenous culture in our classrooms, with our families, and with each other. Let's Indigenize Montessori. Let's walk the path together.

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I think ABAR has brought a breath of fresh air to Montessori education, because it was always my understanding of reading Montessori and being involved with people who were close to Montessori herself that equality was always a very high priority for Montessori educators. But they didn't always know how to actualize it. They spent so much of their time working with children and training adults that they ran out of time and energy to attack all the issues that are involved in being at the center of this great revolution in education. And I see ABAR as part of that revolution.

I'm sure that if Montessori were alive today, she would wholeheartedly embrace ABAR because [racism] is a vestige of control and domination that has to be removed. It is an impediment to peace all over the world.

—CHARLES TERRANOVA

SNAPSHOTS AND REFLECTIONS, MEMORIES AND MOMENTS

By Lisanne Pinciotti

In examining my own learning and re-learning about diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, snapshots emerge in my mind, representing both general memories and specific moments in time. These snapshots prompt reflections—spiraling, repeating, connecting, deepening, and narrowing to a sustained purpose. Sharing these snapshots feels a little scary, yet meaningful. They represent only a few of many memories that have impacted my life. I have become increasingly aware of how my identity (white cisgender female, raised in the U.S. mid-Atlantic region by a mother and father in a large extended Catholic family) has shaped the lens through which I view the world—and I hope these snapshots and reflections can create space for me to continue to examine my own privilege.

SNAPSHOT: fourth or fifth grade, walking home from school with two friends. We see very young Black children playing on the other side of the street. My friend says, “They are so cute when they are little.” I don’t know what she means, and it makes me feel uncomfortable. I don’t say anything at that moment because I’m worried what they will think of me for asking. As I look back now, I believe this is the first memory I have of a racist comment, even though *racist* was not a word I knew or heard back then.

SNAPSHOT: college co-ed cheer teams at a Midwestern university. My partner is a Black man and over the years, a few of our teammates are also Black. After college, I continue with cheer, and our travel team captain, D., is a Black man. Each week, we travel to coach at different universities in Midwestern and Southeastern states. I love the experience; we learn so much about each other on those long drives. All of these Black men are fun-loving, easygoing, and seem to be treated no differently than anyone else on the teams. In hindsight, I wonder if that was true. One specific memory surfaces: I invite our travel team to my family picnic. Weeks later, I find out that a family member expressed anger that D. was there. I feel sad and upset, but don’t know how to follow up (or even if I should) since it wasn’t directed to me. I remember being grateful that my uncle told that family member he was out of line. I wonder now if D. felt or noticed it that day and didn’t let on. Following up with some of these past relationships might help me explore who I was at the time and what my impact was. I wonder if I caused harm to any of these folks. I wonder, and worry if reflecting is enough.

SNAPSHOT: I am an **Early Childhood teacher and administrator**. Our school moves from a large old public school building in a quiet, upper-middle-class town to a large old Catholic school building in a neighboring city. The buildings are literally less than two miles apart but described by some to be “worlds away.” The experience of having to convince families to trust the new setting and bring their children to the city awakens a new perspective in me. What is it about the geographical boundary of a river that gives parents a different impression of the school? What is it about the city that feels so different from the little town across the river? I am a parent; my children will attend this school also, and while these shared conversations seem to help, others are not convinced. I often wonder how folks developed this prejudice. Is it from their own experiences, or lack thereof? Am I naive since I am a transplant to this area? This is something I continue to discuss with colleagues and friends to help me better understand the roots and perception of difference.

One parent teaches me **the difference between Black and black**. “One is a person and one is a crayon,” she says. We talk about what it means to be Black; she wants me to know what she needs to do to prepare her son to live in America where whiteness is the “rule of law.” I begin to notice the ways that whiteness allows entry or preference. It takes concerted effort to notice, and more effort to figure out how to make it visible to others. It will be years before I feel confident enough to call out racism in group situations.

SNAPSHOT: I am now a **faith formation teacher** in our church community (Catholics call the program CCD (Catechesis of the Christian Doctrine)). Growing up in Catholic schools, I was taught to care for those who were less fortunate. I volunteered for organizations and school initiatives that provided resources to those who were sick, poor, imprisoned, etc. At the time, I did not consider other ways that folks may have needed additional support based on aspects of their identities that were not often obvious. Now, as an adult leading classes for young people within our church community, our discussions of identity and “need” continue to expand and impact our discussions of how to help, who needs help, and what is considered “help.” One example is neurodiversity: J. is a student in my CCD class who has been diagnosed on the autism spectrum. Our time with J. helps us all learn more about what an inclusive setting means and requires of each of us, as we work to form a mutually supportive community. Reflecting on this experience, as well as on my interactions with other neurodiverse folks in my immediate and extended family and the classrooms I lead, I see another opportunity to create awareness and strengthen belonging. The moments compel me to develop a Montessori Inclusion Endorsement (MIE) program at our TEP, and work to spread awareness among other TEPs about the impact the MIE can have.

SNAPSHOT: **Marlene Barron** has long influenced my professional growth. In the 1990s, I regularly attend her lectures and workshops. She uses the term “multi-multi,” and challenges us (me) to expand ideas of how “multi” is reflected in our schools. This term, she says, refers to everything: multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-faith, multi-anything. Back at my school, we explore why routines and rituals become patterns of behavior, and ask ourselves how we can rethink those routines/rituals so that everyone feels they belong. In 2021, the last year of Marlene’s life, she and I talk often; I am especially eager to know how she experienced prejudice or difference. She was honest and brave, and reflected on how she could not believe that, at her age, she had not truly explored her own privilege. She found that process interesting and educational even at this point in her life. Like others who were mentors along the way,

Marlene was the essence of a lifelong learner. Even after her death, I am grateful for her voice in my head. As I form new questions, I wonder what she might ask to push my thinking a little deeper.

SNAPSHOT: I am a member of the AMS Teacher Education Action Commission. We begin a book club; a different member chooses the book each time. *White Fragility* is one of the choices; it is one of the first books that helps me consider more specifically my role and possible impact as a white woman in society. I learn the importance of standing back to listen in group settings, rather than being the first to talk. I learn more ways to measure my perspective on life in the context of my privilege, and how to consider instituting systemic changes within spaces I lead. Most importantly, I learn how important it is to stand in vulnerability, take risks, and do my best to restore relationships when I get it wrong. Writing this piece feels *really* vulnerable, but I do so with the hope of prompting others to join these conversations!

My **identity work** evolves with each interaction. I integrate new feedback into what I've already learned, which expands my understanding and perspective. This work feels dynamic, not static, and I hope it remains a "burning flame of imagination" that propels my education. As my learning deepens, it also loops back to those memories/snapshots in my mind. Each time I interact with folks in my world, I consider what I should fold into my life practice after learning more from their unique perspective and life experience. Who are we if not humans that grow inward *and* outward from our interactions with each other?

This journey of mine is a spiral, a never-ending process that continues to loop back around, but on a new level or plane over time. It allows me time to process and reflect, but also to do and act. It's in the doing that I hope to make an impact.

This essay is a small window into my personal life and the ways these snapshots have been woven into my professional life. I offer the reflection as it stands today, knowing that tomorrow, I want to have deeper self-awareness for having shared it. I offer blessings and good effort for our collective journey and look forward to the day I can walk beside and learn from you.

Peace be with you and your spirit.

INTERNALIZED INFERIORITY

By Kiran Paek

SEVERAL years ago, I accepted a position as director of a teacher education program in Beijing, China. I was so excited, and I threw all my energy into designing the course, setting up environments, and interviewing Chinese instructors to be part of the team. I thought I was ready for any challenge—but what I didn't see coming was bias, prejudice, and discrimination.

About 35 adult learners enrolled in the course. The first few days went well, but on the fourth day, I received a message from the program's executive director informing me that 19 of the adult learners had signed a petition demanding that all the Chinese instructors be removed from the course, and that *I* teach all subjects instead. I was shocked. The instructors had all been approved by AMS, they had solid teaching backgrounds, and I had been working happily with them for weeks to prepare the courses.

I called a meeting to listen to the adult learners' concerns. They questioned the Chinese instructors' qualifications and stated that they didn't believe the instructors could deliver a high-quality program. Though the adult learners didn't say this out loud (Chinese culture often discourages confrontation or directness), I suspect they assigned more value to me based on my history. While I am also Asian (Korean), I had taught in the United States for many years and spoke English, while my Chinese instructors had never worked outside their home country and delivered their teaching in their native language. In China, English-speaking people, or those who have experience in America, are held in high esteem, no matter their background or level of education. If someone is white, speaks English, or has traveled/worked in English-speaking countries, they are often given precedence over native Chinese, even if their qualifications are lacking. The reverse can be true as well—highly-educated Chinese are often passed over for positions for which they are very qualified. To see this discrimination from Chinese adult learners against instructors of their own race was upsetting to me, but once I began to understand it, I knew I needed to act.

Rather than passing judgment on the adult learners' actions, I instead firmly shared my support for my instructors. The meeting took most of the morning, but in the end, I was able to convince all adult learners but one to stay on and finish the course with the Chinese instructors in place. It ended up being a great success, and afterward, 10 of the adult learners traveled to an AMS conference in the U.S. to advocate for our program—which led to increased enrollment in our next cohort.

This incident was a great lesson for me. In successive years, I continued to advocate for my Chinese instructors, and spoke with adult learners about the possibility that one day they themselves might become teacher educators. I tried to stress the importance of them growing into leaders in their own country and told them I would support them in this endeavor.

I've lived in China for many years now, and perspectives have begun to shift. Many Chinese teachers have indeed become teacher educators, and programs are thriving. But some of this same bias and prejudice against Chinese teachers still exists. It is difficult to talk about these issues openly, since Chinese people tend to be more reserved and less direct than Americans. Because of these cultural differences, talking about unconscious bias, equity, inclusion, and other ABAR issues may look different in China; any discussions will need to be approached slowly, with sensitivity, and in a space where participants feel safe. If that can happen, I believe we can move forward and challenge each other to have some of these hard conversations.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The author shared the decision to take time to listen to and understand the reasons and concerns of the adult learners before moving forward. It is easy to judge a situation by our own background, our own culture, our own experiences. But when we do that, we often miss the true nature of what is happening.

Has this happened to you? What did it feel like when someone tried to fix a problem without knowing the real cause of the problem? Or has the reverse happened—have you tried to fix a problem that you thought you knew the cause of, only to find that you didn't? What were the results?

It can take time to truly hear another person's perspective, but one way to move forward when there are differing opinions is to step back and see where you can find common ground. Have you experienced this approach before? If you have, what did it feel like? How can you build in the time to find common ground, to get to know the why behind the what?

Q & A WITH KIRAN PAEK

What do you think becomes of us when we don't believe in our own value/expertise?

We will become like machines—robotic—if we don't believe in our own values and expertise. Our effort will be limited to crossing things off our daily to-do lists. Our value helps us thrive and be human beings who can relate with people around us. Our expertise drives us to influence our community to be a better place for all of us.

Why do you think Chinese educators are not seen as credible?

White culture has been held in high esteem in Asian culture for a long time. It's hard to admit that due to a longing to become like white people, some Asians, especially women, cover their whole body when they are exposed to the sun lest their skin get any darker. Learning English is prized as well; those who only speak their native tongue are often seen as less educated.

After living in China for several years, I can share my observations about Montessori there. Montessori in China has a fairly short history; only about 20 years or so. As a result, there are not many well-trained teachers and instructors to serve in the school communities, and educators are brought in from overseas. A similar thing happened in the United States in the Montessori resurgence in the 1960s; many schools hired teachers from France, England etc. Montessori in China is going through some growing pains now, but I do feel confident that the Montessori community will make the transition from this kind of bias to having a positive attitude towards their own teachers. At this stage, it isn't surprising that they prefer to have foreign teachers/instructors who have many years of long experience in teaching. As long as this is their reason (rather than any kind of racism or other bias), I can live with it.

And I observe that things are slowly shifting. Many qualified teachers stay in the classroom to teach children after they gain credentials, rather than moving “up” to become a principal. Parents witness the positive impact Montessori is having on their children and are starting to believe in the Method. I believe that in time, people in China will make the transition from their current biases and start to believe in the expertise and value of their countrypeople when it comes to Montessori education.

Aimee Allen reflects on the difference between some of the “color-blind” thinking of previous decades, and what we know today:

A lot of this comes from the work of Dr. Montessori and then the work of the American Montessori Society in its earlier days. What's going on in the world also is reflected in Montessori. So, in the 1960s and 1970s, this idea of equality versus equity—the idea that we're all the same and we're not going to call attention to our differences because we're all one people. That was revolutionary at the time. But now here we are, 60 years later, and we're looking at our history and realizing that by not calling attention to things, they get swept under the rug or people don't see them. It develops implicit biases, and we're not getting better as a society by ignoring our biases and pretending that we're all in the same boat. The evolution in Montessori is that we need to start actually pulling social justice out from under this umbrella of peace and give it very direct attention and direct language so that all the things that were being ignored—whether that was intentionally, or probably unintentionally being ignored—are now coming to the surface and to the front.

—AIMEE ALLEN

Making Positive Change

ASPIRATIONS IN ABAR LEADERSHIP

By Hilary Green

THE Barrie Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies has been on an ABAR journey as a teacher education program for the past few years. Our instructors work in a variety of school settings, and many had been doing DEI work within these settings. This sparked conversations about how we could incorporate this work into our teacher education program. We began with some guided professional development, and then started to introduce DEI practices and experiences into the course components in an incremental way. Instructors review lesson plans and presentation materials and consider if they represent a more global way of thinking—and if they do not, we make changes.

We welcome feedback from adult learners as well. For example, a few years ago, a group of Elementary II adult learners noticed that all the mathematicians included on the timeline were white males. The adult learners and instructor discussed how this was problematic and came to me with a proposal to revise the timeline to ensure greater diversity and representation moving forward, so that future adult learners will be offered information about a wide range of mathematicians throughout history.

Another example is within our Early Childhood Social Studies curriculum. The instructor has had the adult learners create lessons and activities that focus on covering aspects of social justice with young children. The lessons created include discussions on diverse family structures, peace and social justice, and language around gender identity. The creation of these lesson plans has led to interesting discussions about adult learners' own school experiences, as well as things that they notice within their practicum placements.

On the instructor side, each of our faculty meetings now includes some kind of ABAR professional development. Whether it is watching a video or reading an article and then having a discussion about it, or bringing in a speaker to join us, our growth as educators and as professionals has had a positive impact on the work we are doing with the adult learners. My goal as a TEP director is to create a space for instructors to feel comfortable with the topics, ask questions and share examples about how they may already be incorporating this work into the course components, and recognize that this is all part of the transformation process for ourselves and our adult learners.

As a program director of an AMS-affiliated teacher education program, I am proud of the work we are doing—and yet I know that there is much more to do. I cannot make these changes all by myself. We must do this as a team, and everyone needs to reach the point where they are comfortable creating space for difficult conversations and/or making adjustments to assignments when it is what is best for the adult learners in the program. As someone who also serves on AMS's Teacher Education Action Commission (TEAC), I am excited to see the direction that this work is taking. The intentionality in adding specific requirements around ABAR education and greater awareness in adding language throughout the Teacher Education Handbook and the AMS Fundamental Tenets for teacher

education programs shows a real commitment to this work. Ensuring that all TEPs are focused on this work will allow us to better see where voices are not being represented throughout our curriculum and give us the opportunity to continue to evolve and grow.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do we move our thinking about DEI/ABAR work from a destination to a journey? How can we create opportunities and spaces where everyone in the community is empowered to ask questions and invited to search for solutions?

What makes this work a struggle for you? What internal and external challenges have, or do you face to create a community to do DEI/ABAR work?

Many Montessorians have reverence for their trainers and the way they were taught, and feel it's difficult to move away from outdated or problematic ways of thinking in their teaching. However, consider this quote from Aimee Allen:

I also think when you are talking about reverence for your trainer, one of the things that's really important is if you were trained 20 years ago, well, what's your trainer doing now? Your trainer has likely evolved as well. I mean, I see it in our [AMS] Peace and Social Justice Committee all the time. We have women in their 80s who are coming to the white anti-racist discussion group because they want to continue to learn. But maybe when they trained somebody 20 years ago, they didn't have the information that they have now. And that person they instructed 20 years ago hasn't seen the evolution of the trainer. So, I think it's important, too, to realize that we're all learning, we're all evolving.

-AIMEE ALLEN

THE NEED FOR INDIGENOUS MONTESSORI TEACHER EDUCATION

By Trisha Moquino

INDIGENOUS Montessori Institute (IMI) is an anti-racist Montessori teacher training program that centers the reclaiming of our Indigenous children's education. IMI is an offshoot of the Keres Children's Learning Center (KCLC), a not-for-profit educational organization that supports Cochiti Pueblo children and families in maintaining, strengthening, and revitalizing their heritage language of Keres. IMI features, among other offerings, a 10-module survey course called Reclaiming of Indigenous Education (RIE), which examines the components that make KCLC what it is, as well as the educational context that made KCLC necessary. IMI continually brings awareness to issues around Indigenous education and offers support for other educators, Tribal Nations, and educational institutions. The 10 RIE modules are:

1. History of Indigenous Education
2. Anti-Racism Training (via our partners at Embracing Equity)
3. Understanding the Story of Why KCLC Has to Exist
4. Diving Deeper into the Wider World of Indigenous Education in the U.S.
5. Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies
6. Language Immersion Techniques
7. Indigenous Dual Language Education
8. Indigenous Knowledge Systems
9. Understanding By Design
10. Tyranny of Outcomes

This RIE survey course was needed because, to our knowledge, when we began planning it in 2017, no Montessori teacher training center offered any single one of these 10 modules, much less the whole course. RIE is available as a standalone course, or can be embedded in Montessori training through a partnership with the Southwest Institute of Montessori Studies (SIMS). In addition, IMI offers technical assistance to organizations developing their anti-racist muscles and expanding their critical consciousness. In 2023, IMI will offer two additional courses that take participants through a deeper, more detailed examination of two KCLC components: Indigenous Language Immersion and Indigenous School Leadership Design.

We cannot have a conversation about IMI without looking at why it—and the Keres Children's Learning Center (KCLC)—was needed in the first place. At the time the journey of KCLC started in 2006, Cochiti children's language

and culture still took a back seat in Head Start and public schooling. Unfortunately, this is still the case. New Mexico's Yazzie-Martinez court case (in which a judge ruled that the state of New Mexico was not providing an adequate education to Native American learners, English-language learners, children with disabilities, and children from under-resourced backgrounds) is a stark example. KCLC, now in its 11th year, has been held up as a model of what Indigenous education can be. We founded IMI in order to create a teacher pipeline for KCLC; our founding board of directors foresaw that we would not be able to send future teachers to existing colleges or universities because they would not come back trained in the way we needed them to be—for example, with an understanding of Indigenous Language Immersion pedagogy and Indigenous Dual Language Education, knowing the history of Indigenous education in the United States, and having had quality Montessori training.

IMI is more necessary than ever. Failure to educate our Indigenous children in a way that does not harm them can be seen in their poor reading and math scores, as reported by the educational assessment NAEP, state public education departments, and local public school district websites. It can also be seen in federal and state policies, such as the imposition of federal and Christian boarding schools, into the Bureau of Indian Affairs Day Schools, on to the Johnson O'Malley Act of 1932, and ending with the momentous Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico court case in 2018.

Education has always been done *to* us rather than *with* us, starting with the federal and Christian boarding schools where children were stolen from their Tribal Nations and families and taken hundreds and in some cases thousands of miles away from their families. When Indigenous children arrived at these violent institutions, they had their hair cut and were given military clothing to wear and were forbidden to speak their Indigenous languages. There is ample documentation for this. The PBS documentary, [Unspoken: America's Native American Boarding Schools](#), is an excellent resource with which to start. More information on the Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico lawsuit can be found at the New Mexico Law and Poverty Center and the Native American Budget and Policy Center. Four years after the court ruling, the state of New Mexico has yet to implement a remedy framework for the whole state.

Indigenous education has great potential. It can be an education where children are grounded in their languages and cultures starting in Early Childhood; steeped in the histories of their respective Tribal Nations; exposed to a general education grounded in anti-racism; and taught with the recognition that our children hold dual citizenship, first and foremost in their respective Tribal Nations, and secondly in the United States of America.

We ultimately want what Dr. Montessori called us all to do in educating the “whole child”—we want children to be able to realize their whole selves. Indigenous education in the United States, as it has existed for over 100 years, is a model that today is only graduating half of its students from high school. Teacher training, including Montessori teacher training, is complicit in this failure. We must reckon with the changes that need to be made. We are reminded that we must not take lightly the words of Dr. Marianna Soto-Manning: “Teacher education is deeply implicated in the reproduction of white supremacy. A mostly white teacher education profession prepares mostly white teachers to engaging practices rooted in racist ideas. It's no longer enough to denounce we must fundamentally transform what we do!” From the outset, IMI provides explicitly anti-racist, anti-bias teacher training.

And yet we realize that it will never be enough for a Montessori guide to just allow their students to explore their Indigeneity. The children must also see themselves reflected back to them in the classroom every day. And this is what the Montessori approach allows for. For example, with the Fifth Great Lesson, The Story of Numbers, children must be able to understand numbers in a way that is grounded in sharing and not just capitalism. We train our guides to understand the importance of reorienting themselves to geography; rather than looking at it from a position of

ownership, extractive resources, and political boundaries, we model a position of relationship *with* the land, maintaining existing natural balance, and discovering the human being's Cosmic Task in terms of reciprocity with Earth. There are countless other examples of guides who, after graduating from IMI, have been empowered to be lovingly critical of their Montessori albums and lessons, especially when they perpetuate narratives that are false and do not include all children.

In Montessori teacher training, Montessori teachers are expected to practice building muscle memory with the materials. The same need for muscle memory needs to be applied to developing our anti-bias, anti-racist muscles and our critical race consciousness. We need to expand our lens and bring that expanded critical consciousness into our practice. We can no longer talk about the “child” while being oblivious to the stats in America regarding Indigenous children. Dr. Montessori stated that “of all things, love is the most potent.” And it is with this deep love for our children and Indigenous people that we will continue to see IMI grow and thrive.

Britt Hawthorne charges us to work toward systemic solutions when it comes to ABAR work:

In Montessori education, just like in any other educational spaces in the United States today, we're novices in this [ABAR] work. People have so many assumptions about this work and oftentimes they think that they're a lot farther than they are. But they're really not far in their foundational work. They're just pretty far in their assumptions, their already-held beliefs that have gone unchallenged for a number of years. I don't think that people really realize where the starting line is, that it's so far back because for so long, we have not done work on a systemic level in Montessori education.

So, whatever our solution is, it has to be systemic, and it has to be comprehensive. Systemic, so that it happens regardless of if a school has buy-in or not. And comprehensive anti-bias work has to be our foundation if our goal is for children to reach their fullest potential. And that phrase “fullest potential”—in ABAR work, we think of it as liberation. I am at my fullest potential when I am my most liberated self, and if that becomes our overarching outcome, then that has to also be the foundation of the work.

The foundation, therefore, doesn't become the materials. It doesn't become the shelves, and it doesn't become the album. The foundation of the work becomes anti-bias, anti-racism. It is the spiritual preparation, if that is our outcome. So, just as Montessori started, you know, we start big and then we go small and then we end big. So, for us to start big, our foundation has to be antibias, anti-racist work. It has to be liberation work.

So, when teachers say, “Well, the time Montessori lived in...” it is an othering, distancing phrase to not acknowledge the times in which we live—the fact that Montessori schools are still so segregated, racially, ethnically, socio-economically; that our Montessori schools are ill-equipped to handle racist incidents; that our schools are still struggling with holiday policies, and how to make many different cultures an essential part of their classrooms; we're struggling with how to integrate Montessori principles into public education.

–BRITT HAWTHORNE

THE WORK BEHIND THE WORK

By Maati Wafford

MANY organizations have made very public statements about their stance when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion. AMS is one of a number of organizations across the globe who have committed themselves to anti-bias and antiracism work. And just like the others, it struggles and makes mistakes along the way.

Dr. Kevin Kumashiro is the author of *Troubling Education: “Queer” Activism and Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy*. His concept of “troubling education” asks us to reflect on our own identities, assumptions, frameworks, and practices, and to lean into uncertainty and discomfort in order to learn (and unlearn). By engaging in this kind of “troubling,” we can all do our part to challenge oppression in our interactions, classrooms, and school communities.

Examining equity calls for us not only to celebrate progress, but to also acknowledge the roadblocks and the harm that has been and continues to be perpetuated along the journey. If organizations aren’t able to look critically and honestly at their paths, then they are sure to repeat the same mistakes. This publication and equity audit is one way that AMS is attempting to trouble its commitment to anti-bias and antiracist education. Each day, AMS as an organization is challenged to negotiate and question how its leadership and its members contribute to social problems.

I had the opportunity to sit down with two of the first Black women to serve on the AMS Board of Directors—Amira Mogaji and Sandra M. Stevenson—and hear from them directly about their experiences and hopes for AMS and its leadership. Looking at the work around diversity, equity, and inclusion that took place behind the scenes at AMS is a way to deepen our understanding of the work that the Board has committed itself to. We must realize that not only is this work necessary for us to say Montessori is truly a liberatory way of education, but it’s also needed in order for us to continue to attract new funding resources and to be relevant and sustaining. Change is necessary for us to set standards for all member schools, and change requires self-reflection. And then, rather than feeling bad about what comes up in our self-reflection, we must acknowledge what’s broken, and commit to fixing it.

At AMS, we are normalizing the practice of having difficult conversations. As a result, we have heard from our membership that many people feel that having difficult conversations is easier for them now. For the larger goal of sustainability for our organization, for it to see a path forward, we needed to have some hard conversations and uncomfortable moments. It is important for our community to realize that AMS needed to face these challenges, a few of which are highlighted here.

Sandra M. Stevenson, an award-winning writer, visual editor, and curator, is deputy director of photography at *The Washington Post*. Previously, she worked at CNN and *The New York Times*, where she oversaw digital photo editors and worked on visual content for Race/Related and the Gender, in addition to exclusive projects such as “Overlooked” and “This Is 18.” Sandra was a contributing writer in the book *Unseen: Unpublished Black History from The New York Times Photo Archives*. Her first job out of college was at NBC, and from there she became program coordinator for

the Black Filmmaker Foundation, where she committed to helping people of color enter the film industry at various levels. Outside of work, Sandra serves on many boards. She is a former Montessori parent, a former AMS board member, and a current member of the *Montessori Life* editorial advisory board.

Dr. Amira Mogaji is the president of the AMS Board of Directors. She also serves as the AMS Board liaison for the AMS Peace and Social Justice Committee, on the AMS Directorship Committee, the AMS Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee, and chairs the AMS Executive Committee. Throughout her career, Amira has served as a teacher, a CEO, and a school principal in traditional and Montessori school settings in urban school districts. She has also been a district transformation coach, supporting school principals, and is currently the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for Battle Creek Public Schools (MI). Along with her AMS board service, Amira is a Montessori for Social Justice founding board member and an Eliminating Racism & Claiming/Celebrating Equality (ERACCE) board member. She is a Montessori parent and an ABAR educational consultant. She is AMS-credentialed (Administrator).

While I sat down separately with both Sandra and Amira, I found a number of overlapping experiences in their individual stories. Both spoke about feeling othered in their work on the AMS Board, as well as not having their competence fully recognized. And both had similar reasons for continuing to do the work, despite the challenges.

—*Maati Wafford*

WHAT'S BEHIND FEELING LIKE AN OUTSIDER ON THE AMS BOARD

Amira Mogaji: I have always felt and been treated as an outsider, whether it was because I was [working in] public school, whether it was because I was a Black woman, a Muslim, all of it. I've been an outsider, and I've been "outside" all my life. But it doesn't stop me from moving forward; I was just raised to go around barriers. Just like barriers can be placed, they can be removed by me.

As Montessori educators, we are trained to build community in our classrooms and school spaces. This is not just the nice thing to do; it is core to Montessori philosophy and speaks directly to our fundamental needs as humans. Inclusivity is a practice that the youngest of Montessori children learn. We strive to prepare our environments to blur the lines of who belongs and who doesn't. We intentionally create space for our students to all have a voice, and support them in perspective taking and sharing.

How do we prepare the environment as we engage other adults, both individually and in groups? It is critical that we challenge the ways in which our society has systematically excluded, marginalized, and targeted groups of people based on their various social identities. Who determines who and how we belong? We must be aware of these ways of being that influence how we see one another and thus impacts our abilities to work towards what is best for children. Currently the AMS Board is committing to a thorough look at all of its committee charters. This will be led by the Directorship committee and approached through an intentional liberatory framework. All committee members will work collectively to actively deconstruct any biased/exclusionary policies around decision-making, election and nominations and evaluations of its members and program activities.

WHAT'S BEHIND CODED LANGUAGE AND HAVING ONE'S COMPETENCY BROUGHT INTO QUESTION

Sandra Stevenson: As a person of color who grew up in Wyoming, which is pretty much full of white spaces, I already had the ability to understand people and what was said and not said in the coded language they used. Being on the AMS Board was no different. Sometimes I look back and chuckle and I think, did they not know that I knew what they meant the whole time? And, you know, there were times where I would call them out, but, you know, it's like, "I see you." And to think, If I see you, I'm sure other adults and children will see you too.

Coded language continues to present a challenge in our human interactions. It is often subtle and sometimes invisible, and other times overt and in your face. However, it is a highly charged style of discrimination that can be hard to articulate if you're unaware of it. This lack of awareness can happen in the person using the coded language as well as the person being discriminated against by it. Therefore, not being able to pinpoint what's happening also speaks to the subtle harm that coded language may have on one's psyche and/or self-esteem. Referring to someone as "aggressive" or "not a good culture fit," or using words like "urban" or "inner-city" when describing an ethnic group or community, are types of coded language. Within the Montessori community, an example of coded language could arise around grace and courtesy, particularly when applied to our evaluations of teachers—their mannerisms, how they give lessons, and how they speak or dress. Coded language is an easy way for someone, whether they know they're doing it or not, to maintain a position of power and hold back people who are different from them, without using explicit words.

WHAT'S BEHIND WHY THEY CONTINUED TO DO THE WORK

I asked both Sandra and Amira why, despite feeling like outsiders and facing coded language, they persisted in the work of the AMS Board, particularly when it came to ensuring that DEI principles were fully integrated into all of AMS's work. Several themes emerged in their answers:

- The Board had to change. If not them, then who else would do it?
- Representation was important. They wanted to show up, for the other board members to see their faces, to know they were in the room, helping make change.
- They were looking to the future of education, a future in which children who looked like them had access to Montessori education. The end game was really about serving children and families.
- They felt strongly that this was work they believed in—it was their cosmic task.

Amira Mogaji: "I allow myself my moments of pain and then I ask myself again, Is this still what you want to be doing? And every time, I decide to keep going. As a Black woman, I know that that's what we do to ourselves. We ignore the pain and we keep pushing, because that's the way, that's just our makeup. That's how we've been trained."

"Also, my work gives me confidence. Sometimes the work is self-care, because my competence makes me feel good, and reminds me that I'm in the right place and in the right space. That's what my actual job is in this world. And with AMS, when I'm holding these conversations, when I'm elevating things that need to be elevated, when I'm talking to the executive committee, when I know I'm bringing value—that actually is healing for me.

That actually is what builds me because I don't feel like my work is work. It's part of who I am. And my competence and my success in it is what heals me, because nobody can take that away from me."

"My prayer, my wish from the ancestors is that the conversation you're having with me right now doesn't ever have to happen again. That's what I really want. That's part of why I do what I do, why I continue—so that down the line this doesn't exist. Because I don't want this to exist. I don't want my kids to go through this. I don't want your kids to go through this. I want it to just to be a conversation about 'Oh, tell us about your experience on the board as a human'."

PART II: EQUITY AUDIT

Special resource section *Recommendations for Educators Preparing to Lead Class Discussions about Racism and Race*, by Elliott Schwebach, PhD, Dr. Valaida Wise Consulting, LLC

Edited by Valaida Wise and Elliott Schwebach

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PART I: GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS

PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

This series of equity assessment tools are multi-purpose tools for Montessori teacher education program (TEP) sites, Montessori school leadership, faculty, and staff teaching Early Childhood, Elementary, and Adolescent grade levels. (If you work at the Infant & Toddler level, you can refer to the Early Childhood assessment tool for guidance.) The tools are strongly aligned with the AMS Anti-Bias, Antiracist (ABAR) Certificate Program and are meant to evoke meaningful and sustained dialogues about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Antibias and Antiracist (ABAR) practices in education among school leaders, administrators, and faculty and staff. The purpose of the assessment resource document is a tool and a starting point to build more equitable ABAR schools and school communities. The assessments are a stepping stone and a foundation to start the work of DEI and ABAR. The assessment models in this resource were developed following an extensive literature review conducted in late 2021 to early 2022 on equity auditing in education, reviewing historical and contemporary practices of equity auditing in education.

HOW DO THE ASSESSMENT TOOLS WORK?

Contemporary programmatic documents on equity auditing serve multiple purposes. For example, they can be used as a didactic tool to educate a sizeable local community program or small program (e.g., See Head Start: Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2021), individual teachers and departments, state, school districts, and more (e.g., See Coalition of Communities of Color and All Hands Raised, 2014; National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness, 2018). The multi-purpose, multi-utility aspect of recent equity assessment tools is helpful because of the cross-dialogical possibilities between parents, school community, teachers, students, administrations, school districts, board members, and more. This resource is meant to be used in this way. It is an assessment tool for administrators, school leadership teams, faculty, parents, and staff to engage in reflective dialogues about how they can build more equity and ABAR work and assess what they have already done so far. These assessment tools are a great place to begin if you have yet to consider assessing or building equity, DEI work or engaging with ABAR practices in your Montessori school setting.

This resource's five primary assessments are specifically designed for the following: Montessori TEP sites, Montessori school leadership, and Early Childhood, Elementary, and Adolescent educators. (Infant & Toddler educators may find relevant content in the Early Childhood section.) It is recommended that all readers review *Part I: General Overview of Assessment Tools* (this section) *first*, and then begin to work on their appropriate areas with their teams.

Throughout the assessment model, various categories will develop reflection and growth towards DEI and ABAR values and practices as they can inform the Montessori TEPs and support faculty in teaching and professional practice in administration and Early Childhood, Elementary, and Adolescent grade levels. Each assessment model has specific categories and a set of questions to reflect upon using a 1–5 scale, a section to write notes/observations/questions, an area to record evidence, and a “Things to Consider” section that provides further resources about a wide range of topics. Here are the steps in each assessment model, and how to work through them:

Step 1: Reflective questions and scale

For each question, circle 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 according to your or your team’s best judgment. We encourage you to work together to assess your collective response and carefully think through each topic area. You may want to flag this page or print it out to refer to when working through the questions.

1 = We do not currently engage with this topic in our TEP, leadership, or teaching practices.

2 = We have thought about this topic but have yet to implement it into our TEP, leadership, or teaching practices.

3 = We have implemented this topic in our TEP, leadership, or teaching practices at least once and would like to engage with it more.

4 = We have implemented this topic into TEP, leadership, or teaching practices or other areas of our professional practices more than once.

5 = We feel confident in this topic area and apply it to TEP, leadership, or teaching practices regularly.

Step 2: Reflect (Notes / Observations / Questions)

Write some notes, observations, or questions about the topic. What can stay the same in your TEP, leadership, or teaching practices? What would you like to see done differently? How can you enact change in this topic area within your curriculum and instruction or professional practice?

Step 3: Provide proof of practice (Evidence)

If you and your team circled a value between 2 and 5, this is where you can provide evidence that you have engaged with this topic in your TEP, leadership, or teaching practices. Providing evidence will help you to process what you are currently doing well, and help you think through the broader significance with meaningful referents in mind.

Step 4: Things to Consider

Things to Consider is located at the end of each assessment section. It offers examples of how you and your team might further advance a particular topic, as well as further questions for reflection, potential activities, or other takeaways about the material.

Feel free to collectively choose which categories and topic areas should be the primary focus for you and your school. Create manageable and attainable goals each semester. The goal should not be to complete a given assessment in one sitting or even one term. DEI and ABAR work in education takes time, patience, continuity, and practice. Breaking a particular assessment document into sections that you and your school leadership team or faculty team would like to work on could be a monthly project or year-to-year goal. Think of the assessment tool as a living, reflective resource that you actively engage with regularly.

HOW LONG SHOULD THE ASSESSMENT TAKE?

The assessment tools are collaborative tools to learn how to engage with and work towards DEI and ABAR practices and pedagogy in professional, school, and classroom settings. The time frame is flexible and adaptable and should be completed at your own pace.

Depending on your role, you may engage with the material in a different way. After reading Part I (General Overview of Assessment Tools), use the table below to see which section to move to next.

TEP administration and leadership	Part II (Montessori Teacher Education Program Assessment Tool: Reflecting on the foundational program structure) (page 64)
TEP program faculty	Part II (Montessori Teacher Education Program Assessment Tool: DEI and ABAR curriculum work) (page 83)
School leadership	Part II (Montessori Schools Assessment Tool: School leadership) (page 117)
Early Childhood educators	Part II (Montessori Schools Assessment Tool: Early Childhood Assessment Tool) (page 138)
Elementary educators	Part II (Montessori Schools Assessment Tool: Elementary Assessment Tool) (page 216)
Adolescent educators	Part II (Montessori Schools Assessment Tool: Adolescent Assessment Tool) (page 288)

As you and your team work through your sections, you'll also want to refer to Part III: Resources (page 361).

KEY TERMS

Each term below is complex. These terms are therefore shortened and somewhat limited descriptions:

Race

The term “race” has many connotations. A basic and widely accepted definition is that race is an *idea*—one that human beings are divided into groups based on physical differences, such as skin color or other physical characteristics. Different racial categories include African American or Black, white or Caucasian, Asian, Latinx, etc. Race is not naturally given but is rather “a socially constructed experience... that has no biological basis” (Boucher, 2020, p. 7). Race as an idea first developed around 1500–1600 CE alongside the beginnings of colonialism.

Diversity

Diversity refers to the representation of differences, including differences in race, gender, and other forms of identity. There can also be diversity of language, national or cultural background, sexual orientation, age, disability, and religious background or beliefs. Increasing diversity in the school setting includes amplifying the voices of those who remain underrepresented and those who have experienced and continue to live through oppression. This can take place through incorporating, for example, a diversity of authors, scholars, texts, and perspectives in curricular material and educational experiences.

Equity

Educational excellence cannot exist without educational equity or providing equal opportunities for all students inside the classroom and school community (The College Board, 2000). Equity is neither easy nor inevitable—it takes work. An educator committed to achieving equity will strive to find the best possible outcomes for individual students depending upon their individual needs and learning situations. Given Montessori’s focus on independent learning, Montessori teachers are well-positioned to attune to the needs of each individual student. Equity is a necessary ideal because oppression exists in society, leading to inequities, disprivilege and marginalization.

Inclusion

Inclusion means feeling oneself to be a part of the school and curriculum, having agency (i.e., being able to make decisions and have one’s voice heard), and being supported by others. Inclusion in the learning process is critical because it allows for a safe space where every student belongs and feels welcome.

Belonging

Belonging is achieved when diversity, equity, and inclusion are met. Belonging is when one feels that they are welcomed, and that they feel safe and secure within the classroom, school setting, and community. Belonging allows an individual to bring their full and true self to the school building and to their work.

Racism (what does it mean to be racist?)

Racism involves othering and discriminating on the basis of markers of racial identity, such as skin color. Racism is a social phenomenon and a system, not something that is natural that people are born “with.” People are not born

racist (nor are they born antiracist) – racism is something that people are socialized into. For more, see [*Addressing Racism and White Privilege*](#)¹ by Roliveira (grade levels 6–8 and 9–12).

Antiracism (what does it mean to be antiracist?)

Antiracism involves working to oppose racism. Given its attention to racism’s broader, social operation, antiracism entails a commitment to social justice. Antiracism is the active addressing and dismantling of systems, language, policies, and day-to-day interactions based on racist power dynamics and ideas. This applies to curriculum and instruction, the school environment, the classroom atmosphere, and the wider interactions, policies and commitments of the school community. For more information, please consult the book [*How to be an Antiracist*](#)² by Ibram X. Kendi. Also: see the National Museum of African American History and Culture’s [*“Being Antiracist.”*](#)³

Explicit bias

Explicit bias refers to conscious biases about others’ identities, including along the dimensions of gender, race, culture, disability, or religion. Explicit bias often manifests as negative beliefs or even hostilities about certain groups of people, and it thus contributes to patterns of “othering,” or harmful out-grouping based upon difference.

Implicit bias

Implicit biases are negative associations that people unconsciously have against marginalized groups, which causes them to treat people in negative and unjust ways, thereby working against equity, justice, inclusion, and belonging.

Aversive bias

Aversive bias is a form of implicit bias where cross-racial or interracial situations can create cognitive dissonance for people belonging to a dominant racial group.

Discrimination

Discrimination is the behavioral expression of bias, where people are treated differently based on their race or other identifier. Discrimination is the “unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories” (Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative, *A Community Builder’s Tool Kit*, Appendix I, 2000, p. 1).

Antibias (what does it mean to implement antibias?)

Antibias approaches to education involve challenging and disrupting the prejudices and varying forms of oppression commonly known as the “isms” – including racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, classism, antisemitism, colorism, gender normativity, religious discrimination, homophobia, and more. Antibias education supports inclusivity and all dimensions of difference in the school community and learning environments.

¹ <https://www.learningforjustice.org/learning-plan/addressing-racism-and-white-privilege>

² <https://www.ibramxkendi.com/how-to-be-an-antiracist>

³ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are characterized as slights and indignities perpetrated against individuals because of their marginalized status (e.g., race, gender, class, sexual orientation, immigration and more) (Sue & Spanierman, 2020).

ABAR

Antibias/Antiracism

LGBTQIA+

An acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or sometimes questioning), intersex, asexual (and agender), and others.

Ally

An ally is a person who supports, stands up for, and encourages other people to support marginalized groups. The terms “ally” and “allyship” are used especially commonly within the LGBTQIA+ community to denote sex-based and gender-based social justice advocacy, but these terms are also increasingly used to refer to identity-based support along lines of race.

POC

People of Color

BIPOC

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

DEI

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

EL

English Learner

ELL

English Language Learner. ELL refers to a student who is currently learning English as their second language.

ESS

Educational Support Services

Find more resources here:

Key Terms—Race and Racism⁴ and **Racial Equity Tools Glossary**⁵

⁴ <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/Key-Terms-Racism.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

PART II: ASSESSMENT TOOLS

MONTESSORI TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM (TEP) ASSESSMENT TOOL

Reflecting on the foundational program structure

OVERALL TRAINING SITE MECHANICS

The internal administrative and leadership teams of Montessori teacher education programs are essential to the success of the implementation of DEI and ABAR values and practices. These leadership teams can take an active role in dialoguing and reflecting upon these topics. It's important that leadership reflect and include voices from those who are marginalized. The reflective questions below will guide TEP leadership to think about internal and external elements of Montessori teacher education and programming to make sure TEPs are achieving equitable outcomes and incorporating DEI and ABAR practices.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are we preparing our teachers to be antiracist and enact DEI and ABAR practices in their curriculums and schools through our Montessori course requirements?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Equity Committee and developing a DEI and ABAR strategy

Do we have a Montessori TEP equity committee or individual that oversees teacher training and explores how everyone's perspective can "shape collective decision-making" (Green, 2017, p. 2) about objectives and goals for TEP sessions? (See KOYA leadership partners, 2014).

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Does our TEP Equity Team or committee meet on a regular basis to discuss, create, and implement DEI and ABAR programming, training, and workshops for teachers within the Montessori TEP process?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we include a goal-setting section for ways to make and follow through with equity audit goals? (For equity goal setting see Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative, 2020)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we think about attainable goals, creating diversity indicators per year? (i.e., How are we going to bring about and measure the long-term goals of DEI and ABAR, tuition assistance, and physical accessibility within our TEP?)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we have a *community agreement* for department meetings, goals, and norms before meetings begin? (See Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative, 2020)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we have a written DEI and ABAR or equity strategy for Montessori TEP that is accessible online or visible to the Montessori community?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Collaborating with scholars and faculty

Are professional racial justice or race, racism, and bias scholars invited to collaborate with faculty in the Montessori TEP to help establish objectives, facilitate development towards goals, and/or teach?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we working to ensure that “people of color and people of color-led organizations are robustly represented within your [our] organization’s pipeline of leaders and decision-makers?” (See Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative, 2018, p. 40)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Sharing resources

Do we have a DEI and ABAR webpage for our wider community that considers a wide variety of diverse perspectives and voices?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Montessori TEP Equity Committee

Ongoing practice and participation of an equity auditing leadership team is necessary, along with the need for diversity in this team, as assessing equity is not a one-time assessment that is then “finished” (Skrla, et al., 2009).

Recent literature suggests establishing *equity committees* in schools and organizations and including more stakeholders in the conversation. This can assist assessment tool implementation and successfully putting DEI and ABAR strategies in place (See MAEC, 2021).

A note about incorporating DEI and ABAR pedagogical training within Montessori TEP sessions

In Montessori TEPs, it can be helpful to have a co-instructor with specialized knowledge of race, racism, and bias to facilitate discussions.

Guest teachers with expertise in racial justice can help keep discussions grounded, thereby preventing harm from accruing to adult learners of color (which can unintentionally occur when untrained faculty lead discussions on race and racism).

Defensive positioning

Instructors should be aware of language that can reflect defensive positioning, for example when students invoke ideas such as “colorblindness” or argue “I don’t feel like I am racist or prejudiced.” In instances when such language is voiced, instructors can help the class attune to racism’s perpetuation socially, and towards the stakes of positioning one’s value commitments and actions against the policies and cultural media that reinforce it. Instructors can also help expose students to the invalidating or harmful effect that defensive positioning might have on people of color.

For more on white privilege and white defenses, see the [Resources section](#) (page 361).

Reflection

List the primary activities you anticipate carrying out within the next 1–2 years that will help move you toward your goals.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR AND CONDUCT

In this section, your team will be asked to reflect on antibias/antiracist and inclusive communication strategies. As faculty members, your behavior, language, and body language matter. These facets of DEI and ABAR are important for not causing harm to students of color and in modeling antibias and culturally responsive practices. It is therefore important to be mindful of them.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Names

Are we pronouncing our adult learners’ names accurately in class and spelling them correctly in correspondence?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we normalize thinking about social identifiers and sharing pronouns as a community practice? See example in the section Identity explorations: Race, gender, and culture (page 83).

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we acknowledge our adult learners by their preferred pronouns?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we work to prevent favoritism along the lines of race or gender in calling on or engaging adult learners in discussion?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we being inclusive of every adult learner’s experiences and including everyone’s voice in the training sessions?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we listening to every adult learner’s ideas, not talking over them in sessions, and supporting them throughout the program?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

A note about names and identity

Asking adult learners to think about their gender identity and offer their preferred pronouns models the DEI and ABAR work that we are working to further at large in that it helps adult learners feel welcomed and accepted in the classroom environment (Cross & Hillier, 2018).

Resources:

[Anti-Racist Approach to Communication](#),⁶ by Ryerson University

[How to Be an Antiracist Educator](#),⁷ by Dena Simmons

Entering difficult conversations with colleagues or adult learners

Having difficult conversations about racist comments that may emerge in social interactions is hard, but left unexamined, such language can be hurtful and harmful to others. Although we might try to avoid conflict and therefore not say anything, antibias/antiracism can be served by (confidently and caringly) broaching these difficult conversations.

One aspect of the difficulties that underlie having conversations about racist comments or behavior is that human beings have internalized biases outside of conscious awareness.

Broaching topics of racist language or behavior can therefore be aided by a careful examination of one's own biases. See attribution theory, which outlines tendencies to attribute negative attributes to people unlike us, and to attribute more positive characteristics to people we interact with or feel more similar to in terms of race, class, or gender.

It is also important to address *cognitive dissonance* (e.g., “I feel worried,” or “I feel stressed”). One way to decrease the intensity of such feelings is to uncover and keep in mind one's own unconscious biases.

For more resources on this topic:

[Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain](#),⁸ by Zaretta L. Hammond

[Free webinars from the National Equity Project](#)⁹

⁶<https://pressbooks.library.ryerson.ca/communicationnursing/chapter/anti-racist-communication/>

⁷<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/how-to-be-an-antiracist-educator>

⁸<https://www.amazon.com/Culturally-Responsive-Teaching-Brain-Linguistically/dp/1483308014>

⁹<https://www.nationalequityproject.org/free-recorded-webinars>

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Thinking about creating ABAR environments is important for adult learners in Montessori TEPs. There are many opportunities within both physical and virtual classroom environments for adult learners to feel included and heard.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Environment

Do we make our physical and virtual classrooms an inclusive space visually, aesthetically, and spatially?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Have we considered accessibility in our learning spaces? (i.e., physical room configuration with inclusivity and collective engagement in mind and/or virtual access)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

“Are your students treated as individuals, encouraged to share their own lives and interests” in the classroom setting? (Unlu, 2017, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Have we thought about how to make our classroom environment more inclusive for learners with physical disabilities (e.g., environment and accessibility, instructional practices, assessment, closed captioning and transcribed lesson for virtual environments)?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do our course schedules, classroom rules and projects reflect learners' home languages? (See Ferro, et al., 2022)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do learners see their home languages in some form in the classroom? (See Ferro et al., 2022)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we mindful of all our learners' religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, traditions, and customs? Then, are we cognizant about posting welcoming, non-discriminatory and diverse content on our walls? For example, suppose educators post only pictures or decorations about Easter (a Christian holiday) in March or April on a calendar wall. This might exclude and alienate other learners' religious backgrounds and cultural traditions (such as Jewish people, who often celebrate Passover at this same time of year) if they see that these decorations are taking precedence.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

In creating an inclusive classroom space, it is important to consider the physical and aesthetic layout of the space (what is on the walls of the classroom space? Is it reflective of learners' backgrounds and cultures?) as well as the capacities for learners to share their personal histories and internal experiences in classroom discussion.

Resources:

Toward Inclusive Learning Spaces: Physiological, Cognitive, and Cultural Inclusion and the Learning Space Rating System,¹⁰ by Richard Holeton

¹⁰ <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/2/toward-inclusive-learning-spaces>

CURRICULUM AND CURRICULUM MATERIALS

Culturally responsive and culturally sustaining teaching practices also support DEI and ABAR values. To manifest culturally responsive practices in curriculum and instruction, a number of supports come into play, including: empathy and care, decolonization of curricular materials, knowledge about other cultures, the adoption of cultural frames of reference outside the Western canon, and more (See Paris, 2012).

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Co-creating in curriculum

Are we building classroom rules and norms along with learners' voices and input?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we seeking out opportunities to incorporate the interests and lived experiences of adult learners in classroom activities?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Representation

Do the figures within our curricula (including writers, artists, historians, scientists, mathematicians, etc.) represent a diversity of identities, backgrounds, and experiences? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we considering how lessons could be culturally harmful to some adult learners and faculty?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Race and antibias/antiracism education and dialogues

Do we incorporate education and conversations about race, racism, DEI and ABAR practices and pedagogy throughout the program, rather than signaling that this is an isolated module in the TEP curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are there opportunities throughout training sessions for faculty and adult learners to reflect upon, collaborate on, and offer support for one another about racial equity, antibias/antiracist pedagogy, and DEI and ABAR in their curriculums?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are there discussions on the myriad patterns of racialized violence, including hate crimes against Asian, Asian-American and Pacific Islander individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Are there discussions about how these conversations can be fostered with teachers, administrators, and students?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Digital citizenship

Digital citizenship education is educating students about how to behave responsibly and ethically online, learning about topics including internet research and gathering credible sources, cyberbullying, sexting, harassment, and social media usage. Learn more at commonsense.org.

Do we think about access and equity in terms of digital citizenship education? Do we focus on digital equity for all our adult learners?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

When TEP instructors post links and resources for adult learners, do they include perspectives from authors of color and voices from other marginalized communities?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Curriculum

Are TEP instructors encouraged to frequently audit their own syllabi and curricula for representation and inclusivity? (See Paguyo, 2020)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are TEP instructors encouraged to move away from a Eurocentric, predominately white, curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are TEP instructors encouraged to make reference to different cultural traditions, languages, religions, names, and clothing?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are TEP courses connecting with adult learners' real-world experiences and concerns, interests, and passions?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are TEP instructors being asked to explicitly think about equity in their practice—providing adult learners with what they need to be successful?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are TEP instructors bringing in guest speakers, lecturers, and presenters of color from outside our Montessori TEP setting? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

For curriculum construction, it is helpful to think about decentering aspects of the educational canon that are more Eurocentric. One way of doing so is to include within course syllabi presentations of historical narratives that stand outside of or confront Eurocentric histories (e.g. Indigenous histories from the Americas during the era of colonialism, rather than simply a romantic discussion of colonists and conquistadors), and to include texts and media from BIPOC and other marginalized voices.

For more on constructing DEI and ABAR curricula, consult the information in the Resources section (page 364).

Representation across race and gender identity in your classroom library

It is also possible to decenter and decolonize the Montessori program library by not only including more materials from authors of color and other marginalized voices and perspectives, but also ensuring a sufficiency of materials about Civil Rights movements and leaders, and of materials with tenets of social and racial justice infused into them. (See the Resources section (page 361) for more details and for texts to consider obtaining for your classroom.)

Community sites and stories

Kinloch (2010) suggests that teachers can consider having their students (adult learners) craft “community presentations at sites they frequent (e.g., recreational sites, churches, museums, local meetings) and research assignments on community sites and historical landmarks” (p. 55). This allows students a heightened ability to integrate cultural experience with classroom and curricular practice.

Guest presenters

Consider having “classroom visits with local community members, activists, leaders, artists, and writers” (Kinloch (2010, p. 55). Invite diverse speakers, artists, and instructors of color to include their experiences and work in the classroom.

Consider Zooming your guest presenter(s) into the classroom if they cannot make it in person.

Keep in touch with your guest presenters throughout the year and consider inviting them back in future years.

Bring contemporary social justice issues and other sensitive topics for adult learners to explore within the context of the training program

Adult learners can be made aware of the importance of encouraging their students to develop a mindful understanding of the societal issues that are a part of their everyday lives, both outside and inside the school setting, such as:

- Family diversity
- Death and grief
- Environmental issues and awareness
- Race, racism, and bias
- Military deployment
- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Harassment and discrimination
- Homelessness
- Voting rights
- Refugee and refugee crisis
- Gun violence and safety
- Hunger and food insecurity

CONSULTANTS/PEER SUPPORT

Mentorships can be thought of both internally within the Montessori training institution and externally outside the institution. Faculty members can provide mentorships for adult learners in various capacities and can also offer mentor partnerships with external DEI and ABAR programs, workshops, online courses, and more.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Mentorship within the Montessori training facility

Do we support adult learners as they explore their interests and direct them to resources outside of the program, so they can participate in and use our contact network for professional experiences, jobs, and more?

This is a question that allows you to think about access and accessibility in different ways.

1	2	3	4	5
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As faculty members, are we serving as resources for our adult learners and mentoring them about the Montessori teaching profession and the job market after the training program?

1	2	3	4	5
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In what ways will adult learners be able to stay connected to the Montessori TEP site and how can the site, as an institution, be supportive of their professional efforts?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we use ourselves (faculty and administrators) as examples and share our professional background and experience as Montessori teachers with our adult learners?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Is there a Montessori faculty member with DEI and ABAR expertise to lead various dialogues and collaborate with other faculty members and students as they think through race, racism, and DEI and ABAR work with Montessori values in mind? (See MAEC, 2021)

1	2	3	4	5
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External programs outside the Montessori training site

Do we bring in guest speakers, lecturers, and presenters of color from outside of the Montessori training setting?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we making our adult learners aware of materials, literature, and texts related to antibias/antiracism, the history of racism, DEI and ABAR work, and social justice that they can engage with outside of the Montessori training setting?

1	2	3	4	5
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Making time to socialize and spend time with one another is important. Have we considered creating a time in our class sessions or in the Montessori training program schedule where participants can have an “advisory” or “talk time” in which they discuss important information and topics related to social, racial and disability justice?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

Are participants made aware of external organizations and opportunities with which to engage in and further support DEI and ABAR work?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there organizations pertaining to DEI and ABAR that we can partner with?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Adult learners in the program may benefit from professional networks to help them navigate the processes of the teaching profession and applying for and getting jobs. Faculty, staff and administration at the Montessori training site are all invaluable resources to help guide their adult learners. Consider being another trusted professional they can turn to and dialogue with about professional and personal experiences. Share with them and make them a part of your professional network to build a supportive and inclusive Montessori teaching community.

Important questions to ask:

- Whose voices are being left out of mentorships?
- Who needs support and guidance?

GIVING FEEDBACK TO ADULT LEARNERS: PROGRESS AND GROWTH

This section is designed to be answered by individual TEP instructors. Giving ABAR feedback to adult learners is critical for their growth and progress throughout the Montessori TEP experience. This section also encourages administrators to think about how their TEP programs are explicitly supporting its instructors to give critical and inclusive feedback to adult learners. (See Skrla et al., 2004)

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Providing your perspectives on how you give feedback and how the training site gives feedback to adult learners is important. It is also important to include them in this process by asking them how they would like to receive feedback in the beginning of a class or program setting.

How are we seeking adult learners' feedback for progress and growth?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we seeking to better understand barriers faced by English language learners? How are we increasing access to their learning?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we being descriptive rather than prescriptive in our feedback?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we being non-judgmental in our feedback to our adult learners, focusing on identifying "a challenge and help[ing] formulate an improvement plan?" (University of Toronto Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, 2017, p. 11)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we giving our adult learners options and multiple possible solutions, allowing them freedom and space to grow in their training?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we taking every adult learner's individual needs into consideration and thinking about equity in their education?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Identity awareness

Consider this statement as it relates to teaching and instruction and providing feedback: "I am aware of my own racial, ethnic, and cultural background and understand how it affects my perceptions and values" (Equity Taskforce Working Group, 2010, p. 25)

Flexibility in giving and receiving feedback from students

Flexibility is important to have with your adult learners, as is affording them multiple means of expression to demonstrate their learning and understanding (verbally, written, through projects, artworks, etc.) (See Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012). Also, when adult learners provide feedback, consider being reflective. Be aware of your defenses and take adult learners' feedback into consideration.

Listening

It is important to listen to your adult learners and their whole story, to spend time with them writing down their questions, feedback, and concerns, and to get back to them in a timely manner.

RESULTS

If you answered **4–5** for any of the topics in this assessment, and were able to answer the questions with concrete and specific examples and illustrative evidence, your TEP is moving very positively in the direction of antibias/antiracist education and DEI and ABAR work. Consider the advanced resources section: [Digging deeper: More DEI and ABAR resources](#) (page 364). You could also review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364), to find out more on how to advance your topic areas in your professional practice or classroom.

If you selected **2–3** for any given topic area, consider improving these areas in your training program to create a welcoming atmosphere that fosters DEI and ABAR. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help improve classroom community and curriculum, so that the school experience is not culturally harmful to any students. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

If you answered **1** to any question, you will need to address these topics and develop a plan of action to improve. Your curriculum, instructional approaches, environment, and/or behaviors may be culturally harmful to learners. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help you improve in these areas. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

DEI and ABAR curriculum work

THIS section assesses whether DEI and ABAR topic areas are covered in Montessori TEPs, and it presents topics within ABAR pedagogy as guides. There is an assessment tool for each topic area, followed by suggested activities that could be enacted within a Montessori TEP.

***An important note:** The content below can be adaptable for faculty at Montessori TEP professional development sessions or departmental meetings. It can also be used with adult learners or presented as a model lesson for adult learners to implement with their students in Montessori schools. There are broader applications for all the activities in this section. After you and your leadership team take the assessment, consider engaging with the activity and thinking about how it might be helpful for your program.*

IDENTITY EXPLORATIONS: RACE, GENDER, AND CULTURE

This section will elaborate on the importance of incorporating self-identity and racial identity into TEP sessions. It is also important for Montessori TEP faculty to go through a process of identity and racial identity training and exploration. This can be done with an outside consultant, online webinars or courses, or the completion of the activity below as a starting point.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Does your Montessori training site make adult learners aware of the importance of understanding their students' "lifestyle, immigration history, health beliefs, communication style, etc. of each cultural group?" (Head Start: Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2021, p. 17)

1	2	3	4	5
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Does your training program incorporate the importance of sharing adult learners' own identities (racial, cultural, gender, ethnic) with their students, so students can learn more about who their teachers are?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do your adult learners learn about providing opportunities for their students to explore their identities (racial, cultural, gender, ethnic) as a specific assignment in their classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

ACTIVITY: IDENTITY EXPLORATION

*This activity can be done individually or in groups.

Prompt: This is a visual journaling assignment where you will undergo a personal study of yourself and your self-identity. Answer the following questions below on mixed media paper (or whatever paper is available) through writing and visual imagery.

Materials: Mixed media paper/computer paper, 2-D media of your choice (colored pencils, markers, pens, pencils, etc.)

Goal: The purpose of this assignment is to provide a space and opportunity to visually tell a story about yourself about your name, race, culture, ethnicity, and gender identity. Please use symbolism, writing, and imagery of various kinds to fill the page to tell your identity story.

- **Name:** Write your full name out, along with your name's meaning or a story about how you got your name.
- **Identity:** How do you identify racially, ethnically, or culturally? Who are you influenced by: family, relatives, friends, neighborhood, your parents' work and influence, values developed throughout your lifetime, etc.?
- **Pronouns:** What pronouns do you use?

Share: When finished, feel free to share your work with your peers

RACE, RACISM, ABAR, AND LEARNING ACROSS LINES OF DIFFERENCES

One of the main points made in this section is that, as a TEP, you are thinking about and making space for conversations, deeper reflection, and growth work regarding antibias antiracist education within your TEP. You are also ensuring that your adult learners are getting antiracist training and pedagogical tools to use in their Montessori classrooms in multiple ways and modalities—through the books they read, projects and materials they encounter, the inclusive classroom environments you create, and the interactions and dialogue you foster.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Have we incorporated curriculum materials (texts, articles, blog posts, podcasts, films) that would get adult learners to think about race, racism, bias, and antibias/antiracism so that richer discussions can emerge throughout our curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have informational texts in our classroom and discussions with adult learners about the ongoing issues of social violence and oppression, such as police brutality in America? Do we discuss how they can address these topics with their own students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there opportunities in our curriculum to talk about and discuss racism and antibias/antiracism throughout history and in the present day? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

See the Resources section (page 361).

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

In our lessons, do we use the proper terminology pertaining to race, racism, antibias/antiracism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging?

Do we define these terms accurately? See Key Terms—Race and Racism¹¹ and Racial Equity Tools Glossary.¹²

1	2	3	4	5
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Learning across lines of difference

Are diversity and difference discussed within the context of our adult learners' lives and their communities? Do we know how to safely and respectfully discuss student disabilities, diverse religious practices, nonwhite racial and cultural backgrounds and nondominant sexual or gender identities?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have discussions with our adult learners about *intersectionality*: its definition and implications?

1	2	3	4	5
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LGBTQIA+ and gender identity

Have we talked with our adult learners about the many different forms of sexual and gender identity, and the appropriate and accurate use of related terminology? See examples:

Definitions of Common LGBTQ Concepts and Terms¹³

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

¹¹ <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/Key-Terms-Racism.pdf>

¹² <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

¹³ <https://www.aecf.org/blog/lgbtq-definitions>

Are adult learners able to frame their students' identities (racial, cultural, sexual, etc.) positively, as assets and strengths that can enhance learning and discussion inside and outside of the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we make our adult learners aware of different ways to bring in a diverse range of family arrangements, experiences, and identities into their curriculum materials (same sex parents, foster families, etc.)? (Mayo, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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Speaking up for others

Are we allies? Do we speak up to interrupt racism and discrimination if we witness them unfolding in our classes, in faculty conversations, or in our program? Do we interrupt racist language or behaviors when we encounter them?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we present our DEI and ABAR values and antibias/antiracism work at various faculty and board meetings or have a public audience for our DEI and ABAR work?

1	2	3	4	5
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For white-identifying Montessori educators: Do we use our white privilege (privilege as it relates to race) to be allies?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

For BIPOC educators: Do we use our privilege to be an ally? (Consider the privileges you may have in terms of gender, religion, non-disability, age, education, socioeconomic status, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Making race and racial justice a part of your Montessori curriculum

You will want to think about this work as an ongoing process that you build upon—not trying to complete all of these things in one semester, or even in one year—but building on them over time and gradually infusing them into your lesson materials. The work should emanate throughout the entire curriculum and not be treated as an “elective” or a topic learned about once and then forgotten.

Having ongoing discussions about antibias/antiracism is integral to education. “Doing antiracist work and having cultural humility is a lifelong journey—there is always more for you to know” (Kantawala, 2021, p.17).

Resources:

Bystander intervention training,¹⁴ by Right to Be

Ways to Be in Action Against Anti-Black Racism,¹⁵ by Sarah Sophie Flicker and Alyssa Klein

ACTIVITY: REFLECTIVE READING

This activity can be done individually or in groups.

Read the two texts below (or choose excerpts from them to read) and then complete the prompt below. Come together to discuss the readings. Feel free to use some of the information below to inform your discussion.

- *We Want to Do More than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* by Bettina Love (2019).

¹⁴ <https://righttobe.org/bystander-intervention-training/>

¹⁵ <https://www.how-matters.org/2020/06/01/ways-to-be-in-action-against-anti-black-racism/>

- “Learning Racism: An Ecojustice Approach to Racial Inequality,” by Gary Schnakenberg, in *Ecojustice Education: Toward Diverse, Democratic, and Sustainable Communities* (Martusewicz, Edmundson, and Lupinacci, 2020).

Prompt: Individually spend some time engaging in free-associative writing and sketching as a form of reflective processing. During this time, you may write down or sketch out feelings, emotions, or thoughts you may have about the texts—include any thoughts or feelings that come up for you. Your work in this time frame is a personal reflective piece only for you to keep. You may share in the larger group discussion, but it is not required.

Materials: Feel free to use notebook paper, a personal journal, or paper that is supplied to you to write or sketch out your thoughts. Feel free to use colored pencils, pens, oil pastels, or any other art materials that you would like to use to express yourself (if available).

NOTES:

See the Key Terms (page 60) for definitions about race and racism.

According to Schnakenberg (2020), “race is a result of a specific manifestation of the logic of domination as it has been applied to particular human cultures” (p. 161).

Contemporary ways racism exists:

- *Economic disparities* (housing, income levels, jobs, the workplace, etc.)
- *Education systems and curriculum* (unchecked unconscious bias, harsh consequences for students of color, racist educational policies)
- *Politics and government* (policies, legal supports, etc.)
- *Criminal justice system and prisons* (disparities in drug charges; unlawful arrests; unlawful prison sentencing; police brutality for persons of color, especially for African Americans and Latinx persons)
- *Environment* (pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, communities of color being disproportionately located near toxic waste facilities)
- *Day-to-day interactions and language* (using language with racist origins and meanings; overt and covert racist rhetoric, behaviors, and gestures; linguistic discrimination, etc.)

Antiracism (what does it mean to be antiracist?):

- Antiracism involves a strong commitment to social justice
- Antiracism involves challenging racist policies, language, and day-to-day interactions. Antiracism therefore involves being conscious of the language one is using (including its origins and potentially harmful, even if unintentional, effects)

- Book recommendation on these points: *How to Be an Antiracist*,¹⁶ by Ibram X. Kendi
- Small choices we make in our day-to-day experiences will lead to larger changes

See The National Museum of African American History and Culture's "[Talking about Race](#)"¹⁷

Antiracist pedagogy:

Love (2019) says that antiracist pedagogy should connect with students and their communities and grassroots organizations to make social changes possible. Antiracism means fighting against racism, committing to social justice, and enacting change—challenging racist policies, language, day-to-day interactions, and more. “Pedagogies must call out and teach students how racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and inequality are structural, not people behaving poorly. They must criticize these systems that perpetuate injustice, such as educational survival complex while pushing for equitable communities, schools and classrooms” (p. 55).

Abolitionist teaching practices: The idea of “mattering” is essential (Love, 2019). Abolitionist teaching practices focus on justice, activism, and refusal in the curriculum. It challenges the “traditional” arch of the school curriculum and interrogate learning practices that have marginalized students of color and that have privileged whiteness and maleness. Bettina Love stresses that pedagogical practice of this kind cannot be done in isolation but should be enacted collaboratively with students and their own lived experiences, identities, inherent knowledge of their neighborhoods and communities, and community-based organizations to produce societal changes. Love says that educators must matter, and their students and their voices must matter for changes to occur. It is vitally important to see students for who they are—their race, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality—and how those elements of their identity contribute richly to and intersect in their learning, classroom environment, and school setting.

These can also serve as resources for Montessori faculty:

- [Peace Learning Resources](#)¹⁸
- [Learning for Justice: A Framework for Anti-bias Education](#)¹⁹
- [NAEYC: Antibias](#)²⁰
- [Building Anti-bias Early Childhood Programs: The Role of the Leader](#)²¹

¹⁶ <https://www.ibramxkendi.com/how-to-be-an-antiracist>

¹⁷ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

¹⁸ <https://peacelearningcenter.org/>

¹⁹ <https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards>

²⁰ <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/anti-bias>

²¹ <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2015/building-anti-bias-programs>

- [Teaching for Change: Anti-bias Education](#)²²
- See the section on [Antibias](#) work in this assessment (page 95).
- [Key terms—Race and Racism](#)²³ and [Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#)²⁴

WHITENESS AND WHITE PRIVILEGE

Having discussions about whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy are important for increasing the DEI and ABAR capacity of the Montessori TEP. Avowing whiteness in the educational setting allows white educators and TEP faculty to model the work of discovering internalized unconscious biases and bringing awareness to their white privilege—i.e., to the fact that they have more access and opportunities than populations marginalized by race. Also, this process can allow for educating oneself about the history of race, racism, and bias and its origins in colonialism. The questions below will help the leadership team think and reflect on whiteness and white privilege and how this process may spur valuable conversations in TEP.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

For white faculty: Are we aware of and have we reflected upon our white privilege? (DiAngelo, 2018; 2021)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we provide opportunities for adult learners to discuss race and white privilege in the program?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we allow space for our adult learners to reflect upon white privilege, gender privilege, or religious privilege and how they have affected them?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

²² <https://www.teachingforchange.org/educator-resources/anti-bias-education>

²³ <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/Key-Terms-Racism.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Do we look at ways in which “white people distance themselves from their privilege in order to preserve it?” (Mills, 2020, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we think about how access to “education, money, and power provide access to good health? [Yet also how] access to those systems is limited for people of color by the historic and systemic injustices that benefit white people?” (Center for Health Progress, 2017, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Resources

Speaking of Psychology: The Invisibility of White Privilege, with Brian Lowery in Speaking of Psychology²⁵
Health: A White Privilege? by the Center for Health Progress²⁶

What is White Privilege, Really?, by Cory Collins²⁷

Understanding White Privilege, by Francis E. Kendall²⁸

Understanding White Privilege, by the National Association of School Psychologists²⁹

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism, by Robin DiAngelo³⁰

Robin DiAngelo Wants White Progressives to Look Inward: The Author of “White Fragility” Discusses her New Book, “Nice Racism,” by Isaac Chotiner³¹

²⁵ <https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/white-privilege>

²⁶ <https://centerforhealthprogress.org/blog/publications/health-white-privilege/>

²⁷ <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really>

²⁸ <https://www.american.edu/ocl/counseling/upload/understanding-white-privilege.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity-and-social-justice/social-justice/sp4sj-podcast-and-google-hangout-series/understanding-white-privilege>

³⁰ <https://www.robindiangelo.com/publications/>

³¹ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/robin-diangelo-wants-white-progressives-to-look-inward>

ACTIVITY: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

The information and resources in this section can be used to understand white privilege throughout one's history, as it exists within oneself (for white-identifying people), as it might shape conversation with others, and as it informs the classroom and school environment.

Post-it note reflection. In groups of 4–5, respond to the following questions and create an assemblage of post-it note thoughts. Groups will spend about 30 minutes writing and posting and then share their posts and thoughts with the larger group.

Materials: Each group will receive post-it notes, poster paper, and pens or markers.

Note: This activity could be completed in an electronic format and be completed virtually. See digital platforms available for collaborative dialogue and work (e.g. Mural, Jamboard, etc.)

Questions:

- What is white supremacy? List examples in your post-it notes.
- Reflect on your cultural heritage and family lineage. How have you witnessed whiteness shape you and your family in the past and now?
- What forms and shapes does whiteness take in the 21st century? Can you describe some examples of white privilege and power?
- Questions for adult learners: How can you examine whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy in your Montessori classroom with your students?

NOTES ON WHITENESS, WHITE PRIVILEGE, AND WHITE SUPREMACY

The more surrounded one is by white privilege, the harder it becomes to “break free” of the bubble of one's own perception. Keep in mind that many modern states, including the United States, are only approximately 150–200 years removed from transatlantic slavery, and that racism continues to persist (albeit perhaps more invisibly to those who most benefit from it).

- Whenever white privilege comes up in a conversation, many initial reactions are to be defensive. People oftentimes struggle with conversations about social privilege and tend to get tense. Learning and communicating about white privilege, however, helps one to recognize and attend to one's defenses and thus become better at DEI and ABAR work.

Some well-known real-world examples of white privilege:

- Not having been harassed because of hair color or hairstyle, nor rejected from a job or work-related opportunity because of one's hairstyle.
- Not having been rejected from a job or work-related opportunity because of one's name.
- Generally positive relationships with police officers because of one's white skin.
- Privilege of having school authorities on one's side and listening to them.
- The privilege of learning from a predominately white culture/scholarship/history in the school curriculum.
- Finding an overwhelming number of children's books that represent white characters and Western culture.
- When shopping at a store, generally not being surveilled by staff. For example, at the grocery store when shopping, staff might ask a white person, "oh can I help you?" while they might surveil and follow customers of color.
- When watching TV, news, media, and shopping at stores for products, cards, gifts, music, art, and more, having the privilege of seeing whiteness represented—there is an overwhelming representation of whiteness in these circumstances, and white people have the privilege of feeling seen and represented in a general sense historically and now in the present day.

White educators can also think about whether and how they benefit from other systems of undue privilege, such as those which accrue to cisgender men or non-disabled individuals because of patriarchy or ableism, etc. In addition, it is helpful to remember that proclaiming "color blindness" or stating simply that one is "not racist" can uphold racism by drawing attention away from its social operation. White educators can actively model antiracist approaches by speaking from the "I" perspective to demonstrate how one *participates* in social privilege even if one does not consciously hold negative racial attitudes towards people of color.

ANTIBIAS WORK

“Biases are the stories we make up about people before we truly know them.” —Vernā Myers

The Anti-Defamation League’s (2012) Education Department, A World of Difference Institute, created an equity self-assessment tool for educators called *Creating an Antibias Learning Environment*. They emphasize that looking into one’s own cultural biases and assessing diversity should happen as a daily practice among teachers. Do you think about ways to interrupt explicit and implicit bias? Montessori TEP faculty can think about various ways they can work on their own self-development and bring in antibias training and workshops to their TEP.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are TEP faculty involved in unconscious bias workshop training or training in the form of seminars, online coursework, and/or webinars throughout the year as a professional responsibility and requirement?

1	2	3	4	5
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Is there mentorship provided to make Montessori TEP faculty aware of their own unconscious biases? [Mentorship meaning through AMS’s ABAR training program or a colleague, DEI specialist, or outside consultant.]

1	2	3	4	5
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Do TEP faculty self-reflect on their own conscious and unconscious biases, their racial and cultural identities, and those of their adult learners?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are TEP faculty encouraged to tell their personal narratives of implicit or explicit bias and listen to others’ narratives?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

In the words of the Anti-Defamation League (2012), do TEP faculty members “establish an environment that allows for mistakes” (p. 2) and “model non-defensive responses when told that something they said or did was offensive to someone?” (p. 2)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Antibias in language and communication

Have I thought about bias in the language that I use with my learners that may cause discomfort or harm to persons of gender or racial identities other than my own?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

There are many different types of bias:

Explicit bias: Explicit bias refers to conscious biases about others’ identities, including along the dimensions of gender, race, culture, disability, or religion. Explicit bias often manifests as negative beliefs or even hostilities about certain groups of people, and it thus contributes to patterns of “othering,” or harmful out-grouping based upon difference.

Unconscious Bias or Implicit Bias: Beliefs are there, but you are not aware of how they play out. Stereotypes are one example: imposing certain qualities on people of a different race or other identifier. There are real, life and death implications of implicit bias and racism. From a DEI perspective, unconscious bias is the unfair treatment against groups of people or persons along lines of race, gender identity, or other categories of difference (e.g., religion, disability, class, socio-economic status, ethnicity, nationality, age, etc.) by holding prejudiced beliefs, actions, or judgments against them. Usually, these behaviors are unconscious, meaning that the individual(s) are not aware of them, nor do they acknowledge themselves engaging in behavior that could be harmful to the other person(s) or group(s) receiving the prejudice, beliefs, actions, or judgments. From this definition, any biases that are made purposefully or intentionally are considered **conscious biases** or **explicit biases**.

Aversive bias/aversive racism: Aversive bias is a form of implicit bias where cross-racial or interracial situations can create cognitive dissonance for people belonging to a dominant racial group.

Discrimination: This is the behavioral expression of bias, where people are treated differently based on their race or other identifiers.

Resources:

Four Tools for Interrupting Implicit Bias,³² by Zaretta Hammond

Culturally Responsive Teaching: An Interview with Zaretta Hammond,³³ by Larry Ferlazzo

Teacher Bias: The Elephant in the Classroom,³⁴ by The Graide Network

Unconscious Bias,³⁵ by Vanderbilt University

World Trust: Social Justice & Equity Movement Building³⁶

Bias-free language includes language that is free from sexism and is sensitive to people's chosen sexual orientation, race, age and more. Avoid assuming someone's gender identity if you do not know or did not ask them how they would like to be referred to. Pronoun activities during introductions are useful toward this end.

See Inclusive Language, Biased Language,³⁷ by Writing Commons

ACTIVITY: REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

Reflective Journaling Prompt:

What are your explicit biases? What about deeper internal biases? Reflect in a personal journal about your own conscious biases and what you think your unconscious biases might be. Don't judge them. Just write about them and reflect upon them. Let them surface. What do you need to do to work on them? What are some short-term goals? What about longer-term goals in this reflective work on your biases? Feel free to incorporate both visual imagery and written reflection.

³² <https://crtandthebrain.com/four-tools-for-interrupting-implicit-bias/>

³³ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-culturally-responsive-teaching-an-interview-with-zaretta-hammond/2015/07>

³⁴ <https://marcolearning.com/teacher-bias-the-elephant-in-the-classroom/>

³⁵ <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/diversity/unconscious-bias/>

³⁶ <https://www.world-trust.org/>

³⁷ <https://writingcommons.org/section/style/elements-of-style/inclusive-language/>

Materials:

Notebook, sketchbook, pens, pencils, markers, colored pencils, erasers

Notes:

Know that this is long-term work that one can engage with throughout their lifetime and career, and there is no “quick fix.” The faculty member or educator must want to do this work. To dedicate oneself to challenging social injustices is to dedicate a great deal of attention.

Bringing to conscious awareness one’s internalized racism and biases is a difficult but vital part of this project.

When biases manifest themselves through discrimination and harm, and faculty or adult learners stand by and do nothing, their inaction can result in the perpetuation of racism as a pattern of social violence.

Hammond (2015) writes: “one of the nation’s leading implicit bias scholars, Patricia Devine, compares implicit bias to habits that, with intention and practice, can be broken. Her research has found that three conditions need to be in place for individuals to successfully ‘de-bias’:

Intention: You have to acknowledge that you harbor unconscious biases and are motivated to change. Attention: You have to pay attention to your triggers and know when stereotypical responses or assumptions are activated. Time: You have to make time to practice new strategies designed to ‘break’ your automatic associations that link a negative judgment to behavior that is culturally different from yours” (p. 1).

INTERNATIONAL SECTION ON ABAR

Inequality distorts “the ability to be oneself, of establishing and maintaining a ‘contact’ with another (Fanon, 1959/1965, p. 126).

Racism, xenophobia, and myriad other forms of discrimination and oppression (sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, ageism, etc.) are pervasive and violent acts that exist across the world, not just the United States. The American Montessori Society partners with schools abroad. It is important for Montessori TEP faculty members to consider the ways in which racism operates in other global settings and make their adult learners aware of current issues and injustices taking place around the world. Below are reflective questions that focus on racism and its international components and concerns.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Understanding racism internationally

Do we understand racism and injustices in countries other than the United States?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Can we speak to racism's global history?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of how racism operates uniquely within Europe?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are adult learners being educated about Asian hate crimes happening in the U.S. and abroad?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we keep adult learners updated and assign them readings about current events, racial injustices, and antibias education issues and efforts that are happening abroad?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Transatlantic slave trade

Have we engaged our adult learners in discussions about the transatlantic slave trade, its connections with colonialism and the globalization of race? Have we discussed how they can engage their young students with its difficult and impactful histories?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we equipped with resources that provide accurate narratives of the transatlantic slave trade and its psychological, familial and spiritual consequences?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Working with international students

Are faculty sensitive to their international adult learners' experiences in the U.S. and abroad? Do faculty respect their heritage and native languages?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we providing opportunities for our adult learners to “resolve conflicts, solve problems, work in diverse teams and think critically about information?” (Anti-Defamation League, 2012, p. 3).

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

International current events board

Do we encourage our adult learners to keep a section of their Montessori classroom updated with current events from around the world that showcases events happening about racial injustices and antibias/antiracism?

This can be done using a corkboard or posting them on a “International current events” board in the classroom. Students can take ownership of this board and find and print out articles for the class each week. “Educators should let students know that they consider themselves learners, and that they see themselves as part of the learning process” (Anti-Defamation League, 2012, p. 2).

Processing articles through collage and artmaking

Students can take turns presenting on these articles in classroom discussions or use them in the form of a collage lesson when teachers are ready to switch out articles so students can process their content and meaning.

Helpful resources for faculty on issues regarding racism outside the U.S.

Slavevoyages.org offers excellent resource material for lessons, information and more about slave trades throughout history.

[International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#),³⁸ by the United Nations

[Racism at Home and Abroad: A Conversation Between Friends](#),³⁹ by the World Bank Group

[How Colonialism Shaped Policing in France](#),⁴⁰ by Florian Bobin

[Looking at Racism, Eugenics, and Biopolitics in Europe Historically: An Interview with Marius Turda](#),⁴¹ by Europe Now

[My Very Personal Taste of Racism Abroad](#),⁴² by Nicole Phillip

[Race Abroad for Americans of Color Preparing to Live Abroad](#),⁴³ by Glimpse Study Abroad Guides

[Witness Black History Podcast](#),⁴⁴ by BBC Network

[Black in Latin America](#),⁴⁵ by PBS

[Racial Dynamics in Bermuda in the 21st Century: Progress and Challenges](#),⁴⁶ by Keith Lawrence & Raymond Codrington

[Why is Mainstream International Relations Blind to Racism?](#),⁴⁷ by Foreign Policy

³⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-racism-day>

³⁹ https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/insights/i14-racism-home-abroad

⁴⁰ <https://jacobin.com/2020/07/police-racism-france-africans-colonialism>

⁴¹ <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2020/12/07/looking-at-racism-eugenics-and-biopolitics-in-europe-historically-an-interview-with-marius-turda/>

⁴² <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/travel/racism-travel-italy-study-abroad.html>

⁴³ <https://umabroad.umn.edu/sites/umabroad.umn.edu/files/documents/race-abroad.pdf>

⁴⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01h9dl0/episodes/downloads>

⁴⁵ <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/black-in-latin-america/>

⁴⁶ <https://bermudacommunityfoundation.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Aspen-Bermuda%20Report%202015.pdf>

⁴⁷ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/03/why-is-mainstream-international-relations-ir-blind-to-racism-colonialism/>

Examples of inferiority outside the U.S.

For one example, in India the symbolic value of whiteness is a real issue among residents. It encourages the use of whitening creams to look or appear white. Colorism, as this is called, is prevalent in advertisements and other marketing materials.

We can think colorism as a process whereby people of color internalize inferiority, or what Frantz Fanon calls “epidermalization.” This is traceable to colonialism and its racist legacies. As Oliver (2004) describes, “The values of racist imperialism enter the colonized through the skin” (p. 51).

ACTIVITY:

Have TEP faculty choose two articles from the resources list above (Helpful resources for faculty on issues regarding racism outside the U.S.) for adult learners to carefully read through.

Discussion prompt:

After reading, find a peer to work with and talk to each other about the thoughts and feelings that came up for you. Use the following questions as a guideline for discussion:

- What was your article about and what issues regarding racism were discussed on an international level?
- Can you think of how the events you read about in your articles relate to racism here in the U.S. or in your local community?
- What are you learning about yourself and your own racial identity after reading your article?

Other questions for exploration about representation

- How are marginalized groups represented abroad and in the U.S. (e.g., in artworks, advertising, media, etc.)? What responsibilities might Montessori educators have in representing those who have experienced oppression, racism, or racialized violence?
- How are racism, racialized trauma, and violence *misrepresented* and what effects does this have in our national and international communities?
- What license do we have as Montessori educators in representing marginalized groups (e.g., through our curriculum and instructional strategies)?
- How do we represent our own racial identity-based experiences?

Articles for further exploration on the topic of representation through the visual arts

Protesters Block, Demand Removal of a Painting of Emmett Till at the Whitney Biennial⁴⁸

by Anya Jaremko-Greenwold

Righting Two Martin Luther King Memorial Wrongs,⁴⁹ by Hampton Dellinger

*Some questions and article choices in this section are adapted from the document, “Representing Marginalized Aspects of Self and Non-Self Identities: An Aesthetic Inquiry The School Without Walls High School and The Graduate School of Education and Human Development at George Washington University November 3–December 8, 2021,” by Dr. Brian Casemore, Jason Bulluck, Leslie Smith Duss, and Benjamin Tellie.

Plan write-up:

Create a lesson plan about how you will involve your students in conversations about racism and antibias/antiracism abroad in your classroom and include questions about representation.

Describe your plan and the ways in which you will work with your students and lead the discussions in a caring manner (550 words max).

⁴⁸ <https://hyperallergic.com/367012/protesters-block-demand-removal-of-a-painting-of-emmett-till-at-the-whitney-biennial/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/01/righting-two-martin-luther-king-memorial-wrongs/266944/>

RESULTS

If you answered **4–5** for any of the topics in this assessment, and were able to answer the questions with concrete and specific examples and illustrative evidence, your TEP is moving very positively in the direction of antibias/antiracist education and DEI and ABAR work. Consider the advanced resources section: [Digging deeper: More DEI and ABAR resources](#) (page 364). You could also review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364), to find out more on how to advance your topic areas in your professional practice or classroom.

If you selected **2–3** for any given topic area, consider improving these areas in your training program to create a welcoming atmosphere that fosters DEI and ABAR. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help improve classroom community and curriculum, so that the school experience is not culturally harmful to any students. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

If you answered **1** to any question, you will need to address these topics and develop a plan of action to improve. Your curriculum, instructional approaches, environment, and/or behaviors may be culturally harmful to learners. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help you improve in these areas. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

TEP Collaborative and self-work

THIS section focuses on developing deeper conversations through collaborative dialogue about DEI and ABAR values in curriculum and self-study processes.

COLLABORATIVE CULTURES FOR CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION

It is important to engage with race, racism, DEI and ABAR work and pedagogy in collaboration with other Montessori TEP faculty members at your institution. A good antibias/antiracist curriculum for Montessori TEP does not end with the incorporation of a few artists, scholars, authors, musicians, or writers of color into the curriculum. It also does not end with facilitating discussions about racism in the classroom. It is also about enacting broader change: bringing racist attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and defenses to conscious awareness, and understanding what antibias/antiracist work means and does for society. In this sense, it means enacting antibias/antiracism in daily practice at every level, including through continued collaborative and self-work outside of the classroom.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do Montessori TEP faculty have regular, collaborative meetings about racial equity and the incorporation of antibias/antiracist pedagogy and DEI and ABAR values into their TEP curriculums?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do TEP faculty have an agenda in place in terms of what will be discussed and what the goals are for each meeting? Can they articulate short-term and long-term goals to expand DEI and ABAR values?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we have “a *community agreement* for TEP faculty department meetings, goals and norms before the meeting begins”? (see The Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative, n.d., p. 62)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are there opportunities throughout the year for TEP faculty to reflect upon, collaborate on, and offer support with other Montessori TEP faculty and staff (at different Montessori school training sites) or other TEP programs about racial equity and the incorporation of antiracist pedagogy and DEI and ABAR values into their curriculums?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Montessori TEP faculty and administration can consider having collaborative meetings on a regular basis (monthly or an agreed-upon number per semester) about the TEP’s racial equity strategic plan and its progress in incorporating antiracist pedagogy and DEI and ABAR values into Montessori curriculums.

The point is to not let racial equity, DEI and ABAR ideas, curricular endeavors, and plans fizzle out of the discussion. If they are kept in mind as a priority of faculty and administrators, your institution can continue building upon the foundation established here with consistency and accountability.

ACTIVITY: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

The idea of a professional learning community builds collaborative cultures. According to Fullan (2016), “professional learning communities (PLCs), as we have seen, represent one powerful strategy for developing such cultures, provided that they are seen as deep-learning cultures” (p. 229). When teacher leaders organize and plan out their goals and objectives, in conjunction with a school’s equity committee and/or school leadership team around DEI and ABAR values, they are building upon a collaborative culture. This type of collaborative culture can move the school forward in their thinking about how to address DEI and ABAR values among students. This same concept can be applied to TEPs.

Prompt:

Either collaboratively or individually, come up with a strategy for your Montessori TEP on developing a DEI and ABAR PLC.

Materials: Journal, sketchbook, paper, pens, pencil, colored pencils, eraser

In your sketchbook or on a piece of paper or poster paper, create your own DEI and ABAR curriculum committee proposal for your Montessori training site:

- What is the title of your committee?
- Select five committee members from various departments and positions. This could be faculty and staff, administration, or other outside collaborators or scholars.
- Create a series of 5–7 goals for the committee to focus on in the fall or first semester (could be short-term or long-term goals). You can then bring these to the committee to get started and have the committee add and revise.
- Decide on a set of meeting dates and approximate times.
- Construct a set of community norms for the committee to follow and ask them to add their input and revisions.

2ND ACTIVITY: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

This activity can be done individually or in groups.

Split into groups of four. Each person in the group can take one reflective question and spend about 10 minutes answering the question on paper through writing, drawing, and/or mind-mapping. Then, each person will share and reflect. Your group should feel free to reference the terminology below and add to them in your reflective dialogue.

- What does *diversity* mean to you in your education and professional philosophy? How do you define it?
- How can an educator and school achieve *equity*?
- What does it mean to be *inclusive* in the classroom and school community? What does that look like?
- What does it feel like when a teacher achieves a sense of *belonging* in their classroom and school community? What does “belonging” feel like? What does it mean to belong?

SELF-WORK AND SELF-STUDY

As educators, we must address racism both in the world and within ourselves to dismantle it. We must be aware of ourselves (at the level of behaviors, interactions, language, etc.), our privileges, and the importance of internally reflecting on and communicating “who we are” with the world. Self-examination and self-study can allow us to be aware of our own discomforts, to sit with them in conversations about race, racism, and bias with our students (helping them to do the same), and to collectively bring new knowledge to conscious awareness.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Mentorships and Education

Do we work with colleagues, administrators, and DEI and ABAR mentors to observe our teaching practices and reflect together to build better curriculums and instruction for adult learners?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are there opportunities in our program to engage in PD programming on DEI and ABAR?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we seek PD programs out on our own, and will our institution support us in our education in DEI and ABAR work?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Self-Reflection

Are we setting goals to help ourselves get to a place where we can make improvements?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we give ourselves opportunities to self-reflect about DEI and ABAR work in our TEP curriculum (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we keep a reflective journal to reflect on our biases and work as teachers in DEI and ABAR?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Self-Study

Do we read texts about racism and antibias/antiracism? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we reading books and articles about whiteness and white privilege and books and texts written by BIPOC? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Montessori TEP faculty are encouraged to think about the following questions regarding racism (e.g., racial history, colonial history, etc.)

Do we take time to understand the history of race and racism?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Can we provide an accurate, working definition of race and what concepts went into its construction?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we know how race relates to colonial expansion?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

Do we know about intersectionality: how race intersects with other areas of social oppression (gender, age, sex, class, disability, religion, age, physical appearance, etc.)?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Can we clearly define antiracism and explain what it entails?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of the psychosocial dangers and dimensions of white supremacy?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Cultural competence

Do we engage in collaborations and professional relationships with people of color and people outside of our own race and culture? This is referred to as “cross-cultural skills” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of our personal cultural worldviews? (See Penn State Extension, 2020)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of our “attitude[s] towards cultural differences?” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we have “knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews?” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

See the Resources section (page 361) for more tools to “uneducate” yourself of false biases through reading and study.

Resources:

Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools, 2nd edition,⁵⁰ by Glenn Singleton.

The Courageous Conversation Compass,⁵¹ adapted from Glenn Singleton’s Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools, 2nd edition.

15 Ways Teachers Encourage Racism in the Classroom,⁵² by Tanya Marshall

Working with mentors

Work with a DEI and ABAR mentor in your institution or community. This could be someone who has more experience with DEI and ABAR like an administrator, faculty member, staff member, scholar, or consulting expert, who can work with you to reflect together in order to make positive changes in your curriculum and instruction.

PDs, workshops, DEI and ABAR training seminars

Seek out PD opportunities to learn from experts in race, racism, and bias and DEI and ABAR work. Attend PD sessions throughout the year or during breaks and time off.

Talk to your administration and get them on board to secure funding for PD opportunities, events, conferences, etc.

Goal setting

Set goals in order to help you improve DEI and ABAR in your curriculum and instruction. It is important to reflect and practice weekly. Consider setting a new goal each week or month to make real improvements.

- What are your plans for this week?

⁵⁰ <https://www.amazon.com/Courageous-Conversations-About-Race-Achieving/dp/1483383741>

⁵¹ https://www.siprep.org/uploaded/Magis/Courageous_Conversations_Compass.pdf

⁵² <https://www.thebutterflyteacher.com/racism-in-the-classroom/>

- What 5 things are at the top of your priority list in DEI and ABAR work?
- Take time to write down what you want to accomplish.

RESOURCES AND TIPS

Take online course work

Engaging in online course work will help you boost your confidence level. Here are just a few examples to get started:

See Learners Edge under “Culture and Language.”⁵³

See Coursera under “Anti-Racism I and II” and “Designing and Building Institutional Anti-Racist Spaces.”⁵⁴

Other resources

Boston University Center for Antiracist Research⁵⁵

Organizations to learn more about in order to gain or provide mentorship

Bail funds

The Bail Project⁵⁶

National Bail Out⁵⁷

Black LGBTQIA+ support

Emergency Release Fund⁵⁸

Black Trans Protesters Emergency Fund⁵⁹

⁵³ <https://courses.learnersedge.com>

⁵⁴ <https://www.coursera.org/search?query=antiracism%20&>

⁵⁵ bu.edu/antiracism-center/

⁵⁶ <https://bailproject.org/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.nationalbailout.org/>

⁵⁸ <https://emergencyreleasefund.com/>

⁵⁹ <https://twitter.com/BTFACollective/status/1267853959378731023>

Homeless Black Trans Women Fund⁶⁰

Solutions Not Punishment⁶¹

Frontline organizations

Black Teacher Project⁶²

Black Visions Collective⁶³

Color of Change⁶⁴

Communities Against Police Brutality⁶⁵

Community Justice Exchange⁶⁶

Restore Justice⁶⁷

Showing Up for Racial Justice⁶⁸

Black community

Mutual Aid Hub⁶⁹

Reclaim the Block⁷⁰

Cultural competence

Cultural competence is the ability to effectively interact, communicate, and share knowledge with individuals from cultural backgrounds that are different from one's own cultural, ethnic, or racial background.

⁶⁰ <https://www.gofundme.com/f/trans-housing-coalition-fund>

⁶¹ <https://www.snap4freedom.org/home>

⁶² <https://www.blackteacherproject.org/donations>

⁶³ <https://www.blackvisionsmn.org/>

⁶⁴ <https://colorofchange.org/>

⁶⁵ https://www.cuapb.org/what_we_do

⁶⁶ <https://www.communityjusticeexchange.org/nbfn-directory>

⁶⁷ <https://www.restorejustice.org/>

⁶⁸ <https://surj.org/>

⁶⁹ <https://www.mutualaidhub.org/>

⁷⁰ <https://www.reclaimtheblock.org/home>

But there is more to cultural competence than this simple definition: see What is Cultural Competence and How to Develop It?,⁷¹ by PSU.

See What Are We Seeking to Sustain Through Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy? A Loving Critique Forward⁷² in *Harvard Educational Review*, by Django Paris and H. Samy Alim.

Developing cultural competence is important because according to Paris and Alim (2014),

“while it is crucial that we work to sustain African American, Latina/o [Latinx], Asian American, Pacific Islander American, and Indigenous American languages and cultures in our pedagogies, we must be open to sustaining them in both the traditional and evolving ways they are lived and used by young people. Our pedagogies must address the well-understood fact that what it means to be African American or Latina/o [Latinx] or Navajo is continuing to shift in the ways culture always has” (p. 91).

Penn State Extension’s website (2020) offers cross-cultural attitude strategies that can help Montessori educators strengthen and sustain their communication skills:

- **“Practice openness** by demonstrating acceptance of difference”
- **“Be flexible** by demonstrating acceptance of ambiguity”
- **“Demonstrate humility** through suspension of judgment and the ability to learn”
- **“Be sensitive to others** by appreciating cultural differences”
- **“Show a spirit of adventure** by showing curiosity and seeing opportunities in different situations”
- **“Use a sense of humor** through the ability to laugh at ourselves”
- **“Practice positive change or action** by demonstrating a successful interaction with the identified culture”

What does it mean to be culturally competent as an educator? According to Mayfield (2020), “cultural competency is a progressive state of professionalism in which one:

- Becomes cognizant of how racial bias and inequity have been embedded in our culture and how our cultural values and beliefs influence professional practices;
- Adapts professional practices to create more equitable student outcomes;

⁷¹ <https://extension.psu.edu/what-is-cultural-competence-and-how-to-develop-it>

⁷² <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.982l873k2ht16m77>

- Dismantles inequitable policies and practices that limit access and opportunity, and relinquishes their privileges in exchange for championing equity and disrupting injustice” (p. 1).

Resources:

See 5 Steps toward Cultural Competence in Schools,⁷³ by Vernita Mayfield

Cultural Competence,⁷⁴ by National Education Association

Cultural Competence: An Important Skill Set for the 21st Century,⁷⁵ by the University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension.

RESULTS

If you answered **4–5** for any of the topics in this assessment, and were able to answer the questions with concrete and specific examples and illustrative evidence, your TEP is moving very positively in the direction of antibias/antiracist education and DEI and ABAR work. Consider the advanced resources section: Digging deeper: More DEI and ABAR resources (page 364). You could also review the Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now (page 364), to find out more on how to advance your topic areas in your professional practice or classroom.

If you selected **2–3** for any given topic area, consider improving these areas in your training program to create a welcoming atmosphere that fosters DEI and ABAR. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help improve classroom community and curriculum, so that the school experience is not culturally harmful to any students. Review the Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now (page 364).

If you answered **1** to any question, you will need to address these topics and develop a plan of action to improve. Your curriculum, instructional approaches, environment, and/or behaviors may be culturally harmful to learners. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help you improve in these areas. Review the Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now (page 364).

⁷³ <https://www.middleweb.com/43430/5-steps-toward-cultural-competence-in-schools/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/professional-learning/resources/cultural-competence>

⁷⁵ <https://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/html/g1375/build/g1375.htm>

Reflection

EQUITY ASSESSMENT REFLECTION

After you have completed the assessment, reflect on the following questions to come up with an action plan on the topics and categories you would like to focus on this year.

- What are the major DEI and ABAR goals that you hope to focus on most this year within your Montessori TEP? These can also be shorter-term goals you can implement immediately.
- Moving forward with the Montessori TEP, what are your future and long-term goals in DEI and ABAR? What would you like Montessori adult learners to walk away with after they graduate from the program?
- What are some of the obstacles and resistances you think you might run into, and how can you address them while maintaining momentum?
- What activities and projects in your own curriculum can you adjust or change for adult learners? How can you decolonize your texts and curriculum materials in a meaningful way that would represent a group of diverse scholars, perspectives, and approaches?
- List some of the activities, ideas, and fundamental strategies and approaches you will carry out with the Montessori TEP moving forward from the assessment.

*Questions from this section were adapted from the following resource: Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative (2018, 2020)

MONTESSORI SCHOOLS ASSESSMENT TOOL

School leadership

IN this section, Montessori school leadership is tasked with focusing on creating an equity committee that oversees the implementation of an equity plan and follows through with a plan of action and strategies, throughout the school year and beyond, to incorporate DEI and ABAR practices and values.

FORMING AN EQUITY LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE IN YOUR SCHOOL

Recent literature suggests establishing *equity committees* in schools and having more stakeholders—“administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents, and community members” (MAEC, 2021, p. 2)—be a part of the conversation and assessment tool implementation process is critical to enacting successful DEI and ABAR strategies. It takes a collaborative team effort to take on a leadership role within the school and make sure changes and progress are being made. Equity committees are being established as a part of this effort in schools throughout the country. (See Colorado Department of Education, 2010; MAEC, 2021)

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Does our school have an equity committee, or an existing leadership team, that focuses on and commits to building equity within the school and school community?

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our equity committee meet on a regular basis to discuss, create, and implement DEI and ABAR training for faculty, staff, parents, administrators and more?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Does our school have an equity committee, or an existing leadership team, that focuses on and commits to building equity within the school and school community?

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our equity committee meet on a regular basis to discuss, create, and implement DEI and ABAR training for faculty, staff, parents, administrators and more?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have a process for evaluating how membership on our equity committee contributes to effective DEI work?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we considered a parent advisory committee to move our DEI and ABAR work forward?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER: EQUITY COMMITTEE

An equity committee can involve multiple constituents—faculty members, administrators, parents, and professional consultants that work together to create change within the school setting. Once established, they can meet on a regular basis (monthly or as needed) to determine equity auditing strategies for the school year: where to make improvements, how to craft short-term and long-term goals, how to raise money for programming, and how to strategize for investing in professional development for faculty, staff, and administration.

CONDUCTING INITIAL RESEARCH/FINDING OUT MORE INFORMATION

An equity committee's first goal is to find out more information—to examine existing data and discover what your challenges are. In some states, schools and school districts are often unaware of the inequities present within the school community at large (See Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Conducting more research and identifying what your school is already doing in terms of equity work is important in understanding where the school is currently and where the school could be. This idea is supported by significant research in equity auditing in organizations (See The Coalition of Communities of Color and All Hands Raised, 2014) and in education (See Skrla et al., 2004).

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Has our school already conducted research on inequities present within the school building and amongst staff, faculty, students, and more?

1	2	3	4	5
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Has our school identified strengths and weaknesses in DEI and ABAR? Is the school currently working towards making improvements based on the identified challenges? (See The Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative, 2018, 2020)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we collect data on the “racial, ethnic and linguistic makeup” (Coalition of Communities of Color and All Hands Raised, 2014, p. 6) of our leadership board?

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our school “post materials in languages other than English” (Coalition of Communities of Color and All Hands Raised, 2014, p. 6) on our school website and throughout the school to be more inclusive of other languages?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER: EXAMINING CURRENT SCHOOL LANDSCAPE

Please utilize all sections of this document to assist in the equity audit of your school and to move in productive ways towards DEI and ABAR.

In the information-gathering stage, it is important to collect data on the school community and information. Surveys, focus groups, and interviews with faculty, staff, and parents, particularly paying attention to marginalized groups within the community, will be important.

Guiding questions

- How do current faculty, staff, administrators, students, and parents, and other stakeholders experience the school culture?
- What are the school's strengths in DEI and ABAR?
- What are the school's challenges in DEI and ABAR?
- What improvements do we feel need to be made around DEI and ABAR values?

Here are some ways you might be able to get started in formulating data collection and analyzing that data. These are examples of other equity auditing formats to further gain ideas:

- MAEC, 2021⁷⁶
- Keleher, 2009⁷⁷
- Equity Task Force Working Group, 2010⁷⁸

STARTING WITH A STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION AND ATTAINABLE GOALS

Ongoing *practice* and *participation* are necessary to the equity assessment and community building process. Assessing equity is not a one-time project but must be accompanied by a solid plan with benchmarks and goals. It also entails regular evaluation. Building equity involves a routine practice of self-work and reflection, examining one's cultural biases, and understanding inequities that are already present, and where inequities lie in a school setting (See Skrla et al., 2004).

⁷⁶ <https://maec.org/equity-audit/>

⁷⁷ https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/RacialJusticeImpactAssessment_v5.pdf

⁷⁸ https://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/cde_english/download/resources-links/equity%20toolkit%20final_2010.pdf

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Does our school have a formal strategic plan of action that clearly lays out the challenges and points of focus for the year in DEI and ABAR work?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we think about attainable goals (e.g. creating diversity indicators to measure every year, or how to effectively bring difficult conversations about DEI and ABAR to our teacher education programs and our schools), and do we have a process for evaluating what makes goals attainable?

1	2	3	4	5
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Has our team created “common language and shared frameworks that can ground the work within a unified understanding of race, racism, and other essential, foundational concepts?”

(The Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative, 2018, p. 21)

1	2	3	4	5
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Has our plan been reviewed in collaboration with faculty and staff, as well as the equity committee?

1	2	3	4	5
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Has there been communication with the student and parent body about our equity plan? Have there been updates about the school’s progress towards meeting these goals?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Has there been an equity committee, strategic plan, or announcement made public (See Coalition of Communities of Color and All Hands Raised, 2014)?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Forming an equity plan and maintaining transparency with the school community

Direct communication about the equity process is paramount. Open and transparent communication is essential in understanding what is being addressed, assessed, and worked through. It is critical to keep everyone informed by being clear about the equity audit on a school's website, on its social media, and through any other forms of communication the school uses.

It is highly recommended to have a clear, written strategy for communication about the equity process to keep parents, staff, faculty, administration, and the school community informed about the equity audit process and its goals.

Here are a few strong examples of school strategic equity plans and updates:

The College Preparatory School, Oakland, CA, equity and belonging website⁷⁹

The College Preparatory School, Oakland, CA, racial equity & belonging updates⁸⁰

The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, NJ, DEI strategic plan⁸¹

⁷⁹ <https://www.college-prep.org/about/equity-and-belonging>

⁸⁰ <https://www.college-prep.org/about/equity-and-belonging/racial-equity-and-belonging-updates>

⁸¹ <https://www.lawrenceville.org/life-at-lawrenceville/dei/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-strategic-plan>

EXAMPLES OF FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGIC ACTION POINTS FOR MONTESSORI SCHOOLING:

DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION

Diversity and representation matter. Your school can think about building upon diversity and representation in terms of school, school community, faculty, curriculum, teaching, and instruction, and more in order to work towards student achievement, equity, inclusivity, and belonging (See Gershenson et al., 2021). Consider these questions below as a starting point to your explorations of diversity and representation.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Is there diverse representation amongst faculty, staff, administration, board members, and students? BIPOC representations across all races and ethnicities (e.g., Middle Eastern, Black/African, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, Native American, white, multiracial, etc.) and other identifiers (people with disabilities, different sexual orientations, religious affiliations, ability, neurodiversity, class, language, etc.)? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we examined teacher equity and program equity (to determine, for example, which students are getting quality instruction and which students are left out)?

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our school have a diversity statement or racial equity statement?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Sharing resources

Does our school website have a DEI and ABAR page or additional website that is updated on a regular basis, outlines the school's racial equity plan, and keeps track of the equity plan's goals?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we creating or revising our DEI and ABAR resource webpage for our wider school community, looking for resources that we support and want to share with the wider community?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER: DIVERSITY STATEMENT

There are many DEI statements available. Here are some examples from various schools, so you can create your own statement or build a website/web page that links to your Montessori school's website accordingly:

Creating your School's Diversity Statement,⁸² Ism

University of California,⁸³ Davis, CA

Open Window School,⁸⁴ Bellevue, WA

The Town School,⁸⁵ New York, NY

Urban School,⁸⁶ San Francisco, CA

⁸² <https://isminc.com/advisory/publications/the-source/creating-your-schools-diversity-statement>

⁸³ <https://diversity.ucdavis.edu/about/strategic-plan/goals-and-objectives>

⁸⁴ <https://www.openwindow.school.org/about/diversity-equity-and-inclusion>

⁸⁵ <https://thetownschool.org/who-we-are/diversity>

⁸⁶ <https://www.urbanschool.org/uploaded/documents/StatementDiversityInclusionEquity.pdf>

Sharing resources

In creating a DEI and ABAR resource website or webpage, consider a wide variety of perspectives on topics to represent a wide range of voices and identities.

Your school is also encouraged to expand upon your social and or print media platforms to disperse information on DEI and ABAR work at your school and to share of various resources. Also, interactive digital platforms are available to share within your community, such as [Canva](#) or [Mural](#).

EXAMPLES OF FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGIC ACTION POINTS FOR MONTESSORI SCHOOLING:

TUITION AND ACCESSIBILITY

This section helps school leaders think about tuition opportunities and access for students, faculty, and staff to be able to engage with the opportunities that Montessori education provides. Oftentimes, it is difficult for low- and middle-income families to afford Montessori education due to financial barriers. In this section the leadership team will focus on access to tuition opportunities.

QUESTIONS

Is tuition affordable for students? Is there a scholarship program or a plan in place for children in lower- or middle-income communities to attend our Montessori school?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are school materials and resources available and accessible for all children?

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our school either directly provide or provide information on where to go to get computers, software, notebooks, supplies, etc.? Are computers and digital technologies easily accessible for children and families (e.g., internet, laptops, software, etc.) if included in the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are resources available for mental health services in case students are struggling with their coursework or with mental health issues?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do students have support if they are dealing with family abuse, bullying, cyberbullying, violence, etc.?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Tuition and resource accessibility

Not every student and their family can afford a Montessori education, and the school and programs become inaccessible to lower-income families. What financial opportunities are available to students that enable them to attend Montessori and be successful year-to-year?

Are there fundraising events for scholarships and tuition assistance programs? Here are just a few examples of ways to collect money for scholarships and financial assistance:

- Scholarship campaign: develop a community, alumni, philanthropist, and/or parent fundraising campaign where people can donate money for scholarship and tuition assistance each year. This can be a strategic point for the school's equity plan.
- Reach out to Montessori alumni to donate to increase tuition funding for students.

EXAMPLES OF FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGIC ACTION POINTS FOR MONTESSORI SCHOOLING:

REFLECTIVE DEPARTMENT/TEACHER DIALOGUES

It is important to engage in conversations about race, racism, bias, and DEI and ABAR work in collaboration with other faculty members and administrators at your school. Faculty, administrators, and students must undergo significant and transformative work, exploring what it means to be “racist” and “antiracist” in the curriculum and understanding the definitions of these two terms. A good ABAR curriculum does not end with the incorporation of a few figures, scholars, authors, and writers of color into the curriculum, increasing representation, or even having open discussions about racism. It’s about looking deeply into oneself as an educator, engaging in reading scholarly work on DEI and ABAR values and practices and working on oneself. It is important to understand one’s internalized racism from society and work on oneself towards ABAR to explore and come to an awareness of what ABAR means and can do for society.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we have meetings regularly and collaboratively about racial equity and the incorporation of ABAR pedagogy and DEI and ABAR values into our curriculums?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there opportunities throughout training sessions for faculty, staff and school leadership to reflect upon, collaborate on, and offer support about racial equity, antibias/antiracist pedagogy, and DEI and ABAR with faculty and staff at other Montessori schools?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have an agenda laying out what to discuss, guided by our short-term and long-term goals in DEI and ABAR, for each meeting?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we have a “community agreement” for department meetings, goals and norms before the meeting begins? (The Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative, n.d., p. 62)

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Structured and purposeful meeting times

Lead Montessori teachers in different rooms or grade levels can have collaborative faculty meetings on a regular basis, whether monthly or an agreed-upon number per semester, about the school’s racial equity strategic plan and their progress in incorporating ABAR pedagogy and DEI and ABAR values into their curriculums.

Members of the school’s racial equity committee can lead discussions and dialogue at these meetings.

The point is to not let racial equity, DEI and ABAR values and ideas, curricular endeavors, and plans go to waste and fizzle out of the discussion. You want to make sure it is always kept in mind and a major priority of faculty and administrators.

Continue building upon what has been started to maintain consistency and accountability. Therefore, having a racial equity strategic plan in place is important.

EXAMPLES OF FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGIC ACTION POINTS FOR MONTESSORI SCHOOLING:

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY SPACES (INCREASING VISIBILITY)

This section addresses three distinct topics about the physical school building space—increasing visibility for conversations to occur regarding DEI and ABAR values, creating wellness spaces for student decompression and inner reflection, and offering accessibility for students with special needs. For increasing visibility, the school environment is an important place in raising awareness and having extended conversations regarding racism, antisemitism, ageism, sexism, and all the “isms.” For wellness in the physical school building space, students need spaces in the school where they feel safe and can decompress with their peers and faculty throughout the day. Finally, physical school spaces also need to be accessible for students with varying special needs and physical disabilities and the classroom environment needs to be accessible for all students.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Increasing visibility in the physical school setting to have communal conversations about DEI and ABAR values

Does our school take the time to make space for natural dialogues on racial equity and DEI and ABAR to occur between faculty, staff, and administration? (What promotes such conversations to occur? For example, perhaps displaying student-led projects in the hallways, awareness posters designed by students, art displays throughout the building?)

1	2	3	4	5
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“Do the curricular content and wall displays in your classroom [and in the school building] reflect the experiences and perspectives of the cultural groups that make up the school and its surrounding community?” (Anti-Defamation League, 2012, p. 4)?

1	2	3	4	5
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What visual information is there in our school building about programming and workshops regarding diversity training and understanding LGBTQIA+ student needs and concerns?

1	2	3	4	5
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Spaces for wellness and inner reflection

Are there spaces in the school building where students feel safe and supported? For example, a wellness room, cove area, or other space where students can decompress and talk to their peers and other faculty?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Accessibility in the school building space

Do we have regular conversations as a school leadership about disability and disability studies and what can be learned from scholarship within this field as applied to our school setting?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we work with our ELL students and students with cognitive, learning, or physical disabilities to accommodate them and provide them with the resources they need to be successful in their classroom learning and in the school community?

1	2	3	4	5
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Is our school building accessible for children with special needs and disabilities?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we considered accessibility in our learning spaces? (e.g., closed captioning, transcribed lessons, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our school have a gender-neutral bathroom to accommodate transgender and non-binary persons (i.e., faculty, staff, and students) in support of transgender rights and diversity?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

DEI media communications

Having students and/or faculty create posters around the school building that advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community, allyship, ABAR, inclusivity, anti-bullying, disability and mental health awareness, women's rights and more all could spark dialogue between parents, students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

Displaying student work

Creating spaces within the school building (display cases, bulletin boards, art boards) to communally display and showcase art projects, written work, and advocacy projects regarding DEI and ABAR values can be helpful for sparking dialogues.

Art mural projects

Consider crafting a proposal to create a DEI and ABAR mural within your school building. This is a larger project that perhaps the school's equity committee and students can participate in with a local artist or the school's art teachers. This is an important visual hallmark for the school that could spark conversation and send a powerful message about the school's commitment to DEI and ABAR values.

EXAMPLES OF FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGIC ACTION POINTS FOR MONTESSORI SCHOOLING:

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, FIELD TRIPS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

It is important that the Montessori school leadership think about exploring many areas of difference—DEI and ABAR, LGBTQIA+ issues, religion, cultural, racial, and ethnic identity, and more in school clubs, extracurricular events and programming, and external partnerships with organizations. Creating these school clubs, extracurricular activities, field trips, and organizational partnerships for students is critical to widening opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to discuss and have opportunities to foster DEI and ABAR values in your school setting.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are there clubs in our school where students can reflect and work on issues related to DEI and ABAR values?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we set up a field trip with our students to learn about histories of racism, slavery, white supremacy, and lynching in America?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we making our students aware of materials, literature, and texts related to ABAR, the history of racism, DEI and ABAR values, social justice and more that they can engage with outside of school setting?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we considered creating a time in our class or in our school schedule where students can have an “advisory” or “talk time” in which they discuss important information and topics related to social, racial, and disability justice?

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our school have and maintain partnerships and collaborations with BIPOC organizations and companies? (See Coalition of Communities of Color and All Hands Raised, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our school collect, raise money, or give resources to communities of color or human rights support student organizations? (Coalition of Communities of Color and All Hands Raised, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Student conferences (middle or upper-level students)

Have we considered having our students participate in The NAIS Online Student Diversity Leadership Conference or other state level conferences that focus on social justice and diversity?

Racial justice and diversity week

Have we considered having our equity committee and school leadership teams create a racial justice week or diversity week? Perhaps this could be a “minimester” where students explore various workshops and presentations run by outside scholars and consultants in combination with interested in-school faculty members and administrators on various topics about racial justice, diversity, and equity.

Parent events and programming

Consider creating events, workshops, and presentations related to LGBTQIA+, ABAR, diversity, and more for parents to help support their children.

Family and student learning engagement

There are some great points about integrating families in the learning process and curriculum here:

Ideas for Engaging Families⁸⁷

Family and Community Engagement⁸⁸

Learning more about integrating schools

How White &/or Privileged Families Interact with School Integration⁸⁹

Integrated Schools⁹⁰

Nice White Parents⁹¹

For family integration ideas

Promoting Equity and Anti-bias in the Classroom⁹²

School clubs that Montessori schools can consider

Consider having students create and lead a variety of clubs related to DEI and ABAR values and cultural identity. Here are some examples of potential club offerings:

- Gender equality club
- Racial justice writing club
- DEI and ABAR club
- Gay-straight alliance club (GSA)

⁸⁷ <https://inclusiveschools.org/ideas-for-engaging-families/>

⁸⁸ <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/critical-practices-for-antibias-education/family-and-community-engagement>

⁸⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGNxldwqoZ1U&t=33s>

⁹⁰ <https://integratedschools.org/>

⁹¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/23/podcasts/nice-white-parents-serial.html>

⁹² <https://www.shopbecker.com/resource-cafe/beckers-blog/innovation-in-the-classroom/promoting-equity-and-anti-bias-in-the-classroom/>

- Black-Brown alliance club
- Asian American and Pacific Islander club

Learn more about diversity and affinity clubs at [Oakwood School](https://www.oakwoodschool.org/deiandb)⁹³

EXAMPLES OF FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGIC ACTION POINTS FOR MONTESSORI SCHOOLING:

DEI AND ABAR TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

It is important that the school offer professional training, advancement, and consistent professional development opportunities in the areas of DEI and ABAR for faculty, staff, administration, and board members. Here are some questions to begin to think about in the areas of training and workshops.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do our faculty and staff feel they have safe spaces to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences of race, racism, wellness, LGBTQIA+ issues and more that have an impact on their wellbeing and belonging in their workplace?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there opportunities for faculty, staff, administration, and board members to engage in required and optional classes and training sessions in DEI and ABAR during the summer months?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

⁹³ <https://www.oakwoodschool.org/deiandb>

Are there books and resources available inside the school and on the school's website for faculty, staff, administration, and board members to learn more about the history of slavery, white supremacy, and racism in the United States? What about resources regarding ABAR, social justice issues, and culturally responsive curriculum practices?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we develop new collaborations and partnerships with culturally diverse organizations, museums, and colleges to offer programming to our staff and student body?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Offering robust resources to faculty and staff

Throughout the year, school leadership and administration can offer faculty and staff opportunities to participate in training, seminars, workshops and more which grapple with DEI and ABAR values to enhance their professional, curricular, and pedagogical practices.

Listening circles, facilitated by either a faculty member who is knowledgeable in DEI and ABAR or an outside consultant, can be a good way to bring faculty and staff together to talk about topics like racism and bias. This can be run within the context of a faculty meeting or separate sessions during the school day where faculty come together to have dialogues and reflection.

RESULTS

If you answered **4–5** for any of the topics in this assessment, and were able to answer the questions with concrete and specific examples and illustrative evidence, your curriculum and instruction, professional practice and school building or programming (if applicable) is moving very positively in the direction of DEI and ABAR work. Consider the advanced resources section: [Digging deeper: More DEI and ABAR resources](#) (page 364). You could also review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364), to find out more on how to advance your topic areas in your professional practice or classroom.

If you selected **2–3** for any given topic area, consider improving these areas in your curriculum and instruction, professional practice and school building or programming (if applicable) to create a welcoming atmosphere that fosters DEI and ABAR. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help improve classroom community and curriculum, so that the school experience is not culturally harmful to any students. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

If you answered **1** to any question, you will need to address these topics and develop a plan of action to improve. Your curriculum, instructional approaches, environment, and/or behaviors may be culturally harmful to students in your program. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help you improve in these areas. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

Reflection

EQUITY ASSESSMENT REFLECTION

After you have completed the assessment, reflect on the following questions to come up with an action plan on the topics and categories you would like to focus on this year.

- What are the major DEI and ABAR goals that we hope to focus on the most this year within our school? These can be shorter-term goals that we can implement immediately.
- What are our future and long-term goals in DEI and ABAR? What would we like our faculty, staff, and students to walk away with as they move forward?
- What are some of the obstacles and resistances we think we might run into as school leadership, and how can we address them while maintaining momentum?
- What programs, initiatives, and professional development trainings can we adjust or change? How can we decolonize our programs in a meaningful way that would represent a group of diverse perspectives and approaches?
- What are some of the activities, ideas, and fundamental strategies and approaches we will carry out with our school leadership, faculty, and staff moving forward from the assessment?

*Questions from this section were adapted from the following resource: [Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative \(REJI\)](#) (2018, 2020). Organizational Race Equity Toolkit.

EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT TOOL

EC Teacher and curriculum

IN this section, Montessori Early Childhood faculty are encouraged to reflect on their instruction to better work across cultures, and to move their curriculum and instruction toward DEI and ABAR values. This assessment and the reflective exercises within are specifically geared for the Early Childhood education level.

THE TEACHER:

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR AND CONDUCT IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM

As teachers, think about how you behave, examine the language that you use, and make sure that you are treating your students with respect and sensitivity. This is foundational to positive relationship-building and to the creation of ABAR and inclusive environments in your classrooms.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Classes

Do we create a welcome message for our students' families at the beginning of the term in the form of a note, email, or digital communication to introduce them to the class we are teaching? Does this message include DEI and ABAR practices we will be working towards in our classes?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Behavior and language

Are we pronouncing our students' names and using our students' pronouns (if students are voicing them) accurately in classes and spelling their names correctly in various correspondences?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we normalize thinking about social identifiers and sharing pronouns as a community practice with our students and colleagues?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we think about seeing, listening to, and acknowledging that our students of color and students of different gender identifiers have different experiences than their white and cisgender peers because of their race and their gender identity (i.e. that they are persons that are historically marginalized and continue to endure marginalization, racism, and disprivilege)?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we active listeners with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we check in with our students so that they can express how their day is going, how they are feeling, and to offer support where needed using developmentally appropriate language?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we holding students' feelings and emotions in mind? Are we sensitive to their experiences?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we work to keep our language free of racist and biased language (both conscious and unconscious)?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of language that might embarrass a student, have racist meanings and origins, cause them discomfort, or use sarcastic language that could have a negative effect on student's well-being?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we as the instructors respond to and respect each student equally and treat them fairly?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are students' responses honored, acknowledged, and validated by us (as instructors) and other students in the classes we teach? Students will have varying perspectives and experience levels in each subject area.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Welcome Message

The purpose of your welcome message allows you to not only make a positive first impression with your students' families at the beginning of the term, creating the spark or connection for collaboration, engagement, and involvement in your students' education and curriculum—but this communication is also the beginning of a Culturally Responsive Teaching practice that disrupts power dynamics between the teacher/school and parents/home and creates inclusivity with family and school settings (See Bryan-Gooden, Hester, & Peoples, 2019).

It is important to send out a welcome message to your families at the start of the school year to build partnerships and community.

Keep your welcome message short and concise. Below is a welcome letter example for a Early Childhood classroom. Feel free to type in your own course name, information, and tailor to your class.

Dear students and families,

Welcome! I am very excited to be teaching your child this year in our Early Childhood classroom at __(your school name here)__. I will work hard to make sure our class is refreshing and exciting and filled with great work in all of our subject areas including__(list your subject areas here. Example: practical life, sensorial, etc.). The class experience will be a time for us to build an all-inclusive and welcoming community within the context of our larger school.

I strive to meet every child's learning and social-emotional needs with care and attention. I work hard to create a welcoming antiracist/antibias learning environment where every child can succeed. Together we will strive to build a classroom community that honors and respects everyone's racial, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, identities, and perspectives.

I am looking forward to partnering with you as we create an engaging and inclusive community this year. If you have any questions or need additional information, please reach me at **(your e-mail address or/and your school office number).**

Sincerely,
(Your name here)

Language that expresses racist ideas and has racist origins

Are we aware of our thoughts and language in expressing racist ideas in the classroom? (See Kendi, 2016, 2019). Some examples of language that is damaging and has racist origins include the following: "I am going to crack the whip," "this is a cake walk," "long time, no see," "where are you from really?," "you speak great English," "let's sit Indian style," "peanut gallery," among other phrases that have racist origins or alienating effects. Be aware and work to avoid using this language. Language and words we use as educators stick with children and language tend to get embedded and "hard-wired" in the brain if children hear these expressions repeatedly, contributing to internalized racism.

Listening to your students and offering your support

Here are some points you can take into consideration in listening and responding to your Early Childhood students:

- Teachers need to be flexible with the responses they are looking for from their students. Suppose a teacher asks their students a question and has an idea in mind for the answer. In that case, teachers could be flexible and allow their students to personalize content and make personal connections. Asking follow-up questions is essential.
- Connect with your students daily. Ask questions of your Early Childhood students about how their day was, what they did over the weekend, or how they feel. These check-in questions might not seem like a lot on the surface, but they can show that you care about them as an adult and as their teacher. These check-in questions are essential to understanding your Early Childhood students' inner lives more broadly and how they feel about being at home and in school and will also assist in identifying issues of concern.
- Ask your students for their input and feedback often. You can ask your Early Childhood students "to gather their feelings about (and their understandings of)" books they are reading, materials they are playing with, and their interactions with their classmates (Kinloch, 2010, p. 81).

THE TEACHER:

ANTIBIAS WORK IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

"Biases are the stories we make up about people before we truly know them" —Vernā Myers

Know that there are many different types of bias, such as explicit and implicit bias. This section will have you reflect on your own biases and consider exploring biases with your students in the classroom learning experience.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Is there mentorship being provided to make us aware of our own unconscious biases as educators?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we engage in self-reflection between our own racial and cultural identities and those of our Early Childhood students?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

For white-identifying teachers: have we accounted for and reflected upon our white and social privileges? Are we aware of them? (See DiAngelo, 2018; 2021)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we fighting against racism, even within ourselves, internally reflecting on and communicating who we are with the world, and reflecting on our actions, behaviors, and language with each other and our students and families?

1	2	3	4	5
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In the Early Childhood classroom

Do we talk about antibias perspectives in our classroom? How does our own antibias training and self-work translate to our classroom work with our Early Childhood students?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we think about who might be left out of our curriculums and whose voices are not present?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we think about what resources we need to educate our students on taking antibias perspectives in their Early Childhood reading sources and materials?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Resources

Addressing Implicit Bias in Early Childhood Education,⁹⁴ by Matt Owens

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain,⁹⁵ by Zaretta Hammond

Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People,⁹⁶ by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald

Robin DiAngelo's work⁹⁷

Robin DiAngelo Wants White Progressives to Look Inward: The Author of "White Fragility" Discusses her New Book, "Nice Racism", by Isaac Chotiner⁹⁸

Teacher Bias: The Elephant in the Classroom,⁹⁹ by The Graide Network

Four Tools for Interrupting Implicit Bias,¹⁰⁰ by Zaretta Hammond

'Culturally Responsive Teaching': An Interview with Zaretta Hammond,¹⁰¹ by Larry Ferlazzo

THE TEACHER:

SELF-WORK AND SELF-STUDY

This section covers mentorship, reading, engagement in history, course work, and cultural competence. Montessori educators must address racism in the world and within themselves to stop it. Educators also must be aware of themselves including their own behaviors, interactions, language, social privileges, and the importance of internally reflecting on their own biases and actions. **Self-examination** and **self-study** are important for educators—to be aware of discomforts around topics of social justice, bias, race, and racism and learning to sit with them in conversations with their Early Childhood students and helping them to do the same.

⁹⁴ <https://info.teachstone.com/blog/addressing-implicit-bias-in-early-childhood-education>

⁹⁵ <https://www.amazon.com/Culturally-Responsive-Teaching-Brain-Linguistically/dp/1483308014>

⁹⁶ <https://www.amazon.com/Blindspot-Hidden-Biases-Good-People-ebook/dp/B004J4WJUC>

⁹⁷ <https://www.robindiangelo.com/>

⁹⁸ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/robin-diangelo-wants-white-progressives-to-look-inward>

⁹⁹ <https://marcolearning.com/teacher-bias-the-elephant-in-the-classroom/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://crtandthebrain.com/four-tools-for-interrupting-implicit-bias/>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-culturally-responsive-teaching-an-interview-with-zaretta-hammond/2015/07>

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Mentorships and education

Do we work with colleagues, administrators, and DEI and ABAR mentors to observe our teaching practices and reflect together to build better curriculums and instruction for our Early Childhood students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there opportunities in our program to engage in PD programming on DEI and ABAR?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we seek PD programs out on our own, and will our institution support us in our education in DEI and ABAR work?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Self-reflection

Are we setting DEI and ABAR goals to help ourselves get to a place where we can make improvements?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we give ourselves opportunities to self-reflect about DEI and ABAR work in our Early Childhood curriculum? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we keep a reflective journal to reflect on our biases and work as teachers in DEI and ABAR?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Self-study

Do we read texts about racism and ABAR? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we reading books and articles about whiteness and white privilege in addition to books and texts written by BIPOC authors? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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Montessori Early Childhood educators are encouraged to think about the following questions regarding racism (e.g, racial history, colonial history, etc.).

Do we take time to understand the history of race and racism?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we take the time to understand what bias is, the consequences of unexamined biases, and the many forms that bias can take—explicit, implicit, aversive, discrimination, etc.?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Can we provide an accurate, working definition of race and what concepts went into its construction?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we know how race relates to colonization?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we know about intersectionality and its significance? [How race intersects with other areas of social oppression (gender, age, sex, class, disability, religion, age, physical appearance, etc.)]?

1	2	3	4	5
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Can we clearly define antiracism and explain what it entails?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of the psychosocial dangers of white supremacy?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Cultural competence

Do we engage in collaborations and professional relationships with BIPOC and persons outside of our own race and culture? This is referred to as “cross-cultural skills” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8).

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we aware of our personal cultural worldviews? (See Penn State Extension, 2020)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have “knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews?” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of our “attitude[s] towards cultural differences?” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

See the Resources section (page 361) for information on how you can reeducate yourself through reading and sustained study.

Ideas for visual journaling to reflect on DEI and ABAR

It's an excellent idea to keep a journal about DEI and ABAR practices related to you, your students, and your classroom teaching practice. Visual journaling about projects, assignments, lessons, and everything you are engaging with throughout the school year is helpful to keep track of what you are doing and reflect critically on your actions.

- Consider making visual journaling a routine in your teaching practice and in your thinking about intersections of difference and how you are incorporating DEI and ABAR practices.
- Try to write in your visual journal at least once or twice a week. It could even become a daily routine.
- Find a time that can become a routine time to visually journal. Maybe it's free time you have on your lunch break when no students are around. Perhaps you visit a colleague's classroom or the cafeteria or go outside of school.
- Journaling does not have to take a long time. It could be shorter writing bursts that are anywhere between five to fifteen minutes per session.

Addressing racism and bias in the classroom setting is important aspect of self-work. Here are some notes on classroom management and student behavior:

Your school might have a specific protocol when you encounter racist behaviors, discrimination, or othering.

If you witness racism or bias happening in the classroom, consider asking the individual student(s) who are a part of the incident to have a private conversation with you outside of the classroom. Being proactive helps to incorporate antiracism/antibias into every interaction and behavioral encounter.

Marshall (2020) says that "using swift and harsh consequences on students of color who misbehave" (p. 1) perpetuates racism. Marshall asks teachers to consider these questions as they think about administering consequences and disciplinary action to their students:

- "What relationship-building have you done with your students and families of color?" (p. 1)
- "Rules without relationships always lead to rebellion. If students feel invisible and overlooked in the classroom, and only get the teacher's attention for negative reasons, they are more likely to act out." (p. 1)
- "What other strategies have you already implemented with students of color who misbehave?" (p. 1)

Working with mentors

Work with a DEI mentor in your institution or school community. This could be someone who has more experience with DEI, like an administrator, faculty member, staff member, scholar, or consulting expert, who can work with you to reflect together to make positive changes in your curriculum and instruction.

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

The questions below offer ways to think about DEI and ABAR values and practices within your Early Childhood classroom curriculum and instructional practices. These questions and practices are inspired by *abolitionist practices of teaching*. Bettina Love coined the term “abolitionist teaching” which refers to practices of teaching focusing on social justice, activism, and refusal, challenging the “traditional” arc of school curriculums and interrogating teaching practices and school policies that have marginalized students of color and privileged whiteness, heteronormativity, and heteropatriarchy.

Love writes that educators must matter (i.e., you must matter to yourself), and that their students’ voices must matter for changes to occur. It is vitally important to see students for who they are—their race, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality—and how those elements of their identity contribute to and intersect with their learning, classroom environment, and school setting.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Work to curate diversity in curricular objects, books, materials, and content

Is there representation in my curriculum and classroom, including in books and activities? This would include authors, writers, artists, historians, scientists, mathematicians, literary figures, and more of different races and ethnicities (e.g. Middle Eastern, Black/African, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, Native American, white, multiracial) and across different identifiers (people with disabilities, different sexual orientations, religion, gender identity, neurodiversity, class, language, etc.) (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b).

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Does our curriculum and instruction provide opportunities for alternative points of view to develop?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we eliminating terms like “primitive,” “aboriginal,” and “Oriental” from the language we use to talk about art, music, and literature? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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In our classroom environments, are we referencing different cultural traditions, languages, religions, names, and clothing with our Early Childhood students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are a diverse range of family identities being portrayed in our curriculum materials? For example, same-sex parents, foster families and more? (See Mayo, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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Connecting to students' inner worlds and lived experiences

Are we connecting to students' real-world experiences, concerns, and interests?

1	2	3	4	5
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During independent work time and over the course of our curriculum, do we make opportunities for students to share their own backgrounds, cultures, and interests? (See Unlu, 2017)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we making personal connections that are culturally relevant to our students' lives? (See Paris & Alim, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we leaving any students out of conversations in class?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Co-creating with the instructor and self-direction

Do students have opportunities to create classroom rules together?

1	2	3	4	5
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Can students go in different directions based on their personal interests in the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Montessori pedagogical approaches

Do we alter our instructional practices and approaches for Early Childhood students with different experience levels with regard to different subject areas? [for a few examples, with handwriting, creating letters, sounding words out, etc.]

1	2	3	4	5
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Do our students have a range of choices in their own education—in the types of instruments they play or music that they make and engage in? What about the artwork and materials they use to create, or the books they read independently?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Accessibility

Does our class provide resources for students and how we will work with them to ensure they get what they need to be successful?

- Mental health and counseling services
- Access to technology
- Other materials needed to be successful in the class
- Book materials

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we work with our EL or ELL students with disabilities or learning disabilities to accommodate them with the resources they need to be successful in their Early Childhood classroom learning, include them in classroom discussion and activities, and help them feel that they are a part of the classroom and community?

1	2	3	4	5
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Language

“Can children hear their first languages spoken or sung?” (Martínez, 2021, p.1) “Do you encourage families to support their children’s development in their first language?” (Martínez, 2021, p.1)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

DEI pitfalls in curriculum and instruction

The following examples of DEI pitfalls in curriculum and instruction come directly from Pyatt (2021):

- “Assuming students have no background knowledge or understanding on the subject” (p. 1).
- “Failing to connect learning to students’ communities and homes and acknowledge that learning occurs in many places” (p. 1).

- “Failing to link the curriculum to the interests of the students” (p. 1).
- “Failing to administer assessments and learning opportunities that give all students authentic opportunities to demonstrate their understanding” (if applicable) (p. 1).
- “Creating and using curriculum materials that reinforce Eurocentric values as normative” (p. 1).

Improving instructional strategies

There are a myriad of ways to improve your instruction to incorporate DEI and ABAR values into your classroom practice. Here are some ways in which you might think about your instructional practices moving forward.

Guiding principles inspired by Universal Instructional Design Implementation Guide¹⁰² and Equal Access: Universal Design of Instruction¹⁰³ can be adaptable to your instruction:

- **Accessibility:** Be accessible in your teaching. Be available to talk with your students and listen to their needs. This can be done before, during, or after class.
- **Flexibility:** As a teacher, be flexible in your teaching practices—lesson planning, grading, conversations. For one example, if you want your students to reflect on their work (reading, math, writing, etc.), you might have a student produce a visual artwork about how they feel about the topic at hand or have them verbalize their thoughts about the work with you.
- **Consistency:** Be consistent throughout the school year regarding getting your narratives and feedback to all students and their families in a timely fashion. Maintain consistency in other areas of your instructional practices—letting your students’ parents know more information about what you are doing throughout the year.
- **Language, behavior, and actions:** Avoid stereotyping and racist language (conscious and unconscious). Be cognizant of the language you are using with your students. Do not judge them or use sarcasm or passive-aggressive language. See America’s Reckoning with Systemic Racism Forces More Critical Look at Everyday Words, Phrases that Have Racist Connotations.¹⁰⁴
- **Relevance:** Make your content relevant to your students’ lives and their inner worlds. For one example, to relate to students and their inner lives you might give out prompts about “place,” “family,” “friends,” and/or “inside/outside worlds” (feeling and emotions) to produce works of art, to talk about, or present upon.
- **Multiple ways of access to learning:** Provide students with multiple ways to access knowledge and learning: writing materials, visual aids, audio/video, picture books, etc.

¹⁰² <https://ctei.jhu.edu/files/uid-implementation-guide-v6.pdf>

¹⁰³ <https://www.washington.edu/doit/equal-access-universal-design-instruction>

¹⁰⁴ <https://abc7.com/racism-black-lives-matter-racist-words/6302853/>

- **Support.** Support students and meet them where they are at. Every student comes in with a different set of skills, background, and are at different stages in their learning. Meeting students where they are is important for helping them grow in their own learning.
- **Space.** Arrange your classroom space to maximize inclusion and participation.
- **Organization.** Organize your Early Childhood classroom to make sure students know where everything is, all supplies are labeled, and students have clear access to information and instructions.

Creating lessons and activities in the morning before class starts or during class to shift instruction

Consider talking about emotions and feelings if students are having a rough day, or if you sense that the experience is not going okay based on students' behaviors. Using this strategy in your toolkit, you can switch to talk about several other topics—DEI, ABAR, belonging, social emotional learning and more.

Resources

10 Profound Facts about the Emergent Curriculum,¹⁰⁵ by Montessori Academy

The Emergent Curriculum and How It Works,¹⁰⁶ by The Edvocate

Emergent Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings 2nd edition: From Theory to Practice,¹⁰⁷ by Susan Stacey

Inspired by Reggio Emilia: Emergent Curriculum in Relationship-Driven Learning Environment,¹⁰⁸ by NAEYC

Take These Steps to Promote Equity in Preschool,¹⁰⁹ by Paper Pinecone

Diversity in the Preschool Classroom: 12 Considerations to Avoid Cultural Clashes,¹¹⁰ by Teaching Strategies

¹⁰⁵ <https://montessori-academy.com/blog/emergent-curriculum/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.theedadvocate.org/the-emergent-curriculum-and-how-it-works/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.redleafpress.org/Emergent-Curriculum-in-Early-Childhood-Settings-2nd-Edition-From-Theory-to-Practice-P1723.aspx>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2015/emergent-curriculum>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.paperpinecone.com/blog/how-create-equitable-preschools-all-children>

¹¹⁰ <https://teachingstrategies.com/blog/diversity-preschool-classroom-12-considerations/>

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

DISCUSSING AND EXPLORING BIAS, RACE, AND RACISM

“No matter how well-intentioned, when a teacher...claims that they ‘don’t see color’ they are engaging in ‘color-blind’ rhetoric that is harmful to communities of color...”

—Django Paris & H. Samy Alim in Education Week Teacher

Studying bias, race, and racism for yourself, as an instructor, is important. Having accurate definitions about racism’s historical origins is significant and will affect the quality and the accuracy of your teaching. It is highly recommended that you consider spending time reading through the Resources section (page 361) and obtaining some books and scholarly articles to learn more about the history of bias, race, and racism in American history. These questions will guide you to think about bias, race, and racism within the context of your Early Childhood classroom environment and how to set up productive and meaningful conversations about race and racism with your students.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Classroom conversations about race, racism, and bias

Do we set up a welcoming classroom discussion atmosphere and establish ground rules before we begin to talk about bias and racism with our students at a developmentally appropriate level?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we give students an accurate definition of bias, race, and racism?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we discussing what prejudice and stereotyping mean with our Early Childhood students with regard to different racial groups in society and the harmful effects of prejudice and stereotyping?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we have conversations about differences with our Early Childhood students—hair and skin color and being inclusive of other's differences?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have conversations about historical figures of color, and make the figures and topics traditionally associated with Black History Month more a part of our Early Childhood curriculum throughout the year and not isolated to one discrete piece of the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we educate our Early Childhood students on what bias is and what it looks like in the classroom and community setting?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Addressing racism and bias

Do we talk with our Early Childhood students about how they can address racism and bias if they experience it happening to them or if they witness it happening with any of their peers in their school or community settings?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we encourage our students that if they see something that looks like racism or bias, to go to a teacher or trusted family member(s) to tell them what they are seeing and how they are feeling about it and what they can do to make a change?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

Do we make our students and colleagues aware if we hear or see them express a racist or biased idea? Do we make them aware of their actions or inactions and work to repair if harm has been done? [This piece takes time, self-awareness, and self-development] (See Kendi, 2016, 2019).

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

See special resource section “[Recommendations for Educators Preparing to Lead Class Discussions about Racism and Race](#)” by Elliott Schwebach, PhD (page 361)

Check out [Book Recommendations for Early Childhood students \(ages 3–7\)](#) (page 367) to find out more about books you can consider adding to your classroom for students to engage with.

Contemporary ways racism exists:

Economic disparities (housing, income levels, jobs, the workplace, etc.)

Education systems and curriculum (unchecked unconscious bias, harsh consequences for students of color, racist educational policies)

Politics and government (policies, legal supports, etc.)

Criminal justice system and prisons (disparities in drug charges; unlawful arrests; unlawful prison sentencing; police brutality for persons of color, especially for African Americans and Latinx persons)

Environment (pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, communities of color being disproportionately located near toxic waste facilities)

Day-to-day interactions and language (using language with racist origins and meanings; overt and covert racist rhetoric, behaviors, and gestures; linguistic discrimination, etc.)

Antiracism (what does it mean to be antiracist?)

- Antiracism involves a strong commitment to social justice
- Antiracism involves challenging racist policies, language, and day-to-day interactions.
- Antiracism therefore involves being conscious of the language one is using (including its origins and potentially harmful, even if unintentional, effects)

- Book recommendation on these points: *How to Be an Antiracist*,¹¹¹ by Ibram X. Kendi
- Small choices we make in our day-to-day experiences will lead to larger changes
- See The National Museum of African American History and Culture’s “Talking about Race”¹¹²

Antibias (what does it mean to implement antibias?)

Antibias approaches to education involve addressing and dismantling bias, stereotypes, prejudices, and oppression and developing an increased understanding and value of differences in school and society. Here are some helpful resources to get started in thinking about how you can apply antibias work to your program. These can also serve as resources for Montessori faculty:

- Peace Learning Resources¹¹³
- Learning for Justice: A Framework for Anti-bias Education¹¹⁴
- NAEYC: Antibias¹¹⁵
- Building Anti-bias Early Childhood Programs: The Role of the Leader¹¹⁶
- Teaching for Change: Anti-bias Education¹¹⁷

Antiracist pedagogy

Love (2019) says that antiracist pedagogy should connect with students and their communities and grassroots organizations to make social changes possible. Antiracism means fighting against racism, committing to social justice, and enacting change—challenging racist policies, language, day-to-day interactions, and more. “Pedagogies must call out and teach students how racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and inequality are structural, not people behaving poorly. They must criticize these systems that perpetuate injustice, such as educational survival complex while pushing for equitable communities, schools and classrooms” (p. 55).

¹¹¹ <https://www.ibramxkendi.com/how-to-be-an-antiracist>

¹¹² <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

¹¹³ <https://peacelearningcenter.org/>

¹¹⁴ <https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/anti-bias>

¹¹⁶ <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2015/building-anti-bias-programs>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.teachingforchange.org/educator-resources/anti-bias-education>

Abolitionist teaching practices

The idea of “mattering” is essential (Love, 2019). Abolitionist teaching practices focus on justice, activism, and refusal in the curriculum. They challenge the “traditional” arch of the school curriculum and interrogate learning practices that have marginalized students of color and that have privileged whiteness and maleness. Love (2019) stresses that pedagogical practice of this kind cannot be done in isolation but should be enacted collaboratively with students and their own lived experiences, identities, inherent knowledge of their neighborhoods and communities, and community-based organizations to produce societal changes.

Talking about bias, race and racism in the classroom

Talking frequently about bias, race and racism helps bring those conversations into the Early Childhood classroom. As a result, the discussions become more normalized, less difficult to enact and feel more integrated. Practice creating a safer space, in the beginning, can mean all the difference to a successful conversation. There are many resources at the end of this document to help you find ways in which to structure your discussions or to lead projects regarding race and racism.

Work to decenter the white, Eurocentric canon of education—including scholarly and historical figures—to include more BIPOC voices.

According to David and Smith (2020, 27 July) “*Anti-Racist Baby* by Ibram X. Kendi is a useful tool to facilitate social justice conversations for all ages” (p. 1). *Anti-Racist Baby* can be helpful to discuss racism, and students can begin to engage and enter the conversation of race and racism at an early age. Students will then be able to build upon their knowledge, and it’s not going to be something they did not hear about or discuss. Race then becomes a more normative topic to discuss, and their comfort level will increase along with their competency level.

You, as the instructor, must want to engage in this work with your students, incorporating the conversation of race and racism in a meaningful way into your curriculum. The conversation of race and racism can take place through multiple outlets: projects, discussions and defining the topic, lessons of history, and through the visual arts as a form of self-expression, throughout the year, not just during Black History Month or as an “elective” time slot in your curriculum that compartmentalizes the topic at hand and makes their learning experiences transient and short-lived.

A note about Black History Month

“The current presence of Black History Month as it is frequently undertaken (if at all) is a month of prescribed and oft-repeated, sterile sets of knowledge that highlight “exceptional” Black people. This does a huge disservice to all students” (Affolter, 2019, p. 89). As educators, it is important to avoid narrowing and tokenizing the ways in which curriculums are made around Black History Month and other months that celebrate women, the LGBTQIA+ community and others to expand curriculums and discussions.

Classroom conversation norms

When beginning a conversation about bias, race, and racism in your Early Childhood classroom you should start by creating classroom conversation norms and working towards the development of a safer space.

Ask students to participate in co-creating classroom conversation norms with you as the instructor(s) and show your own examples too. Here are some foundational examples that can be adaptable to any grade level:

- Be respectful of each person's viewpoints and perspectives. Show respect.
- Avoid generalizations and stereotyping.
- Allow each class member and teacher to finish their thoughts before you speak.
- Do not interpret or attack what others say—ask them to explain/clarify.
- Use “I” statements.
- Define your terms from the beginning: “When speaking about race, we will use the following terms...” (Black, White, African American, people of color, Native American, Indigenous people, etc.).

Check out these helpful resources in various subject areas to build more DEI and ABAR you're your Early Childhood curriculum:

Lesson Plans and Tool Kits by Safe@Schools¹¹⁸

Talking to Kids about Racism,¹¹⁹ by Starlight

Diversity in the Preschool Classroom: 8 Considerations to Avoid Cultural Clashes,¹²⁰ by Clarissa Martínez

Never Too Early to Learn: Antibias Education for Young Children,¹²¹ by Jennifer Hooven, Katherine Runkle, Laurie Strouse, Misty Woods, and Erica Frankenberg

Anti-bias Education in the Early Years,¹²² by Embrace Race

Talking to Young Children about Race and Racism,¹²³ by PBS Kids

¹¹⁸ <https://www.safeatschool.ca/resources/resources-on-equity-and-inclusion/racism/tool-kits-and-activities>

¹¹⁹ <https://www.starlight.org/stories/talking-to-kids-about-racism-resources>

¹²⁰ <https://teachingstrategies.com/blog/diversity-preschool-classroom-12-considerations/>

¹²¹ <https://kappanonline.org/hooven-never-early-learn-antibias-education-young-children/>

¹²² <https://www.embracerace.org/resources/antibias-education-in-the-early-years>

¹²³ <https://www.pbs.org/parents/talking-about-racism>

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

INTERNATIONAL SECTION ON ABAR

Inequality distorts “the ability to be oneself, of establishing and maintaining a ‘contact’” with another (Fanon, 1959/1965, p. 126).

Racism, xenophobia, and myriad other forms of discrimination and oppression (sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, ageism, etc.) are pervasive and violent acts that exist across the world, not just the United States. The American Montessori Society partners with schools abroad. It is important for Montessori education Early Childhood faculty members to consider the ways in which racism operates in other global settings and be aware of current issues and injustices taking place around the world. Below are reflective questions that focus on racism and its international components and concerns.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

*Understanding racism internationally
[for Early Childhood educators]*

Do we understand racism and injustices in countries other than the United States?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Can we speak to racism's global history?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of how racism operates uniquely within Europe?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of Asian hate crimes happening in the U.S. and abroad?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we read about current events, racial injustices, and antibias education issues and efforts that are happening abroad?

1	2	3	4	5
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Transatlantic slave trade

Have we engaged in discussions about the transatlantic slave trade, its connections with colonialism and the globalization of race?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we equipped with resources that provide accurate narratives of the transatlantic slave trade and its psychological, familial and spiritual consequences?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Working with international students

Are we sensitive to our international Early Childhood students' experiences in the U.S. and abroad? Do we respect their heritage and native languages?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we providing opportunities for our Early Childhood students to problem solve conflicts that arise and work and play in diverse groups? (See Anti-Defamation League, 2012).

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Helpful resources for Early Childhood faculty on issues regarding racism abroad. Here are some to get started:

Slavevoyages.org offers excellent resource material for lessons, information and more about slave trades throughout history.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,¹²⁴ by the United Nations

Racism at Home and Abroad: A Conversation Between Friends,¹²⁵ by the World Bank Group

How Colonialism Shaped Policing in France,¹²⁶ by Florian Bobin

Looking at Racism, Eugenics, and Biopolitics in Europe Historically: An Interview with Marius Turda,¹²⁷ by Europe Now

My Very Personal Taste of Racism Abroad,¹²⁸ by Nicole Phillip

Race Abroad for Americans of Color Preparing to Live Abroad,¹²⁹ by Glimpse Study Abroad Guides

Witness Black History Podcast,¹³⁰ by BBC Network

Black in Latin America,¹³¹ by PBS

Racial Dynamics in Bermuda in the 21st Century: Progress and Challenges,¹³² by Keith Lawrence & Raymond Codrington

Why is Mainstream International Relations Blind to Racism?,¹³³ by Foreign Policy

¹²⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-racism-day>

¹²⁵ https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/insights/i14-racism-home-abroad

¹²⁶ <https://jacobin.com/2020/07/police-racism-france-africans-colonialism>

¹²⁷ <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2020/12/07/looking-at-racism-eugenics-and-biopolitics-in-europe-historically-an-interview-with-marius-turda/>

¹²⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/travel/racism-travel-italy-study-abroad.html>

¹²⁹ <https://umabroad.umn.edu/sites/umabroad.umn.edu/files/documents/race-abroad.pdf>

¹³⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01h9dl0/episodes/downloads>

¹³¹ <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/black-in-latin-america/>

¹³² <https://bermudacommunityfoundation.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Aspen-Bermuda%20Report%202015.pdf>

¹³³ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/03/why-is-mainstream-international-relations-ir-blind-to-racism-colonialism/>

Examples of inferiority abroad

For one example, in India, the symbolic value of whiteness is a real issue among residents. It encourages the use of whitening creams to look or appear white. Colorism, as this is called, is prevalent in advertisements and other marketing materials.

We can think colorism as a process whereby people of color internalize inferiority, or what Frantz Fanon calls “*epidermalization*.” This is traceable to colonialism and its racist legacies. As Oliver (2004) describes, “The values of racist imperialism enter the colonized through the skin” (p. 51).

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

LEARNING ACROSS LINES OF DIFFERENCE: EXPLORING IDENTITY

Having conversations with students about differences is critical, just like safety and taking care of themselves. Racial identity, disability, LGBTQIA+ identities, class, religious identity, gender identity, and racial identity is essential in examining the intersections of societal discrimination. For example, why might intersectionality be crucial in discussing societal discrimination and White or social privilege or investigating violence against women of color? Crenshaw’s (1991) work, which defines intersectionality, is inspired by Critical Race Theory, her legal background, and conversations about race and gender. In examining violence against women of color, Crenshaw (1991) argues that we need more than unilateral identity-based politics—we need to study intersections of race, class, gender, and more. She contributes to the advancement of feminism by using her theoretical frame of intersectionality to explore the multiple factors of an individual and cultural contexts that all contribute to the discrimination and violence against women of color in our society. If we leave out conversations about such differences in Early Childhood Montessori classrooms, we are doing our children a huge disservice.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are diversity and difference discussed within the context of our students’ lives and community on a regular basis just like safety and taking care of oneself?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we incorporate conversations about religious identity, gender identity, and class differences into our Early Childhood curriculum? How are those conversations managed and set up?

1	2	3	4	5
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Identity

Do we make it a point to allow children to build and know about their identity and talk about race, gender, and cultural identity in our Early Childhood classrooms with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we giving permission to students to be themselves, develop creative confidence, and go deeper into an art experience to explore their racial and self-identity?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

LGBTQIA+ and gender identity

Have we talked to our students about gender identity and the many different types of gender identities in age-appropriate ways? See more examples here: Definitions of Common LGBTQ Concepts and Terms 134 For example, sometimes people’s gender stays the same. Sometimes, people are genderfluid, meaning their gender changes and shifts over time (Mayo, 2014).

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are our students' identities (e.g., racial, cultural, sexual, etc.) seen as positive features, attributes, and strengths that enhance learning and discussions inside and outside of class?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are a diverse range of family identities being portrayed in our curriculum materials (e.g., same sex parents, foster families, etc.)? (See Mayo, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Gender identity

Have conversations with your Early Childhood students around gender identity and gender stereotypes. There are some wonderful resources for Early Childhood students through the Human Rights Campaign that you can adapt to your classroom.

Pronouns in the classroom

When you take attendance at the beginning of the school year and go along through the first few weeks, you can use the following script as an introduction when taking attendance and getting to learn your students' names. You may use this routinely throughout the year. You can also have this information available in your class description.

"When I take attendance at the beginning of each class session, if I mispronounce your name or misgender you [you can talk about what misgendering someone means], please let me know. It's important to me that I honor and pronounce your name correctly and understand your correct pronouns.

- Say "please let me know if I am pronouncing your name correctly."
- Apologize and correct yourself if you mispronounce your student's name or misgender them. This also applies to faculty, administrators, parents, and staff members.

Talking about pronouns with Early Childhood students

See “Welcome to Woke Kindergarten!”¹³⁴

Akiea “Ki” Gross (they/them) is an abolitionist early educator, coach, consultant and creative entrepreneur currently innovating ways to unlearn, heal, liberate and create with their pedagogy, Woke Kindergarten. There are interesting pedagogical techniques that can be adaptable to the Early Childhood level. Check it out and see what you can use for your Early Childhood classroom!

Welcome to Woke Kindergarten!¹³⁵

Woke Read Alouds: They, She, He Easy as ABC¹³⁶

Books about pronouns

They, She, He, Easy as ABC¹³⁷

(Reading age: 3–7 years)

Talk about what your pronouns are as a teacher and go over them as an example. Then you can consider having your students write out or think about their pronouns in a short in-class activity.

Student and family identity integration

Student identity

It’s great to include conversations and projects about your students’ identities to learn about who they are and what their interests are like in their early education.

Families and learning

Involve your students’ families in the learning process with them. Consider how they can learn together and with one another.

Guest speakers

Consider having parents, guardians, and relatives come into the classroom as guest speakers and presenters for your classroom topic areas. Include cultural backgrounds, racial identity, gender identity, and ethnicities into classroom learning.

¹³⁴ <https://www.wokekindergarten.org/>

¹³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqTeLjAwblo>

¹³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxzo9O9KDkM>

¹³⁷ <https://www.amazon.com/They-She-He-easy-ABC/dp/1945289171>

Parent & Caregiver programming

- Consider running a parent/caregiver breakfast, lunch, or dinner program where parents/caregivers have a chance to interact and meet one another.
- Have parents/caregivers interact with those they may not know
- Share your schools and students' roles and engage in conversations in promoting positive experiences for students, social media, social relationships, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Provide parents/caregivers with clear information about your classroom and curriculum.
- Instead of catering a meal with all the same food, ask parents/caregivers to bring food from their own family recipes—foods to enjoy from everyone's cultural background (This could also be done over Zoom).

Resources

Affirming Gender in Elementary School: Social Transitioning,¹³⁸ by Human Rights Campaign

It Feels Good to be Yourself: A Book about Gender Identity,¹³⁹ by Theresa Thorn (Author), Noah Grigni (Illustrator) (geared for Pre-K-K).

Lesson Plans to Create Gender Expansive Classrooms and Support Transgender and Non-Binary Students,¹⁴⁰ by Human Rights Campaign

Be Prepared for Questions and Put-downs about Gender,¹⁴¹ Human Rights Campaign

PD Training for Your School,¹⁴² Human Rights Campaign

Discussing Different Types of Gender Identities,¹⁴³ by The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Five Ways to Have Better Conversations Across Difference,¹⁴⁴ by Adrian Michael Green

Why Do We Avoid Conflicts and Difficult Conversations?,¹⁴⁵ by The Brain Alchemist

How Diversity Makes Us Smarter: Being Around People Who Are Different from Us Makes Us More Creative, More Diligent and Harder-Working,¹⁴⁶ by Katherine W. Phillips

¹³⁸ <https://welcomingschools.org/resources/affirming-gender-in-elementary-school-social-transitioning>

¹³⁹ <https://www.amazon.com/Feels-Good-Be-Yourself-Identity/dp/1250302951>

¹⁴⁰ <https://welcomingschools.org/resources/lesson-plans-gender-identity-transgender-non-binary>

¹⁴¹ <https://welcomingschools.org/resources/be-prepared-for-questions-and-put-downs-about-gender>

¹⁴² <https://welcomingschools.org/resources/training>

¹⁴³ <https://www.aecf.org/blog/lgbtq-definitions>

¹⁴⁴ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_ways_to_have_better_conversations_across_difference

¹⁴⁵ <https://brainalchemist.com/2010/05/21/why-do-we-avoid-conflicts-and-difficult-conversations/>

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/>

Family and student learning engagement resources

Ideas for Engaging Families,¹⁴⁷ by Inclusive Family Network

Family and Community Engagement,¹⁴⁸ by Learning for Justice

Learning more about integrating schools

How White &/or Privileged Families Interact with School Integration¹⁴⁹

Nice White Parents podcast series¹⁵⁰

Promoting Equity and Anti-bias in the Classroom,¹⁵¹ by Zaina Cahill

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:**SAFETY, ALLYSHIP, AND BECOMING AN UPSTANDER**

At the Early Childhood level, safety is an important discussion topic—personal and physical safety, playing safely with others, and more. In addition to these conversations, the discussion on safety as it relates to family life, DEI and ABAR values, and mental health is a necessary topic to also engage in with young children. Consider the following format and questions for discussion to weave into your discussions on safety.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS*Safety*

Have I had a conversation with my Early Childhood students about safety as it relates to DEI and ABAR? What does it mean to feel safe?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

¹⁴⁷ <https://inclusiveschools.org/ideas-for-engaging-families/>

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/critical-practices-for-antibias-education/family-and-community-engagement>

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGNxlwqoZ1U&t=33s>

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/23/podcasts/nice-white-parents-serial.html>

¹⁵¹ <https://www.shopbecker.com/resource-cafe/beckers-blog/innovation-in-the-classroom/promoting-equity-and-anti-bias-in-the-classroom/>

Do we feel safe in our classroom community?
Do our students feel safe? (i.e., the community in which we and our students live in, family life, school life, inner life).

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there books and dialogues happening in our Early Childhood classroom about body safety, consent, and respecting “no”?

1	2	3	4	5
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True self (acceptance, ally, and upstander)

Have we brought up conversations about being true to ourselves and engaged in activities, projects, or book readings toward this goal?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we introduced topics about bullying, discrimination, bias, and racism through picture book reading?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Have we talked with our students or engaged in conversations about what it means to be an upstander and ally?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Safety

Setting up a safer space for discussion

- Let your students know what topics you will be discussing.
- Let them know it's okay to ask questions and it's okay to talk with you as their teacher if they have any fears, concerns or anxieties.
- Encourage your students to label their feelings and emotions in the classroom conversations or with you if you are talking to them one on one (I feel scared, curious, anxious, etc.)
- Tell them it's also okay to feel uncomfortable and feel discomfort (if talking about something that might be difficult).

Consider the following questions for discussion. You can break students up into small groups and have them reflect and talk about the following prompts:

Consider weaving in an activity with students about safety in your subject area to adjust to the grade level you are teaching.

- What does safety mean to you? Give some examples.
- “What makes you feel safe? Who makes you feel safe and why? Why do some people feel safe with police and others don't? (Introduce BLM movement and police brutality.) What can you do to make sure other people feel safe?” (Gross, 2021, p. 1).
- Consider also having a safety conversation with your students about body boundaries, consent, and saying and respecting “no.” See resource below.

Being an ally

Becoming an ally is important.

- Don't repeatedly call a transgender student by their “dead name” (their former name) as this can be harmful to them. If it happens by accident, you can apologize and remember their new name for the next time you interact with them. Same goes for pronouns.
- Remember to use pronouns that students or faculty and staff use and prefer.

Resources that can be adaptable for earlier grade levels

- Lesson Plans and Tool Kits, by Safe@ Schools¹⁵²
- Let's Talk about Body Boundaries, Consent, and Respect: Teach Children about Body Ownership, Respect, Feelings, Choices and Recognizing Bullying Behaviors Paperback,¹⁵³ by Jayneen Sanders (Author), Sarah Jennings (Illustrator)
- Talking to Kids about Racism,¹⁵⁴ by Starlight
- Anti-bias Education in the Early Years,¹⁵⁵ by Embrace Race
- Showing Up for Racial Justice's Educational Toolkits,¹⁵⁶ by SURJ
- (divorcing) WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE, Coming Home to Who We Really Are,¹⁵⁷ by Tema Okun
- How to Be an Antiracist Educator,¹⁵⁸ by Dena Simmons
- Resources,¹⁵⁹ by Facing History and Ourselves

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:**DISCUSSING AND EXPLORING WHITE PRIVILEGE**

Having discussions about whiteness and white privilege are important for increasing the DEI and ABAR capacity of Montessori education. Avowing whiteness in the educational setting allows white educators to bring the internal work of discovering internalized unconscious biases and to bring awareness to their white privilege—i.e., to the fact that they have more access and opportunities than populations marginalized by race. Also, this process can allow for educating oneself about the history of bias, race and racism and its origins in colonialism. The questions below will help Early Childhood faculty think and reflect on whiteness and white privilege and how this contemplation may spur valuable conversations amongst colleagues in the school setting and for curriculum building.

¹⁵² <https://www.safeatschool.ca/resources/resources-on-equity-and-inclusion/racism/tool-kits-and-activities>

¹⁵³ <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1925089185>

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.starlight.org/stories/talking-to-kids-about-racism-resources>

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.embracerace.org/resources/antibias-education-in-the-early-years>

¹⁵⁶ <https://surj.org/category/resources/>

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/>

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/education-update/oct19/vol61/num10/How-to-Be-an-Antiracist-Educator.aspx>

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.facinghistory.org/how-it-works/teaching-resources>

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we know what the terms whiteness, white nationalism, and white supremacy are, and can we define those terms accurately?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we understand what white privilege is?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

For white faculty: have we thought about our own social privileges and power that we have just because of the color of our skin?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we allow space for dialogues amongst colleagues to reflect upon white privilege, gender privilege, or religious privilege and how they have affected them?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we integrate resources, texts, and other materials for learning about whiteness and white privilege into our curriculum on a developmentally appropriate level for our Early Childhood-aged children?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we look at how “white people distance themselves from their privilege in order to preserve it?” (Mills, 2020, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we think about how access to “education, money, and power provide access to good health? [Yet also how] access to those systems is limited for people of color by the historic and systemic injustices that benefit white people?” (Center for Health Progress, 2022, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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For BIPOC educators: Do we use our privilege to be an ally? (Consider the privileges you may have in terms of gender, religion, non-disability, age, education, socioeconomic status, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Resources

Reading for Your Own Self-Growth and Learning about Racism and the History of Racism in America (page 371)

Teaching about White Supremacy and Systemic Racism,¹⁶⁰ by Educators 4 Social Change

How to Explain White Privilege in Terms Simple Enough for a Child,¹⁶¹ by Maressa Brown

How Parents and Kids Benefit from White Privilege,¹⁶² by Happiest Baby staff

Other resources

- Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness,¹⁶³ by Anastasia Higginbotham
- Learning for Justice¹⁶⁴
- The Conscious Kid¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ <https://educators4sc.org/topic-guides/teaching-about-white-supremacy-and-systemic-racism/>

¹⁶¹ <https://www.parents.com/kids/responsibility/racism/how-to-explain-white-privilege-in-term-simple-enough-for-a-child/>

¹⁶² <https://www.happiestbaby.com/blogs/parents/white-privilege-parenting>

¹⁶³ <https://www.amazon.com/Not-My-Idea-Whiteness-Ordinary/dp/1948340003>

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.learningforjustice.org/>

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.theconsciouskid.org/>

- Rethinking Schools¹⁶⁶
- Abundant Beginnings¹⁶⁷
- GLSEN¹⁶⁸
- Seeing White¹⁶⁹

Topic: Dr. Seuss books

Dr. Seuss Books Can Be Racist, but Students Keep Reading Them,¹⁷⁰ by Code Switch, NPR

Montessori Early Childhood educators can consider talking to their students about Dr. Seuss books and the racist and insensitive imagery, content, and context within some of his books which Dr. Seuss enterprises announced in March of 2021—that they will cease publication of the following books including: *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (1937), *If I Ran the Zoo* (1950), *McElligot's Pool* (1947), *On Beyond Zebra!* (1955), *Scrambled Eggs Super!* (1953) and *The Cat's Quizzer* (1976).

This could become a conversation with students about privilege in how Dr. Seuss was able to disseminate racist material—whether conscious or not [you as the teacher will have to judge how to have a developmentally appropriate conversation about these issues because they are important to locate and discuss]. Another approach is about design justice and filtering out or learning to locate and dismantle racist themes and content in literature, film, design, art, and other subject areas. By engaging in exercises like this, as children develop ideas about race in their early childhood, they will be better equipped to understand, identify, and dismantle racism as it surfaces and appears throughout their experiences in the world. The University of Toronto research shows that children begin to notice race by 6 months old and show signs of racial bias. The earlier you can have conversations about race with your students the better.

Other helpful resources:

How to Talk to Kids About Race: Books and Resources that Can Help, by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich

What White Children Need to Know About Race, by Ali Michael and Eleonora Bartoli

Anti-Defamation League anti-bias resources

¹⁶⁶ <https://rethinkingschools.org/>

¹⁶⁷ <http://abundantbeginnings.org/resources>

¹⁶⁸ <http://live-glsen-website.pantheonsite.io/resources/educator-resources>

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.sceneonradio.org/seeing-white/>

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2019/02/26/695966537/classic-books-are-full-of-problems-why-cant-we-put-them-down>

Notes on whiteness and white privilege

The more surrounded one is by white privilege, the harder it becomes to ‘break free’ of the bubble of one’s own perception. Keep in mind that many modern states, including the United States, are only approximately 150–200 years removed from transatlantic slavery, and that racism continues to persist (albeit perhaps more invisibly to those who most benefit from it).

Whenever white privilege comes up in a conversation, many initial reactions are to be defensive. People oftentimes struggle with conversations about social privilege and tend to get tense. Learning and communicating about white privilege, however, helps one to recognize and attend to one’s defenses and become better at DEI and ABAR work.

Some well-known real-world examples of white privilege:

- Not having been harassed because of hair color or hairstyle, nor rejected from a job or work-related opportunity because of hairstyle.
- Not having been rejected from a job or work-related opportunity because of their name.
- Generally positive relationships with police officers because of their white skin.
- Privilege of having school authorities on their side and listening to them.
- The privilege of learning from a predominately white culture/scholarship/history in the school curriculum.
- Finding an overwhelming number of children’s books that represent white characters and Western culture.
- When shopping at a store, generally not being surveilled by staff. For example, at the grocery store when shopping, staff might ask a white person, “oh can I help you?” while they might surveil and follow customers of color.
- When watching TV, news, media, and shopping at stores for products, cards, gifts, music, art, and more, having the privilege of seeing whiteness represented—there is an overwhelming representation of whiteness in these circumstances, and white people have the privilege of feeling seen and represented in a general sense historically and now in the present day in America.

White faculty can also think about whether and how they benefit from other systems of undue privilege, such as those which accrue to cisgender men or non-disabled individuals because of patriarchy or ableism, etc. In addition, it is helpful to remember that proclaiming “color blindness” or stating simply that one is “not racist” can uphold racism by drawing attention away from its social operation. White teachers can actively model antiracist approaches by speaking from the “I” perspective to demonstrate how one *participates* in social privilege even if one does not consciously hold negative racial attitudes towards people of color.

BIPOC faculty can think about their own social privileges to become allies in considering the privileges they may have in terms of gender, religion, ability, age, education, socioeconomic status and more.

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO STUDENTS

Listen carefully to your students and respond respectfully and thoughtfully. In the Montessori Early Childhood classroom, your students will be engaging in activities that interest them, and the classroom environment is primarily choice-based and in an emergent curriculum. The more you can hone in on your students' behaviors and questions and observe their routines, the better you get to know them, enabling you to make recommendations based on their passions and interests. The questions in this section will help you think about listening and responding.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are we being active listeners with our Early Childhood students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we carefully observing our students' behaviors and witnessing the choices they are making in their own creativity and in their conversations, and play with others?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we holding students' feelings and emotions in mind during their time in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we sensitive to our Early Childhood students' experiences? Do we ask them how they are doing on a regular basis to connect with them?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Language

Do we work to keep our language free from racist and biased (conscious and unconscious) language?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

As instructors, do we respond to and respect each student equally and treat them fairly?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we honor, acknowledge, and validate our students' responses throughout class time?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we “creating a ‘third space’ (Moje et al., 2004) in [our] classroom where students can safely explore, compare and contrast their discourse communities?” (Arias, 2018, p. 5)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we make it a point not to “correct” another student’s language when their native language is not English? This is damaging on many levels. See the examples below for more details.

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Here are some bullet points you can take into consideration in terms of listening and responding to your Early Childhood students.

Practice active listening

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) says:

- “Give your full attention to your child” (p.1)
- “Make eye contact and stop other things you are doing” (p. 1)

- “Get down on your child’s level” (p. 1)
- “Reflect or repeat back what she is saying and what she may be feeling to make sure you understand” (p. 1).

Active Listening,¹⁷¹ by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Teachers need to have flexibility and patience

Early Childhood educators could consider being flexible and patient with the responses that you are looking for from your students. Suppose you ask your students a question and you have an idea in mind for the answer. In that case, you can be flexible and allow your students to personalize content and make personal connections. Asking follow-up questions is essential. Having your students work through responses but not being rigid in looking for exact answers is necessary. Consider listening carefully to your students and respond respectfully and thoughtfully.

Connect with your students daily

Asking questions about how your students’ day was, what they did over the weekend, or how they feel, for example, can help teachers understand their inner lives in a day-to-day context.

A note about language

According to Nieves (2011), schools have created a toxic climate of othering “that often stifles cultural expression through language...” (p. 102). Often students of color are corrected by teachers in the classroom and in school spaces with their use of language. This can have severe damaging effects on a student’s self-esteem and performance in school. This is an example of language discrimination. Culture, home dialects and personal identities are marginalized when this occurs. This can occur from the Early Childhood grade level to adolescence.

Educators who mean well can erroneously believe that their students’ ability to speak another language inhibits their learning of English; however, linguistic diversity is an asset for the classroom and society, not a handicap.

Paris (2012) created the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogies, calling for teachers and schools to “support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (p. 95). “Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (p. 95).

¹⁷¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/communication/activelisting.html>

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

ARTISTIC EXPERIENCES AND WORK TIME

Both independent and collaborative work time is critical in the Early Childhood Montessori classroom. You can explore these two ways of working through a DEI and ABAR framework in the form of work time, activities they engage in, reading and helping students deeply engage with their local communities, their own culture, and the places and spaces they occupy and visit.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Instruction during work time

In our Early Childhood classrooms, are we allowing students to follow their own interests as they work through ideas and concepts?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we trying to control things too much in terms of our students' learning and development or in material usage?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we allowing each student's voice and vision to come through in their learning (e.g., with their projects and activities)? [Are we allowing their thinking about their interests to emerge independently?]

1	2	3	4	5
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Materials and classroom spaces

Are materials representative of all students in our classrooms? Is there a wide variety of diversity in our material selection?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

How are we thinking about gender-stereotyped materials? Have we considered removing gender-stereotyped materials or have we removed them?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Have we assigned our students into groups (and switch the groups up often) so they have opportunities to work and interact with all students in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Artistic experiences and self-expression

Whether through music, singing, visual arts (ceramics, photography, art and design, sculpture, painting, etc.), dance, or short performances, are we including and making the visual arts a part of our classroom experience for students to express themselves through various mediums?

1	2	3	4	5
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Partnering with families in the classroom

Do we encourage our students' families to be a part of our students' learning process? For example, do we encourage them to join our students in the classroom (virtually or in person), so they can interact and be with their child, or children, to be collaborative partners in their learning process?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we assign projects or activities where a child’s family can engage with their work at home and in a collaborative format?

1	2	3	4	5
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Communities, culture, and place

Are our students connecting to their local communities by show-and-tell experiences, presentations, and bringing in symbols, artifacts, and images of places they visit, engage with and within, and travel to? (See Kinloch, 2010)

1	2	3	4	5
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In our curriculums, do we give students the opportunity to examine “place?” (See a lesson example below for an idea on this topic.)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are various languages and dialects accessible to our students as they engage with the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are our students’ home languages visible in their independent learning and made accessible in our curriculum when engaging in texts and various work? (See Kinloch, 2010)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are our students’ identities (racial, cultural, gender, etc.) seen as positive features, attributes, and strengths that enhance learning and discussions inside and outside of class?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Art and expression

Consider giving your students the chance to engage with making artwork or artistic experiences that explore more personal topics for reflection (prompts: home, family, place, me, etc.). Students can use traditional or non-traditional materials to work with to make art. For example, nontraditional materials for painting can be corks, plastic lids, cloth, paper, aluminum foil, or other found objects that may be safe to paint with.

Engaging in the visual and performing arts is a way for students to express what they feel inside and their inner worlds, portraying various emotions, feelings, and thoughts through self-expression. An arts integration lesson can allow students to explore self-identity, racism, bullying, and several other topics as a departure point to talk and discuss these critical issues but must be handled and set up with extreme care on behalf of the teacher (Simmons, 2021).

Music visual responses: Example lesson in creative expression involving music from diverse cultures

Play a variety of different musical pieces for your students and have them respond visually. This could be one musical piece per a week. Also have an art prompt focusing on responding to different types of music. Students can make abstract art designs inspired by music from different cultures/countries. You can ask students questions to respond to in addition to their art making: *What's one thing you noticed that surprised you? What was one part of the music you connected to and why? Please share your drawing and tell us about what you made.*

Here are some ideas for musical pieces from various countries and cultures:

Silkroad project, by Yo-Yo Ma. [Yo-Yo Ma created the Silkroad in 1998—a diverse group of musicians playing various instruments].¹⁷²

Dominican Republic, Merengue Hi. [Merengue is music and dance originating in the Dominican Republic].¹⁷³

Japan, Contemporary Koto Music, by Aya Asakura. [The koto is a 13 stringed instrument that is the national instrument of Japan].¹⁷⁴

Ethiopia, Ho Belen by Endegna, [Endega is a women's singing group].¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=RD_eZqnItXpQw&v=_eZqnItXpQw

¹⁷³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3z57Y7XYjDM&list=OLAK5uy_nmN0X_PxwkkdtDsYXqY9eRFi4jjZ5JHUg

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6j4LwKqjVE>

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BU6znJjvpwg>

Scotland, Bagpipes Band of Saint Bernard, by TEDxAveiro. [Bagpipes are a woodwind instrument. The bag is usually made from animal skins].¹⁷⁶

Jazz, Kind of Blue, by Miles Davis. [Jazz originated in the early 1900s from African American communities in New Orleans].¹⁷⁷

Washington D.C., Go-go Swing, by Chuck Brown and the Soul Searchers. [This style of music originated in D.C. and is a mix of funk, R&B and hip-hop].¹⁷⁸

Tips for teachers

When you are engaging your students in art experiences you can ask them questions about their process—*I noticed the way you are making this zig zag line around the page, can you tell me more about it? How does that make you feel?* Mostly listen to your students and let them verbalize more to you about their artwork.

LESSON EXAMPLE: PLACE COLLAGE PROJECT

Early Childhood level. Can be adapted to any grade level. This project is geared for students to develop artwork about place to generate ideas about spaces and places that are relevant to students lives and cultures so they can share their ideas throughout the lesson.

Materials

9" x 12" paper for collage, color construction paper, glue sticks, and brushes.

Art prompt

Create a collage about a place that you love.

- Let's generate some ideas as a class!
- Check out "6 Atlanta-based Artists Who Explore Place, Belonging, and Heritage"¹⁷⁹

Collage Process

Encourage students to use their own process. In collage, cutting, overlapping, and layering are three essential elements. Also, make sure your images are glued down to the surface of the paper well, so they don't fall off over time.

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wusHbnsb9A>

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAC5Vf1REZg>

¹⁷⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqL_QoRM3Co

¹⁷⁹ <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/wAVhL9zGCLwkKA>

Work time

Students can work in the classroom at their own pace and can select materials that might interest them to incorporate into their collage. Maybe there is a particular material that they want to use (fabric, textural piece, or piece of material) that is significant to their collage.

Reflection

Have students lay out their collages in the classroom and do a gallery walk, where students can go around and look at each person's work and make a few comments. These could be positive comments or positive feedback for the artists.

Reflecting on your classroom atmosphere and materials

Consider taking the time each semester to critically review your classroom materials, classroom atmosphere, and teaching to promote DEI values.

Make a note on your calendar to review your curriculum and teaching materials each semester with your colleagues. This includes your classroom space, classroom rules, access to resources, and more.

EXTENDED DAY AND AFTERCARE PROGRAMMING IN MONTESSORI SCHOOLS: MATERIALS IN THE MONTESSORI EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM

This section is for Early Childhood children who are in extended care or aftercare programming in Montessori.

Materials and toys

Learning materials are the core of Montessori education and curriculum. Materials are often geared to be choice-based and invite children to have sensorial experiences and exercises to gain new skills.

Even though “toys” are generally not present in the Montessori classroom, students might be playing with toys in an extended day or aftercare programming in Montessori classrooms after their regular Montessori programming is over or even in a summer camp situation.

Examining materials and toys of the 1990s and 2000s, and some today, like Barbies, G.I. Joe figurines, *Toy Story* toys, storyboards, games, and interactive toys and play materials are often primarily geared for white audiences. This weighs heavily albeit unconsciously on a child's mind in how they construct and think about race—that whiteness is the main narrative in a young child's play development.

To diversify your material and play in your Montessori Early Childhood classroom, consider the following:

- Try gender-neutral materials and toys. Research shows that gender-neutral materials and toys help with cognitive and emotional development. Montessori education does an excellent job with this already, and Early Childhood educators can continue to reflect even more deeply on material selection, toys, and race.
- Find materials or toys for your classroom that represent the students in your classroom and BIPOC and diverse identifiers.
- Consider bringing in materials and toys that focus on interactive play.
- Send a call to families to donate used materials, toys, puzzles, and educational materials for the classroom to involve your families in the collaboration of finding materials or toys for your students' education.
- Include exploration and material time as part of your daily curriculum. You can designate material or toy exploration areas for different activities and toys. Assign students into groups or sections (switch groups/sections often) so they have the exposure to playing with and talking to all students in the classroom.

Resources:

What the Research Says: Gender-Typed Toys,¹⁸⁰ by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Favorite Collection of Diversity Tools and Toys for Preschool and Kindergarten,¹⁸¹ by Pocket of Preschool

20 Diverse and Multicultural Toys that Foster Inclusivity in Kids,¹⁸² by Good Housekeeping

Interesting gender-neutral toy examples from leading toy designers:

Passaro Edizioni Is an Eco-Friendly Toy,¹⁸³ by Paesaggio con figure

SmartKit,¹⁸⁴ by Matthieu Muller

Alma Therapy Dolls – play therapy dolls,¹⁸⁵ by Yaara Nusboim

Cas Holman; Identity in Play,¹⁸⁶ by Cas Holman

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/play/gender-typed-toys>

¹⁸¹ <https://pocketofpreschool.com/favorite-diversity-tools-and-toys-for-preschool-and-kindergarten/>

¹⁸² <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/childrens-products/toy-reviews/g33234635/diverse-multicultural-toys/>

¹⁸³ <https://www.archiecho.com/paesaggio-con-figure-is-an-eco-friendly-toy-by-passaro-edizioni>

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/money/technology/smartkit-by-matthieu-muller-helps-children-use-technology-in-a-healthy-way/ar-BB178JHD>

¹⁸⁵ <https://afilii.com/en/alma-therapy-dolls-play-therapy-dolls-by-yaara-nusboim/>

¹⁸⁶ youtube.com/watch?v=IL1n6LuUicQ

Design Justice pedagogy (Montessori faculty can learn about and seek out design injustices for their students to explore)

JusticeXDesign,¹⁸⁷ by Harvard Project Zero

Design Justice Network Zines,¹⁸⁸ by The Design Justice Network

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

GIVING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS: PROGRESS AND GROWTH

Giving students feedback is important. The reflection questions below will allow you to discuss approaches to beginning to reflect with students on their work and different ways to conceptualize your assessment practices in an equitable way.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are we being flexible with our students and affording them multiple means of expression (e.g., verbal, written, through projects, through art, etc.) to demonstrate their learning and understanding? (See Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we seeking to better understand barriers faced by English language learners (ELLs)? How are we increasing access to their learning?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we being *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive* in our feedback to our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

¹⁸⁷ <http://pz.harvard.edu/projects/justicexdesign>

¹⁸⁸ <https://designjustice.org/zines>

Are we being nonjudgmental in our feedback to our students and focusing on identifying “a challenge and [helping] formulate an improvement plan?” (University of Toronto Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, 2017, p. 11)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we giving our students options and other perspectives?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Statements of development

Consider writing individual statements of development to your families as an assessment addressing areas that are directly observable by you and areas for growth. Here are some example categories:

- Caring for others
- Social-emotional learning
- Play and artistic experiences
- Math and reading
- Communication, language, and literacy
- Motor skills
- Development in general

Make parents a part of your assessment process

Integrate parents into your assessment process so you and they can collaborate. Parents can also be a part of the classroom and help you make observations and assessments about their child's growth and development.

Maintain flexibility in assessment practices

If assessing work at the Early Childhood level, consider alternative approaches to assess work and be flexible. “When we grade behaviors based on subjective interpretation of those behaviors it isn’t just unavoidable imprecision; it’s a recipe for inequity” (Felman, 2019, p. 41). If you have to hand out a grade to students, try to keep the focus on skills you are looking for them to develop; avoid grading on topics like “participation” and “effort.”

Utilize equitable assessment processes

Cahill (2020), a Pre-K Regional Instructional Specialist for the School District of Philadelphia, says to “ensure that assessments of children’s abilities are linguistically accessible, and provide children authentic opportunities to demonstrate their skills. This could include collecting samples of children’s work to demonstrate progress over time, such as through portfolio work, assessing children’s skills through game play, and utilizing vocabulary in the child’s home language to ensure that understanding is reached. Assessment should never be a ‘one and done’ endeavor, but rather an ongoing culmination of documentation of children’s skills and growth over time” (p. 1).

Resources:

Working Toward Culturally Responsive Assessment Practices,¹⁸⁹ by NCTE member Valente’ Gibson

Going Public with Assessment: A Community Practice Approach¹⁹⁰ by Kathryn Mitchell Pierce and Rosario Ordoñez-Jasis

Inclusive Curriculum Design and Assessment Practices,¹⁹¹ by New York University

What are Inclusive Assessment Practices?,¹⁹² by Tufts University

Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms,¹⁹³ by Joe Feldman

¹⁸⁹ <https://ncte.org/blog/2020/02/working-toward-culturally-responsive-assessment-practices/>

¹⁹⁰ <https://cdn.ncte.org/nctev2/product/683/samples/f8e609c5-41bc-458c-b875-125a71a2bf9f.pdf>

¹⁹¹ <https://www.nyu.edu/life/global-inclusion-and-diversity/learning-and-development/toolkits/faculty-digital-inclusion/inclusive-curriculum-design.html>

¹⁹² <https://provost.tufts.edu/celt/inclusive-and-equitable-teaching/what-is-inclusive-and-equitable-teaching/what-are-equitable-assessment-practices/>

¹⁹³ <https://www.amazon.com/Grading-Equity-Matters-Transform-Classrooms/dp/1506391575>

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

CLASSROOM AND LEARNING MATERIALS

This section will cover classroom rules and norms, classroom atmosphere, and the learning materials students use in your classroom within the context of DEI and ABAR values.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Classroom rules and norms

Do our classroom rules and guidelines include language about inclusivity and a message about the importance of addressing racism, discrimination, and homophobic and misogynistic comments, language, and actions when we see them occurring in the classroom and in the school building? Do we make it clear that none of the above will be tolerated by the instructor?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we build our classroom rules collaboratively with our classes instead of producing them by ourselves in isolation?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do students see their home languages in some form in the classroom? (See Ferro et al., 2022)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do students see their country’s flags or a flag that represents students’ cultural backgrounds in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Classroom atmosphere

Do we make our classroom an inclusive space visually, aesthetically, and spatially?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we mindful of all our students’ religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, traditions, and customs? Then, are we cognizant about posting welcoming, non-discriminatory and diverse content on our walls? For example, suppose educators post only pictures or decorations about Easter (a Christian holiday) in March or April on a calendar wall. This might exclude and alienate other children’s religious backgrounds and cultural traditions (such as Jewish students, who often celebrate Passover at this same time of year) if they see that these decorations are taking precedence.

1	2	3	4	5
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“Do the curricular content and wall displays in [our] classroom reflect the experiences and perspectives of the cultural groups that make up the school and its surrounding community?” (Anti-Defamation League, 2012, p. 4)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are the tables or desks in our classroom spaces configured in such a way that our students can hear and see each other?

1	2	3	4	5
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“Does how [we] teach acknowledge the experiences of the students from different backgrounds? Is [our] approach non-stereotypical?” (Unlu, 2017, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Learning materials

Are learning materials (physical objects and other learning materials) representative of cultures other than Western society?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Here are some examples of classroom rules addressing DEI, anti-bullying, antiracism and more.

Use the following language as a guideline:

Antiracism and inclusivity

We strive to create an inclusive environment in the choices we make, in our day-to-day interactions with our peers, teachers, and school community. Everyone's voices, identities, perspectives, racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as emotions and feelings, are honored and respected.

Our classroom is an all-inclusive space where everyone is welcome.

Tips

Consider crafting rules together (teacher(s) and students) as an activity—collaboratively working on them together. This could be a dialogue with the class.

Keep rules short and simple. Consider having a few rules so students can digest them and set them up for success throughout the year. Attach images to help students understand the rules visually.

Consider having a grouping of rules and have a few rules under each category that you design with students. Some categories might be:

- Self-care
- Inclusion and belonging
- Antiracism
- Antibias
- Taking care of our school and classroom
- Taking care of our world

Defining antiracism for young children

This is how Dr. Ronda Bullock defines antiracism to very young children and could be done at the Montessori Early Childhood level because by this age (in fact, even earlier) racial biases start to develop:

“I define being anti-racist to young children as the thoughts, actions, and beliefs of a person who believes people should not be treated unfairly based on the color of their skin. Being anti-racist means fighting against racism” (Gibilisco, 2020, p. 1).

Ronda Taylor Bullock holds a doctorate in Policy, Leadership, and School Improvement from UNC Chapel Hill. Her research interests are critical race theory, whiteness studies, white children’s racial identity construction, and antiracism. She is co-founder and executive director of **we are**.

Defining antibias for young children

Read through Chapter 1: What Is Antibias Education?,¹⁹⁴ by NAEYC to look at some biases that can develop at school in the child’s development and how to disengage from using biased language and address it when bias shows up in the classroom or school setting.

Building an antibiased curriculum is of critical importance in early childhood education. You can begin by having age-appropriate dialogues about diversity learning about differences.

Resources on antibias early childhood education:

It’s OK to Be Different: A Children’s Picture Book About Diversity and Kindness,¹⁹⁵ by Sharon Purtill (Author), Sujata Saha (Illustrator)

Never Too Early to Learn: Antibias Education for Young Children,¹⁹⁶ by Jennifer Hooven, Katherine Runkle, Laurie Strouse, Misty Woods, and Erica Frankenberg

Conversations with Kids about Race,¹⁹⁷ by Margaret A. Hagerman

Can We Talk About Race? A Conversation with Beverly Daniel Tatum,¹⁹⁸ by Joan Richardson

¹⁹⁴ https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/topics/Chap1_Anti-Bias%20Education.pdf

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.amazon.com/Its-OK-Different-Childrens-Diversity/dp/0973410450>

¹⁹⁶ <https://kappanonline.org/hooven-never-early-learn-antibias-education-young-children/>

¹⁹⁷ <https://kappanonline.org/conversations-children-race-childhood-racism-hagerman/>

¹⁹⁸ <https://kappanonline.org/richardson-race-interview-beverly-daniel-tatum/>

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The natural environment is important for children in Montessori education. It is important to consider the qualities of natural objects, plants, insects, as well as their historical and cultural significance. It is also important to have discussions about how to take care of the environment, environmental racism, and how to become antiracist in an environmental context.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Nature and naturalistic objects in the Montessori classroom setting

Do we bring in natural objects from cultures and backgrounds other than Western culture for students to engage with independently and collaboratively?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we bring in plant life from other parts of the world to discuss world cultures with our students? Even if it's in the form of posters or pictures?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we co-create nature activities with our students to promote inclusion?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have our students learn about and discuss environmental pollution and how it affects lower-income communities?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we have students complete community service walks to clean up trash, litter, and debris in their local communities or plant flowers or trees for their local communities?

1	2	3	4	5
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Environmental racism

Do we know how race plays a role in the environment and in energy issues?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we discuss environmental racism (e.g., pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, waste facility locations, etc.) with our colleagues? How do you think you might have a developmentally appropriate conversation with your students? Do we think about it in the context of our own (faculty's) educational pursuits?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Examples of environmental racism (for Montessori Early Childhood faculty)

These conversations will be very complex to have with Early Childhood-age children. However, it's important for Early Childhood faculty to understand the context, historical significance, and negative impacts of environmental racism in communities throughout the country.

- Who works in the energy industry and who does not?
- Who has access to energy and who does not?
- For communities of color that live near waste facilities, how does pollution from these facilities affect their lives? Today, incinerators and other hazardous waste facilities are much more likely to be built in neighborhoods where lower-income communities of color and Indigenous communities live than they were 20 years ago.

You might consider doing the following to develop ABAR perspectives in the classroom:

- Involve Early Childhood students' parents and families in nature education such as having nature walks around local communities and neighborhoods to co-construct learning experiences together.
- Support environmental and antiracist organizations
- Explore environmental racism within a developmentally appropriate context with your students
- Grow small gardens in your classroom and in local communities. Create a small garden inside the classroom for learning purposes and have students maintain a classroom garden in groups and change the groups out once a week; this can promote inclusivity and ideas about building on the concept of care.
- Join or lead clean-up programs in your local or neighboring communities.

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

SELF-DIRECTION AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

The Montessori method of instruction fosters the growth and development of the child and their interests. The child is the center of the classroom experience as they navigate their own interests and lessons. It is important that educators decolonize their curriculum and apply appropriate DEI and ABAR directions to students regarding their learning and exploration process.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Have we thought about culturally responsive and culturally sustaining teaching practices and how we might use them in our instructional strategies to facilitate students' self-learning and learning outside of the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we taken the time to understand our students' cultural backgrounds, their education or ESS plan (Educational Support Service plan), and their individual needs to be successful in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Have we built a trusting relationship with our students and do we talk to them to understand more about their home life, pets, friends, family, and personal interests?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we making personal connections with them that will better build a professional relationship with them and their learning?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we practicing empathy with our students, listening to what their self-interests are, and connecting them to the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we offering our support if our students reach out to us for help or with concerns they may have?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Resources

Author Interview: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies,¹⁹⁹ by Larry Ferlazzo and authors Django Paris and H. Samy Alim

5 Ways to Create a Culturally Responsive Classroom,²⁰⁰ by National Equity Project

Anti-bias in the Classroom,²⁰¹ by Teaching for Change

¹⁹⁹ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-author-interview-culturally-sustaining-pedagogies/2017/07>

²⁰⁰ <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/blog/5-ways-to-create-a-culturally-responsive-classroom>

²⁰¹ <https://www.teachingforchange.org/educator-resources/anti-bias-education>

Anti-bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves, second edition,²⁰² by Louise Derman-Sparks, Julie Olsen Edwards, and Catherine M. Goins

Five Anti-bias Education Strategies for Early Childhood Classrooms,²⁰³ by PBS: Public Media Group of Southern California

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

CONSULTANTS/PEER SUPPORT BETWEEN STUDENTS

In Montessori education, having mixed grade levels in the same classroom is common. It is important to build an inclusive community that talks about and enacts DEI and ABAR principles. Creating strong mentorships and collaborative relationships is important for the diversity of learning between peer groups. The following questions will help you reflect on some of these ideas.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Teacher as consultant

As teachers, do we use ourselves as examples and share our professional backgrounds and what it is like to be a teacher with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we helping students navigate their educational environment and talk about what skills they will need to have?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

²⁰² <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/books/anti-bias-education>

²⁰³ <https://www.pbssocal.org/education/teachers/five-anti-bias-education-strategies-early-childhood-classrooms>

What about students and their families who are struggling to pay for their Early Childhood school tuition that they are currently in? Do we have staff within our school that they can turn to for support or can we direct them to support services?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we bring in presenters from a range of backgrounds and occupations to talk about their careers? Do we invite speakers of color in and speakers with varying identities to talk about diverse job situations to expose our students to a variety of professions?

1	2	3	4	5
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Peer-to-peer consulting

In mixed-grade-level classes, are older students serving mentoring roles to younger Early Childhood students in the same class?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we promoting an atmosphere of kindness and acceptance with our older and younger students in our classrooms?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we involving our upper-level students and challenging them to take on more responsibilities in helping teachers come up with lesson materials and serving in co-teaching or teaching assistant capacities?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

Do we assign students different roles in which they can help around the classroom and conduct classroom community service? Do we switch those roles to make sure everyone has varying responsibilities and positions?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

School murals and art projects to build inclusivity and DEI and ABAR values into the school environment

Consider building teamwork projects where the students can participate in a school mural project about DEI and ABAR. Students in Early Childhood, Elementary, and Adolescent sections can work collaboratively on small murals in the classroom, perhaps on closet or classroom doors, or create a larger mural on the outside wall of the classroom or in the school building.

Sometimes it takes persistence and the involvement of students in the process to make school reform in DEI and ABAR happen. It's important that students feel a sense that they belong (Fullan, 2016, p. 150) and that their ideas matter where they can have more leadership opportunities and become mentors for younger students.

Mentoring

Be a mentor for your Early Childhood students and teach them real-world skills that apply to their lives. Mentoring is important because you are a trusted adult in your students' lives, and they need you. Share and make accessible your knowledge, professional experiences, and, at your discretion, your personal lived experiences. The information below can be tailored to any subject area as assignments or incorporated within your unit and lesson planning.

Opportunities and access

Let your Early Childhood students' families know about opportunities and experiences that fit their interests. Through your contact network and research, give your students' families summer camp information, visual art workshops, and other opportunities outside of school that will provide them with a chance to follow their interests and access those opportunities. Consider looking into local museums and libraries for programming information for your students' families.

Learning about jobs and professions

Consider bringing a variety of diverse professionals of color and varying identities into your curriculum as guest presenters to talk about their lives and professions. Start on a broader scale with your introduction to careers: immigration services staff, homeless shelter workers, social workers, psychotherapists, artists—individuals of different backgrounds and interests that go beyond a police officer, doctor, or fireperson.

Here are some additional ideas for your consideration:

5 Preschool Guest Instructors to Invite to Your Early Childhood Classroom,²⁰⁴ by Rainforest Learning Centre

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

According to Heward (2009/2017) students who have disabilities include people with intellectual, physical, and/or social functioning disabilities who require continuous and extensive support in activities and life interests to contribute to their communities. Severely disabled individuals may experience trouble with their motor skills (movement) and behavior. They may even have sensory malfunctions. Successful inclusion for students with disabilities depends upon multiple educational approaches to provide accommodation for the classroom atmosphere. Thinking about DEI and ABAR values is essential.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are Early Childhood students with disabilities provided with a suitable and accessible physical and mental environment where they feel comfortable?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do Early Childhood students with disabilities feel that their learning development is supported by special services and adaptations to the school environment that take their individual needs into consideration?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

²⁰⁴ <https://rainforestlearningcentre.ca/5-preschool-guest-instructors-to-invite-to-your-early-childhood-classroom/>

Are we working to ensure we know how to work with our Early Childhood students with disabilities by understanding and working with them on their functional motor and sensory capabilities?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we teaching our Early Childhood students with disabilities the skill sets that will allow them to become independent individuals inside the classroom and actively participate in diverse settings outside the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we taking our Early Childhood students with disabilities' interests and passions into account and making them a part of the curriculum? Do we take into consideration their lived experiences and make them a part of the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are the materials in our Early Childhood classroom accessible and clearly labeled to maximize functionality and independent growth?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have multiple ways of communicating information to our Early Childhood students with special needs?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we fostered a classroom environment where our Early Childhood students are able to express how they feel through a program, device, artwork, music, or on a marker board?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Wendell (2013) argues that if society sees disability as a private concern, changes will not occur to ensure accessibility in school and public spaces. Disability, like race and gender, is socially constructed, meaning that it is in our power to change the situations that prevent equity in mobility, communication and participation. Non-disabled Montessori teachers can be allies in advocating for changes to occur within their buildings for disabled faculty, school leadership, students, and visitors.

- Classroom spaces might not be expansive enough.
- Doors, lockers, and cabinets may be hard to open or out of reach for some disabled students.
- Supply shelves are higher in some classrooms so personal aides might be needed to retrieve classroom supplies and materials for disabled students.
- Flexibility and part-time work are important considerations that Wendell (2013) mentions for disabled employees.

It is important that Montessori Early Childhood faculty be equitable, inclusive, and in touch with the realities of disabled individuals in general and for their teaching practices in offering other modalities of accessibility to ensure that disabled students feel comfortable in participating. For example, it is often helpful to provide alternative technologies to type or write with to communicate comfortably and effectively. It is also important to understand limitations to participation and “pace of life” needs.

Skills

For Early Childhood students with severe disabilities, functional skills are vital to the classroom environment because they will help students develop good judgment and independence. Functional skills include learning to take care of oneself by dressing oneself, preparing a snack, riding public buses, purchasing items from a store or vending machines, and recognizing common sight words in community settings (See Heward, 2009/2017).

Choice in projects and activities

Making choices is important because it will make activities more meaningful to Early Childhood students and have an impact on what they do during their time in the classroom. For example, a student might be asked to engage with an activity by choosing between two images instead of just being given one to work with.

Communication skills

Developing communication and networking skills is also important for successful inclusion for Early Childhood students with multiple or severe disabilities. Independent functioning has everything to do with good communication. Educators should focus on working with the students' vocabulary, speech, and phrases. By learning the importance of communication inside the classroom, students will develop the ability to socially interact with their peers and maintain physical health and motor skills, as well as becoming more involved in classroom activities. You can teach both disabled and non-disabled students about respectful dialogue, inclusive language, and DEI and ABAR principles.

The McGill Action Planning System (MAPS)

MAPS is also worth mentioning because it helps children with disabilities transition more easily into the school's community and the classroom environment. A team, which includes members of the student's family, some friends, and special education instructors, all participate in the mapping process. The process helps students with severe disabilities discover and create goals for their future. Through the MAPS process, parents and educators can develop a plan for personalizing the transition services into the classroom or outside of school. The aim of the process is to successfully include the student in the mainstream curriculum.

RESULTS

If you answered 4–5 for any of the topics in this assessment, and were able to answer the questions with concrete and specific examples and illustrative evidence, your curriculum and instruction is moving very positively in the direction of DEI and ABAR work. Consider the advanced resources section: [Digging deeper: More DEI and ABAR resources](#) (page 364). You could also review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364), to find out more on how to advance your topic areas in your professional practice or classroom.

If you selected 2–3 for any given topic area, consider improving these areas in your curriculum and instruction to create a welcoming atmosphere that is antibias/antiracist and fosters DEI and ABAR. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help improve classroom community and curriculum, so that the school experience is not culturally harmful to any students. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

If you answered 1 to any question, you will need to address these topics and develop a plan of action to improve. Your curriculum, instructional approaches, environment, and/or behaviors may be culturally harmful to students in your program. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help you improve in these areas. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

Community

In this section, Montessori Early Childhood faculty and administration are encouraged to reflect upon how DEI and ABAR values and work apply to creating strong partnerships with families, to programming and community events, to nurturing and maintaining wellness, and to including alumni in the school as advocates and continued members of their school communities.

FAMILY NIGHTS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Bringing the child’s family into the learning process is essential to building strong partnerships (See Kinloch, 2010). This model of practice is good because it brings awareness to families of what you are doing as a teacher and because it is an antiracist pedagogical practice of inclusion. When you develop a strong bond with your students’ families, it will be easier for you to communicate home concerns that come up in the classroom and to gain their support. There might be challenges regarding time, you might consider building in opportunities for families to participate a few times per year.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are there family night events where families and faculty can get together (virtually or in person) to learn more about our classrooms and curriculums or just have a social bonding experience?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there opportunities for our students’ families, faculty, staff, and/or administration in the school community to become involved in our students’ learning process or in our assignments and projects that we give to our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we considered hosting a family event where students’ families can come in and bring food from their own culture or a home recipe instead of getting the event catered?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are a diverse range of family identities being portrayed in our curriculum materials (e.g., same sex parents, foster families, etc.)? (Mayo, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Implementing and sustaining school change around DEI and ABAR work hinges on relationship building and everyone being on the same page within a school system. Within the complex nature of school systems, relationships are multifarious—student-teacher, teacher-parent, teacher-administration, and school-district relationships, to name just a few. These relationships must be functional and wholesome for the implementation of reform. School reform around DEI and ABAR should be initiated and sustained with a focus on the relationships, climate, and culture that enable the deep learning necessary to change. Family integration and community participation are essential to the work of DEI and ABAR.

Family and student learning engagement

There are some great points about integrating families in the learning process and curriculum here:

- Ideas for Engaging Families,²⁰⁵ by Inclusive School Networks
- Family and Community Engagement,²⁰⁶ by Learning for Justice

Learning more about integrating schools

How White &/or Privileged Families Interact with School Integration,²⁰⁷ by Integrated Schools

Nice White Parents podcast²⁰⁸

For family integration ideas

Promoting Equity and Anti-bias in the Classroom,²⁰⁹ by Beckers

²⁰⁵ <https://inclusiveschools.org/ideas-for-engaging-families/>

²⁰⁶ <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/critical-practices-for-antibias-education/family-and-community-engagement>

²⁰⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGNxlwqoZ1U&t=33s>

²⁰⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/23/podcasts/nice-white-parents-serial.html>

²⁰⁹ <https://www.shopbecker.com/resource-cafe/beckers-blog/innovation-in-the-classroom/promoting-equity-and-anti-bias-in-the-classroom/>

PROJECT EXAMPLE: “MY NEIGHBORHOOD”

Consider having the visual arts integrated into your units and planning throughout the year so students have outlets to express themselves—based on their own interests, feelings, people and family in their lives, culture, ethnic backgrounds, race, historical figures and emotions and feelings. Here is a project example you can adapt to your Early Childhood classroom and extend to your students’ families so they can collaborate with their children and help them work on their project.

Objective

Students will explore the work of Jacob Lawrence, an American painter who focused on African-American life and historical figures. After examining his work called “*Brownstones*”, about NYC’s Harlem neighborhood, students will be able to make an artwork about their own neighborhood.

Materials

Projection or a printout of *Brownstones* and painting materials (tempera paint, palettes, brushes, paper towels, cups for water, painting paper or thicker paper to work on).

Introduction: Questions

Show students Jacob Lawrence’s work, *Brownstones*.

Ask the students questions about the piece (feel free to create your own or take away or add more to this list):

- First, I want everyone to look at this image. Look with your eyes from the left side to the right side of the image. Then look up and down, and diagonally.
- What’s one thing that you notice or that might stand out to you?

Neighborhood

- What is a neighborhood?
- What makes up this neighborhood in this image?
- What do you notice about the figures?
- Who are all these people and what are they doing?
- What are some of the activities they are doing?
- Is it similar or different compared to your neighborhood?

Other questions about the qualities of the painting and how they relate to the neighborhood and African American culture

- What do you notice about the artist's use of color?
- What do you notice about form?
- After students are finished with the dialogue, you can give them more information about this painting.



Jacob Lawrence, "Brownstones," detail, gouache on board, 31.5" x 73.25", 1958. Clark Atlanta University Art Museum; Gift of Chauncey and Catherine Waddell, WC45. © 2018 Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society, New York.

MORE INFO ABOUT BROWNSTONES:

Jacob Lawrence was inspired by African American neighborhoods, communities, and historical figures. This painting is showing us an image of everyday life of African Americans in Harlem in New York City during the Harlem Renaissance.

- Neighborhoods are very important to maintain, respect, and be a part of. The stores, places, spaces here are important to the people that live there and the diversity of the community.

*Explore and explain the Harlem Renaissance to young children here*²¹⁰:

Art project

You will complete a painting about the neighborhood you live in. You may want to paint a particular place or places that are important in your neighborhood or that you think might be unique.

Other information

You can also adapt this lesson using the following information: **Whitney—Jacob Lawrence’s Brownstones.**²¹¹

TIPS ON ENGAGING EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDENTS WITH THEIR OWN ART- WORK AND ARTISTIC EXPLORATION

Language

Use sensitivity in your language when speaking to your children. When having a discussion with students about paintings, stay away from “yes or no” questions. You need to elicit responses with details from the students, getting them to really look and observe the work of art.

A note about material exploration

It is important to consider whether your students have explored materials, which is a major component of developmental growth (Burton, 1980). Children will often physically explore their art works with their hands, bodies and faces. Children will get themselves into positions when they engage in their artwork. This is healthy because it is important for them to explore and feel the materials you are having them use. It’s about embodied knowledge; that the art materials are tactile and tangible and what it feels like on the body, how it smells, and how they explore the materials (Burton, 1980).

Consider offering a variety of ways to explore materials for your Early Childhood students—painting, collage, drawing, colored pencils, Cray-Pas, papier-mâché, and more.

Discussing artwork with Early Childhood-aged children

When discussing a child’s drawing you might be able to say:

“I see you made lines that are darker than others; what kind of lines did you make?” “Tell me more about them.”

²¹⁰ <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Harlem-Renaissance/353232>

²¹¹ <https://whitney.org/www/jacoblawrence/art/neighborhood.html>

There are many ways that you can approach them and ask questions. For instance, you can say: **“Your idea is really growing; would you like another piece of paper so your idea can grow further?”** You can easily ask children about the color in their work, for they always seem to be very excited about color. In this project, students are getting exposure to the history of the Harlem Renaissance, a neighborhood of color, and thinking about their own neighborhoods and the people that live there, and the importance about maintaining neighborhoods for communities and not gentrifying them.

If your students are having trouble getting started, you can ask:

“Tell me about your neighborhood.” What’s in it? What do you notice about your neighborhood that makes it unique and special?

By questioning children, you begin to help them reflect on what it is they know, opening a conversation. Through questioning, children could internalize their learning, inviting them into the process of their own learning.

By using an inquiry method of teaching, you can have your students think about what they are doing and how they are proceeding through the art making process. The same inquiry method of teaching here can be used in your conversations about more difficult topics like place, community, race, and racism to get their thoughts and feelings about the topics out in the open.

According to Smith (1983) using this inquiry-based approach can be helpful—“what would you like me to know about your drawing that’s special, or, I like how you made this line (or particular element, mark, or space in the piece), can you tell me more about it? What did you do to create this line? What kind of line is it?” (Smith, 1983, p. 65)

SELF-CARE AND WELLNESS

“Self-care, at its most basic, refers to a person’s effort to maintain their wellness and health. Initiated and maintained by each individual based on their own needs, self-care requires active engagement and conscious effort to form new, beneficial habits. Caring for ourselves helps to bring balance, focus, and mindfulness to our lives. In turn, this helps us to better navigate the challenging social and political issues related to our anti-racist work.”

—National Museum of African American History and Culture

Wellness is something that you can build into your Montessori Early Childhood curriculum if you haven’t already. Each student has an interior life that matters and needs to be taken into consideration. It is a part of social-emotional learning that should be cultivated through self-expression in the classroom (See Simmons, 2021). Thinking about wellness and implementing projects and activities as a Montessori practitioner will help students, especially in the COVID-19 pandemic, with coping skills, self-expression, and mindfulness exercises.

SELF-CARE

[these questions are not an assessment, but questions you could think about. Questions below are framed from an “I” perspective]

Do I reflect on how to take care of myself when I run into resistances for my ABAR work at school, with family members, or with friends? What is my plan?

Do I have colleagues I can turn to for help that I trust for reassurance and support for my ABAR work?

Do I have a plan in place where I can stop and reflect at school and journal my thoughts, feelings, and emotions?

If I have a stressful interaction with a colleague at school, how can I move to place where I can speak with them candidly and talk about the importance of ABAR work I am trying to accomplish?

Do I make self-care a part of my routine practice so I am healthy and better able to carry out my professional teaching responsibilities for my children at school?

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Can students express their feelings and emotions in the classroom through the visual arts, writing, music, performance, dance, and other forms of creation?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we have circle discussions or classroom community meetings about how students are feeling regarding the pandemic, global racism, or discrimination in everyday life?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we incorporate core visual arts wellness exercises, such as mindfulness circle drawing, Zentangle doodling, weaving, and more in our curriculums?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

For administrators and school leadership teams

Do we think about building community around wellness in our school and offer the opportunities to have wellness or mental health workshops offered to school faculty, students, and the school community?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Project: Zentangle Doodling

Prompt

Students will complete a Zentangle drawing. Zentangle art is non-representational and unplanned, so your students can focus on the process and not worry about the result. A Zentangle drawing is an abstract drawing created using repetitive patterns.

Step 1: Start with the right supplies. It should be plain white, unlined paper. Printer paper can also be used. Students may use pencil first and then ink in their design later.

Step 2: Draw a border. Use a pencil to draw a light square border around the edges of the paper. The pattern they make will be drawn inside the border. Students don't have to use a ruler or any sort of straight edge to draw their border, just sketch it lightly near the edges of the paper.

Start creating a tangle. A “tangle” is an invented pattern. A Zentangle may have just one tangle or a combination of different tangles. Students can use their pencil to begin drawing whatever pattern comes to them—there's no right or wrong move inside a Zentangle.

Resources

Zentangle Art Resource²¹²

Self-care,²¹³ by National Museum of African American History and Culture

ALUMNI

Including and welcoming back alumni to participate in DEI and ABAR work for the school and to give back is critical to forming partnerships and building an inclusive community. Consider bringing alumni back that you have taught in the past and invite them to engage in school programming, classroom instruction, and the school's equity committee to enhance strategic goals (if time allows and is possible for their schedule).

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we reach out to alumni to bring them back into our classrooms to give back and help teach classes or become a guest presenter? [This can also be done with Elementary or Adolescent Montessori students who have graduated from the program].

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we challenge alumni to join the conversation of DEI and ABAR work in our school?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

²¹² <https://zentangle.com/pages/what-is-the-zentangle-method>

²¹³ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/self-care>

Have we (faculty and administration) considered inviting alumni to serve on our school's equity committee and help in the construction of workshops, clubs, and school programming in terms of DEI and ABAR work?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Reaching out

Consider reaching out to alumni to talk about how they can be involved in a teaching engagement (perhaps on their breaks or in their free time). Alumni can also help inform the units, individual lessons, and programs that you plan in your curriculums.

As you work with DEI and ABAR frameworks and student outcomes in the months and years ahead, consider seeking to engage Montessori alumni in faculty conversations around DEI and ABAR work, using the school's framework and the strategies or outcomes that are developed as guidance.

RESULTS

If you answered **4–5** for any of the topics in this assessment, and were able to answer the questions with concrete and specific examples and illustrative evidence, your curriculum and instruction is moving very positively in the direction of DEI and ABAR work. Consider the advanced resources section: [Digging deeper: More DEI and ABAR resources](#) (page 364). You could also review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364), to find out more on how to advance your topic areas in your professional practice or classroom.

If you selected **2–3** for any given topic area, consider improving these areas in your curriculum and instruction to create a welcoming atmosphere that is antibias/antiracist and fosters DEI and ABAR. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help improve classroom community and curriculum, so that the school experience is not culturally harmful to any students. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

If you answered **1** to any question, you will need to address these topics and develop a plan of action to improve. Your curriculum, instructional approaches, environment, and/or behaviors may be culturally harmful to students in your program. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help you improve in these areas. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

Reflection

EQUITY ASSESSMENT REFLECTION

After you have completed the assessment, reflect on the following questions to come up with an action plan on the topics and categories you would like to focus on this year.

- What are the major DEI and ABAR goals that we hope to focus on the most this year within our Early Childhood classroom teaching? These can be shorter-term goals we can implement immediately.
- Moving forward with our classroom instruction, what are our future and long-term goals in DEI and ABAR? What would we like our students to walk away with?
- What are some of the obstacles and resistances we think we might run into, and how can we address them while maintaining momentum?
- What activities and projects in our own curriculums can we adjust or change? How can we decolonize our texts and curriculum materials in a meaningful way that would represent a group of diverse scholars, perspectives, and approaches?
- What are some of the activities, ideas, and fundamental strategies and approaches we will carry out with our students moving forward from the assessment?

*Questions from this section were adapted from the following resource: Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative (REJI) (2018, 2020). Organizational Race Equity Toolkit.

ELEMENTARY ASSESSMENT TOOL

Elementary Teacher and curriculum

IN this section, Montessori Elementary faculty are encouraged to reflect on their instruction to better work across cultures, and to move their curriculum and instruction toward DEI and ABAR values. This assessment and the reflective exercises within are specifically geared for elementary education.

THE TEACHER:

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR AND CONDUCT

As teachers, think about how you behave, examine the language that you use, and make sure that you are treating your students with respect and sensitivity. This is foundational to positive relationship-building and to the creation of ABAR and inclusive environments in your classrooms.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Classes

Do we create a welcome message for our students' families at the beginning of the term in the form of an email or digital communication to introduce them to the class we are teaching? Does this message include DEI and ABAR practices we will be working towards in our classes?

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our course website, syllabus, or course description include a DEI and ABAR statement and a mental health statement?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Behavior and language

Are we pronouncing our elementary students' names and using our students' pronouns accurately in classes and spelling their names correctly in various correspondences?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we normalize thinking about social identifiers and sharing pronouns as a community practice?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we think about seeing, listening to, and acknowledging that our students of color and students of different gender identifiers have different experiences than their white and cisgender peers because of their race and their gender identity (i.e. that they are persons that are historically marginalized and continue to endure marginalization, racism, and disprivilege)?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we active listeners with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we check in with our students daily so they can express how their day is going, how they are feeling, and to offer support where needed, even if it's just listening?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we holding students' feelings and emotions in mind? Are we sensitive to their experiences?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we work to keep our language free from racist and biased language (both conscious and unconscious)?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of language that we use that might embarrass a student, have racist meanings and origins, cause them discomfort, or have a negative effect on students' well-being?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we as instructors respond to and respect each student equally and treat them fairly?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are students' responses honored, acknowledged, and validated by us (as instructors) and all students in the classes we teach? Students will have varying perspectives and experience levels in each subject area.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Language that expresses racist ideas and has racist origins

Are we aware of our thoughts and language in expressing racist ideas in the classroom? (Kendi, 2016, 2019). Some examples of concrete language that is damaging and has racist origins include the following and might be out of your conscious awareness: "I am going to crack the whip," "this is a cake walk," "long time, no see," "where are you from really?," "you speak great English," "let's sit Indian style," "peanut gallery," among other phrases that have racist origins. Be aware and avoid using this language. Language and words we use as educators stick with children and language tends to get embedded and "hard-wired" in the brain if children hear these expressions repeatedly, contributing to internalized racism.

Listening to your students and offering your support

Consider taking the time to listen carefully to your students and consider collaborative problem solving²¹⁴ (CPS) with them as questions and issues arise. How might you proactively plan to use CPS to continue leading with empathy and maintaining your expectations inside and outside the classroom?

Here are some points you can take into consideration in listening and responding to your students:

- Teachers need to be flexible with the responses they are looking for from their Elementary students. Suppose a teacher asks their students a question and has an idea in mind for the answer. In that case, teachers could be flexible and allow their students to personalize content and make personal connections. Asking follow-up questions is essential. It is necessary to have students work through and defend responses without being rigid in looking for exact answers.
- Connect with your students daily. Ask questions about how their day was, what they did over the weekend, or how they feel. These check-in questions might not seem like a lot on the surface, but it goes deeper, and they are essential to understanding their inner lives more broadly.
- Ask your students for their input and feedback. You can ask your students throughout the semester “to gather their feelings about (and their understandings of) curricular choices, reading materials, discussions, and writing assignments” (Kinloch, 2010, p. 81). This can be adapted to any grade level.

Visual journaling and reflective writing

Consider giving students the chance to engage with journaling or visual journaling prompts that explore more personal topics for reflection.

Visual journaling prompt: Write about how you are feeling today without worrying about sentence structure or whether your thoughts make any sense. Add in any visual journaling that makes sense to you.

²¹⁴https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/researchcenter/collaborative_problem_solving.pdf

THE TEACHER:

ANTIBIAS WORK

“Biases are the stories we make up about people before we truly know them” —Vernā Myers

Know that there are many different types of bias, such as explicit and implicit bias. This section will have you reflect on your own biases and consider exploring biases with your students in the classroom learning experience.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we keep a reflective journal to reflect on our biases and work as teachers in DEI and ABAR?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Is there mentorship being provided to make us aware of our own unconscious biases?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we engage in self-reflection between our own racial and cultural identities and those of our students?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

For white-identified teachers: have we accounted for and reflected upon our white privileges? Are we aware of them? (See DiAngelo, 2018; 2021)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we fighting against racism, even within ourselves, internally reflecting on and communicating who we are with the world, and reflecting on our actions, behaviors, and language with each other and our students and families?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

In the classroom

Do we talk about antibias perspectives in our classroom? How does our own antibias training and self-work translate to our classroom work with students?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we think about who might be left out of our curriculums and whose voices are not present?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we think about how to address and point out what stereotypes, biases, and misconceptions our students have about topics in our curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we think about what resources we need to educate our students on taking antibias perspectives?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Ideas for visual journaling to reflect on DEI and ABAR

It's an excellent idea to keep a writing journal about DEI and ABAR practices related to you, your students, and your classroom teaching practice. Visual journaling about projects, assignments, lessons, and everything you are engaging with throughout the semester is helpful to keep track of what you are doing and reflect critically on your actions.

- Consider making visual journaling a routine in your teaching practice and in your thinking about inter-sections of difference.
- Try to write in your visual journal at least once or twice a week. It could even become a daily routine.

- Find a time that can become a routine time to visually journal. Maybe it's free time you have on your lunch break when no students are around. Perhaps you visit a colleague's classroom or the cafeteria or go outside of school.

Resources

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain,²¹⁵ by Zaretta Hammond

Blind spot: Hidden Biases of Good People,²¹⁶ by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald

Robin DiAngelo's work²¹⁷

Robin DiAngelo Wants White Progressives to Look Inward: The Author of "White Fragility" Discusses her New Book, "Nice Racism", by Isaac Chotiner²¹⁸

Teacher Bias: The Elephant in the Classroom,²¹⁹ by The Graide Network

Four Tools for Interrupting Implicit Bias,²²⁰ by Zaretta Hammond

'Culturally Responsive Teaching': An Interview with Zaretta Hammond,²²¹ by Larry Ferlazzo

THE TEACHER:

SELF-WORK AND SELF-STUDY

This section covers mentorship, reading, engagement in history, course work, and cultural competence. Montessori educators must address racism in the world and within themselves to stop it. Educators must be aware of themselves including their own behaviors, interactions, language, social privileges, and the importance of internally reflecting on their own biases and their actions. Self-examination and self-study are important for educators—to be aware of discomforts around topics of social justice, bias, race and racism and learning to sit with them in conversations with their students and helping them to do the same.

²¹⁵ <https://www.amazon.com/Culturally-Responsive-Teaching-Brain-Linguistically/dp/1483308014>

²¹⁶ <https://www.amazon.com/Blindspot-Hidden-Biases-Good-People-ebook/dp/B004J4WJUC>

²¹⁷ <https://www.robindiangelo.com/>

²¹⁸ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/robin-diangelo-wants-white-progressives-to-look-inward>

²¹⁹ <https://marcolearning.com/teacher-bias-the-elephant-in-the-classroom/>

²²⁰ <https://crtandthebrain.com/four-tools-for-interrupting-implicit-bias/>

²²¹ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-culturally-responsive-teaching-an-interview-with-zaretta-hammond/2015/07>

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Mentorships and education

Do we work with colleagues, administrators, and DEI and ABAR mentors to observe our teaching practices and reflect together to build better curriculums and instruction for our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there opportunities in our program to engage in PD programming on DEI and ABAR?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we seek PD programs out on our own, and will our institution support us in our education in DEI and ABAR work?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Self-reflection

Are we setting goals to help ourselves get to a place where we can make improvements in our curriculum and professional practice?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we give ourselves opportunities to self-reflect about DEI and ABAR work in our curriculum?
(See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Self-study

Do we read texts about racism and ABAR? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we reading books and articles about whiteness and white privilege and books and texts written by BIPOC? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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Montessori educators are encouraged to think about the following questions regarding racism (e.g, racial history, colonial history, etc.)

Do we take time to understand the history of race and racism?

1	2	3	4	5
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Can we provide an accurate, working definition of race and what concepts went into its construction?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we know how race relates to colonialism?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we know about intersectionality and its relevance: how race intersects with other areas of social oppression (gender, age, sex, class, disability, religion, age, physical appearance, etc.)?

1	2	3	4	5
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Can we clearly define antiracism and explain what it entails?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we aware of the psychosocial dangers of white supremacy?

1	2	3	4	5
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Cultural competence

Do we engage in collaborations and professional relationships with BIPOC and persons outside of our own race and culture? This is referred to as “cross-cultural skills” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8).

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we aware of our personal cultural worldviews? (See Penn State Extension, 2020)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have “knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews?” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of our “attitude[s] towards cultural differences?” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

See the Resources section (page 361) on how you can un-educate yourself through reading and sustained study.

Addressing racism in the classroom setting is important aspect of self-work. Here are some notes on classroom management and student behavior:

Address racism and bias when you see or witness it. This is recommended because it makes the whole class aware of the racism that was enacted and that you care about all the students involved.

Depending upon the context, you can pull individual student(s) aside and have a private conversation with them outside the classroom. Don't turn the other way and wait for someone else to step in. You must be proactive and make choices to be antiracist in each interaction and behavioral encounter.

In most cases, you can point to the diversity statement in your class statement, syllabus, or course website stating that you will not tolerate racism, bullying behaviors, or bias in the classroom. Your school might also have a specific protocol when you encounter racist behaviors, discrimination, or othering.

Marshall (2020) says that "using swift and harsh consequences on students of color who misbehave" (p. 1) perpetuates racism. Marshall asks teachers to consider these questions as they think about administering consequences and disciplinary actions to their students:

- "What relationship-building have you done with your students and families of color?" (p. 1)
- "Rules without relationships always lead to rebellion. If students feel invisible and overlooked in the classroom, and only get the teacher's attention for negative reasons, they are more likely to act out." (p. 1)
- "What other strategies have you already implemented with students of color who misbehave?" (p. 1)

Working with mentors

Work with a DEI mentor in your institution or school community. This could be someone who has more experience with DEI, like an administrator, faculty member, staff member, scholar, or consulting expert, who can work with you to reflect together to make positive changes in your curriculum and instruction.

PDs, workshops, DEI training seminars

Seek out PD opportunities to learn from experts in bias, race and racism and DEI and ABAR work. Attend PD sessions throughout the year or during breaks and time off.

Talk to your administration and get them on board to discuss PD opportunities, events, conferences, etc.

Goal setting

Set goals to help you improve in DEI and ABAR values in your curriculum and instruction. It is important to reflect and practice weekly. Consider setting a new goal each week or month to make real improvements:

- What are your plans for this week?
- What five things do you need to get done that are at the top of your priority list in DEI and ABAR work?
- Take time to write down what you want to accomplish.

Take online course work

Engaging in online course work will help you boost your confidence level in taking on this work.

See Learners Edge under “Culture and Language.”²²²

See Coursera under “Anti-racism I and II,” and “Designing and Building Institutional Anti-Racist Spaces.”²²³

Cultural competence

Cultural competence is having the ability to effectively interact, communicate, and share knowledge with individuals from all cultural backgrounds that are different from one’s own cultural, ethnic, or racial background.

But there is much more than this simple definition: See *What is Cultural Competence and How to Develop It?*²²⁴ by PSU.

Developing cultural competence is important because, according to Paris and Alim (2014), “while it is crucial that we work to sustain African American, Latina/o, Asian American, Pacific Islander American, and Indigenous American languages and cultures in our pedagogies, we must be open to sustaining them in both the traditional and evolving ways they are lived and used by young people. Our pedagogies must address the well-understood fact that what it means to be African American or Latina/o or Navajo is continuing to shift in the ways culture always has.”

Penn State Extension’s website (2020) offers cross-cultural attitude strategies that can help Montessori educators strengthen and sustain their communication skills:

- **“Practice openness** by demonstrating acceptance of difference” (p.1).
- **“Be flexible** by demonstrating acceptance of ambiguity” (p.1).
- **“Demonstrate humility** through suspension of judgment and the ability to learn” (p.1).
- **“Be sensitive to others** by appreciating cultural differences” (p.1).
- **“Show a spirit of adventure** by showing curiosity and seeing opportunities in different situations” (p.1).
- **“Use a sense of humor** through the ability to laugh at ourselves” (p.1).
- **“Practice positive change or action** by demonstrating a successful interaction with the identified culture”

²²² <https://courses.learnersedge.com>

²²³ <https://www.coursera.org/search?query=antiracism%20&>

²²⁴ <https://extension.psu.edu/what-is-cultural-competence-and-how-to-develop-it>

Resources

Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools,²²⁵ by Glenn Singleton

The Courageous Conversation Compass,²²⁶ by Glenn Singleton

15 Ways Teachers Encourage Racism in the Classroom,²²⁷ by Tanya Marshall

Boston University Center for Antiracist Research²²⁸

Organizations to learn more about:

Bail funds

The Bail Project²²⁹

National Bail Out²³⁰

Black LGBTQIA+ support

Emergency Release Fund²³¹

Black Trans Protesters Emergency Fund²³²

Homeless Black Trans Women Fund²³³

Solutions Not Punishment²³⁴

Frontline organizations

Black Teacher Project²³⁵

²²⁵ <https://www.amazon.com/Courageous-Conversations-About-Race-Achieving/dp/1483383741>

²²⁶ https://www.siprep.org/uploaded/Magis/Courageous_Conversations_Compass.pdf

²²⁷ <https://www.thebutterflyteacher.com/racism-in-the-classroom/>

²²⁸ <https://www.bu.edu/antiracism-center/>

²²⁹ <https://bailproject.org/>

²³⁰ <https://www.nationalbailout.org/>

²³¹ <https://emergencyreleasefund.com/>

²³² <https://twitter.com/BTFACollective/status/1267853959378731023>

²³³ <https://www.gofundme.com/f/trans-housing-coalition-fund>

²³⁴ <https://www.snap4freedom.org/home>

²³⁵ <https://www.blackteacherproject.org/donations>

Black Visions Collective²³⁶

Color of Change²³⁷

Communities Against Police Brutality²³⁸

Community Justice Exchange²³⁹

Restore Justice²⁴⁰

Showing Up for Racial Justice²⁴¹

Black community

Mutual Aid Hub²⁴²

Reclaim the Block²⁴³

Cultural competence

5 Steps Toward Cultural Competence in Schools²⁴⁴

Cultural Competence²⁴⁵

Cultural Competence: An Important Skill Set for the 21st Century²⁴⁶

²³⁶ <https://www.blackvisionsmn.org/>

²³⁷ <https://colorofchange.org/>

²³⁸ https://www.cuapb.org/what_we_do

²³⁹ <https://www.communityjusticeexchange.org/nbfn-directory>

²⁴⁰ <https://www.restorejustice.org/>

²⁴¹ <https://surj.org/>

²⁴² <https://www.mutualaidhub.org/>

²⁴³ <https://www.reclaimtheblock.org/home>

²⁴⁴ <https://www.middleweb.com/43430/5-steps-toward-cultural-competence-in-schools/>

²⁴⁵ <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/professional-learning/resources/cultural-competence>

²⁴⁶ <https://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/html/g1375/build/g1375.htm>

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

The questions below offer ways in which to think about DEI and ABAR values and practices within your classroom curriculum and instructional practices. These questions and practices are inspired by abolitionist practices of teaching. Bettina Love coined the term “abolitionist teaching,” which refers to practices of teaching focusing on social justice, activism, and refusal: challenging the “traditional” arc of school curriculums and interrogating teaching practices and school policies that have marginalized students of color and privileged whiteness, heteronormativity, and heteropatriarchy.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Work to curate diversity in curricular objects, books, materials, and content

Is there representation in my elementary curriculum and classroom, including texts and reading materials, as the child’s interests are supported and guided throughout the day? This would include authors, writers, artists, historians, scientists, mathematicians, literary figures, and more of different races and ethnicities (e.g. Middle Eastern Black/ African, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, Native American, white, multiracial) and across different identifiers (people with disabilities, different sexual orientations, religion, gender identity, neurodiversity, class, language, etc.). (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b).

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our curriculum and instruction provide our students with ways to look critically at the material that is being presented in class?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Does our curriculum and instruction provide opportunities for alternative points of view to develop?

1	2	3	4	5
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Am I eliminating terms like “primitive,” “aboriginal,” and “Oriental” from the language I use to talk about art, music, and literature? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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In our classroom environments, are we referencing different cultural traditions, languages, religions, names, and clothing?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are a diverse range of family identities being portrayed in our curriculum materials? For example, same-sex parents, foster families and more? (See Mayo, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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When we post links and resources for teachers, do we consider sharing a variety of views and including authors of color and other minority identities?

1	2	3	4	5
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Connecting to students' inner worlds and lived experiences

Are we connecting to students' real-world experiences and concerns, including but not limited to mental health issues like anxiety and depression, family life, personal interests, and passions?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

During independent work time and over the course of our curriculum, do we make opportunities for students to share their own backgrounds, cultures, and interests? (See Unlu, 2017)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we making personal connections that are culturally relevant to our student's lives? (See Paris & Alim, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we leaving any students out of conversations in class?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Co-creating with the instructor and self-direction

Do students have opportunities to create classroom rules together?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Can students go in different directions based on their personal interests?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Differentiated instructional approaches

Do we use differentiated instruction and diversified methods of instruction for students with different experience levels?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Questions for further thinking and reflection

How can we build a civically engaged curriculum model or engage with civic-minded practices?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we interrogating our curriculum materials and making sure a variety of voices are being represented?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Love (2019) writes that educators must matter (i.e., you must matter to yourself), and their students and voices must matter for changes to occur. It is vitally important to see students for who they are—their race, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, disability—and how those elements of their identity contribute to and intersect in their learning, classroom environment, and school setting.

DEI pitfalls in curriculum and instruction

The following examples of DEI pitfalls in curriculum and instruction come directly from Pyatt (2021):

- “Assuming students have no background knowledge or understanding on the subject” (p. 1).
- “Failing to connect learning to students’ communities and homes and acknowledge that learning occurs in many places” (p. 1).
- “Failing to link the curriculum to the interests of the students” (p. 1).
- “Failing to administer assessments and learning opportunities that give all students authentic opportunities to demonstrate their understanding” (p. 1).
- “Creating and using curriculum materials that reinforce Eurocentric values as normative” (p. 1).

Other pitfalls (p. 1) include “failing to closely review all parts of curriculum including:

- Lesson plans (explicitly stated curriculum to be taught)
- Supplementary documents (handouts)

- Tested (curriculum reflected in assessments)
- Taught (material presented to students)
- Learned, hidden (what students inadvertently receive)
- Excluded (omitted) curriculum”

Resource

A Tool to Ensure Your Curriculum Includes All Voices,²⁴⁷ by Shana Pyatt

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

DISCUSSING AND EXPLORING BIAS, RACE, AND RACISM

Studying bias, race, and racism for yourself, as an instructor, is important. Having accurate definitions about racism’s historical origins is significant and will affect the quality and the accuracy of your teaching. It is highly recommended that you consider spending time reading through the Resources section (page 361) and obtaining some books and scholarly articles to learn more about the history of bias, race and racism in American history. These questions will guide you to think about bias, race, and racism within the context of the classroom environment and how to set up productive and meaningful conversations about race and racism.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Classroom conversations about race and racism

Do we set up a welcoming classroom discussion atmosphere and establish ground rules and classroom norms before we begin to talk about or engage with difficult topic areas (racism, racial injustice, racial violence, stereotypes, police brutality, prejudice, stereotyping, and more) with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

²⁴⁷ <https://uncommonschoools.org/uncommon-sense/tool-ensure-curriculum-includes-all-voices/>

Do we have conversations about historical figures of color, and make the figures and topics traditionally associated with Black History Month more a part of our Elementary curriculum throughout the year and not isolated to one discrete piece of the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we infuse vocabulary and learning about accurate definitions relating to DEI and ABAR work into our curriculum and instruction? See Key Definitions of Race and Racism²⁴⁸ and Racial Equity Tools Glossary.²⁴⁹

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we make it a point to discuss the ongoing issues of police brutality in America and the history, meaning, and purpose of the Black Lives Matter movement?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we encourage and facilitate discussions about the following questions with our students:

- What are our civil and human rights?
- What is our responsibility to ensure everyone has access to those rights?
- What is the legacy of slavery and racism in the U.S. and how does this legacy continue to impact America today?
- What is white supremacy and how does white supremacy affect the nation, communities of color, and on an individual level for white identified persons and BIPOC?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

²⁴⁸ <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/Key-Terms-Racism.pdf>

²⁴⁹ <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Addressing racism

Do we make our students and colleagues aware if we hear or see them express a racist idea? Do we make them aware of their actions or inactions? [This piece takes time, self-awareness, and self-development] (See Kendi, 2016, 2019).

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

See special resource section “[Recommendations for Educators Preparing to Lead Class Discussions about Racism and Race](#)” (page 361) by Elliott Schwebach, PhD.

Check out Book Recommendations for Elementary/Early Adolescent students (ages 8–13) (page 368) to find out more about books you can consider adding to your classroom for students to engage with.

Contemporary ways racism exists:

- *Economic disparities* (housing, income levels, jobs, the workplace, etc.)
- *Education systems and curriculum* (unchecked unconscious bias, harsh consequences for students of color, racist educational policies)
- *Politics and government* (policies, legal supports, etc.)
- *Criminal justice system and prisons* (disparities in drug charges; unlawful arrests; unlawful prison sentencing; police brutality for persons of color, especially for African Americans and Latinx persons)
- *Environment* (pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, communities of color being disproportionately located near toxic waste facilities)
- *Day-to-day interactions and language* (using language with racist origins and meanings; overt and covert racist rhetoric, behaviors, and gestures; linguistic discrimination, etc.)

Antiracism (what does it mean to be antiracist?):

- Antiracism involves a strong commitment to social justice
- Antiracism involves challenging racist policies, language, and day-to-day interactions. Antiracism therefore involves being conscious of the language one is using (including its origins and potentially harmful, even if unintentional, effects)

- Book recommendation on these points: *How to Be an Antiracist*,²⁵⁰ by Ibram X. Kendi
- Small choices we make in our day-to-day experiences will lead to larger changes
- See The National Museum of African American History and Culture’s “Talking about Race”²⁵¹

Antiracist pedagogy:

Love (2019) says that antiracist pedagogy should connect with students and their communities and grassroots organizations to make social changes possible. Antiracism means fighting against racism, committing to social justice, and enacting change—challenging racist policies, language, day-to-day interactions, and more. “Pedagogies must call out and teach students how racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and inequality are structural, not people behaving poorly. They must criticize these systems that perpetuate injustice, such as educational survival complex while pushing for equitable communities, schools and classrooms” (p. 55).

Abolitionist teaching practices: The idea of “mattering” is essential (Love, 2019). Abolitionist teaching practices focus on justice, activism, and refusal in the curriculum. They challenge the “traditional” arch of the school curriculum and interrogate learning practices that have marginalized students of color and that have privileged whiteness and maleness. Love (2019) stresses that pedagogical practice of this kind cannot be done in isolation but should be enacted collaboratively with students and their own lived experiences, identities, inherent knowledge of their neighborhoods and communities, and community-based organizations to produce societal changes. Love says that educators must matter, and their students and their voices must matter for changes to occur. It is vitally important to see students for who they are—their race, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality—and how those elements of their identity contribute richly to and intersect in their learning, classroom environment, and school setting.

These can also serve as resources for Montessori faculty:

- Peace Learning Resources²⁵²
- Learning for Justice: A Framework for Anti-bias Education²⁵³
- NAEYC: Antibias²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ <https://www.ibramxkendi.com/how-to-be-an-antiracist>

²⁵¹ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

²⁵² <https://peacelearningcenter.org/>

²⁵³ <https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards>

²⁵⁴ <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/anti-bias>

- [Building Anti-bias Early Childhood Programs: The Role of the Leader](#)²⁵⁵
- [Teaching for Change: Anti-bias Education](#)²⁵⁶
- See the section on [Antibias](#) work in this assessment (page 220).
- [Key Terms—Race and Racism](#)²⁵⁷ and [Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#)²⁵⁸

Talking about bias, race and racism in the classroom

Talking more and more about bias, race and racism helps bring those conversations into the Montessori Elementary classroom, allowing such discussions to become less difficult to enact and to feel more integrated. Practice. Creating a safer space in the beginning can mean all the difference to a successful conversation. There are many resources in the Resources section (page 361) to help you find ways in which to structure your discussions or to lead projects regarding race and racism.

Classroom conversation norms (can be adaptable according to grade level)

When beginning a conversation about race and racism, you should start by creating classroom conversation norms and working towards the development of a safer space.

Ask students to participate in co-creating classroom conversation norms with you as the instructor(s) and show your own examples too. Here are some foundational examples that can be adaptable to any grade level:

- Be respectful of each person's viewpoints and perspectives. Show respect.
- Avoid generalizations and stereotyping.
- Allow each class member and teacher to finish their thoughts before you speak.
- Do not interpret or attack what others say—ask them to explain/clarify.
- Use “I” statements.
- Define your terms from the beginning: “When speaking about race, we will use the following terms...” (Black, White, African American, people of color, Native American, Indigenous people, etc.).

²⁵⁵ <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2015/building-anti-bias-programs>

²⁵⁶ <https://www.teachingforchange.org/educator-resources/anti-bias-education>

²⁵⁷ <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/Key-Terms-Racism.pdf>

²⁵⁸ <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Other ideas to set up a productive conversation on race and racism

Here are some guidelines to consider when setting up a safe space for the discussion of difficult topics, such as race, racism, stereotypes, hate speech, prejudice, and more, in the classroom.

Ground rules or classroom norms for conversation (5 mins): What are some norms that are important for you and your class to uphold? Having students go over norms can be very helpful in setting up a safe and welcoming space for discussion around difficult topics. Give some examples: “respect”; “listening”; “classroom support” (see more above). As the teacher, what’s your norm for the first example?

Values: Speak from your own value system. Don’t worry if you stumble or use wrong terminology. We will clean it up. Take the approach of “saying what you need to say” in our conversation today.

Ask questions or step back: Feel free to ask questions at any point in the classroom discussion or stop and reflect on anything that comes up for you. Silence is okay too. It’s okay to step back and be silent and not know what to say. It’s okay to think and give yourself space before you answer a question. There is no wrong answer.

Presence: Stay fully engaged and present with us for our class time together.

It’s okay to feel uncomfortable: It’s okay to feel uncomfortable and experience discomfort. Doing this work and talking about topic areas listed here including bias, race and racism means you want to be better about working across cultures and making a difference.

Respect and empathy: Show and practice respect and empathy (being in another person’s shoes). Strive for building a nonjudgmental classroom space. We are not judging each other’s ideas or thoughts.

A note about Black History Month

“The current presence of Black History Month as it is frequently undertaken (if at all) is a month of prescribed and oft-repeated, sterile sets of knowledge that highlight “exceptional” Black people. This does a huge disservice to all students” (Affolter, 2019, p. 89). As educators, it is important to avoid narrowing and tokenizing the ways in which curriculums are made around Black History Month and other months that celebrate women, the LGBTQIA+ community and others to expand curriculums and discussions.

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

INTERNATIONAL SECTION ON ABAR

Inequality distorts “the ability to be oneself, of establishing and maintaining a ‘contact’” with another (Fanon, 1959/1965, p. 126).

Racism, xenophobia, and myriad other forms of discrimination and oppression (sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, ageism, etc.) are pervasive and violent acts that exist across the world, not just the United States. The American Montessori Society partners with schools abroad. It is important for Montessori Elementary faculty members to consider the ways in which racism operates in other global settings and be aware of current issues and injustices taking place around the world. Below are reflective questions that focus on racism and its international components and concerns.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Understanding racism internationally

Do we understand racism and injustices in countries other than the United States?

1	2	3	4	5
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Can we speak to racism’s global history?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of how racism operates uniquely within Europe?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of Asian hate crimes happening in the U.S. and abroad and do we bring these topics into discussion with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Notes / Observations / Questions / Evidence:

Do we assign our students readings about current events, racial injustices, and antibias education issues and efforts that are happening abroad?

1	2	3	4	5
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Transatlantic slave trade

Have we engaged our students in discussions about the transatlantic slave trade, its connections with colonialism and the globalization of race?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we equipped with resources that provide accurate narratives of the transatlantic slave trade and its psychological, familial and spiritual consequences?

1	2	3	4	5
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Working with international students

Are we sensitive to our international students' experiences in the U.S. and abroad? Do we respect their heritage and native languages?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we providing opportunities for our elementary students to “resolve conflicts, solve problems, work in diverse teams and think critically about information?” (Anti-Defamation League, 2012, p. 3).

1	2	3	4	5
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Notes / Observations / Questions / Evidence:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Helpful resources for Elementary faculty on issues regarding racism abroad. Here are some to get started:

Slavevoyages.org offers excellent resource material for lessons, information and more about slave trades throughout history.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,²⁵⁹ by the United Nations

Racism at Home and Abroad: A Conversation Between Friends,²⁶⁰ by the World Bank Group

How Colonialism Shaped Policing in France,²⁶¹ by Florian Bobin

Looking at Racism, Eugenics, and Biopolitics in Europe Historically: An Interview with Marius Turda,²⁶² by Europe Now

My Very Personal Taste of Racism Abroad,²⁶³ by Nicole Phillip

Race Abroad for Americans of Color Preparing to Live Abroad,²⁶⁴ by Glimpse Study Abroad Guides

Witness Black History Podcast,²⁶⁵ by BBC Network

Black in Latin America,²⁶⁶ by PBS

Racial Dynamics in Bermuda in the 21st Century: Progress and Challenges,²⁶⁷ by Keith Lawrence & Raymond Codrington

Why is Mainstream International Relations Blind to Racism?,²⁶⁸ by Foreign Policy

²⁵⁹ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-racism-day>

²⁶⁰ https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/insights/i14-racism-home-abroad

²⁶¹ <https://jacobin.com/2020/07/police-racism-france-africans-colonialism>

²⁶² <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2020/12/07/looking-at-racism-eugenics-and-biopolitics-in-europe-historically-an-interview-with-marius-turda/>

²⁶³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/travel/racism-travel-italy-study-abroad.html>

²⁶⁴ <https://umabroad.umn.edu/sites/umabroad.umn.edu/files/documents/race-abroad.pdf>

²⁶⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01h9dl0/episodes/downloads>

²⁶⁶ <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/black-in-latin-america/>

²⁶⁷ <https://bermudacommunityfoundation.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Aspen-Bermuda%20Report%202015.pdf>

²⁶⁸ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/03/why-is-mainstream-international-relations-ir-blind-to-racism-colonialism/>

Examples of inferiority abroad

For one example, in India, the symbolic value of whiteness is a real issue among residents. It encourages the use of whitening creams to look or appear white. Colorism, as this is called, is prevalent in advertisements and other marketing materials.

We can think colorism as a process whereby people of color internalize inferiority, or what Frantz Fanon calls “epidermalization.” This is traceable to colonialism and its racist legacies. As Oliver (2004) describes, “The values of racist imperialism enter the colonized through the skin” (p. 51).

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

LEARNING ACROSS LINES OF DIFFERENCE

Having conversations with students about LGBTQIA+ identities, class, religious identity, gender identity, and racial identity is essential in examining the intersections of societal discrimination. For example, why might intersectionality be crucial in discussing societal discrimination and white or social privilege or investigating violence against women of color? Crenshaw’s (1991) work, which defines intersectionality, is inspired by Critical Race Theory, her legal background, and conversations about race and gender. In examining violence against women of color, Crenshaw (1991) argues that we need more than unilateral identity-based politics—we need to study intersections of race, class, gender, and more. She contributes to the advancement of feminism by using her theoretical frame of intersectionality to explore the multiple factors of an individual and cultural contexts that all contribute to the discrimination and violence against women of color in our society.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are diversity and difference discussed within the context of our students’ lives and community? Are people of different abilities, races, ethnicities, identities, cultures, and religions celebrated?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we incorporate conversations about religious identity, gender identity, and class differences into our curriculum? How are those conversations managed?

1	2	3	4	5
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LGBTQIA+ and gender identity

Have we talked to our students about gender identity and the many different types of gender and sexual identities (e.g., gay, lesbian, agender, asexual, ally, transgender, nonbinary, etc.)? See more examples here: [Definitions of Common LGBTQ Concepts and Terms](https://www.aecf.org/blog/lgbtq-definitions).²⁶⁹

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are our students' identities (e.g., racial, cultural, sexual, etc.) seen as positive features, attributes, and strengths that enhance learning and discussions inside and outside of class?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are a diverse range of family identities being portrayed in our curriculum materials (e.g., same sex parents, foster families, etc.)? (See Mayo, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

²⁶⁹ <https://www.aecf.org/blog/lgbtq-definitions>

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Resources

Five Ways to Have Better Conversations Across Difference,²⁷⁰ by Adrian Michael Green

Why Do We Avoid Conflicts and Difficult Conversations?,²⁷¹ by The Brain Alchemist

How Diversity Makes Us Smarter: Being Around People Who Are Different from Us Makes Us More Creative, More Diligent and Harder-Working,²⁷² by Katherine W. Phillips

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

SAFETY, ALLYSHIP, AND BECOMING AN UPSTANDER

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Safety

Have we had a conversation with our students about safety as it relates to DEI and ABAR? What does it mean to feel safe?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we feel safe in our classroom community?
Do our students feel safe? (i.e., the community in which we and our students live in, family life, school life, inner life).

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there books and dialogues happening in our Elementary classroom about body safety, consent, and respecting “no”?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

²⁷⁰ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_ways_to_have_better_conversations_across_difference

²⁷¹ <https://brainalchemist.com/2010/05/21/why-do-we-avoid-conflicts-and-difficult-conversations/>

²⁷² <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/>

True self (acceptance, ally, and upstander)

Have we brought up conversations about being true to ourselves and engaged in activities, projects, or book readings toward this goal?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we introduced topics about bullying, discrimination, bias, and racism?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Have we talked with our Elementary students or engaged in deeper conversations about what it means to be an upstander and ally?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**THINGS TO CONSIDER***Safety*

Safety is an important discussion topic for ages 6–12—personal and physical safety, playing safely with others, and more. In addition to these conversations, the discussion on safety as it relates to family life, mental health, and police brutality is a necessary topic to also engage in with Elementary students. Consider the following questions for discussion. You can break students up into small groups and have them reflect and talk about the following prompts or turn it into a reflective visual journaling or writing exercise:

Consider weaving in an activity with students about “safety” in your subject area to adjust to the grade level you are teaching.

- What does safety mean to you? Give some examples.
- “What makes you feel safe? Who makes you feel safe and why? Why do some people feel safe with police and others don’t? (Introduce the BLM movement and police brutality.) What can you do to make sure other people feel safe?” (Gross, 2021, p. 1)?

Being an ally

Becoming an ally is important.

- Don't repeatedly call a transgender student by their "dead name" (their former name) as this can be harmful to them. If it happens by accident, you can apologize and try to remember their new name for the next time you interact with them. The same goes for pronouns.
- Remember to use pronouns that students or faculty and staff use and prefer.
- Learn more about being an ally through the [Human Rights Campaign](#)²⁷³

Resources that can be adaptable for earlier grade levels

- Lesson Plans and Tool Kits, by Safe@ Schools²⁷⁴
 - Let's Talk about Body Boundaries, Consent, and Respect: Teach Children about Body Ownership, Respect, Feelings, Choices and Recognizing Bullying Behaviors Paperback,²⁷⁵ by Jayneen Sanders (Author), Sarah Jennings (Illustrator)
 - Talking to Kids about Racism,²⁷⁶ by Starlight
 - Anti-bias Education in the Early Years,²⁷⁷ by Embrace Race
 - Showing Up for Racial Justice's Educational Toolkits,²⁷⁸ by SURJ
 - (divorcing) WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE, Coming Home to Who We Really Are,²⁷⁹ by Tema Okun
 - How to Be an Antiracist Educator,²⁸⁰ by Dena Simmons
- Resources,²⁸¹ by Facing History and Ourselves

²⁷³ <https://www.hrc.org/resources/allies>

²⁷⁴ <https://www.safeatschool.ca/resources/resources-on-equity-and-inclusion/racism/tool-kits-and-activities>

²⁷⁵ <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1925089185>

²⁷⁶ <https://www.starlight.org/stories/talking-to-kids-about-racism-resources>

²⁷⁷ <https://www.embracerace.org/resources/antibias-education-in-the-early-years>

²⁷⁸ <https://surj.org/resources>

²⁷⁹ <http://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/>

²⁸⁰ <http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/education-update/oct19/vol61/num10/How-to-Be-an-Antiracist-Educator.aspx>

²⁸¹ <https://www.facinghistory.org/how-it-works/teaching-resources>

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

DISCUSSING AND EXPLORING WHITE PRIVILEGE

Having discussions about whiteness and white privilege are important for increasing the DEI and ABAR capacity of the Montessori education. Avowing whiteness in the educational setting allows white educators to bring the internal work of discovering internalized unconscious biases and to bring awareness to their white privilege—i.e., to the fact that they have more access and opportunities than populations marginalized by race. Also, this process can allow for educating oneself about the history of bias, race and racism and its origins in colonialism. The questions below will help the faculty think and reflect on whiteness and white privilege and how this contemplation may spur valuable conversations in teacher training programming.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we know what the terms whiteness, white nationalism, and white supremacy are, and can we define those terms accurately?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we understand what white privilege is?

1	2	3	4	5
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For white faculty: have we thought about our own social privileges and power that we have just because of the color of our skin?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we allow space for students to reflect upon white privilege, gender privilege, or religious privilege and how they have affected them?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we integrate resources, texts, and other materials for learning about whiteness and white privilege into our Elementary curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we look at how “white people distance themselves from their privilege in order to preserve it” (Mills, 2020, p. 1)?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we think about how access to “education, money, and power provide access to good health? [Yet also how] access to those systems is limited for people of color by the historic and systemic injustices that benefit white people?” (Center for Health Progress, 2022, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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For BIPOC educators: Do we use our privileges to be an ally? (Consider the privileges you may have in terms of gender, religion, non-disability, age, education, socioeconomic status, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Resources

Reading for Your Own Self-Growth and Learning about Racism and the History of Racism in America (page 371)

Teaching about White Supremacy and Systemic Racism,²⁸² by Educators 4 Social Change

Notes on whiteness and white privilege

The more surrounded one is by white privilege, the harder it becomes to ‘break free’ of the bubble of one’s own perception. Keep in mind that many modern states, including the United States, are only approximately 150–200 years removed from transatlantic slavery, and that racism continues to persist (albeit perhaps more invisibly to those who most benefit from it).

²⁸² <https://educators4sc.org/topic-guides/teaching-about-white-supremacy-and-systemic-racism/>

Whenever white privilege comes up in a conversation, many initial reactions are to be defensive. People oftentimes struggle with conversations about white and social privilege and tend to get tense. Learning and communicating about white and social privileges, however, helps one to recognize and attend to one's defenses and become better at DEI and ABAR work.

Some well-known real-world examples of white privilege:

- Not having been harassed because of hair color or hairstyle, nor rejected from a job or work-related opportunity because of one's hairstyle.
- Not having been rejected from a job or work-related opportunity because of one's name.
- Generally positive relationships with police officers because of one's white skin.
- Privilege of having school authorities on one's side and listening to them.
- The privilege of learning from a predominately white culture/scholarship/history in the school curriculum.
- Finding an overwhelming number of children's books that represent white characters and Western culture.
- When shopping at a store, generally not being surveilled by staff. For example, at the grocery store when shopping, staff might ask a white person, "oh can I help you?" while they might surveil and follow customers of color.
- When watching TV, news, media, and shopping at stores for products, cards, gifts, music, art, and more, having the privilege of seeing whiteness represented—there is an overwhelming representation of whiteness in these circumstances, and white people have the privilege of feeling seen and represented in a general sense historically and now in the present day.

White faculty can also think about whether and how they benefit from other systems of undue privilege, such as those which accrue to cisgender men or non-disabled individuals because of patriarchy or ableism, etc. In addition, it is helpful to remember that proclaiming "color blindness" or stating simply that one is "not racist" can uphold racism by drawing attention away from its social operation. White teachers can actively model antiracist approaches by speaking from the "I" perspective to demonstrate how one *participates* in social privilege even if one does not consciously hold negative racial attitudes towards people of color.

BIPOC faculty can think about their own social privileges to become allies in considering the intersectional privileges they may have in terms of gender, religion, age, education, socioeconomic status and more.

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO STUDENTS

Listen carefully to your students and respond respectfully and thoughtfully. In the Montessori classroom, your students will be engaging in activities that interest them, and the classroom environment is primarily choice-based and in an emergent curriculum. The more you can hone in on your students' behaviors and questions and observe their routines, the better you get to know them, enabling you to make recommendations based on their passions and interests. The questions in this section will help you think about listening and responding.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are we being active listeners with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we carefully observing our students' behaviors and witnessing the choices they are making in their own creativity and in their conversations, and project time with others?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we holding students' feelings and emotions in mind during their time in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we sensitive to our students' experiences? Do we ask them how they are doing on a regular basis to connect with them?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we acknowledge and consider that students will have varying perspectives and experience levels in each subject area?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Language

Do we work to keep our language free from racist and biased (conscious and unconscious) language?

1	2	3	4	5
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As instructors, do we respond to and respect each student equally and treat them fairly?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we honor, acknowledge, and validate our students' responses throughout class time?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we “creating a ‘third space’ (Moje et al., 2004) in [our] classroom where students can safely explore, compare and contrast their Discourse communities?” (Arias, 2018, p. 5)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we make it a point not to “correct” another student's language when their native language is not English? This is damaging on many levels. See the examples below for more details.

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

A note about language

According to Nieves (2011), schools have created a toxic climate of othering “that often stifles cultural expression through language...” (p. 102). Often students of color are corrected by teachers in the classroom and in school spaces with their use of language. This can have severe damaging effects on a student's self-esteem and performance in school. This is an example of language discrimination. Culture, home dialects and personal identities are marginalized when this occurs.

Educators who mean well can erroneously believe that their students' ability to speak another language inhibits their learning of English; however, linguistic diversity is an asset for the classroom and society, not a handicap.

Paris (2012) created the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogies, calling for teachers and schools to “support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (p. 95). “Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (p. 95).

Online articles

Know Your Terms: Code Switching,²⁸³ by Jennifer Gonzalez

The Costs of Code-Switching,²⁸⁴ by Courtney L. McCluney, Kathrina Robotham, Serenity Lee, Richard Smith, and Myles Durkee

Books

Codeswitching in the Classroom: Critical Perspectives on Teaching, Learning, Policy, and Ideology, by Jeff MacSwan and Christian J. Faltis

Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy, by April Baker-Bell

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

INDEPENDENT AND COLLABORATIVE WORK TIME: COMMUNITY, CULTURE, AND PLACE IN THE MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

Both independent and collaborative work time is critical in the Montessori classroom. You can explore these two ways of working through a DEI and ABAR framework in the form of reading and helping students deeply engage with their local communities, their own culture, and the places and spaces they occupy and visit.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Instruction during work time

In our classrooms, are we allowing students to follow their own interests as they work through ideas and concepts?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

²⁸³ <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/code-switching/>

²⁸⁴ <https://hbr.org/2019/11/the-costs-of-codeswitching>

Are we trying to control things too much in terms of our students' learning and development or in material usage?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we allowing each student's voice and vision to come through in their learning (e.g., with their projects and activities)? Are we allowing their thinking about their interests to emerge independently?

1	2	3	4	5
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Partnering with families in the classroom

Do we encourage our students' families to be a part of our students' learning process? For example, do we encourage them to join our students in the classroom (virtually or in person), so they can interact and be with their child, or children, to be collaborative partners in their learning process?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we assign projects or activities where a child's family can engage with their work at home and in a collaborative format?

1	2	3	4	5
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Communities, culture, and place

Are our students connecting to their local communities by developing research projects, presentations, and bringing in symbols, artifacts, and images of places they visit, engage with and within, and travel to? (See Kinloch, 2010)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we talking to our students about gentrification and allowing our students to read about gentrification and how it affects neighborhoods of color?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we allowing our students to explore the topic of gentrification in the context of a lesson or self-led or collaboratively led projects?

1	2	3	4	5
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In our curriculums, do we give students the opportunity to examine “place?” (See a lesson example below for an idea on this topic.)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are various languages and dialects accessible to our students as they engage with the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are our students’ home languages visible in their independent learning and made accessible in our curriculum when engaging in texts and various work? (See Kinloch, 2010)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are our students’ identities (racial, cultural, sexual, etc.) seen as positive features, attributes, and strengths that enhance learning and discussions inside and outside of class?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Lesson example: Place collage project (can be adapted to various Elementary grade levels)

Materials

Magazines, cameras, or phones for taking pictures, printer for printing student images, 9" x 12" paper for collage, glue sticks, brushes.

Art prompt

Create a collage about a place or a space in your local community and tap into personal memories about that place.

This could be a place that you often return to that has helped shape you into who you are. This place must hold something that is emotionally significant to you or has some sort of impact on you. You can draw from your past or recent experiences.

Research and artist statement

Study the history of the place or space you chose in your community. Was this location or area gentrified? Write about what was in this location (a business, a landmark, an individual's residence, etc.) before. Write about the personal meaning this space has had for you and why. Then also write about the significance of the location's history.

Gentrification

Introduce the term "gentrification" and talk about examples of gentrification in local communities. Gentrification is the process of changing a neighborhood by building affluent businesses and creating new (more expensive) housing that often displaces people. Gentrification takes place in neighborhoods and communities of color, making it unaffordable to live there, thus displacing many individuals and taking away the historical significance of the neighborhood.

See some resources below for understanding gentrification:

What is Gentrification?²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ <http://archive.pov.org/flagwars/what-is-gentrification/>

Class idea list

During the introduction of the assignment, ask the class to generate ideas for topics and write them down on a document that can be shared with the class.

Collection of images

Have students go out into their local communities and take photographs of their place or spaces to use in their collages.

The class can also collect images from magazines or the internet and cut them out to paste onto their papers.

Collage Process

Encourage students to use their own artistic process. In collage, cutting, overlapping, and layering are three essential elements. Also, make sure your images are glued down to the surface of the paper well, so they don't fall off over time.

Work time

Students can work in the classroom at their own pace and can select materials that might interest them to incorporate into their collage. Maybe there is a particular material that they want to use (fabric, textural piece, or unusual material) that is significant to their collage.

Reflection

Have students lay out their collages in the classroom and do a gallery walk, where students can go around and look at each person's work and make a few comments about it on post-it notes. These could be positive comments or positive feedback for the artists.

Afterwards, students can share out what they created and present their topics, final collage pieces, and artist statements.

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

It is essential to teach students to be thoughtful digital citizens who are critical thinkers who engage ethically, responsibly, and compassionately online. Students should create and consume digital content safely and responsibly; include and empathize with others; and find, evaluate, and utilize content effectively. Thinking about digital citizenship through a DEI and ABAR lens is critical. Teaching students to be responsible for their language on social media, be all-inclusive, and not engage in cyberbullying (and shut it down if it happens) are essential facets of sound, ethical digital citizenship.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we think about access and equity in terms of digital citizenship education? Do we focus on digital equity for our Elementary students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we focusing on teaching our Elementary students to act responsibly and ethically online?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we cover racism, cyberbullying, sexting, bias, and online chat violence and harm with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we consciously or unconsciously diminishing the accessibility of misinformation and “color-blind” resources, texts, and articles from our classrooms and instructional practices? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we teach about online accessibility and disparities amongst class differences and communities about who does or does not have access to digital resources?

1	2	3	4	5
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Teaching responsibility online

Do we focus on ABAR within digital citizenship education, teaching our students to be respectful with their social media posts and images and to be inclusive online?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we making sure our students stay away from sources and identify sources that are harmful to them in rhetoric, imagery, and speech? [These can include racist ideas, hate speech, or other forms of violence.]

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we considered teaching about how to use digital devices and online tools and media and manage one's digital footprint?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we covered media addiction and how to manage devices in the classroom space?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Making sure students have access to valuable digital knowledge and material

Protecting personal information online

It is important for students to consider how to protect their personal information (usernames and passwords) for banking, school, and medical sites and to what extent they can protect them. Having strong passwords are important and students need to know what that looks like when they are online. Perhaps conversation around this area and using companies like Lastpass and storing passwords can be a topic of interest. Making this information accessible to students is important, especially upper elementary grade levels that are starting to use technology more and more.

Identity theft

Learning how to navigate fraudulent sites and avoid falling into identity theft is of critical importance in the digital age. *Digital fluency* is related to this idea for helping students learn about what is real and what is not (e.g. news, media, product purchases, etc.).

Digital visual literacy

Perhaps an element exploring digital “visual” literacy in artmaking and graphic design, broadly speaking, is helpful toward this end. This can help students understand how information is conveyed through graphic design. This can further allow students to better identify racism and bias in advertisement, design, and marketing materials.

Resources

Digital Citizenship: Using Technology Appropriately,²⁸⁶ by Mike Ribble

ISTE Standards: Students,²⁸⁷ by International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)

A Framework for Digital Citizenship Implementation,²⁸⁸ by Common Sense Education

Phi Delta Kappan: Expanding Digital Citizenship Education to Address Tough Issues,²⁸⁹ by Nicole Mirra, Sarah McGrew, Joseph Kahne, Antero Garcia, and Brendesha Tynes

²⁸⁶ <https://www.digitalcitizenship.net/nine-elements.html>

²⁸⁷ <https://www.iste.org/standards/iste-standards-for-students>

²⁸⁸ <https://www.commonsense.org/education/planning-resources>

²⁸⁹ <https://kappanonline.org/digital-citizenship-tough-issues-mirra-mcgrew-kahne-garcia-tynes/>

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

IDENTITY EXPLORATIONS—RACIAL IDENTITY AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

It's important that students explore their racial and self-identity within the context of their education. Early adolescence and the transformations that occur around puberty—including physical, sexual, mental, and emotional changes—can often lead to perplexity (Burton, 1981). Anxiety is prominent and oftentimes older Elementary/younger Adolescents students' decisions, interests, and passions will change. It is critical that students explore and have a strong understanding about race and racial identity and how that plays a role in their racial and self-formations.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Integrating the visual arts to explore racial and self-identity

Do we talk about race and cultural identity in our classrooms with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we giving permission to students to be themselves, develop creative confidence, and go deeper into an art experience to explore their racial and self-identity?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Whether through music, singing, visual arts (e.g., ceramics, photography, art and design, sculpture, painting, etc.), dance, theatrical prompts, or short performances, are we making the visual or performing arts a part of our classroom experiences for students to express themselves through various mediums?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Lesson example: Identity Portraits

Elementary. Can be adapted to different grade levels.

Objective of the lesson

Through the manipulative qualities of collage materials (e.g., colored construction paper, stained paper, magazines, personal photography, etc.), students will work to create a self-portrait that explores their identity by combining materials to represent themselves as a larger whole—their racial, self, and cultural identities.

Materials

16" x 20" paper for backgrounds, acrylic paints, paint brushes, paper towels, cups to hold water, aprons, scissors, glue sticks, magazines, personal photos.

Goal

The purpose of this assignment is for students to tell a story about themselves visually. This does not have to be a “traditional self-portrait assignment” where students must represent a face. It could include their name, race, culture, ethnicity, and gender identity as written reflection in combination with imagery or perhaps in the form of symbolization. You can encourage students to use writing and imagery of various kinds to fill the page for them to tell their identity stories.

Artist examples that teacher can use for discussion

Wendy Red Star’s photography work.

Brief Statement

Wendy Red Star is a visual artist. She studies and works in photography, mixed media, sculpture, textiles, and performance artmaking practices. Her body of photography is drawn from her lived experiences growing up on the Crow reservation in Montana and her personal identity. Her photographic works represent the importance of examining, understanding, and calling out racist stereotypes of BIPOC, and the importance of exploring colonialism in education.

See the following works for discussion:

Wendy Red Star: Baaéetichish (One Who Is Talented). (2022, April, 15). *Light Work*. <https://www.lightwork.org/archive/wendy-red-star/>

Colonization of America

Through Wendy Red Star's work you can introduce students to colonialism and the harm it has done to Indigenous people in America. Lessons from Trauma informed teaching practices²⁹⁰ can help you prepare for difficult conversations with your elementary students. Just make sure your conversations are developmentally appropriate for the age group you are working with.

For faculty and staff:

Braiding Histories: Learning from Aboriginal Peoples' Experiences and Perspectives²⁹¹

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

GIVING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS: PROGRESS AND GROWTH

Giving students feedback is important. The reflection questions below will allow you to discuss approaches to beginning to reflect with students on their work and different ways to conceptualize your assessment practices in an equitable way.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are we being flexible with our students and affording them multiple means of expression (e.g., verbal, written, through projects, through art, etc.) to demonstrate their learning and understanding? (See Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we taking off points for spelling or grammar in students' written responses and academic material that is being assessed? Students from different cultural backgrounds have different ways of expressing language, thought, and dialect. Consider not taking off points unless you are assessing spelling and grammar specifically.

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

²⁹⁰ <https://www.edutopia.org/article/trauma-informed-approach-teaching-colonization-americas>

²⁹¹ <https://www.ubcpres.ca/braiding-histories>

Are we seeking to better understand barriers faced by English language learners? How are we increasing access to their learning?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we being *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive* in our feedback to our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we being nonjudgmental in our feedback to our students and focusing on identifying “a challenge and [helping] formulate an improvement plan?” (University of Toronto Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, 2017, p. 11)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we giving our students options and other perspectives?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Written conversations

This is an assessment tool used by elementary educator Valente’ Gibson that can be adapted to various grade levels. In this system, instead of using standardized forms of writing assessments, written conversation is used to allow students to write in their own cultural language (See Gibson, 2020). It is vital that Montessori educators understand that there are many ways to connect to students’ cultural backgrounds and languages and should not downplay students’ home languages in the classroom or otherwise. Stay away from telling students to “be civilized” or to use “proper” English in their written assessments on projects, assignments, and in their language. For example, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a cultural language. Consider reading Kendi’s (2019) *How to Be an Antiracist*, Chapter 7: Culture. Kendi (2019) says, “I must use the language of my culture to express the culture” (p. 150).

Collaborative rubrics and assessments

Collaborate with students and their families to create your assessment narratives for Montessori education (See Gibson, 2020). Give your students and families agency, voice, and opportunities to work together. Consider giving other faculty and staff a chance to also be a part of the creation process.

Maintain flexibility in assessment practices

Alternative approaches to assessing work are important. Give students flexibility and choices. For example, when grading visual artwork or a musical composition, give your students the option of completing a rubric, a checklist, or a “written conversations” reflection.

Resources:

Working Toward Culturally Responsive Assessment Practices,²⁹² by NCTE member Valente’ Gibson

Going Public with Assessment: A Community Practice Approach²⁹³ by Kathryn Mitchell Pierce and Rosario Ordoñez-Jasis

Inclusive Curriculum Design and Assessment Practices,²⁹⁴ by New York University

What are Inclusive Assessment Practices?,²⁹⁵ by Tufts University

Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms,²⁹⁶ by Joe Feldman

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

CLASSROOM AND LEARNING MATERIALS

This section will cover classroom rules and norms, classroom atmosphere, and the learning materials students use in your classroom within the context of DEI and ABAR values.

²⁹² <https://ncte.org/blog/2020/02/working-toward-culturally-responsive-assessment-practices/>

²⁹³ <https://cdn.ncte.org/nctev2/product/683/samples/f8e609c5-41bc-458c-b875-125a71a2bf9f.pdf>

²⁹⁴ <https://www.nyu.edu/life/global-inclusion-and-diversity/learning-and-development/toolkits/faculty-digital-inclusion/inclusive-curriculum-design.html>

²⁹⁵ <https://provost.tufts.edu/celt/inclusive-and-equitable-teaching/what-is-inclusive-and-equitable-teaching/what-are-equitable-assessment-practices/>

²⁹⁶ <https://www.amazon.com/Grading-Equity-Matters-Transform-Classrooms/dp/1506391575>

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Classroom rules and norms

Do our classroom rules and guidelines include language about inclusivity and a message about the importance of addressing racism, discrimination, and homophobic and misogynistic comments, language, and actions when we see them occurring in the classroom and in the school building? Do we make it clear that none of the above will be tolerated by the instructor?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we build our classroom rules collaboratively with our classes instead of producing them by ourselves in isolation?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do our course schedules, classroom rules and projects reflect students' home languages? (See Ferro et al., 2022)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do students see their home languages in some form in the classroom? (See Ferro et al., 2022)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do students see their country's flag or a flag that represents student's cultural backgrounds?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Classroom atmosphere

Do we make our classroom an inclusive space visually, aesthetically, and spatially?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we mindful of all our students' religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, traditions, and customs? Then, are we cognizant about posting welcoming, non-discriminatory and diverse content on our walls? For example, suppose educators post only pictures or decorations about Easter (a Christian holiday) in March or April on a calendar wall. This might exclude and alienate other children's religious backgrounds and cultural traditions (such as Jewish students, who often celebrate Passover at this same time of year) if they see that these decorations are taking precedence.

1	2	3	4	5
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"Do the curricular content and wall displays in [our] classroom reflect the experiences and perspectives of the cultural groups that make up the school and its surrounding community?" (Anti-Defamation League, 2012, p. 4)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are the tables or desks in our classroom spaces configured in such a way that our students can hear and see each other? (e.g., a seminar-style table or roundtable set up)

1	2	3	4	5
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"Does how [we] teach acknowledge the experiences of the students from different backgrounds? Is [our] approach non-stereotypical?" (Unlu, 2017, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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"Do [we] encourage alternative perspectives, debate ideas, [and] create an environment which is open to representation of different viewpoints?" (Unlu, 2017, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

“Are [our] students treated as individuals, [and] encouraged to share their own lives and interests?” (Unlu, 2017, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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Learning materials

Are learning materials (physical objects and other learning materials) representative of cultures other than Western society?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Classroom rules

Make classroom rules addressing DEI and ABAR clearer and more visible in your classroom.

Use the following language as a guideline.

Antiracism and inclusivity

“Racist language, actions, and behaviors will not be tolerated by the school nor by the instructor. Please report racism, bullying, cyberbullying, discrimination, or any form of othering to the teacher, a school staff member, or an administrator. We strive to create an antiracist environment in the choices we make, in our day-to-day interactions with our peers, teachers, and school community. Everyone’s voices, perspectives, racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, and emotions and feelings are honored and respected.”

“Our classroom is an inclusive space where everyone is welcome...”

Technological tips

As a class activity, share a Google document with your students in which they craft the classroom rules and edit the language collaboratively.

Try Mural (mural.co). Craft your classroom rules and then have students comment on them and make suggestions. Mural is a great tool to invite your Elementary students to think & collaborate visually. Here's a link to a video²⁹⁷ which gives basic instructions on how to use this platform.

Another great tool is Flipgrid (info.flip.com). Students can have fun by making a 90-second video of a rule or norm they want to uphold throughout the semester/year.

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The natural environment is important for children and adolescents in Montessori education from Pre-K–12th grade. It's important to consider the qualities of natural objects, plants, insects, as well as their historical and cultural significance. It is also important to have discussions about how to take care of the environment, explore and acknowledge environmental racism, and how to become antiracist in an environmental context.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Environmental racism

Do we and our Elementary students know how race plays a role in the environment and in energy issues?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we discuss environmental racism (e.g., pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, waste facility locations, etc.) with our students? Do we think about it in the context of our own (faculty's) educational pursuits?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

²⁹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zA1RcPp19w4&feature=youtu.be>

Nature and naturalistic objects in the Montessori classroom setting

Do we bring in natural objects from cultures and backgrounds other than Western culture for students to engage with independently and collaboratively?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we bring in plant life from other parts of the world to discuss world cultures with our students? Even if it's in the form of posters or pictures?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we co-create nature activities with our students to promote inclusion?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have our Elementary students learn about and discuss environmental pollution and how it affects marginalized communities?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Examples of environmental racism

- Who works in the energy industry and who does not?
- Who has access to energy and who does not?
- Communities of color that live near waste facilities and the pollution from these facilities affects their lives. Today, incinerators and other hazardous waste facilities are much more likely to be built in neighborhoods where people of color and Indigenous communities live than they were 20 years ago.

Involving parents and families

You might consider doing the following:

- Involve students' parents and families in co-creating nature education such as having nature walks around local communities and neighborhoods.
- Support environmental and antiracist organizations.
- Journal about nature inside and outside the classroom setting.
- Grow small gardens in your local communities.
- Create a small garden inside the classroom for learning purposes and have students maintain a classroom garden in groups and change the groups out once a week can promote inclusivity and ideas about care.

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

SELF-DISCIPLINE AND SELF-DIRECTION

The Montessori method of instruction fosters the growth and development of the child and their interests. The child is the center of the classroom experience as they navigate their own interests and lessons. It is critical that, within this process, Elementary students are aware of the materials they are engaging with and that there are resources available to them about the history of race, racism, bias, antiracism, education along lines of difference, antibias work, and more. It is also important that educators decolonize their curriculum and apply appropriate DEI and ABAR direction to students regarding their learning and exploration process.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Have we thought about culturally responsive and culturally sustaining teaching practices and how we might use them in our instructional strategies to facilitate students' self-learning and learning outside of the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Have we taken the time to understand our students’ cultural backgrounds, their education or ESS plan, and their individual needs to be successful in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we built a trusting relationship with our students and talked to them to understand more about their home life, pets, friends, family, and personal interests?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we making personal connections with them that will better build a professional relationship with them and their learning?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we practicing empathy with our students, listening to what their self-interests are, and connecting them to the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we offering our support if our students reach out to us for help or with concerns they may have?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

“No matter how well-intentioned, when a teacher...claims that they ‘don’t see color’ they are engaging in ‘colorblind’ rhetoric that is harmful to communities of color...”

—DJANGO PARIS & H. SAMY ALIM IN *EDUCATION WEEK TEACHER*

“Culturally sustaining educators connect present learning to the histories of racial, ethnic, and linguistic communities, to the histories of neighborhoods and cities, and the histories of the larger states and nation-states that they are part of.”

—DJANGO PARIS & H. SAMY ALIM IN *EDUCATION WEEK TEACHER*

Educators must make a real effort to study and examine the traditional tools they are using and disassemble them (traditional education systems) and see the potential of using antiracist pedagogies and practices to make the processes, curriculums, and outcomes for students more equitable and inclusive. Building in more opportunities for self-study is important so students are curious and ask more questions.

Resource

Author Interview: “Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies”²⁹⁸ between Larry Ferlazzo and authors Django Paris and H. Samy Alim.

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

CONSULTANTS/PEER SUPPORT BETWEEN STUDENTS

In Montessori education, having mixed grade levels in the same classroom is common. It is important to build an inclusive community that talks about and enacts DEI and ABAR principles. Creating strong mentorships and collaborative relationships is important for the diversity of learning between peer groups. The following questions will help you reflect on some of these ideas.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

In mixed-grade-level classes, are older students serving mentoring roles to younger students in the same Elementary level class?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we promoting an atmosphere of kindness and acceptance with our older and younger students in our classrooms?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

²⁹⁸ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-author-interview-culturally-sustaining-pedagogies/2017/07>

Are we involving our upper-level students and challenging them to take on more responsibilities in helping teachers come up with lesson materials and serving in co-teaching or teaching assistant capacities?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we assign students different roles in which they can help around the classroom and conduct classroom community service? Do we switch those roles to make sure everyone has varying responsibilities and positions?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

School murals and art projects to build inclusivity and DEI and ABAR values into the school environment

Consider building teamwork projects where the students can propose a school mural project about DEI and ABAR. Students in Early Childhood, Elementary, and Adolescent sections can work collaboratively on small murals in the classroom, perhaps on closet or classroom doors, or create a larger mural on the outside wall of the classroom or in the school building.

Sometimes it takes persistence and the involvement of students in the process to make school reform in DEI and ABAR happen. It's important that students feel a sense that they belong (Fullan, 2016, p. 150) and that their ideas matter where they can have more leadership opportunities and become mentors for younger students.

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

According to Heward (2009/2017) students who have disabilities include people with intellectual, physical, and/or social functioning disabilities who require continuous and extensive support in activities and life interests to contribute to their communities. Severely disabled individuals may experience trouble with their motor skills (movement) and behavior. They may even have sensory malfunctions. Successful inclusion for students with disabilities depends upon multiple educational approaches to provide accommodation for the classroom atmosphere. Thinking about DEI and ABAR values is essential.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are students with disabilities provided with a suitable and accessible physical and mental environmental where they feel comfortable?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do students with disabilities feel their learning development is supported by special services and adaptations to the school environment that take their individual needs into consideration?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we working to ensure we know how to work with our students with disabilities by understanding and working with them on their functional motor and sensory capabilities?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we teaching our Elementary students with disabilities the skill sets that will allow them to become independent individuals inside the classroom and actively participate in diverse settings outside the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we taking our students with disabilities' interests and passions into account and making them a part of the curriculum? Do we take into consideration their lived experiences and make them a part of the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are the materials in our classroom accessible and clearly labeled to maximize functionality and independent growth for disabled students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have multiple ways of communicating information to our students with special needs?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we fostered a classroom environment where our students are able to express how they feel through a program, device, artwork, music, or on a marker board?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

More work needs to be done within the intersections of racism and ableism and talking about disability and people of color with disabilities who are further marginalized from scholarship, media, the arts, film, music, and education. The intersection of race and disability are not often talked about and represented. It is important to bring in conversations about disability and disability justice to your classroom conversations with your Elementary students, and making disability, like race and gender identity, move from the private to the public sphere (See Annamma, Ferri, and Connor, 2018; Thorius, González and Jackson, 2020).

Wendell (2013) argues that if society sees disability as a private concern, changes will not occur to ensure accessibility in school and public spaces. Disability, like race and gender, is socially constructed, meaning that it is in our power to change the situations that prevent equity in mobility, communication and participation. Non-disabled Montessori teachers can be allies in advocating for changes to occur within their buildings for disabled faculty, school leadership, students, and visitors.

- Classroom spaces might not be expansive enough.
- Doors, lockers, and cabinets may be hard to open or out of reach for some disabled students.
- Supply shelves are higher in some classrooms so personal aides might be needed to retrieve classroom supplies and materials for disabled students.
- Flexibility and part-time work are important that Wendell (2013) mentions for disabled employees.

It is important that Montessori Elementary faculty be equitable, inclusive, and in touch with the realities of disabled individuals in general and for their teaching practices in offering other modalities of accessibility to ensure disabled students feel comfortable in participating. For example, using alternative technologies to type or write with to communicate comfortably and effectively. It is also important to understand limitations to participation and “pace of life” needs.

Skills

For Elementary students with severe disabilities, functional skills are vital to the classroom environment because they will help students develop good judgment and independence. Functional skills include learning to take care of oneself by dressing oneself, preparing a snack, riding public buses, purchasing items from a store or vending machines, and recognizing common sight words in community settings (See Heward, 2009/2017).

Choice in projects and activities

Making choices is important because it will make activities more meaningful to Elementary students and have an impact on what they do during their time in the classroom. For example, a student might be asked to engage with an activity by choosing between two images instead of just being given one activity to work with.

Communication skills

Developing communication and networking skills is also necessary for successful inclusion for Elementary students with multiple or severe disabilities. Independent functioning has everything to do with good communication. Educators should focus on working with the students’ vocabulary, speech, and phrases. By learning the importance of communication inside the classroom, students will develop the ability to socially interact with their peers and maintain physical health and motor skills, as well as becoming more involved in classroom activities. You can teach both disabled and non-disabled students about respectful dialogue, inclusive language, and DEI and ABAR principles.

The McGill Action Planning System (MAPS)

MAPS is also worth mentioning because it helps children with disabilities transition more easily into the school's community and the classroom environment. A team, which includes members of the student's family, some friends, and special education instructors, all participate in the mapping process. The process helps students with severe disabilities discover and create goals for their future. Through the MAPS process, parents and educators can develop a plan for personalizing the transition services into the classroom or outside of school. The aim of the process is to successfully include the student in the mainstream curriculum.

RESULTS

If you answered **4–5** for any of the topics in this assessment, and were able to answer the questions with concrete and specific examples and illustrative evidence, your curriculum and instruction is moving very positively in the direction of DEI and ABAR work. Consider the advanced resources section: [Digging deeper: More DEI and ABAR resources](#) (page 364). You could also review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364), to find out more on how to advance your topic areas in your professional practice or classroom.

If you selected **2–3** for any given topic area, consider improving these areas in your curriculum and instruction to create a welcoming atmosphere that is antibias/antiracist and fosters DEI and ABAR. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help improve classroom community and curriculum, so that the school experience is not culturally harmful to any students. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

If you answered **1** to any question, you will need to address these topics and develop a plan of action to improve. Your curriculum, instructional approaches, environment, and/or behaviors may be culturally harmful to students in your program. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help you improve in these areas. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

Community

IN this final section, Montessori Elementary faculty and administration are encouraged to reflect upon how DEI and ABAR values and work apply to creating strong partnerships with families, to programming and community events, to nurturing and maintaining wellness, and to including alumni in the school as advocates and continued members of their school communities.

FAMILY NIGHTS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Bringing the child’s family into the learning process is essential to building strong partnerships (See Kinloch, 2010). This model of practice is good because it brings awareness to families of what you are doing as a teacher and because it is an antiracist pedagogical practice of inclusion. When you develop a strong bond with your students’ families, it will be easier for you to communicate home concerns that come up in the classroom and to gain their support. You might consider building in opportunities for families to participate a few times per year in your curriculum.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are there family night events where families and faculty can get together (virtually or in person) to learn more about our classrooms and curriculums or just have a social bonding experience?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there opportunities for our students’ families, faculty, staff, and/or administration in the school community to become involved in our students’ learning process or in our assignments and projects that we give to our students? (See Kinloch, 2010)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Have we considered hosting a family event where students' families can come in and bring food from their own culture or a home recipe instead of getting the event catered?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are a diverse range of family identities being portrayed in our curriculum materials (e.g., same-sex parents, foster families, etc.)?
(Mayo, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Implementing and sustaining school change around DEI and ABAR work hinges on relationship building and everyone being on the same page within a school system. Within the complex nature of school systems, relationships are multifarious—student-teacher relationships, teacher-parent relationships, teacher-administration relationships, and school-district relationships, to name just a few—must be functional and whole-some for the implementation of reform. School reform should be initiated and sustained with a focus on the relationships, climate, and culture that enable the deep learning necessary to change. Family integration and community participation are essential to the work of DEI and ABAR.

It is important to understand how racism operates within family and students of color and teacher dynamics. See some helpful resources below to learn more.

Resources

How Discrimination Shapes Parent-Teacher Communication,²⁹⁹ *The Atlantic*

The Importance of Teaching Kids about Systemic Racism,³⁰⁰ by Kerry K. Prout and Sarah E. Beals-Erickson
W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Healing in Action event³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/11/which-parents-are-teachers-most-likely-to-contact/507755/>

³⁰⁰ <https://www.childrensmercy.org/parent-ish/2021/03/teaching-kids-about-systemic-racism/>

³⁰¹ <https://healourcommunities.org/day-of-racial-healing/>

SELF-CARE AND WELLNESS

“Self-care, at its most basic, refers to a person’s effort to maintain their wellness and health. Initiated and maintained by each individual based on their own needs, self-care requires active engagement and conscious effort to form new, beneficial habits. Caring for ourselves helps to bring balance, focus, and mindfulness to our lives. In turn, this helps us to better navigate the challenging social and political issues related to our anti-racist work.”
—National Museum of African American History and Culture

Wellness is something that you can build into your Montessori curriculum if you haven’t already. Each student has an interior life that matters and needs to be taken into consideration. It is a part of social-emotional learning that should be cultivated through self-expression in the classroom (See Simmons, 2021). Thinking about wellness and implementing projects and activities as a Montessori practitioner will help students, especially within the COVID-19 pandemic and life in the post-pandemic world, with coping skills, self-expression, and mindfulness exercises.

SELF-CARE

[these questions are not an assessment, but questions you could think about. Questions below are framed from an “I” perspective]

Do I reflect on how to take care of myself when I run into resistances for my ABAR work at school, with family members, or with friends? What is my plan?

Do I have colleagues I can turn to for help that I trust for reassurance and support for my ABAR work?

Do I have a plan in place where I can stop and reflect at school and write in a journal my thoughts, feelings, and emotions?

If I have a stressful interaction with a colleague at school, how can I move to a place where I can speak with them candidly and talk about the importance of ABAR work I am trying to accomplish?

Do I make self-care apart of my routine practice so I am healthy and better able to carry out my professional teaching responsibilities for my children at school?

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS

Do we have projects in our Montessori curriculum for students to explore their inner lives, feelings, and emotions?

1	2	3	4	5
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Can students express their feelings and emotions in the classroom through the visual arts, writing, music, performance, dance, and other forms of creation?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have circle discussions or classroom community meetings about how students are feeling regarding the pandemic, global racism, or discrimination in everyday life?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we incorporate core visual arts wellness exercises, such as mindfulness circle drawing, Zentangle doodling, weaving, and more in our curriculums?

1	2	3	4	5
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For administrators and school leadership teams

Do we think about building community around wellness in our school and offer the opportunities to have wellness or mental health workshops offered to school faculty, students, and the school community?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

“Holding” concept project

This project can be adaptable for any grade level. This example is geared for Elementary students.

Prompt: “Holding”

Make a 2-D design by hand or digitally about something or someone you hold or have held in the past. Your topic of study could be a memory, place, or person.

Questions to consider

- Is there a particular memory you love that you hold?
- What places have held you and why?
- Is there a person in your life that you hold onto as a source of support, inspiration, or value?

For younger students, you might simplify the language of the prompt to look something like this:

- “Make art about someone or something that has supported you. How can you portray that person or thing in an artwork that you create?”

Guidelines

Part 1: Artwork

- 1.) **Size:** 8.5” x 11” or slightly smaller or larger depending on what paper you have.
- 2.) **Self-expressive art project:** Work towards generating either a representational or abstract work. Work from the inside.
- 3.) **Tools:** Try to utilize a different tool in your painting process.
- 4.) **Space:** Consider the whole space of your canvas or page.

Part 2: Written piece

Write a paragraph about your artwork. Summarize your artwork in your own words and describe why you made your artistic choices. What topic did you choose, and why? Write about the concept of “holding” and how it relates to your topic.

Thoughts about wellness art activities and projects

Dialogue

It is important that students can reflect on their artworks and their own artistic process and share opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and experiences regarding their work.

Reflection

Reflection is an essential piece of processing any artistic endeavor in the classroom setting. This can be done through artist statements, Padlet writing activities, conversations with peers about their work and the work of others, short writing assignments, visual journaling.

Creative confidence

Empowering students to create authentic work; having an idea to express that they enjoy; feeling good about their art; making creative decisions and choices.

Project: Zentangle Doodling

Prompt

Students will complete a Zentangle drawing. Zentangle art is non-representational and unplanned, so your students can focus on the process and not worry about the result. A Zentangle drawing is an abstract drawing created using repetitive patterns.

Step 1: Start with the right supplies. It should be plain white, unlined paper. Printer paper can also be used. Students may use pencil first and then ink in their design later.

Step 2: Draw a border. Use a pencil to draw a light square border around the edges of the paper. The pattern they make will be drawn inside the border. Students don't have to use a ruler or any sort of straight edge to draw their border, just sketch it lightly near the edges of the paper.

Start creating a tangle. A “tangle” is an invented pattern. A Zentangle may have just one tangle or a combination of different tangles. Students can use their pencil to begin drawing whatever pattern comes to them—there's no right or wrong move inside a Zentangle.

Resources

Zentangle Art Resource³⁰²

Self-care,³⁰³ by National Museum of African American History and Culture

ALUMNI

Including and welcoming back alumni to participate in DEI and ABAR work for the school and to give back is critical to forming partnerships and building an inclusive community. Consider bringing alumni back that you have taught in the past and invite them to engage in school programming, classroom instruction, and the school's equity committee to enhance strategic goals (if time allows and is possible for their schedule).

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we reach out to alumni to bring them back into our classrooms to give back and help teach classes or supervise clubs?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we challenge alumni to join the conversation of DEI and ABAR work in the school?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we (faculty and administration) considered inviting alumni to serve on our school's equity committee and help in the construction of workshops, clubs, and school programming in terms of DEI and ABAR work?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

³⁰² <https://zentangle.com/pages/what-is-the-zentangle-method>

³⁰³ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/self-care>

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Reaching out

Consider reaching out to alumni to talk about how they can be involved in a teaching engagement (perhaps on their breaks or in their free time). Alumni can also help inform the units, individual lessons, and programs that you plan in your curriculum.

As you work with DEI and ABAR frameworks and student outcomes in the months and years ahead, consider seeking to engage Montessori alumni in faculty conversations around this work, using the school's framework and the strategies or outcomes that are developed as guidance.

RESULTS

If you answered 4–5 for any of the topics in this assessment, and were able to answer the questions with concrete and specific examples and illustrative evidence, your curriculum and instruction is moving very positively in the direction of DEI and ABAR work. Consider the advanced resources section: Digging deeper: More DEI and ABAR resources (page 364). You could also review the Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now (page 364), to find out more on how to advance your topic areas in your professional practice or classroom.

If you selected 2–3 for any given topic area, consider improving these areas in your curriculum and instruction to create a welcoming atmosphere that is antibias/antiracist and fosters DEI and ABAR. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help improve classroom community and curriculum, so that the school experience is not culturally harmful to any students. Review the Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now (page 364).

If you answered 1 to any question, you will need to address these topics and develop a plan of action to improve. Your curriculum, instructional approaches, environment, and/or behaviors may be culturally harmful to students in your program. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help you improve in these areas. Review the Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now (page 364).

Reflection

EQUITY ASSESSMENT REFLECTION

After you have completed the assessment, reflect on the following questions to come up with an action plan on the topics and categories you would like to focus on this year.

- What are the major DEI and ABAR goals that we hope to focus on the most this year within our classroom teaching? These can be shorter-term goals we can implement immediately.
- Moving forward with our classroom instruction, what are our future and long-term goals in DEI and ABAR? What would we like our students to walk away with after they graduate from the program?
- What are some of the obstacles and resistances we think we might run into, and how can we address them while maintaining momentum?
- What activities and projects in our own curriculums can we adjust or change? How can we decolonize our texts and curriculum materials in a meaningful way that would represent a group of diverse scholars, perspectives, and approaches?
- What are some of the activities, ideas, and fundamental strategies and approaches we will carry out with our students moving forward from the assessment?

*Questions from this section were adapted from the following resource: Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative (REJI) (2018, 2020). *Organizational Race Equity Toolkit*.

ADOLESCENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Adolescent Teacher and curriculum

IN this section, Montessori Adolescent faculty are encouraged to reflect on their instruction to better work across cultures, and to move their curriculum and instruction toward DEI and ABAR values. This assessment and the reflective exercises within are specifically geared for adolescence.

THE TEACHER:

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR AND CONDUCT

As teachers, thinking about the language that you use, and making sure you are treating your students with respect and sensitivity is foundational to positive relationship-building and to the creation of ABAR and inclusive environments in your classrooms.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Classes

Do we create a welcome message for our students' families at the beginning of the term in the form of an email or digital communication to introduce them to the class we are teaching? Does this message include DEI and ABAR practices we will be working towards?

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our course website, syllabus, or course description include a DEI and ABAR statement and a mental health statement?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Behavior and language

Are we pronouncing our students' names and using our students' pronouns accurately in classes and spelling their names correctly in various correspondences?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we normalize thinking about social identifiers and sharing pronouns as a community practice?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we think about seeing, listening to, and acknowledging that our students of color and students of different gender identifiers have different experiences than their white and cisgender peers because of their race and their gender identity (i.e. that they are persons that are historically marginalized and continue to endure marginalization, racism, and disprivilege)?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we active listeners with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we check in with our students daily to hear them so they can express how their day is going, how they are feeling, and to offer support where needed, even if it's just listening?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we holding students' feelings and emotions in mind? Are we sensitive to their experiences?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we work to keep our language free from racist and biased language (both conscious and unconscious)?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we aware of language that we use on a regular basis that might embarrass a student, have racist meanings and origins, cause them discomfort, or use sarcastic language that could have a negative effect on student's well-being?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we as the instructors respond to and respect each student equally and treat them fairly?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are students' responses honored, acknowledged, and validated by us (as instructors) and all students in the classes we teach? Students will have varying perspectives and experience levels in each subject area.

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Language that expresses racist ideas and has racist origins

Are we aware of our thoughts and language in expressing racist ideas in the classroom? (See Kendi, 2016, 2019). Some examples of language that is damaging and has racist origins include the following: "I am going to crack the whip," "this is a cake walk," "long time, no see," "where are you from really?," "you speak great English," "let's sit Indian style," "peanut gallery," among many other phrases that have racist origins. Be aware and avoid using this language. Language and words we use as educators stick with children and language tend to get embedded and "hard-wired" in the brain if children hear these expressions repeatedly, contributing to internalized racism from a societal and systematic standpoint.

Listening to your students and offering your support

Consider taking the time to listen carefully to your students and consider collaborative problem solving³⁰⁴ with them as questions and issues arise. How might you proactively plan to use CPS to continue leading with empathy and maintaining your expectations inside and outside the classroom?

Here are some points you can take into consideration in listening and responding to your students:

Teachers need to be flexible with the responses they are looking for from their students. Suppose a teacher asks their students a question and has an idea in mind for the answer. In that case, teachers could be flexible and allow their students to personalize content and make personal connections. Asking follow-up questions is essential. It is necessary to have students work through and defend responses without being rigid in looking for exact answers as the instructor.

Connect with your students daily. Ask questions about how their day was, what they did over the weekend, or how they feel. These check-in questions might not seem like a lot on the surface, but it goes deeper, and they are essential to understanding their inner lives more broadly.

Ask your students for their input and feedback. You can ask your students throughout the semester “to gather their feelings about (and their understandings of) curricular choices, reading materials, discussions, and writing assignments” (Kinloch, 2010, p. 81). This can be adapted to any grade level.

Visual journaling and reflective writing

Consider giving students the chance to engage with journaling or visual journaling prompts that explore more personal topics for reflection. Some ideas include the following:

Stream of consciousness writing. Write about how you are feeling today without worrying about sentence structure or whether your thoughts make any sense. Add in any visual journaling that makes sense to you. What happened over the weekend or over the last week that’s on your mind? How did that make you feel?

³⁰⁴ https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/researchcenter/collaborative_problem_solving.pdf

THE TEACHER:**ANTIBIAS WORK**

“Biases are the stories we make up about people before we truly know them” — Vernā Myers

Know that there are many different types of bias, such as explicit and implicit bias. This section will have you reflect on your own biases and consider exploring biases with your students in the classroom learning experience.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Is there mentorship being provided to make us aware of our own unconscious biases?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we engage in self-reflection between our own racial and cultural identities and that of our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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For white identified teachers: have we accounted for and reflected upon our white and social privileges? Are we aware of them? (See DiAngelo, 2018; 2021)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we fighting against racism, even within ourselves, internally reflecting on and communicating who we are with the world; and reflecting on our actions, behaviors, and language with each other and our students and families?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

In the classroom

Do we talk about antibias perspectives in our classroom? How does our own antibias training and self-work translate to our classroom work with students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we think about who might be left out of our curriculums and whose voices are not present?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we think about how to address and point out what stereotypes, biases, and misconceptions our students have about topics in our curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we think about what resources we need to educate our students on taking antibias perspectives?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Ideas for visual journaling to reflect on DEI and ABAR

It's an excellent idea to keep a writing journal about DEI and ABAR practices related to you, your students, and your classroom teaching practice. Visual journaling about projects, assignments, lessons, and everything you are engaging with throughout the semester is helpful to keep track of what you are doing and reflect critically on your actions.

- Consider making visual journaling a routine in your teaching practice and in your thinking about intersections of difference, your own biases, and how you can work on them.
- Try to write in your visual journal at least once or twice a week. It could even become a daily routine.
- Find a time that can become a routine time to visually journal. Maybe it's free time you have on your lunch break when no students are around. Perhaps you visit a colleague's classroom or the cafeteria or go outside of school.

Resources

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain,³⁰⁵ by Zaretta Hammond

Blind spot: Hidden Biases of Good People,³⁰⁶ by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald

Robin DiAngelo's work³⁰⁷

Robin DiAngelo Wants White Progressives to Look Inward: The Author of "White Fragility" Discusses her New Book, "Nice Racism", by Isaac Chotiner³⁰⁸

Teacher Bias: The Elephant in the Classroom,³⁰⁹ by The Graide Network

Four Tools for Interrupting Implicit Bias,³¹⁰ by Zaretta Hammond

'Culturally Responsive Teaching': An Interview with Zaretta Hammond,³¹¹ by Larry Ferlazzo

THE TEACHER:

SELF-WORK AND SELF-STUDY

This section covers mentorship, reading, engagement in history, course work, and cultural competence. Montessori educators must address racism in the world and within themselves to stop it. Educators must be aware of their behaviors, interactions, language, social privileges, and the importance of internally reflecting on their own biases and their actions. **Self-examination** and **self-study** are important for educators—to be aware of discomforts around topics of social justice, bias, race, and racism and learning to sit with them in conversations with their students and helping them to do the same.

³⁰⁵ <https://www.amazon.com/Culturally-Responsive-Teaching-Brain-Linguistically/dp/1483308014>

³⁰⁶ <https://www.amazon.com/Blindspot-Hidden-Biases-Good-People-ebook/dp/B004J4WJUC>

³⁰⁷ <https://www.robindiangelo.com/>

³⁰⁸ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/robin-diangelo-wants-white-progressives-to-look-inward>

³⁰⁹ <https://marcolearning.com/teacher-bias-the-elephant-in-the-classroom/>

³¹⁰ <https://crtandthebrain.com/four-tools-for-interrupting-implicit-bias/>

³¹¹ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-culturally-responsive-teaching-an-interview-with-zaretta-hammond/2015/07>

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Mentorships and education

Do we work with colleagues, administrators, and DEI and ABAR mentors to observe our teaching practices and reflect together to build better curriculums and instruction as faculty?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there opportunities in our program to engage in PD programming on DEI and ABAR?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we seek PD programs out on our own, and will our institution support us in our education in DEI and ABAR work?

1	2	3	4	5
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Self-reflection

Are we setting goals to help ourselves get to a place where we can make improvements?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we give ourselves opportunities to self-reflect about DEI or ABAR work in our teacher education curriculum? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we keep a reflective journal to reflect on our biases and work as teachers in antibias/antiracism and DEI?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Self-study

Do we read texts about racism and ABAR? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we reading books and articles about whiteness and white privilege and books and texts written by BIPOC? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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Montessori teacher educators are encouraged to think about the following questions regarding racism (e.g, racial history, colonial history, etc.)

Do we take time to understand the history of race and racism?

1	2	3	4	5
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Can we provide an accurate, working definition of race and what concepts went into its construction?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we know how race relates to colonialism?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we know about intersectionality and its relevance; how race intersects with other areas of social oppression (gender, age, sex, class, disability, religion, age, physical appearance, etc.)?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Can we define antiracism and explain what it entails?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we aware of what white supremacy is and the psychosocial dangers of white supremacy?

1	2	3	4	5
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Cultural competence

Do we engage in collaborations and professional relationships with BIPOC and persons outside of our own race and culture? This is referred to as “cross-cultural skills” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8).

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we aware of our personal cultural worldviews? (See Penn State Extension, 2020)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have “knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews?” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we aware of our “attitude[s] towards cultural differences?” (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 8)

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

See the Resources section (page 361) for how you can reeducate yourself through reading and sustained study.

Addressing racism in the classroom setting is important aspect of self-work. Here are some notes on classroom management and student behavior

Address racism and bias when you see or witness it. This is recommended because it makes the whole class aware of the racism that was enacted and that you care about all the students involved.

Depending upon the context, you can pull individual student(s) aside and have a private conversation with them outside the classroom. Don't turn the other way and wait for someone else to step in. You must be proactive and make choices to be antiracist in each interaction and behavioral encounter.

In most cases, you can point to the diversity statement in your class statement, syllabus, or course website stating that you will not tolerate racism, bullying behaviors, or bias in the classroom. Your school might also have a specific protocol when you encounter racist behaviors, discrimination, or othering.

Marshall (2020) says that "using swift and harsh consequences on students of color who misbehave" (p. 1) perpetuates racism. Marshall asks teachers to consider these questions as they think about administering consequences and disciplinary actions to their students:

- "What relationship-building have you done with your students and families of color?" (p. 1)
- "Rules without relationships always lead to rebellion. If students feel invisible and overlooked in the classroom, and only get the teacher's attention for negative reasons, they are more likely to act out." (p. 1)
- "What other strategies have you already implemented with students of color who misbehave?" (p. 1)

Working with mentors

Work with a DEI mentor in your institution or school community. This could be someone who has more experience with DEI, like an administrator, faculty member, staff member, scholar, or consulting expert, who can work with you to reflect together to make positive changes in your curriculum and instruction.

PDs, workshops, DEI training seminars

Seek out PD opportunities to learn from experts in bias, race and racism and DEI and ABAR work. Attend PD sessions throughout the year or during breaks and time off.

Talk to your administration and get them on board to discuss PD opportunities, events, conferences, etc.

Goal setting

- Set goals to help you improve in DEI and ABAR values in your curriculum and instruction. It is important to reflect and practice weekly. Consider setting a new goal each week or month to make real improvements.
- What are your plans for this week?
- What five things do you need to get done that are at the top of your priority list in DEI and ABAR work?
- Take time to write down what you want to accomplish.

Take online course work

Engaging in online course work will help you boost your confidence level in taking on this work.

See Learners Edge under “Culture and Language.”³¹²

See Coursera under “Anti-racism I and II,” and “Designing and Building Institutional Anti-Racist Spaces.”³¹³

Cultural competence

Cultural competence is having the ability to effectively interact, communicate, and share knowledge with individuals from all cultural backgrounds that are different from one’s own cultural, ethnic, or racial background.

But there is much more than this simple definition: See *What is Cultural Competence and How to Develop It?*³¹⁴ by PSU.

Developing cultural competence is important because, according to Paris and Alim (2014), “while it is crucial that we work to sustain African American, Latina/o, Asian American, Pacific Islander American, and Indigenous American languages and cultures in our pedagogies, we must be open to sustaining them in both the traditional and evolving ways they are lived and used by young people. Our pedagogies must address the well-understood fact that what it means to be African American or Latina/o or Navajo is continuing to shift in the ways culture always has.”

Penn State Extension’s website (2020) offers cross-cultural attitude strategies that can help Montessori educators strengthen and sustain their communication skills:

- “**Practice openness** by demonstrating acceptance of difference” (p.1).
- “**Be flexible** by demonstrating acceptance of ambiguity” (p.1).

³¹² <https://courses.learnersedge.com>

³¹³ <https://www.coursera.org/search?query=antiracism%20&>

³¹⁴ <https://extension.psu.edu/what-is-cultural-competence-and-how-to-develop-it>

- **“Demonstrate humility** through suspension of judgment and the ability to learn” (p.1).
- **“Be sensitive to others** by appreciating cultural differences” (p.1).
- **“Show a spirit of adventure** by showing curiosity and seeing opportunities in different situations” (p.1).
- **“Use a sense of humor** through the ability to laugh at ourselves” (p.1).
- **“Practice positive change or action** by demonstrating a successful interaction with the identified culture”

Resources

Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools,³¹⁵ by Glenn Singleton

The Courageous Conversation Compass,³¹⁶ by Glenn Singleton

15 Ways Teachers Encourage Racism in the Classroom,³¹⁷ by Tanya Marshall

Boston University Center for Antiracist Research³¹⁸

Organizations to learn more about:

Bail funds

The Bail Project³¹⁹

National Bail Out³²⁰

Black LGBTQIA+ support

Emergency Release Fund³²¹

Black Trans Protesters Emergency Fund³²²

Homeless Black Trans Women Fund³²³

Solutions Not Punishment³²⁴

³¹⁵ <https://www.amazon.com/Courageous-Conversations-About-Race-Achieving/dp/1483383741>

³¹⁶ https://www.siprep.org/uploaded/Magis/Courageous_Conversations_Compass.pdf

³¹⁷ <https://www.thebutterflyteacher.com/racism-in-the-classroom/>

³¹⁸ <https://www.bu.edu/antiracism-center/>

³¹⁹ <https://bailproject.org/>

³²⁰ <https://www.nationalbailout.org/>

³²¹ <https://emergencyreleasefund.com/>

³²² <https://twitter.com/BTFACollective/status/1267853959378731023>

³²³ <https://www.gofundme.com/f/trans-housing-coalition-fund>

³²⁴ <https://www.snap4freedom.org/home>

Frontline organizations

Black Teacher Project³²⁵

Black Visions Collective³²⁶

Color of Change³²⁷

Communities Against Police Brutality³²⁸

Community Justice Exchange³²⁹

Restore Justice³³⁰

Showing Up for Racial Justice³³¹

Black community

Mutual Aid Hub³³²

Reclaim the Block³³³

Cultural competence

5 Steps Toward Cultural Competence in Schools³³⁴

Cultural Competence³³⁵

Cultural Competence: An Important Skill Set for the 21st Century³³⁶

³²⁵ <https://www.blackteacherproject.org/donations>

³²⁶ <https://www.blackvisionsmn.org/>

³²⁷ <https://colorofchange.org/>

³²⁸ https://www.cuapb.org/what_we_do

³²⁹ <https://www.communityjusticeexchange.org/nbfn-directory>

³³⁰ <https://www.restorejustice.org/>

³³¹ <https://surj.org/>

³³² <https://www.mutualaidhub.org/>

³³³ <https://www.reclaimtheblock.org/home>

³³⁴ <https://www.middleweb.com/43430/5-steps-toward-cultural-competence-in-schools/>

³³⁵ <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/professional-learning/resources/cultural-competence>

³³⁶ <https://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/html/g1375/build/g1375.htm>

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

ADOLESCENT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

The questions below offer ways in which to think about DEI and ABAR values and practices within your classroom curriculum and instructional practices. These questions and practices are inspired by *abolitionist practices of teaching*. Bettina Love coined the term “abolitionist teaching” which refers to practices of teaching focusing on social justice, activism, and refusal, challenging the “traditional” arc of school curriculums and interrogating teaching practices and school policies that have marginalized students of color and privileged whiteness, heteronormativity, and heteropatriarchy.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Work to curate diversity in curricular objects, books, materials, and content

Is there representation in my curriculum and classroom, including texts and reading materials, as the child’s interests are supported and guided throughout the day? This would include authors, writers, artists, historians, scientists, mathematicians, literary figures, and more of different races and ethnicities (e.g. Middle Eastern, Black/African, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, Native American, white, multiracial) and across different identifiers (people with disabilities, different sexual orientations, religion, gender identity, neurodiversity, class, language, etc.) (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b).

1	2	3	4	5
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Does our curriculum and instruction provide our students with ways to look critically at the material that is being presented in class?
Does my curriculum and instruction provide opportunities for alternative points of view to develop?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Am I eliminating terms like “primitive,” “aboriginal,” and “Oriental” from the language I use to talk about art, music, and literature? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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In our classroom environments, are we referencing different cultural traditions, languages, religions, names, and clothing?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are a diverse range of family identities being portrayed in our curriculum materials. For example, same-sex parents, foster families and more? (See Mayo, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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When we post links and resources for teachers, do we consider sharing a variety of views and including authors of color and other minority identities?

1	2	3	4	5
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Connecting to students' inner worlds and lived experiences

Are we connecting to students' real-world experiences and concerns, including but not limited to mental health issues like anxiety and depression, family life, personal interests, and passions?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

During independent work time and over the course of the curriculum, do we make opportunities for students to share their own backgrounds, cultures, and interests? (See Unlu, 2017)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we making personal connections that are culturally relevant to our student's lives? (See Paris & Alim, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we leaving any students out of conversations in class?

1	2	3	4	5
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Co-creating with the instructor and self-direction

Do students have opportunities to create classroom rules together?

1	2	3	4	5
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Can students go in different directions based on their personal interests?

1	2	3	4	5
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Differentiated instructional approaches

Do we use differentiated instruction and diversified methods of instruction for students with different experience levels?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Questions for further thinking and reflection

How can I build a civically engaged curriculum model or engage with civic-minded practices?

1	2	3	4	5
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Am I interrogating my curriculum materials and making sure that a variety of voices are being represented?

1	2	3	4	5
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Differentiated instructional approaches

Do we use differentiated instruction and diversified methods of instruction for students with different experience levels?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Love (2019) writes that educators must matter (i.e., you must matter to yourself), and their students and voices must matter for changes to occur. It is vitally important to see students for who they are—their race, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, disability—and how those elements of their identity contribute to and intersect in their learning, classroom environment, and school setting.

DEI pitfalls in curriculum and instruction

The following examples of DEI pitfalls in curriculum and instruction come directly from Pyatt (2021):

- “Assuming students have no background knowledge or understanding on the subject” (p. 1).
- “Failing to connect learning to students’ communities and homes and acknowledge that learning occurs in many places” (p. 1).
- “Failing to link the curriculum to the interests of the students” (p. 1).
- “Failing to administer assessments and learning opportunities that give all students authentic opportunities to demonstrate their understanding” (p. 1).
- “Creating and using curriculum materials that reinforce Eurocentric values as normative” (p. 1).

Other pitfalls (p. 1) include “failing to closely review all parts of curriculum including:

- Lesson plans (explicitly stated curriculum to be taught)
- Supplementary documents (handouts)
- Tested (curriculum reflected in assessments)
- Taught (material presented to students)
- Learned, hidden (what students inadvertently receive)
- Excluded (omitted) curriculum”

Resource

A Tool to Ensure Your Curriculum Includes All Voices,³³⁷ by Shana Pyatt

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

DISCUSSING AND EXPLORING BIAS, RACE, AND RACISM

Studying bias, race and racism for yourself, as an instructor, is important. Having accurate definitions about racism’s historical origins is significant and will affect the quality and the accuracy of your teaching. It is highly recommended that you consider spending time reading through the Resources section (page 361) and obtaining some books and scholarly articles to learn more about the history of race and racism in America. These questions below will guide you to think about bias, race and racism within the context of the classroom environment and how to set up productive and meaningful conversations about these topics.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Classroom conversations about race and racism

Do we set up a welcoming classroom discussion atmosphere and establish ground rules and classroom conversation norms before we begin to talk about or engage with difficult topic areas (racism, racial injustice, racial violence, stereotypes, police brutality, prejudice, and more) with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

³³⁷ <https://uncommonschoools.org/uncommon-sense/tool-ensure-curriculum-includes-all-voices/>

Do we incorporate conversations about race and racism, talk about historical figures of color, and make Black History Month, and other months celebrating people of color, women, and more a part of our curriculum throughout the year and not isolated to one piece of the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we infuse vocabulary and learning about accurate definitions relating to DEI and ABAR work into our curriculum and instruction? See Key Terms—Race and Racism³³⁸ and Racial Equity Tools Glossary.³³⁹

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we make it a point to discuss the ongoing issues of police brutality in America and the history, meaning, and purpose of the Black Lives Matter movement?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we encourage and facilitate discussions about the following questions with students:

- What are our civil and human rights?
- What is our responsibility to ensure everyone has access to those rights?
- What is colonialism and the legacy of slavery and racism in the U.S. and how does this legacy continue to impact America today?
- What is white supremacy and how is white supremacy embedded in American society and abroad?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

³³⁸ <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/Key-Terms-Racism.pdf>

³³⁹ <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Addressing racism

Do we make our students and colleagues aware if we hear or see them express a racist idea? Do we call them out and make them aware of their actions or inactions? [This piece takes time, self-awareness, and self-development] (See Kendi, 2016, 2019).

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

See special resource section “[Recommendations for Educators Preparing to Lead Class Discussions about Racism and Race](#)” (page 361) by Elliott Schwebach, PhD.

Check out Book Recommendations for Adolescents (ages 14–18) (page 369) to find out more about books you can consider adding to your classroom.

Contemporary ways racism exists:

- *Economic disparities* (housing, income levels, jobs, the workplace, etc.)
- *Education systems and curriculum* (unchecked unconscious bias, harsh consequences for students of color, racist educational policies)
- *Politics and government* (policies, legal supports, etc.)
- *Criminal justice system and prisons* (disparities in drug charges; unlawful arrests; unlawful prison sentencing; police brutality for persons of color, especially for African Americans and Latinx persons)
- *Environment* (pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, communities of color being disproportionately located near toxic waste facilities)
- *Day-to-day interactions and language* (using language with racist origins and meanings; overt and covert racist rhetoric, behaviors, and gestures; linguistic discrimination, etc.)

Antiracism (what does it mean to be antiracist?):

- Antiracism involves a strong commitment to social justice

- Antiracism involves challenging racist policies, language, and day-to-day interactions. Antiracism therefore involves being conscious of the language one is using (including its origins and potentially harmful, even if unintentional, effects)
- Book recommendation on these points: *How to Be an Antiracist*,³⁴⁰ by Ibram X. Kendi
- Small choices we make in our day-to-day experiences will lead to larger changes
- See The National Museum of African American History and Culture’s “Talking about Race”³⁴¹

Antiracist pedagogy:

Love (2019) says that antiracist pedagogy should connect with students and their communities and grassroots organizations to make social changes possible. Antiracism means fighting against racism, committing to social justice, and enacting change—challenging racist policies, language, day-to-day interactions, and more. “Pedagogies must call out and teach students how racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and inequality are structural, not people behaving poorly. They must criticize these systems that perpetuate injustice, such as educational survival complex while pushing for equitable communities, schools and classrooms” (p. 55).

Abolitionist teaching practices: The idea of “mattering” is essential (Love, 2019). Abolitionist teaching practices focus on justice, activism, and refusal in the curriculum. They challenge the “traditional” arch of the school curriculum and interrogate learning practices that have marginalized students of color and that have privileged whiteness and maleness. Love (2019) stresses that pedagogical practice of this kind cannot be done in isolation but should be enacted collaboratively with students and their own lived experiences, identities, inherent knowledge of their neighborhoods and communities, and community-based organizations to produce societal changes. Love says that educators must matter, and their students and their voices must matter for changes to occur. It is vitally important to see students for who they are—their race, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality—and how those elements of their identity contribute richly to and intersect in their learning, classroom environment, and school setting.

These can also serve as resources for Montessori faculty:

- Learning for Justice: A Framework for Anti-bias Education³⁴²
- NAEYC: Antibias³⁴³

³⁴⁰ <https://www.ibramxkendi.com/how-to-be-an-antiracist>

³⁴¹ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

³⁴² <https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards>

³⁴³ <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/anti-bias>

- Teaching for Change: Anti-bias Education³⁴⁴
- How Should I Talk about Race in My Mostly White Classroom?³⁴⁵
- Talking about Race with Teenagers³⁴⁶
- See the section on Antibias work in this assessment (page 292).
- Key Terms—Race and Racism³⁴⁷ and Racial Equity Tools Glossary³⁴⁸

Talking about bias, race and racism in the classroom

Talking more and more about bias, race, and racism helps bring those conversations into your Montessori classroom with adolescent students allowing such discussions to become less difficult to enact and to feel more integrated. Practice. Creating a safer space in the beginning can mean all the difference to a successful conversation. There are many resources in the Resources section (page 361) to help you find ways in which to structure your discussions or to lead projects regarding bias, race, and racism.

Philosophical notations about difficult historical subject matter in curriculum

In education, some histories are talked about more than others. The traumatic effects of slavery will always be with America and America's history. What can educators do to remember these histories?

How do educators pass the history of slavery to their students in the adolescent Montessori curriculum? Or, how do families pass on these histories to their children? Here are some points worth thinking about for educators:

- How do educators, administrators, and school leadership remember historical tragedy and trauma in the Montessori curriculum?
- How can educators bring personal stories, experiences, and the spiritual lives of those impacted into the upper-level Montessori curriculum?

³⁴⁴ <https://www.teachingforchange.org/educator-resources/anti-bias-education>

³⁴⁵ <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/how-should-i-talk-about-race-my-mostly-white-classroom>

³⁴⁶ <https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/talking-about-race-with-teenagers>

³⁴⁷ <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/Key-Terms-Racism.pdf>

³⁴⁸ <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

For educators see Toni Morrison's profound and powerful book *Beloved*,³⁴⁹ and *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*,³⁵⁰ by Nikole Hannah-Jones.

It is essential to remember past U.S. and complex national and international difficult histories and confront them in the curriculum in a classroom space that is creative and reflective for psychological and psychical processing. Here are some reflection questions to consider journaling about:

Reflection prompts:

Prompt 1: For Montessori educators or for those who work with difficult historical topics in education—do you return to a particular difficult traumatic historical event in your curriculum each year, and what has the experience been like for you when you revisit that history or traumatic event a second, third, and fourth time with a set of new students? Does it change or stay the same? What feelings come up for you, and does your lesson or project change or stay the same?

Prompt 2: What happens to a child's education when traumatic histories are forgotten? How they are remembered and what dialogical processes and purposes does this afford learners in education?

Prompt 3: What version of history do you pass down to your students about slavery, racism, and other difficult topics in history? What is told and what is not? How far in-depth do we go as Montessori educators?

Classroom conversation norms (can be adaptable according to grade level)

When beginning a conversation about race and racism, you should start by creating classroom conversation norms and working towards the development of a safer space.

Ask students to participate in co-creating classroom conversation norms with you as the instructor(s) and show your own examples too. Here are some foundational examples that can be adaptable to any grade level:

- Be respectful of each person's viewpoints and perspectives. Show respect.
- Avoid generalizations and stereotyping.
- Allow each class member and teacher to finish their thoughts before you speak.
- Do not interpret or attack what others say—ask them to explain/clarify.
- Use “I” statements.

³⁴⁹ <https://www.amazon.com/Beloved-Toni-Morrison/dp/1400033411>

³⁵⁰ <https://www.amazon.com/1619-Project-New-Origin-Story/dp/0593230574/>

- Define your terms from the beginning: “When speaking about race, we will use the following terms...” (Black, White, African American, people of color, Native American, Indigenous people, etc.).

Other ideas to set up a productive conversation on race and racism

Here are some guidelines to consider when setting up a safe space for the discussion of difficult topics, such as race, racism, stereotypes, hate speech, prejudice, and more, in the classroom.

Ground rules or classroom norms for conversation (5 mins): What are some norms that are important for you and your class to uphold? Having students go over norms can be very helpful in setting up a safe and welcoming space for discussion around difficult topics. Give some examples: “respect”; “listening”; “classroom support” (see more above). As the teacher, what’s your norm for the first example?

Values: Speak from your own value system. Don’t worry if you stumble or use wrong terminology. We will clean it up. Take the approach of “saying what you need to say” in our conversation today.

Ask questions or step back: Feel free to ask questions at any point in the classroom discussion or stop and reflect on anything that comes up for you. Silence is okay too. It’s okay to step back and be silent and not know what to say. It’s okay to think and give yourself space before you answer a question. There is no wrong answer.

Presence: Stay fully engaged and present with us for our class time together.

It’s okay to feel uncomfortable: It’s okay to feel uncomfortable and experience discomfort. Doing this work and talking about topic areas listed here including bias, race and racism means you want to be better about working across cultures and making a difference.

Respect and empathy: Show and practice respect and empathy (being in another person’s shoes). Strive for building a nonjudgmental classroom space. We are not judging each other’s ideas or thoughts.

A note about Black History Month

“The current presence of Black History Month as it is frequently undertaken (if at all) is a month of prescribed and oft-repeated, sterile sets of knowledge that highlight “exceptional” Black people. This does a huge disservice to all students” (Affolter, 2019, p. 89). As educators, it is important to avoid narrowing and tokenizing the ways in which curriculums are made around Black History Month and other months that celebrate women, the LGBTQIA+ community and others to expand curriculums and discussions.

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

INTERNATIONAL SECTION ON ABAR

Inequality distorts “the ability to be oneself, of establishing and maintaining a ‘contact’” with another (Fanon, 1959/1965, p. 126).

Racism, xenophobia, and myriad other forms of discrimination and oppression (sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, ageism, etc.) are pervasive and violent acts that exist across the world, not just the United States. The American Montessori Society partners with schools abroad. It is important for Montessori Adolescent faculty members to consider the ways in which racism operates in other global settings and make their students aware of current issues and injustices taking place around the world. Below are reflective questions that focus on racism and its international components and concerns.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Understanding racism internationally

Do we understand racism and injustices in countries other than the United States?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Can we speak to racism’s global history?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of how racism operates uniquely within Europe?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we aware of Asian hate crimes happening in the U.S. and abroad and do we bring these topics into discussion with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we assign our students readings about current events, racial injustices, and antibias education issues and efforts that are happening abroad?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Transatlantic slave trade

Have we engaged our students in discussions about the transatlantic slave trade, its connections with colonialism and the globalization of race?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we equipped with resources that provide accurate narratives of the transatlantic slave trade and its psychological, familial, and spiritual consequences?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Working with international students

Are we sensitive our international students' experiences in the U.S. and abroad? Do we respect their heritage and native languages?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we providing opportunities for our students to “resolve conflicts, solve problems, work in diverse teams and think critically about information?” (Anti-Defamation League, 2012, p. 3).

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

International current events board

Do we encourage our students to keep a section of their Montessori classroom updated with current events from around the world that showcases events happening about racial injustices and antibias/antiracism?

This can be done using a corkboard or posting them on a “International current events” board in the classroom. Students can take ownership of this board and find and print out articles for the class each week. “Educators should let students know that they consider themselves learners, and that they see themselves as part of the learning process” (Anti-Defamation League, 2012, p. 2).

Processing articles through collage and artmaking

Students can take turns presenting on these articles in classroom discussions or use them in the form of a collage lesson when teachers are ready to switch out articles so students can process their content and meaning.

Helpful resources for faculty on issues regarding racism abroad. Here are some to get started:

[Slavevoyages.org](https://slavevoyages.org) offers excellent resource material for lessons, information and more about slave trades throughout history.

[International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-racism-day),³⁵¹ by the United Nations

[Racism at Home and Abroad: A Conversation Between Friends](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/insights/i14-racism-home-abroad),³⁵² by the World Bank Group

[How Colonialism Shaped Policing in France](https://jacobin.com/2020/07/police-racism-france-africans-colonialism),³⁵³ by Florian Bobin

[Looking at Racism, Eugenics, and Biopolitics in Europe Historically: An Interview with Marius Turda](https://www.europenowjournal.org/2020/12/07/looking-at-racism-eugenics-and-biopolitics-in-europe-historically-an-interview-with-marius-turda/),³⁵⁴ by Europe Now

[My Very Personal Taste of Racism Abroad](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/travel/racism-travel-italy-study-abroad.html),³⁵⁵ by Nicole Phillip

[Race Abroad for Americans of Color Preparing to Live Abroad](https://umabroad.umn.edu/sites/umabroad.umn.edu/files/documents/race-abroad.pdf),³⁵⁶ by Glimpse Study Abroad Guides

³⁵¹ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-racism-day>

³⁵² https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/insights/i14-racism-home-abroad

³⁵³ <https://jacobin.com/2020/07/police-racism-france-africans-colonialism>

³⁵⁴ <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2020/12/07/looking-at-racism-eugenics-and-biopolitics-in-europe-historically-an-interview-with-marius-turda/>

³⁵⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/travel/racism-travel-italy-study-abroad.html>

³⁵⁶ <https://umabroad.umn.edu/sites/umabroad.umn.edu/files/documents/race-abroad.pdf>

Witness Black History Podcast,³⁵⁷ by BBC Network

Black in Latin America,³⁵⁸ by PBS

Racial Dynamics in Bermuda in the 21st Century: Progress and Challenges,³⁵⁹ by Keith Lawrence & Raymond Codrington

Why is Mainstream International Relations Blind to Racism?,³⁶⁰ by Foreign Policy

Examples of inferiority abroad

For one example, in India the symbolic value of whiteness is a real issue among residents. It encourages the use of whitening creams to look or appear white. Colorism, as this is called, is prevalent in advertisements and other marketing materials.

We can think colorism as a process whereby people of color internalize inferiority, or what Frantz Fanon calls “*epidermalization*.” This is traceable to colonialism and its racist legacies. As Oliver (2004) describes, “The values of racist imperialism enter the colonized through the skin” (p. 51).

ACTIVITY FOR TEACHERS:

Choose two articles from the above “Helpful resources for faculty on issues regarding racism abroad.”

Discussion prompt:

After reading, find a peer to work with and talk to each other about the thoughts and feelings that came up for you. Use the following questions as a guideline for discussion:

- What was your article about and what issues regarding racism were discussed on an international level?
- Can you think of how the events you read about in your articles relate to racism in the U.S. or in your local community?
- What are you learning about yourself and your own racial identity after reading about your article?

Other questions for exploration about representation

- How are marginalized groups represented abroad and in the U.S. (e.g., in artworks, advertising, media, etc.)? What responsibilities might Montessori educators have in representing those who have experienced oppression, racism, or racialized violence?

³⁵⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01h9dl0/episodes/downloads>

³⁵⁸ <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/black-in-latin-america/>

³⁵⁹ <https://bermudacommunityfoundation.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Aspen-Bermuda%20Report%202015.pdf>

³⁶⁰ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/03/why-is-mainstream-international-relations-ir-blind-to-racism-colonialism/>

- How is racism, racialized trauma, and violence *misrepresented* and what effects does this have in our national and international communities?
- What license do we have as Montessori educators in representing marginalized groups (e.g., through our curriculum and instructional strategies)?
- How do we represent our own racial identity-based experiences?

Articles for further exploration on the topic of representation through the visual arts

Protesters Block, Demand Removal of a Painting of Emmett Till at the Whitney Biennial³⁶¹

by Anya Jaremko-Greenwold

Righting Two Martin Luther King Memorial Wrongs,³⁶² by Hampton Dellinger

*Some questions and article choices in this section are adapted from the document, “Representing Marginalized Aspects of Self and Non-Self Identities: An Aesthetic Inquiry The School Without Walls High School and The Graduate School of Education and Human Development at George Washington University November 3 – December 8, 2021,” by Dr. Brian Casemore, Jason Bulluck, Leslie Smith Duss, and Benjamin Tellie.

Plan write-up:

Create a lesson plan about how you will involve your students in conversations about racism and antibias/antiracism abroad in your classroom and include questions about representation.

Describe your plan and the ways in which you will work with your students and lead the discussions in a caring manner (550 words max).

³⁶¹ <https://hyperallergic.com/367012/protesters-block-demand-removal-of-a-painting-of-emmett-till-at-the-whitney-biennial/>

³⁶² <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/01/righting-two-martin-luther-king-memorial-wrongs/266944/>

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

LEARNING ACROSS LINES OF DIFFERENCE

Having conversations with students about LGBTQIA+ identities, class, religious identity, gender identity, and racial identity is essential in examining the intersections of societal discrimination. For example, why might intersectionality be crucial in discussing societal discrimination and white or social privilege or investigating violence against women of color? Crenshaw's (1991) work, which defines intersectionality, is inspired by Critical Race Theory, her legal background, and conversations about race and gender. In examining violence against women of color, Crenshaw (1991) argues that we need more than unilateral identity-based politics—we need to study intersections of race, class, gender, and more. She contributes to the advancement of feminism by using her theoretical frame of intersectionality to explore the multiple factors of an individual and cultural contexts that all contribute to the discrimination and violence against women of color in our society.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are diversity and difference discussed within the context of our students' lives and community? Are people of different abilities, races, ethnicities, identities, cultures, and religions celebrated?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we have discussions with our students about intersectionality and what it means?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we incorporate conversations about religious identity, gender identity, and class differences into our curriculum? How are those conversations managed?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Whiteness and whiteness as property

Do we investigate as a class what whiteness is?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we investigate how whiteness shows up in education as property? [e.g., curriculum, texts we read, policies, and more]

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

LGBTQIA+ and gender identity

Have we talked to our students about gender identity and the many different types of gender and sexual identities? See more examples here: [Definitions of Common LGBTQ Concepts and Terms](https://www.aecf.org/blog/lgbtq-definitions).³⁶³

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are our students' identities (e.g., racial, cultural, sexual, etc.) seen as positive features, attributes, and strengths that enhance learning and discussions inside and outside of class?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are a diverse range of family identities being portrayed in our curriculum materials (e.g., same-sex parents, foster families, etc.)? (Mayo, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

³⁶³ <https://www.aecf.org/blog/lgbtq-definitions>

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Resources

Five Ways to Have Better Conversations Across Difference,³⁶⁴ by Adrian Michael Green

Why Do We Avoid Conflicts and Difficult Conversations?,³⁶⁵ by The Brain Alchemist

How Diversity Makes Us Smarter: Being Around People Who Are Different from Us Makes Us More Creative, More Diligent and Harder-Working,³⁶⁶ by Katherine W. Phillips

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

DISCUSSING AND EXPLORING WHITE PRIVILEGE

Having discussions about whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy are important for increasing the DEI and ABAR capacity of Montessori education. Avowing whiteness in the educational setting allows white educators to bring the internal work of discovering internalized unconscious biases and to bring awareness to their white privilege—i.e., to the fact that they have more access and opportunities than populations marginalized by race. Also, this process can allow for educating oneself about the history of bias, race, and racism and its origins in colonialism. The questions below will help Adolescent Montessori faculty think and reflect on whiteness and white privilege and how this contemplation may spur valuable conversations in the classroom.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we know what the terms whiteness, white nationalism, and white supremacy are, and can we define those terms accurately?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we have an understanding of what white privilege is?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

³⁶⁴ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_ways_to_have_better_conversations_across_difference

³⁶⁵ <https://brainalchemist.com/2010/05/21/why-do-we-avoid-conflicts-and-difficult-conversations/>

³⁶⁶ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/>

For white faculty: have we thought about our own social privileges and power that we have just because of the color of our skin?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we allow space to reflect upon white privilege, gender privilege, or religious privilege?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we integrate resources, texts, and other materials for learning about whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege into our curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we look at how “white people distance themselves from their privilege in order to preserve it?” (Mills, 2020, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we think about how access to “education, money, and power provide access to good health? [Yet also how] access to those systems is limited for people of color by the historic and systemic injustices that benefit white people?” (Center for Health Progress, 2022, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

For BIPOC educators: Do we understand our privileges to be an ally? [consider the privileges you may have in terms of gender, religion, non-disability, age, education, socioeconomic status, etc.]

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Resources

You will find some good resources about whiteness and white privilege under

Reading for Your Own Self-Growth and Learning about Racism and the History of Racism in America (page 371)

Teaching about White Supremacy and Systemic Racism,³⁶⁷ by Educators 4 Social Change

Notes on whiteness and white privilege

The more surrounded one is by white privilege, the harder it becomes to ‘break free’ of the bubble of one’s own perception. Keep in mind that many modern states, including the United States, are only approximately 150–200 years removed from transatlantic slavery, and that racism continues to persist (albeit perhaps more invisibly to those who most benefit from it).

Whenever white privilege comes up in a conversation, many initial reactions are to be defensive. People oftentimes struggle with conversations about white and social privilege and tend to get tense. Learning and communicating about white and social privileges, however, helps one to recognize and attend to one’s defenses and become better at DEI and ABAR work.

Some well-known real-world examples of white privilege:

- Not having been harassed because of hair color or hairstyle, nor rejected from a job or work-related opportunity because of one’s hairstyle.
- Not having been rejected from a job or work-related opportunity because of one’s name.
- Generally positive relationships with police officers because of one’s white skin.
- Privilege of having school authorities on one’s side and listening to them.
- The privilege of learning from a predominately white culture/scholarship/history in the school curriculum.
- Finding an overwhelming number of children’s books that represent white characters and Western culture.
- When shopping at a store, generally not being surveilled by staff. For example, at the grocery store when shopping, staff might ask a white person, “oh can I help you?” while they might surveil and follow customers of color.

³⁶⁷ <https://educators4sc.org/topic-guides/teaching-about-white-supremacy-and-systemic-racism/>

- When watching TV, news, media, and shopping at stores for products, cards, gifts, music, art, and more, having the privilege of seeing whiteness represented—there is an overwhelming representation of whiteness in these circumstances, and white people have the privilege of feeling seen and represented in a general sense historically and now in the present day.

White faculty can also think about whether and how they benefit from other systems of undue privilege, such as those which accrue to cisgender men or non-disabled individuals because of patriarchy or ableism, etc. In addition, it is helpful to remember that proclaiming “color blindness” or stating simply that one is “not racist” can uphold racism by drawing attention away from its social operation. White teachers can actively model antiracist approaches by speaking from the “I” perspective to demonstrate how one *participates* in social privilege even if one does not consciously hold negative racial attitudes towards people of color.

BIPOC faculty can think about their own social privileges to become allies in considering the privileges they may have in terms of gender, religion, ability, age, education, socioeconomic status, and more.

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO STUDENTS

Listen carefully to your students and respond respectfully and thoughtfully. In the Montessori classroom, your students will be engaging in activities that interest them. The more you can home in on your students’ behaviors and questions and observe their routines, the better you get to know them, enabling you to make recommendations based on their passions and interests. The questions in this section will help you think about listening and responding.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are we being active listeners with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we carefully observing our students’ behaviors and witnessing the choices they are making in their own creativity and in their conversations, and project time with others?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we holding students’ feelings and emotions in mind during their time in the classroom? Are we sensitive to their experiences? Do we ask them how they are doing on a regular basis to connect with them?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we acknowledge and consider that students will have varying perspectives and experience levels in each subject area?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Language

Do we work to keep our language free from racist and biased language (both conscious and unconscious)?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

As instructors, do we respond to and respect each student equally and treat them fairly?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Do we honor, acknowledge, and validate our students’ responses throughout our class time and experience with them?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Are we “creating a ‘third space’ (Moje et al., 2004) in [our] classroom where students can safely explore, compare and contrast their Discourse communities?” (Arias, 2018, p. 5)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we make it a point *not* to “correct” another student’s language when their native language is not English? This is damaging on many levels. See note in the example section below for more details.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

A note about language

According to Nieves (2011), schools have created a toxic climate of othering “that often stifles cultural expression through language...” (p. 102). Often students of color are corrected by teachers in the classroom and in school spaces with their use of language. This can have severe damaging effects on a student’s self-esteem and performance in school. This is an example of language discrimination. Culture, home dialects and personal identities are marginalized when this occurs.

Educators who mean well can erroneously believe that their students’ ability to speak another language inhibits their learning of English; however, linguistic diversity is an asset for the classroom and society, not a handicap.

Paris (2012) created the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogies, calling for teachers and schools to “support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (p. 95). “Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (p. 95).

Online articles

Know Your Terms: Code Switching,³⁶⁸ by Jennifer Gonzalez

The Costs of Code-Switching,³⁶⁹ by Courtney L. McCluney, Kathrina Robotham, Serenity Lee, Richard Smith, and Myles Durkee

Books

Codeswitching in the Classroom: Critical Perspectives on Teaching, Learning, Policy, and Ideology, by Jeff MacSwan and Christian J. Faltis

Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy, by April Baker-Bell

³⁶⁸ <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/code-switching/>

³⁶⁹ <https://hbr.org/2019/11/the-costs-of-codeswitching>

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

INDEPENDENT AND COLLABORATIVE WORK TIME: COMMUNITY, CULTURE, AND PLACE IN THE MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

Both independent and collaborative work time is critical in the Montessori classroom. You can explore these two ways of working through a DEI and ABAR framework in the form of reading and helping students deeply engage with their local communities, their own culture, and the places and spaces they occupy and visit.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Instruction during work time

In our classrooms, are we allowing students to follow their own interests as they work through ideas and concepts?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we trying to control things too much in terms of our students' learning and development or in material usage?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we allowing each student's voice and vision to come through in their learning (e.g., with their projects and activities)? Are we allowing their thinking about their interests to emerge independently?

1	2	3	4	5
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Partnering with families in the classroom

Do we encourage our students' families to be a part of our students' learning process? Do we encourage them to join our students in the classroom (virtually or in person), so they can interact and be collaborative partners in their child's learning process?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we assign projects or activities where a child's family can engage with their work at home and in a collaborative format?

1	2	3	4	5
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Communities, culture, and place

Are our students connecting to their local communities by developing research projects, presentations, and bringing in symbols, artifacts, and images of places they visit, engage with and within, and travel to? (See Kinloch, 2010)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we talking to our students about gentrification and allowing our students to read about gentrification and how it affects marginalized neighborhoods and populations?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we allowing our students to explore the topic of gentrification in the context of a lesson or self-led or collaboratively led projects?

1	2	3	4	5
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In our curriculums, do we give students the opportunity to examine *place*? (e.g., places that are meaningful to them. See a lesson example below)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are various languages and dialects accessible to our students as they engage with our curriculums?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

Are our students' home languages visible in their independent learning and made accessible in our curriculum when engaging in texts and various work? (See Kinloch, 2010)

1	2	3	4	5
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Are our students' identities (racial, cultural, sexual, etc.) seen as positive features, attributes, and strengths that enhance learning and discussions inside and outside of class?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Lesson example: Place collage project

Can be adapted to any grade level.

Materials

Magazines, cameras, or phones for taking pictures, printer for printing student images, 9" x 12" paper for collage, glue sticks, brushes.

Art prompt

Create a collage about a place or a space in your local community and tap into personal memories about that place. This could be a place that you often return to that has helped shape you into who you are. This place must hold something that is emotionally significant to you or has some sort of impact on you. You can draw from your past or recent experiences.

Research and artist statement

Study the history of the place or space you choose in your community. Was this location or area gentrified? Write about what was in this location before (e.g., a business, a landmark, an individual's residence, etc.). Write about the personal meaning this space has had for you and why. Then also write about the significance of the location's history.

Gentrification

Introduce your students to the term gentrification and talk about examples of gentrification in local communities. Gentrification is the process of changing a neighborhood by building affluent businesses and creating new (more expensive) housing that often displaces marginalized populations. Gentrification takes place in minority neighborhoods and communities, making it unaffordable to live there, thus displacing many individuals and taking away the historical significance of the neighborhood.

See some resources below for understanding gentrification:

What is Gentrification?³⁷⁰

Class idea list

During the introduction of the assignment, ask the class to generate ideas for topics and write them down on a Google slideshow or other document that can be shared with the class.

Collection of images

Have students go out into their local communities and take photographs of their place or spaces to use in their collages. The class can also collect images from magazines or the internet and cut them out to paste onto their papers.

Collage process

Encourage students to use their own process. In collage, cutting, overlapping, and layering are three essential elements. Also, make sure students' images are glued down to the surface of the paper well, so they don't fall off over time.

Work time

Students can work in the classroom at their own pace and can select materials that might interest them to incorporate into their collage. Maybe there is a particular material that they want to use (fabric, textural piece, or piece of material) that is significant to their collage.

Reflection

Have students lay out their collages in the classroom and do a gallery walk, where students can go around and look at each person's work and make a few comments about it on post-it notes. These could be positive comments or positive feedback for the artists.

³⁷⁰ <http://archive.pov.org/flagwars/what-is-gentrification/>

Afterwards, students can share out what they created and present their topics, final collage pieces, and artist statements.

Resources

Lesson Plan: Gentrification,³⁷¹ by Rachel Roberson

Speak Truth: Gentrification,³⁷² by Inspired Teaching

“A Right to the City”—Resources to Examine Gentrification and Urban Renewal,³⁷³ by The National Council for Social Studies

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

It is essential to teach students to be thoughtful digital citizens who are critical thinkers who engage ethically, responsibly, and compassionately online. Students should create and consume digital content safely and responsibly; include and empathize with others; and find, evaluate, and utilize content effectively. Thinking about digital citizenship through a DEI and ABAR lens is critical. Teaching students to be responsible for their language on social media, be all-inclusive, and not engage in cyberbullying, racism, and/or bias (and to confront these things when they happen) are essential.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we think about access and equity in terms of digital citizenship education? Do we focus on digital equity for our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we focusing on teaching our students to act responsibly and ethically online?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

³⁷¹ <https://cdn.kqed.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2017/03/Gentrification-lesson-plan1.pdf>

³⁷² <https://inspiredteaching.org/speak-truth-gentrification/>

³⁷³ <https://www.socialstudies.org/tssp/right-city-resources-examine-gentrification-and-urban-renewal-students>

Do we cover racism, cyberbullying, sexting, bias, and online chat violence, and harm with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we consciously or unconsciously diminishing the accessibility of misinformation and color-blind resources, texts, and articles from our classroom and instruction? (See Rolling, 2020a; 2020b)

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we teach about online accessibility and disparities amongst class differences and communities about who is getting access and who is not in terms of digital resources and information accessibility?

1	2	3	4	5
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Teaching responsibility online

Do we focus on ABAR within digital citizenship education, teaching our students to be respectful with their social media posts and images and to be inclusive online inside and outside of the school setting?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we making sure our students stay away from sources and identify sources, that are harmful to them in rhetoric, imagery, and speech? [These can include racist ideas, hate speech, or other forms of violence.]

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Have we considered teaching about how to use digital devices and online tools and media and manage one's digital footprint?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we covered media addiction and how to manage devices in the classroom space?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Making sure students have access to valuable digital knowledge and material

Protecting personal information online

It is important for students to consider how to protect their personal information (usernames and passwords) for banking, school, and medical sites and to what extent they can protect them. Having strong passwords are important and students need to know what that looks like when they are online. Perhaps conversation around this area and using companies like Lastpass and storing passwords can be a topic of interest. Making this information accessible to students is important, especially for Adolescent grade levels that are starting to use technology more and more.

Identity theft

Learning how to navigate fraudulent sites and avoid falling into identity theft is of critical importance in the digital age. *Digital fluency* is related to this idea of helping students learn about what is real and what is not (e.g. news, media, product purchases, etc.).

Digital visual literacy

Perhaps an element exploring digital “visual” literacy in artmaking and graphic design, broadly speaking, is helpful toward this end. This can help students understand how information is conveyed through graphic design. This can further allow students to better identify racism and bias in advertisement, design, and marketing materials.

Resources

Digital Citizenship: Using Technology Appropriately,³⁷⁴ by Mike Ribble

ISTE Standards: Students,³⁷⁵ by International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)

A Framework for Digital Citizenship Implementation,³⁷⁶ by Common Sense Education

Pi Delta Kappan: Expanding Digital Citizenship Education to Address Tough Issues,³⁷⁷ by Nicole Mirra, Sarah McGrew, Joseph Kahne, Antero Garcia, and Brendesha Tynes

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

IDENTITY EXPLORATIONS—RACIAL IDENTITY AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

It's important that students explore their racial and self-identity within the context of their education. Early adolescence and the transformations that occur around puberty—including physical, sexual, mental, and emotional changes—can often lead to perplexity (Burton, 1981). Anxiety is prominent and oftentimes adolescents' decisions, interests, and passions will change. It is critical that adolescents explore and have a strong understanding about race and racial identity and how that plays a role in their racial and self-formations and in their human development.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Integrating the visual arts to explore racial and self-identity

Do we talk about race and cultural identity in our classrooms with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

³⁷⁴ <https://www.digitalcitizenship.net/nine-elements.html>

³⁷⁵ <https://www.iste.org/standards/iste-standards-for-students>

³⁷⁶ <https://www.commonsense.org/education/planning-resources>

³⁷⁷ <https://kappanonline.org/digital-citizenship-tough-issues-mirra-mcgrew-kahne-garcia-tynes/>

Are we giving permission to students to be themselves, develop creative confidence, and go deeper into a visual art experience to explore their racial and self-identity?

1	2	3	4	5
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Whether through music, singing, visual arts (e.g., ceramics, photography, art and design, sculpture, painting, etc.), dance, theatrical prompts, or short performances, are we making the visual or performing arts a part of our classroom experiences for students to express themselves through various mediums?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Lesson example: Identity Portraits

Adolescence. Can be adapted to different grade levels.

Objective of the lesson

Through the manipulative qualities of collage materials (e.g., colored construction paper, stained paper, magazines, personal photography, etc.), students will work to create a self-portrait that explores their identity by combining materials to represent themselves as a larger whole—their racial, self, and cultural identities.

Materials

16" x 20" paper for backgrounds, acrylic paints, paint brushes, paper towels, cups to hold water, aprons, scissors, glue sticks, magazines, personal photos.

Goal

The purpose of this assignment is for students to tell a story about themselves visually. This does not have to be a "traditional self-portrait assignment" where students must represent a face. It could include their name, race, culture, ethnicity, and gender identity as written reflection in combination with imagery or perhaps in the form of symbolization. You can encourage students to use writing and imagery of various kinds to fill the page for them to tell their identity stories

Artist examples that teacher can use for discussion

Wendy Red Star's photography work.

Brief Statement

Wendy Red Star is a visual artist. She studies and works in photography, mixed media, sculpture, textiles, and performance artmaking practices. Her body of photography is drawn from her lived experiences growing up on the Crow reservation in Montana and her personal identity. Her photographic works represent the importance of examining, understanding, and calling out racist stereotypes of BIPOC, and the importance of exploring colonialism in education.

See the following works for discussion:

Wendy Red Star: Baaéetichish (One Who Is Talented). (2022, April, 15). *Light Work*. <https://www.lightwork.org/archive/wendy-red-star/>

Colonization of America

Through Wendy Red Star's work, you can introduce students to colonialism and the harm it has done to Indigenous people in America. Lessons from Trauma informed teaching practices³⁷⁸ can help you prepare for difficult conversations with your elementary students. Just make sure your conversations are developmentally appropriate for the age group you are working with.

For faculty and staff:

Braiding Histories: Learning from Aboriginal Peoples' Experiences and Perspectives³⁷⁹

CURRICULUM BUILDING AND INSTRUCTION:

GIVING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS: PROGRESS AND GROWTH

Giving students feedback is important. The reflection questions below will allow you to discuss approaches to beginning to reflect with students on their work and different ways to conceptualize your assessment practices in an equitable way.

³⁷⁸ <https://www.edutopia.org/article/trauma-informed-approach-teaching-colonization-americas>

³⁷⁹ <https://www.ubcpres.ca/braiding-histories>

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are we being flexible with our students and affording them multiple means of expression (e.g., verbal, written, through projects, through art, etc.) to demonstrate their learning and understanding (See Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012)?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we taking off points for spelling or grammar in students' written responses and academic material that is being assessed? Students from different cultural backgrounds have different ways of expressing language, thought, and dialect. Consider not taking off points unless you are assessing spelling and grammar specifically.

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we seeking to better understand barriers faced by English language learners? How are we increasing access to their learning?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we being *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive* in our feedback to our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we being nonjudgmental in our feedback to our students and focusing on identifying “a challenge and [helping] formulate an improvement plan?” (University of Toronto Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, 2017, p. 11)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are we focused on grading students for the skills that we want them to learn and not grading based on subjective categories like “participation” and “effort”? [Grading on subjective categories could involve conscious and unconscious bias and is not productive to an equitable strategy for assessment according to contemporary equity and assessment research (See Feldman, 2019)].

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we giving our students options and other perspectives?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Written conversations

This is an assessment tool used by elementary educator Valente’ Gibson that can be adapted to the high school classroom. In this system, instead of using standardized forms of writing assessments, written conversation is used to allow students to write in their own cultural language (See Gibson, 2020). It is vital that Montessori educators understand that there are many ways to connect to students’ cultural backgrounds and languages and should not downplay students’ home languages in the classroom or otherwise. Stay away from telling students to “be civilized” or to use “proper” English in their written assessments on projects, assignments, and in their language. For example, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a cultural language. Consider reading Kendi’s (2019) *How to Be an Antiracist*, Chapter 7: Culture. Kendi (2019) says, “I must use the language of my culture to express the culture” (p. 150).

Collaborative rubrics and assessments

Collaborate with students and their families to create your assessment narratives for Montessori education (See Gibson, 2020). Give your students and families agency, voice, and opportunities to work together. Consider giving other faculty and staff a chance to also be a part of the creation process.

Maintain flexibility in assessment practices

Consider alternative approaches to assessing work. Give students flexibility and choices. For example, when grading visual artwork or a musical composition, give your students the option of completing a rubric, a checklist, or a “written conversations” reflection.

Resources:

Working Toward Culturally Responsive Assessment Practices,³⁸⁰ by NCTE member Valente’ Gibson

Going Public with Assessment: A Community Practice Approach³⁸¹ by Kathryn Mitchell Pierce and Rosario Ordoñez-Jasis

Inclusive Curriculum Design and Assessment Practices,³⁸² by New York University

What are Inclusive Assessment Practices?,³⁸³ by Tufts University

Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms,³⁸⁴ by Joe Feldman

DEI AND ABAR AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

CLASSROOM AND LEARNING MATERIALS

This section will cover classroom rules and norms, classroom atmosphere, and the learning materials students use in your classroom within the context of DEI and ABAR values.

³⁸⁰ <https://ncte.org/blog/2020/02/working-toward-culturally-responsive-assessment-practices/>

³⁸¹ <https://cdn.ncte.org/nctev2/product/683/samples/f8e609c5-41bc-458c-b875-125a71a2bf9f.pdf>

³⁸² <https://www.nyu.edu/life/global-inclusion-and-diversity/learning-and-development/toolkits/faculty-digital-inclusion/inclusive-curriculum-design.html>

³⁸³ <https://provost.tufts.edu/celt/inclusive-and-equitable-teaching/what-is-inclusive-and-equitable-teaching/what-are-equitable-assessment-practices/>

³⁸⁴ <https://www.amazon.com/Grading-Equity-Matters-Transform-Classrooms/dp/1506391575>

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Classroom rules and norms

Do our classroom rules and guidelines include language about inclusivity and a message about the importance of addressing racism; discrimination; and homophobic and misogynistic comments, language, and actions when we see them occurring in the classroom and in the school building? Do we make it clear that none of the above will be tolerated by the instructor either?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we build our classroom rules collaboratively with our classes instead of producing them by ourselves?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do our course schedules, classroom rules and projects reflect students' home languages (See Ferro, et al., 2022)?

1	2	3	4	5
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Classroom atmosphere

Do we make our classroom an inclusive space visually, aesthetically, and spatially?

1	2	3	4	5
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"Do the curricular content and wall displays in [our] classroom reflect the experiences and perspectives of the cultural groups that make up the school and its surrounding community" (Anti-Defamation League, 2012, p. 4)?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Are the tables or desks in our classroom spaces configured in such a way that our students can hear and see each other (e.g., a seminar-style table or round table set up)?

1	2	3	4	5
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“Does how [we] teach acknowledge the experiences of the students from different backgrounds? Is [our] approach non-stereotypical?” (Unlu, 2017, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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“Do [we] encourage alternative perspectives, debate ideas, [and] create an environment which is open to representation of different viewpoints?” (Unlu, 2017, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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“Are [our] students treated as individuals, [and] encouraged to share their own lives and interests?” (Unlu, 2017, p. 1)

1	2	3	4	5
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Learning materials

Are learning materials (physical objects and other learning materials) representative of cultures other than Western society?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Classroom rules

Make classroom rules addressing DEI and ABAR clearer and more visible in your classroom.

Use the following language as a guideline.

Antiracism and inclusivity

“Racist language, actions, and behaviors will not be tolerated by the school nor by the instructor. Please report racism, bullying, cyberbullying, discrimination, or any form of othering to the teacher, a school staff member, or an administrator. We strive to create an ABAR environment in the choices we make, in our day-to-day interactions with our peers, teachers, and school community. Everyone’s voices, perspectives, racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, and emotions and feelings are honored and respected.”

“Our classroom is an inclusive space where everyone is welcome...”

Technological tips

As a class activity, share a Google document with your students in which they craft the classroom rules and edit the language collaboratively.

Try Mural (mural.co). Craft your classroom rules and then have students comment on them and make suggestions. Mural is a great tool to invite your students to think & collaborate visually. Here’s a link to a video which gives basic instructions on how to use this platform.

Another great tool is Flipgrid (info.flipgrid.com). Students can have fun by making a 90 second video of a rule or norm they want to uphold throughout the semester/year.

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The natural environment is important for adolescents in Montessori education. It’s important to have discussions about how to take care of the environment, environmental racism, environmental justice, and how to become antiracist in an environmental context.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Environmental racism

Do we and our students know how race plays a role in the environment and in energy issues in our nation and local communities?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we discuss and have a working understanding of what environmental racism is (e.g., how communities of color are affected by pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, waste facility locations, and more compared to white communities) with our students?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have our students learn about and discuss environmental pollution and how it affects marginalized communities?

1	2	3	4	5
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Environmental Justice

Do we have conversations about what environmental justice is and its principals?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Examples of environmental racism

- Who works in the energy industry and who does not?
- Who has access to energy and who does not?
- Communities of color that live near waste facilities and the pollution from these facilities affects their lives. Today, incinerators and other hazardous waste facilities are much more likely to be built in neighborhoods where people of color and Indigenous communities live than they were 20 years ago.

Resources

Reporting on Environmental Racism,³⁸⁵ by Learning for Justice

Emelle, Alabama: Home of the World's Largest Hazardous Waste Landfill³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵ <https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/reporting-on-environmental-racism>

³⁸⁶ <http://websites.umich.edu/~snre492/Jones/emelle.htm>

Maquiladora Workers and Border Issues³⁸⁷

The Dearborn, Michigan Arab American Community and Industrial Air Pollution³⁸⁸

The Yucca Mountain High-Level Nuclear Waste Depository and the Shoshone³⁸⁹

Environmental Justice Resources for Educators and Students, by California Coastal Commission³⁹⁰

Teaching about Environmental Racism: Four Activities,³⁹¹ by Institute for Humane Education

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

SELF-DISCIPLINE AND SELF-DIRECTION

The Montessori method of instruction fosters the growth and development of the child and their interests. The child is the center of the classroom experience as they navigate their own interests and lessons. It is critical that, within this process, adolescents are aware of the materials they are engaging with and that there are resources available to them about the history of race, racism, bias, antiracism, education along lines of difference, antibias work, and more. It is also important that educators decolonize their curriculum and apply appropriate DEI and ABAR directions to students with regard to their learning and exploration process.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Have we thought about culturally responsive and culturally sustaining teaching practices and how we might use them in our instructional strategies to facilitate students' self-learning and learning outside of the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we taken the time to understand our students' cultural backgrounds, their education or ESS plans, and their individual needs to be successful in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

³⁸⁷ <http://websites.umich.edu/~snre492/Jones/maquiladora.htm>

³⁸⁸ <http://websites.umich.edu/~snre492/berry.html>

³⁸⁹ <http://websites.umich.edu/~snre492/kendziuk.html>

³⁹⁰ <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/directory/ejed.html>

³⁹¹ <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/directory/ejed.html>

Have we built a trusting relationship with our students and talked to them to understand more about their home life, pets, friends, family, and personal interests?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we making personal connections with our students that will better build a professional relationship with them and their learning?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we practicing empathy with our students, listening to what their self-interests are, and connecting them to the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we offering our support if our students reach out to us for help or with concerns they may have?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

“No matter how well-intentioned, when a teacher...claims that they ‘don’t see color’ they are engaging in ‘colorblind’ rhetoric that is harmful to communities of color...”

—DJANGO PARIS & H. SAMY ALIM IN EDUCATION WEEK TEACHER

“Culturally sustaining educators connect present learning to the histories of racial, ethnic, and linguistic communities, to the histories of neighborhoods and cities, and the histories of the larger states and nation-states that they are part of.”

—DJANGO PARIS & H. SAMY ALIM IN EDUCATION WEEK TEACHER

Educators must make a real effort to study and examine the traditional tools they are using and disassemble them (traditional education systems) and see the potential of using antiracist pedagogies and practices to make the processes, curriculums, and outcomes for students more equitable and inclusive. Building in more opportunities for self-study is important so students are curious and ask more questions.

Resource

Author Interview: “Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies”³⁹² between Larry Ferlazzo and authors Django Paris and H. Samy Alim

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

CONSULTANTS/PEER SUPPORT BETWEEN STUDENTS

In Montessori education, having mixed grade levels in the same classroom is common. It is important to build an inclusive community that talks about and enacts DEI and ABAR principles. Creating strong mentorships and collaborative relationships is important for the diversity of learning between peer groups. The following questions will help you reflect on some of these ideas.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

In mixed-grade-level classes, are older students serving mentoring roles to younger students in the same class?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we promoting an atmosphere of kindness and acceptance with our older and younger students in our classrooms?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we involving our upper-level students and challenging them to take on more responsibilities in helping us teachers come up with lesson materials and serving in co-teaching or teaching assistant capacities?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

³⁹² <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-author-interview-culturally-sustaining-pedagogies/2017/07>

Do we assign students different roles in which they can help around the classroom and conduct classroom community service? Do we switch those roles to make sure everyone has varying responsibilities and positions?

1	2	3	4	5
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**NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

School murals and art projects to build inclusivity and DEI and ABAR values into the school environment

Consider building teamwork projects where the students can propose a school mural project about DEI and ABAR. Students in Early Childhood, Elementary, and Adolescent sections can work collaboratively on small murals in the classroom, perhaps on closet or classroom doors, or create a larger mural on the outside wall of the classroom or in the school building.

Sometimes it takes persistence and the involvement of students in the process to make school reform in DEI and ABAR happen. It's important that students feel a sense that they "belong" (Fullan, 2016, p. 150) and that their ideas matter where they can have more leadership opportunities and become mentors for younger students.

DEI AND THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY JUSTICE

According to Heward (2009/2017) students who have disabilities, including intellectual, physical, and/or social functioning disabilities, require continuous and extensive support in activities and life interests in order to contribute to their communities. Severely disabled individuals may experience trouble with their motor skills (movement) and behavior. Successful inclusion for individuals with disabilities depends upon multiple educational approaches to provide accommodation for the classroom atmosphere. Thinking about DEI and ABAR values is essential.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are students with disabilities provided with a suitable and accessible physical and mental environmental where they feel comfortable?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do students with disabilities feel their learning development is supported by faculty and adaptations are made to the school environment that take their individual needs into consideration?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we working to ensure we know how to work with our disabled students by understanding and working with them on their functional motor and sensory capabilities?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we teaching our students with disabilities the skills that will allow them to become independent individuals inside the classroom and actively participate in diverse settings outside the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are we taking our students' interests and passions into account and making them a part of the curriculum? Do we take into consideration their lived experiences and make them a part of the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are the materials in our classroom accessible and clearly labeled to maximize functionality and independent growth?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Do we have multiple ways of communicating information to our students with special needs?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we fostered a classroom DEI and ABAR environment where our students are able to express how they feel through a program, device, artwork, music, or on a marker board?

1	2	3	4	5
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Disability Justice

Have we had conversations about disability justice and disability studies to inform our curriculums? [or have a working understanding on what these fields entail and mean?]

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

More work needs to be done within the intersections of racism and ableism to understand disability and people of color with disabilities who are further marginalized from scholarship, media, the arts, film, music, and education. The intersection of race and disability are not often talked about and represented. It is important to bring in conversations about disability and disability justice to your classroom conversations with your elementary students, and making disability, like race and gender identity, move from the private to the public sphere (See Annamma, Ferri, and Connor, 2018; Thorius, González and Jackson, 2020).

Wendel (2013) raises an excellent point about the more society really embraces the idea of disability being a private concern—disability won't be regarded as important for changes to occur in terms of accessibility in school and public spaces. Disability, like race and gender, is a socially constructed idea. In school buildings there are flaws for disabled students in wheelchairs and disabled students in general and for faculty and school leadership to really think about. Non-disabled Montessori teachers can be allies in advocating for changes to occur within their buildings for disabled faculty, school leadership, students, and visitors.

- Classroom spaces might not be expansive enough.
- Doors, lockers, and cabinets may be hard to open or out of reach for some disabled students.

- Supply shelves are higher in some classrooms so personal aides might be needed to retrieve classroom supplies and materials for disabled students.
- Flexibility and part-time work are important that Wendell (2013) mentions for disabled employees.

It is important that Montessori Adolescent faculty be equitable, inclusive, and in touch with the realities of disabled individuals in general and for their teaching practices in offering other modalities of accessibility to ensure disabled students feel comfortable in participating. For example, using alternative technologies to type or write with to communicate comfortably and effectively. It is also important to understand limitations to participation and “pace of life” needs.

Skills

For Adolescent students with severe disabilities, functional skills are vital to the classroom environment because they will help students develop good judgment and independence. Functional skills include learning to take care of oneself by dressing oneself, preparing a snack, riding public buses, purchasing items from a store or vending machines, and recognizing common sight words in community settings (See Heward, 2009/2017).

Choice in projects and activities

Making choices is important because it will make activities more meaningful to Adolescent students and have an impact on what they do during their time in the classroom. For example, a student might be asked to engage with an activity by choosing between two images instead of just being given one to work with.

Communication skills

Developing communication and networking skills is also necessary for successful inclusion for Adolescent students with multiple or severe disabilities. Independent functioning has everything to do with good communication. Educators should focus on working with the students’ vocabulary, speech, and phrases. By learning the importance of communication inside the classroom, students will develop the ability to socially interact with their peers and maintain physical health and motor skills, as well as becoming more involved in classroom activities. You can teach both disabled and non-disabled students about respectful dialogue, inclusive language, and DEI and ABAR principles.

The McGill Action Planning System (MAPS)

MAPS is also worth mentioning because it helps children with disabilities transition more easily into the school’s community and the classroom environment. A team, which includes members of the student’s family, some friends, and special education instructors, all participate in the mapping process. The process helps students with severe disabilities discover and create goals for their future. Through the MAPS process, parents and educators can develop a plan for personalizing the transition services into the classroom or outside of school. The aim of the process is to successfully include the student in the mainstream curriculum.

RESULTS

If you answered **4–5** for any of the topics in this assessment, and were able to answer the questions with concrete and specific examples and illustrative evidence, your curriculum and instruction is moving very positively in the direction of DEI and ABAR work. Consider the advanced resources section: [Digging deeper: More DEI and ABAR resources](#) (page 364). You could also review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364), to find out more on how to advance your topic areas in your professional practice or classroom.

If you selected **2–3** for any given topic area, consider improving these areas in your curriculum and instruction to create a welcoming atmosphere that is antibias/antiracist and fosters DEI and ABAR. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help improve classroom community and curriculum, so that the school experience is not culturally harmful to any students. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

If you answered **1** to any question, you will need to address these topics and develop a plan of action to improve. Your curriculum, instructional approaches, environment, and/or behaviors may be culturally harmful to students in your program. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help you improve in these areas. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

Community

In this final section, Montessori Adolescent faculty and administration are encouraged to reflect upon how DEI and ABAR values and work apply to creating strong partnerships with families, to programming and community events, to nurturing and maintaining wellness, and to including alumni in the school as advocates and continued members of their school communities.

FAMILY NIGHTS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Bringing the child's family into the learning process is essential to building strong partnerships (See Kinloch, 2010). This model of practice is good because it brings awareness to families of what you are doing as a teacher and because it is an antiracist pedagogical practice of inclusion. When you develop a strong bond with your students' families, it will be easier for you to communicate home concerns that come up in the classroom and to gain their support. Although there might be challenges in regard to time, you might consider building in opportunities for families to participate a few times per year.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are there family night events where families and faculty can get together (virtually or in person) to learn more about our classrooms and curriculums or just have a social bonding experience?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are there opportunities for our students' families, faculty, staff, and/or administration in the school community to become involved in our students' learning process or in our assignments and projects that we give to our students? (See Kinloch, 2010)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

Have we considered hosting a family event where students' families can come in and bring food from their own culture or a home recipe instead of getting the event catered?

1	2	3	4	5
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Are a diverse range of family identities being portrayed in our curriculum materials (e.g., same sex parents, foster families, etc.)?
(Mayo, 2014)

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Implementing and sustaining school change around DEI and ABAR work hinges on relationship building and everyone being on the same page within a school system. Within the complex nature of school systems, relationships are multifarious—student-teacher relationships, teacher-parent relationships, teacher-administration relationships, and school-district relationships, to name just a few—must be functional and whole-some for the implementation of reform. School reform should be initiated and sustained with a focus on the relationships, climate, and culture that enable the deep learning necessary to change. Family integration and community participation are essential to the work of DEI and ABAR.

It is important to understand how racism operates within family and students of color and teacher dynamics. See some helpful resources below to learn more.

Resources

How Discrimination Shapes Parent-Teacher Communication,³⁹³ *The Atlantic*

The Importance of Teaching Kids About Systemic Racism,³⁹⁴ by Kerry K. Prout and Sarah E. Beals-Erickson

³⁹³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/11/which-parents-are-teachers-most-likely-to-contact/507755/>

³⁹⁴ <https://www.childrensmercy.org/parent-ish/2021/03/teaching-kids-about-systemic-racism/>

SELF-CARE AND WELLNESS

“Self-care, at its most basic, refers to a person’s effort to maintain their wellness and health. Initiated and maintained by each individual based on their own needs, self-care requires active engagement and conscious effort to form new, beneficial habits. Caring for ourselves helps to bring balance, focus, and mindfulness to our lives. In turn, this helps us to better navigate the challenging social and political issues related to our anti-racist work.”
—National Museum of African American History and Culture

Wellness is something that you can build into your Montessori curriculum if you haven’t already. Each student has an interior life that matters and needs to be taken into consideration. It is a part of social-emotional learning that should be cultivated through self-expression in the classroom (See Simmons, 2021). Thinking about wellness and implementing projects and activities as a Montessori practitioner will help students, especially in the COVID-19 pandemic, with coping skills, self-expression, and mindfulness exercises.

SELF-CARE

[these questions are not an assessment, but questions you could think about. Questions below are framed from an “I” perspective]

Do I reflect on how to take care of myself when I run into resistances for my ABAR work at school, with family members, or with friends?
What is my plan?

Do I have colleagues I can turn to for help that I trust for reassurance and support for my ABAR work?

Do I have a plan in place where I can stop and reflect at school or at home and write in a journal my thoughts, feelings, and emotions?

If I have a stressful interaction with a colleague at school, how can I move to place where I can speak with them candidly and talk about the importance of ABAR work, I am trying to accomplish?

Do I make self-care a part of my routine practice, so I am healthy and better able to carry out my professional teaching responsibilities for my children at school?

NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we have projects in our Montessori curriculum for students to explore their inner lives, feelings, and emotions?

1	2	3	4	5
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Can students express their feelings and emotions in the classroom through the visual arts, writing, music, performance, dance, and other forms of creation?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we have circle discussions or classroom community meetings about how students are feeling regarding the pandemic, global racism, or discrimination in everyday life?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we incorporate core visual arts wellness exercises, such as mindfulness circle drawing, Zentangle doodling, and more in our curriculums?

1	2	3	4	5
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For administrators and school leadership teams

Do we think about building community around wellness in our school and offer the opportunity to have wellness or mental health workshops offered to school faculty, students, and the school community?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

THINGS TO CONSIDER

“Holding” concept project

This project can be adaptable to any grade level. This example is geared for upper middle school/high school grade levels.

Note about the lesson

This project is inspired by Donald Winnicott, an English Pediatrician and psychoanalyst. He is influential in the fields of object relations theory and developmental psychology. Winnicott’s (1977) theory of *The Parent-Infant Relationship* is about the journey from the infant’s dependence on the mother onward. Essential to this theory is Winnicott’s *holding* concept, the importance of the mother physically holding her infant.

Prompt: “Holding”

Make a 2-D design by hand or digitally about something or someone you hold or have held in the past. Your topic of study could be a memory, place, or person.

Questions to consider

- Is there a particular memory you love that you hold?
- What places have held you?
- Is there a person in your life that you hold onto as a source of support, inspiration, or value?

As necessary, you might simplify the language of the prompt to look something like this:

- “Make art about someone or something that has supported you. How can you portray that person or thing in an artwork that you create?”

Guidelines

Part 1: Artwork

Size: 8.5” x 11” or slightly smaller or larger depending on what paper you have.

Self-expressive art project: Work towards generating either a representational or abstract work. Work from the inside.

Tools: Try to utilize a different tool in your painting process.

Space: Consider the whole space of your canvas or page.

Part 2: Written piece

Write a paragraph about your artwork. Summarize your artwork in your own words and describe why you made your artistic choices. What topic did you choose, and why? Write about the concept of “holding” and how it relates to your topic.

Thoughts about wellness art activities and projects

Dialogue

It is important that students can reflect on their artworks and their own artistic process and share opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and experiences regarding their work.

Reflection

Reflection is an essential piece of processing any artistic endeavor in the classroom setting. This can be done through artist statements, Padlet writing activities, conversations with peers about their work and the work of others, short writing assignments, visual journaling.

Creative confidence

Empowering students to create authentic work; have an idea to express that they enjoy; feeling good about their art; making creative decisions and choices.

Project: Zentangle Doodling

Prompt

Students will complete a Zentangle drawing. Zentangle art is non-representational and unplanned, so your students can focus on the process and not worry about the result. A Zentangle drawing is an abstract drawing created using repetitive patterns.

Step 1: Start with the right supplies. It should be plain white, unlined paper. Printer paper can also be used. Students may use pencil first and then ink in their design later.

Step 2: Draw a border. Use a pencil to draw a light square border around the edges of the paper. The pattern they make will be drawn inside the border. Students don't have to use a ruler or any sort of straight edge to draw their border, just sketch it lightly near the edges of the paper.

Start creating a tangle. A “tangle” is an invented pattern. A Zentangle may have just one tangle or a combination of different tangles. Students can use their pencil to begin drawing whatever pattern comes to them—there’s no right or wrong move inside a Zentangle.

Resources

Zentangle Art Resource³⁹⁵

Self-care,³⁹⁶ by National Museum of African American History and Culture

ALUMNI

Including and welcoming back alumni to participate in DEI and ABAR work for the school and to give back is critical to forming partnerships and building an inclusive community. Consider bringing alumni back that you have taught in the past and invite them to engage in school programming, classroom instruction, and the school’s equity committee to enhance strategic goals (if time allows and is possible for their schedule).

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Do we reach out to alumni to bring them back into our classrooms to give back and help teach classes or supervise clubs?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we challenge alumni to join the conversation of DEI and ABAR work in the school?

1	2	3	4	5
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Have we (faculty and administrators) considered inviting alumni to serve on our school’s equity committee and help in the construction of workshops, clubs, and school programming in terms of DEI and ABAR work?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS / QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

³⁹⁵ <https://zentangle.com/pages/what-is-the-zentangle-method>

³⁹⁶ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/self-care>

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Reaching out

Consider reaching out to alumni to talk about how they can be involved in a teaching engagement (perhaps on their breaks or in their free time). Alumni can also help inform the units, individual lessons, and programs that you plan in your curriculums.

As you work with DEI and ABAR frameworks and student outcomes in the months and years ahead, consider seeking to engage Montessori alumni in faculty conversations around this work, using the school's framework and the strategies or outcomes that are developed as guidance.

RESULTS

If you answered **4–5** for any of the topics in this assessment, and were able to answer the questions with concrete and specific examples and illustrative evidence, your curriculum and instruction is moving very positively in the direction of DEI and ABAR work. Consider the advanced resources section: [Digging deeper: More DEI and ABAR resources](#) (page 364). You could also review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364), to find out more on how to advance your topic areas in your professional practice or classroom.

If you selected **2–3** for any given topic area, consider improving these areas in your curriculum and instruction to create a welcoming atmosphere that is antibias/antiracist and fosters DEI and ABAR. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help improve classroom community and curriculum, so that the school experience is not culturally harmful to any students. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

If you answered **1** to any question, you will need to address these topics and develop a plan of action to improve. Your curriculum, instructional approaches, environment, and/or behaviors may be culturally harmful to students in your program. Reflect on these topics and produce a list of goals to help you improve in these areas. Review the [Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now](#) (page 364).

Reflection

EQUITY ASSESSMENT REFLECTION

After you have completed the assessment, reflect on the following questions to come up with an action plan on the topics and categories you would like to focus on this year.

- What are the major DEI and ABAR goals that we hope to focus on the most this year within our classroom teaching? These can be shorter-term goals we can implement immediately.
- Moving forward with our classroom instruction, what are our future and long-term goals in DEI and ABAR? What would we like our students to walk away with after they graduate from the program?
- What are some of the obstacles and resistances we think we might run into, and how can we address them while maintaining momentum?
- What activities and projects in our own curriculums can we adjust or change? How can we decolonize our texts and curriculum materials in a meaningful way that would represent a group of diverse perspectives and approaches?
- What are some of the activities, ideas, and fundamental strategies and approaches we will carry out with our students moving forward from the assessment?

*Questions from this section were adapted from the following resource: Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative (REJI) (2018, 2020). Organizational Race Equity Toolkit.

PART III: RESOURCES

THIS section can be used for locating valuable resources that will assist Montessori faculty and school leadership in fostering DEI and ABAR values and social justice work. These resources are geared both for self-education and to guide collaborative dialogues.

Questions for Educators Preparing to Lead Class Discussions about Racism and Race,
by Elliott Schwebach, PhD

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Can I provide an adequate working definition of race?
- Do I know what philosophical concepts went into its construction (e.g., essentialism, civilizational progress, etc.)?
- Can I provide historical and contemporary examples of these concepts at work (for example, in essentialist racial thinking)?
- Do I know when and where race as a concept first emerged? (i.e., do I know its history?)
- Do I understand the distinction between racial difference and epidermal difference?
- Can I explain how race played into colonial expansion, enslavement, and dispossession?
- Can I explain how racial injustice is perpetuated today, even by and within liberal democratic systems of governance?
- Can I explain how racial oppression can intersect with other forms of social oppression (religious, ethnic, national, gendered, sexual, ableist, etc.) while also operating uniquely? Can I provide examples of intersections of oppression?
- Can I situate myself racially within social dynamics of privilege and disprivilege? If I am white, can I avow the benefits that accrue to me as a function of my race? Can I explain how and why they accrue?
- If I am white, can I acknowledge the experiential limits to my understanding of life under racial oppression? Do I feel comfortable bringing in and leaving space for non-white voices, listening to and affirming their experiences without speaking for or over them or rushing to say, “I understand”?
- Can I adequately explain what is meant by race being a social construction?

- Do I understand the difference between racism as a personal attribute and racism as a social-structural phenomenon?
- Can I trace the social-structural legacies of racism from colonial periods to today? Can I provide clear examples?
- Can I cite and bring to bear not merely the experiences but claims and arguments from non-white voices who are thinkers and scholars in their own right?
- Can I define antiracism? Do I know the contours, claims and objectives of antiracist practice?
- Can I define white supremacy? Can I identify it? Can I validate those who work to resist and dismantle it?
- Can I acknowledge that defenses often emerge in discussions of race, and moreover that these defenses can themselves be uniquely racialized, or bear a unique relation to racial violence? Can I understand how denial (perhaps defending against white shame or guilt), for example, can serve a reality-denying function for people of color?
- Can I acknowledge and validate the rage that might emerge for people of color when their racial reality is denied, especially by people in higher positions of power and control? Am I aware of the negative psychological consequences of suppressing this rage, and the violence that is enacted when individuals of color are asked to do so?
- Do I know, and can I provide examples of, histories and practices of empowerment (spiritual, psychological, cultural, economic, and political) that communities of color have developed under racial oppression?
- Am I aware of the complexity and diversity of experiences across differently-racialized subject positions and different communities of color? Can I relate the complexity and particulars of these experiences back to white supremacy and the conceptual origins of race?

If, to any of these questions above, the answer is “no,” “I’m not sure,” or “I could learn more,” can I:

- Confidently avow that I have things to learn in matters of racism and race? Work to move from unconscious ignorance (not knowing that I did not know) to conscious ignorance (knowing that I do not know), and then slowly towards a goal of greater and greater competence?
- Acknowledge that classroom discussions of racism may be flawed or incomplete (or worse, contribute further racialized damage) in the absence of a well-grounded historical, conceptual, and sociopolitical understanding of racism and race?
- Look to existing resources to learn about racial history and politics. Pursue not only literary, journalistic, and biographical material (which is invaluable) but also scholarly material that conveys the well-defined facts, concepts, and approaches of racial study?

SHARING RESOURCES

SHARING RESOURCES QUESTIONS

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Are we creating or revising our DEI and ABAR resource webpage, website, and printed materials for our wider school community, looking for resources that we support and want to share with the wider community? Perhaps other digital platforms are available for the dissemination of information and collaboration such as [Mural \(mural.co\)](https://mural.co).

1	2	3	4	5
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In doing the work of DEI and ABAR resource building, do we consider a wide variety of perspectives on topics to represent all voices and identities in the discussion?

1	2	3	4	5
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Do we make resources available to everyone, including students, parents, alumni, community members, substitutes, volunteers, and donors?

1	2	3	4	5
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NOTES / OBSERVATIONS /
QUESTIONS / EVIDENCE:

GENERAL RESOURCES

THE DEI resources that are gathered below are meant for self-development in DEI as well as for making your school a more equitable and inclusive working environment and space for faculty, staff, and students. Resources below are meant to be comprehensive and were hand-picked to provide you with some guidance and information to turn to no matter where you are in your journey with equity.

There are a wide variety of topics and categories that cover an array of issues and areas that are important and relevant today including racism, antiracism, bias, antibias, culturally responsive teaching practices, whiteness, gender identity, disability, critical disability studies, and research methods and approaches.

Navigating Resources

The sections provided to you below have two sections for you to review and engage with. For some, we've provided web pages from which to navigate; others can be located by searching the name of the resource.

Stage 1: Fundamentals (Essential DEI and ABAR resources to read and consider right now)

These resources are meant for Early Childhood, Elementary, and Adolescent faculty, Montessori school leadership and staff, and TEP leadership and staff first entering ABAR work. These stakeholders are encouraged to explore these materials to learn more. This section provides you with several resources you can read and engage with on breaks at work, at home in the evenings, or in conversation with colleagues or friends. Feel free to go at your own pace, and don't feel you have to read everything. These resources will take you on a journey about the contours and realities of racism and they ask you to be an advocate for your school and board leadership team to take racial oppression and discrimination seriously. Try to make a goal to engage with a piece of material weekly to keep your self-education on DEI consistent. Another strategy might be to locate resources that you might need based on the topic areas in the document.

Stage 2: Digging Deeper (more DEI and ABAR resources)

This section contains resources beyond DEI fundamentals and is designed for schools that would like more help and can draw from an array of topics that address antiracism, antibias, whiteness, DEI in education, and more.

Stage 1: Fundamentals

General

Showing Up for Racial Justice's educational toolkits (surj.org)

(Divorcing) White Supremacy Culture, Coming Home to Who We Really Are (whitesupremacyculture.info)

How to Be an Antiracist Educator (ascd.org)

Facing History & Ourselves resources

Inclusion Doesn't Happen by Accident (mckinsey.com)

Measuring the Invisible: Why and How You Should Measure Inclusion (aleriala.tech)
 Boardroom: Getting the Board on Board with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work
 Becoming an Anti-racist School Board Member
 CAIR Coalition's Statement on Becoming an Anti-Racist Organization

Books & Articles

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain
 How Racism, Trauma and Mental Health Are Linked
 Understanding Race and Privilege (nasponline.org)
 Self-Care Tips for Black People Struggling with This Very Painful Week
 Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision
 My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant (nytimes.com)
 The 1619 Project | The New York Times magazine
 The Intersectionality Wars
 White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack
 Who Gets to Be Afraid in America?
 Racism Experienced in Childhood Lasts a Lifetime
 Dual Pandemics: Finding Pathways to Heal and Repair
 The Twin Pandemics of Racism and COVID-19
 Historical Foundations of Race: National Museum of African American History and Culture
 Race and Racial Identity: National Museum of African American History and Culture
 So You Want to Talk About Race
 Talking to Children After Racial Incidents
 Howard C. Stevenson's work with Racial Empowerment Collaborative

How to talk about race with your students

Talking About Race (nhmaac.si.edu)
 Let's Talk: Discussing Race, Racism, and Other Difficult Topics with Students (learningforjustice.org)
 Children Are Not Colorblind: How Young Children Learn Race (inclusions.org)
 10 Ways to Start a Conversation about Race (raceforward.org)
 Social Justice Standards (tolerance.org)
 Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students (tolerance.org)
 Strategies for Reducing Racial and Ethnic Prejudice: Essential Principles (tolerance.org)
 Discussion Guide: Courageous Conversations about Race in the Classroom (nnstoy.org)
 Anti-Racism for Kids: An Age-by-Age Guide to Fighting Hate (parents.com)

Whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy

Understanding White Supremacy (uua.org)
 Whiteness: National Museum of African American History and Culture

How Parents and Kids Benefit from White Privilege (happiestbaby.com)

Learning for Justice

“Me And White Supremacy” Helps You Do the Work of Dismantling Racism

Robin DiAngelo’s books

Nice Racism: How Progressive White People Perpetuate Racial Harm

The Conscious Kid (theconsciouskid.org)

Rethinking Schools (rethinkingschools.org)

Abundant Beginnings (abundantbeginnings.org)

GLSEN

Seeing White

How to Talk to Kids about Race: Books and Resources that Can Help (readbrightly.com)

What White Children Need to Know about Race

Anti-Defamation League anti-bias resources (adl.org) Keynote: Cheryl I. Harris (Whiteness as Property lecture, YouTube) Talking Mindfully about Whiteness (YouTube)

The Weaponization of Whiteness in Schools

Understanding White Supremacy (uua.org)

Health: A White Privilege (centerforhealthprogress.org)

Antisemitism

What is Antisemitism? (holocaustremembrance.com)

Anti-Semitism: Dramatic Rise in 2021

How Antisemitic Rhetoric is Impacting Jewish Communities, and What to Do About It, By NPR News

Teaching Materials on Antisemitism and Racism (ushmm.org)

Teaching Materials by Topic (ushmm.org/teach/teaching-materials)

Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial (ushmm.org/antisemitism)

Disability

Critical Disability Studies Collective (cdsc.umn.edu)

Critical Disability Theory Terminology (cdsc.umn.edu/cds/terms)

The Wonder of Miscasting: The Misrepresentation of Disfigurement and Disability

Coming to Claim Crip: Disidentification with/in Disability Studies

Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution (documentary film)

Why is Disability Representation So White?

Antibias

Anti-Defamation League

Anti-Defamation League: What is Bias?

Talking about Race: Bias: National Museum of African American History and Culture

Critical Race Theory

What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Do Republicans Want to Ban It in Schools?

Why Critical Race Theory is Essential to an Honest Education in America

A Lesson on Critical Race Theory (americanbar.org)

Critical Race Theory in Education: A Scholar's Journey

LGBTQIA+ resources and podcasts

Queer America: Learning for Justice podcast

Making Gay History (makinggayhistory.com)

Supporting LGBTQ Students and Teachers (Heinemann Blog podcast)

Book recommendations for Early Childhood students (ages 3–7)

See this book selection resource by Social Justice Books (socialjusticebooks.org)

The following books are examples of great picture books that can be read by you as the teacher in class or by both the student and their families:

They, She, He, Easy as ABC, by Maya Christina Gonzalez

Anti-Racist Baby, by Ibram X. Kendi

The Undefeated, by Kwame Alexander

Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness, by Anastasia Higginbotham

Can I Touch Your Hair? Poems of Race, Mistakes, and Friendship, by Irene Latham & Charles Waters

Let's Talk About Body Boundaries, Consent, and Respect: Teach Children About Body Ownership, Respect, Feelings,

Choices and Recognizing Bullying Behaviors, by Jayneen Sanders

It's OK to Be Different: A Children's Picture Book about Diversity and Kindness, by Sharon Purtill

Let's Talk about Race, by Julius Lester

Separate is Never Equal, by Duncan Tonatium

The Other Side, by Jacqueline Woodson

Something Happened in our Town (A Child's Story about Racial Injustice), by Marianne Celano

Whoever You Are, by Mem Fox

I Am Enough, by Grace Byers

Sulwe, by Lupita Nyong'o

The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family, by Ibtihaj Muhammad

Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History, by Vashti Harrison

3 2 1 Awesome! 20 Fearless Women Who Dared to Be Different, by Eva Chen

Hair Love, by Matthew A. Cherry

Book recommendations for Elementary/Early Middle School students (ages 8–13)

Racial Justice and Black Experience

Ghost Boys, by Jewell Parker Rhodes

A Good Kind of Trouble, by Lisa Moore Ramée

Ghost, by Jason Reynolds

Piecing Me Together, by Renee Watson

One Crazy Summer, by Rita Williams-Garcia

Into the Streets: A Young Person’s Visual History of Protest in the United States, by Marke Bieschke

Dark Sky Rising: Reconstruction and the Dawn of Jim Crow, by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Tonya Bolden

This Book is Anti-Racist, by Tiffany Jewell

Brown Girl Dreaming, by Jacqueline Woodson

The Lions of Little Rock, by Kristin Levine

New Kid, by Jerry Craft

Courage Has No Color: The True Story of the Triple Nickles, America’s First Black Paratroopers, by Tanya Lee Stone

Hidden Figures, by Margot Lee Shetterly

The Griots of Oakland: Voices from the African American Oral History Project, by Angela Beth Zusman

Bright Lights, Dark Nights, by Stephen Emond

Becoming, by Michelle Obama

Ghetto Cowboy, by G. Neri

Glory Be, by Augusta Scattergood

Hispanic Heritage

With the Fire on High, by Elizabeth Acevedo

Charlie Hernández and the League of Shadows, by Ryan Calejo

Marcus Vega Doesn’t Speak Spanish, by Pablo Cartaya

The Storm Runner, by J.C. Cervantes

The House on Mango Street, by Sandra Cisneros

The Only Road, by Alexandra Diaz

Hour of the Bees, by Lindsay Eager

Tight, by Torrey Maldonado

Merci Suárez Changes Gears, by Meg Medina

The Inexplicable Logic of My Life, by Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Pride, by Ibi Zoboi

Native American Heritage

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, by Sherman Alexie

Apple in the Middle, by Dawn Quigley

Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians but Were Afraid to Ask: Young Readers Edition, by Anton Treuer
 Firekeeper's Daughter, by Angeline Boulley
 In the Footsteps of Crazy Horse, by Joseph M. Marshall
 If I Ever Get Out of Here, by Eric Gansworth
 Hearts Unbroken, by Cynthia Leitich Smith
 Indian No More, by Charlene Willing McManis
 An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States, by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
 I Can Make this Promise, by Christine Day
 Race to the Sun, by Rebecca Roanhorse
 This Place: 150 years Retold, by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm
 Urban Tribes: Native Americans in the City, by Lisa Charleyboy
 Other resources:
 50+ Multicultural Middle Grade Novels for Summer Reading, by Colours of Us

Book recommendations for Adolescents (ages 14–18)

With the Fire on High, by Elizabeth Acevedo
 Monster, by Walter Dean Myers
 All American Boys, by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
 Dear Martin, by Nic Stone
 The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas
 Black Man in a White Coat, by Damon Tweedy
 One Person No Vote, by Carol Anderson and Tonya Bolden
 Into the Streets: A Young Person's Visual History of Protest in the United States, by Marke Bieschke
 Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You, by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
 Just Mercy: A True Story of the Fight for Justice (Adapted for Young Adults), by Bryan Stevenson
 Kindred, by Octavia E. Butler
 March: Book One, by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin
 The Griots of Oakland: Voices from the African American Oral History Project, edited by Angela Beth Zusman
 Hidden Figures, by Margot Lee Shetterly
 Bright Lights, Dark Nights, by Stephen Emond
 Becoming, by Michelle Obama
 Salvage the Bones, by Jesmyn Ward
 Ghetto Cowboy, by G. Neri
 Glory Be, by Augusta Scattergood
 Hearts Unbroken, by Cynthia Leitich Smith
 An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States, by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
 This Place: 150 Years Retold, by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm
 Urban Tribes: Native Americans in the City, by Lisa Charleyboy

With the Fire on High, by Elizabeth Acevedo

Pride, by Ibi Zoboi

The Inexplicable Logic of My Life, by Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Merci Suárez Changes Gears, by Meg Medina

Stage 2: Digging deeper

Classroom Resources

English and ELA

Becoming Anti-Racist ELA Teachers (ced.ncsu.edu)

Build Your Stack: Antiracist Books for Your Curriculum Today (ncte.org)

Geography and Earth Sciences

UNC Department of Geography and Earth Sciences DEI teaching resources

Civics and Citizenship

Zinn Education Project's teaching materials

Science

Building an Anti-Racist Science Classroom, National Science Teaching Association

Science has a Diversity Problem. For the Sake of our Students, We Have to Change the Narrative

White Science Teachers, Here's Why Anti-Racism Includes You!

ASBMB's History of Black Scientists

Teaching Diversity: The Science You Need to Know to Explain Why Race is Not Biological

Teaching Tools for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education

Science in the City: Culturally Relevant STEM Education

Visual Arts and Design

Black Lives Matter: An Open Letter to Art Educators on Constructing an Anti-Racist Agenda

Making Black Lives Matter: Toward an Anti-Racist Artmaking and Teaching Agenda-part 1

Making Black Lives Matter: Toward an Anti-Racist Artmaking and Teaching Agenda-part 2

Design Justice Pedagogy

Design | A Brief History of How Racism Manifests Itself in Design

Music

Anti-Racist Music Resources (music.unc.edu)

Spanish

Beyond Black History Month in Spanish class: Steps to Greater Equity, Secondary Spanish Space

Technology

10 Resources for Teaching Anti-Racism (iste.org)

MIT Review, Of Course Technology Perpetuates Racism

Math

A Pathway to Equitable Math Instruction

YouTube videos

Black Parents Explain to Their Children How to Deal with the Police

How Studying Privilege Can Strengthen Compassion

Black Feminism & the Movement for Black lives: Barbara Smith, Reina Gossett, Charlene Carruthers

How Studying Privilege Can Strengthen Compassion

Episodes 151: Dr. Howard Stevenson Discusses Coping with Racial Encounters

Reading for your own self-growth and learning about racism and the history of racism in America

Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools

How to Be an Antiracist

Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America

How the Word Is Passed

Ain't I a Woman

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism

White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America

Between the World and Me

Preventing Prejudice: A Guide for Counselors, Educators, and Parents

Chalmer E. Thompson (various works)

Kimberlé Crenshaw (various works)

Racism as We Sense It Today

On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis

History, Trauma, and Healing in Postcolonial Narratives: Reconstructing Identities

The Handbook of African American Psychology

Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression

We Want to Do More than Survive

James Baldwin / The Fire Next Time

Blind spot, Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?

Black Girls Must Die Exhausted: A Novel for Grown-ups

Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower

Just Mercy

Me and White Supremacy

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing

So You Want to Talk about Race

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century

Beloved

The Warmth of Other Suns

This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color

When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America

Other people's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom

Despite the Best Intentions

Empowerment

Celebrating Black Women Trailblazers—From Shirley Chisholm to Marsha P. Johnson: Weekend Reading on Women's Representation

Other books on the history of race and racism

11 Books that Examine the History of Racism in America

Podcasts

Episode 6: Anti-Asian Racism is Not New (Part One)

Episode 6: Anti-Asian Racism is Not New (Part Two)

1619 (New York Times)

Code Switch (NPR)

Third Space with Jen Cort

Intersectionality Matters! Hosted by Kimberlé Crenshaw

Momentum: A Race Forward podcast

Pod for the Cause

Pod Save the People (Crooked Media)

Seeing White

Teaching While White

The Combahee River Collective Statement

Critical Race Theory, Comic Books and the Power of Public Schools

What's Really Behind the 1619 Backlash? An Interview with Nikole Hannah-Jones and Ta-Nehisi Coates

Nice White Parents

Be Antiracist

Repairing the Past: Returning Native Land

Nicholas Ng-A-Fook's podcasts

Podcast: Voices on Antisemitism

More ABAR resources to check out

75 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice

Anti-Racism Project

Jenna Arnold's resources

Resources for White People to Learn and Talk about Race and Racism

Zinn Education Project's teaching materials

Glen Singleton

A Way of Life: Indigenous Perspectives on Anti-Oppressive Living

First Encounters with Race and Racism: Teaching Ideas for Classroom Conversations

Equity Auditing Resources

Using Equity Audits to Create Equitable and Excellent Schools

Equity AUDITS: A Practical Leadership Tool for Developing Equitable and Excellent Schools

Equity Toolkit for Administrators, Colorado Department of Education

Research Methods

Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples

Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Educational Research

Just Research in Contentious Times: Widening the Methodological Imagination

R- Words: Refusing Research

Critical Youth Research in Education: Methodologies of Praxis and Care

Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies

White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology

Acknowledgements & References

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“An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking: it involves the spiritual development of man, the enhancement of his value as an individual, and the preparation of young people to understand the times in which they live.”

—MARIA MONTESSORI, EDUCATION AND PEACE

An education capable of saving humanity must center equity and justice. To achieve this, we must unapologetically ask ourselves a few basic questions about our Montessori communities:

- Whose voice is not being heard?
- Who is being silenced?
- Why does this happen?
- How does this happen?

We can then dive deeper and ask more specific questions:

- Are we mindful of all our learners' religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, traditions, and customs?
- Do we make it a point to talk about race, gender, and cultural identity with our learners?
- Do we work to keep our language free of racist and biased language (both conscious and unconscious)?
- Do we have a formal strategic plan of action that clearly lays out the challenges and points of focus for our DEI and ABAR work?

Reflecting on these questions (and many more) will help you and your organization create a more inclusive and equitable Montessori environment for everyone. Equity Examined is both a series of essays and an assessment tool designed to help schools and teacher education programs measure and understand the current state of DEI within their organizations. In working through this publication, you will recognize strengths, identify areas for improvement, and gain valuable insight to help you prioritize and implement meaningful change.

This is how we thrive. This is Montessori education.



The American Montessori Society is the world's leading member organization advancing research and advocating for Montessori teacher education and progressive education policy.



DEI Committee

Regular Monthly Meeting Report - December 2024

DEI Mission: Sterling Montessori values diversity, prioritizes equity, and commits to being an inclusive school community which is critical to meeting our Montessori mission and affirming the full humanity of all community members. ([Our DEI Pledge](#))

Minutes from December 2nd, Meeting:

Attendance and Call To Order

Virtual via Google Meet

Chair: Dwayne Jones

Board Members Present: Susan English

Others: Justin Tosco, Mary Williams, Sara Stinette, Kim Elliott, Cinwan Garner

Meeting was called to order at 4:01 pm

Updated Google Group

- Cinwain added to Google group. Non-participants were removed
- Susan English also added to Google group. Current members include Mary, Cinwain, Justin, Sara, Dwayne, Elizabeth and Kim

New Partnership with Maati Wafford

- Dwayne received feedback from the Finance Committee and funding is available in the amount of \$8750 from the remaining balance with Peaceful Schools
- A presentation has been scheduled for Maati to attend the Director's meeting to answer questions, provide insight on services offered and deliverables from the proposal - on December 3, 2024



Discussion Items

- Get Director feedback about the February 2025 about 2025-2026 school year: use of a school-wide calendar of celebrations - reintroducing the calendar with guidance on how to facilitate discussions with belonging and inclusion as guiding framework. Possibly reintroduce as an “educational calendar.”

Meeting was adjourned at 4:59pm.



DEI Committee

Regular Monthly Meeting Report - January 2025

DEI Mission: Sterling Montessori values diversity, prioritizes equity, and commits to being an inclusive school community which is critical to meeting our Montessori mission and affirming the full humanity of all community members. ([Our DEI Pledge](#))

Minutes from January 13th, Meeting:

Attendance and Call To Order

Virtual via Google Meet

Chair: Dwayne Jones

Board Members Present: Susan English

Others: Justin Tosco, Mary Williams, Sara Stinette

Meeting was called to order at 4:01 pm

DEI [1-3-5 Year Plan](#)

- In April 2024 we agreed to review and update the plan. We should do that before April 2025 - have it updated, approved by the board and uploaded to the website.
 - Plan to have it ready for Board review/ approval by March Board Meeting
 - All participants plan to review it individually prior to our February meeting and then workshop it at the February meeting.
 - Justin will make a document to share with us so we can all comment/make notes on it.
 - Need to establish and maintain a close relationship with current/ new ED. Obtain aggregate data from the current/ new ED on demographics and staff/ student retention



Consultant & AMS Standards

- Dwayne motioned for a vote on moving forward with a partnership with Maati Wafford - PD, leadership coaching, accreditation work, etc.
- Reviewed AMS Accreditation Standards with particular reference to each metric that relates to inclusive practices. Discussed how this consultant partnership is aligned with our school mission and strategic planning initiatives.

Discussion Items

- Answer questions about item on consent agenda
- Should we change the name of the committee to add “Belonging” at the end - DEIB?
- Are staff who participate in regular DEI meetings receiving credit for professional development at this time?
- Potential acknowledgement of Sterling’s representation on a national level at the AMS conference - presentation from Justin, Sara and Kim
 - Consider adding to website or formal publication

Meeting was adjourned at 5:01pm.



Activating the light within ourselves and in our Montessori practice.

Sterling Montessori Academy & Charter School

Willed Radiance Consulting addresses the urgent need to build and sustain high-quality, impactful learning experiences for school communities. Our **professional development** enhances the self-awareness and skills of educators and administrators in Montessori schools and teacher education programs. We provide high-quality adult education that benefits children the most. We focus on bringing mental health issues to the forefront as crucial knowledge for supporting young people and providing genuine care to colleagues. Montessori's philosophy emphasizes the value of collective learning and accountability. We create specialized communities of Montessori practice that focus on innovative adult learning strategies and culturally responsive pedagogy. Our professional development sessions inspire educators to improve their practices collectively.

Our **small team coaching** approach lays the foundation for cultural responsiveness, equitable teaching practice, curriculum, materials, and school policies. Through a **Communities of Care** framework, educators and administrators embark on a spirit-filled journey of culturally competent professional development and support. Team coaching sessions are designed to increase cohesiveness, improve group dynamics, address critical areas of growth, set direction, and help teams achieve their departmental/instructional team goals.

Scope of Work

- The consultant will work with a small team to create agendas based on written information about annual goals, timelines, areas of improvement, and strategic accreditation equity initiatives.
- The consultant will lead the team in utilizing relevant peer-reviewed articles, models of practice, accreditation standards and criteria, and problem-solving tools to enhance professional knowledge, build capacity, and set actionable goals toward implementing equity-based school accreditation.
- The consultant will facilitate two community professional development sessions with Q&A to orient staff and faculty to the Equity Examined audit tool and accreditation equity framework, as well as its impact and benefits to the various areas of the school culture and classroom practices across all program levels.
- The consultant will be available to talk with the Head of School or one other identified administrative leader as needed throughout the contract period to offer support for major takeaways, goals, and action plans. Pre- or post-session check-ins about professional and leadership challenges are scheduled as phone/video conferences as needed.



Deliverables

- Documentation of small group accreditation team's identified school challenges and opportunities, exploration of areas of strength and areas for growth
- High-level notes from focused discussions, problem-solving practice, and gathering tools and resources to progress toward achievable goals.
- The accreditation team will benefit from additional support in implementing leadership best practices to achieve team-specific goals.

Timeline

- Two 1.5-hour workshops (TBD) school professional development
- Six Bi-weekly 1.5-hour sessions (TBD) small team coaching



Consultant Fees

Quote #1

Two 1.5-hour full group workshops

Service	Notes	Investment
All School Equity Audit Professional Development	Two All-School Professional Development Workshops 1-1.5 hours each	\$1,500

Quote #2

Small group Accreditation team coaching for 3 months

Small Team Coaching <hr/> Equity-focused Accreditation team	3-month period- 6 1.5-hour sessions meeting bi-weekly <hr/> One equity-focused accreditation team (up to 7 participants)	Total \$3,500
One-on-one Check-ins with HOS and one additional key staff as needed throughout the contract period.		

***Payment for all services is due in advance, and no refunds will be provided for unused services.**

**Maati Wafford
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