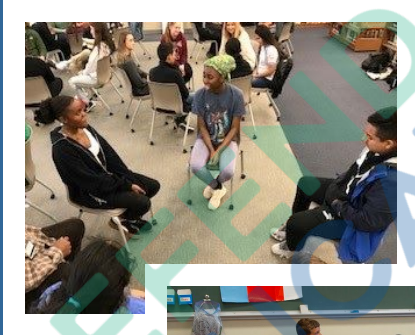


Race and Racism: Having Conversations and Ensuring the Social Emotional Wellbeing of Students & Staff



Frederick County Public Schools
Equity Office and Office of Mental Health & Psychological Services

Conversations on race & racism and the connection between the social emotional wellbeing of students, their families, and our colleagues is essential. Due to the role we each play to ensure FCPS is a place where each and every student and staff member feels valued and respected, it is crucial that we have guidelines for engaging in civil and purposeful conversations on race, racism, and the social emotional wellbeing of all members of our community ([FCPS Aspirational Goal 5, Priority 9](#)). This guidebook provides key elements such as: best practices, strategies, and non-negotiables when facilitating and engaging in conversations on race & racism, along with points to consider related to the social emotional wellbeing of students and staff.

This guidebook is a resource to prepare staff for engaging in discourse on difficult topics that may arise in the workplace and/or classroom; it should not be construed as a curricula guide for use with students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Table of Contents

[COMMON VOCABULARY](#)
[CONVERSATIONS ON RACE AND RACISM](#)
[ADDRESSING RACIST SPEECH AND ACTIONS](#)
[RACISM AND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING](#)
[ADDENDUM: DEFINITION OF RACISM](#)
[ADDITIONAL RESOURCES](#)

For Additional Support

Dr. Eric Louérs-Phillips, Supervisor Accelerating Achievement & Equity
(Eric.Phillips@fcps.org) 301.644.5271

Ann McGreevy, Supervisor of Mental Health & Psychological Services
(Ann.Mcgreevy@fcps.org) 301.696.6880

Toby Heusser, Equity Teacher Specialist
(Tobin.Heusser@fcps.org) 301.644.5277



The following FCPS policies and regulations guide the recommendations put forth in this guidebook:
[Educational Equity and Excellence](#) Policy 444
[Bullying, Harassment, And Intimidation](#) Policies 309, 437, and 447

All definitions except *anti-racism*, *educational equity*, and *equity lens* taken from: W.K. Kellogg Foundation. (2009). [Racial Equity Resource Guide: Glossary](#).

Ally: Describes someone who supports a group other than one's own (in terms of racial identity, gender, faith identity, sexual orientation, etc.). Allies acknowledge disadvantage and oppression of other groups than their own; take risks and supportive action on their behalf.

Anti-Racism: Anti-racism is purposeful. It challenges and counters racism and race-based inequalities, prejudices, and discrimination [in institutional and social structures, practices, policies, and regulations] through actions, theories, and conscious practices.

Taken from: [Anti-racism: General Resources](#) (July 2020). The University of Iowa Libraries.

For additional information see: Smithsonian. (n.d.). [Talking About Race. Being Antiracist](#). National Museum of African American History & Culture. [Scroll to section entitled: "Example of Being Antiracist at the Institutional Level"]

Discrimination: The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories.

Educational Equity: every student has access to the opportunities, resources, and educational rigor they need throughout their educational career to maximize academic success and social/emotional well-being and to view each student's individual characteristics as valuable. **Taken from:** [COMAR 13A.01.06 Educational Equity](#)

Equity Lens: for any program, practice, decision, or action, the impact on all students is addressed, with strategic focus on marginalized student groups. **Taken from:** [COMAR 13A.01.06 Educational Equity](#)

Ethnicity: A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base.

Inclusion: Inclusion authentically brings traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities and decision/policy making.

Prejudice: A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes)...

Privilege: A right that only some people have access or availability to because of their social group memberships (dominants).

Race: A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups.

Racism(Link provides additional information): Racism is a complex system of beliefs and behaviors, grounded in a presumed superiority of the white race. These beliefs and behaviors are conscious and unconscious; personal and institutional; and result in the oppression of people of color and benefit the dominant group, whites.

Social Justice: Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure.

White Privilege: Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. Generally white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.

CONVERSATIONS ON RACE AND RACISM

Naming strong feelings and harmful experiences in safe, well-facilitated spaces is foundational for allowing the executive function necessary to acquire and utilize new skills and knowledge that are essential to stop and prevent racism in our schools.

Take time to regulate/calm yourself first and pay attention to your body during these conversations. If you feel yourself getting anxious, angry or dysregulated in any way, use some of the calming techniques listed on pages 8 and 9. It's important to practice these strategies when you're calm so they become familiar.

Many wonder, "What is the right age to talk with children about race?" For the answer to that question, consider the resource "They're Not Too Young to Talk About Race!", found [here](#).

Tips for Having Conversations on Race and Racism

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

People are more willing to have conversations if the culture in which they find themselves is psychologically safe - free from criticism and retaliation

DO RESEARCH

Learn about the experiences of those who are members of historically marginalized groups; the country's history of racism and discrimination

START THE CONVERSATION

Don't let fear of saying the wrong thing prevent the conversation; be comfortable being uncomfortable

ASK QUESTIONS

Ask questions with genuine curiosity - be authentic

ACTIVELY LISTEN

Give members of historically marginalized groups space to share thoughts and emotions without interruption

Above taken from: Charles, K. (June 2020). [How to have conversations on race with African American and Black employees](#). Willis Towers Watson.

RESPECT, REFLECT, AND RESIGN

- Approach conversation with respect
- Embrace discomfort of not knowing

REST AND REBOOT

- Internalize what you've learned
- Commit to change
- Treat yourself kindly

RECOGNIZE BIAS AND PRIVILEGE

- Acknowledge your privilege
- Get comfortable with your story



RESEARCH AND RELEARN

- Find out what you don't know

Above taken from: Smith, D. (June 2020). [The 10 r's of talking about race. How to have meaningful conversations](#). Net Impact.

ADDRESSING RACIST SPEECH AND ACTIONS

Incidents of hateful speech and actions should never be passively tolerated. When reports are made about the use of racial slurs or derogatory speech, immediate steps should be taken to investigate the incident, ensure the social emotional needs of students are met, and challenge any speech or actions that devalue, disrespect, misrepresent, or denigrates any person and/or group of people.

The following are taken, in part, from "[Responding to Hate and Bias at School](#)" (Teaching Tolerance).

Listen to and speak with the student or staff member that has been victimized by racist speech and/or action(s).

Be specific in your description of the incident, otherwise gossip and rumor will allow mistaken information to take root (p. 14).



Stand as an equity leader and assess the level of support you need to effectively address the speech and/or action(s).

Communicate immediately with the families of those involved.

Standup and speak to the school community: Our school stands for respect and inclusion, a place where each and every student and adult is welcomed, valued, and appreciated (p. 14). A place where racist and discriminatory speech and actions are not tolerated.

Immediately conduct a full investigation of the incident (p. 14).

Make sure consequences are clear and consistent. Our policies and regulations state a lack of tolerance for racist speech and actions.

Do not make the victim a spokesperson for racial inequities. Ensure that the student and their family's social and emotional needs are respected and have been met.

Listen to the needs of the student, their family, and/or staff.

RACISM AND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING

Social-emotional learning is the process for developing student's and adult's understanding of self and their positive relationships with others in the community. As we acknowledge systemic racism in our schools and around the country, we have a unique opportunity to utilize Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as a tool for social justice and promoting racial equity, especially for younger learners who may not have skills to digest complex conversations. The core competencies centered around this learning are: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social-awareness. These core competencies are paramount in acknowledging and implementing strategies to create inclusive learning communities where all students feel a sense of belonging and thrive.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, 2001, racism persists as a significant public health issue that adversely impacts the mental health of people of color.

Racism: A PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN

Exposure to perceived racial inequities elicits the same brain based stress response as trauma and can lead to poor social and emotional regulation by staff and students and results in the same wear and tear on the body and brain.



Racism is considered a fundamental cause of adverse health outcomes for historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups and racial and ethnic inequities in health, separate from socioeconomic status. There is evidence linking the primary domains of racism – structural racism, cultural racism and individual-level discrimination – to mental and physical health outcomes. Find additional information [here](#).

Additional Resources

- ❑ APA (2017). [Addressing the mental needs of racial and ethnic minority youth: A guide for practitioners.](#)
- ❑ Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. (2020). [Race and Health.](#)
- ❑ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2019). [Where Mental Health and Social Justice Meet.](#)

Racism can be viewed as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) but it doesn't necessarily stop after childhood so the traumatic impact continues and can result in toxic stress.

“There is no more effective neurobiological intervention than a safe relationship... relationships are the counterpoint to traumatic stress in childhood.”

Dr. Bruce Perry

Perceived Racism: AN ACE RESPONSE



Black children were significantly more likely to experience all ACEs, except for parental drug use, compared to both White and Latinx children.

American Journal of Orthopsychiatry Investigating Racial Differences in Clusters of Adverse Childhood Experiences
Kathryn Maguire-Jack, Paul Lanier, and Brianna Lombardi
Online First Publication, February 28, 2019.

When our emotion brain is activated, the thinking brain is offline - overwhelming emotion trumps rational thought. It's important for all of us to remember, and not just for students, that when the emotion-driven part of our brains is activated, we need safe spaces and safe relationships to re-regulate. Students and staff can't learn until their thinking brains are back online.

Additional Resources*

- ❑ Maguire-Jack, K., Lanier, P., & Lombardi, B. (2019, February 28). [Investigating Racial Differences in Clusters of Adverse Childhood Experiences](#). American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 90(1), 106.
- ❑ Sacks, V. & Murphey, D. (2018). [The prevalence of adverse childhood experiences, nationally, by state, and by race or ethnicity](#). Child Trends.
- ❑ Slopen, N., Shonkoff, J. P., Albert, M. A., Yoshikawa, H., Jacobs, A., Stoltz, R., & Williams, D. R. (2016). [Racial Disparities in Child Adversity in the U.S.: Interactions With Family Immigration History and Income](#). American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 50(1), 47–56.

*For research studies: Read the entire study **or** just the introduction, results, discussion, and conclusion & implications.

SELF-REGULATION Is A SUPERPOWER

"Our brains crave synchrony; share your calm..." (Allie Nelson). Don't contribute to the chaos.

By teaching social emotional learning lessons, teachers learn about their own triggers, get to practice improving their social and emotional competencies, and develop better relationships with students.

Regulation can't be taught, it needs to be felt and shared by another caring adult before a student can learn it.

A dysregulated teacher, administrator, bus driver, [fill in the blank], can never regulate a dysregulated child.

Teachers need to develop their own self-awareness and self-regulation in order to support their students.

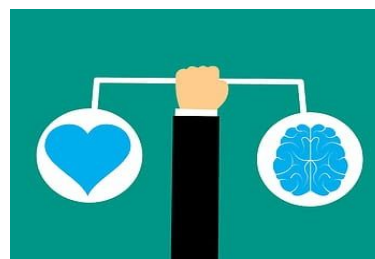
The 3 R's

You must first Regulate in order to Relate, and only then can you Reason.

Dr. Bruce Perry

Create and Share the Calm

- Self-regulation is developed through interaction with caregivers including school staff.
- When adults are calm and regulated, students can co-regulate with them and calm their stress response.
- Likewise, when administrators are calm and regulated, teachers can co-regulate with them and calm their stress response.



SELF REGULATING ACTIVITIES

Focused Attention and Relaxation Practices

"Focused attention practices calm and soothe our limbic brain activity and sympathetic nervous system responsible for the fight or flight response. They allow access to the parasympathetic nervous system which calms and relaxes the body through deep breathing and movement."

Desautels & McKnight, *Eyes are Never Quiet*, 2019

The collage features several activity links: 'All About the Breath', 'Balloon Breathing', 'Windmill Arms', 'Three Part Breath', 'Brain Breaks', 'STOP', 'Letting Go Breath', and 'Create and Share the Calm'. A central image shows two speech bubbles, one labeled 'INHALE' and one labeled 'EXHALE', set against a background of a grid and a large 'SELF REGULATION' watermark.

- **First**, when you breathe calmly, your brain thinks you are not in danger, if you were, you would be breathing rapidly and running.
- **Then**, your student's brain thinks it must be safe or you would be breathing rapidly and running.
- **After a while**, their mirror neurons will imitate yours without your explicit coaching. Just breathe easily and calmly and the rest will follow.
- But, if you do not practice this regularly when you are not dysregulated, your sympathetic nervous system will **hijack** you before you can remember to breathe in times of stress.
 - ◆ Knowing how to do something and doing it when you're stressed are two very different things. That's why we need to practice.
 - ◆ If not, your brain will decide YOU are the one in danger and initiate fight or flight in a heartbeat. Literally.

Lynn Davis, Coordinator of Mental Health, FCPS

ADDENDUM: DEFINITION OF RACISM

The purpose of this expanded discussion on racism is to assist staff in discussions that may arise on race and racism. When colleagues or students bring up issues related to race and racism, it is essential that the vocabulary used is understood by all.

This addendum is not intended as a resource guide for teaching students about race and racism, rather it is to provide points of consideration for the term racism. It is vital to understand the contemporary use of this term in the current social movement.

COMMON VOCABULARY: RACISM

“Because racism is complex and contentious, many of us are afraid to even broach the subject. Fear of opening a can of worms and making a mistake can be paralyzing. It often feels easier and safer to avoid the topic altogether. Instead of calling attention to racism, we too often wish it would just go away. But whether we choose to talk about it or not, racism is already in the building. And, the more we avoid it, the more it grows.”

[National Education Association: EdJustice](#) (2018)

As you read these definitions consider:

- What do they have in common?
- What are some differences?
- Why do you believe some state a specific race and others do not?

Racism

The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people

(Source: [Anti-Defamation League](#), 2020)

(1) a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race; (2) the systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another

(Source: [Merriam-Webster](#), 2020)

A belief that one's own racial or ethnic group is superior, or that other such groups represent a threat to one's cultural identity, racial integrity, or economic well-being; (also) a belief that the members of different racial or ethnic groups possess specific characteristics, abilities, or qualities, which can be compared and evaluated. Hence: prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against people of other racial or ethnic groups (or, more widely, of other nationalities), esp. based on such beliefs.

([Oxford English Dictionary Online](#), 2020. Oxford University Press)

Racism is a complex system of beliefs and behaviors, grounded in a presumed superiority of the white race. These beliefs and behaviors are conscious and unconscious; personal and institutional; and result in the oppression of people of color and benefit the dominant group, whites

(Source: [W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2009](#); Taken from: National Conference for Community and Justice — St. Louis Region)

Consider

What do they all have in common?

- Belief that a racial or ethnic group is presumed superior to another
- The oppression of a group based on presumed inferior traits
- Socially constructed beliefs that influence systems and structures

What are some differences?

- Terms used to describe the beliefs and systems
- Unlike the other three definitions, the Oxford English Dictionary does not explicitly state that racism is socially constructed/systemic oppression/a complex system; it personalizes racism by stating, "A belief that one's own..."
- Merriam-Webster and Oxford English Dictionaries do not state specific races or ethnic groups.
- Anti-Defamation League and definition used by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation specifically state white race/people and people of color

Why do you believe some state a specific race and others do not?

- Racism is specific to each country and/or culture. The groups that are marginalized and those presumed as superior differ from place to place.
 - ◆ Additional information can be found [here](#).

Definition of Racism: In FCPS Guidebook

Racism: Racism is a complex system of beliefs and behaviors, grounded in a presumed superiority of the white race. These beliefs and behaviors are conscious and unconscious; personal and institutional; and result in the oppression of people of color and benefit the dominant group, whites.

(Source: [W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2009](#); Taken from: National Conference for Community and Justice — St. Louis Region)

Why use this definition?

- It explicitly states the "oppression of people of color" and "presumed superiority of the white race" - **In the United States**, "American racism systematically advantages White Americans and disadvantages Americans of color." ([Feder, S. June 2020. Stanford News.](#))
- In order to effectively talk about racism and address it one must explicitly state what it is (the people/groups impacted) in the country in which they live.

Points to Consider

- Power + Racial Prejudice = Racism (Source: [W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2009](#); Taken from: National Conference for Community and Justice — St. Louis Region)
 - ◆ System of racism develops over a period of time
 - Must be considered within the cultural context in which it exists
 - ◆ It is a **complex system/institutional** (e.g. political, economic, education, health care, housing, etc.)
 - ◆ People of color have not been in a position of power to create and have control of the complex systems/institutions within the United States.
- Racism and Racist are related but have different meanings.
 - ◆ Racism: a complex system of beliefs and behaviors
 - ◆ Racist: one who advocates or supports racism

- Individuals that are victims of racism have been made to feel guilty due to their race. "Imagine,...living with the continual experience of having your honesty, your integrity, indeed, your very character, constantly in question, constantly doubted. Then, try to imagine,...the severe emotional pain that accompanies that reality."
(Source: Nile, L. N. & Straton, J. C. 2003. [Beyond Guilt: How to Deal with Societal Racism](#). Multicultural Education 10(4), 2-6.)
- In the United States, some people of color can be racially prejudiced.
- The intent of using the definition is not to make people feel guilty about their race but to make them aware of the complex system/institution.
- The definition does not state that all white people are racist.
- Authentic conversations on race and racism can be uncomfortable. Get comfortable being uncomfortable.
- Not calling racism what it is contributes to continued misunderstandings about inequitable structures that have historically marginalized groups of people.
- When engaging in conversations on race and racism remember conversation norms and the ultimate purpose of the conversation - to bring awareness.
- **The History and Dictionary Meaning of Racism:** "When discussing concepts like racism, therefore, it is prudent to recognize that quoting from a dictionary is unlikely to either mollify or persuade the person with whom one is arguing." (Source: [Merriam-Webster](#), 2020)
 - ◆ Be comfortable leaving a conversation with no resolution.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ❑ Alonso, A. (June 2020). [Tips for Discussing Racial Injustice in the Workplace](#). SHRM.
- ❑ Charles, K. (June 2020). [How to have conversations on race with African American and Black employees](#). Willis Towers Watson.
- ❑ Cleeland, N. (June 2020). [Don't Be Silent: Expert Tips to Defuse Workplace Tensions](#). SHRM.
- ❑ Equity Office and Secondary Social Studies: Frederick County Public Schools (2020). [For Families: Addressing Social Unrest](#).
- ❑ Equity Office and Secondary Social Studies: Frederick County Public Schools (2020). [Social Unrest & Civil Disobedience: Understanding & Addressing What We See and Hear](#).
- ❑ Gurchiek, K. (June 2020). [Addressing Racism Starts with Having Hard, Respectful Conversations](#). SHRM.
- ❑ Janove, J. (July 2020). [It's Time to Talk About Race](#). SHRM.
- ❑ Knowledge @ Wharton. (June 2020). [How to Begin Talking About Race in the Workplace](#).
- ❑ Liu, J. (June 2020). [Talking about racial inequality at work is difficult—here are tips to do it thoughtfully](#). CNBC make it.
- ❑ Maryland State Department of Education. [COMAR 13A.01.06 Educational Equity](#).
- ❑ NPR. (June 2020). [Navigating Conversations About Race](#).
- ❑ Smith, D. (June 2020). [The 10 R's of Talking About Race: How to Have Meaningful Conversations](#). NET IMPACT.
- ❑ Williams, E. K. (June 2020). [Yes, You Must Talk About Race At Work: 3 Ways To Get Started](#). Forbes.

