I. Identity and Sociocultural Consciousness Resource

II. Engaging in Dialogues about Race and Schooling – Supplement

III. References
A strong sociocultural consciousness requires a deep understanding of the forces that shape one’s own worldview. It also requires a commitment to understanding the perspectives and experiences of others. To use this guide:

1. Choose one or two questions at a time and think about them deeply. Write your thoughts in a journal, or share them with someone you trust.

2. Use the recommended resources in the right-hand column to examine information and perspectives that can help deepen your reflection.

### Learning About Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Reflection</th>
<th>Resources to Aid Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How has your worldview been shaped by identity markers: such as race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and so on?</td>
<td>DiAngelo, R. (2010). Why can’t we all just be individuals? Countering the discourse of individualism in anti-racist education (article). UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies 6(1). [see pages 1-14]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of your identity markers feel most significant to you? What experiences are attached to them?</td>
<td>Identifying Identity – Brief article exploring the importance of reflecting on one’s identity as a teacher.</td>
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<td>How has your family influenced your identity development and worldview?</td>
<td>Colorblindness: The new racism? – Brief article by Teaching Tolerance exploring the ways in which a colorblind orientation is problematic for teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In what ways has your racial identity shaped your sense of place in the world?</td>
<td>Why Talk About Whiteness? – Resource from Teaching Tolerance on exploring and discussing whiteness as a racial identity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you know or believe about your students? What informs these beliefs? Are any of these beliefs based on assumptions, stereotypes, or generalizations?</td>
<td>Project Implicit – A website run by Harvard University that helps users identify implicit beliefs, associations, and biases.</td>
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1 “Identity markers” could also be thought of as “group memberships” (i.e. the different groups to which I belong). Major identity markers include the group memberships that society treats as particularly salient, such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, sexual orientation, ability, language, citizenship, and so on.
Learning About Schools and Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Reflection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are my beliefs about the purpose of schools and education?</td>
<td>A Tale of Two Children (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shortfilm">short film</a>). National Education Association.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How were these beliefs shaped by my own experiences as a student [and a teacher]?</td>
<td>Cammarota, J. (2006). Disappearing in the Houdini education: the experience of race and invisibility among Latino/a students. (<a href="https://www.nce.ca/14/1/article/article.html">article</a>) Multicultural Education, 14(1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How might my experiences have been similar to (or different from) those of my students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why were public schools created, and how have they evolved over time? How have schools treated students from different racial and ethnic groups at different points in time?</td>
<td>Historical Timeline of Public Education in the U.S. – Web page authored by the Center for Racial Justice Innovation that documents the historical evolution of public schooling in the United States.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In what ways do schools reflect the values and interests of the dominant culture in a society? How might students outside of this dominant culture be marginalized?</td>
<td>Precious Knowledge (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=preciousknowledge">film</a>). Dos Vatos Productions, Inc. 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways do existing structures and practices in schools lead to inequitable outcomes for students from different groups?</td>
<td>Is School Funding Fair? – Explores the impact of school funding disparities. Contains reports and fact sheets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do these structures and practices challenge the notion of a meritocracy where all students can be equally successful?</td>
<td>National Center for Fair and Open Testing – Explores misuses of standardized testing, particularly practices that are harmful to specific groups of students. Contains fact sheets.</td>
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**Directions:**
Keep a record of situations you encounter in your teaching experience (or life) that involve another person, and contain some level of conflict or uncertainty. For each situation, **seek to understand the other person’s perspective.**

**Learning From Others**

- How might this problem or issue look from his/her/their perspective?
- How might I be contributing to the problem in ways that I am not aware?
- How might my own biases or “blind spots”³ be affecting my understanding of this issue?
- How might my words and actions be coming across? How might this person be perceiving me?
- What challenges or frustrations might this other person be experiencing? What might he be up against?

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³“Blind spots” refer to all of the elements of a situation of which you are not aware or conscious. These might include the other person’s intentions, the experiences they bring to the encounter, additional background context, and so on.

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This document is intended to serve as a resource for any school staff member seeking to initiate (or facilitate) a dialogue about race at his or her school. There are many different ways to go about this. For example, you might use existing structures (e.g. professional learning communities, grade-level teams) to begin the conversation. You might begin by gathering a group of colleagues that share a mutual interest in addressing this topic, or seek to bring people into the conversation who had not given it much thought before. Regardless of who initiates the dialogue or how it is organized, here are some guidelines that may be helpful.

### Why is it important to have dialogue with colleagues about race and bias?

There are well-documented disparities in academic achievement (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014) and discipline (Skiba et al., 2011, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2012) between white students and students of color. These disparities are connected to historical oppression (Katznelson, 2006; Rothstein, 2014) and implicit bias in the education system (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009; Skiba et al., 2011).

And yet, there is great reluctance to discuss issues of race and school directly – especially among white educators (Pollock, 2004). Conversations about race can feel risky and personal, and make all participants feel deeply vulnerable (Singleton, 2008).

Still, they are necessary: “Addressing racial disparities requires addressing race. Imagine a school district with consistently low reading achievement scores; yet within that district, an unwritten code prevented staff from explicitly discussing the topic of reading. Obviously, the failure to address the central problem would guarantee that reading deficits would persist over time” (Carter et al., 2017, P. 218).

### What should be the goal(s) of these dialogues?

There are three, and they are all interrelated:

1. For educators to reflect on their own beliefs, views, and perceptions of students from different groups, and how these perceptions came to be formed.
2. For educators to identify ways that these beliefs and perceptions have influenced interactions with students.
3. For educators to determine how interactions – and patterns of interaction – may be influencing disparate outcomes in academic achievement and discipline. Then, determine what must be done to eradicate these disparities (Carter et al., 2017).

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4 It must be noted that it is not realistic for all three of these goals to be accomplished in one – or even multiple – conversations. Rather, these goals provide a guiding framework for the purpose in engaging in dialogues about race and schooling.
## What can help these dialogues be successful?

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<tr>
<th>Provide time and space for participants to do individual reflective work.</th>
<th>It would be difficult for participants to engage in a productive dialogue about racial disparities and inequities if they have not done some initial self-examination and self-reflection. The questions on the <em>Identity and Sociocultural Consciousness Resource</em> can help prompt this reflection, as can the <em>Working Against Racial Bias</em> module itself. Reflecting on one’s racial identity and unpacking biases does not have to be done in isolation. These discussions can take place in pairs or small groups, and could be especially productive if individuals are paired with others who have had different experiences and can share different perspectives.</th>
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| Establish norms and commitments | In order for dialogues about race and schooling to be successful, it is crucial for all participants to establish norms and commitments for how they will engage with one another. Singleton and Hayes (2008; 2012), authors of *Courageous Conversations*, recommend four:  
- **Stay engaged** – Resist the urge to opt out or disengage from a conversation if the topic begins to feel risky. Commit to listening to and hearing colleagues even if their views differ from or challenge your own.  
- **Expect discomfort** – Examining racial inequity creates inherent discomfort and challenges previously-held beliefs about fairness and meritocracy.  
- **Speak your truth** – Be honest about your thoughts and feelings and attempt to locate where they are coming from. Do not attempt to speak on behalf of others.  
- **Expect a lack of closure** – Understand that the question to transform racial inequity and bias is ongoing; it won’t be solved in a single conversation, and it defies easy answers.  
Some additional norms that might be helpful include:  
- Ask questions and seek to understand; don’t make assumptions about what others think/feel/believe.  
- Consider the impact of your words on others. |
| Examine data | Examine actual data at the school and district (or even national) level on disparities in academic achievement and disciplinary actions. The group can examine disparities based on race and ethnicity, but also examine factors such as gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, and so on. The purpose here is to determine which groups of students seem to be faring worse than others, and then to ask the question “Why?” (Carter et al., 2017) |
| Ask critical questions about systems and practices | Here are some examples of questions that could be asked to critically analyze racial disparities in achievement and disciplinary outcomes:  
- In what ways might these disparities be linked to instructional or disciplinary practices?  
- How might these practices (or the way we use them) be linked to biases or stereotypes about different groups of students?  
- Whose interests are served (and not served), and whose needs are being met (or not met) by these practices? (Carter et al., 2017; Noguera, 2008).  
- Does this [action, practice] move students in this group “closer to educational opportunity, or further away from it?” (Pollock, 2008, p. 24)  
- What actions can each of us take to begin undoing the disparities we’re seeing?  
- How can we involve students in this process? |

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5 These are just examples. There may be other, additional questions that are also relevant to ask.

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### What could cause these dialogues to be unsuccessful?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>How to Avoid</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Racial spotlighting or racial ignoring</strong></td>
<td>Racial spotlighting: Asking someone (explicitly or implicitly) to act as a “spokesperson” for his or her entire racial group.</td>
<td>Solicit the thoughts and opinions of several different participants. Ask them to share their perspectives, but do not ask (or imply that they should) speak on behalf of others.</td>
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<td>(Carter, 2008)</td>
<td>Racial ignoring: Diminishing or ignoring someone’s racial identity when they desire that their racial group membership (and the experiences connected to it) be recognized.</td>
<td>If a participant locates their racial group membership when making a comment or sharing an opinion, validate that comment and ask open-ended follow-up questions.</td>
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<td><strong>Reinforcing stereotypes</strong></td>
<td>This occurs when participants in the discussion merely repeat prevailing racial stereotypes, or use them to explain the race-based disparities that are being discussed. For example:</td>
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| (Carter et al., 2017)                         | • “These kids just don’t care.”  
• “Their parents don’t value education. There’s no discipline at home.”  
• “They act like thugs in class.” | If stereotypes are voiced or used as a basis for explanation, they must be challenged. This could be done by…  |
|                                             | Naming what is happening:  
• “That sounds like a common stereotype about [students from this group].” | Ask probing questions:  
• “What makes you think…”  
• “What do you mean when you say…”  
• “Is this opinion from your own experiences, or did you get it from someone/somewhere else?”  
• “What else might explain ___ other than [stereotype]?”  |
| **Blaming students**                          | This occurs when participants shift responsibility for a problem back onto students rather than examining the role they play in creating/perpetuating it. Often, this is accompanied by “colorblind” assessments of the problem. For example:  |
| (Carter et al., 2017)                         | • “It’s not a matter of bias. Black students are disciplined more often because they misbehave more.” | If participants begin to invoke colorblindness or shift blame, they must be reminded that any instructional or disciplinary action involves an interaction between teacher and student (Carter et al., 2017). By definition, then, the educator bears at least some responsibility for the outcome of a given interaction. Again, specific probing questions can be helpful:  |

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6 A commitment to identifying and working against these stumbling blocks can actually be incorporated as part of your group norms. For example, a norm could be “We will challenge, rather than reinforce stereotypes.”


Klein, R. (2015). In 10 years, America’s classrooms are going to be much more diverse than they are now. *Huffington Post.* Retrieved from: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/07/classroom-demographics-2025_n_7175760.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/07/classroom-demographics-2025_n_7175760.html).


