



RESPONDING TO BIGOTRY

*A GUIDEBOOK FOR TEACHERS AND
ADMINISTRATORS IN MICHIGAN*



EDUCATORS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



SEPTEMBER 2020

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STOP AND THINK

As you read this guidebook, consider the questions:
where does bigotry come from and how does it spread?

INTRODUCTION

- A teacher starts a class discussion about the white police officer who knelt on George Floyd's neck for nearly eight minutes. One student's father said that the police officer should have knelt even harder.
- An immigrant student speaks with an accent and other students laugh at her.
- Students are whispering the n-word and a Black student cannot concentrate.
- A student tells a racist joke and other students are waiting for the teacher to respond.
- Girls report graffiti with "kill the Jews" on the wall in the bathroom.
- An LGBTQ student says that other students are sending messages about her sexual orientation while she is in school.

Bigotry --- such as hate speech, verbal threats, harassment, intimidation, name-calling, bullying and

STOP AND THINK

Have you experienced, observed, or heard about a scenario like any of these, in your school?

Circle one YES NO

If no, why do you feel these are unlikely to happen at your school?

When you yourself encounter a situation like this, how do you usually respond?

Please write the names of two colleagues you who think might be interested in a discussion
about responding to bigotry.

1. _____ 2. _____

cyberbullying, or more subtle forms such as when teachers mispronounce names, or disregard religious traditions, or make students speak for their entire group --- is increasing --- and teachers are unprepared

to respond. When they do not respond, students might conclude that they agree with the bigotry, when actually they do not know how.

Bigotry can trigger an emotional response --- such as hurt, fear, or embarrassment --- that affects a student's feelings of isolation and causes her to stop coming to school.

Many parts of Michigan are becoming more segregated and more diverse, and some students are using racist language to ridicule the new students. Teachers themselves attended segregated schools in segregated communities and bring those biases with them to the classroom. It can be as subtle as continually calling on the white students in the front of the room.

The 2020 presidential campaign will feature hate speech which some students will repeat, and others will report fear and anxiety. Meanwhile, some will say that "white supremacists are fine people" and that "Jews should not replace us."

When students or teachers make comments like these, teachers are not prepared to respond. Well-meaning teachers were not taught how to respond in the moment and too often decide to ignore the comments rather than saying or doing something.

This document includes things that teachers can say or do before an incident occurs and when it does in the moment. It does not ignore that these are symptoms of a deeper problem, but they still need practical ideas, nonetheless.

This resource assumes that when bigotry arises, teachers should say something, even if feeling paralyzed and unsure what to do. Hate should never have the last word.

Barry Checkoway
University of Michigan

TASK

Below are messages from educators in Michigan. Please underline the sentences or phrases you consider most important from their messages:

DEAR COLLEAGUE:

You've been asked to do more than perhaps ever before during this year of unimaginable uncertainty, and we thank you. Thank you for the love you showed in making kids feel safe and cared about during these often unsafe and uncertain times. Thank you for your professionalism in redesigning teaching and learning in the best interests of students who couldn't be in your classrooms. And thank you for your passion as you advocate for a return to safe learning environments for your students.

Unfortunately, the global health pandemic is not our only obstacle as educators. In addition to your love and leadership in the face of COVID-19, we must also maintain our commitment to creating schools that are places of inclusion, acceptance, and respect for all. In the past few years, the United States has seen an increase in hate speech, violence, and discriminatory actions that target people and groups based on race, religion, and ethnicity. In the past few months, we've seen thousands of protests across the country in the ongoing fight for racial equality. Racism remains a dominant aspect of American society, but in our Michigan communities and schools, we must not accept this.

So, thank you in advance for joining us as we recommit ourselves to creating schools that are places of inclusion, acceptance, and respect for all. The resources and support you will find here were gathered or designed to encourage you to speak out against all forms of bigotry, and to help your students to do the same. You will find resources to support you as you work to establish a school and class culture based on

STOP AND THINK:

These two letters from colleagues express their thoughts about why it is important for educators to respond to bigotry. Do you yourself think that teachers and administrators have roles and responsibilities in responding to bigotry? If so, why? If not, why not? Jot down a few of your own thoughts here:

relationships and love. You will find resources that can provide some guidance should you have to confront bigotry in your own class, school, or community. In addition, we've included resources to help your school heal from the scars of racism or discrimination, and to rebuild with attention to racial justice and equity.

Together, we can build the safe, inclusive, and equitable schools and communities we want for ourselves, and owe to our students.

Sean McBrady
K-12 Social Studies Consultant
Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD)

DEAR COLLEAGUE:

I believe that as we continue to strive for equity and equality, we must ask ourselves as educators very uncomfortable questions. One is, "How would I feel if..." many times we as humans miss areas because we don't apply empathy. We also make staggering assumptions about what people should do. As a SS educator, the inquiry-based approach has always been my favorite. It takes us beyond the "what" and looks towards the "why" and "how." As educators, when we look at the students we teach we must be intentional about what we expect from ourselves in this equity and equality fight and why it is important for us to convey this to students. We must look at how our actions make informed citizens who participate in best practices of doing the right thing because it's the right thing.

Marsha Lewis
Western International High School
Detroit Public Schools Community District

RESPONDING TO BIGOTRY IN THE CLASSROOM

RESPONDING TO TRIGGERS

When someone says something hurtful or hateful, do you respond or not respond? How do you decide whether to respond? What explains your decision?

STOP AND DISCUSS:

How do you usually respond to bigotry?
Do you stay silent? Do you listen, and then respond? Do you respond on the spot?
Do you later discuss with your colleagues?
Do you and your colleagues strategize about what steps to take?
Why do you respond in this way?

Would you like to change the way in which you usually respond?

A trigger is something someone says or does that causes anxiety or anger in another person who becomes so emotional that it affects their communication. It is important for a person to understand their own triggers, and the responses that are available to them, so that the dialogue can continue.

How do you feel when someone says the following?

1. "You act like a poor person."
2. "White supremacists are fine people."
3. "Mexicans and Arabs should go back where they came from."
4. "The Holocaust never happened."
5. "Homosexuality is an illness."

Responding to triggers like these is a skill which takes practice --- and experience in knowing about the communications and conflict styles which you have learned, over the years.

Some people learn to communicate in an aggressive way because of the power and privilege they inherit because of the color of their skin, or the amount of money they earn, or their gender and sexual orientation, or the community in which they live. Others have been socialized to listen first, then ask questions, and then respond. Yet others have been socialized to stay silent, not necessarily because they are quiet people, but rather because they have been conditioned to silence because of the forces around them.

Teachers will make better choices when they realize that their usual way of responding is only one of several choices. Which of the following is your usual response to triggers? Where did you learn them? Are there others to consider? (Please check the one or ones which you usually choose and discuss with a colleague.)

TEACHERS SHOULD HAVE A FEW PHRASES READY

There is no single best way to respond to bigotry. There are many ways. Some of us are helped by having a few phrases, like the following ones or the ones in the next section:

- "Please repeat that, I want to be sure that I heard you."
- "Where did you learn that?"
- "Do you understand why that was hurtful?"
- "Saying that can be disrespectful, even hurtful."
- "I feel angry when someone says something like that."
- "Please don't use that language when I'm around."

TASK

Read this list and pick out a couple of phrases that make sense to you. Or make a card with your favorite phrases to keep at your desk, or create a list in your phone.

- That's how we do things here. (Or: That's not how we do things here.)
- That's our culture. (Or: That's not our culture.)
- Think before you speak. Whatever you say, you can't take it back.
- Racial jokes are not acceptable here.
- That's not funny to me. It sounds racist. What makes that joke funny?
- That could sound racist. / That sounds racist to me.
- Let's be careful of our words. We respect all people here.
- Let me push on that a little...
- How do you think our/your.... would feel if s/he heard you say/call her/him that?
- I have no idea if you realize the impact of those words.
- I'm not sure how hearing this makes me feel...
- I don't want to put you on the spot, but that comment makes me feel uncomfortable.
- Think about what you just said. If you really mean that, we need to talk.
- So, what do you mean when you say ?
- Help me understand your thinking.
- When I hear that, I feel offended.
- When and why did you start believing that?
- What evidence do you have to support this belief?
- I can see how you might think that but/and....
- Hold on, I need a minute to process what you just said.
- What you just said does not reflect for me the good person I know you are.
- Excuse me did you mean to say something that may be interpreted as offensive?

RESPONDING TO RACIST COMMENTS

Responses collected by the Oregon Center for Educational Equity ([linked here](#)).

Most of us have had that moment where someone says something racist or offensive and our brain freezes and stops us from responding. Having a couple of phrases in your back pocket can help prepare you for next time.

ROLE-PLAYING SCENARIOS FOR TEACHERS

TASK

Responding to bigotry takes practice, and one way to practice is by role-playing with others, and then talking --- and getting feedback --- about what you said, and why. Following are some role-playing scenarios which you and your colleagues might use as a basis for discussion. We suggest that you ask a few close colleagues about the possibility of a role-playing exercise like the following, and then arranging a meeting to discuss them with teachers and administrators.

Highlight two or three scenarios from the list below that would make for a good discussion with your colleagues. Include any real examples from your own experience. At your next staff meeting, ask your colleagues for a few minutes to discuss them. Come up with a plan for how you might all respond to the scenarios.

From *Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry at School* ([linked here](#)).

- An elementary student holds up the corners of his eyes and says “Ching chang chong ching” as a Korean student walks by.
- A parent is angry because your classroom is inclusive. “I don’t understand why my son has to do group work with a retarded boy. Why aren’t they in their own classroom?”
- During a service project planting trees at a local park, you hear a group of students laughing as one of them complains, “Why are we doing this? This is what Mexicans are for.”
- During a staff meeting, some teachers cheer when the principal announces that students from a nearby trailer park will be attending a different school next year.
- On the way to lunch, you hear a girl say to her friends, “C’mon bitches, let’s go eat.”
- A lesbian student comes to you, upset. A classmate told her that homosexuality is a sin and she is going to hell unless she chooses a different lifestyle.
- During group work, you hear a boy say to a girl, “Stop PMS-ing and just take notes, OK?”
- You put students into groups and overhear one turn to another and say, “Good, you can be our token black. “A boy who likes attention gets laughs by chanting to a classmate with hearing aids, “Can you hear me now?”
- A teacher criticizes a girl about her earrings: “Don’t you realize that those look ghetto?”
- During an informal chat, a parent offers to hire a “bunch of illegals” to paint your classroom.
- A fellow teacher made a joke in the faculty lunchroom about the band students, calling them “band fags.”

RESPONDING TO BIGOTRY OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

“Speak Up!” is a publication by the Southern Poverty Law Center which features several ways of responding to bigotry with family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, classmates, and more. [Click here for the full guide.](#)

ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM

FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH RACE & RACISM: IDEAS FOR CLASSROOM CONVERSATIONS

[This article from the New York Times](#) includes information about how teachers can facilitate classroom discussions about how to confront race and racism in the classroom. It includes firsthand accounts and YouTube interviews with teachers and students dealing with the issue, and the lessons learned.

SETTING GROUND RULES

Setting ground rules --- at the beginning of a course --- can create a safer space for discussion of sensitive topics. One approach is to ask group members to formulate a list of ground rules, such as:

1. Listen, and respect others.
2. Expect that there will be differences.
3. The goal is not to agree, but to understand.
4. Speak up, but do not dominate.
5. Assume that everyone is trying their best, based on what they were taught, some of which might be inaccurate
6. Things will be said in confidence if we wish.

Ground rules are beneficial, but not always, such as when they frustrate freedom of speech, or protect the privileged from anger that makes them uncomfortable.

SAFE SPACE AND BRAVE SPACE

The myth of “safe space”: Students inevitably enter racial justice courses with different preconceptions, knowledges, and experiences. Such courses can be particularly discomfoting for white students who have limited experience thinking critically about race. Resistance to learning can take the forms of defensiveness, dismissiveness, or requests for ‘respect’ of ‘safe space’ where their claims will not be challenged, that is, “the myth of safety in race dialogue for people of color..... For marginalized and

STOP AND THINK

What would it take to create “brave spaces” rather than “safe spaces” in your school or classroom?

oppressed minorities, there is no safe space... mainstream race dialogue in education is arguably already hostile and unsafe for many students of color whose perspectives and experiences are consistently minimized. Violence is already there.” As such, some educators have suggested students aim for a “brave space” within which to honestly consider perspectives and ideas that may be new, difficult, or discomfoting.

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

HATE INCIDENTS AS INSTITUTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Adapted from Responding to Hate and Bias at School, a publication by Teaching Tolerance:

There is a groundswell of “hate” --- racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and other forms of hate worldwide. At this writing, there are more than 35 hate groups reported in Michigan. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has decried hatred and bigotry in response to a plot by domestic terrorists and hate groups to kidnap her.

Hate incidents --- motivated by intense hostility against an entire group on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, gender, sexual identity or other group membership --- abound in schools.

Hate can include hate speech, hurting someone physically, taunting or hurtful teasing, leaving someone out or saying bad things so others will think less of them, or using online and mobile technology to harm someone emotionally and socially.

While most people associate hate incidents with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan or White Supremacists, it occurs in everyday life, such as verbal abuse or insults, slurs or ridicule, bullying or cyberbullying, or racist graffiti on the walls.

This guidebook includes information about responding to bigotry as a personal or interpersonal concern, but incidents are also opportunities for strategic planning at the institutional level, without which incidents can be expected to continue.

Strategic planning of this type is an institutional challenge about which the Southern Poverty Law Center has written, including ideas for what might happen before, during, and after an incident, as follows:

Adapted from Teaching Tolerance:

BEFORE AN INCIDENT:

- Assessing school climate and culture
- Roles of teachers and administrators
- Knowing about best practices
- Establishing guidelines
- Staying current and connected
- Building a support group

IN THE MOMENT:

- Gathering accurate information
- Using my voice and authority
- Naming the incident
- Informing stakeholders
- Incidents as opportunities
- Working with media

AFTER THE CRISIS:

- From incident to long-range planning
- Building institutional capacity
- Reviewing policies and practices
- Involving faculty and staff members
- Involving students as allies
- Increasing public awareness

When incidents of bigotry and hate arise, school leaders are often unsure how to respond. Too often they search for the culprit and treat the incident as a one-time event, rather than as an opportunity for institutional change over the transfer.

CASE STUDIES

Incidents of bigotry are increasing, and we are compiling a collection of case studies, from situations in Michigan. We believe that case studies like the following can form the basis for discussion in schools and communities. We urge you to please share any case studies of your own to the collection.

HARMONY'S CASE STUDY

Harmony attends an almost all-black high school in Detroit. When students were using the N-word in class, it upset her and affected the educational environment. She expected her well-meaning teacher to handle the situation and facilitate a discussion. Instead, her teacher did not know how to respond and indeed was speechless. Harmony's story --- and discussion questions --- can be found [here](#).

SALINE HIGH SCHOOL CASE STUDY

A Mexican American father was telling parents at the school board meeting about racism in the schools

STOP AND THINK

Have you ever observed or heard about a situation in which students used the N-word or another racist slur. Did you respond and, if so, how did you respond? Did you not respond and, if not, why?

and about how students in the high school taunted his son with "taco," "enchilada" and "dirty Mexican" left his son in tears. While standing, the father was interrupted by a white man who asked "Then why didn't you stay in Mexico?"

A parent turned to the white man and gasped "no, you should leave now." An African American father stood up and confirmed that his son was taunted with racist slurs as an everyday experience.

Community members marched through the streets with signs "We are a nation of immigrants" and "Hate has no home here." Students asked the school district to create a curriculum that included content on racism, and started a new club called Students against Racism. School officials announced a series of community meetings to discuss the situation.

After Monday's meeting, the white man's son wrote, "today my father asked a deliberately racist question at the Saline Area Schools diversity and inclusion meeting. His views of hate in no way represent my own. I stand in solidarity with the refugees and immigrants of the world."

Students confronted the school board and demanded that they take action and create policies against hateful and racist speech. They stood in the front of the room with their arms locked as they addressed the board. The board president warned the students not to clap or talk out of order. The superintendent said they would try harder, and subsequent community meetings were scheduled.

Meanwhile White Saline High School students filed a federal lawsuit about an earlier incident for they had been suspended for posting racial slurs about their Black classmates on social media.

The students had posted the n-word several times on Snapchat. In a chat titled "Racist," followed by two gorilla emojis, one student introduced another to a chat with a message saying "My ni****," while another responded by saying "Sup ***." More messages were posted afterward by the same students including "White Power" and "The South will Rise Again."

The White students --- and their attorney --- claimed the school district should not be able to discipline them for their racist messages and hate speech. They argued that they have a constitutional right to freedom of speech and cannot be penalized for what happens outside of school.

The superintendent posted an online comment about “inappropriate racist comments using derogatory terms about African Americans. Hate, prejudice, and racism have no place in our schools or our community. Our School and our District find the words used in these posts to be deplorable and we strongly denounce the actions and words of these students.” He said the District is taking efforts to make students of color feel safe in the school district by explicitly calling out the language as racist and integrating educational opportunities inside and outside the classroom.

At an emergency Saline School Board meeting called the next day, Black students spoke out about the bigoted comments. “I honestly hope you can do something to make us feel comfortable walking the hallways of that school,” one student told board members.

STOP AND THINK

If you were at the meeting when a white parent said something racist, would you say something and, if so, what? Do administrators have a responsibility to “do something” and, if so, what? Teachers? Community members? If you were asked to organize a workshop for administrators to help them learn how to respond, what would you want them to learn?

JASON GUMENICK

Saline High School Teacher

A Saline High School social studies teacher shares his thoughts on how he approaches bigotry in the classroom.

1. Student used a term they think is harmless: "That's so _____." The blank is often retarded, ghetto, gay, etc. I would often ask what it is they are trying to say, and the student would respond with something is dumb or stupid. I would then educate: "Do you realize by calling something X, it is putting down this particular person, and I know you would never knowingly want to make someone feel bad. Can you work to not use that word in the future?"
2. The key is to educate and not to be punitive. Most often students hear things at home and repeat them. Often time, the mood in the room will send message to the student who makes a bigoted remark. I once had a student say, "If a gay person, hit on me, I'd punch him." Before I could respond, a bunch of students in the class started verbally attacking the student for being homophobic and how inappropriate that is. I asked the student if he realized how hurtful that statement could be. I also told him that just because something makes him uncomfortable, he should never resort to violence or a verbal assault to address his issue.
3. In general, it is rare to have that student who is just a flat-out bigot. Most frequently, they probably grew up in a home where language like that is acceptable, and they have a friend group where it is acceptable, and do not realize the impact their words will have.

STOP AND THINK

Jason's approach is "to educate and not to be punitive." What process do you have in place in your classroom or school that works to educate and not simply punish students? How might your process be improved?

DEARBORN CASE STUDY

TASK

Watch [the Real Dearborn March Video here](#).

How might you use this video as a discussion starter in your classroom? How might students in your school initiate similar leadership projects? For discussion questions specific to the video, [click here](#).

Pastor Terry Jones is a frequent visitor to Dearborn --- a city with a large population of Muslims and Arab-Americans --- where he threatens to burn the Koran in front of Edsel Ford School. When he comes, he stands on the public sidewalk in front of the schools, and spews hate speech against Muslims.

Dearborn was once home to Henry Ford, who is known for the mass-production of automobiles --- and also for his anti-Semitism and relationship with Adolf Hitler. Orville Hubbard, Mayor of Dearborn, was called the "Dictator of Dearborn," whose campaign to "Keep Dearborn Clean" was understood to mean "Keep Dearborn White."

In anticipation of Jones' arrival, students formed the Intergroup Dialogue Student Leadership Team and produced a video embracing diversity. They organized student-led workshops and advocated for intergroup dialogue. They also launched "The Real Dearborn," an annual march which celebrates diversity and became the largest youth-led social justice parade in metropolitan Detroit.

To learn more about the student-led initiatives, you can learn more at [this website](#).

YOUTH RESPONDING TO RACISM IN COOPERSVILLE

Thom Hourani

In response to [a racist social media post making fun of the George Floyd incident](#) in Coopersville, Michigan, a group of students and alumni circulated and facilitated a survey among the school community. Respondents were asked to recount experiences of racism or white privilege that they experienced or witnessed during their time in the community. They were provided with the opportunity to remain anonymous, and all personal identifying information was removed to ensure that the testimonials served their purpose to start a conversation in the wider community. The survey produced 43 pages of testimonials recounting experiences of racism prompting the school community to recognize the problem and initiate a discussion on how to promote diversity and tolerance in the future. However small this response may have been, this is significant because it is, perhaps, the first time this majority-white community has engaged in a discussion on diversity to this degree.

LEAD THE CHANGE: A CALL FOR SCHOOL DIALOGUE ABOUT RACE

Cranbrook Kingswood high school students produced YouTube video, "Bridge the Divide," in which social justice leaders call on teachers to use intergroup dialogue at school to discuss racial injustice in American society. Student filmmakers overcame the challenges of social distancing by using Flipgrid and recorded Zoom sessions to create this documentary that provides tips for effective conversations about race, along with an urgent message for educators: "if we never discuss our differences, we will forever be divided."



To view the video, click the image above or click [here](#).

STOP AND THINK

The video makes it clear that students have a desire to discuss this issue, and recognize the challenge of doing so in school. After watching the video, reflect on what these students have to say. What comes to mind about your own school and students? How might this video be used in your school or classrooms? What might your students be thinking and feeling about racism in American and in their community?

MICHIGAN'S DIVERSITY AND DIALOGUE RESOLUTION

Youth leaders from the Youth Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity in Metropolitan Detroit program advocated for "diversity learning for all students." They gathered 3,000 signatures on a petition calling for social justice education, and presented a resolution to the Michigan Board of Education, for which they won unanimous approval. State board members resolved that all public-school students should have diversity content in the curriculum, and that teachers should be trained to teach about diversity, as follows:

Whereas, Michigan's students should be provided educational opportunities that equip them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will prepare them to become the next generation of community leaders; and

Whereas, Michigan's schools should prepare students to effectively participate in a multicultural society and global economy that is more democratic, equitable and just; and

Whereas, Michigan's students should be educated on their social identity and that of others to effectively enable them to replace prejudice, bias, and stereotypes with acceptance, understanding and unity; and

Whereas, Michigan’s schools, teachers, and students should have ready access to civil rights and social justice learning opportunities to better themselves, their institutions, and their communities; and

Whereas, Michigan’s students who have learned about social justice foster environments that promote engagement, celebrate diversity, strengthen equal opportunity for all, eliminate inequities, and confront discrimination; and

Whereas, Michigan’s students should understand their right to assemble, protest, and/or organize community action projects, empowering students to protect themselves and others from injustices and to be able to rectify said injustices; and

Whereas, Schools that lack the resources, including qualified and experienced staff and educators, or otherwise fail to address race-sensitive issues through education and dialogue, ultimately undermine students’ development and their ability to recognize, understand, avoid, and respond to stereotypes, bigotry, racism, sexism and gender, religious, and other inequalities;

it is therefore Resolved That the Michigan Civil Rights Commission will continue to promote civil rights education and diversity learning through public forums and youth dialogues; and Resolved,

That the Michigan Civil Rights Commission encourages schools, school districts, and school boards to adopt policies and practices that promote an understanding and appreciation of diversity; and Resolved,

That the Michigan Civil Rights Commission encourages schools, school districts, and school boards to provide civil rights education to students through courses, workshops, or other methods; and Resolved,

That the Michigan Civil Rights Commission encourages schools, school districts, and school boards to implement best practices that promote the ability of all students to constructively exercise their first amendment rights and to speak on the policy issues that concern them, through public forums, student representation on school boards, and other civic engagement programs; and it is finally Resolved,

That the Michigan Civil Rights Commission encourages schools, school districts, and school boards to educate and train school faculty to recognize and nurture sensitive situations involving social justice and civil rights issues and secure third-party experts where appropriate.

Adopted on the 26th day of January 2015,

by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission

STOP AND THINK

1. Which policies or practices are in place in your school that promote an understanding and appreciation of diversity? How are they made known to the students and broader community?
2. Does your school provide civil rights education to students through courses, workshops, or other methods? If not, where and how might your school begin this work?
3. Does your district educate and train school faculty to recognize and nurture sensitive situations involving social justice and civil rights issues? If not, how could you advocate for this training?

CONSISTENT WITH MICHIGAN SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

Link to [Michigan k-12 Social Studies Standards from the Michigan Department of Education](#).

Responding to Bigotry is consistent with Michigan state social studies standards, which provide information which Michigan school districts might use to revise curricula and create courses from which students can learn. The document includes educational materials and guiding questions for learning and teaching,

especially about how responding to bigotry is part of larger issues in American society. Topics include the American civil rights movement, uses of protest and other forms of participation, causes and consequences of civil unrest, and issues which affect Indigenous Peoples; Latinos/ Latinas; new immigrants; people with disabilities; the gay and lesbian community.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- [The Conversation: 9 tips teachers can use when talking about racism](#)
- [White Teachers Responding to Racism & Suffering](#)

LESSON PLANS

- [Teaching Race: Pedagogy and Practice](#)
- [How to Teach Kids to Speak Up for Themselves](#)
- [Lesson Plans to Promote Thinking and Learning about Current Events through the Lens of Diversity, Bias and Social Justice](#)

RACE & RACISM

- [Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#)
- [21 Anti-Racism Videos to Share with Kids](#)
- [Victoria Alexander's Antiracist Guide](#)
- [Center for Racial Justice in Education: Resources for Talking about Race, Racism and Racialized Violence with Kids](#)
- [Anti-Racism Resources from the University of Pennsylvania](#)
- [First Encounters with Race & Racism: Teaching Ideas for Classroom Conversations](#)

GUIDES & TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO BIGOTRY

- [Microaggressions In Our Lives](#)
- [How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes](#)
- [Speak Up Pocket Guide](#)
- [Encouraging children to speak up and speak out](#)
- [Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry](#)
- [Responding to Everyday Bigotry](#)
- [Making it Meaningful: Interrupting Biased Comments in the Classroom](#)

- [Responding to Bigotry and Intergroup Strife on Campus](#)
- [How to Respond When Students Use Hate Speech](#)
- [Six steps to speaking up against everyday bigotry](#)
- [Responding to Hate and Bias at School](#)
- [How to Talk to a Bigot TED Talk](#)
- [Responding to Hate: Information & Resources](#)
- [Responding to Bias Incidents: A Resource for Middle and High School Educators](#)

CONTRIBUTORS

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Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA)

The State of Michigan has 57 Intermediate School Districts – (ISD) sometimes called Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESA), Educational Service Agencies (ESA), Regional Educational Service District (RESA) or Educational Service District (ESD). Each ISD has a Board of Education and a Superintendent, just like a local school district. The boundaries of an ISD follow county lines, some ISDs cover more than one county. Their primary purpose is to assist local school districts in providing a wide range of programs and services in the area of Teaching and Learning, Early Childhood, Special Education, English Language Learners, Career & Technical Education, Technology, Business & Transportation Operations, School Improvement, and Assessment Mandates. (Services may vary at each ISD depending on the size of the region and their needs.)

Macomb County. The Social Studies department is committed to helping teachers implement the MI Social Studies standards and C3 Framework through high-quality, research-based instructional support to teachers. I focus my efforts on improving student engagement and achievement in the social sciences through reading, writing, and talking, as well as by considering the context of each individual school and classroom while supporting the needs of teachers at various stages of their careers. I try to help teachers create safe and flexible classroom environments in which students feel important and respected, that foster community, responsible citizenship, and positive attitudes toward self and others, and that create expert learners.

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Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD)

The MISD provides support and professional learning services to schools and teachers in

PETRA ALSOOFY

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Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU)

ISPU provides objective research and education about American Muslims to support well-informed dialogue and decision-making. I am planning a workshop focused on Muslim Americans which will address bullying, bigotry and Islamophobia. We organize workshops and make presentations on Islamophobia and its connection to other forms of bigotry, training on Ideologically motivated violence, Muslims and civic engagement

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We investigate cases of unlawful discrimination and we also provide training in the areas of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. We also work with schools on policy development and programming that promotes and supports a safe and equitable learning environment.

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Michigan Education Association

UniServ Director, Region 2-A

As a UniServ Director for the Michigan Education Association I help support local MEA affiliates with their labor needs. I'm fortunate to work for an organization that at its core is rooted in social justice advocacy. I enjoy the fact that I am able to support the work of members and districts with implementing policies and programs that strive to bring more equity to employees and students.

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We offer services in consultation, facilitation, and development of equitable school environments. We offer professional learning in the following areas: Implicit Bias Training, Culturally Responsive Instruction, Reaching and Teaching Students of Poverty, Academically Supporting African American Males, A Call to

Action: African American Girls at Risk. Managing Change and Transition. These services are offered to any Wayne County School as an educational support service. Can be offered outside of Wayne County as private consultation.

APPENDIX: REFLECTIONS FROM COLLEAGUES

We are eager to offer space for teachers and administrators to share their reflections about responding to bigotry. Sean has shared the following reflections, and we encourage you to send yours to us, and we will include it here for others to read:

Sean McBrady
K-12 Social Studies Consultant
Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD)

In my experience working in schools, I find that it's common for schools to state that racism is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. It's sometimes challenging, however, for individual teachers to confront racism in their schools and classrooms. Standing up to racist behaviors and comments is not only the right thing to do, but it's the most effective way to show that racist assumptions or stereotypes are not okay and help students (or colleagues) learn about the negative impact their comments are having.

Creating a positive classroom culture is important from the beginning. While school or class rules may be required by administration to be included in your syllabus or discussed on day one, they should be preceded by words of love. Words that show you will care about each individual and that you value community in more than just a mission statement, but as something that matters deeply. The hope is that while communities and even families have disagreements, the baseline culture created will be able to handle whatever conflicts may occur.

In my experience as a teacher, I find it's first important to remain calm when addressing a potentially volatile situation. You may be angry about someone's comments or behavior, but keeping yourself and others safe is a priority. Doing so usually requires you to remain calm. If a student makes an offensive remark, sending them to the principal's office or shouting at them may seem like you are sending the message that you are not going to tolerate racism in the classroom, but the opportunity to confront the underlying assumptions of the offender may be lost.

Teachers must be willing to have conversations about racism if progress is to be made. A private conversation with the offender may be appropriate. If the class or group was involved or impacted, a safe and controlled discussion in a group setting may be needed. If you are going to challenge the viewpoint of a student (or colleague), doing so with questions is often a more effective approach than a lecture or scolding. It's important to let the offender know that what they said is not okay, while not simply calling them racist. Examples include: "I think I know what you're trying to say, but I don't like that word. Choose a different word. That's offensive language and that kind of speech has no place in our school." Consider providing examples of why that language or behavior causes a problem. You may want to ask them to explain their perspective, perhaps saying: "Why do you feel this way?" It's possible what was said and heard was not really the intent of the speaker and this is an opportunity to change the language they and others feel is appropriate. They might not have known the impact of the words they chose. Help them see how they've impacted the group, and specifically the victim as a person: "How do you think this makes ___ feel? How do you think you would feel?"

Sometimes, it's helpful to confront the comments or behaviors immediately, but to save the conversation for later. Teachers could say: "I don't agree with your assumptions." Or, "I don't like that language, let's have a conversation about this later. I need to think about it and then you can share your thinking with me." This allows the offender to reflect on their language prior to confronting their beliefs. It's important to document these instances too, and let those involved know that you'll take notes during or after the conversation to provide to others such as parents, administrators, or other authorities.

Healing is important following an incident of racist language or behavior, and revisiting the day-one conversation about love and community may be needed throughout the year. There's never too much time spent on building relationships with and between students, and I have found that students that work and talk together frequently (socially, on athletic teams, in clubs, or in class settings/academic situations) are less likely to offend or attack each other. Creating a class family doesn't negate conflict, but it often helps students learn about each other in ways that foster understanding, empathy, and can improve overall class culture.