



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

DATE: February 22, 2019
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Resources to Support Student and Community Dialogues on Racism**

“My message is really that racism has no place in the hearts and minds of our children.”
– Ruby Bridges, Civil Rights Activist¹

School communities across the Commonwealth are engaging in dialogue around race, racism, and bigotry following the unacceptable and hurtful events that we learned about over the past few weeks. In this twenty-four hour news cycle, we know that our students continue to be inundated with racist images linked to Virginia's history of civil rights oppression. The recent revelations from some of our leaders have left our communities hurt and left our students seeking deeper understanding. Now more than ever, our joint commitment to supporting the social and emotional needs of Virginia's diverse student population is required. From our vantage point as educators, we must all join together to renew our commitment to equity and the elimination of racism of any kind from our public school experience.

Our commitment to advancing equity outcomes and fostering inclusive and welcoming environments for Virginia's students is resolute. As educators, we are uniquely positioned to be leaders in this effort. In the coming days, I encourage us all to take time to reflect on these events and the conditions that exist within our culture and communities that created space and place for these hurtful symbols to be perceived by some as acceptable. As education leaders – we have the opportunity and an obligation – to facilitate meaningful dialogue on racism and bigotry with our students, staff, and school communities.

¹ [Ruby](#) was the first African-American child to desegregate the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in Louisiana during the New Orleans school desegregation crisis in 1960.

Students of all backgrounds are experiencing a time in which social justice is at the forefront of their everyday lives. Having conversations related to issues such as race, racism, diversity and inclusion can be difficult and emotional experiences. The recent events in the Commonwealth bring the need for these discussions to the forefront. As educators, we can work together to shift the conversation from hate and hurt toward understanding and respect in our communities. This is a critical time for schools and families to work together to foster safe and supportive environments, to teach effective conflict resolution strategies, and to help children understand and manage their emotional reactions.

The compendium of resources provided in this document is intended to help support school divisions in engaging stakeholders in constructive dialogue around these issues with the ultimate goal of enhancing a climate that is welcoming, socially supportive, just, caring, nurturing, and respectful for all students, families, and school personnel.

Additionally, in schools across the Commonwealth, issues related to racially insensitive activities and behaviors have also been the focus of media attention. We encourage division superintendents to work with your faculty and school leaders to ensure that lessons are designed with racial sensitivity and cultural competence in mind. Finally, when students or staff engage in inappropriate and unprofessional conduct, we encourage your teams to take appropriate action to make it clear that racism will not be tolerated in our public schools and know that we will support your efforts.

In response to some educators' requests to also provide guidance on supporting students in understanding and respecting their own personal boundaries and those of others, in the coming days, we will distribute an additional memorandum that provides guidance and resources to school divisions about leading discussions with our students about:

- promoting healthy relationships within our schools and our communities; and
- preventing physical, sexual, and emotional violence in student relationships.

My office will be sending an email to superintendents with additional details about our previously planned **#EdEquityVA** webinar series in the near future. The webinar series is designed to deploy resources, facilitate discourse, and share strategies that promote and advance equity outcomes for all Virginia Students. For additional information on #EdEquityVA and the resources provided below or if your team needs any support, please contact Leah Walker, Director for the Office of Equity and Community Engagement at Leah.Walker@doe.virginia.gov.

Resources for Teachers and Parents - Facilitating Classroom discussions

- From the **Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)** [Resources for Addressing Racism and Hatred in the Classroom](#) A compiled list of resources to help educators effectively discuss racism and hatred in the classroom.
- From **Teaching Tolerance** [Teach About Blackface and Other Racist Halloween Choices](#) This online lesson plan builder guides teachers towards building lessons to facilitate student dialogue and help students analyze costumes to see how they reinforce stereotypes.
- From **Teaching Tolerance** [Learning Plan Builder](#) This online lesson plan builder guides teachers towards building lessons around social justice standards aimed at prejudice reduction.
- From **Read Brightly** [Books to help kids understand the fight for racial equality](#) This is a list of books aimed at helping the reader to understand our Nation's history in its fight for racial equality.
- From **The National Education Association** [Unite Against Hate!](#) A list of resources for students, educators, and families as they engage in current national dialogue about racism, hate, and bias.
- From **The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)** [Resources on Understanding Bias and Privilege; Resources to Support Students in Stressful Times](#) A list of resources identified by NASP to help school and families engage in constructive dialogue about the issues of race, privilege, prejudice, and power.
- From **The Anti-Defamation League (ADL)** [After Charlottesville: Teaching about Racism, Anti-Semitism and White Supremacy](#) This page provides relevant lessons, related curricula and additional anti-bias resources and strategies to teachers and parents/family members, discuss topics related to white supremacy, racism, anti-Semitism, domestic extremism, free speech, and others with young people.
- From **Facing History and Ourselves** [Lesson Plans Resources on the Fight against Bigotry](#) This website provides a lesson plan designed to help students probe themes about race, racism, and history.
- From PBS **Blackface Minstrelsy in Modern America** [Teaching Guide: Exploring Blackface Minstrelsy in Modern America](#) This teaching guide helps instructors use a specific primary source set, Blackface Minstrelsy in Modern America, in the classroom. It offers discussion questions, classroom activities, and primary source analysis tools.

Resources for School and Division Leaders

- From **EthicsUnwrapped, McCombs School of Business, University of Texas**
- [Teaching Blackface: A Lesson on Stereotypes](#) This case study examines an incident where a teacher was placed on administrative leave for showing a video on Blackface during a lesson on segregation in his US History class. Discussion question explore the complexities involved in teaching about stereotypes and racism.
- From **The Century Foundation's Report** [A New Wave of School Integration: Districts and Charters Pursuing Socioeconomic](#)

[Diversity](#) This report addresses racial and socioeconomic segregation in schools. It highlights the work that schools are doing to promote integration.

- From **The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)**

[Resources for Building Trauma Sensitive Schools](#) This online resource is aimed at providing educational leaders brief tips and policy recommendations for developing trauma-sensitive schools.

Dr. Lane's February Reading List

I have received several inquiries and requests for the latest literature that examines the issues associated with racial inequities in education. Below are several pieces that I and other members of the VDOE staff are reading this month based on recommendations that we have received.

White Fragility, by Robin DiAngelo.

Antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility. Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. In this in-depth exploration, DiAngelo examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively.

Between the World and Me, by Ta-Nehisi Coates.

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden? *Between the World and Me* is Ta-Nehisi Coates's attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son—and readers—the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, from Howard University to Civil War battlefields, from the South Side of Chicago to Paris, from his childhood home to the living rooms of mothers whose children's lives were taken as American plunder. Beautifully woven from personal narrative, reimagined history, and fresh, emotionally charged reportage, *Between the World and Me* clearly illuminates the past, bracingly confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward.

For White Folks That Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Ya'll Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education (Race, Education and Democracy), by Christopher Emdin.

Drawing on his own experience of feeling undervalued and invisible in classrooms as a young man of color and merging his experiences with more than a decade of teaching and researching in urban America, award-winning educator Christopher Emdin offers a new lens on an approach

to teaching and learning in urban schools. Putting forth his theory of Reality Pedagogy, Emdin provides practical tools to unleash the brilliance and eagerness of youth and educators alike—both of whom have been typecast and stymied by outdated modes of thinking about urban education.

No BS (Bad Stats): Black People Need People Who Believe in Black People Enough Not to Believe Every Bad Thing They Hear about Black People, by Ivory A. Toldson

What if everything you thought you knew about Black people generally, and educating Black children specifically, was based on BS (bad stats)? We often hear things like, “Black boys are a dying breed,” “There are more Black men in prison than college,” “Black children fail because single mothers raise them,” and “Black students don’t read.” In *No BS*, Ivory A. Toldson uses data analysis, anecdotes, and powerful commentary to dispel common myths and challenge conventional beliefs about educating Black children. With provocative, engaging, and at times humorous prose, Toldson teaches educators, parents, advocates, and students how to avoid BS, raise expectations, and create an educational agenda for Black children that is based on good data, thoughtful analysis, and compassion. *No BS* helps people understand why Black people need people who believe in Black people enough not to believe every bad thing they hear about Black people.

Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education, by Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, and Gloria Ladson-Billings

The emergence of Critical Race Theory (CRT) marked an important point in the history of racial politics in the legal academy and the broader conversation about race and racism in the United States. More recently, CRT has proven an important analytic tool in the field of education, offering critical perspectives on race, and the causes, consequences and manifestations of race, racism, inequity, and the dynamics of power and privilege in schooling. This groundbreaking anthology is the first to pull together both the foundational writings in the field and more recent scholarship on the cultural and racial politics of schooling. A comprehensive introduction provides an overview of the history and tenets of CRT in education. Each section then seeks to explicate ideological contestation of race in education and to create new, alternative accounts. In so doing, this landmark publication not only documents the progress to date of the CRT movement, it acts to further spur developments in education.

JFL/LDW

Given inquiries related to this memo, and to ensure readers understand the full context around its publication, the following supplemental note is provided by way of additional information.

This memo was issued in February 2019 as a compendium of resources and different perspectives for school division leaders who were navigating community conversations related

to race. It is not a resource or directive for classroom teachers, nor does it reflect recommended or required student reading.

The resources listed and authors referenced represent a variety of viewpoints, and their inclusion does not necessarily represent a Department endorsement of expressed views and opinions.

Finally, because the Department has received many related inquiries, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is not included in the Virginia Standards of Learning, which comprise the content in each subject area that the commonwealth's school divisions are required to cover in their local curricula. Nowhere in the standards is there a requirement for schools to teach critical race theory, or to incorporate critical race theory when presenting required content.

As stated in the memo, the purpose of the document was to support division leaders as they further the shared goal of fostering schools that are welcoming and respectful of all students, families, and school staff.

-November 19, 2021