

# Classroom Strategies for Talking about Race

*Excerpted and adapted from Everyday Antiracism, edited by Mica Pollock*

## Learn

- Racial categories are not biological realities.
- Develop the will, skill, and capacity to engage in courageous conversations about race.

## Remember

- We are all treated as racial group members and need to examine that experience. However, within racial groups, experiences will be different based on other identities.
- Students may have experienced unequal expectations based on their race. Educators need to work with student anxiety about unequal intelligence or potential.

## Teach

- Basic skills! Defy racially based ideas of potential careers and contributions.
- Create curriculum that explores how people have been (and still are) treated differently or disadvantaged based on race or ethnicity.
- Analyze systematic racial barriers (such as over-policing, discrimination in hiring, etc.) and the impact over time of such practices.
- Find materials that teach the history and literature of diverse cultures. Show students their stories matter. Use readings and images, of people who share your students' background.
- Listen to your students. They are experts in their own experiences.

## Navigate

- Notice and investigate students' silences. Avoid putting students on the spot to represent their race or ethnicity.
- Directly discuss racially charged topics in a structured and safe format, such as:



- a) Create ground rules, such as not interrupting, active listening, allowing for pauses, and ensuring everyone gets a chance to talk.
- b) Elevate learning, growing, and connecting over being right.
- c) Model *not* responding to everything and instead just trying to understand. Show appreciation for where each person is at and each person's struggle to be present.
- d) Provide time for evaluation so students can say what went well & what could go better.

## Connect

- Analyze with coworkers and students how your race affects your teaching.
- Learn about your students' home lives and communities.
- Find support so that you can keep thinking about everyday antiracist strategies.

## Act

- Invite students to help define and debate the antiracist policies necessary for improving your school.
- Work together with others in your community and your school to change unequal systems.

**FOR MORE TEACHING IDEAS AND SUPPORTS, SEE PP. 3, 40, 41, 42, AND <CHANGEAGENT. NELRC.ORG/ISSUES/ISSUE-42>.**