

Resources for educators during a time of racial reckoning

The School Climate Center in the Division of School Support provides assistance to local school districts and Minnesota educators on implementing transformative school climate improvement initiatives for racial equity. This focus can help districts and networks to create safe and supportive schools. We work so that all Minnesota students have school environments that maximize their learning potential to be successful in school and in life.

We believe systemic racism exists and is ongoing. We also believe that historic and ongoing examples of systemic racism including incidents of police brutality like the murder of Mr. George Floyd impact the learning environment. We have students and staff alike still grieving the profound loss of life of someone in our community. Meanwhile, jury selection for the trial of Derrick Chauvin will begin on March 8th. Trial proceedings will likely begin towards the end of March and take at least a month to reach a verdict. Increased police presence, news reports leading up to and during the trial, conversations in community, and likely a highly visible national call for social action will offer daily reminders of the traumatic events of last May. Further, the trial has the potential to highlight additional inequities in our justice system and cause further division in community. Many people will be affected, directly and indirectly, including our colleagues, staff, families, students and communities.

We recognize that not all educators will prioritize preparing for the trial and its impact on the community. However, the killing of Mr. George Floyd and the range of community responses that happened locally and internationally as a result of his unjust death was a reminder that, as educators, we are in a key position to help staff and students. Educators can help each other and students engage in practices to learn about systemic racism, process feelings, empathize with each other and start a path to healing. Towards that end, the Center has collected resources to support educators to address the impact of the trial for the murder of Mr. George Floyd.

Personal Reflections

Prior to digging into these resources, we want to recognize that reflecting on, learning about or collectively processing incidents of police brutality, especially those carried out in our own community, has the potential to cause harm to the school community when not engaged in a manner that is culturally responsive and sustaining. To mitigate this harm, each of us must start with personal reflection. Use the reflection questions below to explore and build critical self and social awareness skills before proceeding:

Reflections to build self-awareness

- What is my personal understanding of, proximity to, and experience of systemic racism, including police brutality? How are these experiences, beliefs and dispositions influenced by intersectional identity?
- How did this influence how I experienced the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent aftermath?
- What are my own needs for learning, processing and healing? How can I meet these needs in healthy ways and what support do I need?

- How do I feel when confronted by individuals or ideas that are different from my own? What has been my response to these individuals or ideas? Do my responses honor and respect others' differences? Can I grow in my ability to respond with respect and compassion?
- Knowing my own experience, beliefs and dispositions, am I equipped to lead conversations or teach about this? If not, who is or who can help me?

Reflections to build social awareness

- How might the knowledge, experience, beliefs and dispositions about systemic racism, including police brutality, in my school community differ from mine and why? How will I respond respectfully to these differences?
- How did members of my school community experience the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent aftermath? How are the experiences, beliefs and dispositions of other people influenced by their own intersectional identity? How can I learn more about what other people are experiencing?
- Knowing our knowledge, experience, beliefs and dispositions differ within the community, what might people need for learning, processing and healing? How can I learn more about what needs they might have?
- What is needed to reduce harm that can occur when learning about and reflecting on this situation?

Plan for Systemic Support

While there is no one way to approach this learning, consider taking a systems approach. This includes investing real time, energy and resources to support the social and emotional needs of all members of the school community. Additionally, we encourage all schools to provide resources and supports for all members of the school community to learn more about the legal process and how the justice system contributes to systemic oppression. This requires an explicit exploration of the political and historical context of this particular trial. The table below offers reflective questions for leaders to use as they make plans to intentionally approach decisions related to this situation.

Reflections for District or Network Leaders	Reflections for School Leaders	Reflections for Educators
<p>What are the collective strengths of the community?</p> <p>How can you collaborate with the community to help schools explore the historical and political context of the life and death of Mr. Floyd and the upcoming trial and promote collective healing?</p> <p>How will you systematically and from a culturally responsive and sustaining stance communicate</p>	<p>How might staff be impacted during the trial?</p> <p>How will you bring adults together to explore the history of racial injustice and the political context of the death of Mr. Floyd and the upcoming trial, process, and heal?</p> <p>How will you support staff to do the same in their classroom?</p>	<p>How will you create space for students to explore the historical and political context of these events and heal?</p> <p>How might students' learning and behavior be impacted during this situation?</p> <p>How can you help students to explore their emotions in a way</p>

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<p>instructions for how all members of the school community can access support during and after the trial?</p> <p>How will you bring adults together to explore the historical and political context of these events, the upcoming trial and process, and heal?</p> <p>How will you bring school leaders together to collectively process, and engage in their own healing?</p> <p>How will you support them in developing a plan to support their schools?</p>	<p>What school wide strategies can you use to provide space and resources to students/families?</p> <p>How will you collaborate with families and students to ensure the work is responsive and sustaining?</p> <p>How will you communicate to the community about addressing these topics from a culturally responsive and sustaining stance?</p>	<p>that promotes identity, agency and belonging?</p> <p>How can we help students use critical thinking and analysis as skills for understanding and interrogating events of the trial and community response?</p>

The School Climate Center has gathered a few resources to spur ideas and plans to support both adults and students.

Resources for Structuring Conversations

The first step in talking with children and young adults is for adults to talk with each other about how they feel and to share ideas about how to support each other. By getting centered ourselves, we adults can better provide support for students to talk about their feelings, thoughts and concerns. Use structured conversations that the school community is familiar with, such as [Courageous Conversations](#), [circle](#) and the Collaborative on Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)'s [Three Signature Practices](#).

For districts and buildings who have circle keepers, [Circle for the Adult Community](#) offers guidance for using the circle process to slow conversations down and allow everyone to speak from the heart. If you have not had experience with circle, connect to a circle keeper in your school, district or a [community restorative practitioner](#).

The Minnesota Department of Education website page, [Responding to Trauma and Tragedy](#), offers a variety of resources for educators. General guidance is offered on how to talk about [traumatic events and tragedies](#), as well as links to national resources.

Community Resources

Weekly Circles for Educators: The [Legal Rights Center](#) is hosting ongoing sessions for information and processing as the trials of former officers involved in the murder of Mr. George Floyd begin. The [Trial Community Support](#) webpage includes resources for the community and educators. In addition, they offer an overview of the law for

young people entitled *Know Your Rights*. New events will be offered as the trial proceeds. Contact [Christopher Mendez](#) for further information.

Community Wellness Circles: Members of the restorative justice/practice (RJ/RP) community are encouraging RJ/RP keepers and practitioners across the state to collaborate with others in their local community to offer a weekly space for engagement and connection. The trial may last at least a few months, or go perhaps longer. Building connections will help to strengthen bonds and provide support to address the outcome of the trial. People may offer a weekly zoom circle or pair it with a face-to-face circle in a library, fellowship hall, or school gym. If people are meeting face to face, consider ways to offer refreshment and food, and stipends for circle keepers and childcare providers. Contact [Dr. Raj Sethuraju](#) for more information.

Racial Healing Talking Circles: The [Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute](#) offers **Coming to the Table in Minneapolis: Racial Healing Talking Circles and Learning Sessions**. Join Peacebuilding's Assistant Executive Director Crixell Shell and others invested in transforming psychological trauma into nonviolent power. Participants help instigate these monthly CTTT gatherings in Minneapolis for all who want to take Minnesota beyond the legacy of enslavement and be part of the solution.

Resources for Adult and Student Learning

The educational resources below are relevant to both adults and students.

[Abolitionist Teaching Network](#) has a Guide for Racial Justice & Abolitionist Social and Emotional Learning, as well as other resources for educators.

[Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom: A Resource for Educators](#) from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

[Anti-Racism Daily](#) provides a daily newsletter with daily actions for dismantling white supremacy.

[Black Lives Matter at School](#) has classroom resources for every age group developed by educators and organizers across the country.

[Circle Forward, a manual for keeping talking circles](#), has a number of outlines for circle that may be useful in helping students process their thoughts, questions and feelings during the trial. However, those circles on equity and life's unfairness are best used as part of an on-going circle practice. Unless you have been supported in learning the circle process and supported in how to hold a space for students of color and LGBTQ+ students, consider other ways of supporting students in expressing or sharing their feelings and concerns.

[Learning for Justice](#) (formerly [Teaching Tolerance](#)) offers [teaching strategies](#) and lesson plans for teaching about racism and current events. The resource, '[When Bad Things are Happening](#)' offers guidance for supporting yourself and your students who may want to discuss a crisis as it unfolds.

The [Learning Network](#) shared an article about last summer's protests, along with discussion questions, and opened comments for students to share their opinion. They have a blog post for educators with ["10 Ways to Talk About Sensitive Issues in the News."](#)

[Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility](#) has current events lesson plans regarding elections, conspiracy theories and national turmoil. They provide resources for social emotional learning (SEL), restorative practices (RP) and racial equity.

[PBS News Hour Extra](#) released [a lesson plan for grades 6-12](#) about the death of George Floyd. The plan includes a news video (that omits the footage of Floyd's death) and discussion questions about the protests, police brutality, and media literacy.

[The Pulitzer Center](#) collaborated with the New York Times to turn the 1619 Project, a collection of essays and literary works observing the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery, into a [curriculum for teachers of all grade levels](#). The curriculum includes reading guides, activities, and other resources about the history of race in America.

[Ramsey County Public Health](#) offers ideas for calming activities in the [Virtual Calm Room](#). Mindful or awareness practices for both adults and students can help prepare people for conversations through calming breathing and movement. Paying attention to our breathing makes it easier for us to connect to our thinking brain. [The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine](#) has created an [Anti-Racism Toolkit](#) to provide access to resources to help adolescent health professionals combat racism, promote racial justice, reduce health disparities, and advance health equity for youth. The toolkit supports SAHM members in implementing the recommendations of the 2018 position paper, [Racism and Its Harmful Effects on Nondominant Racial–Ethnic Youth and Youth-Serving Providers: A Call to Action for Organizational Change](#).

[Something Happened in Our Town](#), by Marianne Celano, PhD, ABPP and Marietta Collins, PhD and Ann Hazzard, PhD, is a children's book about racial injustice. [Here is a link to an animated reading](#) of the book.

Resources to Support Mental Health

In addition, here are websites and resource pages specific to addressing mental health needs during community or national turmoil.

[The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) parenting webpage, [Healthy Children](#), offers guidance under the title “What’s Going On? Help Kids Cope with Frightening News Events. In addition, the AAP provides guidance to parents, teachers, child care providers, and others who work closely with children to filter information about a crisis and present it in a way that their child can accommodate, adjust to, and cope with. To learn more, visit the [Talking to Children about Tragedies & Other News Events page](#) on the AAP website.

[The Anti-Defamation League’s Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources page](#) contains numerous resources that provide tips, tools, strategies and lessons for K-12 educators, administrators, students and family members including “Table Talk: Family Conversations About Current Events.”

[Black Emotional and Mental Health \(BEAM\) Collective](#) has graphics, videos, and toolkits designed to be shared for educational purposes.

[Glazer Children's Museum](#) offers resources for educators, parents, and children related to talking about the current events.

[Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health](#) has posted on their website [traumatic event resources](#) for adults working with children.

[The National Association of School Psychologists](#) offers the resources “Educators Supporting Students During National Turmoil” and “Supporting Children During National Turmoil: Parents/Caregivers.”

[The National Center for School Mental Health has a repository of mental health resources and webinars related to Cultural Responsiveness & Equity | University of Maryland School of Medicine \(schoolmentalhealth.org\)](#)

[Sesame Street in Communities](#) offers guidance for talking with younger children about [traumatic experiences](#).

[The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine](#) has created an [Anti-Racism Toolkit](#) to provide access to resources to help adolescent health professionals combat racism, promote racial justice, reduce health disparities, and advance health equity for youth.

[The University of Michigan’s Center for Research for Learning and Teaching](#) page entitled [Responding to Difficult Moments](#) offers resources providing strategies for anticipating and responding to difficult discussions and reactions.