



October 23, 2024

Feng K. An, Director
Jeffrey Burstein, Regional Attorney
JFK Federal Building
15 New Sudbury Street, Room 475
Boston, MA 02203-0506

Re: Investigation Request/Boston Public Schools

Dear Director An and Attorney Burstein:

Under 29 C.F.R. §1601.6(a), Parents Defending Education (PDE) files this request to investigate Boston Public Schools (BPS) in Boston, Massachusetts for employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in violation of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. §2000e *et seq.*¹

PDE makes this investigation request as an interested third-party organization with members who are parents of school children throughout the country. PDE and its members oppose racial discrimination and political indoctrination in America's schools. BPS appears to have affinity groups that separate individuals into categories based on race and provides training for these groups. Attached to this complaint is supporting evidence in the form of a guide, titled, "White School Leaders Affinity Group: Committed to Antiracism" (Exhibit A), which is a step-by-step guide to a lesson plan for white teachers and parents; pilot curriculum, titled, "Mendell Affinity Group for White People Challenging Racism" (Exhibit B), which is a series of lesson plans geared toward white affinity group members, and a training slide show for teachers; a training manual, titled, "BPS Staff Affinity Groups: Guidelines and Best Practices" (Exhibit C), which promotes BPS's effort to create affinity groups based on self-identification.

BPS appears to have affinity groups for staff that excludes certain races. There is at least one affinity group that is for "White Staff and Parents Challenging Racism" (Ex. A at 1). This group appears to be for white people only. For example, one guide states that a goal is to "Learn[] More about Each Other as White People," indicating that only one race is allowed in the affinity group (Ex. A at 1).

BPS also appears to have an affinity group—and certain training—for staff who are "White School Leader[s]" (Ex. B at 1). This group's mission includes "educat[ing], support[ing], and respectfully challeng[ing] one another as *white* people" (Ex. B at 2 (emphasis added)), further confirming that BPS is excluding staff from groups and training based on race. The curriculum for the group also emphasizes that the group and its training is only for "white principals" (Ex. B at 3).

BPS's "Guidelines and Best Practices" for "BPS Staff Affinity Groups" reinforces that BPS has groups and trainings that exclude employees based on race. For example, this training manual

¹ Copies of this letter are also addressed to each member of the Commission, and Parents Defending Education makes the same request of them under 29 C.F.R. §1601.6(a).



primes faculty to “clarify that these groups are not intended for those who want to learn more about someone else’s identity group or learn how to advocate for another group” (Ex. C at 4). Rather, the manual states that “[a]ffinity groups are for people who share a common identity”—and that identity appears to be only those that have the same race (Ex. C at 4). The manual also notes that those “with mixed heritage may want to join more than one group” (Ex. C at 3). In addition, the manual highlights a group called “BPS Black/African-American School Leader Affinity Group,” which excludes staff based on race from participating (Ex. C at 5). The manual also highlights books like “Why People of Color Need Spaces Without White People” (Ex. C at 5), which advocates for employee groups or benefits that exclude others based on race.

In short, the BPS affinity documents show that not all staff and faculty are welcome to join the affinity groups or attend their training—and the documents show that this exclusion would be based solely on an individual’s race.

As the Commission is aware, “the important purpose of Title VII” is “that the workplace be an environment free of discrimination, where race is not a barrier to opportunity.” *Ricci v. DeStefano*, 557 U.S. 557, 580 (2009). Specifically, Title VII declares that it is an “unlawful employment practice” (1) “to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual’s [protected characteristic]”; or (2) “to limit, segregate, or classify his employees or applicants for employment in any way which would ... adversely affect his status as an employee, because of such individual’s [protected characteristic].” 42 U.S.C. §2000e-2(a). Title VII also declares that it is an “unlawful employment practice for any employer ... to discriminate against any individual because of his race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in admission to, or employment in, any program established to provide apprenticeship or other training.” *Id.* §2000e-2(d). Title VII “prohibits even making a protected characteristic a ‘motivating factor’ in an employment decision.” *EEOC v. Abercrombie & Fitch Stores, Inc.*, 575 U.S. 768, 773 (2015) (quoting 42 U.S.C. §2000e-2(m)). But here, Boston Public Schools appears to be intentionally discriminating against its employees because of their race by making race a barrier to opportunity.

A 2015 decision issued by the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) during the Obama Administration is instructive. When a Chicago-area high school held a “Black Lives Matter” assembly during Black History Month “for African American students only,” OCR concluded the school violated the Equal Protection Clause and Title VI. *See* Sept. 29, 2015 Letter (OCR Docket #05-15-1180). The school’s desire “to provide a comfortable forum for black students to express their frustrations” could not justify the school’s exclusion of white students, who were told they could not participate. OCR concluded that the district failed to “assess fully whether there were workable race-neutral alternatives” and “did not conduct a flexible and individualized review of potential participants.” In a Resolution Agreement with OCR, the district agreed that its programs and activities would be “open to all students ... regardless of their race” and to adopt policies and training to ensure the district’s compliance. OCR imposed these requirements even though the district had promised “not to hold such events in the future.”

BPS likewise cannot exclude employees based on their race. We ask that your office promptly investigate the allegations in this complaint, act swiftly to remedy unlawful policies and practices, and order appropriate relief.

Thank you for your prompt assistance with this request for investigation and resolution.



Please contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and "M".

Caroline Moore
Vice President
Parents Defending Education

Enc. Exhibit A-C

Cc: The Honorable Charlotte A. Burrows, Commission Chair
The Honorable Jocelyn Samuels, Commission Vice Chair
The Honorable Andrea R. Lucas, Commissioner
The Honorable Kalpana Kotagal, Commissioner



EXHIBIT A

White School Leader

Affinity Group: Committed to

Antiracism

— June 4, 2020 —

Agenda

2:00- Welcome, Purpose, Objectives, Norms

2:05- Tri Check-in

2:15- Moving Toward Action (Ally vs. Co-conspirator)

2:40- School/Leader Reflection

2:55- Antiracist Commitment and Next Steps

BPS White Affinity Group Mission

We aim to educate, support, and respectfully challenge one another as white people to 1) face the historical and current realities of racism, particularly as it has impacted and continues to impact the Boston Public Schools, and 2) take bold steps to eliminate our own racial bias and, through our individual and collective leadership, the impact of racism on BPS students, families, and staff.

** This mission statement was drafted by the white affinity group at Bolling*

Objective and Norms

Today's Objective

- Create a space for white principals to engage in courageous conversations and identify next steps towards antiracist action in our schools

Norms

- **Be Respectful:** We are all responsible for creating a safe space to share; create an atmosphere of warm invitation (not blame) and approach each other with a spirit of generosity
- **Dare to Be Open and Welcome Discomfort:** Moments of vulnerability and humility are often the greatest teachers; lean into discomfort - try it on
- **Maintain Confidentiality:** What's learned, leaves; what's said, stays.
- **Learn and Act Intentionally:** Invest in this experience as though your actions benefit hundreds, if not thousands, of students - they do

Trio Check-Ins

Activator: [Dr. Robin DiAngelo](#) (1:00-2:50)

Break-Out Groups:

- Intro: Name, school, pronouns
- What resonates with you?
- What challenges you?



To Ally and Co-Conspire Towards Antiracism

Ally	To Ally	Co-Conspirator
<p>Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways (racialequitytools.org)</p>	<p>To ally is a skill you have to practice and check yourself on. Implied in the definition is action, not that it should just be used as an identity or fixed binary (Marks).</p>	<p>To be a white co-conspirator means to deliberately acknowledge that people of color are criminalized for dismantling white supremacy. It means we choose to take on the consequences of participating in a criminalized act, and we choose to support and center people of color in the reproductive justice movement (Rush).</p>

Anti-Racism: actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life.

White People and Antiracist Work

“The point of anti-racist work isn’t to make white people feel they are doing better in their positions of privilege and power within this immoral system – it is for them to hold themselves and their white community accountable for addressing and attacking the very system that needs to be destroyed in order for Black people to stay alive and well.”

– Rachel Cargle

Allying In Action

[Video # 1](#) (until 5:38)

[Video # 2](#) (4:16-5:54)

Jane Elliott - In response to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, Jane Elliott devised the "Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes Exercise." This, now famous, exercise labels participants as inferior or superior based solely upon the color of their eyes and exposes them to the experience of being a minority.

Allying In Action

Breakout Group Questions:

- Given the context of the time, how is Elliott a co-conspirator?
- Can you think of a time when you struggled to ally? Why?

Whole Group - In the Chat:

- What have been barriers that have caused you to struggle to ally as a white school leader?

Working Towards Antiracism

Consider: How is your response to the crisis (anti-Black racial violence) within the crisis (covid-19) now situated within the context of your school community and the long term goal of becoming an antiracist multicultural school community?

Reflect & Commit to Action: Use the [Continuum](#) to self-reflect on where your community is and identify high leverage action steps for:

- **Now** - Addressing anti-Black racial violence
- **Next/Later** - Working towards becoming an antiracist multicultural school

Share Out

“Raise your hand” to:

Share your now/next/later action plans with the whole group.



Post Reading

Summary of Stages of Racial Identity Development

For our White Friends Desiring to Be Allies

Closing Commitments

Commitments: In the Chat - Name a commitment towards antiracist leadership in your school community.

Exit Ticket: Please complete the Exit Ticket so we can use your feedback to plan forward for future white school leader affinity group sessions

[Exit Ticket](#)





EXHIBIT B

Mendell Affinity Group for White Staff and Parents Challenging Racism
Meeting 1: November 18, 2019

Agenda

Welcome and Objectives for today; Scheduling plan

Introductions:

- Name
- Role at the Mendell
- One hope for this group
- One fear (optional)

Norms – any additions or changes?

- **Be Present:** We know that when we are together, the time is precious
- **Be Engaged:** We know we are stronger as a team when we engage in productive conflict and all bring our voices to the table
- **Be Respectful:** We know we are all responsible for creating a safe space to share; create an atmosphere of warm invitation (not blame)
- **Be Mindful:** We know that each of our views are important and we will approach each other with a spirit of generosity
- **Dare to Be Open and Welcome Discomfort:** Moments of vulnerability and humility are often the greatest teachers; lean into discomfort - try it on
- **Maintain Confidentiality:** What's learned, leaves; what's said, stays. If we are sharing others' experiences who are not part of the group, ask their permission first or share in a way that maintains their anonymity.

Additions from the Group:

- Assume we are good people.
- Challenge each other, starting with inquiry.
- Use I statements.

Learning More about Each Other as White People

Up to 5 minutes each to answer any or all of these questions:

1. How would you describe your ethnic heritage?
2. Are there other key identities that influence your experience as a White person and an ally to people of color, such as your religion, class background, or the part of the country (or other country) where you grew up?
3. What was the racial/ethnic composition of your neighborhood and/or schools growing up?
4. What is the racial/ethnic composition of your children's schools, neighborhood, family, and/or social circle now? For example, if you had a party with 20 people this weekend, including your closest family and friends, what would the racial/ethnic composition of that party be?

5. What past opportunities, if any, have you had to learn about the history or current realities of racism in the United States, and Boston in particular?
6. What past opportunities, if any, have you had to gather with other White folks to enhance your effectiveness as an ally to people of color?

Closing: Highlight of today's conversation (something that touched you or was helpful)

Mendell Affinity Group for White Staff and Parents Challenging Racism
Meeting 2: November 25, 2019

Agenda

Welcome and Objectives for Today

Reminder of Norms

- **Be Present:** We know that when we are together, the time is precious
- **Be Engaged:** We know we are stronger as a team when we engage in productive conflict and all bring our voices to the table
- **Be Respectful:** We know we are all responsible for creating a safe space to share; create an atmosphere of warm invitation (not blame)
- **Be Mindful:** We know that each of our views are important and we will approach each other with a spirit of generosity
- **Dare to Be Open and Welcome Discomfort:** Moments of vulnerability and humility are often the greatest teachers; lean into discomfort - try it on
- **Maintain Confidentiality:** What's learned, leaves; what's said, stays. If we are sharing others' experiences who are not part of the group, ask their permission first or share in a way that maintains their anonymity.

Additions from the group's first meeting:

- Assume we are good people.
- Challenge each other, starting with inquiry.
- Use I statements.

Learning More about Each Other as White People - those who did not take a turn last time

Up to 5 minutes each to answer any or all of these questions:

1. How would you describe your ethnic heritage?
2. Are there other key identities that influence your experience as a White person and an ally to people of color, such as your religion, class background, or the part of the country (or other country) where you grew up?
3. What was the racial/ethnic composition of your neighborhood and/or schools growing up?
4. What is the racial/ethnic composition of your children's schools, neighborhood, family, and/or social circle now? For example, if you had a party with 20 people this weekend, including your closest family and friends, what would the racial/ethnic composition of that party be?
5. What past opportunities, if any, have you had to learn about the history or current realities of racism in the United States, and Boston in particular?
6. What past opportunities, if any, have you had to gather with other White folks to enhance your effectiveness as an ally to people of color?

What themes did you notice? What surprised you, touched you, or struck you?

Developing a Common Framework about Race and Racism
(Elbow partners or full group: reactions, disagreements, additions, other examples)

Moving the Race Conversation Forward (systemic racism, 4 minute video)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjGQaz1u3V4>

Terminology and Definitions: Read sheet individually

Aamer Rahman (Fear of a Brown Planet) - Reverse Racism (3 minute video)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dw_mRaIHb-M

Handout on Continuum of Anti-Racist Organizations
<https://racc.org/wp-content/uploads/buildingblocks/foundation/Continuum%20on%20Becoming%20an%20Anti-Racist.%20Multicultural%20Institution.pdf>

Handout on Microaggressions
<https://www.sph.umn.edu/site/docs/hewg/microaggressions.pdf>

Closing: Highlight of today's conversation (something that touched you or was helpful)
Invitation to share ideas for future meetings

Terminology and Definitions

Institutional racism - When societal institutions, such as educational, criminal justice, political, or economic institutions provide more resources, rights, and other advantages to people of one race than another. Example: When charged with the same crime, a black male is six times more likely to go to jail than a white male.

Systemic racism - Inequities across multiple institutions that allocate advantage and power based on race or ethnicity. Example: The school to prison pipeline.

Interpersonal racism - When a White person mistreats a person who is or they perceive to be a person of color, intentionally or unintentionally, based on race or ethnicity. Example: Calling a person of color a racial or ethnic slur.

Internalized racism - When an individual of color comes to believe prejudiced ideas about himself or herself, or others who share his or her race or ethnicity, and even actively participate in institutionalized racism. Example: A police officer of color who shoots an unarmed African-American man (and not others).

Racist microaggressions - The verbal and nonverbal slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate White people's stereotyped assumptions about people of color and/or that White people are more important or valuable than people of color. Examples: Mistaking a Latino manager for a custodian; a White customer getting more attentive service in a store than a customer of color (see <http://sph.umn.edu/site/docs/hewg/microaggressions.pdf>)

Reverse racism - A term generally used by White people to describe acts of prejudice by people of color against White people. While such behaviors occur, they are not racism because they are not connected to a larger system of oppression. Examples: None.

Race - Human categories created to justify disparate treatment, including slavery, colonialism, and other economic exploitation. The categories are based on appearance (skin color, hair texture, the shape of eyes, nose, and mouth, etc.) and ethnicity.

Racial identities may include: African heritage (Black), Asian heritage (including Arab), Latina/Hispanic heritage, European heritage (White), and Indigenous heritage (in the U.S., Native American).

Everyone who is not European heritage may be called people of color, people of the global majority, or people targeted by racism (and genocide).

Ethnicity - The national origin(s) of one's parents, grandparents, and other ancestors.

Mendell Affinity Group for White Staff and Parents Challenging Racism
Meeting 3: December 2, 2019

Agenda

Welcome Back - any questions or reflections from last week

Handout on [8 White Identities](#) by Barnor Hesse and [Summary of Stages of Racial Identity Development](#) based on Joy and John Hoffman's and others' work
Discuss in pairs and then in full group

Watch and discuss "Eyes on the Prize" episode about school desegregation in Boston ("busing")
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/eyes-prize-keys-kingdom-1974-1980>
How does this history continue to impact our city, BPS in general, and the Mendell?

Recommendation if you want to learn more:
<https://truthlearningchange.com/can-we-talk/> This video offers in-depth interviews with individuals who were personally impacted by school desegregation and busing in Boston in the 1970's.

Closing: Highlight of today's conversation (something that touched you or was helpful)

Meeting 4: December 9, 2019

Agenda

Welcome Back - any questions or reflections from last week

Update on attendance policy discussion

Watch and discuss, "How to Overcome Your Biases: Walk Boldly Toward Them" TED Talk by Vernā Myers

https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them?language=en

Pairs: How can we walk boldly toward staff, parents, and students of color at the Mendell?

Full group discussion

Think about the relationships you currently have with people of color, particularly students, families, and staff in the Mendell community.

What is going well in those relationships?

What challenges do you experience in those relationships?

How does your personal history as a White person influence your strengths and challenges as you build those relationships?

Pair discussions followed by full group discussion

Current issues of race in the Mendell community more broadly: pair conversations

- 1) How do issues of race impact your school, including:
 - a) relationships with staff, students, and families; and
 - b) specific areas such as instruction, opportunity gaps, before and after school programming, discipline, family engagement, hiring and retention, decision-making, etc.?
- 2) What successes and challenges have you observed in addressing issues of race at the Mendell?
- 3) When you think about playing a leadership role in addressing issues of race at the Mendell, what strengths and challenges do you have rooted in your personal history as a White person?

Notes regarding shared issues

Closing

Meeting 5: January 6, 2020

Welcome - any thoughts from last week?

Current issues of race in the Mendell community more broadly: full group discussion

- 1) How do issues of race impact your school, including:
 - a) relationships with staff, students, and families; and
 - b) specific areas such as instruction, opportunity gaps, before and after school programming, discipline, family engagement, hiring and retention, decision-making, etc.?
- 2) What successes and challenges have you observed in addressing issues of race at the Mendell?
- 3) When you think about playing a leadership role in addressing issues of race at the Mendell, what strengths and challenges do you have rooted in your personal history as a White person?

Priority issues:

Family engagement team - Stand Against Racism Week, Black Lives Matter - making that work more intentional, and involve more adults in the work with students, supporting staff with student activities and conversations

*Continue to create spaces like this one: another affinity group? Invite community into a learners' stance

*Follow up for this group

Connection between these issues at the Mendell and more broadly: e.g. another school

*(Curley?) and/or a JP community group

All adults by last name or by first name

Intersection between disability and race - how to treasure every student, and teach children to treasure one another

Self-segregation by White (and possibly other) students

*As White parents, how do we talk with our children about race (our White children and our children of Color) - reach out to other affinity group about whether it should be a full community event (help from Wee the People?)

Supporting families that are less involved at school to become more involved

"Not My Idea" - children's book about a White child with questions about race

Book group: "White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in the U.S."

Share out from the affinity group for parents and staff of color - Julia

Pairs: Brainstorm ideas for next steps

Full group discussion and notes

Choose at least one to implement now

Complete evaluation form

Closing:

- Name
- What was most helpful or meaningful in our 5 weeks together?
- What is one next step you personally plan to take?

January 6, 2020

Name (optional) _____

Parent or Staff Member? (optional) _____

1. What was most useful about the affinity group?

2. What could be improved about the affinity group?

3. Please respond to these statements on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 = strongly disagree; 10 = strongly agree):

Statement	Rating (1 to 10)
a. Because of my participation in this group, I feel more able to take initiative to address issues of race at the Mendell.	
b. Based on my observations, I feel that most or all group participants are now better able to take initiative to address issues of race at the Mendell.	
c. I would recommend that other BPS schools conduct a similar group.	
d. If a friend or colleague asked my opinion, I would recommend that they participate in a similar affinity group at their school.	

4. I would be interested in being trained to conduct similar affinity groups at the Mendell and/or for other BPS school communities. If yes, be sure to include your name on this form, or reach out to Becky Shuster separately (rshuster@bostonpublicschools.org).

If yes, provide your name here (optional): _____



EXHIBIT C

Please note: Schools and Central Office departments must make a deliberate, accurate self-assessment to consider whether 1) affinity groups are the right tool at any given [stage of moving toward becoming an anti-racist department or school](#), and 2) whether internal or external staff are available who have the vision, relationships, facilitation skills, and knowledge of racism and anti-racism to be effective conveners. We must each consider our individual, organizational, and institutional levels of readiness for setting and implementing discussion norms, leading these conversations, and following up when affinity groups surface individual, group, and organizational issues that call for bold action.

Table of Contents:

[Why Do We Need Affinity Groups Based on Racial/Ethnic Identity?](#)

[Essential Steps for Launching Affinity Groups](#)

[Resources and Best Practices for Affinity Groups for People of Color](#)

[Resources and Best Practices for Anti-Racist Affinity Groups for White People](#)

[Resources and Best Practices for Interracial Dialogues in Staff or Community Meetings](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Why Do We Need Affinity Groups Based on Racial/Ethnic Identity?

Depending on the stage of the anti-racism work at a particular school or department, it is often useful to hold affinity groups based on racial/ethnic identity. This continuum is a way to assess the current stage of that work on an organizational level:

- Bread for the Journey: An Online Companion to Radical Welcome [Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist, Multicultural Institution](#)

These charts summarize several frameworks that describe stages of racial and ethnic identity development on the individual level:

- Interaction Institute for Social Change: [Stages of Racial Identity Development](#)

Affinity groups are one important and effective tool in moving departments and schools along the continuum to become an anti-racist organization and institution (see above), along with other vital steps such as application of the [Boston Public Schools Racial Equity Planning Tool](#), and training on and implementation of [Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices](#).

For various reasons (resistance to affinity groups, lack of skilled facilitators, urgency of particular triggering events), a school or department may choose to begin with interracial discussion. However, holding affinity groups early and often will greatly improve the likelihood that later interracial dialogue will be honest, constructive, and effective.



BPS Staff Affinity Groups: Guidelines and Best Practices

Compiled by the Office of Equity

These articles explain the value of distinct affinity groups based on racial/ethnic identity:

- White Students Confronting Racism, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, [Becoming an Anti-Racist White Ally: How a White Affinity Group Can Help](#)
The value of anti-racist affinity groups for White people, and the role of White people in ending racism.
- JustLead Washington; [Caucuses \(Affinity Groups\) as a Racial Justice Strategy: What We Have Learned](#)
This article aims to support individuals and organizations to organize and effectively facilitate "caucuses," or affinity groups, to support learning about racial justice.
- [National Association of Independent Schools; How Racial Affinity Groups Saved My Life](#)
How affinity spaces can be a place of affirmation and empowerment that is often desperately needed in school districts.
- National Association of Independent Schools: [Identity, Affinity, Reality](#)
The need for student affinity groups.
- Racial Equity Tools; [Racial Identity Caucuses or Affinity Groups](#)
Discusses what affinity groups are and some reasons to make them available for staff.
- Seattle Girls' School; [So What, Now What? How Identity Development Applies in Schools](#)
Illustrates ways that identity work can be incorporated in schools.

Essential Steps for Launching Affinity Groups

1. Establishing Buy-In from Leadership: It is essential that the department head or school leader is integrally involved with developing the plan for affinity groups.
2. Evaluating the Context in Broader Organizational Anti-Racism Work: Affinity groups should be developed in the context of broader anti-racism work at a particular school or department. This continuum is a way to assess the current stage of that work:
 - Bread for the Journey: An Online Companion to Radical Welcome [Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist, Multicultural Institution](#)



BPS Staff Affinity Groups: Guidelines and Best Practices

Compiled by the Office of Equity

- National Juvenile Justice Network; [Anti-Racist Organizational Development](#)
This page provides resources for anti-racist organizational development.
3. **Selecting Facilitators and Planning Collaboratively:** The ideal affinity group facilitators are skilled at group facilitation, demonstrate a well-developed understanding of racism, and have strong existing relationships with potential participants or the ability to build those relationships. Affinity group facilitators should meet to form a common overarching vision and implementation plan for their independent and collective work, including regular opportunities to debrief together (without violating participants' confidentiality).
- [Teaching Tolerance; Toolkit for Making Space](#)
This toolkit describes how affinity groups help students of Color to be seen and heard, and provides step-by-step recommendations on how to launch or revamp student affinity groups. This resource can be adapted for staff affinity groups.
 - [Giddens School; Affinity Group Facilitators Training](#)
This slide presentation was used to prepare affinity group facilitators at the Giddens School in Seattle, WA.
 - [Intergroup Resources: Facilitation Skills](#)
A helpful guide to facilitation skills in the context of affinity group work.
 - [People of Color Caucus Facilitator's Guide](#); American Friends Service Committee
Structural guidance for a caucus or affinity group meeting.
 - [SessionLab; Essential Facilitation Skills for an Effective Facilitator](#)
Provides useful facilitation tools, though not in the specific context of affinity group work.
4. **Clarifying Membership Guidelines:** Affinity group membership is based on self-identification. Ask people what group or groups they would like to join; never assume you know how someone identifies. Some people with mixed heritage may want to join more than one group (ideally, groups should be scheduled at non-overlapping times for this reason). Sometimes it is helpful to have a separate affinity group or breakout sessions within an affinity group for people of mixed heritage.



BPS Staff Affinity Groups: Guidelines and Best Practices

Compiled by the Office of Equity

However, it is important to clarify that these groups are not intended for those who want to learn more about someone else's identity group, or learn how to advocate for another group. Affinity groups are for people who share a common identity.

5. **Setting Norms for Affinity Group Meetings:** It is essential for affinity groups to set norms or ground rules at the start, and continue to remind participants of the norms as needed. This will give the facilitator(s) the opportunity to create and maintain a group culture most likely to lead to safety, openness, connection, and learning.
 - [Culture Connecting; Addressing Race Relations in the 21st Century](#)
Information on norms for engaging in conversations about racism and privilege.
 - [Advancing Racial Equity in Schools; Establishing Norms](#)
Provides an example of group norms adapted from Singleton & Linton's Courageous Conversations model.
 - [Iowa State University; White Fragility: Book Discussion Ground Rules](#)
An example of ground rules established for discussions on the topic of race.
 - Catalyst; [Conversations Ground Rules Infographic](#)
A one-page infographic outlining useful ground rules for conversations on any challenging topic (not specific to issues of race).
6. **Following Up:** It is useful to bring all affinity group facilitators together periodically to share successes and challenges, communicate lessons learned, elevate themes, consider intergroup collaboration of various kinds, and calibrate with broader anti-racist organizational change efforts. Some or all affinity groups may decide to take specific action.

Resources and Best Practices for Affinity Groups for People of Color

Affinity groups for people of Color provide safe spaces of support and relief. Participants can discuss and address lived experiences with internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic racism, and how these experiences affect them personally and professionally. Affinity groups for people of Color can give participants an opportunity to discuss and build capacity for anti-racist work, deepen their understanding of patterns of White culture, privilege, and supremacy, and to build relationships and solidarity.

Sometimes, affinity groups for people of Color choose not to adhere to a highly structured agenda, preferring to focus on simply being together and sharing experiences. Other groups



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may opt to focus on collective study, such as reading and discussing books about the history and current reality of how racism impacts people with that particular identity. Others focus on action: goal setting, implementation, and leveraging the power of the collective voice.

- The Arrow; [Why People of Color Need Spaces Without White People](#)
This article discusses why people of Color need their own affinity group spaces.
- [Sample Agenda: BPS Black/African-American School Leader Affinity Group](#)
These slides provide an outline of the agenda for an affinity group developed by Gene Roundtree, headmaster of the Snowden International School, in June 2020.
- [The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture](#)
This resource from the [Dismantling Racism Workbook](#) lists the characteristics of White supremacist culture, and how it shows up in institutions and organizations.
- CompassPoint; [Race Caucusing in an Organizational Context: A POC's Experience](#)
In this blog post, Kad Smith shares what he learned from facilitating a caucus for people of Color.
- [Internalizations](#)
This resource offers a way to explore how internalized racism operates.
- Race: The Power of An Illusion
This three-part PBS documentary details the role that racism has played in history and societal structures, and the pseudoscience of race.
 - [Part 1: The Difference Between Us](#) (Full Video)
 - [Part 2: The Stories Will Tell](#) (Abbreviated)
 - [Part 3: The House We Live In](#) (Full Video)
 - [Discussion Guide](#)
- [Perspectives on the Value of Black and Brown Lives](#)
This resource is a collection of videos, and commentary that could be used to frame discussions in Black and Brown affinity spaces.
- Roots of Justice: [The Wisdom of Caucusing for People of Color](#)
Discusses specific values for people of Color when convening.

Resources and Best Practices for Anti-Racist Affinity Groups for White People



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Anti-racist affinity groups for White people are an opportunity to develop their understanding of the historical and current realities of how internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic racism manifest; to face their indoctrination and participation in White supremacy; and become increasingly effective at disrupting racism, applying racial equity strategies, and building authentic relationships with people of Color. These affinity groups are a place for White people to take responsibility for their own learning.

- The Arrow: Going to the Root: [How White Caucuses Contribute to Racial Justice](#)
Why it is important to participate in White anti-racist affinity groups or “caucuses.”
- Sample Agenda: [BPS White School Leaders Committed to Anti-Racism](#)
Sample agenda for an initial meeting of a White affinity group, developed by principals Michael Baulier and Julia Bott in June 2020, a week after George Floyd’s murder.
- Sample Agenda: [BPS White Central Office Staff Challenging Racism](#)
Sample agenda for a White anti-racist group held for Central Office staff the week after George Floyd’s murder. Led by Becky Shuster, participants included some employees with deep experience with anti-racist affinity group work and others new to the work.
- Sample Curriculum: [4 Session Affinity Group for White Parents and Staff at the Mendell](#)
During SY 2019-20, White parents and staff at the Mendell School participated in a pilot anti-racist affinity group series. This document provides the four session agendas.
- [Building Anti-Racist White Educators](#) (BARWE)
Resources produced by a group of district and charter school educators in Philadelphia.
- [Coalition of Anti-Racist Whites](#) (CARW)
After the transformative dialogue initiated by people of Color that followed the 2001 Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization, White folks formed the CARW.
- Diversity Best Practices; [Five Ways an Anti-Racist White Caucus/Affinity Group Supports Diversity and Inclusion](#)
How White caucuses or affinity groups help White leaders become more self-aware and increase their knowledge of the dynamics of race and allyship.
- [Helm’s White Racial Identity Development Model](#)
The White Racial Identity Model was developed by psychologist Janet Helms in 1990.



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- Perspectives on Urban Education: [Becoming an Anti-Racist White Ally: How a White Affinity Group Can Help](#)
How a White student affinity group helps participants understand their racial identities and work to become effective anti-racist allies.
- Social Justice Training Institute; [Facilitating White Caucuses](#)
Provides a structure for how to facilitate a caucus or affinity group meeting.
- [Tips for Creating Effective White Caucus Groups](#); Craig Elliott
How to set up an effective White caucus or affinity group.
- White Anti-Racism Affinity Groups: [I Used to Be a Skeptic, But Now I'm an Evangelist](#)
How a White man moved from being a skeptic of White identity work to a believer.

Resources and Best Practices for Interracial Conversations in Staff or Community Meetings

For various reasons, such as resistance to affinity groups, lack of facilitators with the needed knowledge and skills, or the urgency of particular triggering events, a school or department may choose to begin with interracial discussion without first holding affinity groups. Generally, the same six essential steps provided above for launching affinity groups apply, including establishing buy-in from leadership, evaluating the organizational change context, selecting highly skilled facilitators, setting clear norms, and ensuring follow up.

Some additional tips for staff or community meetings for people of all racial and ethnic identities include:

- Ideally, have two co-facilitators who represent two of the largest demographic groups represented in the meeting. The co-facilitators should consciously plan the roles each will take during the meeting. For example, sometimes it is helpful if a White facilitator steps in if a White participant goes off track.
- Define the desired outcomes in advance, ensuring that the participants are ready to engage in respectful, constructive conversation that may be uncomfortable at times. If the White participants have had limited exposure to learning about racism, extra care will be needed to ensure that this is a useful experience for participants of Color.



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- Prioritize the voices of people of Color. Consider using a timer to ensure that none of the participants, particularly White participants, dominate the conversation.
- Consider breaking into small groups based on identity, especially if there will be more than one meeting.
- Avoid making any particular participation mandatory. For example, remind participants they can pass or just share one word for how they are feeling. Discussions that may feel like a relief for White people may feel burdensome to people of Color, and the explicit chance to opt out of responding to every prompt may be important.
- Place the conversation in the context of long-term collective work toward racial equity, including applying the Racial Equity Tool and Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices to the team's or school's work. Share next steps before the conversation closes - and then follow through on those commitments.

If your department or staff are interested in a multi-session interracial dialogues, here are some resources:

- Dozens of BPS schools have held interracial dialogues in partnership with YW Boston for staff, parents, and high school students. More information about their Inclusion Boston program is available [here](#).
- Critical Conversations: [Dialogue Across Racial Divides](#)
This interracial dialogue project seeks to build understanding across racial divides.
- Crossing Borders Education; [Initiating Interracial Dialogue](#)
Resources for intentional cross-cultural interactions
- [Dialogue for Affinity Groups: Optional Discussions to Accompany Facing Racism](#)
A guide to encourage public dialogue and problem solving on the issue of racism
- PBS Interracial: [Honest Conversations](#)
Documentary featuring the first encounter between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Dr. John Hope Franklin.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers



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- [Affinity/Alliance Groups Frequently Asked Questions](#); Seattle Girls' School, Seattle, WA
This document provides answers to commonly asked questions about affinity groups.
- Roots of Justice: [Building an Effective White Caucus](#)
Answers questions about the formation of white caucus or affinity groups.