The senseless police-initiated murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, amongst hundreds of other murders of Black women, men, and children in the United States over the past 400 years due to systemic racism and anti-blackness, has become a much-needed call to action for all. This is particularly true and needed in our schools and in our classrooms, as we look to affirm, celebrate, and advocate for all students in our classes, but especially our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students.

In his book, How to Be an Antiracist, Ibram X. Kendi (2019) writes, "The opposite of racist isn't 'not racist.' It is 'anti-racist.' … One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an anti-racist. There is no in-between safe space of 'not racist'" (p. 9). No one is born racist or antiracist; these result from the choices we make. Becoming anti-racist is different for different racial groups, but all racial groups struggle under white supremacy. For white people, being anti-racist involves acknowledging and understanding one’s privilege, working to change one’s internalized racism, and disrupting racism when one sees it. Developing antiracist identities as people of color starts with recognizing how race and racism have also been internalized. As Dr. Anneliese A. Singh says in her book The Racial Healing Handbook, (2019), “It means recognizing that people of color groups are not always united in solidarity under a larger umbrella of people of color. Misinformation, prejudice, and harm can exist between people of color groups, and these need to be confronted just as White racism must be challenged” (p. 92).

Teaching for an anti-racist future starts with educators. This is work that is needed for all teachers and all students, whether your school has a predominantly white population or is quite diverse. We also acknowledge that this work looks different for white teachers than it does for BIPOC teachers. An anti-racist educator must actively work to dismantle the structures, policies, institutions, and systems that create barriers and perpetuate race-based inequities for people of color. But how does a middle and high school ELA teacher work towards becoming an anti-racist educator?

As current English language arts teacher educators and former middle and high school English teachers, this document represents a collaborative effort to compile a list of resources, suggestions, and recommended actions for English teachers grades 6-12 to help us all do the work we must do to support students in our schools. We acknowledge that our positionalities as a White female, a Black female, and an Asian American female influence the ways in which we have curated these resources. We also hope that our collaborative background gives breadth and diversity to the work here and inspires others to talk and work across difference. We recognize there are many perspectives and resources on becoming anti-racist teachers, and are grateful for the many scholars, teachers, and activists we list here who have theorized, analyzed, and done the anti-racist work detailed in this document. We hope you will learn from them as we have, and continue to cite and read their original works. We are listening, self-reflecting, and self-examining as we also work alongside you towards becoming anti-racist teachers ourselves through the curation of this document.

Below we offer five steps for actively moving forward towards anti-racist ELA teaching. We suggest beginning with listening and reflection. As Kendi (2019) writes, “....being an antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination” (p. 23).
STEP 1: LISTEN & REFLECT

Ijeoma Oluo, author of *So You Want To Talk About Race*, in referencing Dr. Kendi’s book notes that “[t]he beauty of anti-racism is that you don't have to pretend to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it's the only way forward.” Thus each person’s starting point in becoming anti-racist is with themselves. There are a few key parts to this: *positioning, listening, and reflecting.*

**Positioning.** Often educators talk about encouraging students to take the stance of a learner. By this we generally mean being open, being engaged, being present, being thoughtful. This kind of positioning is also required in learning to be an anti-racist teacher. For example, Dr. Bettina Love in *EdWeek* argues that white teachers “must learn how to deal with what Cheryl E. Matias calls ‘white emotionalities’ and what Robin DiAngelo has termed ‘white fragility.’” Positioning for learning to be an anti-racist teacher requires awareness of who you are in relation to your world and an acknowledgement that we *all* have biases, which is the first step towards dismantling them. Howard (2003) offers these five questions to begin the work of positioning yourself below (p. 198):

1. How frequently and what types of interactions did I have with individuals different from my own growing up?
2. Who were the primary persons that helped to shape my perspectives of individuals from different groups? How were their opinions formed?
3. Do I currently, or have I ever harbored prejudiced thoughts toward people from different backgrounds?
4. If I do harbor prejudiced thoughts, what effects do such thoughts have on students who come from those backgrounds?
5. Do I create negative profiles of individuals who come from different racial backgrounds?

**Listening.** What does it mean to be an active listener? How do you *actively* listen? To begin, what you should *not* do is ask already marginalized and minoritized students in classes to speak for all Black people. What you should do is educate yourself and position yourself to hear what Black children, families, and teachers voluntarily share about these experiences as their lived truth. What they have to say may make you uncomfortable. There is often the desire to respond to these truths, these uncomfortable moments, by focusing on intention. However, taking the stance of a learner allows us to stay open, engaged. Recall, our goal is not about pretending to be free of racism, but working to become anti-racist.

There are lots of places where Black students and teachers have shared their stories concerning racism perpetuated in schools and the curriculum. You might begin with this [student’s blog](#), [teacher’s post](#), and this [teacher’s book](#). *Teaching Tolerance* and *Rethinking Schools* also offer an abundance of resources for teachers and teaching.

**Reflecting.** After hearing these often uncomfortable truths, what should we do with this information? Dr. Maya Angelou is oft-quoted as saying, “when you know better, do better.” Therefore students’, families’, and colleagues’ truths should encourage us to critically reflect on how racism is perpetuated and ways to fight it in schools. Often the work stops with acknowledging the hurt, sympathizing, or even empathizing with students, families, and colleagues. However, to be an anti-racist educator we must move beyond
niceness and empathy. As Amy Shuman (2005) writes, “[e]mpathy offers the possibility of understanding across space and time, but it rarely changes the circumstances of those who suffer. If it provides inspiration, it is more often for those in the privileged position of empathizer rather than empathized” (p. 5).

Instead, anti-racist teachers must work to become co-conspirators, taking risks for and working alongside Black students, families, and colleagues. To begin to equip yourselves to join in, you must learn and unlearn about racism. Thankfully, there are rich resources to support this work.

Source:

STEP 2: READ

There are many books available that discuss anti-racism, bias, or explore racism in America or our schools in a general sense. We definitely encourage you to read those books (see here, here, here and here for some lists). But, this list below is specifically for doing anti-racist work in middle and high school English language arts. These titles are listed alphabetically by topic area, but not by order of preference. We have highlighted a few books that you might want to start with. As you read, consider framing your notes around the following: a) what it says (summary), b) what it means (analysis & implications) and c) what you will do (action).

Culturally and Historically Responsive/ Social Justice Frameworks and Methods

Bridging Literacy and Equity: The Essential Guide to Social Equity Teaching by Althier M. Lazar, Patricia Ann Edwards, Gwendolyn Thompson McMillon
Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy by Gholdy Muhammad
Social Justice Literacies in the English Classroom: Teaching Practice in Action by Ashley S. Boyd

Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching by Lee Anne Bell

Race, Justice, and Activism in Literacy Instruction edited by Valerie Kinloch, Tanja Burkhard, & Carlotta Penn

Restorative Justice in the English Language Arts Classroom by Maisha T. Winn, Hannah Graham, & Rita Renjitham Alfred
Listen & Reflect ⇔ Read ⇔ Interrogate ⇔ Act ⇔ Repeat

Conversations and Discussion Approaches

Classroom Talk for Social Change: Critical Conversations in English Language Arts by Melissa Schieble, Amy Vetter, & Kahdeidra Monet Martin

The Power of Teacher Talk: Promoting Equity and Retention Through Student Interactions by Deborah Bieler

Writing and Language Study

Biography-Driven Culturally Responsive Teaching by Socorro G. Herrera

Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy by April Baker-Bell

Students’ Right to Their Own Language: A Critical Sourcebook edited by Staci Perryman-Clark, David E. Kirkland, & Austin Jackson

Race and Writing Assessment edited by Asao B. Inoue & Mya Poe

Race, Empire, and English Language Teaching: Creating Responsible and Ethical Anti-Racist Practice by Suhanchie Motha


We Do Language: English Language Variation in the Secondary English Classroom by Anne H. Charity Hudley & Christine Mallinson

Writing Instruction in the Culturally Relevant Classroom by Maisha T. Winn & Latrise Johnson

Literature Study

Beyond the Culture Tours: Studies in Teaching and Learning With Culturally Diverse Texts by Gladys Cruz, Sarah Jordan, Jose Melendez, Steven Ostrowski, Alan Purves.

Critical Encounters in Secondary English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents (Third Edition) by Deborah Appleman

Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children’s Literature: Mirrors, Windows, and Doors by Maria José Botelho, Masha Kabakow Rudman

The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games by Ebony Elizabeth Thomas

Engaging with Multicultural YA Literature in the Secondary Classroom: Critical Approaches for Critical Educators edited by Ricki Ginsberg & Wendy J. Glenn
Listen & Reflect ⇔ Read ⇔ Interrogate ⇔ Act ⇔ Repeat

Letting Go of Literary Whiteness: Antiracist Literature Instruction for White Students by Carlin Borsheim-Black & Sophia Tatiana Sarigianides

Racism in Contemporary African American Children's and Young Adult Literature by Suriyan Panlay

Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: The Hidden Racism of Children's Literature, and the Need for Diverse Books by Philip Nel

Intersections of Gender, Race, and Literacy

A Search Past Silence: The Literacy of Young Black Men by David E. Kirkland

A Walk in Their Kicks: Literacy, Identity, and the Schooling of Young Black Males by Aaron M. Johnson

Fearless Voices: Engaging a New Generation of African American Adolescent Male Writers by Alfred W. Tatum

Girl Time: Literacy, Justice, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline by Maisha T. Winn

Reading for Their Life: (Re)Building the Textual Lineages of African American Adolescent Males by Alfred W. Tatum

Reading Girls: The Lives and Literacies of Adolescents by Hadar Dubowsky Ma'ayan

Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males: Closing the Achievement Gap by Alfred W. Tatum

Well-Read Black Girl: Finding Our Stories, Discovering Ourselves edited by Glory Edim

White Anti-racist Educator Narratives

Holler If You Hear Me: The Education of a Teacher and His Students (Paperback- 2nd Edition) by Gregory Michie

Holler If You Hear Me (Comic Edition) by Gregory Michie and Ryan Alexander-Tanner

"Is This English?" Race, Language, and Culture in the Classroom by Bob Fecho

"What Does Injustice Have to Do with Me?": Engaging Privileged White Students with Social Justice by David Nurenberg
Listen & Reflect ⇔ Read ⇔ Interrogate ⇔ Act ⇔ Repeat

STEP 3: INTERROGATE

Once you have reflected and read, it’s time to start interrogating your curriculum, teaching practices, and the texts in your classroom. Interrogation requires deep and ongoing critical questioning. As you unpack what you are currently doing, know this is not easy work. You likely will find some hidden biases you didn’t realize you had.

As a part of interrogating, we encourage you to first look at this list of qualities of anti-racist ELA curriculum compiled by NCTE’s Standing Committee Against Racism and Bias in the Teaching of English. Do a gut check. Which of these are you already doing? Why? Which of these have you not considered before? Why? Which of these makes you mad? Why? Which of these do you not understand? Why? In this section, we ask you to unpack and interrogate a few of those qualities:

1. Interrogate Your Curriculum and Instruction

Take a moment to find your course’s curriculum materials - including your scope and sequence and pacing guides, your lesson plan documents, assignments, and activities. Ask yourself, how inclusive is my course or department’s curriculum? If you had to map your curriculum using Dr. Nelson Laird’s framework below, on a continuum of exclusive (the left-hand side) to inclusive (right-hand side), where would your ELA department, your courses, or your units fall? Anti-racist curriculum and instruction must be empowering, and equity-oriented while also critical of established norms, such as the literary canon, that propagate anti-blackness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Inclusivity Continuum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose/goals</strong></td>
<td>Prepare students for diverse experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare students to actively engage in a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>diverse society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Multicultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundations/perspectives</strong></td>
<td>Exposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple foundations/perspectives examined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learners</strong></td>
<td>Collaborators with diverse learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructor(s)</strong></td>
<td>Understands own views, biases, values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedagogy</strong></td>
<td>Critical/equity oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td>Empowering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment/evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Methods suited to student diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjustment</strong></td>
<td>Adjustment to diverse needs of students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:
Whether you have a scripted curriculum, a long-established curriculum, or you have great flexibility in determining what is included in your curriculum, it is important to closely examine what your curriculum contains and the messages it sends explicitly or implicitly. There are a variety of resources for you and your colleagues to do an equity audit with. Tricia Ebarvia of #DisruptTexts has created a list of eight questions to ask yourself about the inclusivity of your literacy classroom. Additionally, NYU’s Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools has created a scorecard that can help you determine the extent to which your English Language Arts curricula are (or are not) culturally responsive.

**Curriculum Violence.** In the spring 2020 issue of *Teaching Tolerance*, Dr. Stephanie P. Jones offers insight into curriculum violence and ways to end it. In brief, curriculum violence is when educators “construct a set of lessons that damage or otherwise adversely affect students intellectually and emotionally” through erasure or disregard of people’s humanity. Anti-racist educators, though, seek to humanize rather than dehumanize students. In thinking about your own curriculum, units, lessons, activities, and assignments, we encourage you to think about where you have inflicted violence on your students, whether intentionally or not. This might take the form of:

- having students participate in a simulation, game, or reenactment of slavery or other traumatic historical events
- having students write from a perspective of an Enslaver (sometimes referred to as ‘slave owner’) or even a Jewish holocaust victim.
- repeatedly showing and sharing racist or traumatic images or videos rather than celebrating and showing joy and excellence
- leaving particular people’s (e.g. LGBT) history out of the curriculum or teaching it in ways that are irresponsible
- Using the N-word or reading the N-word aloud (see Ta-Nehisi Coates for more information)
- Downplaying or “whitewashing” the severity of racialized historical events
- Asking students to take a side on topics that dehumanize a group of marginalized people (e.g. Should people own slaves?; Should the US build a border wall?)

For more examples, visit Mapping Racial Trauma.

2. **Interrogate Your Texts**

As ELA teachers, we have a unique responsibility of selecting books for our students to read. Often teachers are unaware that their own ideologies guide their book selections. Interrogating and acknowledging our own ideologies is important because our choices send messages of power to our students, articulating and reinforcing ideas of what is appropriate and valued. This process of determining a text’s value based on ideological assumptions is part of what Raymond Williams (1977) called the *selective tradition*. He defined the selective tradition as “an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification” (p. 115). This means that certain ideas and practices of the past are promoted and emphasized, while others are excluded or forgotten. Teachers have long upheld this selective tradition, but we are also capable of disrupting it and creating a new selected tradition, one that includes books that are windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors.
Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) wrote:

“Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books” (p. ix)

To date, white children have a multitude of opportunities to see themselves represented in literature. But BIPOC students are rarely represented. In Huyck & Dahlen’s (2019) graphic shown below, it is clear that the publishing industry is not doing a good job of depicting characters from diverse backgrounds. All students need diverse books.

Source:

Therefore, the texts we privilege by teaching them and the texts we have in our classroom libraries must be interrogated. There are many resources available to audit these texts. Lee & Low Books has created a Classroom Library Questionnaire to help you determine where there are strengths and where there are gaps in diversity. Michelle has also created a chart to track, sort, and analyze what races and cultures are
represented in your curriculum or classroom library that she has used in her teacher preparation courses. Additionally, as you review supplemental materials like videos, art, audio, etc, The Diverse and Inclusive Growth Checklist from KIDMAP will be helpful.

As you analyze your materials, library, literature circle books, or whole-class reads, keep these questions in mind:

- Think about your student population. Does your list provide a mix of mirror and window books for your students—books in which they can see themselves reflected and books in which they can learn about others?
- Think about the subject matter of the texts. Do all your books featuring Black characters focus on slavery? Do all your books about Latinx characters focus on immigration? Are all your LGBTQ books coming out stories? Do you have any books featuring marginalized characters that are not primarily about race or prejudice? Do you have books that feature joy and excellence, and talk about everyday experiences for a racialized group? Are you holding on to texts just because they are in the literary canon (e.g. Huck Finn, To Kill a Mockingbird)?
- Think about the authors of your texts. How many of your books are #ownvoices stories written and/or illustrated by BIPOC authors and illustrators? How many of your “diverse” books were created by white people trying to write about BIPOC experiences?
- Think about the bias in the texts. How many of your books are written by authors with racist views? Are you holding on to authors and their texts despite their problematic histories towards disenfranchised or marginalized populations (e.g. Flannery O’Connor)? How many contain harmful stereotypes? If you do come across racist ideas and harmful stereotypes in the books you’re reading with students, will you ignore or gloss over those ideas or have a meaningful conversation about them?
- Think about the amount of time you privilege certain texts. Even if you have a wide variety of cultures and races represented in your class library or curriculum, how much weight do those texts hold in your week, unit, semester, or year?
- Think about the organization of your courses’ texts? Do you teach American Literature or British Literature chronologically? Why? How does that position white authors predominantly or erase BIPOC authors? Do you only teach black authors texts during Black History Month?

Once you have analyzed what is there and what is not, and you may want to expand your library or select new texts. You may find Teaching Tolerance’s text selection tools particularly helpful. The tool promotes a multi-dimensional approach to text selection that prioritizes: critical literacy, cultural responsiveness, and complexity.

Sources:

3. Interrogate Your Approaches to Text Analysis

Think about the ways in which you teach text analysis to your students. All of us want our students to be critical thinkers, but an anti-racist approach to ELA needs to do more than that. Does your analysis of texts
include critical literacy practices? How do you disrupt traditional texts in your classroom to bring in more critical perspectives?

**Part One: Critical Literacy**

Interrogating your approach to text analysis starts with an understanding of critical literacy. Critical literacy “refers to the use of technologies of print and other media of community to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rules systems, and practices governing the social fields of institutions and everyday life” (Luke, 2014, p. 21). Critical literacy is pedagogy that has the potential to transform lives and communities through a process of becoming aware of one’s experience relative to power relations, often realized through reading and writing. We encourage ELA teachers to apply a critical lens when approaching literature.

For practical suggestions, we draw on Haddix and Rojas’s (2011) questions as a framework for interrogating texts. When analyzing texts, consider these questions from Haddix and Rojas (2011):

1. Who was the text written for?
2. Whose perspective and narratives are omitted or silenced by this text?
3. What are the cultural meanings and possible readings that can be constructed from this text?
4. What is the text trying to do to me? Or how is the text positioning me as the reader?

It is important for you and your students to ask these questions. When teaching from a critical literacy lens, it is also important for your students to know that you are intentionally taking a critical literacy approach to texts.

**Part Two: Extending the Critical Literacy Lens**

Haddix and Rojas’s (2011) also offer an extended critique to examine “what critical literacy makes possible and what such analyses leave out” (p. 22). To avoid one construction of knowledge, teachers can also ask these questions from Haddix and Rojas (2011):

1. How is the literature and curriculum defined within this critical literacy approach?
2. How is the analysis of these texts (literature and curriculum) defined by particular discourses?
3. How can these discourses be altered, interrupted, resisted?
4. What subjectivities constitute and are constituted through these discourses (and what “new” subjectivities might be constructed)?

**Sources:**

**Part Three: Bring Your Lenses to Action -- #DisruptTexts**

English Language Arts teachers have the ability to challenge the traditional, white-centered canon that are often core texts in current curricula. How can teachers teach the canon while pushing for restorative practices that repair “historic harm inflicted on students who endure school systems that perpetuate racial inequities” (NCTE 2020 Call)? How can we build an inclusive and equitable ELA curriculum by disrupting texts?
Listen & Reflect ⇔ Read ⇔ Interrogate ⇔ Act ⇔ Repeat

We encourage ELA teachers to check out #DisruptTexts, which is “is a crowdsourced, grassroots effort by teachers for teachers to challenge the traditional canon in order to create a more inclusive, representative, and equitable language arts curriculum that our students deserve.”

Educators who want to #disrupttexts should consider their four core principles:
   a) interrogating our biases to understand how they inform our teaching practices
   b) centering the authentic voices and lived experiences of people of color
   c) applying a critical literacy lens to our teaching practices that is anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-bias
   d) working in community with other educators, particularly Black, Indigenous, and educators of color.

Visit their website to join the effort and also join #DisruptTexts Twitter Chats.

4. Interrogate Your Approaches to Writing

Consider the kinds of writing that are privileged in your curriculum. What ways of writing, what genres, what Englishes are valued or valorized? Whose ways with words are marginalized by the kinds of speaking and writing that are privileged in your classroom?

In 1974 the Conference on College Composition and Communication, in their statement affirming students’ right to their own language wrote, “[w]e need to ask ourselves whether the rejection of students who do not adopt the dialect most familiar to us is based on any real merit in our dialect or whether we are actually rejecting the students themselves, rejecting them because of their racial, social, and cultural origins” (3). Although English teachers understand the connection between students’ identities and the subject matter, and often consider this in their text selection, including diverse English varieties as legitimate content in our study of the English language has been slow to catch on.

English teachers’ understanding of the purposes of schooling: a common language, a common curriculum, a common citizenship are often at the core of the hesitation to include, teach, and support the use and knowledge of English language variation. Many English teachers see teaching Standardized English as a way of offering access to students and creating commonality among them. From this we get rules about whether it’s acceptable to begin sentences with ‘and’ or ‘because’ and whether it’s permissible to use ‘I’ in writing. Yet if we look at many of the lauded texts, they routinely snub their noses at and break these rules. The questions, then, are:

- Why are some writers ‘allowed’ and even applauded for breaking the rules while others are stigmatized?
- How do we offer students’ similar space, freedom, and knowledge to write?
- Where do these ‘rules,’ come from, and why are they ‘rules’?
- How do we equip students with the knowledge of a variety of Englishes and the spaces to wield them mightily?

Many of us were not trained to teach English language variation and the grammar of those Englishes. Thankfully there is a growing collection of resources to better understand language change as a normal function of a living language (See Anne Curzan’s TED talk and Jamila Lyiscott’s TED talk 1 or TED talk 2 ), the harm that deficit views of dialects of English cause, such as April Baker-Bell’s new book, Linguistic
Listen & Reflect ⇔ Read ⇔ Interrogate ⇔ Act ⇔ Repeat

**Justice**, and ways to prepare and equitably teach about English language variations (see Mike Metz’ Resources for teaching in Culturally and Linguistically Complex Classrooms and Chris Palmer’s Teaching Language Variation in the Classroom).

Series Editors Valerie Kinloch and Susi Long write that Linguistic Justice “offers us an Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy as an approach that rejects the shaming of, and the linguistic violence experienced by, Black people...This approach also helps teachers and researchers come to terms with the many different ways Anti-Black Linguistic Racism gets dangerously normalized in our teaching and pedagogical engagements...” Dr. Baker-Bell’s book gives nuanced insight into how to interrogate the views of dialect, sentence structure, grammar that have historically guided writing instruction and is also causing linguistic violence for Black children.

We know that secondary ELA writing teachers can either be “gatekeepers or guides” (McBee Orzulak, 2013). Learning more about the ways language works can support you in bolstering students’ abilities to write for a range of audiences through various forms. Thus, in interrogating your approaches to writing:

- consider the range of ways humans engage in writing;
- consider the real power hierarchies embedded in written communication;
- work to make those ways of writing and power hierarchies transparent in classrooms;
- support students in understanding the ideologies surrounding written communication; and
- prepare them to write across various situations.

Source:

**STEP 4: ACT**

The last and most important step is to act. How can we move listening to action, reflection to change, and interrogation to transformation? In “What Anti-Racist Teachers Do” the NCTE’s Standing Committee Against Racism and Bias in the Teaching of English offers practical suggestions below:

- **OPPOSE** English-only policies because censorship deprives linguistically, ethnically, and culturally diverse students of their voices.
- **RECOGNIZE** the importance of adequate materials in students’ first language(s).
- **SEEK** training in English language diversity.
- **WORK** against implicit bias against students of color.
- **AFFIRM** students of color, multiple Englishes, multicultural practices, and identity expression.
- **INCLUDE** culturally and ethnically relevant and sustaining materials belonging in all learning spaces.
- **CELEBRATE** and respect the power of communities of color reading in their heritage language and in their own customs.
- **ADOPT** teaching stances that are anthropologically and ethnographically informed.
English teachers know that language has power. In acting, we want to be sensitive, intentional, and reflective in our language that can lead to action. In this section, we offer some practical and tangible ways to act within and beyond your schooling institutions.

### 1. School Culture

In moving beyond interrogation, we ask you to start with your larger school community. For starters, share what you are reading and learning about anti-racist teaching with your colleagues. Invite them to read and plan along with you. Think about how you, as an English teacher, can work across and with other disciplines and content areas. How might working collaboratively with your social studies colleagues, or art colleagues, or even math colleagues open up new spaces and ideas for teaching language arts content and pedagogy that are anti-racist?

Working with your principal, find opportunities to make anti-racist professional development consistently part of the fabric of your school culture. Partner with and advocate for your library media specialist to examine what books are being checked out in the library, what diversity book gaps are present, and how library spaces might be transformed into welcoming places, rather than another place that is policing black and brown bodies. Consider and work to change how your school’s library fine policies present an economic barrier in accessing library materials and services for marginalized students.

Advocate for and commit to hiring BIPOC English teachers (and other subject area teachers) in your school. If you do not have teachers of color applying to work at your school, address why that may be. Actively reach out to and recruit from historically black colleges and universities, and make sure your school has adequate mentorship available so as to retain them. Your school, your students, and your community will all benefit from a diversity of voices and perspectives.

Reexamine your policies for who is allowed or offered advanced, honors, Advanced Placement, or IB English courses. Are there policies, ideologies, people standing in the way for students of color to take these courses? Determine whether your school’s tracking system has allowed for the advancement of students of color or has hindered their ability to achieve as equally as their white peers. If not, pilot new ways of organizing classes to eliminate such barriers.

### 2. Standards

Beyond incorporating ELA state standards, we encourage ELA teachers to explore, examine, and incorporate social justice standards into their curriculum. If we want students to meet our content area standards, how much more essential is it for them to understand and apply ways to make their world a more equitable environment?

*Teaching Tolerance* offers twenty Social Justice Standards around four anchor standards and domains: Identity, Diversity, Justice, and Action (IDJA). According to their site, “the standards are leveled for every stage of K–12 education and include school-based scenarios to show what anti-bias attitudes and behavior may look like in the classroom.”
Listen & Reflect ⇔ Read ⇔ Interrogate ⇔ Act ⇔ Repeat

Some examples of these standards include:

- 5. Students will recognize traits of the dominant culture, their home culture, and other cultures, and understand how they negotiate their own identity in multiple spaces (Identity)
- 7. Students will develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups (Diversity)
- 11. Students will recognize stereotypes and relate to people as individuals rather than representatives of groups. (Justice)
- 19. Students will make principled decisions about when and how to take a stand against bias and injustice in their everyday lives and will do so despite negative peer or group pressure (Action)

As you reexamine your curriculum, intentionally plan for ways you may incorporate these standards into your lessons.

3. Students

Becoming an anti-racist ELA educator includes affirming your students’ heritage, racial and cultural backgrounds and identities, and their language choices. This should move beyond just a “holidays and heroes” approach in which multicultural education consists primarily of ethnic celebrations and acknowledgment of “great men” during one month or event of the year, but understandings of culture and race in relation to structural issues and power are addressed in superficial, artificial, or stereotypical ways (Nieto, 2017).

Part One: Amplifying Student Voices

One way to do this is to amplify the strengths, identities, and voices of students through writing and activism. Students have powerful words to share that exemplify, express, and teach the community about their experiences, learning, and growth. Particularly for students who are marginalized due to social inequities, it is important for their voices to be heard and their stories to be known. To illustrate how to do anti-racist amplification of youth voices, we share a few examples in our area. We encourage you to modify these examples or research and partner with teachers and/or local community organizations that are devoted to working with and amplifying the brilliance of youth of color.

One example of such an organization in Raleigh, NC is #PassTheMicYouth, which seeks to amplify the voices of young people by sharing their lived experiences and stories of activism through a podcast and blog.

Another example is the Literacy and Community Initiative (LCI), founded by Crystal, which partners with community-based organizations (e.g. Bull City YouthBuild, Juntos NC, and CORRAL Riding Academy) to examine and empower youth voices. The mission is to amplify historically and currently underserved student voices through student publications, advocacy, and leadership.

To celebrate and affirm these students’ writing, we include their published works and respective reading and educator guides below so you may read, learn from, and support the work of youth who are currently marginalized due to social inequities. Their words are powerful and true. Whether you use these youth voices in your classroom, or you find or create ones in your local community to use, students’ stories and narratives can be just as powerful, if not more, than texts in the literary canon.
Texts and Resources

A Leg Up by CORRAL Riding Academy Students
- Reading and Discussion Guide: A Leg Up
- Educator’s Guide: A Leg Up

See Unbroken Pieces Through the Shadows by Bull City YouthBuild Students
- Reading and Discussion Guide: See Unbroken Pieces Through the Shadows
- Educator’s Guide: See Unbroken Pieces Through the Shadows

The Voices of Our People: Nuestras Verdades (Bilingual in English and Spanish) by Juntos NC Students
- Reading and Discussion Guide: The Voices of Our People: Nuestras Verdades
- Educator’s Guide: The Voices of Our People: Nuestras Verdades

Part Two: Five Steps for Centering and Publishing Youth Voices

Below, The Literacy and Community Initiative offers five steps for classroom teachers to center and publish youth voices.

- **Write:** When implementing an inclusive writing curriculum, start by asking: "Why write?" and give your students voice and choice in their writing tasks by considering themes, topics, and genres that are intentionally designed to meet their needs. Consider varied genres such as poetry, narrative, memoir, essays, letters, multimodal creations, and autoethnographies. The key is letting students express themselves, their lived realities, and their communities. See LCI’s curriculum guide here.

- **Revise and Edit:** After each writing task, give students a chance to edit their own pieces through guided peer reviews, whole-class workshop models, or individual conferencing. Use posters, steps, and guidelines for editing offering concrete and practical steps for this process. Edit alongside your students--show them that writing is a process that takes time, effort, and care. Focus on meeting your students where they are.

- **Publish:** There are various self-publishing resources online for teachers or individuals should you want to create a finished book. However, sharing your students’ work online, at your school library, with other ELA classes, or even for a parent's night can achieve similar effects of amplifying your students as writers and advocates for their community.

- **Celebrate:** After publication or sharing their work, make time to celebrate them. Your students deserve acknowledgment for their hard work. We recommend that teachers always leave time for these community-building moments in their classrooms. See an example of a celebration here.

- **Engage and Lead:** Create and organize opportunities for your students to share their work beyond the classroom. What community spaces are available for a public reading? Who do your students want to invite to hear their voices and learn from their stories? How can the community learn from your students? See an example here of an LCI students’ podcast with #PassTheMicYouth.

Source:
4. Texts

Another way to take your interrogation into action is to add, replace, or remove books from your curriculum or classroom library that no longer suit the needs of your community or will help you to enact the vision of Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop’s (1990) windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors. Below we offer some of our favorite recommendations for texts in middle and high school English language arts classrooms that celebrate blackness or provide insights into what it means to be a Black person in America today.

There are many more amazing books out there, and we encourage you to use some of the following websites that are devoted to diversity in the book industry. These include: Diverse Book Finder; Embrace Race; The Brown Bookshelf; We Need Diverse Books; The Cooperative Children’s Book Center; Social Justice Books; American Indians in Children’s Literature; Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators; Latinxs in Kid Lit; ¡Colorín Colorado!; Reading While White; CrazyQuiltEdi; #ProjectLitCommunity; Worlds of Words; Lee & Low Books; Rich in Color

**Middle School Recommendations**

*denotes the text works in high school, too.

- **A Good Kind of Trouble** by Lisa Moore Ramée
- **All American Boys** by Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely *
- **Bad Boy** by Walter Dean Myers
- **Black Brother, Black Brother** by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- **Black Enough: Stories of Being Young & Black in America** edited by Ibi Zaboi *
- **Blended** by Sharon Draper
- **Brown Girl Dreaming** by Jacqueline Woodson
- **From the Desk of Zoe Washington** by Janae Marks
- **If You Come Softly** by Jacqueline Woodson
- **New Kid** by Jerry Craft
- **Piecing Me Together** by Renee Watson
- **The Parker Inheritance** by Varian Johnson
- **The Season of Styx Malone** by Kekla Magoon
Listen & Reflect ⇔ Read ⇔ Interrogate ⇔ Act ⇔ Repeat

_The Skin I’m In_ by Sharon G. Flake

_Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky_ by Kwame Mbalia

_Woke: A Young Poet’s Call to Justice_ by Mahogany L. Browne, Elizabeth Acevedo, Olivia Gatwood, & Theodore Taylor, III *

**High School Recommendations**

_All Boys Aren’t Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto_ by George M. Johns

_Americanah_ by Chimamanda Adichie

_American Street_ by Ibi Zoboi

_Becoming_ by Michelle Obama

_Between the World and Me_ by Ta-Nehisi Coates

_Citizen: An American Lyric_ by Claudia Rankine

_Dear Martin_ by Nic Stone

_Don’t Call us Dead: Poems_ by Danez Smith

_I am Alfonso Jones_ by Tony Medina

_Just Mercy_ by Bryan Stevenson

_Long Way Down_ by Jason Reynolds

_On the Come Up_ by Angie Thomas

_Pride_ by Ibi Zoboi

_SLAY_ by Brittney Morris

_The Hate U Give_ by Angie Thomas

_The Nickel Boys_ by Colson Whitehead

We also acknowledge that adding diverse books into our classroom spaces is _not enough_. It’s equally important to think about what you are doing with these texts, how you are talking about these texts, and what lessons and activities are built around these texts. Anti-racist education moves beyond mere inclusion to addressing inequities, discussing and unpacking privilege and racism today, celebrating cultural knowledge and assets, and disrupting status quo and long-held norms and institutional practices that prevent or thwart equality for all. You may find that Stuart Hall’s (1980) reception theory is a helpful tool for enacting
anti-racist and culturally responsive readings of texts. Building on this theory, *Teaching Tolerance* offers suggestions for how to Read Against the Grain.

**Sources:**

5. Actions to STOP

Although it is important to take action in your classroom and school. There are just a few things you should stop doing.

- Please do **not** call on your Black or minoritized students/faculty to speak on behalf of all BIPOC.
- Please do **not** mispronounce your students’ names. Take the time to learn proper pronunciation. Apologize when you get names wrong, and work really hard to rectify for the future. It shows you care enough to humanize them and their cultural identity.
- Please do **not** do a separate “diversity unit” or “multicultural unit.” Being Black, Asian, or Latinx, for example, is not something that lasts for one month or one unit. This articulates that white experiences are the default, which they should not be.
- Please do **not** use racially coded or racist language, like “ghetto,” “thug,” “sketchy,” “upppity,” the “N-word,” or “the peanut gallery.” These words are used to dehumanize Black people. As a language arts teacher, we know words and language hold power; so use that power for the better.
- Please do **not** buy prepackaged, ready-made anti-racist materials, and use them without critical thought. You cannot shortcut or sidestep the hard work by buying someone else's.

**STEP 5: REPEAT**

The work an anti-racist educator needs to do is never done. Step five reminds you that when you think you are done, you should return to Step 1, or whatever step you need to revisit. Anti-racist and anti-bias education is a life-long commitment and practice.

We encourage you to share your efforts towards becoming an anti-racist ELA teacher with other colleagues as a way to be accountable to this work and to dialogue about ways to do better as a community. Please make a copy of this document for yourself, and add to it. Revisit the steps often and make small improvements each day. Small steps can lead to larger ones.

As Michelle Obama reminds us in her memoir *Becoming*, “becoming isn’t about arriving somewhere or achieving a certain aim. I see it instead as forward motion, a means of evolving, a way to reach continuously toward a better self. The journey doesn’t end.” This process is also a charge for us (Michelle, Chandra, and Crystal) to continue this journey to unlearn and learn and to continually evolve as we become anti-racist educators with you.

*We hope you join us.*
AUTHOR BIOS

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