# Frequently Asked Questions about EDI from Educators

## Question 1: Supporting BIPOC Students

*Often, I am aware that I may only have one BIPOC in my classroom and I fear that they may feel too much responsibility for being willing to speak out when they may not be ready. Aside from private conversations and check ins are there specific strategies to prevent this?*

*I have struggled with supporting my BIPOC students and educating students who have hurtful views, and sometimes feel stuck. Any advice about how to educate students about race and colonization, yet still make my BIPOC students feel heard and seen?*

## Answer:

- As with all students, building a positive relationship of trust is the first step. Informal chats should be about other subjects like their interests, favourite subjects so you show you are getting to know them beyond just 'race' topics.
- Once you have built a relationship, you should ask them how they think you could best support them. Do not choose or decide for them! Suggested language: *"I know it's not easy being the only [ racialized] student in this class. Let me know what I can do to make things easier for you. Anything at all."* Some BIPOC students may feel empowered by having a voice to speak while others might be shy/hesitant to have the spotlight on them. This shows that you care and are aware that they might feel uncomfortable.

# Question 2: Addressing Offensive Language in Text

*Some own voice texts include racial slurs, and some contain slurs used in as reclaimed/in group language. I usually start with a lesson about reclaimed language and the power of words that includes reading short pieces, considering ourselves as social texts and Journaling. I explain that I will sensor myself as we read and if I am quoting in writing, and how and why I will do so. Then I ask each student to think carefully for themselves about what words it is and is not appropriate for them to use when we are reading or writing someone else's words...do you have any guidelines or suggestions for handling the issue of reclaimed language in a classroom context?*

## Answer:
- It is NEVER acceptable for a teacher to utter any racial slur/pejorative terms even if it's in the text, lyrics etc.
- Explain the historical reasons behind the offensive language and that those historical words are still used to hurt others.
- Reclaimed language is used ONLY by members who are of the same community/'race' and even so, there is no consensus on the usage of such terms.
- Zero tolerance for the use of racist terms among students.
- When offensive language comes up when reading, the teacher should model by refraining from saying the word and explain why authors might choose to use certain offensive words.
- Explain that the words are hurtful to many and that because the author chose it does not mean that it's acceptable to say aloud.
- It's important to understand that because one person who is a member of the targeted group thinks it's 'okay' doesn't mean that it's okay for everyone.

# Question 3: Strategies for Developing Confidence to Address Difficult Issues

*How can we help staff feel confident in their approach to hard topics/issues in their classrooms? Often the hesitation comes from worry or concern for doing it the wrong way - how do we bolster confidence so that teachers are willing to teach about challenging things?*

## Answer:

- Recognize that you are on a journey that will take a long time.
- Invite experts or guest speakers to address topics to build your knowledge and confidence (e.g. Indigenous Elders).
- Cultivate EDI resources/people who you can bounce ideas off and consult with if uncertain.
- Engage in ongoing professional learning that focuses on EDI.
- Teachers are learners: READ, READ, and READ some more.

## Diversity and Equity Resource for Teachers

- Queen's University (Anti-racism education guide)
  https://educ.queensu.ca/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.educwww/files/files/ScholarStrike%20Resources%20FINAL1.pdf
- http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/Equity-Incl_Compendium/Equity%20Res%20Compendium%20-FINALSeptember%202012.pdf
- https://www.osstf.on.ca/resource-centre.aspx
- https://www.etfo.ca/BuildingAJustSociety/anti-blackracism/Pages/anti-blackracism.aspx
- https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-its-time-to-completely-ban-the-n-word-in-schools/2019/10
- https://facingcanada.facinghistory.org/thoughtfully-choosing-texts