

Caring and Connection in a New Era

How School Leaders Support Anti-Racist Social-Emotional Learning



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Agenda

- Acknowledgement of the Land
- Acknowledgement of the Moment
- Defining racism, anti-racism, and anti-racist SEL
- Anti-racist SEL Leadership: Creating Conditions
 - Classroom Level
 - School Level
 - District level
- Lingering questions and tensions
- Discussion!

Facilitator & Moderator



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Acknowledgement of the Land



Acknowledgement of the Land

“WE BEGIN BY ACKNOWLEDGING THAT WE ARE ON THE ANCESTRAL LAND STEWARDED SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL BY THE SALISH PEOPLE OF THE DUWAMISH, GREEN, WHITE, CEDAR, AND UPPER PUYALLUP RIVERS, MANY OF THESE GIVING BIRTH TO THE CONTEMPORARY CITIZENS OF THE MUCKLESHOOT INDIAN TRIBE. WE HONOR AND GIVE THANKS THAT WE ARE ABLE TO COLLECTIVELY ENGAGE IN THIS CONVERSATION ON THEIR SACRED HOMELANDS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF TEACHING AND CARING FOR OUR SACRED CHILDREN AND YOUTH.”



Acknowledgement of the Moment

- Reckoning as a nation
- Reckoning as a RULER community



What is Anti-Racism?

Racism is

- A violent system of oppression and advantage based on race
- An ongoing pandemic, seen and unseen

Anti-Racism is

- Not a metaphor to assuage white guilt
- Compelling us to re-examine “neutral” activities such as SEL

What is Anti-Racist SEL?

Anti-racist SEL is the process of **understanding** and **addressing** the intersections of emotion and social differences, including class, gender, disability, race, and ethnicity.

An anti-racist SEL approach **values differences**, recognizes how they shape students' experiences, **and challenges deficit perspectives** about students' family and community wellness practices.

What is Anti-Racist SEL?

The Scenario

A White kindergarten teacher noticed a White student comment about a Black classmate's hair during work time.

The teacher convened a community circle and led a discussion to affirm the beautiful qualities of diverse hair textures and colors.

- Communicated that noticing racial differences was appropriate
- Showed that *difference* from a White “normal” does not mean *worse* or *less*
- Recognized a moment with racialized meaning
- Used an SEL structure explicitly discuss race
- Acknowledged emotions her BIPOC students might be feeling
- Built White students' capacity to respectfully discuss race

How might anti-racist
SEL leadership actions
look in your context?

Anti-Racist SEL Leadership

- The Challenge
- The Power of Leadership
- Our Study
 - How do leaders support anti-racist SEL?
 - Observations and interview with 3 exceptional leaders
 - Each leader used SEL to reshape schools and classrooms to center BIPOC students' feelings and experiences

Classroom-level Leadership Actions



- Use SEL to directly discuss race and racism
- Integrate SEL across content areas
- Use SEL to connect with and learn from students and families
- Adapt SEL to your students and community

School-level Leadership Actions



- Pair professional learning about SEL with learning about race and racism
- Encourage staff to use SEL to regulate emotions while learning about race and racism
- Leverage SEL to help teachers overcome fears about anti-racist teaching

District-Level Leadership Actions



The screenshot shows the Highline Public Schools website. At the top left is the Highline Public Schools logo. To the right of the logo are navigation links: "2021 Learning", "About", and "School & Learning Sites". Below the navigation is a breadcrumb trail: "HOME > DEPARTMENTS > CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION > SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING". The main heading is "SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING" in large blue letters. Below that is the sub-heading "Families as Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Experts". The main text reads: "We believe that families are students' first and forever teachers. Social emotional learning (SEL) is a set of skills and practices that families and communities have been developing and fostering for generations. The school system has only recently recognized the deep impacts of these skills and practices on all learning outcomes, and now that research in the learning sciences has solidly validated these findings, we seek to integrate social emotional learning across all classrooms in partnership with our families."

- Broaden **stakeholder** definition & codify collaboration = families as SEL experts
- **Antiracism is a verb** & demands **investing** in policy, structures & people

District-Level Leadership Actions



“Today, we lean into the challenge and priority to be an **anti-racist institution**, understanding that this will be a key lever in eliminating opportunity and achievements gaps.”

-Highline Public Schools, School Board, 2020

- ***Sponsorship, advocacy, policy, & representation*** matter
- Dismantling + rebuilding racist school systems requires ***critical*** design approach & principles (like UDL)

Lingering Questions and Tensions



- ***We don't have time:*** Academic integration, moving anti-racist SEL from periphery to center as contextual AND academic priorities
- ***We're not ready:*** Adult readiness, urgency, complicity, and “the meaning is in the mess” (Duncan-Andrade, 2019)

Takeaways

- Transformation is ongoing and difficult, but possible
- Anti-racist SEL leadership starts with critical self-reflection
- Cultivate authentic and just relationships with staff, families, and students
- Anti-racist SEL is a verb, not a metaphor

Thank You

“If you have come to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine then let’s work together.”

-Lilla Watson and Indigenous Activist Sisters