



College of

Education

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

## Leading Tips

*"Little moments, big impact."*

WSU College of Education's Educational Leadership Program is committed to quality leadership during this time of uncertainty and new circumstances. "Leading Tips" is a quick resource for educational leaders.

### "The Need for Anti-Racist School Leadership Now" by Katherine C. Rodela

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare existing inequities in and across our school systems, particularly highlighting disparities in food security, technology and internet access. While these highlight income inequalities, they also occur along racial lines. We know children of color are more likely to live in poverty. We also know that Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Micronesian Islander communities are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. We have also seen overt forms of racism hurting Asian communities in the US, and the continued racist violence against Black men and women.

School leaders committed to social justice and equity may feel overwhelmed by these clear injustices. What can school leaders do in the face of such injustice and racism? What is possible now as we continue to be physically distant from our communities? Here are a few practices that can help leaders committed to combating racism in their schools and communities:

- Commit to developing your own racial literacy now. The first step to combat racism is to commit to your own critical self reflection and learning. What is race? What impact does racism have on students of color? How can we talk about race and racism explicitly with our colleagues and staff? Commit to learning more about race and racism, and how it impacts the lives of students and families of color in your school and district. A few suggestions are provided below to begin this life-long journey.
- Conduct a community-based equity audit of your school. An equity audit is a dive into analyzing achievement, program, and teacher data to determine where there are disproportionate inequities impacting students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities, among others. A *community-based equity audit* creates a representative team of administrators, teachers, classified staff, families, youth, and other community members to facilitate an equity audit of school practices and data, based on the particular needs and values of the community.
- Support, mentor, and be an ally to teachers, staff, and administrators of color. Research suggests that educators of color have a positive impact on all students. Yet, educators and leaders of color are vastly underrepresented in our districts. A critical question to ask yourself is: How supportive and inclusive is our staff to educators of color? Often the burden of "equity work" is put on the shoulders of staff of color without much recognition for this work (or the emotional toil it takes). Consider how educators of color are supported (or not) in your district. Seek out ways to mentor and be an authentic ally to them. *This does not mean to make them responsible for teaching everyone how to be anti-racist*, but to make conscious efforts to support their leadership and professional development.
- Speak up explicitly against racism and injustice in your communities. We may be physically distant from our schools and staff now, but there are ways to still speak against racism and injustice. There are ways to still show your commitment to being an ally and anti-racist leader. Use this distance to plan for anti-racist professional learning. Develop discussion norms with colleagues to discuss racism and equity issues among your staff. Strengthen your ability to call out race and racism, particularly in the common everyday form of *deficit-based comments about students and families*.

As you make these plans, consider how you show up for people of color and speak up now. In a staff meeting, take a few minutes to acknowledge the impacts the recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery may have on your school community, particularly Black and African American students and families. Hold a moment of silence to honor their memory and speak their names. Acknowledge with your staff the stress coronavirus racism may be having on your Asian and Asian American students, and discuss ways to support them or connect with local Asian and Pacific Islander community organizations. Discuss the disparate impacts the virus is having on Indigenous, Micronesian Islander, Black, and Latinx communities. Share with them your own learning about racism and model being an anti-racist leader.

*The most important step you can take to combat racism is to not remain silent about injustices in your community. Students, families, and colleagues of color will notice a shift in how you are able to talk and address racism and other forms of oppression. This work will not be easy and will be uncomfortable. But, remember, our comfort as professional educators and leaders is not more important than the safety, belonging, survival, and success of our students and communities.*

Suggested readings & websites:

- *How to be an antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Everyday Antiracism: Getting real about race in school* by Mica Pollock (Ed.)
- [\*When race enters the room: Improving leadership and learning through racial literacy\*](#) by Sonya Douglass Horsford
- [\*Community-based equity audits: A practical approach for educational leaders to support equitable community-school improvement\*](#) by Terrance L. Green
- [\*What White Colleagues Need to Understand\*](#) by Clarice Brazas & Charlie McGeehan
- [\*How to respond to coronavirus racism\*](#) by Teaching Tolerance

## Your Statewide Educational Leadership Team...



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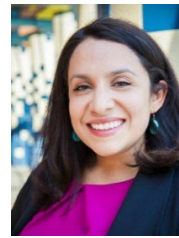
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