

Racial Equity Messaging Spectrum



Instructions: Evaluate where your audience/conversation partner is on the spectrum of emotion surrounding the issue of racial equity in education. Then, use corresponding messages in the tables below to invite them to shift to a more positive emotion.

OPPOSITION:	 VIOLENCE	 CONTEMPT	 AVERSION
TRANSITION:	 DISCOMFORT	 SUSPICION	 AMBIVALENCE
SUPPORT:	 ACCEPTANCE	 AFFIRMATION	 ACTIVISM

“What we can agree on...”

Goal: Move from outright violence and contempt or fear to mild aversion and discomfort.

-  Our goal is to propel young people in our community towards a promising future.
-  We can move forward as planned with our school year if we commit to building strong relationships in our community and having direct conversations about issues that arise.
-  We want our classrooms to be calm and collected so students can learn.
-  *Invite direct conversation: “I’d like to connect with you about your concerns directly. Would you be willing to speak with me one-on-one before you bring your concerns to other groups of people?”*
-  As [leadership role], my responsibility is to support our district and bridge divides in order to ensure a calm, coordinated, and welcoming school environment so that teaching and learning can continue as planned.
-  All around the state, students, families, and teachers are under a tremendous amount of stress. Let’s start off the school year with care and connection. If you’re worried about something, you can come to talk to me about it.
-  We are greater than any fear politicians and pundits can stir up, and we [can turn to each other/can practice turning to each other] with trust and support for a great school year ahead.

Above all, [our/my] goal is to bridge divides and ensure that every student feels welcome and a sense of belonging at school — so they can reach their full potential.

Empathize: "I see how much you care about your child. I hope you can understand that it's my responsibility to show the same level of care for all students in our [school/district] so it's important that I can listen and hear concerns from many different people."

"Here's what's really happening in our classroom..."

Goal: Move from aversion and discomfort towards ambivalence and acceptance.

Ask: "What concerns you about [making sure every student has a strong understanding of culture and race as part of their education]?"

Students and teachers all benefit from a calm, collected, and [orderly/safe] learning environment.

Learning about truthful histories can bring up painful emotions in young people and adults. We can and should expect strong emotions to come up. Learning environments should create intentional space for listening, sharing stories, healing, and deepening relationships across our differences. These are the conditions for genuine belonging.

A shared, honest understanding of [the past/each other's cultures] bridges divides.

Teachers who talk about culture and race can give students mirrors that reflect their identity, and windows into the world to connect with other cultures.

Young people are curious and need time and space in school to talk about what's happening in the world around them.

Have you seen our district's [strategy/plan]? I'd love to share it with you and explain exactly how racial equity fits into that and into our curriculum.

Talking about race and different cultures isn't about blame; it's about understanding each other.

It's important students see themselves represented in curricula whatever the subject matter - when young people see themselves in the curriculum, they're more engaged, they feel a sense of belonging, and they're more able to learn.

If we listen to students, they are well aware of the inequities they see and have experienced in their world. Teaching truthful histories helps them see themselves as part

of a bigger story. It gives them context for why things are the way they are today, so they can help us co-create better systems in the future.

Let's give teachers our trust as they start the year by creating care, connection, and curiosity that students need in order to learn.

“Our district is trying to advance racial equity because/by...”

Goal: Move from ambivalence and acceptance to affirmation and activism.

We all want to live in communities where we know we can depend on each other, no matter what we look like or where we come from.

Learning about different histories, races, and cultures helps us build connections across our differences. Educators [or teachers in our district] are experts at connecting curriculum to students' experiences, perspectives, histories & cultures.

Our work to [describe equity/culturally responsive work] is designed to benefit the specific students in our district who haven't been included in the past.

When students see themselves and each other in the curriculum, they have better relationships with their classmates, the classroom environment is calmer, and the school climate as a whole is improved.

Being at school should mean being a part of the community while working together to build on our strength and bridge divides.

Our district's goal is to make sure every student has equal opportunities to succeed in school and has access to accurate, comprehensive, and relevant curriculum. We are ensuring that each and every student has access to knowledge and skills as well as opportunities to grow, learn and thrive.

As our community returns to school, teachers need our support and trust to do what they do best: create a calm and caring environment for students to learn.

“To really move the needle, we need more vocal supporters like you...”

Goal: Move from affirmation to vocal support and activism.

Our education system and curriculum need to keep up with what students in our district are asking for. That means teaching in an honest and inclusive way, and addressing current events to prepare young people for their future lives and careers.

Our district recognizes the knowledge and unique lived experiences of the students in our classrooms. We are committed to providing culturally relevant and sustaining curriculum and experiences so that students are affirmed and validated for each of their unique histories and identities.

Let's support educators to reinforce equity in the classroom, and let's trust students to share and learn about what's happening in the world around them.

It's important to acknowledge the long and painful history of race and education in our state. Students are ready for systems and institutions to change for the better, and that's why our district is making sure racial equity is central.

Ask: If you speak to other [parents/community members], would you be willing to share some of what we talked about so their concerns can be alleviated?

Make the Message Your Own

Start with a message that resonates with an issue you're dealing with and matches up with the emotions involved for your audience. Then try one or more of these:

1. Make it specific to your district (ex. Here's what's happening in our schools...)

2. Tell a story (ex. I remember when I used to think X, and now I think Y because...)

3. Create a metaphor or analogy (ex. What would have happened if [historical figure] didn't know how to deal with or even talk about controversial issues?)