

RETHINKING WHITE PRIVILEGE: LESSON PLANS



ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO

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ETFO Statement and Definition of Equity, June 2011

It is the goal of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario to work with others to create schools, communities and a society free from all forms of individual and systemic discrimination. To further this goal, ETFO defines equity as fairness achieved through proactive measures which result in equality, promote diversity and foster respect and dignity for all.

RE💡THINK - RE📧CONNECT - RE❤️IMAGINE



Important to Read: Getting Started

Q: Why does rethinking White Privilege matter?

A: As educators, our goal is to create **inclusive** and engaging learning environments that support all of our students' successes. We recognize that teaching and learning is a journey that requires constant reflection and rethinking of our personal mindset and teaching practices. Part of this process means courageously and critically interrogating our own **biases** and stereotypes and how they have impacted on our personal and professional actions. As educators, we realize that both individual and systemic **racism** is a reality in our society and that both awareness and agency need to take place in order to effect change. These values and principles are supported within the provincial context of our Ministry of Education's initiatives and directions ([Ministry's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy](#), [Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan](#)) as well as [ETFO's Statement on Social Justice and Equity](#). These initiatives and guidelines address the necessity for pro-active, critical interrogation and agency in order to challenge individual and institutional racism.

There is extensive research and data to suggest that our current school system is failing many of our students. We need to address the opportunity/achievement gap and ensure that we are approaching the teaching of our students with an anti-racist framework and using a variety of teaching and learning strategies to meet the diverse needs of our students. The *Rethinking White Privilege* lessons are grounded in the research of Gloria Ladson-Billings' Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Louise Derman-Sparks' Anti-Bias Education goals. Both scholars speak significantly to the necessity for educators to critically reflect on our own assumptions and values, that our learning environments and programs need to reflect the realities, lived experiences and **identities** of all our students, parents and communities and that in order for individual and structural transformation to occur, all **stakeholders** need to understand issues of **power**, **privilege**, **marginalization** and positionality and how such concepts interact in different societal contexts. (Ladson-Billings 1995, 2014, Derman-Sparks 1989, 2009).

Q: Do I need to be an expert?

A: No, the lesson plans are organized using an inquiry-based approach, which means that you do not have to know all of the answers. It is important to create safe space for students to ask questions, reflect and think critically about the issues and ideas explored in the lessons. Learning in collaboration with students is a powerful way to acknowledge your own journey and to share responsibility for learning with your students. ETFO's resource on rethinking [White Privilege, Re-Think, Re-Connect, Re-Imagine: Thinking about Ourselves, Our Schools, Our Communities, Reflecting on White Privilege](#), has extensive background information for educators, as well as self-reflection questions that can be used in the classroom or in your own teaching practice.

Q: Is “Social Justice” or “Equity” even part of the curriculum?

A: Yes. It is our responsibility as educators to ensure that all of our students feel safe and included in our school [community](#). Within the written curriculum, there are many references to intentionally integrate Social Justice content and practices. For example, Ontario's Social Studies curriculum states “It is essential that learning activities and materials used to support the curriculum reflect the [diversity](#) of Ontario society” and that a key component of equity and inclusive education is to interrogate issues of power and privilege and challenge both individual and societal biases and assumptions (Ministry of Education, Social Studies, pp 44, 46).

In addition to the written curriculum, there is a “hidden curriculum” (Hargreaves 1982, Style 1995) which impacts our diverse teaching and learning experiences and includes all of the unspoken messages that we receive, such as curriculum materials, staff hiring, school assemblies, staff, student, community interactions/relationships, etc. Refer to the Ministry of Education's [Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan](#) for more details.

Q: What does it mean to be an ally?

A: An ally is a person of one identity group who supports the rights and works alongside a person of another identity group. Taking into consideration that power and privilege is at times based on context, the ally usually holds a different position of power than the person they are supporting. [Allyship](#) goes way beyond sympathy and help. An ally is someone whose personal commitment to fighting [oppression](#) and [prejudice](#) is reflected in willingness to:

1. Educate oneself about different identities and experiences;

2. Challenge one's own discomfort and prejudices;
3. Learn and practice the skills of being an ally; and
4. Take action to create interpersonal, societal and institutional change.

(Source: [What does it mean to be an ally? Definition and Characteristics](#))

With respect to anti-racist **activism** and issues of White Privilege, truly, we cannot call ourselves allies. It is a term that others bestow upon us based on our actions of support. Social justice educator, activist and writer Paul Kivel reminds us that there are very specific strategic actions one can take to be an effective ally ([Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies](#)).

Q: What if all of my students are White?

A: This work is relevant and important for all of our students, especially because we live in a diverse and global world. Even in more homogeneously White communities, racism and racialized power and marginalization has significant impact within micro and macro spaces. Building an understanding and critically interrogating assumptions, biases and stereotypes is an important first step for White and racialized people. We cannot work against racism within our society and be strong allies unless we develop a critical awareness and proactive stance toward fighting injustices that our neighbours experience. Additionally, race is not the only social identity we hold. Human beings are much more complex and understanding our distinct identities as well as our intersectionalities, within different contexts, where certain spaces might privilege or oppress us will make us fuller human beings as well as stronger social justice advocates.

ETFO's rethinking White Privilege resource is called **Re-Think, Re-Connect, Re-Imagine: Thinking about Ourselves, Our Schools, Our Communities, Reflecting on White Privilege**.

Re-thinking our teaching practice means reflecting on the choices we make everyday in the classroom and thinking critically about how our students are excluded or included in the learning process. Sometimes it means shifting power in the classroom to give students more of an active and collaborative role in their learning. It often means taking a risk and trying something new.

Re-connecting with our students means creating school communities that ensure every student feels listened to, valued and respected for who they are. It means acknowledging the multiple identities of our students and their families and finding meaningful ways to honour and integrate these identities throughout the curriculum.

Re-imagining our learning environments requires hope and courage. It requires that we trust the research and trust what we know to be true, intuitively, that when our students see themselves reflected throughout the curriculum and within the learning community, it increases student engagement, which in turn, leads to increased student achievement. Re-imagining our learning environments acknowledges the impact of systemic discrimination that continues to affect many of our students and recognizes the need to re-imagine a system where all students can feel successful.

Q: How do I start?

A: It is OK to feel uncomfortable or nervous about discussing complicated issues like White Privilege and anti-racism. It is OK not to know all of the definitions or vocabulary before you begin. Each *Rethinking White Privilege* lesson has prompts to use for discussion, as well as possible responses you might expect from students. There is also an extensive **glossary** with definitions that you can use for your own reference or share with students and display as anchor charts. It is always helpful to do this work with another committed educator to collaborate and/or reflect with you.

The *Rethinking White Privilege* lessons are organized into four sections: Myself, My Classroom, My School, My Community. Each lesson includes several activities, including Extensions and Next Steps. You are encouraged to choose lessons and adapt them for your unique classroom community.

Creating a classroom community that is safe and inclusive for all members of our school community is essential before any meaningful learning can begin. It is important to establish Classroom Agreements/Ground Rules at the beginning of the school year to support cooperative learning and behaviour management. The *Rethinking White Privilege* lessons can help to review or reinforce your Classroom Agreements and strengthen your school/classroom community.

Q: How can I assess this learning on the report card?

A: Each of the *Rethinking White Privilege* lessons lists the overall expectations and often integrates several subjects at once. Throughout the lesson, educators will find Success Criteria or “look-fors” to help guide formative assessment.

In addition to curriculum expectations, educators are encouraged to use the Learning Skills and Work Habits to assess their students. For example, when developing a rubric and Success Criteria for “Collaboration”, use “I” statements to encourage student self-assessment, such as:

- I work with my group to divide tasks in an equitable and inclusive manner.
- I complete my share of the work to the best of my ability within the timeline provided.
- I listen and speak respectfully and value the opinions of others.
- I think about how I relate to others and how I can carefully choose my words and actions.
- I use a variety of strategies when working with others to help the group reach a common goal.
- I am willing to revise my ideas and plans to achieve group goals.
- I contribute my ideas to support my groups when solving problems and making decisions.
- I ask questions to clarify our ideas.

(Ministry of Education, *Growing Success*, page 11)

Q: How do I use the lessons in *Rethinking White Privilege* and how are they set up?

A: Each lesson provides the following key features:

- Key questions and inquiry goals to guide and direct the focus of the discussions and lessons
- Curricular expectations within different subjects/strands that the lesson addresses
- Suggested prior knowledge students and educators ideally have engaged in prior to the lesson to fully benefit from its offerings
- Specific experiences of Activation/Minds-On, Learning Task, Consolidation, Individual Practice, Call for Action, Next Steps and Extensions

- Educator prompts written in red with guiding questions or specific instructions
- Suggested assessment tools and strategies for reference
- Additional resources for further support

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GLOSSARY



ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO

GLOSSARY

TERM	DEFINITION
Aboriginal peoples	Defined in section 35(2) of the <i>Constitution Act, 1982</i> , s: "... 'Aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada." Other terms used to encompass these diverse groups include First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI), Indigenous, Native and First Peoples. For the purpose of this resource, Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples will be used to respectfully acknowledge these original inhabitants of North America.
Activism	The action or policy of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change.
Advocacy	The act or process of supporting a cause.
Affirmative action	Affirmative action policies were developed to address long histories of discrimination faced by minorities and women. This term is primarily in use in the USA. In Canada, we have used the term "employment equity" since the 1980's.
Ally	Someone who works against the oppression of a specific social group(s), even though they do not belong to that group, such as a man who works to end sexism or a White person who stands up against racism. Becoming an ally involves acknowledging your own privilege and taking action towards social justice.
Allyship	Allyship is not an identity – it is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people. Allyship is not self-defined – our work and our efforts must be recognized by the people we seek to ally ourselves with.
Assimilation	The process by which a person or persons acquire the social and psychological characteristics of a dominant or majority group: e.g., "Waves of immigrants have been <i>assimilated</i> into the American culture."

TERM	DEFINITION
Barrier	An obstacle to entry in societal activities, created by the culture of the community or the dominant group, i.e., people's behavior towards newcomers or persons seen as “the other” (e.g., marginalized groups).
Bias	An opinion, preference or inclination that limits an individual's or a group's ability to make fair, objective or accurate judgements.
Class	Class is a relative social rank in terms of income, wealth, education, status/position and/or power.
Community	A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common; A feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals.
Courageous conversations	<p>Educator Glenn E. Singleton outlines Four Agreements to guide educators, students and community stakeholders when discussing race:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay Engaged; • Expect to Experience Discomfort; • Speak your Truth; and • Expect and Accept a Lack of Closure.

TERM	DEFINITION
Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP)	<p>Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy seeks to empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically. Educators who ascribe to this pedagogy foster student voice by:</p> <p><u>Holding high expectations</u> Educators, students, families and community stakeholders work together to create a culture of high expectations in the classroom by engaging in high-yield teaching strategies, consistent assessment and caring relationships.</p> <p><u>Acquiring cultural competence</u> Educators use students' cultures and connections to communities as a vehicle for learning.</p> <p><u>Nurturing critical consciousness</u> Educators provide opportunities for students to critique the cultural norms, values and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities.</p>
Diversity	<p>The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status.</p>
Employment equity	<p>Federal legislation, encouraging the establishment of working conditions that are free of barriers, correcting the conditions of disadvantage in employment and promoting implementation of special measures and the accommodation of differences for the four designated groups in Canada: women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and racialized persons.</p>
Equality	<p>The state or quality of being equal; correspondence in quantity, degree, value, rank or ability.</p>
Equity	<p>A condition or state of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.</p>
Eurocentric	<p>Focusing on European culture or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world; implicitly regarding European culture as preeminent.</p>

TERM	DEFINITION
Exclusion	The state of group disempowerment, degradation and disenfranchisement maintained by systemic barriers and supported by an implicit ideology of superiority.
Fairness	Having or exhibiting a disposition that is free of favouritism or bias; impartial.
First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI)	<p><i>First Nation.</i> A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word “Indian,” which many found offensive. The term <i>First Nation</i> has been adopted to replace the word “band” in the names of communities.</p> <p><i>Inuit.</i> Aboriginal people in northern Canada, living mainly in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, northern Quebec and Labrador. Ontario has a very small Inuit population. The Inuit are not covered by the Indian Act.</p> <p><i>Métis people.</i> People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry. The Métis history and culture draws on diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, Irish, French, Ojibwe and Cree.</p>
Gender expression	The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2012) defines <i>gender expression</i> as: “Gender expression is how a person publicly expresses or presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person’s chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender. Others perceive a person’s gender through these attributes.”
Gender identity	The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2012) defines <i>gender identity</i> as: “Gender identity is each person’s internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person’s sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person’s gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex.”
Identity	The concept a person develops about themselves that evolves over the course of their life. This may include aspects of life that they have no control over, such as where they grew up or the colour of their skin, as well as choices they make in life, such as how they spend their time and what they believe.
Inclusion	Creating an environment where people have both the feeling and reality of belonging and are able to achieve to their full potential.

TERM	DEFINITION
Inclusive	To include all, to be comprehensive.
Infrastructure	Refers to structures, systems and facilities serving the economy of a business, industry, country, city, town or area, including the services and facilities necessary for its economy to function.
Liberation	The act of setting someone free from imprisonment, slavery, oppression.
Marginalized	This term is used to refer to the process of making a group or class of people less important or relegated to a secondary position.
Meritocracy	A social system, society or organization in which people have power because of their abilities, not because of their money or social position.
Mobilize	To make ready for action and movement.
Newcomer	A) A person who is new to Canada who has come here either as an immigrant or refugee. B) A person who is new to a school.

TERM	DEFINITION
The Ontario Human Rights Code 1962 (OHRC)	<p>The <i>Ontario Human Rights Code 1962</i> prohibits discrimination against people based on a protected ground in a protected social area.</p> <p>Protected grounds are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Age; ● Ancestry, colour, race; ● Citizenship; ● Ethnic origin; ● Place of origin; ● Creed; ● Disability; ● Family status; ● Marital status (including single status); ● Gender identity, gender expression; ● Receipt of public assistance (in housing only); ● Record of offences (in employment only); and ● Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding). <p>Protected social areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accommodation (housing); ● Contracts; ● Employment; ● Goods, services and facilities; and ● Membership in unions, trade or professional associations.
Oppression	<p>How one group is dominated by another, more powerful, individual or group through physical, psychological, social or economic threats or force and frequently by an ideology of dominance.</p>
Power	<p>The capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.</p>

TERM	DEFINITION
Prejudice	A set of opinions about or attitudes towards a certain group or individuals within it that casts that groups and its members in an inferior light and for which there is no legitimate basis in fact. Usually a negative opinion formed before knowing all the facts.
Privilege	“Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do. Access to privilege doesn’t determine one’s outcomes, but it is definitely an asset that makes it more likely that whatever talent, ability, and aspirations a person with privilege has will result in something positive for them.” – Peggy McIntosh
Racialized peoples	Recognizing that race is a social construct, the Ontario Human Rights Commission describes people as “racialized person” or “racialized group” instead of the more outdated and inaccurate terms <i>racial minority</i> , <i>visible minority</i> , <i>person of colour</i> or <i>non-White</i> .
Racism	According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2012): “Racism is a belief that one group is superior to others. Racism can be openly displayed in racial jokes, slurs or hate crimes. It can also be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, people don’t even realize they have these beliefs. Instead, they are assumptions that have evolved over time and have become part of systems and institutions, and also associated with the dominant group’s power and privilege.”
Sexual orientation	A person’s attraction to someone of a different sex, the same sex or both sexes.
Socio-economic status	An economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education and occupation.
Stakeholder	A group/individual that has an interest in a particular issue or project and can affect or be affected by the outcomes.

TERM	DEFINITION
Systemic oppression	Systematic oppression is the mistreatment of people within a social identity group, supported and enforced by the society and its institutions, solely based on the person's membership in the social identity group.
Union or trade union	<p>A union is an organized group of workers who collectively use their strength to have a voice in their workplace. Through a union, workers have a right to impact wages, work hours, benefits, workplace health and safety, job training and other work-related issues. (Los Angeles County Federation of Labor)</p> <p>“trade union” means an organization of employees formed for purposes that include the regulation of relations between employees and employers (Ontario Labour Relations Act)</p>
Unfairness	Lack of equality or justice.
White Privilege	White Privilege is about the concrete benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society that Whites receive, unconsciously or consciously, by virtue of their skin colour in a racist society.