


Understanding racism / Icebreakers

Challenging racism quiz

 Suggested time: 15-20 minutes

Preparation

- Photocopy the required number of copies of the quiz.
- Photocopy the required number of answer sheets.

Small group activity

- Complete the questionnaire individually or in small groups.

Whole group activity

- Conduct a feedback session using the information in the answer sheet.
- Distribute answer sheets.

Quiz: Challenging racism

1. The Department's first Anti-Racism Policy was released in:

- a) 1988 b) 1990 c) 1992 d) 1994

2. A whole-school focus on anti-racism education for a period of a year can eradicate the influence of racism in a school community forever.

- a) True b) False

3. In a school community, tolerance of racist behaviours has negative impacts on:

- a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff
b) Students and staff who are migrants or children of migrants
c) Refugee students and staff
d) All students and staff

4. Deliberately avoiding sitting next to or working with students, staff or community members because they have Aboriginal or African or Asian features is an example of:

- a) Direct racism b) Indirect racism c) Institutional racism

5. The scheduling of a special event at a time of religious commitment for a particular group is an example of:

- a) Direct racism b) Indirect racism c) Institutional racism

6. Not applying for or denying special assistance for students, (for example, refugee assistance or Aboriginal Assistance), because it is not available to all students in the school community is an example of:

- a) Direct racism b) Indirect racism c) Institutional racism

7. Before you can take any action to challenge racism it is essential to establish whether an incident is an example of direct, indirect or institutional racism.

- a) True b) False

8. When a complaint about racism is received from a student about a staff member, investigating and finding an effective resolution to the complaint is the responsibility of:

- a) the Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO)
- b) the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (ACLO)
- c) the Principal and School Executive
- d) the Director Public Schools NSW

9. 'Treating everyone the same' is the best way to be fair and to avoid racism.

- a) True
- b) False

10. In NSW it is generally against the law to treat others unfairly or to harass them because of their 'race'.

Circle the three factors below which are not listed as unlawful under of the 'race' section of anti-discrimination law in NSW.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| colour | sexuality | nationality |
| ethnic background | marital status | race |
| ethno-religious background | age | descent |

Answer sheet

Quiz: Challenging racism

1. The Department's first Anti-Racism Policy was released in:

c) 1992

The Anti-Racism Policy Statement of the NSW Department of Education and Training was released in 1992. The revised Anti-Racism Policy was released in 2005 and applies to all staff and students in schools and other worksites of the NSW Department of Education and Communities.

2. A whole-school focus on anti-racism education for a period of a year can eradicate the influence of racism in a school community forever.

b) False

Schools are dynamic places that experience annual, and sometimes more frequent, movements of students and staff. Students transfer to other schools or graduate to take up further study or work, new students and families join the school community, some staff members leave and new people arrive.

Focusing on anti-racism in one year can have a great impact on the students, staff and community members present, but it will not reach any student, staff member or community member who was not at the school at the time.

When they enter a school, new students, staff and community members may bring attitudes, values, understandings and behaviours that fit well with the antiracism approach of their new school. On the other hand, new students, staff and community members may need to have the school's expectations made explicit and this usually requires some learning opportunities.

Effective schools realise that racism can re-emerge if left unchallenged and consequently include explicit anti-racism strategies targeting students, staff and community members within annual school management plans, as required by the Anti-Racism Policy.

3. In a school community, tolerance of racist behaviours has negative impacts on:

d) All students and staff

Tolerance of racist behaviours is not permitted by the Department's Anti-Racism Policy:

Racist behaviours can be one-off events or a series of 'small things' over time which are directed at individuals or groups because they:

- have some obvious physical difference, eg skin colour or facial features,
- speak with a distinctive accent when speaking English
- wear some defining apparel eg hijab (head scarf), skull cap or turban
- follow a distinctive religious practice eg Jews, Muslims.

Racist behaviours undermine an individual's peace of mind and motivation for coming to school or work. Racist behaviours can severely affect student learning at school.

Racist behaviours that are ignored, denied or tolerated do not just affect those who are targeted by the behaviours. The unhappiness, ill-feeling and disruptions they cause within classrooms, workplaces and school communities can unsettle and disrupt learning and working for everyone.

4. Deliberately avoiding sitting next to or working with a student, staff or community member because they have Aboriginal or African or Asian features is an example of:

a) Direct racism

5. The scheduling of a special event at a time of religious commitment for a particular group is an example of:

b) Indirect racism

6. Not applying for or denying special assistance for students, (for example, refugee assistance or Aboriginal Assistance), because it is not available to all students in the school community is an example of:

c) Institutional racism

Race-based attitudes and prejudice are the foundation of racist behaviours such as those highlighted in Questions 4, 5 and 6. No racism, whether direct, indirect or institutional, is permitted within the learning and working environments of the Department of Education and Communities.

In practice the distinctions between direct, indirect or institutional racism can be difficult to establish because all racism, including indirect and institutional racism, is directly experienced by individuals or groups.

Direct racism is experienced as words or actions deliberately targeted to embarrass, hurt, intimidate, disadvantage or exclude particular individuals or groups, (eg not inviting a Vietnamese staff member to have morning tea in the same place as other staff members or ridiculing or punching a Sikh boy for wearing a turban).

Indirect racism is experienced in similar ways to those of direct racism, but although the words or actions are felt by individuals or groups, the sources are characteristically located in less direct attitudes or practices, (eg 'treating everyone alike' which results in disadvantaging particular students.)

Institutional racism or systemic racism describes forms of racism which are structured into political and social institutions. It occurs when organisations, institutions or governments discriminate, either deliberately or indirectly, against certain groups of people to limit their rights. It regularly and systematically advantages some ethnic and cultural groups and disadvantages and marginalises others. For example, racism experienced by students at school may result in lower educational outcomes and students leaving school early, which leads to fewer employment opportunities and consequently higher levels of unemployment for these students when they leave school.

7. Before you can take any action to challenge racism it is essential to establish whether an incident is an example of direct, indirect or institutional racism.

b) False

No form of racism is permitted within the Department of Education and Communities. It is not necessary to determine whether an incident is direct, indirect or institutional racism before responding to it.

The classifications direct, indirect or institutional simply highlight that there are many ways in which the unwanted influence of racism can be expressed:

- intentional or unintentional behaviours by individuals or groups that are easily substantiated as race-based (direct)
 - intentional or unintentional behaviours by individuals or groups that may not be easily substantiated as race-based but nevertheless have negative affects for individuals or groups from particular cultural, linguistic or religious backgrounds (indirect)
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- attitudes, policies or practices within institutions or organisations that allow or promote behaviours which limit opportunities for individuals or groups from particular cultural, linguistic or religious backgrounds (institutional).

In some locations it may be helpful to take time to discuss the meanings of 'racist behaviours', 'racist acts', 'being racist' and 'being a racist'. If this is the case, a helpful starting point or conclusion may be that individuals who use racist behaviours (race-based insults, jokes, comments), are, in essence, committing racist acts, and they are being racist. However, being guilty of racist behaviours and being racist on occasions does not automatically indicate that an individual is a racist.

8. When a complaint about racism is received from a student about a staff member, investigating and finding an effective resolution to the complaint is the responsibility of:

- c) the Principal and School Executive

It is the responsibility of the Principal and School Executive to investigate and effectively resolve complaints about racism.

The Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO) is the trusted person to whom individuals and groups initially bring complaints about racist incidents which they have experienced or observed in the school. The ARCO may be asked to assist in seeking a resolution but it is not the ARCO's role to lead this process.

An Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (ACLO) can often be the first point of contact for Aboriginal students, family members and community people. Although ACLOs may assist the ARCO or Principal, it is not their responsibility to record, investigate or resolve complaints about racism.

In most circumstances complaints about racism will be resolved within a school community. There are circumstances, for example when the Principal is involved in the complaint or when a complaint has not been effectively been resolved, that the Director Public Schools NSW is responsible for investigating and effectively resolving complaints.

9. 'Treating everyone the same' is the best way to be fair and to avoid racism.

- b) False

In some circumstances 'treating everyone the same' at school can result in fairness for all students and avoid racism. The essential prerequisite is that there is a 'level playing field' when the treatment is given. For example, treating everyone the same results in fairness and avoids racism when all students, irrespective of their backgrounds and needs, are invited to participate in a charity walk-a-thon or can choose books to borrow from the library.

In most circumstances, however, 'treating everyone the same' does not result in fairness because the diversity in student backgrounds, talents and needs means there is rarely a level playing field at the start. Without a level playing field, some students are advantaged and some are disadvantaged by everyone being treated the same.

For example,

- expecting all students to read the same basic reader would 'treat everyone the same' but it would consistently disadvantage those students who have difficulty learning to read as well as those who are advanced readers for their age compelling all students to play tennis in summer would disadvantage those who excel in playing softball, cricket or swimming
- constraining all students to learning within programs offered by the school would disadvantage those students who could benefit from attending regional or state-wide talent development programs, eg sport, music, dance, drama, science, mathematics.

These examples are unlikely to occur in schools because few people would resist treating students differently in these cases.

On the other hand, a common area of concern about racism in schools relates to occasions when

'treating everyone the same' disadvantages particular students, often Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students or students from language backgrounds other than English. In these cases, 'treating everyone the same' and reluctance to treat students differently denies students support that they are entitled to receive on the grounds such as 'we can't give the same support to everyone who needs it so we won't give it to anyone.' It is in circumstances such as these, that is when students from particular backgrounds are disadvantaged, that concerns about a racial basis to such decisions can arise.

Treating students differently is not unfair, nor is it unfamiliar to schools. School communities in which concerns are raised about 'treating everyone the same' may benefit from time spent considering the underlying attitudes and values that are the foundation of the concerns.

10. In NSW it is generally against the law to treat others unfairly or to harass them because of their 'race'.

Circle the three factors below which are not listed as unlawful under of the 'race' section of anti-discrimination law in NSW.

sexuality marital status age

NSW Anti-Discrimination law states that:

- It is generally against the law to treat you unfairly, or harass you, because of your race, colour, nationality, descent, ethnic or ethno-religious background, or because of the race, colour, nationality, descent, ethnic or ethno-religious background of any of your relatives, friends or work colleagues.¹
- It is also unlawful to treat unfairly or harass individuals because of their sexuality, marital status or age but these factors are not aspects of unlawful race-based discrimination.

1 http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/adb/ll_adb.nsf/pages/adb_race