

Looking In to Speak Up: How White Educators Can Utilize Literacy to More
Confidently and Competently Discuss Race with Early Elementary Students

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Literacy Education

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

May 2022

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Description

I chose to complete my project in the form of a professional development opportunity which aims to answer the research question: *How can White educators utilize literacy to more confidently and competently discuss race and racism with their early elementary students?* Throughout my career in education, I have often heard rhetoric surrounding the increasing diversity of our students and our duty as educators to support this diversity and help all students grow and learn. The reality is, this narrative is often utterly surface level and it gives educators no guidance for how exactly to accomplish this goal. Educators, especially White educators, have a significant amount of inward learning to venture into before they can truly guide their diverse students' success in learning. My project provides a professional learning opportunity through which educators may engage in meaningful conversations with colleagues surrounding racism in education, deep self-reflection into one's own bias, and an exchange of ideas surrounding the use of

literacy to guide challenging discussions of race and racism with students. In order to cover these topics in sufficient depth and with adequate relationship building for vulnerable reflection and discussion, this professional learning course takes place over the course of five bi-weekly sessions, lasting 90 minutes each.

Throughout this course, entitled *Looking In to Speak Up*, educators learn from their own experiences as well as the experiences of others to better understand the role bias plays in their own classroom as well as the education system as a whole. Participants engage in a variety of self-reflective activities and collaborative learning opportunities. The main topics covered in the sessions include gaining a better understanding of

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contemporary racism and one's own bias, learning ways to interrupt and reconstruct these biases to gain confidence and competence when discussing race and racism with students and colleagues, and how to utilize the wealth of resources found within the field of literacy to address the topic of race and racism within the early elementary classroom.

Setting and Audience

This optional learning experience will take place in a non-school setting, such as a community center or library. This allows participants from different school settings to reflect on ideas of racism within the education system as a whole, rather than confined to the singular experiences of one school building. This non-school setting is also intended to provide a space where participants can feel safe and brave to speak candidly and be a vulnerable participant in the process. In order to feel comfortable opening up and becoming vulnerable when discussing tough, personal, and taboo topics, it is essential that participants choose to attend this learning experience of their own volition, rather

than be required to attend. Dedication to the goals of this professional development will be vital to the success of the learning experiences.

Participants from a variety of school settings are invited to sign up for the course to share differing experiences and perspectives. While this course is intended for educators who self-identify as White, any educator that works with students and wants to feel more equipped to discuss race in their classrooms will be welcome to join.

Communications advertising this learning opportunity acknowledge that there is a specific emphasis on dismantling the experience of the dominant culture and its accompanying bias, so participants should sign up based knowing the course would be relevant to their experiences and goals. The more diverse experiences that can be shared

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within the group, the more robust the learning opportunity can become. Additionally, while the focus of the White experience is a basis for reflection, BIPOC voices were incorporated throughout the creation of this project, through materials selected, and input from BIPOC colleagues. The course aims to secure 10 to 20 attendees in order to create a sense of small group trust and community amongst participants without leaving members feeling like a silent observer in a large group.

Assessment

After each session of the professional development course, participants are asked to rate the learning opportunity, provide written feedback, and share any wishes for future sessions using a Google Form. This form will seek details on portions of the learning experience that felt most impactful, as well as areas for improvement. Then, one month after the course is completed, a follow-up Google Form evaluation will be sent via email.

This time, the questions will ask participants to share about the relevance of the learning within their classroom in the weeks during and following the learning experience, the effectiveness of the strategies and resources shared, and the impact of the strategies on their students. This final assessment seeks to discover which aspects have lasting effects on teachers and students after the course has ended.

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MATERIALS

Google Slide Presentation PDFs

Presenter's notes and pacing are found in the notes section for each slide. All links to outside resources are accessible within each Google Slide page or in the notes. • [Session One: Racism and Bias in Education](#)

- [Session Two: Deconstructing Bias](#)
- [Session Three: Exploring Critical Literacy](#)
- [Session Four: Diversify Your Collection](#)
- [Session Five: Being Brave](#)

Supplemental Material Links

These materials are linked within the Google Slide presentations, but I have also linked them here for easier access.

- [Race Reflective Journaling Exercise - Google Doc](#)
- [Critical Analysis & Text Selection Exercise - Google Doc](#)
- [Calculating Representative Proportions Handout - PDF](#)
- [Session One Evaluation and Feedback - Google Form](#)

- [Session Two Evaluation and Feedback - Google Form](#)
- [Session Three Evaluation and Feedback - Google Form](#)
- [Session Four Evaluation and Feedback - Google Form](#)
- [Session Five Evaluation and Feedback - Google Form](#)
- [One Month Follow-Up Evaluation and Feedback - Google Form](#)

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