

Connecticut State Department of Education: Moving

Forward Together

Patricia Ciccone

Everyone:

The press release below is the letter that was sent to superintendents yesterday from Commissioner Cardona. It reflects the Commissioner's concerns and his certainty that we, as educators, may be strong voices in helping children and families process the turmoil and emotionally-charged atmosphere they are seeing and experiencing. The Commissioner's letter (now press release) below includes a roster of excellent resources to assist students, families and community members in dialogue around the issues of racism, hatred, and violence; now risen to frightening levels across our country. These resources and information will be placed on our School District Home Page. I am urging administrators to please send the Commissioner's letter and its roster of resources to each school's faculty and staff so that where appropriate, they may assist our students and families, as well as one another, to navigate the emotionally-charged coverage. As always, please contact me with any questions or concerns. Thank you.

Pat

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For immediate release: June 2, 2020

Dear Connecticut Education Community:

The protests and riots that are taking place across our country are the culmination of several tragic, high profile and disturbing acts of violence against people of color at the hands of police. It's inescapable that our children and students have also seen and heard about the unrest and root causes on TV, on the internet or social media, in a school setting, or from their friends. Processing and making sense of the emotions that incidents of racism and violence, and the consequences, evoke can be very difficult for all of us regardless of our age. Likewise, engaging in meaningful, developmentally appropriate conversations with our children and students about these issues and events presents an understandably sensitive challenge for many parents and educators.

If we are to prepare our students to become productive members of a diverse society who embrace diversity and foster school communities in which all members feel valued, respected and safe, remaining silent on these current events is not an option. As adults and educators, we must be proactive about making this a teachable moment by addressing issues of racism and inequity head-on. It starts with ensuring children and teenagers know their schools are safe places to learn and grow. It involves providing age-appropriate information to allow them to cope with and form an understanding of upsetting current events as well as asking what they may understand already about the situation and, just as importantly, listening to their perspectives. It's also critically important that Social and Emotional Learning is implemented systematically in schools, homes, and communities and that adults and students work together to apply the five SEL competencies of: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills.

As we find the academic year drawing to a close, we at the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) feel a very real sense of urgency to make sure our educators and families are supported and have the necessary tools needed to have these conversations and promote anti-racist learning environments.

I am sending you the following resources to provide teachers, students and parents with insights and strategies to help engage in a dialogue about racism, hate, violence, and other tragic events that children may hear about at school and/or see on the news. Together, as leaders, as educators, as adults, we can ensure our school communities are learning environments in which all students feel valued, respected, and safe to learn and grow.

In Partnership,

Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.

Commissioner of Education
State of Connecticut

Written Materials

- [Teaching Tolerance](#) – Tolerance.org, Race & Ethnicity
- [“Avoiding Racial Equity Detours”](#) - Paul Gorski, EdChange
- [“The Critical Work of Racial Identity Development”](#) - Dr. Daren Graves presentation to CSDE
- State Education Resource Center’s (SERC) [“Equity in Education: A Transformational Approach to Teaching and Learning”](#)
- The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement developed a guide -- [Talking to Kids about Tragedies \(Such as Shootings and Terror Attacks\) in the News](#) – which helps explain for parents and guardians the importance of discussing the event with children and helps inform parents of common questions children ask in the aftermath of tragic events.

- [Compilation of Racial Identity Models](#) - Racial Equity Tools
- [“A look at Implicit Bias and Microaggressions”](#) – Todd Finley, Edutopia
- [Association of Middle Level Instruction and Microaggressions in the Classroom](#) – Rick Wormeli, AMLE
- [“How White Parents Can Use Media to Raise Anti-Racist Kids”](#) - Sierra Filucci, Common Sense Media
- The National Education Association (NEA) has several online resources for teachers, students and parents to help engage in a dialogue about racism, hate and violence which can be accessed and found on NEA’s website [here](#).
- [Resources for Addressing Trauma, Violence, and Grief](#) is a compendium produced by CSDE staff. Please consult this guide for links to additional resources.

SERC Racial Equity Online Discussions

On the following Thursdays from 4:30–5:30 p.m., participants in these facilitated online discussions will have the opportunity to share their perspectives around a specific topic. All are welcome! Please register separately for each session.

- **June 4 - Our Youth Speak: COVID-19 Virtual Learning**
Register: ctserc.net/eqcovid0604
- **June 11 - COVID-19 and Anti-Asian Racism: Supporting Asian Students, Families, and Educators**
Register: ctserc.net/eqcovid0611
- **June 18 - Distance Learning and Family Engagement: The Perspective of Communities of Color**
Register: ctserc.net/eqcovid0618
- **June 25 - Mental Health and Racial Equity**
Register: ctserc.net/eqcovid0625

CSDE Leadership Webinar

- **SCHOOLING FOR CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: Engaging Black and Latinx Youth in Analyzing, Navigating, and Challenging Racial Injustice**
 - Tuesday, June 16, 2020 from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.
 - Register here <https://ctserc.net/critconscious>