

REFRAME

INSPIRE SCHOOLS

Equity in Action:

BUILDING INCLUSIVE AND ANTI-RACIST SCHOOLS

A creative digital project

In partnership with Factory International
and Midlands Arts Centre.

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About REFRAME: Inspire Schools

REFRAME: Inspire Schools is a creative multimedia project for Key Stage 3 pupils in schools from Birmingham, London and Manchester. Delivered in partnership with Factory International and Midlands Arts Centre, the project aims to increase digital literacy and access to technology through creative learning. Weaving poetry, visual art and digital technology, each school group produces their own ‘zine’, inspired by the Southbank Centre’s artistic programme.

In the summer of 2024, participating schools visited the Hayward Gallery exhibition *There Is Light Somewhere* by artist Tavares Strachan. Strachan uses his art to celebrate unsung heroes and cultural trailblazers who are often overlooked. His work explores the links between science and art; visibility and invisibility; belonging and displacement. A focal piece of the exhibition was his sculpture *The Encyclopedia of Invisibility*, a 3,000-page leather-bound volume filled with 17,000 entries on overlooked people, places and things. As a child in the Bahamas, Tavares Strachan was introduced to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* by his grandfather, but he questioned why no one from his own community was represented in its pages. In his interdisciplinary approach to art making, inspired by poetry, food, science, dance, and music, Strachan tells stories of resistance and shares hope for the future.

About this resource

In exploring the themes of Strachan’s work, it felt vital to equip both our artist-educators and the school teachers involved in the project with the knowledge and understanding of equity and representation, and how this might impact both themselves and their pupils. We worked with Ella Philips of creative culture agency C Catalysts Ltd, to deliver teacher training centred around anti-racist approaches to building more equitable learning environments. This resource developed out of conversations with our participating teachers, and its aim is to share that knowledge and understanding more widely.

How to use this resource

This resource is aimed at supporting teachers and educators at all levels and is designed to help you reflect on your teaching practice regardless of subject area or role.

Embedding anti-racism into your teaching practice requires both reflection and action. If you are experiencing direct racism or micro-aggressions, remember to prioritise your wellbeing. Daily discrimination is exhausting and it is important that you choose how best to use your energy. This journey can stir feelings of discomfort or upset – as an ally, rather than avoiding these emotions, view them as essential steps. Racism is deeply hurtful and uncomfortable, and experiencing discomfort is a sign that you are engaging deeply and thoughtfully with your words and actions. This kind of reflection is crucial for creating meaningful, positive change.

In the sections ahead, you'll find a series of short exercises, thought experiments and links to additional resources. These tools are designed to help you integrate anti-racist practices into your teaching and recognise the impact of the work you're already doing. No matter your subject area, each section will provide practical insights to support your teaching journey.

If possible, we encourage you to do exercises with a colleague to support you in exploring complex ideas and to create accountability when setting goals.

Each section includes:



Duration

How long the whole section will take you to complete



Launchpad

A short introduction to launch you into the topic



Conversation starter

Some prompts to get you thinking



Challenge

An activity that connects the topic to your teaching practice



Momentum builder

A commitment to take your learning forward

The sections you'll find include:

1. Understanding anti-racism and decolonisation within your teaching practice
2. Anti-racist approaches to the curriculum
3. Navigating challenging conversations
4. Radical safeguarding: non-exclusionary practices
5. Wellbeing: keeping yourself safe
6. Additional resources

Understanding anti-racism and decolonisation within your teaching practice



Duration:
10 – 15 minutes



Launchpad

You may have heard the terms ‘decolonisation’ and ‘anti-racism’, but what do they mean in the context of your teaching practice? Well, first let’s start with some simple definitions:

Anti-racism is the commitment to actively opposing racism and creating a world where all people are respected and valued equally. It involves acknowledging our privileges and taking steps towards reducing inequity.

Simplified: anti-racism is challenging racism within ourselves and others.

Decolonisation is a process that asks us to challenge the colonial mindset. It involves transforming existing systems and the way we learn and operate. It seeks to make societies fair, honest and respectful to everyone. Anti-racism is a form of activism that can support the decolonisation process.

Simplified: Decolonisation is freeing our minds from racism and changing our rules to make things fair for all.



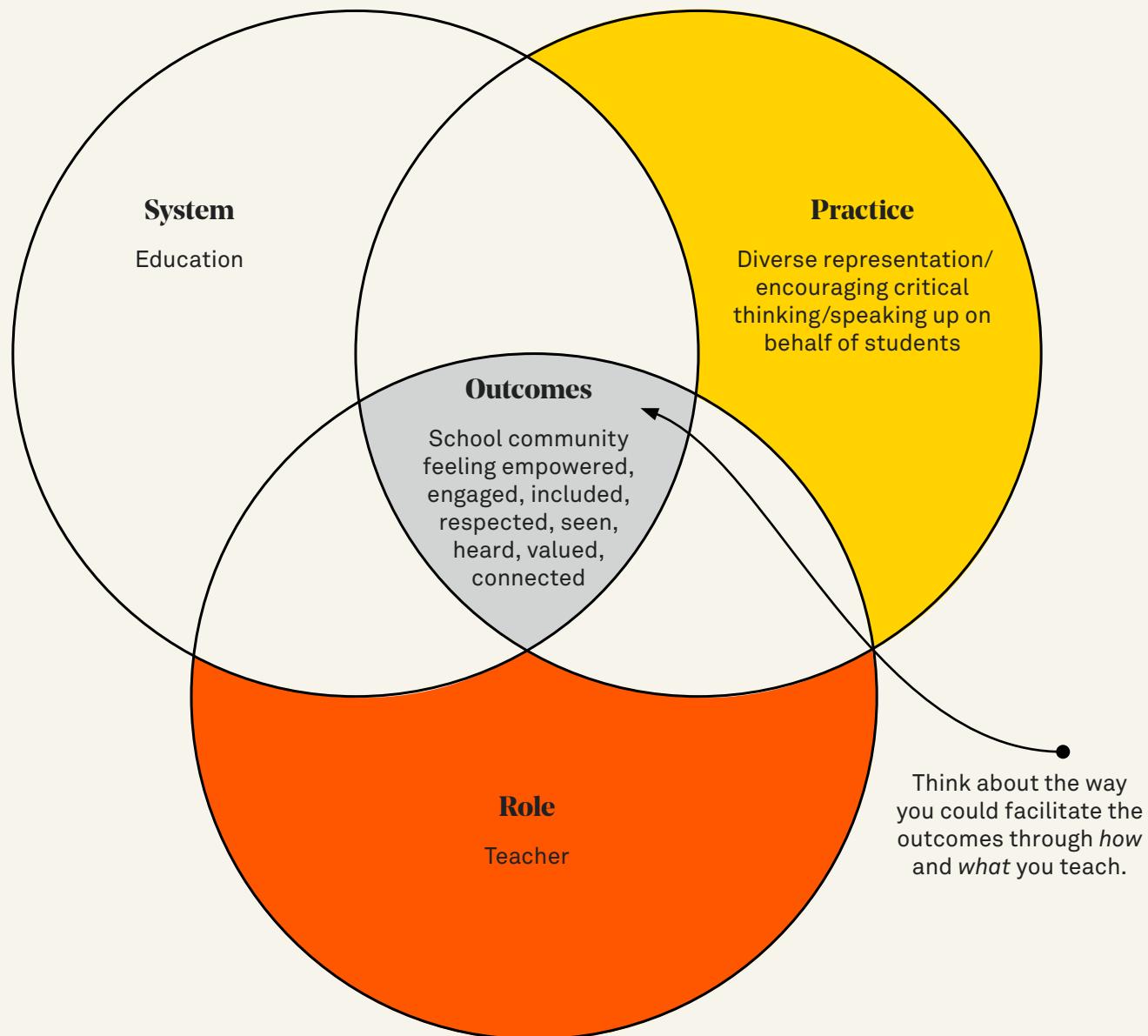
Conversation starter

When we embed anti-racism and decolonise our teaching practices, we are able to challenge behaviours and transform ways of thinking.

Below is a Venn diagram that encourages us to consider how we can use our practice to build greater equity, oppose racism and innovate new ways of learning that are fair to all.

Can you think of any effective ways you have seen these outcomes achieved by teachers or students in the school or classroom context?

Discuss



Challenge

Create a list of 5 possible ways the outcomes could be achieved in your school.



Momentum builder

Can you make one commitment to embedding anti-racism in your practice? Whether it's challenging assumptions about cultural dress or hairstyles, revising behavioural policies, diversifying the curriculum, or building a support network, your goal can be short-term or long-term.

My anti-racism commitment to making positive change is
<insert action you will take>

I will do this by <insert date>

Anti-racist approaches to the curriculum



Duration:
15 – 30 minutes



Launchpad

No matter your subject, there are powerful ways to embed an anti-racist approach into your teaching. This includes not just what you teach, but how you teach it. It involves self-reflection and vulnerability. This may sound scary, but the opportunities for growth and improvement are worth it!

While the curriculum can feel restrictive at times, remember this: at its height, the British Empire controlled 25% of the world's land and over 400 million people. The story of Britain is deeply intertwined with the stories of other cultures through migration and colonisation. This connection gives you the opportunity to broaden your subject, showing how ideas, goods and talent have travelled across cultures – and continue to do so today.

We all feel empowered when we see ourselves reflected in a positive light, valued and included. Anti-racist teaching helps us meet these essential needs for our students.



Conversation starter

We are all the products of a biased education system and will often have to seek additional knowledge to create a more holistic understanding of the world.

Think of the thought leaders or innovators in your subject area. Name the first seven that you think of.

How many are from the Global Majority?

How many are women or non-binary?

How many are disabled?

Does your list reflect your education or background?

Discuss.

In the further resources section on page 19 are links to lesson plans that can help you diversify your teaching and reflect your students' backgrounds in a positive light.



Challenge

Critical thinking is essential to an anti-racist approach. It helps us reflect on unconscious biases and stay open to challenging, transforming and improving our teaching practices. It's also a skill we can foster in students, empowering them to reflect on and positively shape society.

Language constantly evolves, reflecting our changing context and understanding of the world. Regularly reviewing the language that we use and making intentional choices is a valuable practice.

Consider the terms below and reflect on which you would use and why.

Global Majority/ Global Ethnic Majority/people of colour/Black/black/ White/white/disabled person/person living with a disability/visually impaired/blind/migrant/immigrant.

Make a word bank of subject-relevant terms that you will choose to use and why. Add a date to review them.

Think critically about what is included and who is represented in your curriculum. What actions could you take to diversify this?

Can you work collectively with other teachers, parents, SLT and partner organisations to diversify the curriculum? [Maslaha](#) has some good resources to support ideas on collective action.

Race and Conscious Equality (RACE) Charter Mark is for schools wishing to demonstrate their commitment to anti-racist action and improvement. You can find more information [here](#).



Momentum builder

The way we design classrooms and lessons can unintentionally escalate negative behaviors or exclude certain learning styles. By creating more equitable spaces, students can feel empowered and valued.

What steps can you take to make your classroom more inclusive?

Think about how your classroom looks and works:

- Who is represented on the walls?
- How are student *efforts* recognised (without shaming others)?
- Does the layout facilitate collaboration?
- Is it easy for everyone to access learning (no matter their starting point)?
- Can students move about without being disciplined?
- Is there quiet space for those experiencing sensory overload?
- What is the lighting like and could it be negatively impacting learning?

What actions can you take in your school setting to improve the design of your classroom?

I will do this by <insert date>

Navigating challenging conversations



Duration:
30 minutes



Launchpad

When promoting anti-racism in our school setting, what is our role as educators?

True shifts in perspective come from **self-directed learning**. To inspire this, we must avoid the very behaviours we aim to challenge – like paternalism, colonial attitudes or prejudice – in our communication. Every individual has the capacity to discover new insights. Our role is to guide them in questioning their own perspectives while establishing clear boundaries for acceptable behaviour in the school or classroom.

Accountability is key. To ensure follow-through, set clear timelines and commit to taking action. Given the heavy workloads educators face, it's easy for tasks to slip through the cracks. Building a peer support network among colleagues can help us stay on track and hold one another accountable.



Conversation starter

Imagine trying to begin a conversation with a colleague or a student in which you are addressing prejudiced behaviour.

How do you feel physically and emotionally?

What could make this conversation challenging?

Discuss.



Challenge

Read the following classroom scenario and reflect on how you could address the behaviour. Either write a list of prompts you could use, or role play it with your colleague.

During a group project discussion, a student dismissively says to a classmate, 'You probably don't know how to do this – aren't you new to the country?' implying incompetence based on the classmate's ethnicity or perceived immigrant status. The targeted student looks hurt but doesn't respond, while others in the group awkwardly avoid addressing the comment.

Consider:

- Intention: what outcome do you hope to achieve?
- Environment: what is the best setting to hold this conversation(s)?
- Participants: who should be present?
- Behaviour: what is the behaviour that you want to address?
- Impact: describe the impact it has had on you and others.
- Feelings: how do you feel about it?
- Future: what would you like them to do differently?

Prioritise a safe, supportive environment for everyone's well-being. If a conversation feels unsafe, pause it and plan to revisit later. Afterward, reflect with colleagues to gain insights and improve the follow-up discussion.



Momentum builder

People want to feel heard. Practicing active listening fosters calmer conversations rooted in empathy and understanding instead of conflict. Active listening means being fully present – not planning your response, giving unsolicited advice or sharing your own experiences. It's about truly hearing and understanding, which can be challenging. While it's natural to share experiences to connect, this exercise encourages focusing solely on the speaker. Try it with a friend or colleague, then discuss how it felt for both of you.

- Agree a scenario they would like to explore
- Spend 15 minutes in conversation
- Hold space, allow silence – people need time to process their thoughts.
- Ask clarifying questions: 'so are you saying that...?'
- Reflect back what has been said in your own words
- Do not give advice or share your own experiences
- Ask open questions, such as: 'how did that feel?' rather than 'did that feel challenging?'

Radical safeguarding: non-exclusionary practices



Duration:
20 – 25 minutes



Launchpad

Safeguarding involves actively protecting individuals from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation, while ensuring their well-being and rights are respected. However, the current safeguarding culture can sometimes harm individuals, particularly those from marginalised communities (for more information, see further resources on pages 19 and 20).

Radical safeguarding builds on traditional approaches by addressing systemic inequalities and social injustices. It seeks transformative change to create environments where everyone – especially those from marginalised groups – is truly protected and empowered.



Conversation starter

Equality means treating everyone the same. However, this approach is not always fair, as it overlooks the fact that individuals have different needs and starting points (see further resources on page 19 and 20).

Equity focuses on providing support tailored to each person's unique circumstances, ensuring fairness by addressing and removing barriers.

Is there anything within your school's safeguarding framework that could be improved? See the further resources section for more information and support.

Can you think of an example when equality is not fair/equitable?

What could make your classroom a more equitable space?

Discuss.



Challenge

Exclusion is often viewed as a last resort by teachers. It has serious consequences for students and disproportionately impacts marginalised groups, for instance:

- Black Caribbean children are excluded at five times the rate of their white peers (Virasami, Joshua, editor. *A World Without Racism: Building Antiracist Futures*. Pluto Press, 2024).
- Working-class Black Caribbean, mixed white and Black Caribbean, Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils – particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) – are more likely to face exclusion.
- Being excluded increases the likelihood of imprisonment by 33%.
- Nine out of ten boys in custody had previously been excluded from school, with two in five permanently excluded before the age of 14 years old.

When has exclusion been implemented in your school setting and who has it affected? How did you/would you feel?



Momentum builder

In the essay *Transforming Education* by No More Exclusions and their [letter to educators](#), the racialised impact of exclusion is explored. The authors challenge educators to consider alternatives, such as:

- Family counselling
- Peer mediation programmes
- Community accountability circles
- Mentorship models

By embracing these approaches, we can work together to create inclusive educational environments and move away from exclusionary practices that harm vulnerable students.

Consider what you would need to implement alternatives to exclusion. What challenges could you face? How could you take steps towards non-exclusionary practices?

Wellbeing: keeping yourself safe



Duration:
10 – 15 minutes



Launchpad

The fact that you are reading these resources already shows your commitment to creating safe and nurturing environments in your classroom. As educators we can often forget our own wellbeing amidst our focus on our students. However, when we forget about keeping ourselves safe, we can feel dysregulated and managing the dynamics of the classroom can become overwhelming. Use the following prompts to help you to recognise triggering moments and develop a toolkit for handling the emotions that are brought up.



Conversation starter

What makes you feel overwhelmed in the classroom?

What does it feel like when you lose control? (Consider how you feel emotionally and physically)

What does it look like? (Consider how you behave and interact with others)

What does it look and feel like when you manage to navigate a stressful situation successfully?

Discuss.



Challenge

This mindfulness activity, or variations of it, focus on grounding, breathing and quiet reflection. It is designed to support you during overwhelming moments.

1. Find a comfortable and quiet space where you can move freely without distractions.
2. Stand up and take a few moments to stretch your arms, legs and neck, releasing any tension in your body.
3. Close your eyes and take several deep breaths, inhaling deeply through your nose and exhaling slowly through your mouth.
4. Feel the ground beneath your feet supporting you and imagine roots extending from your body into the earth, grounding you.
5. Slowly place your hands over your heart, feeling the steady beat of your own heartbeat.
6. When you feel ready, open your eyes and take a final deep breath.



Momentum builder

Commit to a daily mindfulness practice at the start and end of your day.
This could be as simple as deep breathing or involve visualizations and other meditation techniques. Add a positive, self-affirming reflection on something you've achieved, overcome, or challenged yourself to do.

Keep a reflection journal where you can reflect on how this has impacted your teaching practice.

Further resources

Included here are some thought-provoking texts and videos that relate to our previous activities. They will be interesting to teachers from a range of subject areas. We hope these will support you in your professional development.

You will find links and short summaries below.

1. The Black Curriculum

Re-imagining the future of education through Black British history, The Black Curriculum provides resources, training and workshops.

2. Our Migration Story

This website supports teachers through lesson plans and slides, to explore the often-untold stories of the generations of migrants who came to and shaped the British Isles. It spans from 43AD to the current century.

3. History Lessons

A Runnymede publication that brings together perspectives on teaching diversity in and through the history national curriculum.

4. The Anti-Racist Educator

A collective of educational stakeholders (including students, teachers, parents, academics and activists) working toward building an anti-racist education system through resources, workshops and events.

5. Race and Conscious Equality (RACE) Charter Mark

A charter mark for schools wishing to demonstrate their commitment to anti-racist action and improvement.

6. The Ace Programme

A brief overview of the ACE programme, tailored to raise the attainment of African Caribbean boys.

7. How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System, by Bernard Coard

The book highlights the educational inequality and institutional racism faced by Black children within the British educational system.

8. Uncivilised: 10 Lies that Made the West, by Subhadra Das

A humorous critique of the white supremacy baked into our ideas of **science** and **western civilisation**. Each chapter takes its title from a lie that we often take to be an objective truth and asks where these ideas come from.

9. A World Without Racism: Building Anti-Racist Futures, ed. Joshua Virasami

What is anti-racist activism, and how can we organise for real power around anti-racist principles? Activist Joshua Virasami brings together powerful voices and strategies to tackle issues like **education**, **housing**, **policing**, **climate justice**, and **healthcare**.

10. Superior: The Return of Race Science, by Angela Saini

Where did the idea of **race** come from, and what does it mean today? Angela Saini explores the origins and resurgence of the belief in biological differences between races, examining the dangerous impact of its role in perpetuating **inequality** and **division**.

11. The Spoon Theory, by Christine Miserandino

Christine Miserandino's 'Spoon Theory' is a metaphor that describes the limited energy available to individuals with chronic illnesses or disabilities. We can use it to consider the difference between **equality** and **equity**.

12. No More Exclusion

No More Exclusions is a Black-led and community-based abolitionist grassroots coalition movement. Their organising centres the voices and experiences of children and young people who have experienced oppressive education and exclusion.

13. Radical Safeguarding: A Social Justice Workbook for Safeguarding Practitioners

Created through partnerships between Transforming Together and Maslaha, this resource is made for those working with children and young people, especially in schools, who want to transform how they approach **safeguarding**.

Videos

Bias in Science with Subhadra Das (20 minutes)

How to Change It, Joshua Virasami (one hour, split into chapters)

How can we address today's biggest challenges and create meaningful change? Artist and organiser Joshua Virasami shares insights from movements like Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter, offering practical advice on successful campaigning.

Superior: The Return of Race Science, Aidan McCullen in conversation with Angela Saini (one hour, includes scrollable key moments)

For centuries, dominant groups have framed their power as natural, reinforcing their superiority. Understanding how power shapes the idea of race helps reveal its true meaning.

Excluded, by EachOther (45 minutes)

A documentary featuring the voices of young people. It gives insight into how exclusion has affected them and the collective action they have taken alongside educators and politicians to create positive change.

Resource credits

This resource was developed by Ella Phillips, director of creative culture agency, C Catalysts Ltd, with additional support from Lily Dettmer, Creative Engagement Producer (Schools) at the Southbank Centre.

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REFRAME Partners:



About the Southbank Centre

We're the UK's largest centre for the arts and one of the nation's top five visitor attractions, showcasing the world's most exciting artists at our venues in the heart of London. As a charity, we bring millions of people together by opening up the unique art spaces that we care for.

The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Hayward Gallery, National Poetry Library and Arts Council Collection. We're one of London's favourite meeting spots, with lots of free events and places to relax, eat and shop next to the Thames.

southbankcentre.co.uk



About Factory International

Factory International is a global destination for arts, music and culture opening in the heart of Manchester in 2023. Programmed and operated by the team behind Manchester International Festival (MIF), Factory International commissions, produces and presents an ambitious year-round programme of original creative work, music and special events by leading artists from across the globe at its landmark new venue, online and internationally. It also stages the city-wide Festival every other year at Factory International and at venues and spaces across Greater Manchester. Driven by the same interests and ambitions that defines MIF, Factory International encourages artists to create work in new ways, to collaborate across disciplines and blur the boundaries between art and popular culture.

factoryinternational.org



Midlands Arts Centre

About Midlands Arts Centre (MAC)

Midlands Arts Centre is a contemporary arts centre set in the magnificent surroundings of Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham. Voted No.1 Free Visitor Attraction in the West Midlands 2019 in a survey carried out by VisitEngland, MAC welcomes over one million visitors a year. The arts centre offers creative opportunities for all ages across theatre, film, visual arts, practical courses and accessible programmes, and is a national leader in developing work for children and young people. MAC is a registered charity supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery through the Postcode Culture Trust, Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.

macbirmingham.co.uk



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