Our School - A Reflection Tool for Staff

Critical reflection is a wonderful tool for unpacking how our perceptions and worldview influence our professional practice.

This reflection tool is designed for use by school staff as an opportunity to explore their personal understandings of culture and diversity in their school, examine the values and beliefs that may underlie these understandings, and reflect on how these factors may influence their teaching practice and interactions with students. The reflection tool is divided into sections to encourage staff to consider their personal and community values, how societal factors influence racism, their personal interactions with racism, and how their school interacts with racism and discrimination.

This reflection tool could be incorporated into staff or team meetings, school leadership or strategic coordination meetings, professional development days or relevant working groups to name a few. A suggested format for use of the reflection tool includes:

1. Introduction to the issue of racism in schools, and associated concepts, through encouraging staff to:
   - Listen to CMY's podcast episode - *Racism: When it happens at school, we pick it up.*
   - Watch the video: *Mohamed's story*, and/or
   - Complete the *Cross Cultural Awareness online module*

2. Ask staff to complete the questionnaire individually - encourage honesty in answers in order to get the most out of the reflection process, and as they will not be required to share their personal responses. Alternatively *CMY's Our School: Reflection card activity* is a solution-focused, reflective process that focuses on student experiences and the school’s approach to diversity and inclusion.

3. Facilitate a discussion with the group – this is where the shared understanding and learnings occur! Selecting key questions and unpacking them using the *World Café approach* may be a constructive way to promote discussion.

Please refer to the *CMY Facilitating Conversations About Racism – A guide for teachers and school leaders* and *Navigating common challenges* resources, for further ideas and suggestions.
4. Reflective processes can draw out great information and insights. Use page 8 – Reflection survey: Anti-racism and our school as a tool to gather data regarding staff perceptions about racism and discrimination. To ensure staff privacy, this could be done through:

- An anonymous drop box whereby staff could post their written answers
- Creation of an online survey through forums such as Survey Monkey.

Please refer to Reflection Tool – Teachers notes on how data obtained through reflection can be used to create meaningful change in your school.

Glossary of Key Terms

**Anti-racism**: ideas and practices that seek to confront and ameliorate racism and discrimination on interpersonal and systemic levels, to uphold the human rights and ensure equal opportunity for all members of society.

**Culture**: An umbrella term which encompasses social norms and behaviours found in human society; as well as the knowledge, beliefs, art, laws, customs, capabilities and habits of individuals within these groups.

**Discrimination**: Behaviour which treats people unequally based on their perceived group membership, can range from slights to hate crimes.

**Equity**: Refers to the capacity of students to have equal opportunity to receive a quality education. It differs from equality as it recognises that not everyone starts with the resources or options, but rather some individuals and groups may require specialised or additional support to be able to access the same opportunities as everyone else.

**Microaggression**: A statement, action or incident of indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group.

**Multiculturalism**: The presence of, and support of the presence of, different cultural groups within a society.

**Privilege**: A special right or advantage which is granted or only available to a particular person or group.

**Prejudice**: Or pre judgement, refers to an opinion or attitude regarding a group or its individual members that is formed based on ignorance, fear and misinformation.

**Race or racial categorisation**: Groupings of humans based on shared physical or social characteristics. This concept – although biologically and socially disproven – is often used to define and attribute value to groups of people, resulting in the privileging or discrimination of some groups over others.

**Reflective practice**: The process exploring your thoughts, feelings, beliefs and actions in regards to a particular issue for the purpose of developing greater understanding and to engage in continuous learning.

**Representation**: Is used in this resource to describe a person’s right to see people of their culture, ethnicity and religion represented throughout their community in positions of employment, respect, seniority, and leadership. Can also refer to the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way.

**Stereotype**: Is an exaggerated belief, image or distorted truth about a person or group that is generalised across that group, allowing little or no room for individual differences. Stereotypes can be positive, negative or neutral.

**Values**: What is considered important in a person’s life and therefore underlies and influences beliefs and behaviours.

**Vilification**: Abusive and derogatory speech or writing towards an individual or group.
Reflection: Community, Identity and Values

What are the core values of our school?

What are some of the factors that have contributed to the values you hold?
Does your culture, ethnicity, family history, peer groups influence your values?

How does our school talk about and celebrate diversity?
Consider concepts such as multiculturalism and Australian identity in your answers.

What are some of your actions and behaviours that demonstrate your values?

How do you self-identify culturally or ethnically?

What are some of the core values that you hold, such as the way you believe that people should treat each other?
Reflection: Systems, Society and Racism

We all swim in the same historical waters

The analogy of the fishbowl prompts us to consider the ways in which our history and the social structures around us have influenced our experiences and identities. It suggests that historical events and systems, shape the environment in which we live, but like a fish swimming in water, you cannot always see the structures or their impacts.

The term race is often used to describe a group of people who originated from the same area, generally share some biological features, and who may share a common history. Often people are considered to hold certain values, abilities and behaviours based on their assumed race.
The concept of race, or racial categorisations, has long been scientifically proven not to exist. Despite this, certain groups of people are commonly stereotyped, judged and discriminated against based on their assumed race – these beliefs and actions are called racism. Indeed racist beliefs have underpinned many discriminatory policies and practices – some of which are listed in the fishbowl above – the impacts of which still affect people today.

As we consider the historical waters we are swimming in:

How do you think the idea of race or racial categorisations have influenced Australia today?

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Australia is considered by many to be the most successful multicultural nation in the world. What are the benefits and strengths of being a multicultural nation? Does the concept of multiculturalism omit or ignore any perspectives?

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What do Australia’s politicians, lawyers, teachers, celebrities, sports stars and other people in positions of power and leadership look like?

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As a child did you see people like yourself represented in these positions? What were the impacts of seeing people like you, or not seeing people like you in these positions of power?

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Thinking about your family’s history in Australia, how have these historical waters and ideas of multiculturalism influenced your understanding of what it means to be Australian?

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How does the identification of a person (self or imposed) with a certain group impact on their interactions with systems and services? For example do all groups have equal access to employment opportunities or health care? Who is over-represented in our justice system?

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Can you identify examples of privilege and/or discrimination in your own life?

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Reflection: Personal Interactions with Racism

ACTIVITY: THE INVISIBLE DISCRIMINATOR
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FUrd0Mg_4

“Are these the waters we swim in today?”
How has your cultural / ethnic / “racial” identity influenced your life in Australia?

Which “groups” do you consider more likely to:
- Be vilified or celebrated by media outlets?
- Be considered threatening?
- Experience frequent microaggressions?

Can you think of a time when you have had a conversation about racism? What was this like? Did you encounter any difficulties or challenges throughout the conversation?

Can you think of a time when you have participated in racism or been silent in the face of racism?

What are some of the ways you can look after yourself when choosing to speak up about racism? Who can you talk openly to about your experiences of, or interactions with, racism?

What are the current practices that our school has in place for addressing and responding to issues of racism?

Having completed this reflection:
- What is something you have learnt about yourself or others?
- What is an action that you wish to take, or behaviour you wish to change, in order to address racism?
Reflection survey: Anti-racism and our school

Do you believe there is an issue of racism in our school? Please explain why or why not.

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Is there any other feedback you wish to provide regarding this issue?

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What policies / practices could be adjusted within our school to ensure that we are proactively and effectively preventing and responding to racism and discrimination?

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How confident do you feel in facilitating discussions about identity, racism and discrimination in your school?

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Are there any professional learning opportunities that would assist our school in operating from an anti-racism framework?

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[culturalorganizing.org/the-problem-with-that-equality-vs-equity-graphic/]