

SO YOU WANT TO DO ABAR WORK?

*A Resource Guide for Investing and Sustaining
Anti-bias/Anti-racist (ABAR) Work in Schools and Communities*

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OVERVIEW

shea martin, Kass Minor, Kelly Hurst, and Liz Kleinrock, developed this guide to supplement content within the “So You Want to Do ABAR Workshop” delivered on July 7, 2020. The objective of this guide, when used in tandem with workshop content, is meant to equip educators and all those who participate in schools with deeper, more nuanced knowledge about ABAR learning.

As many educators are seeking to develop more just, anti-racist, richly cultured, and liberated educational spaces, shea, Kelly, Kass, and Liz provide a variety of perspectives and experiences from their vantage points-both as individuals and as a collective- to deconstruct institutional learning barriers and support the beautiful, ugly learning necessary to change the way communities experience school.

INCLUDED IN THIS GUIDE

- Popular terms used to describe ABAR work are differentiated and delineated in detail with citations, and noted “key differences”
- A list of ABAR “Do’s and Don’ts” when pursuing initiatives and training
- Questions to consider when working not only to develop long-term ABAR community learning experiences, but also to change the space of school from racist to anti-racist
- A list of references and resources to continue learning

COMMON TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE ABAR WORK

DIVERSITY VS. EQUITY

DIVERSITY

Definition: The term **diversity** literally translates to, “a range of differences.” In schools, diversity typically means that folx from the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community are sought to be hired as school leaders and/or teachers, and students are recruited to join the student body to develop a more racially-balanced school.

However, in the United States, the conversation around diversity seldom goes beyond surface level, racial representation. Educators from the BIPOC community are almost always immersed within white, institutional hegemony in schools, and frequently suffer emotional trauma, inequitable disciplinary action, and curricular violence

Key Difference: Works towards creating racially and sometimes ethnically variant populations within a school

EQUITY

Definition: The term **equity**, within the context of education, is used to describe the development of structures and systems that address, deconstruct, and reduce inequities in school. In essence, equity means that fair does not mean “the same as,” and that students who have been historically and presently marginalized need more, and sometimes, different resources. Equity is about students getting what they need.

Paul Gorski says, “Good diversity PD should involve cultivating the four skills of equity literacy: recognizing inequity and bias, responding to inequity and bias, redressing inequity and bias, and cultivating equity.”

Key Difference: Not to be confused with “equality.” Works towards examining POWER within institutions, and reimagines how structures can be built to flatten hierarchies within any given group. Not based solely on race.

COMMON TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE ABAR WORK

MULTICULTURALISM VS. CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY (CRP)

MULTI- CULTURALISM

Definition: Multicultural education is a process that permeates all aspects of school practices, policies and organization as a means to ensure the highest levels of academic achievement for all students. It helps students develop a positive self-concept by providing knowledge about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups.

To accomplish these goals, multicultural education demands a school staff that is culturally competent, and to the greatest extent possible racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse. (National Association for Multicultural Education, 2020)

Key Difference: Multiculturalism promotes representation of diverse cultures and peoples within all facets of school. For example, a social studies curriculum will work to deconstruct master narratives to reveal hidden truths and whole stories, a classroom library will include a wide variety of texts by #ownvoices authors, and translanguaging within the community will be encouraged--whether it be in a Caregiver-Teacher meeting or a school assembly.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

Definition: A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Cultural referents for African-American students might be hip hop, call and response, and/or oral-storytelling. Ladson-Billings underscores that including aforementioned components to explain dominant culture IS NOT the goal of culturally relevant teaching; rather, cultural referents are the curriculum. It's also important to note that while culturally relevant teaching surfaced from Ladson-Billings work with African-American students, it is certainly not limited to the Black experience.

Key Difference: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy also immerses multiculturalism within the curriculum and other facets of school, however; its power is centered within the partnership between school staff, caregivers, and students working together to co-design learning experiences that honor students' families and cultures. More often than not, the big work behind CRP is moving towards collectivist culture and away from individualistic culture.

COMMON TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE ABAR WORK

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) vs. TRAUMA-SENSITIVE APPROACH

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Definition: Supports students' emotional well-being within classroom life and other parts of school culture; acknowledges that social and emotional literacies are constructs and standards that students benefit from learning when woven into their overall development. *Example: Zones of Regulation, RULER*

Key Difference: Does not acknowledge race and power. SEL, as a curriculum, is disproportionality used in marginalized school communities.

TRAUMA-SENSITIVE APPROACH

Definition: A trauma-sensitive approach seeks to build structures and routines that provide space for all those in a school community to work towards healing. Positive and therapeutic behavior supports are cultivated. School staff does nuanced, deep work on understanding various ways children have experienced trauma, and often choose a trauma-informed framework to operate whole school routines, behavioral supports, and teaching practices from. Ample counseling is developed and provided, while learning time is designed with an undercurrent of healing.

Key Difference: Includes social and emotional literacy, but extends the conversation to traumatic components of interpersonal and communal violence in social constructions like racism, sexism, and homophobia that are ubiquitous in schools.

COMMON TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE ABAR WORK

ANTI-BIAS/ANTIRACIST TEACHING (ABAR) vs. ABOLITIONIST TEACHING

ABAR TEACHING

Definition: Anti-bias, antiracist (ABAR) education supports all children's full development in our multiracial, multilingual, multicultural world and gives them the tools to stand up to prejudice, stereotyping, bias, and eventually to institutional 'isms'. (Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves, Louise Derman-Sparks & Julie Olsen Edwards).

ABAR education is an orientation to education that not only acknowledges the racism and bias at the core of the educational system, but also explicitly works to disrupt that system with goals of equity and justice for marginalized communities.

Key Difference: Acknowledges and critiques racism and bias present in the educational system, as well as intentionally disrupts that system with goals of equity and justice for marginalized communities.

ABOLITIONIST TEACHING

Definition: Abolitionist Teaching is not just a teaching approach: It is a way of life, a way of seeing the world, and a way of taking action against injustice. Additionally, it requires a complete reimagining of how school works to educate all peoples, with a prioritization on those who are marginalized.

To work towards abolitionist teaching is to take sometimes small, and sometimes enormous risks, in the name of creating equal rights, citizenship, and liberties for BIPOC youth, their families, and their communities. Essentially, it is freedom fighting within the context of school. (Bettina Love, 2019:89).

Key Difference: Requires complete reimagining of school as a construct, complex phenomena hard to quantify because it is stance work; your way of life, most likely within and outside of your school community.

THE DOs AND DON'Ts OF INVESTING IN ABAR WORK

Do...

- Familiarize yourself with cultures of calling in vs. calling out in community
- Read *White Supremacy Culture* (Okun) and use it to inform your work
- Your own work + community work (organize, organize, organize)
- Hire people with a track record of ABAR experience and scholarship
- Create the 3rd space to do this work (courageousness required)
- Commit to unpacking accountability: What does it mean for you and your community as you work toward justice and liberation? (consider: why it's named as "cancel culture" when we demand accountability TO the people of color)
- Understand power dynamics to change policy, practice, procedure, programs
- Connect the systems and collaborate in your efforts (education, transportation, etc.)
- Understand how laws and policies affect history and outcomes (local and national)
- Establish a community of support to keep you accountable for your words and actions in this movement
- Know your terrain - who's been doing this work in your community already?
- Involve students, caregivers, families, staff, and community stakeholders in your work!

Don't...

- Rely on "kindness" to solve systemic injustice
- Do the Privilege Walk (or other activities that use BIPOC as pawns for discussions on race)
- Focus on "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion"
- Invest without intentionality and systems of accountability in place
- Hire consultancy firms that do a "needs assessment" that are absent of an anti-oppression lens
- Suggest that "details" be worked out later (the devil is in those, we should be, too)
- Fall into the trap of Equity Detours (Gorski)
- Put marginalized people in power without a mandate, budget, and/or adequate support structures
- Consider this an "add-on" to curriculum
- Center whiteness and/or use BIPOC as the object lesson
- Skip steps in the learning and development process. This work won't happen overnight.
- Forget to do your homework on the strengths and needs of your own community
- Utilize and/or buy resources to be used in classrooms without adequate preparation, accountability, and strong norms
- Limit your work to a single month, year, or unit; ABAR must be implemented into all that you do as a school and community

QUESTIONS

to consider when investing in individual and/or organizational ABAR partnerships

- If this is the first time your school has focused on ABAR, why is it a priority now?
- How will you ensure that stakeholders cannot opt out?
- Who is leading this work? How are objectives being determined, and what will accountability look like?
- How are BIPOC staff, families, caregivers, and students centered?
- What will you do to prepare for potential harm, as well as repair potential harm evoked from ABAR conversations within your community?
- What ongoing support will be available for BIPOC?
- How will you embed ABAR into the culture of your organization?
- How will you communicate your ABAR intentions to the whole community, and how will that communication be met with ongoing visibility and progress?
- How will you sustain yourself, teachers, students, and families in this work?

References and Resources

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About Liberate and Chill*

Founded in 2020, the Liberate and Chill* Collective consists of educators, consultants, professors, authors, and facilitators with more than 100 years cumulative experience in schools, universities and communities. With expertise in Anti-Bias/Anti-Racist education, antiracist education, strategic planning, culturally responsive literacy instruction, LGBTQ+ advocacy, systems change, arts education, community organizing, and more!

Learn more at www.liberateandchill.org