

Educational legacies

Reflecting on and sharing the personal connections you make between race, class and education.

Time required: About 60 minutes for a team of four educators

Space and material requirements:

- A quiet space
- Timer
- Pencil and paper

"Educational equity means that each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential."

[National Equity Project, 2021](#)

This resource was created in collaboration with [Blue Engine](#), an organization that partners with schools, districts and education organizations to assist educators in effectively collaborating and individualizing instruction for every learner — regardless of race, income level and learning style.

The activities within the Next Education Workforce [Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion collection](#) are intended to facilitate thinking, intention-setting and clarifying purpose along your individual journey, and to support your growth with your educator team. We recommend that you plan a sequence of activities for your team with intentionality or follow the sequence we proposed in the [Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion collection](#).

In this activity, you will reflect on the connections you make between race, class and education; share those connections with your team; and listen as your team members share. This is an opportunity to gain understanding of each member's lived experiences and build empathy and trust.

Getting organized (5 minutes)

1. (2 min) Standards: Review team norms. If your team does not have any, consider borrowing these:

- Be present
- Speak your truth
- Maintain confidentiality
- Expect and accept non-closure

2. (1 min) Roles: Identify a facilitator who will move the team through the activity.

3. (2 min) Preview: Preview the activity as a team.

Reflecting on your educational legacy (30 min)

4. (30 min) Create: Generate a story or presentation that answers at least four of the questions appearing in the question bank that follows.

The question bank holds more questions than you will have time for, so respond to those that move you. We do encourage you to respond to at least one question from each of the four categories (i.e., family educational history; experience of schooling and content area; race-consciousness; and connecting race, class and education).

Feel free to get creative. You are welcome to write, draw, use technology, etc. Do whatever feels most natural to you.

Question bank

Your family educational history

- How much school did your parents complete? Grandparents? Great-grandparents? Other relatives in their generations?
 - What were their schooling experiences like? Consider whether they went to public or private or parochial school (and whether these schools were selective or not), whether they were required to attend school, whether they liked school, etc.
 - Did they go to schools with people mostly of the same economic class or of different classes? Is that something they were aware of during school, or only in retrospect? How, if at all, did class affect the experiences they had in the schools that they attended?
- What types of jobs have your family members held? How much agency did they feel they had in their decision to take these jobs?
- What kind of education was required for the jobs your family members have held? What types of jobs did their educations prepare them for?
- Who (or what generation) was the first person in your family to go to college? Why did this person go? What was it like for this person to be the first?
- Has anyone in your family attended college under the GI Bill? Would they have attended otherwise?
- What other policies, programs, or de jure or de facto laws have limited or expanded your family members' educational opportunities?
- For those in your family over age 25 who have not gone to or who have not finished college, did they consider it? If so, what factors influenced their decision?
- How does your family talk about education? What are the things they say, and what value do they place on it, either implicitly or explicitly?

Your experience of schooling and your content area

- Where and how were you educated? (For example, did you go to public or private school?) Was the school in an urban, suburban or rural area?
- What were your graduation requirements? Did you have to take any major standardized tests (e.g., school achievement tests, local tests, state standardized tests) to graduate?
- What types of courses were offered at your high school?
- In your school, how were your classes grouped (e.g., by ability or level; honors; college-preparatory)? If you were able to choose your classes, how did you choose them?
- During your PreK–12 education, what was your experience with the content you will teach this year? How was this different from or similar to your friends or family members' experiences?
- What did you enjoy or not enjoy about the way you were taught this content in school? Did you have different experiences in learning the content? How did they differ?
- What style of teaching worked best for you? Did you experience different styles?
- How did your experience learning the content in your PreK–12 education influence your studies and learning post-secondary?
- How did you feel about becoming a teacher in your specific content area?

Your race-consciousness

- Are your parents of the same race? The same ethnicity? What about your siblings and other relatives?
- How, if at all, did your parents talk to you about race?
- What events most influenced your understanding of racial or ethnic diversity (either in terms of your identity or someone else's), particularly in your formative years?
- Do you think your teachers were aware of your race? How do you know?

- What was the racial makeup of your elementary/middle/high school? Of its teachers? Did that match the racial makeup of the community you grew up in?
- When and where did you see yourself — and people who look like you — in your PreK–12 curriculum? What races were the Americans you learned about in school? How did you celebrate multicultural holidays or events (e.g., Black History Month, Cesar Chavez Day, Lunar New Year)?
- What groups or organizations have you or your family been a part of that were race-based (intentionally or unintentionally)?
- Was there an active affirmative action conversation happening at your college when you were there? If so, what was it about? Did you participate?
- When have you been ashamed of your racial identity?
- When have you been proud of your racial identity?

Connecting race, class and education

- Did your parents have choices about where to send you to school? What were their options, and what did they consider in making their decisions?
- What was your experience with ability tracking in schools (e.g., gifted, special education, college prep, vocational)? Did your friends, particularly friends from other racial backgrounds, have similar experiences?
- What did your parents expect from the schools you attended?
- How did your parents interact with your schools and teachers (e.g., conferences, phone calls, field trips, volunteering), and were those interactions positive or negative?
- What did you get in trouble for in school? What were you praised for?
- What was the highest level of education you were expected to complete and why?
- How have your race, class and educational history shaped your personal and professional life choices?

Sharing educational legacies (20 min)

5. (2 min) Form groups: If your team is large (e.g., 6-8 team members), consider whether you wish to form smaller groups (e.g., pairs, groups of 3, groups of 4). While this may mean that not all team members hear each other's legacies, it will mean that team members spend more time speaking relative to the overall length of the protocol.

6. (18 min) Share: Round-robin, share your educational legacies. Ensure each team member has the same amount of air time.

Note: When not sharing, team members should focus on listening actively (e.g., nodding, eye contact) during this time. They are welcome to non-verbally affirm contributions but should avoid commenting.

Reflecting (5 min)

7. (2 min) Reflect independently: Silently reflect or journal in response to the following prompts:

- What feelings did this activity raise for you?
- To what extent did this activity help you individually to gain momentum and confidence in your equity journey?

8. (3 min) Discuss: With your team, discuss:

- How might this activity have equipped your team to work more effectively together to better serve your students?
- When might your team explore another activity from the Next Education Workforce [Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion collection](#)?