

# A GUIDE FOR SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACISM

Version 1.0

# UNTEACH RACISM



Teaching  
Council of  
Aotearoa  
New Zealand

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# INTRODUCTION

## What we heard

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Racism is an uncomfortable topic to talk about directly with their learners and colleagues, largely due to the fear of getting it wrong.	They feel unequipped to respond, or unable to make an effect if they were to, resulting most frequently in silence.	Calling out racism was also perceived as disruptive to the professional environment, resulting in social exclusion and isolationism
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In our conversations with teachers and nationwide survey, many teachers said that:

This framework has been developed in response to these findings, as a first step in supporting teachers to feel more equipped to lean into productive conversations about racism.

## ‘Calling in’ conversations instead of calling out

“I think you can understand how calling out is toxic. It really does alienate people and makes them fearful of speaking up.”

**Professor Loretta J. Ross**

## What is calling in?

Calling-in is a concept created by human-rights practitioners, including Professor Ross, which enables us to speak up, but without tearing down. Calling-in can happen publicly or privately and instead of shaming someone who has made a mistake or said something that’s wrong, we patiently ask questions to explore the harmful actions or language. Calling-in cannot minimise any harm inflicted by racist comments or actions, but it can stop it from happening again.

## How does this relate to *Our Code / Ngā Tikanga Matatika*?

Teachers face complex ethical dilemmas and professional tensions every day. When we identify racism, it is imperative that we lean in and confront it, not only because the safety and wellbeing of our tamariki and rangatahi is at stake, but also to uphold our wider commitments as set out in the Code of Professional Responsibility | Ngā Tikanga Matatika mō ngā Haepapa Ngaiotanga.

**This guide is underpinned *Our Code / Ngā Tikanga Matatika* and the expectations that as teachers we are committed to:**

- 1.2 Engaging in professional, respectful and collaborative relationships with colleagues, which for example includes:
- seeking to resolve conflicts respectfully and constructively
- providing colleagues with constructive feedback and appraisal on their practice

**1.5 Contributing to a professional culture that supports and upholds the Code, including for example:**

- leading and engaging in professional conversations about ethical conduct
- taking action to stop harmful, unethical, or unlawful actions of a colleague where their behaviour may be in breach of this Code.

In contrast, expressing or promoting discriminatory beliefs is in direct opposition to upholding our commitment to learners and effectively managing our assumptions and personal beliefs.

This guide also provides teachers with an opportunity to live the values of the teaching profession which overarch both *Our Code / Ngā Tikanga Matatika* and *Our Standards / Ngā Paerewa*, particularly:

PONO: showing integrity by acting in ways that are fair, honest, ethical and just.

WHANAUNGATANGA: engaging in positive and collaborative relationships with our learners, their families and whanau, our colleagues and the wider community

## **How can I use this resource?**

A framework for safe and productive conversations doesn't need to be complicated. The purpose is to provide simple structures and conversation starters, so that we feel more equipped to lean in and confront racism when we identify it.

Rurea, taitea, kia tū ko taikākā anake.

**Strip away the bark and expose the heartwood.**

# GUIDE TO SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATION ABOUT RACISM

## Foundations for safe and productive conversations about racism

Before embarking on conversations about racism with colleagues, the following foundations might be useful to consider.

### Addressing the Racist/Non-Racist Binary

Racism is often seen to exist only in people, rather than embedded in systems and processes. Our research with teachers suggested the most common examples of racism witnessed was teachers sharing racist comments, or their low expectations, with other teachers. This was usually done in private, and ‘in confidence’.

When conversations about racism go wrong it’s usually due to participants becoming defensive, with their focus turning to convincing others they are in the non-racist category.

The racist/non-racist binary impacts our ability to identify, confront and dismantle racism in the following ways:

- It misleads us into thinking that being ‘racist’ is a fixed identity that only a few of us possess, expressed only in intentional acts of discrimination
- Too much time is spent denying that we are racist and insisting we are good people which only reinforces blindspots
- It leads us to think we are not part of the problem
- It overlooks the personal, interpersonal, cultural, historical and structural examination that is needed to challenge the system of racism
- This makes it nearly impossible to engage in dialogue focussed on making change.

Before embarking on conversations about racism with colleagues, it might be a good idea to start by addressing the racist/non-racist binary and establish an understanding of racism as a system that impacts everyone. Entering conversations with this shared understanding is beneficial because it enables us to focus on how our racism manifests and not if.

### Impact vs. intention

Avoid starting a conversation with “nobody here is racist”, rather, “nobody here wants to be racist”. It’s natural to want to avoid making people feel uncomfortable or defensive. Feeling accused or defensive is not conducive to learning. But allaying people’s fears and telling them they are not racist is not conducive to learning either. For productive conversations about racism we need to move away from the focus on intentions – otherwise we’ll think we aren’t part of the problem.

## **Recognise your own privilege in being able to engage safely in conversations about racism**

For indigenous and diverse colleagues, conversations about racism are not just an exchange of ideas. It can mean re-experiencing ignorance and prejudice. Colleagues who can enter and exit conversations about racism and have the privilege of being able to leave the issue of racism itself, have the responsibility to lean in and lead these conversations. Doing so demonstrates a commitment to the profession's values of pono - showing integrity by acting in ways that are fair, honest, ethical and just.

### **Safety vs. discomfort**

Safety in conversations about racism tends to be misconstrued with comfort. The need for reassurance can dominate and drain most conversations - Those of us who are not targets of racism should not need to feel comforted as we learn and talk about our role in a racist society. Instead those of us who can 'opt in' to confronting racism need to lean in to discomfort and encourage others to do the same. Our effectiveness in identifying, confronting and dismantling racism will be determined by the ability to take risks and give in to discomfort. Avoiding discomfort will only sustain biased environments as it benefits those who have traditionally held power.

### **Empowerment, not blame**

Safe and productive conversations about racism shouldn't be about blaming or catching anyone out. Instead it should be empowering and provide teachers with opportunities to demonstrate commitment to the values of the teaching profession. Addressing the racist/non-racist binary and impact over intentions (see above), supports empowerment, as it makes it safe to lean in and . Identifying, confronting and dismantling racism is a journey and interrogating how racial bias manifests isn't an indictment of character - it's an opportunity for learning and growth and provides opportunities to live the values of the teaching profession.

### **Recognition that racism impacts all of our lives**

Individuals from the dominant culture tend to think they don't have a racialised experience - they might be against racism but don't see how they benefit from a system that privileges them or how racial hierarchies influence their lives. If we expand our understanding of racism as a system into which we have all been socialised, then we are more likely to discuss and give or receive feedback on racist patterns in order to support learning and growth and demonstrate pono. Without an understanding of how race has shaped all of our lives, we will likely encounter derailments as set out in the framework below.

### **Building Trust**

The instance on building trust first before talking about racism can be an attempt to maintain our comfort. But trust can be built through challenging interactions not just the easy ones, including:

- Demonstrating a willingness to speak honestly even when you feel others might turn their backs on you
- Not turning your back on someone when they speak honestly
- Receiving hard feedback about bias and not dismissing it
- Being willing to tell someone you see evidence of possible bias in their practice
- Holding ourselves in uncomfortable space for longer than we normally would.

# Tikanga for safe and productive conversations about racism

## Separate the person from the action/behaviour

Social justice activist Jay Smooth shares in [this video](#) that the most important step is focussing on what somebody did, not what you think they are. The ‘what they are’ conversation is not productive, as it takes what a person said or did, and draws conclusions about their character. This conversation inevitably leads to a discussion about their intentions, which can never be proven either way and does not address why their actions or words are problematic.

Instead of “You’re racist for using that word”.

Try: “There is some history behind that word you might not be aware of...”

## Affirm their perspective

The way we each see the present, is a direct consequence of our past and when confronted with new knowledge, it is truncated until we hear something that affirms what we already think. Enabling each other to feel heard can diffuse anger, contain reactivity and open others to hearing something new.

In response to: “Everyone in our society can succeed if they’d only work hard enough,”

Try: “I can understand why you feel that way, I myself... however I have come to understand that...”

## Inquire

Ask questions to find out what lies behind the comment - the experiences, values and emotions. This will form the basis for potential shared ground by which to ‘call in’ the person.

In response to “Well I don’t believe in race...”

Try: “I hear equality is important to you. It is for me too. For me, this means addressing inequalities like racism...”

## Reframe

Create a different way to look at the situation.

In response to: “Everyone in this society can be successful if they only work hard enough”

Try: “ So, you feel that anyone can succeed in this society if they work hard enough. Have you met any hardworking people who struggle to make ends meet?”

## Use preference statements

Clearly communicating a preference is more effective than stating demands, or having others guess what needs to happen. For example if you witness a racist joke, or other micro-aggression:

Try: “I didn’t think that was funny and would like you to stop”

Or “I would like to participate in the conversation, but I’m having a reaction to a comment and I need us to return to that comment first”.

## **Revisit**

Even if the moment has passed, go back and address the issue. Research indicates leaving racist comments and behaviours unaddressed, can have just as much an impact as the comment or behaviour itself.

In response to “Of course they’ll get the job, ticking the diversity box”.

Try: “Can we rewind for a moment to what was said yesterday....I thought it was inappropriate and wanted to check in with you”.

## **Recognition**

Make a point at the end of each conversation to recognise that it wasn’t easy and share appreciation for the willingness to stay in the conversation.

Try: “I appreciate we are both willing to stay in this conversation and learn together, even if it is uncomfortable at times”.

## **Other quick tips and considerations**

- Avoid starting questions with “why?” - it puts people on the defensive. Instead, try “how?” or “what made you...?”
- When addressing a racist comment, try to avoid using the pronoun “you” too much. It can leave the person feeling defensive and blamed. Use “I” statements and refer to the action directly i.e. “when.... was said...”
- Sometimes humour can defuse a tense situation, but avoid laughing comments off – we don’t want to imply there is something funny about what was said or done.



# ‘CALLING IN’ TO CONVERSATIONS INSTEAD OF ‘CALLING OUT’: WHAT IT MEANS AND HOW TO DO IT

## Calling in vs. Calling out – what’s the difference?

Calling-out happens when we point a comment or action, not to address or rectify the damage, but instead to vilify the person.

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### Calling in

- is focused on reflection, not reaction
- recognises that we can all make mistakes, and inviting someone to do better
- focusses on the actions, and the impact they had on others, rather than any assumptions around intent or motivation
- seeks to understand or learn more about why someone holds a particular view
- enables others to feel heard which can defuse anger, contain reactivity and open others to hearing something different
- works well when we already have a relationship with the person

### Calling out

- comes from a place of emotional reaction
- is for when we need to interrupt to prevent any further harm
- when we need to let someone know that their words or actions are unacceptable and will not be tolerated
- will likely feel uncomfortable, but necessary
- allows us to hit the “pause” button and break the momentum
- it limits capacity for reason, empathy and self-reflection

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### Sounds like

“I can see that we both really care about... so I’m surprised to hear you say that. Can you tell me what experiences have lead you to think that?”

### Sounds like

“I can’t believe you just said that, that’s racist!”

## Should I call in or should I call out?

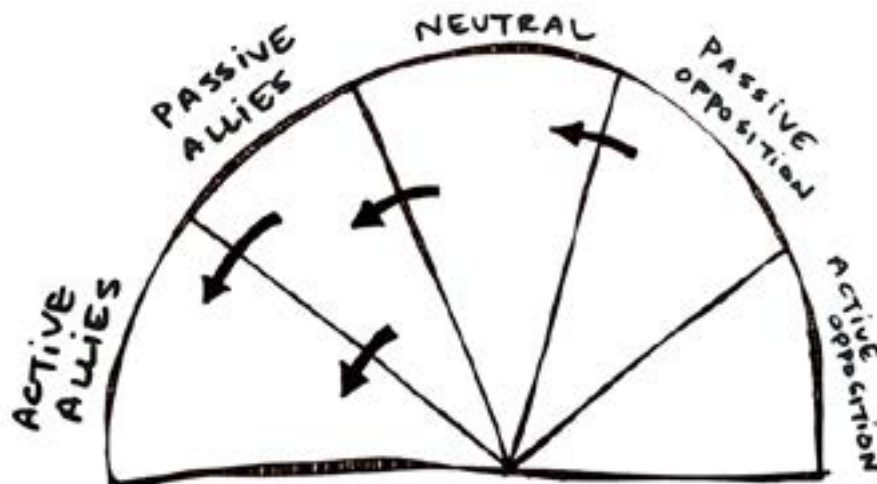
Contributing to a professional culture that supports and upholds *Our Code* recognises the importance of not letting racist comments pass unaddressed. However, the following questions might support you to determine whether you should initiate a calling-in conversation or call-out. These reflective questions are not designed to let people 'off the hook' rather they are about keeping you and your colleagues safe:

<b>Who has the power in this situation?</b>	Calling in is more effective at diffusing aggression than calling out – so if you lack power, or are speaking to someone with whom you're vulnerable, calling in can protect you more than calling out.
<b>Is it an institution or an individual?</b>	If it's an individual consider calling them in. If it is an institution or systemic racism, call it out.
<b>Are they likely to change?</b>	If they are not, call them out. If this is someone you've called in before and they're repeating their actions, you might consider calling them out.
<b>Am I the right person?</b>	How is your relationship? Would a neutral third party be more effective in leading the conversation?
<b>Is it the right time?</b>	Timing is important if you are to be more effective – if they are distracted or busy they will be less likely to listen.
<b>Who is in the room?</b>	Is there time now for an open-ended and potentially difficult conversation? Will colleagues who experience racism have the ability to opt out of the conversation?

Upholding *Our Values / Ngā Uara* particularly whanaungatanga and engaging in positive and collaborative relationships, means that calling-in should be the preferred approach for safe and productive conversations about racism, instead of calling-out.

ActionStation NZ use the spectrum of allies diagram when considering where to place energy in efforts to shift thinking and growing movements of social change and it might be useful to consider this diagram when engaging in calling-in or calling-out racism and growing the Unteach Racism movement.

We might think those in active opposition should be prioritised, but calling-in efforts with individuals who sit at this end of the spectrum of allies will likely be ineffective and they probably need to be called out! For teachers growing the Unteach Racism movement, time and effort would be better spent in calling-in those in passive opposition, neutral or passive allies, where the vast majority of individuals sit on social change issues.



Source: [350.org](https://www.350.org)

## Calling in: Preparation

Calling someone in to a conversation about racism requires preparation.

This might include:

- Noting down and practising some conversation starters that would work in a variety of situations
- Consider any situations or individuals where you anticipate you might need to instigate a calling-in conversation
- Checking in with yourself and your own well-being – is it the right time for you?
- What tools and techniques can you use to support you in remaining calm and open when things become difficult?

## Calling in: initiating the conversation

<b>Step 1</b>	A good place to start is sharing any apprehensions you have around the conversation: “I’m going to lean into discomfort and ask that we return to a comment that was made yesterday..”
<b>Step 2</b>	Share your hopes for the outcome of the conversation, and why you care enough to have this conversation with them: “I know we are all committed to the very best outcomes for all of our learners and so I hope that discussing this matter will support us all on our journey to identify, confront and dismantle racism..”
<b>Step 3</b>	Once you’ve followed these two steps, you can then share your feedback about the specific comment/behaviour and follow this up with a question: “I know it wasn’t your intent, but what you said about... made me very uncomfortable. Can I ask what experiences have led you to believe that? ....How do you think somebody from that group would respond, if they were in the room?”

## Calling in: other useful questions and conversation starters

Simple questions are a powerful tool in calling-in conversations. They support the speaker to understand their blindspots or ignorance as they work through their reasoning and it gives time to frame and tailor a response.

It’s helpful to have a list of back-pocket questions that would apply to different calling-in conversations.

You’ll notice these questions and conversation starters relate back to the tikanga for safe and productive conversations we explored earlier in the guide.

<b>Better understand the person’s perspective, experiences</b>	“Can I ask what experiences have led you to think that?” “What do you mean by the term, [e.g. reverse racism, political correctness, etc]?” “What leads you to say that?”
<b>Lead with curiosity over judgment</b>	“It sounds like [a shared value e.g. fairness] is really important to you. For me, that means [e.g. everyone being able to celebrate their culture and language in a way that feels meaningful to them]. What do you think about that?”

<b>Reframe claims as personal perspectives, not absolute truth</b>	<p>“That might be true from your perspective but how might someone who identifies with that group respond if they were in the room?”</p> <p>“It sounds like we have had very different experiences. From my perspective....”</p>
<b>Focus on people – this can be more effective than reeling off numbers or statistics</b>	“How do you think you would respond if you were in that situation?”
<b>Focus on impact over intention</b>	“I understand you didn’t intend to cause harm. But how might the impact of your words/actions differ from your intent?”
<b>Reflect back what you heard using mirroring, validation and empathy.</b>	“So what I’ve heard you say is....I understand this comes from a good place....but have you considered.....?”

## What to do when you get called in

People with a true understanding of racism do not diminish, blame, or judge those who acknowledge their contribution to it. Rather, the choice to acknowledge your own role in racism has status, because it is the choice to refuse ignorance.

If you are called in to a conversation about racism, an effective way of demonstrating your good intentions, is to check for defensiveness, thank the person for calling you in and listen with curiosity.

You could try one of these responses:

“Thank you..

...I appreciate your willingness to talk to me about this.”

...I’m glad you brought this to my attention.”

Calling in conversations indicate a level of trust and recognises that both participants are committed to doing better, so expressing gratitude is the logical response.

Expressing gratitude also supports a productive conversation, as it demonstrates your willingness to engage and learn another perspective.

## Code-based framework: identifying and responding to interpersonal racism and micro-aggressions

Teachers told us that when they witnessed interpersonal racism, they were often so shocked to they were unable to formulate an appropriate response.

While we might have a strong immediate reaction to a racist comment, it’s important that we actively listen to what someone is saying and ask open ended questions to try to determine why they might hold that view.

Emily Beausoleil from Victoria University discusses in [this video](#), how we can hear each other across profound social differences and inequality.

If we understand what is behind a racist view and understand the challenges we are up against in transforming that view, then we can be more effective in our conversations.

The following framework provides insights into the comments or perspectives you might encounter, what could be behind their perspective and the guidance *Our Code | Ngā Tikanga Matatika* provides.

What you might see or hear?	Reframing these claims	What does the Code of Professional Responsibility <sup>1</sup> and Examples in Practice <sup>2</sup> say?	Additional resources
<p>“I don’t pay attention to race/ethnicity, I treat all children/learners the same.”</p>	<p>While this might seem like a fair approach and we might like to think that we treat everyone equally, countless studies show that we are not and cannot be objective and independent from our socialisation. We all have prejudices learnt from our socialisation – conscious or otherwise and we can’t just decide that they have no effect. You also can’t effectively treat everyone the same, nor should we want to.</p>	<p>As teachers we understand the importance of identity, language and culture— knowing where our learners come from and building on all that they bring with them to their learning.</p>	<p>Visit the Unteach: Equal Treatment as Equality app module to explore the concept of “colour-blindness”</p> <p><u><a href="#">Colour-blindness or Colour-brave?</a></u> Ted Talk by Mellody Hobson</p> <p>Teacher Liana MacDonald explores colour-blindness and how it perpetuates whiteness in her thesis <u><a href="#">Silencing and Institutional Racism in Settler-Colonial Education.</a></u></p>
<p>“Isn’t it the focus on differences, a form of apartheid or separatism?”</p>	<p>Not addressing differences only holds them in place. Our inequitable outcomes across education, health, housing and so on shows that we are already divided across many levels of society. Insisting that we are all one is also underpinned by the idea that race doesn’t matter. This undermines the experiences of diverse groups and enables Pākehā to maintain unequal power.</p>	<p>Similar to the example provided above, our commitment to learners expects that teachers respect the diversity of the heritage, language, identity and culture of all learners which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fostering a learning culture that celebrates diversity and inclusion, and protects against discrimination</li> <li>• learning about the histories, heritage, language, identity, beliefs and culture of my learners and what is important to them.</li> </ul>	<p>Listen to what teachers have to say about the power of harnessing cultural capital through the lens of <i>Tapasā</i> in <u><a href="#">this video</a></u></p> <p>In <u><a href="#">this video</a></u> teachers at Newtown School shares how they view diversity as a gift and the importance of knowing the whole child.</p>

1. [Our Code | Our-Standards-Nga-Tikanga-Matatika-Nga-Paerewa](#)

2. [The Code of Professional Responsibility](#)

<p>“Stereotypes exist because there is actually, deep down, some truth to them,”</p>	<p>Some might say that there is a kernel of truth to stereotypes, but this has much more to do with the ways stereotypes work and much less to do with their validity. When we encounter individuals who don't fit a stereotype, we either tend not to notice or we view them as exceptions. Stereotyping can be harmful as prejudices generally start as stereotypes.</p>	<p>Stereotyping inhibits the ability to see the depth of diversity within cultures and limits the potential of learners. (2.3)The examples in practice for teachers commitment to respecting the diversity of the heritage, language, identity and culture of families and whānau (3.3) includes recognising the diversity between cultures and within a culture, including diversity of ethnicity, ability, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, faith and belief.</p>	<p>Visit the Unteach: Harmful Assumptions module in the Unteach Racism app for steps to identifying and resisting stereotypes.</p> <p><b><u>Tapasā: cultural competencies framework for teachers of Pacific learners</u></b> Turu 1 - understanding and responding to the diverse identities, languages and cultures between Pacific groups.</p> <p><b><u>The Danger of a Single Story</u></b> Ted Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.</p>
<p>“the Treaty of Waitangi is a thing of the past.”</p>	<p>A limited understanding of racism as only deliberate acts of hate, disregards the impact of colonisation and the way Pākehā have accumulated wealth, social capital and other benefits over time that exist to this day. Of course te Tiriti o Waitangi enables all of us to live in Aotearoa New Zealand as partners. Te Tiriti should be honoured, not settled – settlement means forgetting.</p>	<p>As teachers, we are committed to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and we understand this has implications in all of our practice. A teacher's role is in leading and modelling a commitment to tangata whenuatanga and an understanding of Tiriti partnership in Aotearoa New Zealand (1.4). teachers have a responsibility to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi by paying particular attention to the rights and aspirations of Maori as tangata whenua (4.2)</p>	<p>See the Code-based resource bank for resources and further reading relating to upholding Code commitment statements relating to te Tiriti o Waitangi.</p>

<p>“Actually, there is a lot of reverse racism from Māori toward Pākehā.”</p>	<p>Anybody can discriminate or be prejudiced towards others, but racism is about systems of unequal power and they simply do not flip back and forth. When privilege is invisible and feels normal, then even the slightest concession can feel like a personal affront.</p>	<p>Being fair and effectively managing my assumptions and personal beliefs expects that learners will be treated equitably and recognises that treating learners fairly does not always mean treating them equally. (2.6)</p>	<p>Refer to Identify: Terms and definitions to support conversations about racism and the Unteach: Equal Treatment as Equality app module to explore the concept of affirmative action.</p> <p>Podcast - <a href="#"><u>Conversations that Count  Ngā Kōrero Whai Take – Equity vs Equality and why access to education matters</u></a></p> <p>Further reading on the concept of reverse racism in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad:</p> <p><a href="https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/14-04-2018/grateful-horis-and-model-minorities-why-dont-we-know-were-racist/"><u>https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/14-04-2018/grateful-horis-and-model-minorities-why-dont-we-know-were-racist/</u></a></p> <p><a href="https://thespinoff.co.nz/media/08-08-2018/a-friendly-reminder-that-reverse-racism-is-still-not-a-real-thing/"><u>https://thespinoff.co.nz/media/08-08-2018/a-friendly-reminder-that-reverse-racism-is-still-not-a-real-thing/</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Why reverse racism is a myth.</u></a></p>
<p>“I’m Pākehā and I was actually a minority growing up in my community and at school,”</p>	<p>What seems like a diverse environment to those from the dominant culture in fact may look very different to minority groups. While individuals may at times experience being part of the minority group, rarely would they remain so throughout their lives as they move away from schools and communities, nor does temporarily being part of the minority erase the privileges afforded to Pākehā . To identify, confront and dismantle racism it is important that Personal anecdotal evidence is not favoured over broader societal patterns.</p>	<p>Teachers work in the best interests of learners by being fair and effectively managing my assumptions and personal beliefs. This commitment statement recognises that we must be careful that our own bias and personal beliefs do not negatively interfere with the quality and effectiveness of our teaching.</p>	<p>Visit the Unteach: Assumed superiority module in the Unteach Racism app to explore the concept of privilege.</p> <p><a href="#"><u>A concise list of Pākehā privilege</u></a> from Kupu Taea.</p>



<p>“I don’t see how Pākehā children and young people who are from a lower socio-economic group can be considered privileged...”</p>	<p>Similar to the example above, this idea disregards intersectionality and the privileges afforded to many in society based solely on skin colour. For Pākehā children, their values, language and identity are written into the insitutions, laws and culture they live in.</p> <p>They are more likely to be given time to speak, less likely to be questioned by authority, they don’t need to work as hard as other children to be understood because their ways of knowing, seeing and doingg are already written into the society around them. Insisting that oppression is a consequence of lower socio-economic groupings rather than race can also be an attempt a avoidance or denial through channel switching.</p>	<p>The above statements are relevant here. In addition, intersectionality is recognising and celebrating “All of who I am” which is reflected in the examples in practice for Code commitment statement (3.3) – recognising the diversity between cultures and within a culture, including diversity of ethnicity, ability, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, faith and belief – an example in practice for commitment statement (3.3).</p>	<p>See relevant links above on privilege.</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Short video</u></a> by Kimberley Crenshaw which unpacks the concept of intersectionality</p> <p>Te Tiriti Based Futures 2020 webinar:</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Intersections of Race, Gender, Class, Sexuality and Ableism</u></a></p>
<p>“Of course children say hurtful things at times, but we know they are not racist,”</p>	<p>Children begin to show many of the same implicit racial attitudes that adults in our culture hold and have already learned to associate some groups with higher status or more positive value. They come to make sense of race and beliefs through listening to and looking at what others do and say. Children need support in constructing an idea of how the world sees them and how it sees others. In their unique position, teachers can constructively engage the harmful biases that pervade and shape attitudes around recognising and celebrating diversity.</p>	<p>Guidance is provided in talking to children and young people about race and racism, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helping learners to think critically about issues and understand different views, theories, perspectives and experiences (2.4)</li> <li>• fostering an inclusive and respectful learning culture that affirms and celebrates diversity (3.3)</li> <li>• fostering universal values of human rights and respect for diversity (4.1)</li> </ul>	<p>Guide to Safe and Productive Conversations about racism – for Code-based guidance on talking to learners about race and racism</p> <p><a href="#"><u>9 steps to positively shape racial attitudes in children</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Let’s Talk! Talking about Race with Children</u></a></p> <p>Further Reading:</p> <p>Creating an Anti-Racist Culture in the Early Years: An Essential Guide for Practitioners</p> <p>By Sandra Smidt</p>



<p>“I don’t like the tone of these conversations when they become accusatory or emotional. The message would get across so much better if it was delivered in a gentler way.”</p>	<p>Tone policing. Avoiding what is being said by focussing on the tone. Also centers white comfort as more important than the impact of racism on those present and a way of shutting down the conversation. Is closely linked to racial stereotypes and minimises the harm caused by racism. For those who are privileged not to have personally experienced racism, sitting in discomfort temporarily</p>	<p>Teachers value respectful and collaborative relationships with colleagues in order to deliver high quality teaching and learning. We understand that we are all personally and collectively responsible for upholding this Code (1.5). The Examples in Practice go further and set out expectations around seeking to resolve conflicts respectfully and constructively and leading and engaging in professional conversations about ethical conduct.</p>	<p>Identify:</p> <p>Terms and definitions to support conversations about racism for a definition of tone policing.</p> <p>Guide to Safe and Productive Conversations about racism.</p> <p>Read more about tone policing <a href="#">here</a> and identifying tone policing <a href="#">here</a></p>
<p>“Here we go again, playing the racism card. People see racism everywhere these days, even where it isn’t.”</p>	<p>Racism is far more likely to go unreported. To accuse someone of playing the racism card is to claim their experience is false. It implies that the individual could understand how racism operates more so than somebody who is personally impacted by it. Because of the prevailing view that racism is individual acts of prejudice, there is a perception that outsiders can simply look at a specific incident and decide whether it happened or not. What if we sought more knowledge and reflected on other peoples perspectives, rather than so quickly dismissing them?</p>	<p>Promoting an understanding of exclusion or discrimination that may be experienced by people marginalised by their personal or social circumstances. In contrast, examples of behaviours that go against this commitment include promoting a climate of exclusion of vulnerable or marginalised people or groups and failing to address situations of discrimination.</p>	<p>Visit the Unteach Racism module in the Unteach Racism app for an exploration of racism as a pervasive shaper of our society in Aotearoa New Zealand.</p> <p>Te Tiriti based Futures 2020 webinars to further explore racism in Aotearoa New Zealand:</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Kōrero from Moana Jackson on systemic racism and colonisation in Aotearoa New Zealand Institutional racism in the health and education sectors</u></a></p>

<p>“I didn’t mean any harm, it was just a joke, everyone is so sensitive these days.”</p>	<p>Members of the dominant cultural group usually do not understand the collective weight of oppression, so what might be just one joke or throw away comment is actually one of a thousand micro-aggressions experienced. The focus on intentions dismisses the impact of behaviour and invalidates the experience of others. It also projects the problem outward rather than reflecting on and changing behaviour – it is their fault for taking it too seriously.</p>	<p>Examples in practice that do not promote professional, respectful and collaborative relationships include the following: acting in a way that may be intimidating, humiliating or harassing to a colleague</p> <p>Making derogatory comments about the heritage, language, age, gender, identity or culture of a colleague (1.2) These apply to patterns of behaviour and accumulative effects, not just individual incidents.</p>	<p>See framework for analysing jokes and comments.</p> <p>Listen to the HRC’s <a href="#"><u>Voice of Racism</u></a> which reveals the damaging effect of constant micro-aggressions.</p> <p>Read Christine Robertson’s experience of <a href="#"><u>Growing up Samoan in Aotearoa New Zealand and the microaggressions experienced along the way</u></a></p>
<p>“But Māori and Pacific learners actually choose to take these subjects, they’re not forced to.”</p>	<p>This comment implies that if choice is involved then it can’t be categorised as oppression. The choice discourse shifts the focus away from holistic understandings of injustice and inequity, disregarding the institutional systems and structures which make choices available. What other opportunities are actually available? What supports are in place to ensure equitable access?</p>	<p>Teachers understand that every learner brings unique and diverse experiences, needs, abilities and strengths to their learning, and that our teaching must be flexible and responsive. We strive to ensure that every learner has the support they need to be able to reach their full potential (2.5).</p>	<p>Visit the Unteach: Low Expectations module in the Unteach Racism app for an exploration of implicit bias and low expectations for learners.</p>

<p>“I don’t think you/we should be exploring Black Lives Matter with learners. What message is that sending ALL children? I’m not sure it’s relevant and shouldn’t you/we be saying ALL lives matter anyway?”</p>	<p>Criticising social awareness culture has become a way of claiming victim status for individuals rather than acknowledging that more deserving others hold that status.</p>	<p>Teachers commitment to society sets out expectations around promoting and protecting the principles of human rights, sustainability and social justice, along with fostering learners to be active participants in community life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• modelling and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms</li> <li>• fostering universal values of human rights and respect for diversity</li> <li>• promoting curiosity and critical inquiry about, and engagement with, real-world issues</li> <li>• creating learning opportunities to empower learners to become active and critically informed citizens (4.1 and 4.2)</li> </ul>	
<p>“I would never have guessed her mother was a scientist/doctor/ lawyer.”</p>	<p>While these types of microaggressions might be intended as a compliment, it in fact reveals harmful assumptions and stereotypes that are carried about indigenous and minority groups. Usually the speaker is unaware of the offence caused, so it is helpful to paraphrase and reflect back the essence of what was said, followed by an inquiring question such as:</p> <p>“I’m wondering what message this is sending her.. would you have said that to a Pākehā learner?”</p>	<p>To know our learners, we need to know their families and whānau. Making discriminatory comments about the heritage, language, identity, or culture of my learners’ families and whānau is an example in practice which goes against statement (3.3).</p>	<p>Visit the Unteach: Low Expectations module in the Unteach Racism app for an exploration of implicit bias and low expectations for learners.</p> <p>Visit the Unteach: Harmful Assumptions module in the Unteach Racism app for an exploration of identifying and resisting stereotypes.</p>

<p>“All of the children in the class are Pākehā so why would our learners need to learn...It’s just political correctness gone mad.”</p>	<p>Political correctness claims often surface when people from the dominant culture are being challenged to acknowledge something they previously haven’t been required to do – including racism. Whose interests does it serve, to position political correctness as something that we must avoid? Children may find it easier to relate to others who look like them, but they still need to learn how to relate to people who are different from them.</p>	<p>As teachers we recognise our role in leading and modelling a commitment to tangata whenuatanga and an understanding of Tiriti partnership in Aotearoa New Zealand: fostering an understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and its implications within the learning environment</p> <p>Valuing and promoting te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in school or centre management and in teaching and learning. (1.4)</p>	<p>See the <i>Code</i>-based resource bank for resources and further reading relating to upholding Code commitment statements relating to te Tiriti o Waitangi.</p> <p>Visit the Unteach: Assumed superiority module in the Unteach Racism app to explore the concept of privilege.</p>
<p>“I feel really uncomfortable about this, isn’t identifying whiteness and talking about white fragility racist in itself?”</p>	<p>Being seen racially is a common trigger for white fragility. Pākehā are taught not to see themselves in racial terms - any race that is discussed is theirs, not mine or ours. For those who benefit from privilege, the sense of the individual is also so strong that being referred to as white or Pākehā can feel like an affront, like every other social group can be defined but not Pākehā because that is simply the norm. This defensiveness when talking about race is not a natural reaction, instead it is a social force which functions to keep the racial hierarchy in place.</p>	<p>We recognise that, as teachers we have a strong influence on learners and their understanding of the world. As such, we must be careful that our own bias and personal beliefs do not negatively interfere with the quality and effectiveness of our teaching (2.6).</p>	<p>In this opinion piece <a href="#"><u>Ann Milne explores Who should learn most about White Privilege—Māori children or Pākehā children?</u></a></p>

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“We all have the same opportunities in New Zealand, if [indigenous or minority group] worked harder, then they too would succeed.”

This idea is underpinned by the concept of universalism – thinking everyone had the same experience as you, that everyone has a fair go. Universalism ignores how history and/or structures shape lives and comes from a lack of exposure to other ways of seeing and doing. Pākehā are taught that their perspectives and experiences are the norm and represent the reality of all. In this example, blame is placed on the individual for not living up to that norm, rather than inequitable systems and structures.

Promoting an understanding of exclusion or discrimination that may be experienced by people marginalised by their personal or social circumstance (that is, by their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender, ability, religion, or language).

# CONVERSATIONS WITH LEARNERS

## What does the Code say?

Our *Code / Ngā Tikanga Matatika* provides guidance in how teachers should engage learners in conversations about racism.

Our commitment to learners means that in conversations we should be:

- fostering an environment of trust and respect where learners feel it is safe to take risks
- fostering a learning culture that celebrates diversity and inclusion, and protects against discrimination.

While being fair and effectively managing my assumptions and personal beliefs means that in conversations we should be:

- helping learners to think critically about issues and understand different views, theories, perspectives and experiences
- presenting issues or subject matter in an open way and being transparent about my own beliefs or perspective.

Our commitment to society means we should also be:

- fostering universal values of human rights and respect for diversity
- promoting curiosity and critical inquiry about, and engagement with, real-world issues
- fostering opportunities for learners to feel empowered to participate and contribute effectively in their communities and in issues that are important to them.

## The Code|Ngā Tikanga Matatika in action: how to respond when learners raise questions about race and racism

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**Step 1** Promote curiosity, critical inquiry and engagement by stating you are open to these conversations.

Example

“That’s a really important question and we should learn about this together.”

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**Step 2** Presenting issues or subject matter in an open way by answering the question as directly and honestly as possible.

Example

“Melanin is what determines how dark your skin is, some people have more melanin than others.”

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**Step 3** Help learners to think critically about issues and understand different views, theories, perspectives and experiences by asking a question back.

Example

“That might be true, but what do you think about that?”

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**Step 4** Foster a learning culture that celebrates diversity and inclusion and protects against discrimination by instilling anti-racism values.

Example

“It’s normal to feel guilty about our own privileges, but how can we use that to create justice and not get too caught up in our own feelings?”

Watch teacher Samantha Richards engage in conversation about diversity with her six year old learners.

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**Step 5** We should also foster opportunities for learners to feel empowered to participate and contribute, by instilling in them that conversations about racism are the responsibility of all of us, whether or not we experience racism personally.

Example

“What do you think we should do to make racism a thing of the past?”

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Source

### **Other considerations for conversations with learners**

Meaningful race conversations rely on teachers understanding the implications of their own racial and cultural perspectives.

Sharing your own unsettling or embarrassing feelings, or discomfort, first will help to create openings for learners to engage.

To promote dignity of learners, when beginning a conversation we need to strike a balance and understand learners own histories and the exchange of ideas about to take place. One way to do this, is to acknowledge aloud and express clearly our own experience with what we are about to discuss.

Teachers should be clear that their beliefs are their own and encourage learners to question and respond with their own perspective in order to promote curiosity and critical inquiry.

Do not ask indigenous or minority learners to give a perspective on behalf of their group. This is tokenistic and assumes a monolithic experience, reinforcing Pākehā as the dominant cultural group and the “norm”.

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