

# **Courageous Conversations Professional Development**

**Achieving Equity in Schools**

# RACE

Race is one of the most emotional and controversial issues facing contemporary society and is often one of the more controversial classroom topics. Often the focus is on racial minorities and the oppressive aspect of race. However, whites are also affected by race.

Research suggests that counselors and educators must do significant work to reach a better understanding of the impact of race and racism. Schools should begin to encourage constructive dialogues among racial groups regarding race and racism, instead of shrinking away from such difficult conversations.

Dialogue on race and racism elicits many emotions, especially unpleasant emotions. People of color may feel annoyed, angry, powerless or pained. Raising questions about racism is often uncomfortable to Whites and can be considered divisive. These are unpleasant emotions for both people of color and White people. Discussing race may be one of the most difficult tasks faced by educators.

# Achievement Gap

## How do we close the achievement gap?

Race affects the lives and learning of all children.

Have we ever asked (or thought):

- This work will be too hard for my [insert race] students.
- These parents just don't care.
- These families don't value education.
- These children need discipline/structure.
- These children lack exposure/experiences.
- The problem is the parents.

# Courageous Conversations

“We are deeply divided by race, and race remains the topic around which we still cannot have open, honest, courageous conversations.”

“Participating in Courageous Conversations helps make us more cognizant of the perspectives of others and helps us develop “informed empathy” toward our students, their families, and their communities.”

“We are all learners, to some degree, in this examination of race. It matters not where you are on the continuum of racial understanding. What is important is your willingness to expand your racial consciousness, deeply explore your own racial identity, and better empathize with the corresponding perspectives and experiences of the racial other.”

# What is a Courageous Conversation?

Courageous Conversations is a formal structure to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race in order to examine schooling and improve student achievement.

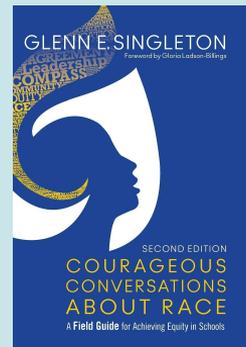
- Engages those who won't talk
- Sustains the conversation when it gets uncomfortable or diverted
- Deepens the conversation to the point where authentic understanding and meaningful actions occur.

# Where do we begin?

How do we do this?



# Our Courageous Conversation



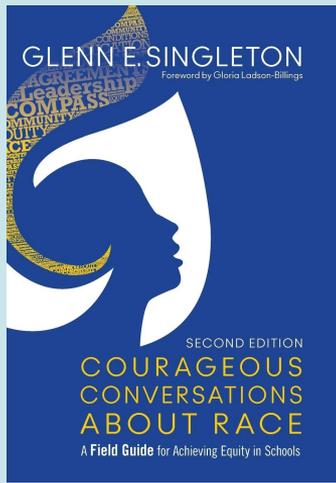
Establish a racial context that is personal, local, and immediate.

All Educators entering into a courageous conversation must commit to following these **Four Agreements**: (how to have the conversation)

1. Stay engaged
2. Speak your truth
3. Experience discomfort
4. Expect and accept non-closure

# The Six Conditions of Courageous Conversation

1. Establish a racial context that is personal, local, and immediate. **(Engage)**
2. Isolate race while acknowledging the broader scope of diversity and the variety of factors and conditions that contribute to a racialized problem. **(Engage)**
3. Develop understanding of race as a social/political construction of knowledge, and engage multiple racial perspectives to surface critical understanding. **(Sustain)**
4. Monitor the parameters of the conversation by being explicit and intentional. **(Sustain)**
5. Establish agreement around a contemporary working definition of race, one that is clearly differentiated from ethnicity and nationality. **(Deepen)**
6. Examine the presence and role of Whiteness and its impact on the conversation and the problem being addressed. **(Deepen)**



- The Four Agreements are practiced to create a **safe space**
- The Six Conditions are used as a **road map**

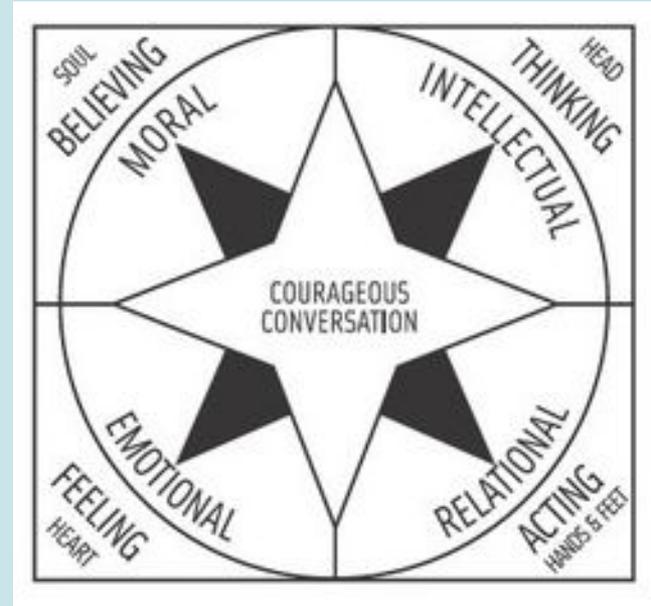


- The Compass is a **navigating tool** to guide participants through these conversations

# The Courageous Conversation Compass

## Emotional - Heart

Responds to information through feelings, causes an internal sensation such as anger, sadness, joy, or embarrassment.



# The Courageous Conversation Compass

## Intellectual - Mind

Personal disconnect with the subject, search for new information. Often verbal or based on our best thinking.



# The Courageous Conversation Compass

## Moral - Soul

Responds from deep seated belief that relates to the racial information or event. Believes in the rightness or wrongness of a given racial issue. These come from the “gut”, but may be verbally articulated.

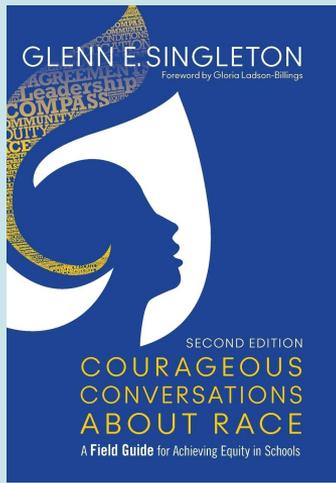


# The Courageous Conversation Compass

## Relationally - Hands & Feet

We connect and respond to racial information through our specific behaviors and actions.





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# Let's Get Started!

## Breakout Rooms

10 minutes

How are you feeling about the topic of race today?

- 2 min each of talking and listening.

# Racial Consciousness

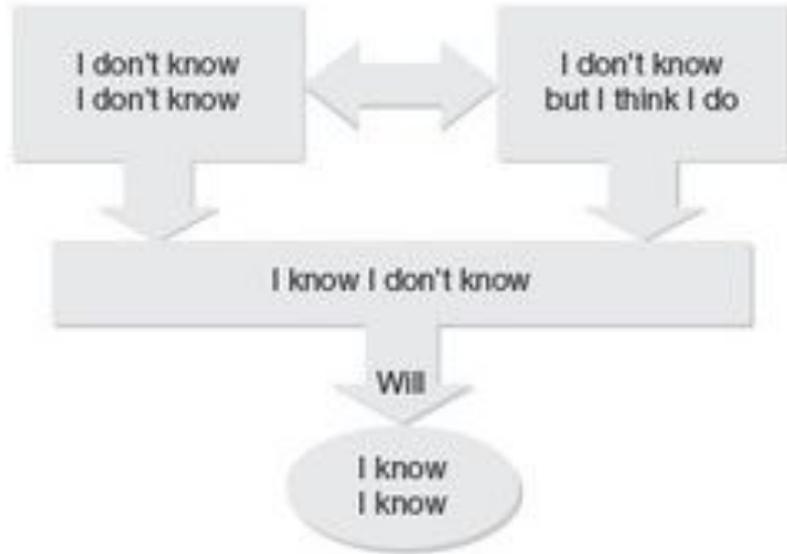
The degree of how conscious you are about how race impacts your life.

# Let's First Acknowledge

- Acknowledge that we don't know what we don't know -
- “I don't know what I don't know.”
  
- Acknowledge that caring and loving others is not the same as knowing said others-
- “You think you know because you care.” P. 66

### We must elevate our own racial consciousness

Stages	Description	Example
"I don't know, I don't know"	When we act based on ignorance	
"I don't know but I think I do"	Our assumptions guide us but have not been verified	A teacher expresses the belief that there is no racial achievement gap in the honors and AP program.
"I know I don't know"	Acquiring information that challenges our assumptions or equips us with new knowledge.	After presented with data highlighting the achievement gap, this becomes a consciousness- raising experience.
"I know I know"	We can now exist in full consciousness and become secure in our belief that our fund of knowledge is sufficient	By talking to students of color and discussing why they succeed and do not succeed, will lead her to explore other racial inequalities that exist in her school.



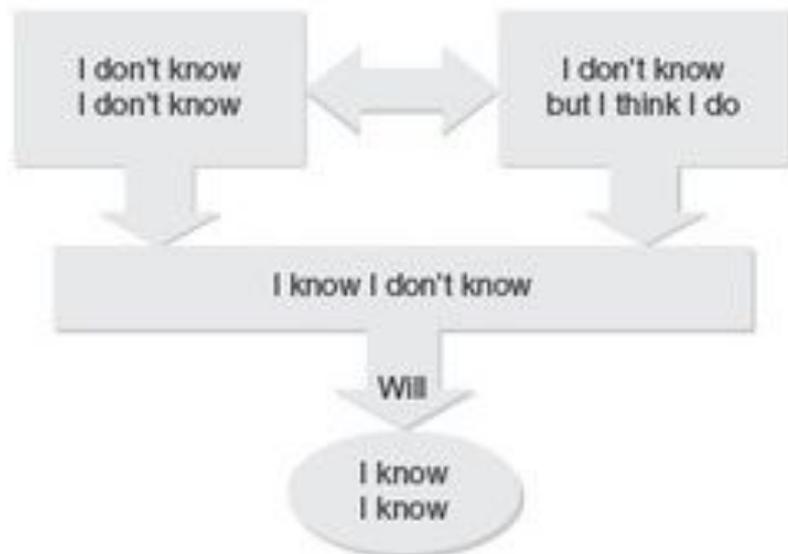
What are the  
inherent weaknesses  
of

“I don’t know but I  
think I do?”

How can admitting “I know I don’t know”  
impact an educator's efforts?

How much is my life impacted by race?

0-100%



**Breakout Room:** Establish a racial context that is personal, local, and immediate.

**In a breakout group you will each answer the following questions:**

1. How much is my life impacted by race? (The percentage you wrote in your self reflection)
2. What personal, local and immediate context lead me to this number?

**As a group discuss the following question**

1. What are the reasons for discrepancies or similarities in our numbers?

Share something you heard in  
the breakout sessions you  
found **meaningful**.

# Homework

1. Review the Equity Exercise you completed previously.

Answer each question again, adding the word now.

Have your definitions changed?

1. I now define racism as:
2. I now define institutionalized racism as:
3. I now define equity as:
4. I now define anti-racism as:

Thank you for your courage and conversation.

