



Background: Relmagine Education is a collaboration between Portland Empowered, the Young People's Caucus, four school districts across Southern Maine and the Maine Department of Education. Relmagine Education (RE) brought youth and educators together in the summer of 2020 to address racism in the education system. RE connected youth leaders and district leaders who were committed to creating change and to listening and learning alongside each other. The RE process centered youth experience and youth voice, specifically those of Black and Brown students in the public education system here in Maine.

The recommendations included below are the result of the work, experiences and ideas of youth leaders with input from district leaders. These recommendations are not intended to be all encompassing, but rather provide ideas for how to address and implement anti-racist and liberatory practices in our schools, districts, practices, policies, and every day actions. **It is imperative that anti-racism is at the forefront of school reopening and is a part of any and ALL learning conditions inside and outside our schools.**

“Punishment needs to be taken away, because that only adds to policing in the schools. It takes away from the ability for students to learn.”

Youth Leader

Risk of Being Expelled



Discipline Policies and Practice Recommendations:

- Explore Restorative Justice
- Remove SROs from schools, and redirect that money towards implementing RJ practices and hiring more social workers and/or guidance counselors
- Implement intensive anti-racist policies and practices into the school system
- Take away punishment and policing in the schools (it takes away from student's ability to learn and grow)



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“We need to highlight the intellectual ability of our students not their language or the color of their skin, but their ability.”

Youth Leader

Academic Placement Policy and Practice Recommendations:

- Disrupt the way ELL students are tracked and placed in order to integrate ELL students into more mainstream classes.
- Encourage BIPOC students who are interested in AP classes to register.
- Create classes with a mix of languages (including English speaking students, bilingual students, and other language speakers).
- Instill a sense of togetherness.
- Do not segregate students based on their race, and or language.
- Normalize difference.



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“I want a more honest educational experience. It has been fabricated to be happier, and it hasn’t been an accurate description of our history.”

Youth Leader

Decolonizing the Curriculum Recommendations:

- Prioritize BSU's, give them space to lead themselves and provide uplifting support
- Replace some of the required books with books by black authors
- Integrate books that explore anti-racism/ how to be an anti-racist
 - (If you have to keep problematic books) then...
 - Re-frame problematic books to look at, explore, and talk about the problematic aspects
- Propose a requirement for schools to explore, discuss, and expand on Black History Month and curriculum.
- Propose and pass the requirement of a Black history book school wide. Use a vetting process to ensure its validity and reliability.
- Require textbooks and/or use writings that are more accurate and showcase events like “Black wall street” for example.
- Engage groups like the civil rights teams.
- Create a bridge program between high school students and colleges teaching programs that are more diverse



Decolonizing the Curriculum Recommendations (continued):

- Create a BIPOC mentoring program for students who are interested... have an elementary or middle school student paired with a junior/senior in high school, and include a person of color that is out of college and in the professional world. The adult can mentor both of the younger students, and the high school student can be one (of what should be many) supports for the middle school student.
- Lift up black history.
- Decolonize classes in all areas, not just history class.
- Require Implicit Bias training for teachers. Invite student groups to participate in these trainings as well.
- Before hiring new teachers, have them successfully complete implicit bias training
- Bring in consultants – experts in the field of racism to meet with students. (Important background to this recommendation: Students need experts in the field to help them with the issues they face at school. Students are not experts in the field of racism – and it’s overwhelming to consider students as being responsible for the change that is necessary.)

“I was sitting here thinking about curriculum, and thinking about leadership and about Black students thinking their voices don’t matter. We need to find a way to truly show students of color that their voices matter.”

Youth Leader



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“Students know which teachers are not kind to Black students...this one teacher kept coming into the room and policing us after school.”

Youth Leader



Recommendations to Address the Cultural Climate within our Schools:

- Make groups like BSU accessible for students, make sure potential meeting times are when people are available, and take into consideration student's other responsibilities (jobs, siblings, etc.)
- Ensure groups like BSU are student-led so students have fuller responsibility and creative control.
- Add "Race in America" as a topic on the list of books for High Schools.
- Commit to learning and being open to other people's stories and experiences.
- Offer BLM stickers and make them available like they have for the LGBTQ community.
- Make an announcement before the Pledge of Allegiance that students don't have to stand up.
- Learn about the Youth Engagement work students have been doing.
- Acknowledge the problems associated with race in the past within the school and demonstrate with evidence what work has been done since to fix those problems.
- Be willing to offer your own ideas to take action on fixing issues within the schools.



Recommendations to Address the Cultural Climate within our Schools (cont.):

- Communicate to the whole school to clearly say that racism is not tolerable and there are consequences for it.
- Put up posters, Black Lives Matter symbols throughout the schools, and make books by Black authors accessible.
- End the inequitable celebration of holidays like Christmas celebrated for 2+ weeks, and lift up different religions and holidays.
- Acknowledge the problems associated with race in the past within the school and demonstrate (with clear evidence) what work has been done over the past few months to fix those problems.
- Have a place (with adequate support) to report or talk through when micro-aggressions or racist behavior is witnessed or experienced.

I've witnessed the powerful learning that happens when Black Youth and Youth of Color have an opportunity to speak up and discover their voice.

I have witnessed this in youth despite the racist targeting and the racism that underpins the education system.

Educator



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“We’re not creating spaces where Black students can grow and flourish. I’ve never had a Black teacher in any class for my entire life.”

Youth Leader



Recommendations to Increase Diversity and Representation among teachers/staff & administrators:

- Incorporate student voice in the hiring process for new teachers, and put on paper a promise to increase diversity in the schools.
- Increase diversity of staff so Black students, low income families, and more students can recognize themselves in their teachers.
- Increase Black teachers, and other teachers of color, within the schools



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“You deal with racism in and out of school, to have space for these conversations is very critical. It is taking a toll on everyone...the safety of all students is in being able to have these conversations.”

Youth Leader



Recommendations to Improve Interaction between Students and Teachers

- Say students names correctly
- Have teachers correct themselves/each other when they make a mistake
- Require teachers to take classes/ workshops on how to deal with racism and difficult situations that come up in the classroom
- Increase accountability and transparency between administration and students
- Require hiring practices that take into account any complaints/micro aggressions that a teacher/staff has done *before* hiring a teacher
- Support teachers to support students to start clubs like BSU or the International Club
- Treat students as individuals that have unique needs and unique methods of support
- Increase anti-racist trainings for teachers.
- Increase workshops for teachers on anti-racism.
- Increase number of teachers of color



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“Within the education experience, we need to see changes implemented.”

Youth Leader

Recommendation: Leaders lead in response to Youth Voice (specifically BIPOC):

- Keep students updated on what administration is doing with regards to anti-racism.
- Ask youth for help in implementing anti-racist changes, yet avoid putting all the work on them.
- Show students that their safety is your top priority and it is a concern.
- Create your own short term solutions to the long term problem of anti-racism.
- Be transparent about your process as you continue this work.
- Engage in training and opportunities for teachers to come together and recognize biases in order to change them.