



Facilitating Dialogue on Systemic Racism and Social Justice through Educational Athletics

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In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Interscholastic athletic competition is an extension of the classroom and an educational activity that provides outstanding opportunities to teach life lessons. Members of the MSAA/MIAA believe that through participation in such programs, young people learn values and skills that help prepare them for the future. Leadership, goalsetting, teamwork, decision making, perseverance, integrity, sacrifice, healthy competition and overcoming adversity are inherent in the interscholastic athletic framework and also support the academic mission of schools. Student-athletes earn the privilege to participate by succeeding academically, and the resulting positive outcomes continue far beyond graduation. Similarly, adult participants, coaches, officials, athletic administrators, and school leaders are privileged to serve as role models for the desired positive outcomes we seek for our student-athletes. The Educational Athletic programs exist to prepare young men and women for the next level of life, not the next level of athletics. Wins are achieved through athletics by developing successful athletes and teams, but more importantly, wins are achieved through the educational experience by developing successful and responsible students, leaders, and community members.

Educational Athletics does not happen in a vacuum. It happens in the everyday lives of each of its participants. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the concerns facing our society may impact and influence the members of the MSAA/MIAA and the participants in Educational Athletics. Two major concerns are Systemic Racism and Police Brutality. Advancing racial equity and inclusion can sometimes seem daunting and often leaves many wondering how and where to start. One way to achieve social change in an organization is to incorporate race equity and inclusion at every stage of Educational Athletics.

Systemic Racism (SR) is prejudice plus the power to act on stereotypes. The increased violence against Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) in our society deeply affects the experience of our BIPOC students, teachers, and administrators. This violence is not only manifested in police brutality, but also in racial hate crimes, and in unfair and unequal treatment on our courts or fields. In order to ensure that we are all contributing to the inclusion, equity, and belongingness of people who identify as BIPOC in our schools and our fields and courts, it is essential that all members of the MSAA/MIAA engage in dialogue that aids in common understanding on SR, the social construct of race, the psychological construct of empowerment, anti-racism, equity, and belongingness. The MSAA/MIAA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee has been diligently working to break down barriers and to build up and improve on efforts to diversify or schools and educational athletics, as well as to highlight the many efforts that are happening across the Commonwealth to address issues of inclusion and belongingness.

Each member of the DEI Community has lived experiences and professional training to respond to the challenges faced by MSAA/MIAA members. This document is written to assist you with starting, facilitating, or participating in the dialogue on SR, Race, and Empowerment, the essential elements for transforming individuals, groups, and organizations. In our case, the students, parents, community members, and school leaders. If we are to deconstruct and transform minds, we must clarify goals, and objectives, as well as standards and benchmarks for progress. Here's a few training and learning objectives to consider.

Potential Learning Outcomes:

- Deepen understanding of Systemic Racism; Anti-Racism; and Equity
- Unpack SR, AR, and Equity work and its application to our MSAA/MIAA members
- Review or preview the District's, School's, Team's, or Individual's commitment to deconstructing SR and living in an Anti-Racist Society

Facilitation Resources:

- Ground Rules - Establish and Practice Ground Rules for creating, maintaining, and sustaining a safe space for learning
 - Be engaged
 - Understand that you may experience discomfort; Embrace it
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 - Speak your truth; Use only "I" statements
 - Expect and Accept non-disclosure
 - Distinguish individual from group or organizational learning
 - Keep conversation centered on SR, and Anti-Racism
 - What's said in your meeting space, stays in the meeting space
 - What's learned in the meeting space is shared outside of the meeting space
 - If meeting is online (Zoom, etc.), detail how you would like the conversation to flow
 - Others, as necessary based on your knowledge of the meeting participants
 - Establish a ombudsman or person to enforce/remind group members of these rules throughout the dialogue.

Helpful Facilitation Information

- Race, Equity, & Inclusion Action Guide: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-andinclusion-action-guide/>
- Organizational Change Processes: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/plan/changeprocess/organizational-change-process>

DEI Meeting Dialogue and Application Questions:

- Define Systemic (Institutional) Racism [SR], Stereotype, Discrimination, Bias, Prejudice, and other terms related to understanding and creating positive responses to SR
- Discuss and provide examples of the various factors that contribute to SR in the US
- Discuss the intersectional of SR, Politics, and Educational Athletics
- Connect the various levels of Bloom's Taxonomy to SR, Politics, and Educational Athletics Create innovative solutions to issues and concerns involving SR, Politics, and Educational Athletics
- List and explain the different forms of Bias, Prejudice, Discrimination, Diversity, etc.
- Examine the Traumatic impacts of Systemic Racism and other Mental Health challenges for Youth, families, and other community members
- Create innovative solutions to issues and concerns involving SR, Gender, Politics, and Educational Athletics

Systemic Racism has been identified a Public Health Crisis in the US. RaceForward.org has identified several factors that lead to the public health crisis and contribute to the inequitable treatment and circumstances that BIPOC deal with because of SR. This is not a comprehensive list. It is a starting point for dialogue and discourse. And a place to begin to deconstruct and transform the systems established to maintain privilege and disparities in communities across the Commonwealth and the US:

- Wealth Gap
- Employment Gap
- Housing Discrimination
- Government Surveillance
- Incarceration
- Drug Arrests
- Immigration Policies
- Infant Mortality

Additional Questions:

- What is your understanding of Anti-Racism?
- What does it mean to be “not racist” vs. “anti-racist?”
- Is Educational Athletics an appropriate tool to use for transformation and change?
- What would an Anti-Racist look like at your level of Educational Athletic participation? (On your team (members, officials, coaches, ADs, etc.)?)
- Consider all of the roles that you hold. What are they and how does anti-racism apply to those areas of your life?
- How do these areas, identified by RaceForward.org, impact or influence each of the areas and the participants (Student-Athletes, Coaches, Officials, Athletic Administrators, etc.)?
- Are those working and living in Educational Athletics immune from the impact or influence of these factors?
- Are there any areas that you are grappling with?
- Are there other factors or considerations for this group?
- What are your take-aways from this meeting?
- Others?

Our DEI Committee has been positioned and is making a difference across the Commonwealth. We are available to assist your DEI efforts. Now is a time for us to send a message on the best uses of Educational Athletics as a tool for change.

THE POSITIVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS DO NOT HAPPEN BY CHANCE. THEY HAPPEN BECAUSE TEACHER-COACHES AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION ADOPT AN INTENTIONAL AND PURPOSEFUL APPROACH TO THE INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC EXPERIENCE.