As the largest institution serving youth in our country, schools have great potential to promote anti-racism and facilitate positive development for Black youth. Adolescents’ unique combination of increasing cognitive ability and growing desire to explore and engage in the world make them ideally suited to thrive in educational settings.

Unfortunately, in addition to opportunities for resilience and positive change, schools also expose Black youth to frequent racism that is often condoned or left unchecked by teachers and other school staff. In school, Black youth face inequitable opportunities, biased information, and disproportionate punishments.

One notably positive path through which some schools are helping to counteract racism is through fostering critical consciousness. Critical consciousness is a process through which students from historically marginalized racial groups are encouraged to understand, analyze, and challenge racial injustice at its roots and apply this understanding toward academic goals and civic engagement.

The following research-based recommendations can help support positive development for Black youth in schools:

- **Schools**: Conduct an equity analysis to identify and remediate disproportionate access to advanced coursework and enrichment programs and disparate impacts of discipline and other school policies on Black adolescents.
- **Schools**: Allocate resources for culturally responsive social-emotional learning programs and assess the implementation and benefits for Black adolescents.
- **Schools and Universities**: Provide pre-service training and ongoing professional development for anti-racist teaching methods and curricula.
- **Funders**: Fund the expansion of evidence-based best practices for promoting anti-racist and equitable school settings as well as the development and testing of new, transformational programs and practices.
- **Youth**: Create, advocate for, and participate in opportunities to build racial equity in your school community and encourage adults to take action.

To read the full report, *The Intersection of Adolescent Development and Anti-Black Racism*, visit: developingadolescent.org/adolescence-and-anti-black-racism
During adolescence, relationships with peers become increasingly central to healthy development as belonging to social groups outside the family takes on new importance. Young people become more sensitive to social status, and their desire to earn respect from others increases. Positive peer relationships can promote further healthy outcomes.

For Black adolescents, peer groups provide a crucial support system. Same-race peers, in particular, as well as peers belonging to other racial groups who have experienced a similar history of marginalization and racism, can provide an important place of belonging, mutual support, understanding, and respect.

Currently, in 2021, many peer relationships are happening online. Overall, social media broadens the traditional range of peer interactions and provides adolescents with unprecedented opportunities to give and receive support, connect, and share their voices. Because of their broad scope, social media and other online spaces provide unique ways to promote resiliency in adolescence and better equip Black youth to manage negative experiences with racism.

The following research-based recommendations can help ensure that these interactions, both in-real-life and online, support positive development for Black youth:

- **Schools and Community-based Organizations**: Create space and provide resources for youth to connect with social groups that increase belonging and support positive identity.
- **Parents and Other Caring Adults**: Talk with adolescents about what they see, hear, and are exposed to online, including open dialogues about race-related content.
- **Media and Researchers**: Build and strengthen connections between researchers, media producers, and youth, such as via collaborative youth councils, to inform media representations of and content for Black adolescents.
- **Youth**: Create, advocate for, and participate in affinity groups and other affirming social spaces.

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Supportive relationships with parents and other caregivers are crucial in adolescence, even as youth establish stronger relationships with peers and engage in more exploration. Families support positive identity development—particularly via cultural socialization and pride, they provide a safe base from which to safely explore, and they offer a literal and figurative place of belonging. Parents and caregivers can also provide an excellent buffer against negative outcomes from racism and discrimination and promote resilience in the face of racism.

Specifically, many Black families facilitate culturally relevant coping (for example, African-centered strategies such as spiritual and community-based coping that reflect historical and cultural traditions) and act as a primary source of racial and ethnic socialization, cultural pride, and preparation for bias. Programs specifically aimed at bolstering these types of family supports for Black youth—such as the Strong African American Families Program (SAAF), the EMBRace intervention, and Pathways for African American Success—are likely to promote healthy development and positive outcomes among Black youth and other youth of color, regardless of which specific barriers these youth are facing in their daily experiences with racism.

The following research-based recommendations can help support positive development for Black youth within the context of family:

- **Policymakers**: Conduct an equity analysis to identify and remediate disparate impacts of existing federal and state-level health and social policies on Black families.
- **Funders**: Fund the expansion of existing evidence-based, strengths-focused programs and the development (via research and refinement, for example) of new programs that support Black families with adolescents.
- **Parents and Other Caring Adults**: Talk with adolescents about their experiences with race and racism, acknowledge your own emotions around these topics, and build capacity to support adolescents’ social and emotional needs.
- **Youth**: Share your views of race and racism with your family (however you define “family”) and learn about different experiences and perspectives as you develop your own ideas.
The Intersection of Adolescent Development and Anti-Black Racism

The Importance of Community

The communities and neighborhoods where adolescents spend time also offer promising avenues to support positive growth and resilience in the face of racism, offering places of belonging and safe exploration for youth.

Community involvement (such as volunteering, advocacy, club membership) is one key context in which adolescents come to feel purpose and believe that they matter. Establishing a sense of purpose in adolescence promotes resiliency and increases well-being by facilitating identity formation. Having a sense of purpose acts as a buffer against daily stressors and protects against the negative effects of poverty. Black adolescents who feel that their lives have purpose and meaning may be less negatively impacted by daily experiences with racism.

For Black youth and their peers, communities are also places where adolescents can get involved in anti-racism campaigns and other types of activism and advocacy to work against racism in a way that promotes their healthy development. Moreover, while this type of community involvement can promote resilience among Black youth facing racism, it can also encourage anti-racism and action among other peers, adults, and policymakers in the broader community. Supporting youth involvement in anti-racism advocacy would yield positive effects for all of us—not just adolescents.

The following research-based recommendations can help support positive development for Black youth in communities:

- **Funders:** Increase resources for community organizations committed to supporting youth activism and other activities that create space for Black adolescents to cultivate their sense of purpose and contribute to their communities.

- **Community-based Organizations:** Build staff capacity through training and ongoing support to reduce turnover and increase sustainable adult-youth relationships.

- **Community-based Organizations and Universities:** Develop or strengthen partnerships for training and supporting youth development program staff in using evidence-based best practices to meet the needs of Black adolescents.

- **Youth:** Engage in community-based programs that support your capacity for social action; share these opportunities with other youth and take advantage of social media platforms to communicate your message and involve others in the work.

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