

The Intersection of Adolescent Development and Anti-Black Racism



UCLA
Center for
the Developing
Adolescent

The Importance of Schools

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.