

# RISING FROM THE PANDEMIC: CENTERING THE CORE VALUES OF AN ANTIRACIST EDUCATOR

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## ABSTRACT

This brief summarizes the responses of pre-service candidates, in-service educators, community college faculty, and university teacher education faculty who completed the California Council on Teacher Education's Policy Committee State-wide Survey on antiracist education. Using the participant and responses and the professional expertise amongst CCTE membership, critical policy recommendations and funding priorities are identified.

## BACKGROUND

Beginning in the middle of the 2019-2020 academic year and extending into the 2020-2021 academic year, the COVID-19 pandemic forced educational institutions to suspend in-person learning and abruptly transition to distance learning. In the midst of the transition, the #BlackLivesMatter movement<sup>1</sup> and efforts to counter the xenophobia that affects many people of Asian descent<sup>2</sup> experienced a rapid global expansion that gave attention to inequalities and issued a call for institutions (e.g., education, judicial, criminal justice, employment, health care etc.) to express solidarity and take action against structural racism. While the recent rise in socio-political movements and activism, that led to calls for solidarity and action, have introduced many in the nation to the concept of antiracism, research dating back as far as the end of the Second World War demonstrates the study of antiracism has long been a topic of interest in the field of education<sup>3</sup>.

The call for solidarity and action also challenged educational institutions and educators to develop greater understanding of the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to effectively engage students in distance learning utilizing antiracist pedagogies and practices. Antiracist education requires commitment at both the individual and institutional levels. A commitment should acknowledge and confront the economic and historic roots of inequalities that have

resulted in racial discrimination in educational institutions and the creation of race-based disparities in services and outcomes for students identifying as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)<sup>4</sup>. In light of this, the California Council on Teacher Education's (CCTE) Policy Committee conducted a survey of its membership regarding their awareness, support and integration of antiracist principles in their classrooms. This research brief focuses on the results of the CCTE Antiracism Survey and highlights policy relevant findings.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

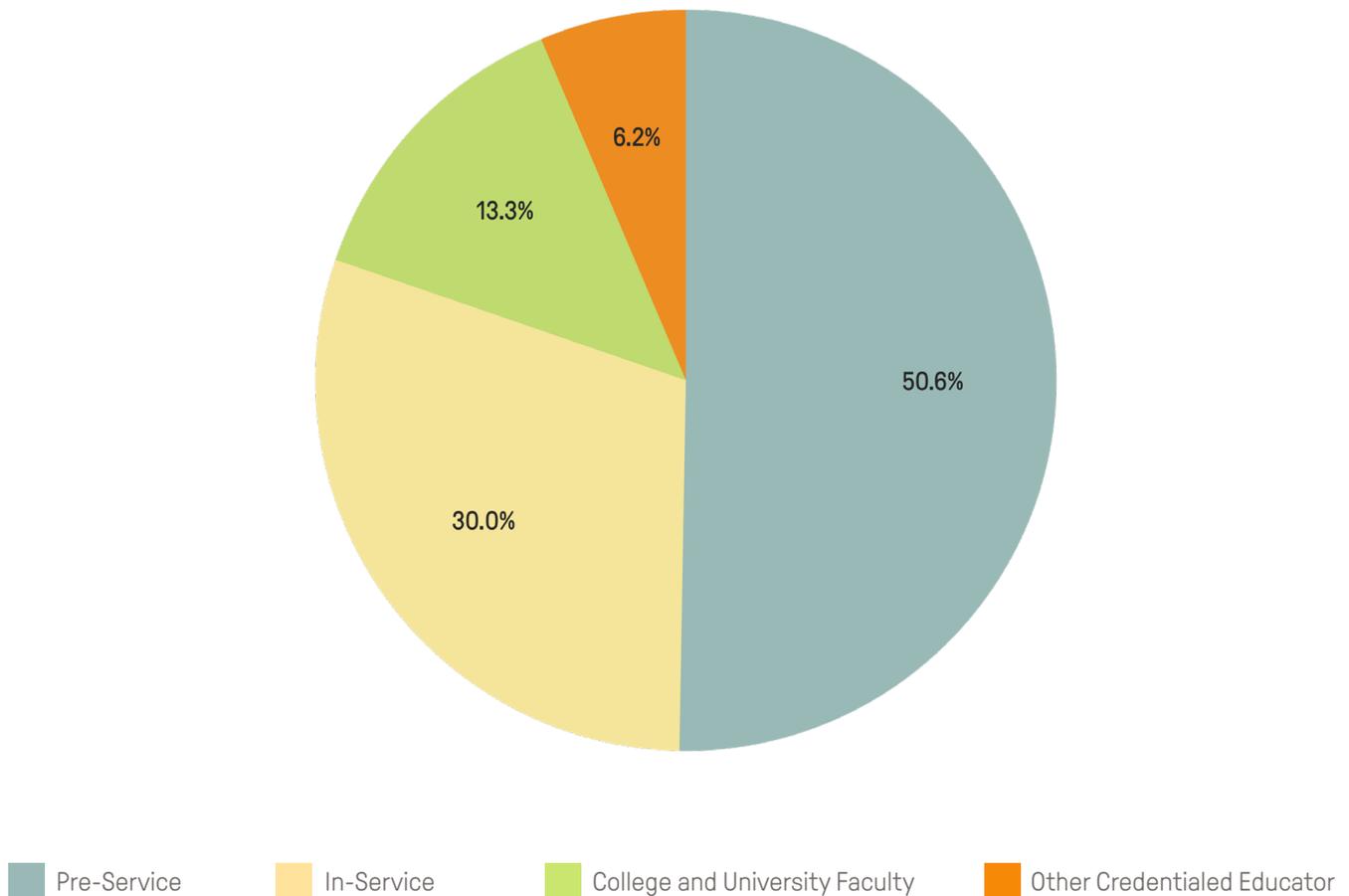
The authors (the REAL Lab team) acknowledge Darlene Bailey for her design work in the creation of this brief. We also recognize Stephanie Biagetti, Karen Escalante, Anita Flemington, Daniel Soodjinda, and Suzanne Whitehead for their development of the original survey, and the California Council on Teacher Education's Policy Committee Co-Chairs (Pia Wong, Cynthia Grutzik, and Nicol R. Howard) for leading the development team and providing supporting documents related to policy priorities. Special thanks to the entire California Council on Teacher Education's Policy Committee and Dean Mario Martinez for their support of this research brief.

## DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY AND PARTICIPANTS

The CCTE has been active in California since 1945 as the only organization bringing together the California State University system, University of California system, independent colleges and universities, and more recently community colleges to work on Teacher Preparation. Members include 70 higher education institutions with Teacher Preparation Programs, and include teacher education faculty, deans, graduate students, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, induction leaders, county offices of education, and K-12 teachers. CCTE’s professional network, state-wide policy initiatives and research priorities impact and engage thousands of future teachers each year, and thousands of practicing K-12 teachers.

The CCTE Policy Committee developed a 13-question survey focused on antiracism principles and practices at the individual and organizational levels to inform California policy-making decisions that support educators and institutions. CCTE shared the survey with its active membership and encouraged the recipients to share the survey with other educators in their networks. A total of 551 people responded and represented educators from a broad range of institutions, roles and career stages (Figure 1): pre-service teachers (n=279); in-service teachers (n=165); college and university faculty (n=73); other credentialed educators (n=34). Pre-service teachers account for slightly more than half of the survey respondents.

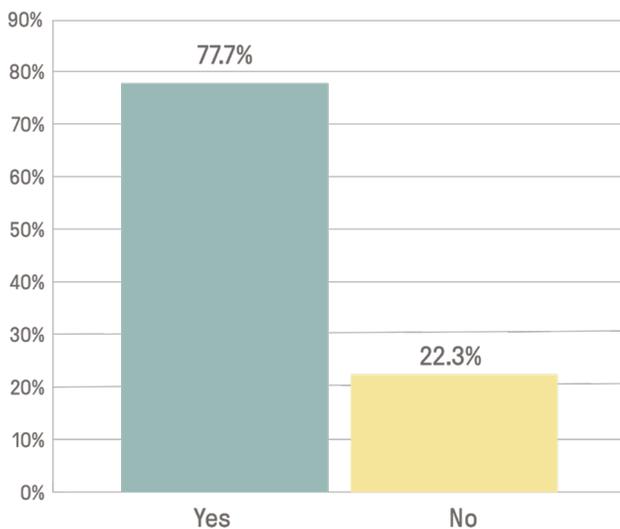
**Figure 1. Participants of the Antiracism Survey**



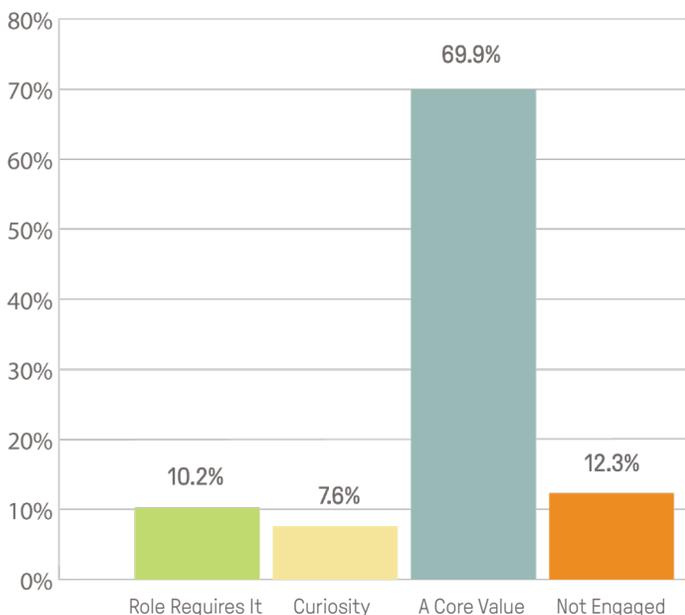
## AN INCREASING INTEREST IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Survey respondents overwhelmingly reported engaging in professional learning related to antiracist education (Figure 2) and identify being an antiracist educator as a core value (Figure 3). Importantly, of those respondents who indicated the reason that they are not engaged in professional learning related to antiracist education 61% (n=70) indicated that such opportunities were not available, 31% (n=36) were unable to participate in available activities and 8% (n=9) reported a lack of interest in these types of professional learning activities.

**Figure 2. Participants' Engagement in Antiracist Education**

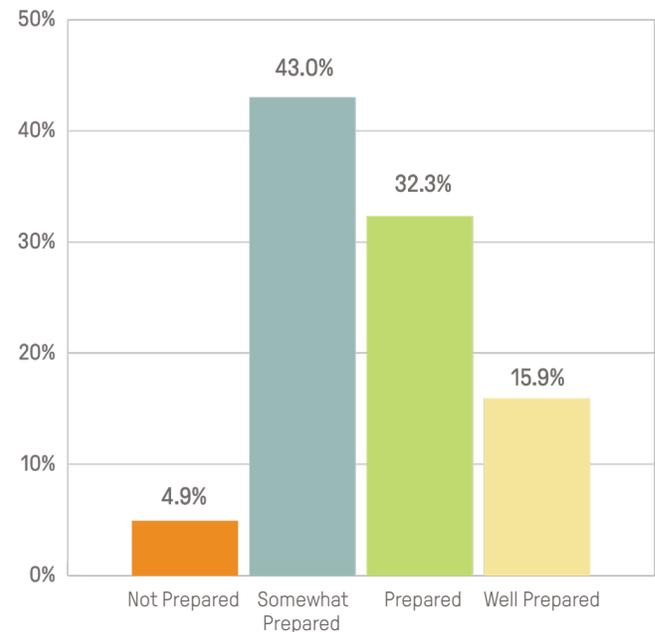


**Figure 3. Participants' Motivation for Engagement in Antiracist Education Activities**



Survey respondents want to engage in antiracist education pedagogy and practices but report feeling unprepared to do so (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Participants' Perception of Their Preparedness to Implement Antiracist Practices**



The importance of an organizational commitment to antiracist education was revealed in the survey respondents' identification of actions that would support their preparedness to engage in antiracist education pedagogy and practices (Table 1).

**Table 1. Actions That Would Support Participants' Preparedness**

Participants' Thoughts on Helpful Resources	%
Opportunity to observe experts modeling practices	48.6%
A professional learning community to support me in trying new strategies	37.9%
More resources including readings, videos, webinars.	37.2%
Better working conditions (e.g., fewer students, more instructional aides, more bilingual resources)	27.0%
Coaching	25.0%
More support from my site	16.7%
More support from my district	16.3%
Other opportunities	6.7%

Opportunities to observe experts modeling antiracist education practices was the most frequently identified form of support (48.6%, n=268). Participants also expressed that access to a professional learning community that provided support as they incorporated new antiracist strategies into their practice would be of tremendous benefit (37.9%, n=209). Access and availability to practical learning resources such as literature, videos and webinars was identified by 37.2% (n=205) respondents. Additional actions that would support respondents' preparedness in this area include coaching (25%, n=138), improved working conditions (27%, n=149), more support from their assigned work location (16.7%, n=90), and more support from their district (16.3%, n=90).

Based on the survey results, there is also a need for on-going and sustainable professional learning plans. Plans should include a focus on antiracist teaching practices that center on supporting BIPOC communities. Professional learning programs need to include certificated and classified staff so they can collaborate in meaningful and coherent ways to meet the socioemotional and academic needs of students. On-going support is critical as new strategies are implemented so that individuals can understand what worked, what did not, and why.

## **QUALITIES OF AN ANTIRACIST EDUCATOR**

Participants were asked to share their current beliefs about the qualities of an antiracist educator by naming 2-3 key terms. The top five qualities of an antiracist educator that were identified by current educators included the terms critical thinker, equity, open-minded, aware, and reflective. The top five qualities identified by pre-service candidates were open-minded, equity, empathetic, unbiased, and culturally responsive. Several respondents from both groups entered full phrases as opposed to key terms, and in each instance these comments demonstrated an understanding of the need to acknowledge and confront the economic and historic roots of inequalities. For example, one current educator stated that an antiracist educator is "aware of the history of racism and how it impacts all of society." Another

said, "they continually learn about structural racism in different aspects of life." One pre-service candidate indicated that an antiracist educator is "a person that is actively working to destroy structural racism where it exists," and another said, they "change systemic issues by being a voice." In summary, responses to this question demonstrate a range of beliefs about the qualities of an antiracist educator from how they think (e.g., critically) to how they act in response to racism (e.g., being a voice). Current educators' and pre-service candidates' beliefs about the qualities of an antiracist educator highlight an awareness that moving beyond addressing race in the classroom is important. Multicultural education is an established framework for addressing race in education<sup>5</sup>; however, recent scholars have emphasized the need to shift to antiracist education practices to address racism in K-12 and higher education institutions.<sup>6</sup> Finally, participants' responses indicated that educators' knowledge base on antiracism frameworks is emergent, suggesting the need for a differentiated and long-term approach to professional learning.

## **TOWARDS AN ANTIRACIST FRAMEWORK**

The range of results in this study demonstrate a need for an antiracist framework to inform and guide the collective work of educators. Such a framework should address the macro and micro levels within organizations and highlight the differences between the "thinking" and "actions" required to engage in antiracist practices. To develop an antiracist framework, policymakers and educators should draw upon research on antiracist education to guide the development process. For example, several critical steps outlined in prior research include: 1) examining the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of racial prejudice and discrimination, 2) exploring the influence of race and culture on one's own personal and professional attitudes and behavior, and 3) identifying and counteracting bias and stereotyping in learning materials<sup>7</sup>, pedagogical strategies, and assessment practices.

## CONCLUSION

Policymakers have a responsibility to support and fund the following for current educators and pre-service candidates: 1) ongoing professional learning opportunities to develop their capacity as antiracist educators; 2) programs (e.g., Ethnic Studies) to move further towards a critical examination of racism as well as a deeper knowledge base of how diverse communities have built American democracy<sup>8 9</sup>; and, 3) the development and implementation of an anti-racist framework to guide future learning plans and policy changes. An antiracist framework may also support the intentional and meaningful assessments of the COVID-19 pandemic's disproportionate effect on BIPOC communities.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the research in this brief, the co-directors of the Race in Education Analytics Learning Lab (Nicol R. Howard, PhD and Adriana Ruiz Alvarado, PhD) can be reached at [real\\_lab@redlands.edu](mailto:real_lab@redlands.edu).

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sobo, E. J., Lambert, H. & Heath, C. D. (2020). More than a teachable moment: Black lives matter, *Anthropology & Medicine*, 27(3), 243-248, DOI: 10.1080/13648470.2020.1783054

<sup>2</sup> Ho, J. (2021). Anti-Asian racism, Black Lives Matter, and COVID-19, *Japan Forum*, 33(1), 148-159, DOI: 10.1080/09555803.2020.1821749

<sup>3</sup> Lynch, I., Swartz, S., & Isaacs, D. (2017). Anti-racist moral education: A review of approaches, impact and theoretical underpinnings from 2000 to 2015. *Journal of Moral Education*, 46(2), 129-144.

<sup>4</sup> Genao, S., & Mercedes, Y. (2021). All We Need Is One Mic: A Call for Anti-racist Solidarity to Deconstruct Anti-Black Racism in Educational Leadership. *Journal of School Leadership*, 31(1/2), 127-141. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.redlands.edu/10.1177/1052684621993046>

<sup>5</sup> Leonardo, Z. & Grubb, W. N. (2018). *Education and Racism: A Primer on Issues and Dilemmas* (2nd Ed.). Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> Zembylas, M. (2015). Rethinking race and racism as technologies of affect: Theorizing the implications for anti-racist politics and practice in education. *Race, Ethnicity & Education*, 18(2), 145-162. doi: 10.1080/13613324.2014.946492

<sup>7</sup> Tater, C., & Henry, F. (1991). *Multicultural education: Translating policy into practice*. Ottawa, ON: Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada.

<sup>8</sup> Cuauhtin, R. T., Zavala, M., Sleeter, C. E., & Au, W. (2019). *Rethinking ethnic studies*. Rethinking Schools.

<sup>9</sup> Sleeter, C. E., & Zavala, M. (2020). *Transformative ethnic studies in schools: Curriculum, pedagogy, and research*. Teachers College Press.



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