

KASP Call to Action for Social and Racial Justice

The Kansas Association of School Psychologists (KASP) stands together with other organizations in outrage and heartbreak at the recent highly publicized violent deaths of people of color. We recognize that these most recent deaths only highlight the deep-rooted pain and trauma from a history of injustice and violence that has characterized so much of American history. In the face of these injustices, the accompanying rage and sadness, and the ensuing protests, we recognize that children and families are overwhelmed and exhausted, and we wish to provide both support and healing. We also firmly call for the deliberate and purposeful action to end systemic racism, injustice, and violence against people of color and we support nonviolent, peaceful approaches that maintain both peoples' safety and First Amendment rights.

KASP recognizes that upholding and aspiring to social justice is an ethical principle for school psychologists who serve as advocates for all children. In 2017, the NASP Board of Directors highlighted the importance of having a social justice lens, noting:

“Social justice is both a process and a goal that requires action. School psychologists work to ensure the protection of the educational rights, opportunities, and well-being of all children, especially those whose voices have been muted, identities obscured, or needs ignored. Social justice requires promoting non-discriminatory practices and the empowerment of families and communities. School psychologists enact social justice through culturally-responsive professional practice and advocacy to create schools, communities, and systems that ensure equity and fairness for all children and youth.” (Adopted by the NASP Board of Directors, April 2017).

We further recognize systems that perpetuate injustice continue to exist throughout this country and that they directly impact the communities we serve. As a practitioner, trainer, mentor, and colleague, you may be asking yourself what you can do. While recognizing that our actions and individual journeys, in the pursuit of social justice and cultural competency, may look different for each of us, KASP offers the following resources and recommendations. We hope that each of you might find at least one of the recommendations and/or resources useful and relevant:

1. KASP endorses the NASP Call for Action to End Racism and Violence Against People of Color (2020). You are encouraged to review the full text and associated resources: <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/media-room/press-releases/nasp-calls-for-action-to-end-racism-and-violence-against-people-of-color>.
2. To become the best advocates for social justice, it is important to understand the impact of implicit bias, race, and privilege in our culture. Some resources to help can be found here: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity/social-justice>.
3. The NASP Social Justice Task Force has developed a series to discuss and share knowledge on a range of topics related to social justice, including the school-to-prison pipeline, white privilege, and issues faced by our indigenous communities. You can find this series here: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity/social-justice/sp4sj-podcast-and-google-hangout-series> or <https://www.tolerance.org/topics/race-ethnicity>.
4. You may seek to further educate yourself on the history of racial oppression and segregation, particularly as it has impacted education. Kansas has played a role in this history as over 50 years ago the landmark Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision ruled that U.S. state

laws establishing racial segregation in public schools are unconstitutional, and stated that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal". You can begin to learn more about this landmark decision and the history of segregation here: <https://www.nps.gov/brvb/index.htm>

5. Continue your quest for cultural competency by learning about the concept of culture humility. You can start by reading this:
<https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2013/08/cultural-humility>
6. Attend, organize, and/or provide professional development on issues related to race and social justice. Consider attending the Fall 2020 virtual KASP conference (October 8-9, 2020), featuring Dr. Charles Barrett, who will speak on timely topics related to the assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse students and social justice. You can also listen to Dr. Barrett discuss racism, social justice, and police brutality on the *School Psyched* Podcast at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMkVxvwmDZM>
7. You may choose to further educate yourself on the topics of racism and oppression through some summer reading. The following are recommended: *How To Be Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, *White Fragility* by Robin Diangelo, and *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad.
8. Check in with colleagues and friends. If you are struggling with what to say, the YouTube video below provides a good example of differentiating empathy from sympathy:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HznVuCVQd10&feature=youtu.be>
9. Reach out to colleagues to talk about ways to support communities who are most impacted by the current climate. Develop partnerships with groups who advocate for communities that have been marginalized and ask them what we can do.
10. Remain vigilant for examples of discrimination or bias in the communities and schools in which we work, call them out, and work to remediate them. These include overt, obvious examples of hate speech (e.g. graffiti), as well as microaggressions against persons of color and other historically marginalized and oppressed communities. This also includes individuals of Asian descent, as there has been an increase in anti-Asian sentiment during the COVID-19 pandemic.
11. Support and encourage school boards and school administrators to improve existing anti-discrimination policies and procedures, and monitor for the consistent application of those policies and procedures
12. Reduce disproportionality by race and ethnicity in school discipline by carefully examining behavior data and the management of problem behaviors in schools. The following NASP resource is recommended:
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity/social-justice/implicit-bias-a-foundation-for-school-psychologists/implicit-bias-part-2>
13. Encourage and assist teachers as they integrate themes related to race and social justice into their curriculum. See, for example, the National Council of Teachers of English: [There Is No Apolitical Classroom: Resources for Teaching in These Times](https://ncte.org/blog/2017/08/there-is-no-apolitical-classroom-resources-for-teaching-in-these-times/) at <https://ncte.org/blog/2017/08/there-is-no-apolitical-classroom-resources-for-teaching-in-these-times/>. The *National Education Association* also provides resources for teachers: <https://neaedjustice.org/black-lives-matter-school-resources/>
14. Provide assistance to parents as they address issues related to race with their children and students. There are many resources for talking about race with children, including <https://www.readbrightly.com/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-race-books-and-resources-that-can-help/>, <https://www.amazon.com/Best-Sellers-Books-Childrens-Prejudice-Racism/zgbs/books/3135> and https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/beyond_golden_rule.pdf.

15. Engage in discussing these issues with our own children and children we serve in our schools. Dr. Byron McClure (@SchoolPsychLife on Twitter) provides excellent resources online to help us do this.

KASP encourages all school psychologists across the state to join us in continuing to promote actions needed to meet the educational and mental health needs of students and families. We encourage and support you as you engage in self-reflection, self-education, self-care, and collaboration with others in your ongoing advocacy for students.

Respectfully,

Acknowledgements: Adapted from the New York Association of School Psychologist (2020) *Statement on Discrimination Against Persons of Color*, the Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania (2020) *Statement Supporting Social Justice and Anti-Racism*, the Michigan Association of School Psychologists (2020) *Call to Action for Social and Racial Justice*, and the NASP (2020) *Call for Action to End Racism and Violence Against People of Color*.