Culturally Responsive, Anti-Racist, and Equitable (CARE) School Assessment

In a culturally responsive school, students', families', and educators' cultures are included in all aspects of schooling, including supports and services that promote well-being and mental health. Anti-racist policies and practices promote equity and oppose racism and other forms of oppression. Equitable schools provide the climate and resources that enable all students and educators to perform at their highest level. Culturally responsive, anti-racist, and equitable (CARE) schools. **The 5 domains of a CARE school are: (1) Teaming and Collaboration; (2) School Climate; (3) School Discipline; (4) Curricula and Teaching Practices; and (5) Professional Development.** Each indicator includes a few ways schools may demonstrate success in each area. The included examples are not exhaustive but illustrative, and ratings in each domain can be used as a starting place for quality improvement initiatives. This assessment tool provides suggestions for action planning that can be tailored to meet your school's needs using the resources in our resource library.

Instructions: Complete this assessment with an existing team or identify a new team. Broad and diverse participation ensures meaningful assessment, successful planning, and implementation. Your team may include school-employed staff, community-employed staff, and other partners and stakeholders. Youth and families should have meaningful roles in your quality improvement initiatives. You may also reassess at any time with different team members who may have more information about CARE policies and practices. **If you are unable to rate the item accurately, please use the "Don't Know" option. Teams should review items with high rates of "Don't Know" ratings. When calculating averages by hand, exclude these items from your total score calculations.** For more detailed instructions and a glossary, visit www.theSHAPEsystem.com, navigate to the CARE assessment page, and download instructions from the green box at the top of the page.

Using Your Results: You might start with low scores. Do not be discouraged! Instead, use your results to prioritize and plan key improvement areas. Use this assessment to facilitate structured conversations, drive strategic planning, provide a metric for reassessment, and optimize all aspects of your CARE policies and practices over time.

NCSMH, 2022

Teaming and Collaboration: Schools that work together with a variety of people from different backgrounds, including families and the community, are using effective methods to create strong teams. These teams focus on promoting fair and equitable policies and practices that respect all cultures and fight against racism and other forms of oppression. The team's responsibilities may involve gathering and analyzing data; hiring staff members who support these principles; making sure money is distributed equitably; and sharing information with everyone involved. By setting a good example and speaking up for CARE practices, this team reinforces the importance of equitable treatment and behavior in their schools.

Indicator	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
1. **School has a team that takes charge of implementing and assessing CARE policies and practices.** (Examples: manages data; seeks help from both internal and external experts for CARE programs and professional development activities; offers a support system for mental health and education that has different levels of assistance; focuses on finding alternatives to suspension and prioritizing them; measures progress toward equity by using evaluation strategies that consider cultural responsiveness in both the process and outcomes)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. **School collects information from various people with different perspectives (e.g., students, family members, community organizations, etc.) to inform decisions about policies, practices, and interventions.** (Examples: school uses different forms of data such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc., to understand and address student strengths and needs; school collects data to evaluate effectiveness of policies, practices, and interventions)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. **School regularly reviews data by group (e.g., race, gender identity, sexual orientation, income level, immigration status, disability status, etc.) to understand and address major disproportionalities or disparities in school policies and practices.** (Examples: school reviews policies such as attendance, special education, advanced course work, discipline, and participation in extracurriculars for major differences in access, use, and outcomes; shares data back to the school community)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. **School shares decision-making power with families and the community.** (Examples: families and community members have important roles in the school's decision-making teams; school asks for input from caregivers, students, and community members to help plan and make decisions; families and students also have a say in creating school rules and ways of doing things)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. **School monitors use of recruitment and retention policies and practices to hire school staff with shared identities of the school/local community's diversity.** (Examples: implements surveys and feedback mechanisms to gather input from both staff and educators regarding their experiences with recruitment and retention policies; compares the identities of employees with the diversity of the school or local	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

community to identify any gaps or discrepancies; establishes partnerships with community organizations and networks that promote diversity and inclusion to tap into a wider pool of candidates)							
6. **School monitors use of recruitment and retention policies and practices to hire school staff committed to CARE learning environments.** (Examples: incorporates CARE in hiring management systems; revises job descriptions and interview questions to assess cultural competence; employs qualified teachers who are knowledgeable about CARE practices being included in educational content; provides CARE professional development training program for new staff)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. **School provides staff with space and opportunity to engage with one another to support their well-being.** (Examples: establishes and maintains mentorship programs; utilizes learning communities; provides space and opportunities for communities who have been historically marginalized to engage with one another through affinity groups, social activities, and networking opportunities)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. **School uses a process to ensure that funds are spent equitably.** (Examples: looks at the budget regularly to make sure money is spent equitably; keeps track of the budget and makes changes if needed; is open when making decisions; asks the school community for input on how money should be used; makes sure there is enough money for mental health support based on what the school community needs)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. **School teams up with the community to get funding and keep programs running that support student success.** (Examples: establishes ongoing partnerships with neighboring schools and districts to make sure all students have equal opportunities; school develops a plan to maintain partnerships with local businesses, colleges, universities, and neighboring schools to keep programs going)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
Teaming and Collaboration Total Score ____ **Teaming and Collaboration Average (Total Score/9) ____**							

School Climate: Creating a safe and inclusive environment that welcomes everyone is an important part of promoting cultural responsiveness, anti-racism, and equity. Students, staff, families, and community members all work together to make sure the school is a place where everyone feels safe, respected, and included. This means celebrating differences, getting input from experts in the community, communicating in ways that respect culture and language, and standing up for social justice issues that matter to students and families.

Indicator	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
10. **School fosters an environment to ensure that students most impacted by social injustices (i.e., racism, classism, ableism, cisnormativity, heteronormativity, sexism, etc.) and historical trauma feel physically and emotionally safe and welcome.** (Examples: staff pronounce student names correctly, use correct pronouns, affirm student identities, and the school is responsive to correction; school adheres to trauma-informed best practices to create trauma-responsive schools; students are treated equitably; staff believe all students can succeed; school celebrates diversity through school-sponsored activities)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. **School provides additional supports to promote academic success and well-being.** (Examples: school provides and staff are aware of supports and/or list of referrals to assist families with financial stressors such as food insecurity, transportation, and child care challenges, housing resources, college, and FAFSA and college scholarship applications; school provides access to mental health services; school has procedures in place such as credit recovery to support success for retained students; school outlines and ensures caregivers' awareness of opportunities for students exceeding academic milestones)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. **School provides equitable and barrier-free access to resources, school grounds, and classrooms.** (Examples: school monitors access to extracurricular activities and opportunities and takes action to reduce disparities; school ensures classrooms and activities are accessible to students with disabilities)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. **School teaches students about positive self-identity.** (Examples: students engage in the development of their cultural self-awareness and identity; students demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between cultures and cultural groups and the dynamic nature of those relationships; school provides opportunities and guidance for students to develop understanding and skills to meaningfully advocate for social justice)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

14. **School adjusts how they communicate with families to make sure everyone can understand and be understood, regardless of their communication style or language abilities.** (Examples: translates information that's sent home as needed; learns a few words in families' languages; has interpreters; discovers effective communication strategies and uses them regularly such as robocalls, newsletters, e-newsletters, social media, texts, presentations, and home visits; establishes positive two-way communication between home and school)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. **School creates and maintains a connection with the community inside and outside of school.** (Examples: school hosts events to foster a connection between the school and community; school administration and staff participate in community events; school makes consistent, predictable efforts to ensure families and community members feel welcomed in the school building)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

School Climate Total Score _____
School Climate Average (Total Score/6) _____

School Discipline: School discipline is the structure, supports, and safety created in the environment to implement strategies that address behavior, repair harm, and restore relationships. How schools choose to promote prosocial behaviors and address behaviors that impact student success are essential components of a CARE school. Use of exclusionary discipline policies and practices disproportionately impacts Black and brown students, results in losses in academic gains, feeds the school-to-prison pipeline, contributes to a culture of unfairness and less school connectedness, and reinforces negative stereotypes about marginalized students. Key strategies to transform how schools approach discipline include (1) collaborative relationships between students, families, and educators; (2) positive school climate created through the use of social and emotional learning curricula, student-centered learning, and trauma-informed practices; and (3) use of a multitiered system of support to address student behavior and promote positive relationships between all school community members. Schools impact how students learn they should be treated and how they can advocate for themselves in the larger community. It is important that schools not only reduce the use of ineffective policies but create a culture that allows restorative practices to thrive. This takes changes in attitudes, relationships, policies, and procedures.

Indicator	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
16. **School collaborates with students, families, behavioral and medical health providers, and/or community members to review and revise discipline policies and practices.** (Examples: students and families teach and model desired behaviors; students and families participate in the planning and implementation of multitiered system of supports focused on behaviors; schools establish and maintain proactive and positive communication with caregivers; *Note: example policies for bullying and harassment*: Model Laws and Policies | GLSEN)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. **School promotes social and emotional learning for students <u>and</u> staff.** (Examples: staff know how to handle their feelings and solve problems well, and staff teach students how to do the same; school helps staff learn about how their emotions can affect their relationships with students and families; school encourages students to show appropriate behaviors that fit their own backgrounds; *Note: review CASEL competencies with cultural analysis resource*: Equity & Social and Emotional Learning: A Cultural Analysis | CASEL)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. **School uses policies and practices that consider the effects of trauma and aim to create a healing environment.** (Examples: staff engage in ongoing professional development about the role of stress and trauma in student behavior; staff and students are knowledgeable about trauma reactions; staff receive ongoing professional development on how to respond to difficult behaviors without causing more distress; staff are trained to deescalate situations)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. **School staff continuously work to eliminate use of ineffective and harmful discipline practices by monitoring and reducing their usage.** (Examples: monitor and reduce criminalization of student behavior; monitor and reduce use of student resource officers and metal detectors; monitor and reduce the use of suspension and expulsion)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

		DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
20.	**School staff identify alternative strategies to zero tolerance and exclusionary policies and practices.** (Examples: identifies and implements evidence-based or practice-based strategies and frameworks that suit the school community such as restorative practices or culturally responsive positive behavior intervention supports)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
21.	**School monitors and reviews discipline data (office discipline referrals, suspensions, expulsions) for disproportionalities and disparities.** (Examples: school looks at information about students to see if certain groups of students are affected more than others by discipline policies; school is fair and transparent, so they share this information with students and families; school also works to understand why these differences exist and find ways to fix the problem)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
22.	**School monitors and reviews use of special education services and supports data for disparities.** (Examples: reviews special education data to monitor disproportionalities and disparities in access, assignment to disability categories, and outcomes; includes trauma screening in initial assessment for special education; ensures that all students referred to special education also receive resources about available community mental health supports; ensures students are educated in least restrictive environments)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
23.	**School staff receive training to understand how racism and other forms of oppression and bias affect discipline policies and practices <u>in general</u>.** (Examples: history of racism and discrimination in school discipline; understanding of effective and ineffective discipline strategies; understanding the impact of implicit/unconscious biases and power structures on discipline choices)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
24.	**School staff receive training to understand how racism and other forms of oppression and bias affect discipline policies and practices in their specific school.** (Examples: school staff reflect on how their cultural lens impacts perceptions of student behavior; school shares data related to discipline at the school; staff learn and implement culturally responsive discipline strategies)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
25.	**School staff participate in training to build classroom management skills.** (Examples: rewarding positive behaviors; maintaining clear behavioral expectations and consequences; strategies to help students problem solve; strategies to identify underlying issues related to disruptive behaviors)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
School Discipline Total Score ____ **School Discipline Average (Total Score/10) ____**								

NCSMH, 2022

Curricula and Teaching Practices: A school that follows CARE policies and practices pays attention to how they teach and what they teach. They work together with students, families, and the community to decide what should be taught and how it should be taught. They make sure to include the perspectives and experiences of people from different backgrounds. They focus on local history and knowledge, using what students already know and are good at to create a variety of learning opportunities. They use books and materials that talk about different cultural groups in a positive way and encourage discussions that help students think critically about important issues in society, history, and their own identities.

Indicator	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
26. **School asks students, families, and the community for their opinions and uses feedback to make sure the curricula, lessons, and materials in class represent different cultures within the community.** (Examples: students co-create learning spaces; families and respected community members such as elders and local leaders are sought out for their expertise and included in planning and carrying out curricula)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. **School makes sure the curricula and teaching methods focus on content that relates to the students' everyday lives.** (Examples: builds on students' existing knowledge and skills; includes diverse perspectives, authors, and topics of significance to students and families in the curricula)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. **School understands and includes the local culture in creating curricula and teaching methods.** (Examples: educators understand and respect the traditions and practices of the local community; educators include different types of knowledge in their lessons, such as indigenous knowledge, local knowledge, and scientific knowledge)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. **School ensures representation of diverse cultures, languages, and abilities in <u>curricula content</u>.** (Examples: content reflects different traditions, religions, spirituality, names, languages, clothes, gender identities, and sexual orientations in major components of the curriculum and images, and it is not just an add-on; educators provide multiple perspectives of the same event, particularly those from marginalized groups; content includes positive messaging that confronts stereotypes and shows cultural strengths)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. **School ensures representation of diverse cultures, languages, and abilities in <u>classroom materials</u>.** (Examples: displays, media, and printed materials show different students, cultures, and abilities)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. **School acknowledges and addresses the impact of racism and other forms of oppression, power, and inequity throughout curricula and teaching practices.** (Examples: understands the difference between key terms such as racism, discrimination, and prejudice and their impact on learning environments; understands how power and privilege impact learning environments and	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

		DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
	relationships between staff, students, and families at multiple levels (interpersonal, institutional) and addresses disparities)							
32.	**School offers different ways for students to learn both inside and outside of the school building.** (Examples: educators engage with and credit community leaders as experts to provide diverse learning experiences that reflect cultural knowledge bases)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
33.	**School grades and evaluates students fairly, considering their different backgrounds and abilities.** (Examples: educators use tests and tools that are fair and consider different languages spoken by students; educators look closely at assessment results and separate the data by different groups to see if there are any biases, disproportionality, or inequities)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
34.	**Educators have resources to help make the classroom a welcoming place for everyone.** (Examples: educators have access to materials that reflect diverse communities)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

Curricula and Teaching Practices Total Score _____
Curricula and Teaching Practice Average (Total Score/9) _____

Professional Development: Staff professional development is crucial to ensuring that a school maintains a learning environment focused on CARE policies and practices. This means providing training, resources, and ongoing coaching to help staff incorporate CARE principles into their daily work. The school needs to have experts who can lead this training or access individuals with the necessary training to engage the school community effectively. Some important topics for professional development include understanding and partnering with the local community, implementing CARE teaching practices and developing inclusive curricula, and recognizing how identity and culture shape education for both staff and students. It's also important for staff to actively engage in their own learning and participate in activities that support CARE policies and practices, as this helps make them sustainable over time.

Indicator	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
35. **School provides opportunities for staff members to engage in individual development.** (Examples: staff engage in their own learning about systems of injustice and their role in the current education system; staff engage in their own learning about their own identities and biases and the impact on their work)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. **School provides professional development opportunities in CARE practices.** (Examples: provides CARE training to new staff; provides professional development activities that create collaboration and support among staff such as learning collaboratives or mentorship programs; caregivers and community members co-lead trainings with school staff; administration engages school staff in selection of professional development activities as collaborators)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. **School provides professional development activities that foster learning about and partnering with the local community.** (Examples: includes an orientation to the students, local community, and languages as part of onboarding new staff; provides professional development opportunities to improve understanding of how local culture enriches learning experiences; enhances understanding of how systemic racism and systems of oppression have contributed to health and mental health outcomes in the community)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. **School evaluates professional development activities to measure effectiveness in increasing educator knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors related to promoting equity.** (Examples: invites staff to provide feedback on professional development activities in multiple formats; evaluates staff knowledge and skill acquisition in relation to outcomes)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
Professional Development Total Score _____ **Professional Development Average (Total Score/4)**							

Domain	Average Score
Teaming and Collaboration	
School Climate	
School Discipline	
Curricula and Teaching Practices	
Professional Development	

Categories to Assist with Interpreting Averages:

Not Established – Domains where contributors reported the practices within the domain do not exist yet within the organization or they are rarely observed. The overall mean falls between 1.0-1.9.

Emerging – Domains where contributors reported that many practices within the domain are happening much less often than there is opportunity to do so. The overall mean falls between 2.0-2.9.

Progressing – Domains where contributors reported many practices within the domain are carried out at least some of the time there are opportunities do so. The overall mean falls between 3.0-4.9.

Advancing – Domains where contributors reported many practices within the domain are happening often and are likely part of everyday practice. The overall mean falls between 5.0-6.0.