Racial Equity Plan
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PURPOSE

The Educational Theatre Association's (EdTA) Racial Equity Plan outlines the organization's continued efforts to promote anti-racism and racial equity in all aspects of its operations, including governance, infrastructure, content, programming, chapters, and membership. This plan serves as a guide and is intended to not only advance EdTA’s commitment to racial equity, but also to inspire similar efforts in the theatre education industry. The plan is a dynamic document and will be updated as needed to reflect the evolving landscape of racial justice. EdTA stands in solidarity with movements working toward improving the lives of marginalized communities and ending the systemic oppression perpetuated by white supremacy in the United States.
The Educational Theatre Association is an international nonprofit organization that serves as the professional association for theatre educators. EdTA is the parent organization of the International Thespian Society, an honorary organization that has inducted more than 2.5 million Student Thespians since its founding in 1929. Additionally, EdTA operates the Educational Theatre Foundation, the organization’s philanthropic arm dedicated to increasing opportunity and access to school theatre.

Oppression perpetuated by white supremacy in the United States.

**MISSION:** Educational Theatre Association’s (EdTA) mission is shaping lives through theatre education by honoring student achievement in theatre and enriching their theatre education experience; supporting teachers by providing professional development, networking opportunities, resources, and recognition; and influencing public opinion that theatre education is essential and builds life skills.

**HONORING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT** in theatre and enriching their educational experience

**SUPPORTING EDUCATORS** by providing professional development, networking opportunities, resources, and recognition

**INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION** and policy-makers that theatre education is essential and builds life skills

**STUDENTS**

**EDUCATORS**

**PUBLIC**

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Exposure to theatre changes minds, builds empathy, helps to interrogate problems, connects us to one another, and stimulates creativity. Therefore, every student must have theatre as a vital and essential part of their education and existence. To shape lives and ensure a future where equity is the norm and diversity is a cherished benefit of theatre, EDTA, ETF, and ITS will honor student achievement, support educators, and influence public opinion through an anti-racist lens in our operating and governance practices, and programming and support services. The future of the field is determined by our youth and their multicultural stories. Ensuring an equitable and diverse theatre future is paramount and requires all theatre educators, students, and practitioners to act now.
We have come to learn and embrace the notion that committing to anti-racism work is an act of love. It is from a place of love for our members, both current and prospective, that we have made the important, necessary, and urgent step in developing a plan that ensures EdTA supports a culture that is inclusive of all people. The process forced us to look inward as an organization to name our areas of opportunity. It also allowed us space to think boldly about how we can continue to push ourselves and the field of educational theatre toward racial equity.

— Dr. Jennifer Katona, EdTA Executive Director and ETF President

Educational theatre programs have long been seen as providing safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments where students learn, grow and explore identities and cultures, experiencing ideas to which they may not have otherwise been exposed. It is essential that this exploration be inclusive of the authentic and creative voices of the world in which they live, thus learning to recognize and appreciate a diverse collection of identities, experiences, perspectives, and abilities. EdTA must be an organization that inspires our theatre communities toward empathy and understanding.

— Helen Duranleau-Brennan, EdTA Board President

Theatre is a lens on society, humanity, and our collective culture. Through this lens, audiences and theatre practitioners gain better awareness, understanding, and compassion for those like and unlike themselves. The Educational Theatre Foundation is uniquely positioned to broaden the access to this lens for participation in and magnification and amplification of important stories, issues, and circumstances. It is critical that the foundation use its influence to ensure equity and a much broader visibility and awareness of the power theatre has to shape and change lives.

— Matt Conover, ETF Board Chair
For the handful of kids of color who join these predominately white spaces, their “greatness” cannot be maximized because they often have to sift through many discomforts — ranging from disconnects with the material being presented, to how some teaching artists might engage with them due to implicit bias, to the sea of predominately white peers they are surrounded by.

— Ilasieia Gray in "Why Are There No Great Kids of Color in the Performing Arts?"

Theatre, as a form of artistic expression, has the potential to serve as a tool for promoting social justice. Through its portrayal of real-world issues in dramatic settings, it can foster empathy and increase understanding of diverse perspectives. Despite this, theatre has sometimes been guilty of perpetuating oppressive issues such as racism, even as it claims to be immune to these problems or applauds itself for presenting shows that address them. This is evident in areas ranging from the content of productions, to governance, operations, and audience development. As Brigitte Winter and Jared Shamberger wrote in their American Theatre article "Facing Our Failure: The Power of Acknowledging Racism Within the American Theatre":

American theatre is not immune to the racist, oppressive practices baked into other industries, but too often we are resistant to holding up the same mirror to our own institutions that we hold up to society through the work on our stages. We must stop leaning on radical art to justify oppressive art-making, and start talking about radical hiring, decision-making, budgeting, and power-sharing.

Mary McColl, former executive director of Actors’ Equity Association, acknowledged the situation in Richard Morgan’s Bloomberg.com article "In American Theater, a Radical Accounting of Race and Privilege":

"Factually, American theatre is a white dominant art form ... and the rest of Equity leadership are aware that the first steps can start in their own backyard."

2020 U.S. census statistics show that 77% of the total U.S. population is white and 23% are BIPOC, and those demographics are shifting — half of the under-18 population is BIPOC, and this number is expected to grow over the next decade (see TYA-USA pamphlet). Yet according to research studied by EdTA:
• 7% of theatre teachers are Black, Latinx, or non-white races
• 28% of public high schools in high-poverty areas offer theatre instruction
• 25% fewer fine arts credits earned by Black students (1.5) than white students (2.0)

When I was growing up there were no drama or theatre enrichment programs in elementary schools like there are now. Some options were presented in middle and high school, but not many. My mom had to do copious amounts of research for any professional acting classes I wanted to participate in and she wasn’t always sure where to look. And, as is true for many cultures, finding Black-centered theatre arts programs was a struggle. Similarly, [BIPOC students] will have to go along with studying and performing white-centered plays or monologues (for example, focusing on Shakespeare rather than August Wilson) that often do not reflect the world they live in.

— Ilasieia Gray in "Why Are There No Great Kids of Color in the Performing Arts?"

While racism in American theatre and industry’s lack of diversity has existed forever, an anti-racist movement emerged after the 2020 murder of George Floyd, prompted by the manifesto and list of demands put out by We See You White American Theatre.

The business models of predominantly white theatres and theatre organizations are structured by white representation and therefore predominantly white audiences are their consumers. This is not a coincidence, and a shift towards a predominantly multicultural representation in theatre will require a comprehensive overhaul of these business models. This process should be collaborative, with the active involvement of BIPOC communities.

As Jerald Pierce says in his American Theatre piece “Not a Moment but a Movement: Toward an Anti-Racist American Theatre”:

These anti-racism practices don’t end with how the art is made.
This plan is both a continuation and an evolution of EdTA’s response to the world’s demand for change. EdTA has learned much in the creation of this plan and will continue to learn. Using an inclusive process led by consultant Michael J. Bobbitt, every EdTA employee and foundation and association board member was invited to submit action items. A racial equity plan task force, made up of diverse members of EdTA’s employees and association and foundation board members, worked for several months with consultant Bobbitt to turn those action items into S.M.A.R.T outcome goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based). Committees of chapter directors and BIPOC members also input to the S.M.A.R.T. goals, which will align with EdTA’s strategic plan, center BIPOC, and aim to ensure the culture of being an anti-racist theatre education organization.

This Racial Equity Plan comes after a few years of training and education. In 2020-21, EdTA retained Ivy Planning Group as its DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access) consultants. Ivy led full-day training with the EdTA staff, the EdTA board of directors, and chapter leaders in 2020. They also provided direct coaching to the executive team in developing an initial focus and creating a three-year DEIA strategic plan. Additionally, staff pursued individual DEIA training and learning as relates to their work and their personal journeys. Several staff participated in Racial Equity Matters.

training workshops offered by Greater Cincinnati Foundation in 2020-21, training via the Arts Education Partnership Working Group, and DEI Event Strategist Certification coursework in 2022. EdTA provides DEI workshops to their members via the Learning Center.

This plan is also a continuation of work toward the three-year DEIA strategic plan referenced above, whose outcomes included increased BIPOC presenters and topics at EdTA events, professional learning for teachers, and DEIA-focused educational grant projects. In particular, ETF programs have deepened the organization’s DEIA impact and advanced its racial equity goals: JumpStart Theatre has broadened access to theatre education in schools where there was none, including in BIPOC communities in Atlanta, Cincinnati, and San Diego. The Pathway program, launched in 2021, focuses specifically on building racial equity through school theatre. ETF’s grant-making efforts also prioritize Title I schools with high BIPOC enrollment.

In addition to the work on racial equity, EdTA, ETF, and ITS acknowledge and will deepen the organization’s work on:

• Intersectionality as it relates to racial injustice. EdTA, ETF, and ITS understand that equity involves many aspects around disenfranchisement, but this plan focuses solely on racial equity. This will help develop the framework to build a suite of subsequent plans that provide space to specifically name and address other inequities such as disability, gender, and sexuality.

• EdTA, ETF, and ITS use the term BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). EdTA, ETF, and ITS recognize that language is fluid, and the intersectional justice and equity movement is redefining terminology regularly. The use of the term BIPOC is not meant to erase or exclude.
The Plan

To ensure that BIPOC voices are represented and heard in governance, intentionally prioritize, and cultivate BIPOC members (through recruitment and publicity plans) until the identified goal is achieved or exceeded.

To ensure that all constituents are aware of EDTA, ETF, and ITS’ racial equity/anti-racist culture, use and promote the anti-racism/racial equity statement broadly and intentionally (i.e., job postings, job descriptions, website, annual report, point of purchase, vendor/partner contracts, events, etc.) and ensure that all partners, vendors, contractors, consultants, sponsors, donors, volunteers, members, students, schools and other entities that EdTA, ETF, and ITS work with share the commitment to anti-racism as part of all formal agreements.

To ensure accountability for organizational DEIA actions, create a DEIA committee composed of staff, board, chapter directors, BIPOC task force, members with equal representation BIPOC/non-BIPOC.

To perpetuate anti-racism/racial equity in every aspect of EdTA, ETF and ITS operations and programming, ensure equal representation of BIPOC/Non-BIPOC on all working groups, task forces, committees (including volunteer committees, i.e., Thespy Committee) and staff.

To ensure accountability for organizational DEIA actions, create and hire a DEIA staff position to manage the racial equity plan and support the organization in its DEIA efforts.

To ensure and advance an anti-racist and a racially equitable culture, provide biannual racial equity training, workshops, for members, chapters, and teachers.

To shape lives and ensure an equitable and diverse future where BIPOC contributions to theatre are celebrated and well-known, provide teacher training in diversifying and decolonizing classroom, curriculum, and the canon, and maintain a database of BIPOC theatre content.
2023

- To position EdTA, ETF and ITS as a racial equity/anti-racist organization which values the participation and contributions of BIPOC, review and revise the mission, vision, and core values from a Diversity Equity Inclusion Accessibility (DEIA) lens.

- To ensure and advance an anti-racist and racially equitable culture, reduce barriers of participation, and increase the number of BIPOC prospects/members, review and revise all governing, prospecting, nominating, election, onboarding, chapter charters, chapter agreements, and accountability measurements documents and processes for the board, foundation, committees, staff, and all chapters.

- To ensure and advance an anti-racist and racially equitable culture in the staff, board, foundation, and chapters, the following will occur:
  - To enable maximum participation of BIPOC foundation board members beyond financial contributions, conduct a full review and revise foundation member fundraising/giving policies and practices through a racial equity/anti-racist lens.
  - To increase the awareness of BIPOC donor needs, require two readings/trainings annually on wealth disparity, systemic oppression, the history of fundraising, 501(c)3 laws, inclusive fundraising practices, contributions beyond financial gifts, equity in finance for boards, staff, and chapter leadership.
  - To ensure the value of BIPOC voices and promote EdTA, ETF, and ITS’ culture of anti-racism, review, revise and standardize all HR practices, policies, procedures in recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and interviewing to eliminate all instances of “othering,” implicit bias, and racism.
  - To perpetuate EdTA, ETF and ITS as a welcoming place for BIPOCs, build an onboarding plan for new BIPOC employees (i.e., e-introduce new staff, pronunciation of name, 30/60/90 welcoming atmosphere assessment, introduce to affinity groups at the organization and in the field, celebrate cultural holidays, etc.).

- To influence public opinion around the value of BIPOC contributions to the field and our anti-racist values, build an advocacy plan for creating culturally responsive curriculum.

- To create a welcoming environment for BIPOC participants, create regular affinity groups and activities and land acknowledgements at the International Thespian Festival (ITF) and Theatre Education Conference (TEC). In 2023, when ITF falls over Juneteenth, incorporate celebratory programming; ensure future event dates to not fall on the federal holiday.
• To ensure racial equity/anti-racism is a part of governance at every level, embed annual racial equity actions into the board, the foundation, chapter leadership, and every committee.

• To ensure racial equity/anti-racism in governance, empower the DEIA committee and any other member of the board and ETF with the power to request “to reconsider action” prior to adoption, if the potential for inequitable/racist outcomes is perceived.

• To ensure a culture of anti-racism/racial equity and value the work of BIPOC staff, complete an annual pay equity assessment for all employees and adjust salaries if necessary.

• To value the knowledge that BIPOCs bring to EdTA, ETF, and ITS, develop a diversity recruitment plan, increasing the BIPOC applicant pool by 20% and ensuring that at least 50% of all candidates interviewed are BIPOC for any open staff positions.

• To celebrate the gravitas of certain multicultural holidays (Juneteenth, Indigenous Peoples Day, Tet, Ramadan, Rosh Hashana, etc.) for BIPOCs, develop an operational plan for recognizing (i.e., office closing, educating staff, public acknowledgement, etc.).

• To promote EdTA, ETF, and ITS as an anti-racist/racial equity organization and increase the “safe feeling” need of BIPOC participants, ensure the maximum engagement, and increase BIPOC participation, collect self-reported racial demographic data and have members and participants sign an anti-racist agreement and code of conduct at the renewal/sign-up process, registration for events, pre-event email, pre-announcement, ‘know before you go,’ registration receipt, etc.

• To ensure the safety of BIPOC program participants, revise the current safety and reporting system to include racism incident reporting for incidents of racism, racial harassment, or racist harm and develop “next steps” follow up plan with appropriate forms of justice (punitive, reparative, or transformative), taking care of the person who has received harm/harassment. Additionally, a template will be made available for chapter usage or adaptation, if desired.

• To advance the contributions of BIPOC members of our field, diversify content (publications, podcasts, webinars, etc.) and the delivery of content (dual language, translated, universal reading level, etc.), ensuring that at least 50% of the content is about or by BIPOCs.
• To ensure racial equity/anti-racism is a part of decision-making at every level, embed annual racial equity actions into every committee (including education, main stage, and Thespy committees), chapter leadership, and student leadership.

• To ensure racial equity/anti-racism is a part of the governance and elections of student leadership programs, design resolutions, rules, and guidelines to aid in the creation of racial equity/anti-racism actions for student leadership programs (including the International Thespian Student Leadership Council and State/Provincial Thespian Officers).

• To value the input of BIPOC voices in the future of the field, review and revise the Thespy adjudication process, ensuring equity, eliminating barriers to participation, and building equity in awards.

• To value the contributions of BIPOC voices in the future of the field, create new opportunities that specifically prioritize the deep engagement and support of BIPOC youth (i.e., internships, partnerships with IATSE, featured Pathway productions at ITF, diversity in future leaders’ programs, fund Title I and non-Title I/ high BIPOC student enrolled school main stage productions to attend ITF, ITO, STO, etc.).

• To value the contributions of BIPOC voices in the future of the field, ensure that Thespy and Main Stage advisory committees have at least equal representation BIPOC/non-BIPOC members to (i.e., build recruitment plan, provide adjudicator compensation, incorporate diversity in rubrics, build more stringent bias intervention vetting process in interview/application, provide training to mitigate bias, adjudicators sign anti-racist/racial equity agreement, etc.).

• To raise awareness of diversity practices in the field, review and revise the Honor Chapter Program to incentivize, award and promote chapters with strong anti-racist and diversity advancements, practices, and actions.

• To influence public opinion around the value of BIPOC contributions to the field and our anti-racist values, provide tools and talking points to teachers for advocating for racial equity in their school theater programs.

• To advance EdTA’s culture of anti-racism/racial equity and perpetuate a safe and welcoming environment for BIPOCs, radically re-imagine and incorporate anti-racism efforts into ITF and TEC (i.e. diversify main stage presenters, utilize local BIPOC-owned vendors for products and services, redesign the Thespy academic competition, Main stage and Chapter Select selection process and college auditions process to meet accessible and anti-racist goals, including adjudication tools and processes, showcasing works by BIPOC authors, site selections, etc.).
• To ensure that BIPOC voices are represented and heard, elevate BIPOC member(s) to leadership with the following appointment goals:

• To ensure racial equity/anti-racism, implement a consultation and consensus process with the DEIA Committee on board and ETF membership and the hiring/evaluation of the Executive Director in.

• To remove barriers to accessing our financial assistance programming for BIPOC and ensure equity, radically redesign/revise and expand needs-based practices including scholarships, and grants, achieving 50% BIPOC teacher recipients and 50% BIPOC student recipients, and ensure equal BIPOC/non-BIPOC representation in adjudication panels.

• To support anti-racism/racial equity plans on the chapter level, provide funding for consultations or plan creations.

• To ensure an awareness and practice of anti-racism/racial equity and perpetuate EdTA, ETF and ITS’ culture as an anti-racist/racial equity organization, revise all operations policies, practices and procedures and eradicate all racism and White Supremacy practices from internal communications, feedback mechanism, Employee Handbooks, etc. and design reporting/compliance procedures.

• To ensure the value of BIPOCs to our field and EdTA, build a recruitment plan (i.e., partnerships with HBCUs and Offices of Diversity and Inclusion in higher ed, membership fee waivers for predominantly BIPOC schools, “look alike” marketing) to increase BIPOC membership by 25%.

• To celebrate the value of BIPOC contributions to the field and ensure equity, radically redesign and revise EdTA and ITS awards, including the Hall of Fame, from an anti-racist lens, ensuring adjudication panels have equal BIPOC/non-BIPOC representation and at least 50% of awards go to BIPOC.
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Racial Equity Tool Glossary
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