



**Tenafly Board of Education
Anti-Racism Training & Listening Sessions**

Please see the attached video which provides an overview of this work, presented by Bonnie Cushing and Edie Grauer.

What is the Initiative and Its Objectives:

The Tenafly Board of Education will be educating ourselves about racism to be informed and effective listeners for our community.

- 1) **Leadership training for the board and district administrators** to learn more about racism, including its history, and to establish shared language and common definitions to have a constructive dialogue about race and racism in our community. Our hope is that this preparation will allow us to hear, receive and respond appropriately and compassionately to all community members who attend the listening sessions.
- 2) **Listening sessions, facilitated by experts**, to ensure we create safe spaces for our district **staff, students and families** to share any personal experiences of racism in the school environment.

Background: In June 2020, the board passed a resolution to address racism in our schools and discussed conducting listening sessions for our community around this topic. As we explored how the listening sessions would be implemented, we quickly recognized we would need help from external experts in this field. We then took concrete steps to set up the work - allocating funds appropriately through the budget process, forming a board committee dedicated to this work, and meeting with various stakeholders - i.e. the Diversity committee which includes parents in the community, administration - most of whom supported and encouraged our work.

The Listening Sessions Committee drafted a request for proposal (or an RFP) for this work, and that was sent out in May 2021 and posted through the month of June 2021. The board received three proposals in response. The committee reviewed and considered the proposals, and ultimately chose Bonnie Cushing for this work based on her experience with NJ-based public schools, her expertise in the field, recommendations from colleagues and other public school districts, and overall cost to the district. Bonnie will be leading the training and facilitating the listening sessions along with her co-facilitator, Edie Grauer.

Expected Timeline:

Board & Administration Trainings - Q1 2022



Community Listening Sessions - Q2 2022

FAQs

Q: What are the goals of this project?

A: The Listening Sessions Antiracism Training consists of modules on The Fundamentals of Racism, followed by debriefing sessions for reflection and feedback. The training will lead us to listening sessions where we will provide safe spaces for our community to discuss how Racism has impacted their lives. The listening sessions will be voluntary and open to the entire Tenafly Public Schools community. In an effort to create safe and comfortable spaces for all participants, neither the training sessions nor listening sessions will be recorded.

The Anticipated Outcomes of the trainings are:

1. Participants will learn definitions of Race and Racism
2. Participants will receive a historical context for structural racism
3. Participants will acquire a common language with which to constructively discuss racism
4. Participants will be able to identify the “Four Is of Racism” and understand the nature of implicit bias
5. Participants will have increased awareness of their own socialization/racialization process and its influence
6. Participants will have a “racial equity lens” through which to more deeply listen and understand the stories they hear from the community in the Listening Sessions
7. Upon completion of the training, the board and lead administrators, with the assistance of the facilitators, will hold the Listening Sessions for the community to share any personal experiences of racism in the school environment.

Q: Is this introducing Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Tenafly Schools?

A: This is a listening sessions initiative. We are not here to discuss CRT content, it would be inappropriate for us to comment on CRT as we are not CRT theorists nor did we hire CRT educators.

Q: Will this training be done in classrooms?

A: No. The Anti-Racism training for listening sessions consists of modules on The Fundamentals of Racism, followed by debriefing sessions for reflection and feedback. The training will lead us to listening sessions where we will provide safe spaces for our community to discuss how Racism has impacted their lives. The listening sessions will be voluntary and open to the entire Tenafly Public Schools community. In an effort to create safe and comfortable spaces for all participants, neither the training sessions nor listening sessions will be recorded



Meet our Facilitators, Bonnie Berman Cushing & Edie Grauer

Bonnie and Edie are dedicated professionals and experts in the space of undoing racism © and community partnership to bring people together. Bonnie and Edie have three decades of experience facilitating, researching and engaging communities on the topic of racism.

Bonnie comes highly recommended by the former Superintendent of the Montclair Public School District, who worked with her over two academic school years. Bonnie served as an Anti-Racism trainer and facilitator for their entire staff. Bonnie has also worked with the Teaneck Public Schools as a consultant and facilitator. She led an Undoing Racism Workshop for the Teaneck community in 2019, which included students, administrators, parents, teachers/staff, BOE trustees and town council members. Bonnie is also a core trainer with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond where she promotes education and community organizing to undo racism and all other forms of oppression. She is co-founder of both the Anti-Racist Alliance and European Dissent, NJ. Bonnie is a racial equity trainer with the Center for Racial Justice in Education where she develops training for educators in public and private schools on how to talk about, and deal with, issues of race and racism in the classroom, and a Senior Consultant for the Soul Focused Group. Bonnie sits on the Board of the Center for the Study of White American Culture, where she also develops curriculum and co-facilitates workshops on issues of white culture, white privilege and white racial identity for the purpose of understanding and de-centering white culture, building a multiracial community and organizing for racial justice and equity.

Edie is a multi-faceted and seasoned educator, leader, coach and manager experienced and adept at developing training curricula and conducting training. Edie has experience working on behalf of a myriad of disenfranchised and special needs populations promoting empowerment, inclusion and self-determination. Edie is a fellow at CEAR (Community-Engaged Anti-Racist Education Project at Rutgers Graduate School of Education) where she provides guidance, support and feedback to ensure that programs are supporting the development of candidates' dispositions, knowledge, and skills to be effectively engaged in and committed to excellence, equity and social justice in their teaching practice. Edie is also a trainer at the Center for the Study of White American Culture where she develops curricula and facilitates public and institutional Anti-Racism workshops.