Embracing Equity offers this classroom “audit” to critically examine the messages conveyed by the images on the walls, the books on the shelves, and the arrangement of the furniture with a keen eye toward diversity, equity and inclusion. This audit also helps us to consider the types of interactions that teachers have with students and families, and that students have with one another. Doing this “equity audit” at the beginning of the school year is an important and helpful practice to carefully support individual learning and collective healing for racial justice in education.

Place-Based Connections

Honor Native Land
Land Acknowledgements provide context for the history and legacy of the land on which your school sits and serves as a step towards justice in amplifying the stories and practices that erase Indigenous peoples’ histories and cultures. Resources: Trisha Moquino’s Embracing Equity blog post and Honor Native Land.

Localize Learning
Incorporate learning opportunities rooted in the local history, environment, ecology, culture, economy, literature, and art of the neighborhood, community, city, and/or region.

Culturally Sustaining Materials and Décor

Fine Art
Include works that are visually representative of the children’s lived experiences as well as the diversity of country and that vary in medium and style. Equally important to consider are the artists themselves such as local artists, artists representative of the identities of the children in the classroom, and artists from all parts of the world— and particularly those whose art intersects with social justice and political activism (ex. Favianna Rodriguez, Sanaz Mazinani, Shepard Fairey).

Music
Whether for playing softly in the background, used in movement activities, or sung by teachers and children, musical selections should be thoughtfully curated to include historical and contemporary pieces that vary in instrumentation and composition both locally and from around the world. Resources: World Music curricular experiences from Smithsonian Folkways Network of Music Educators

- Incorporate critical music that intersects with social justice and political activism (ex. Aisha Fukushima, Sweet Honey and the Rock, The Freedom Singers)
- Learn the histories of traditional folk songs and nursery rhymes before singing them in class to ensure they do not promote prejudiced and racist stereotypes
Books & Poetry
The books and poems in your classroom library should be representative of diverse narratives, characters, and illustrations that are reflective of your students’ reality as well as the multitude of social identities and lived experiences in our society. Selecting high quality literature that fosters positive racial and ethnic identities and attitudes about diversity as well as teaches accurate information about history and/or various identities requires a highly attuned critical lens. Consider using this guide for selecting anti-bias children’s books by Social Justice Books.

Foster Social and Emotional Safety
• Co-create classroom community agreements and commitments
• Develop school-wide strategies for conflict resolution that utilize restorative practices
• Analyze practices, procedures, and policies for gender-neutrality
• Incorporate trauma informed practices that prevent and/or reduce the impact of toxic and traumatic stress. Resource: Carly Riley’s Embracing Equity blog post.

Ongoing Preparation of the Adult
Most importantly, the ability to critically analyze the environment requires the ongoing and life-long development of critical consciousness. We invite you to continue on your learning journey with Embracing Equity:
• Enroll in a Cohort-Based Online Learning Experience where we engage in real conversations to shift our behaviors and mindsets about systemic oppression, our role in dismantling it, and reimagine new ways of being in liberation and solidarity with one another.
• Get connected with the Embracing Equity Alumni Network both on-line and in person for regional events and activities
• Find us on Facebook and Instagram to build a coalition of “Embracing Equity Buddies” (Embracing Equity blog post by Malaika Hankins)

Embracing Equity is a community of educators, parents, children and change-agents who are on a journey of integrated social justice, anti-bias, anti-racist education for every child.
You are welcome here. Thank you for Embracing Equity with us.