



Blueprint for Civil Rights Team Success

The mission of the Civil Rights Team Project is to increase the safety of elementary, middle level, and high school students by reducing bias-motivated behaviors and harassment in our schools.



But how do civil rights teams and their adult advisors help to further this mission? What do they need to do? Here are the five expectations we have in the Civil Rights Team Project — our blueprint for success:

1. Create an Identity as a Civil Rights Team

Civil rights teams need to focus on issues specifically related to race and skin color, national origin and ancestry, religion, disabilities, gender (including gender identity and expression), and sexual orientation.

Individual team members may not own all the specific vocabulary yet, but they need to support the general mission and philosophy of the Civil Rights Team Project. Over time and with education, teams will develop a more complex understanding of civil rights issues, what they look like in their school communities, and the role of civil rights teams in addressing these concerns. One of the most effective ways to foster this growth is by doing the actual work. This should be an ongoing process.

2. Increase the Team's Profile

It's important that schools know about their civil rights teams. Teams need to identify themselves, explain their role, and be seen and heard. They should strive for constant and consistent presence in their school communities.

Teams should also communicate who they are and what they do outside of their schools in the community. This helps promote the great work being done throughout Maine in the Civil Rights Team Project.

3. Identify Civil Rights Issues in the School Community

What are the behaviors and practices in our school communities that might make it so that students don't feel completely safe, welcome, and respected based on their (or their loved ones') race and skin color, national origin and ancestry, religion, disabilities, gender (including gender identity and expression), and sexual orientation?

This is the question teams must ask, over and over again. Teams must never succumb to the idea that “we don’t have those issues here.” Civil rights issues are often subtle and do not affect everyone equally. Issues are more than just individual behaviors; they are issues of culture. Teams must be willing to *look* for these issues and make the invisible visible.

4. Engage the School Community***

This is the most important expectation and where civil rights teams should devote the most time and attention. Teams should be active and visible in addressing civil rights issues within their school communities; in fact, it’s why we have civil rights teams.

The Civil Rights Team Project’s focus statement highlights this expectation:

- *We help schools think and talk about issues related to race and skin color, national origin and ancestry, religion, disabilities, gender (including gender identity and expression), and sexual orientation.*

Teams are encouraged to address the issues they identify as most relevant in their school communities (through the third expectation). However, they may also address civil rights issues that don’t immediately or obviously affect student populations in their school communities.

Project initiatives must have direct and clear connections to race and skin color, national origin and ancestry, religion, disabilities, gender (including gender identity and expression), and/or sexual orientation, and *should intentionally incorporate this language*.

These initiatives can be small or large. They should offer education, engagement, and encouragement, but never enforcement — civil rights teams are not the civil rights police. In combination, these initiatives help establish a constant and consistent civil rights team presence.

5. Respond to Major Public Incidents of Bias

Civil rights teams should be ready to respond to major public incidents of bias, prejudice, or hate that may occur in their greater school communities. The key word here is *major*; individual team members are not expected to respond to each and every instance of bias that occurs in their school communities. This is about harnessing the power of the team to respond to high profile incidents that demand a public response.

These are opportunities for teams to take action, but they need not go it alone. Team advisors are strongly encouraged to contact Brandon and coordinate some sort of response.

A Few Additional Notes about These Strategies:

- The expectations outlined in this blueprint may also prove useful in helping students understand the role of civil rights teams in our school communities.
- These expectations do not need to be addressed in any particular order. Teams need not “master” one before moving on to the next, and some initiatives will likely address multiple expectations; all five are interconnected.
- Recommendations and resources for addressing each of these five expectations are available through the [CRTP Drive](#).