

*In my implementation of the URC, I focus on race in the context of physics. Most of the students in my class are white, and so one of my priorities as a facilitator needs to be supporting my students of color.*

*One manifestation of this support: a few years ago, I began reaching out to my students of color ahead of time in the hopes of hearing from them what sorts of supports they needed. I'm sharing this letter here in case it's helpful to some URC teachers; please feel free to borrow and edit it as you see fit.*

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If you're getting this e-mail, it's because I think you might identify as a student of color in my Physics class. I know that guessing at people's racial identity can be problematic, but read on to see why I'm doing it

I wanted to give you a heads up on the unit we're going to start in a few weeks, which focuses on race and culture in physics. Given our school population is majority white, and that many white students haven't thought as much about their racial identity, some of what we do is oriented towards getting white students to think about race.

One of my jobs as a facilitator is to make sure that that doesn't come at your expense – the classic horrible example would be asking any of you to speak for all students of color. Even if nothing that bad happens, I know that your identity and your experience at our school and in society could mean that you're experiencing these next weeks in a different way than many of your peers (though maybe not).

So I'm writing to give you some heads up, and to let you know that it's really important to me that this unit feel good to you at the same time that most students might be having a different type of experience than you. If you're up for it, I'd really like to hear from you how I can make this unit useful, productive, and not-harmful while helping all students talk more productively about race. Talking about race in multi-racial groups can bring challenges, but I really believe (and have seen year after year) that it can be done well if we're intentional and honest.

I'm going to check in with you and your classmates of color after an upcoming class, but wanted to send this e-mail so you had a little time to think about how you felt about this. (That's why I'm guessing at people's racial identity; while problematic, I thought springing this on people might be worse.) If you'd like to talk to me but not in front of other people, you can always come by and speak with me privately.

Your Faithful Teacher,

Moses