

Rescuing Math and Science from Critical Race Theory’s Racial Discrimination

Jonathan Butcher

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Proponents of critical race theory are not just indoctrinating students with their toxic narrative in history classes, but even in math and science.

Critical race theorists have applied the ideology’s racially discriminatory ideas to these technical subjects for years.

Policymakers, educators, and parents should reject instructional content that violates the racial provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Constitution.

Educators around the country are applying critical race theory (CRT) to K–12 lesson plans. CRT is a worldview that makes racial identity the prism through which its advocates consider all aspects of public and private life. Critical race theorists believe that racial discrimination against the “oppressors” is not only appropriate, but necessary, and that public and private institutions—government and businesses, for example—must generate equal *outcomes* for everyone.¹ Despite mainstream media and educators’ claims that teachers are not applying CRT,² examples to the contrary abound:

- In Portland, Oregon, the Portland Public School District hosted a “Critical Race Theory Coalition Summit” this past April.³

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- The Loudon County Public School District contracted with an organization called The Equity Collaborative to provide professional development to district teachers. The Equity Collaborative prioritizes CRT in its training.⁴
- The California Department of Education created a model ethnic-studies curriculum that is replete with CRT’s racially discriminatory ideas, including “intersectionality.”⁵ Kimberlé Crenshaw, one of CRT’s originators, designed this concept, which claims that all ethnic minorities are oppressed in American society and that they are oppressed in multiple ways—based on their gender, class, race, and other combinations of racial and personal characteristics.⁶

Since CRT is a philosophy or worldview (fields of study that are considered “soft” sciences), educators have applied the theory to other soft sciences (or non-hard sciences), such as history and civics.⁷ Educators who have adopted CRT’s perspective on these subjects accuse America’s public and private institutions (government and businesses, for example) as being “systemically racist,” arguing that the effects of slavery and the Jim Crow era persist today. Early CRT thinkers, such as Derrick Bell, stated this position in their writings.⁸

Critical race theorists who are active in K–12 education today have created lessons in history, civics, and social studies that incorporate CRT and its concepts of systemic racism and intersectionality. For example, the Zinn Education Project, which continues the work of revisionist historian Howard Zinn, provides lessons that teach that “structural racism” remains present in America, despite the Civil Rights Act’s prohibitions against racial discrimination.⁹

Some social studies lessons, such as one entitled “The Color Line,” state directly that the lesson is part of a “quest to construct [a] critical perspective.”¹⁰ The word “critical” here does not refer to desirable critical thinking, but to CRT. The Black Lives Matter at School recommended that curricular materials include lessons on how to apply CRT, with school systems using the materials to teach that America is systemically racist.¹¹

Critical Race Theory and K–12 Math and Science Curricula

Educators are also applying CRT’s racial bias to math and science. Colleges of education—where teachers are trained before entering the classroom—have produced materials that teach educators how to use CRT

in these subjects *for many years*. In 2014, the Columbia Teachers College Record released a report titled “When It Comes to Mathematics Experiences of Black Pre-Service Teachers...Race Matters,” in which the author says that, according to critical race theorists, even math has an “identity.”¹² Consistent with other critical race theorists, such as Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, and Ibram X. Kendi, the author rejects colorblindness and makes accusations of ongoing privileges based on white skin color:

CRT has been used along with other race-centered frameworks in mathematics education to expose the practices of some White mathematics teachers who profess racial indifference and colorblindness, while dismissing discussions of White privilege and antiracist pedagogy.¹³

In February 2021, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) recommended *Critical Race Theory in Mathematics Education* to its members for summer reading.¹⁴ NCTM’s keynote speaker at its 2019 conference was the critical race theorist and college professor Gloria Ladson-Billings. (One of Ladson-Billings’s most-cited articles is titled, “Just What Is Critical Race Theory and What’s It Doing in a Nice Field Like Education?”¹⁵)

Likewise, the National Science Teaching Association wrote in May 2020 that its members now “work from the stance that scientific ways of knowing and science education are fundamentally cultural and inherently political.”¹⁶ The organization recently hosted a multi-day online event that included a session titled “Critical Affinity Spaces for Science Educators,” where teachers were taught to use a “critical lens that...exposes the hidden and master narratives” in science, and affirms “that racial/social justice approaches to science teaching are needed.” Just as with the 2019 NCTM conference, the organization featured a proponent of CRT as the keynote speaker.¹⁷

Predictably, then, school officials who are either sympathetic to, or unaware of, CRT’s discriminatory ideas are following these organizations and designing K–12 math and science curricula using CRT’s false and dangerous precepts:

- District officials from Los Angeles, San Diego, and other California school districts created “Equitable Math.” This math curriculum opens with recommendations for “critical approaches to dismantling white supremacy in math classrooms” and encourages “critical praxis” (the use of CRT in teaching practices).¹⁸ “White supremacy” is mentioned 54 times in the curriculum’s first handbook, with no mention

of addition, subtraction, or any other skills. Portland Public Schools, home to the Critical Race Theory Coalition mentioned above, is using the curriculum.¹⁹ The California Department of Education recently updated its math standards, recommending that teachers ask students completing mathematical word problems to ask questions such as “Who [sic] does this privilege? Who [sic] does this silence?”²⁰

- In 2019, Seattle Public Schools created a “K–12 Math Ethnic Studies Framework” that divided math instruction into the CRT themes of “Origins, Identity, and Agency”; “Power and Oppression”; “History of Resistance and Liberation”; and “Reflection and Action”—terms identical to or consistent with the teacher training materials referenced above. (Seattle school officials did not mandate that local schools use the framework, though the material is still available on the district’s website.)²¹
- Groups such as Learning for Justice, an arm of the extreme leftist Southern Poverty Law Center, recommends science lessons on the “social construction of race” and to consider “why science looks the way it does,” that is, why more ethnic minorities are not active in scientific research.²²
- In Boston, teachers told *The Boston Globe* last fall that they will “teach about...naming conventions in scientific laws and theorems rooted in European colonization.”²³ The teacher said, “We’re naming things [in science] because of colonial influence, because of imperialism.” On average, black fourth-grade students score 33 points below their white peers on a national comparison in science. Educators should spend more time focusing on scientific facts rather than addressing and manufacturing political content unrelated to basic science.

Policy Recommendations

With district and state educators revising instruction in math and the hard sciences away from facts and skills, parents, teachers, and policy-makers should:

- **Request** copies of public school instructional materials, reject content that teaches racial discrimination, and consider proposals that prohibit the use of content that violates Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and

- **Design** proposals that offer education savings accounts, as available in Arizona, Florida, and North Carolina, to name a few states, to students attending schools teaching racially discriminatory content.²⁴

Policymakers should:

- **Revoke** the state K–12 funding for public schools that teach or apply racial discrimination in any subjects.

Conclusion

Critical race theory is overt racial discrimination. Theorists claim that America is systemically racist, despite the Civil Rights Act and state and federal agencies designed to stop and prosecute racist acts. And despite the enormous and obvious progress on race that this country has made.

Educators have used CRT to redesign history, civics, and English instructional content to focus on the critical obsession with oppression and power. Now, school officials are also changing classroom content in the hard sciences and math away from facts and skills and focusing on racial activism. (In math!) Parents, teachers, and policymakers should oppose any form of racial discrimination in schools, and reject these insidious efforts to inject prejudice and racial bias into technical subjects that should be used to help children—of all backgrounds—to develop skills and abilities that will help them to be successful in school and in life.

Jonathan Butcher is the Will Skillman Fellow in Education in the Center for Education Policy, of the Institute for Family, Community, and Opportunity, at The Heritage Foundation.

Endnotes

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