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# Literacy & Social Justice: Empowering Educators and Families

Dr. Altheria Caldera  
Mo Thomas  
Christopher Stewart

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# **From Philosophy to Practice: Thinking Deeply About Children's Books Selections**

**Altheria Caldera, Ph.D.**

**Assistant Professor, Reading and Language Arts**


**Director, D.C.-Area Writing Project**

**Howard University School of Education**



# — Your philosophy of education

How your philosophy shapes  
your selection of teaching  
materials, e.g. children's books.



Why you  
are/aren't  
teaching  
certain  
concepts



# Philosophical Debates about Curricula

CURRICULUM

Should climate change be taught in schools? Parents and teachers think so

EQUITY & DIVERSITY FROM OUR RESEARCH CENTER

## Teachers Are Divided on Teaching LGBTQ Topics



By Seana Nijamo — December 15, 2021 9 min read

CURRICULUM

## Half of Americans Don't Think Schools Should Teach About Racism's Impact Today



By Madeline Will — February 07, 2022 5 min read

CULTURE

## Patriotic Education: Pride or Problem?

By Thor Reimann August 2, 2021

Share



Activists raising concerns  
over graphic scenes in books  
in Georgia schools

—

# What instructional materials are being used? **What books are made available to students?**



## Transparency

Proponents of such bills say that parents deserve transparency, as if teachers are engaging in covert practices meant to convert students.

- What do you believe is the purpose of education?
- What should students be able to do? Why?
- What is the role of the teacher?





# Poll Everywhere

- The purpose of schooling is to ...
- Students should be able to ...
- The role of the teacher is to ...

# I believe that

## Diversity, Social Justice, and the Educational Leader

Volume 2 | Number 3

Article 1

November 2018

### Woke Pedagogy: A Framework for Teaching and Learning

Altheria Caldera

Texas A&M University Commerce, [altheria.caldera@tamuc.edu](mailto:altheria.caldera@tamuc.edu)

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#### Recommended Citation

Caldera, Altheria (2018) "Woke Pedagogy: A Framework for Teaching and Learning," *Diversity, Social Justice, and the Educational Leader*: Vol. 2 : No. 3, Article 1.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uttyler.edu/dsjel/vol2/no3/1>

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- the purpose of education is to prepare students to enact positive societal change by **critically examining socio-political issues.**
- students should be able to think critically, relate to others empathetically, **envision a just society.**
- the teacher's role is to **facilitate difficult conversations about injustice and inequities.**



Because I believe . . . , I  
select children's books  
that . . .



**Example:**

Because I believe that students should learn to relate to others with empathy and understanding, I include children's books that reflect diverse lived experiences.

# Why is it important for teachers, especially ELAR teachers, to think about their beliefs about education?



## 3 Reasons

- 1) It helps teachers understand the reasons behind their pedagogical choices.
- 2) It allows teachers to work with intentionality.
- 3) It enables teachers to communicate their goals effectively with stakeholders.



## Mississippi teacher fired for reading I Need a New Butt! to children

**Toby Price's termination for sharing the humorous children's book  
has sparked criticism and a wave of support**



# Summary

Children's books can be powerful tools to help social justice-oriented teachers achieve their goals.

Selections should be deliberate and reflective of a teacher's philosophy of education.

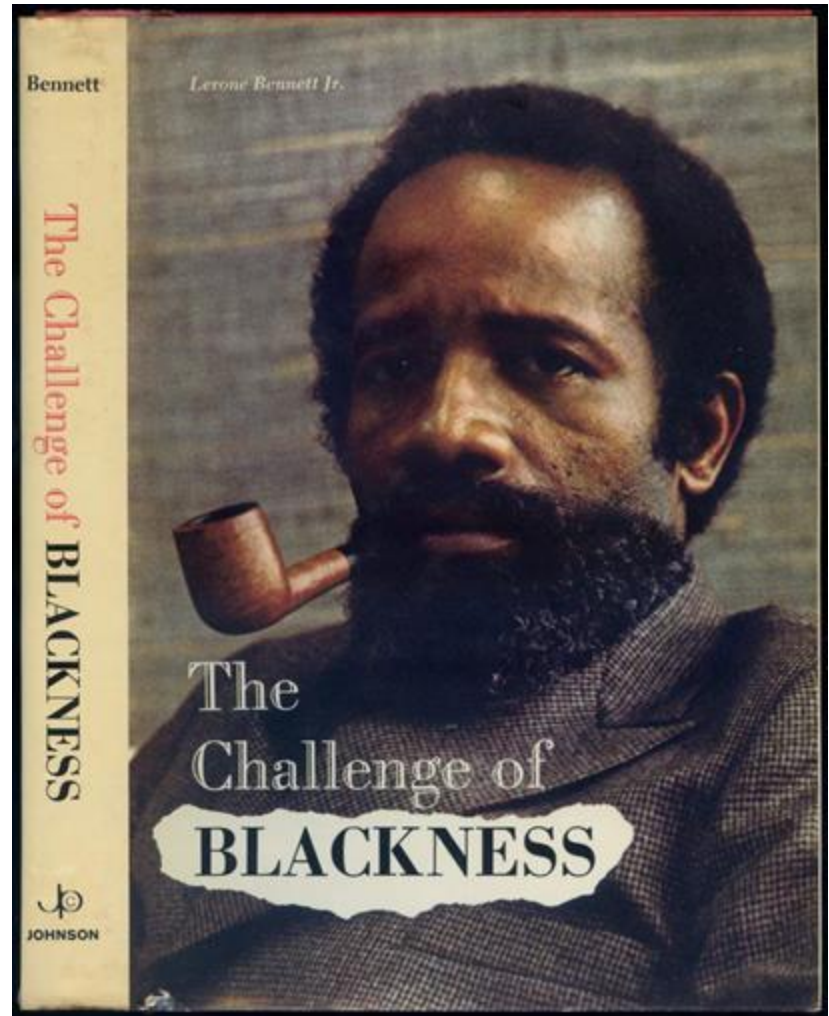
Teachers who have thought deeply about the connections between their educational philosophy and their classroom libraries are able to justify their decisions to stakeholders.



## Closing

“An educator in a system of oppression is either a revolutionary or an oppressor.” --Lerone Bennett, Jr.

Is your children's books library  
revolutionary or oppressive?





# Thank you!

Email: [altheria.caldera@howard.edu](mailto:altheria.caldera@howard.edu)

Website: [www.drcaldera.com](http://www.drcaldera.com)

Twitter: @altheriacaldera

I look forward to your  
questions and comments  
after the last presentation.

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# Educators



# Literacy



# Critical Race Theory in Education

What this looks like in education

1. **Centrality of race and racism** (the system of education is build on racist ideals and was not created for people of color). Be willing to decenter whiteness in your teaching
2. **Challenging the dominant ideas and narratives** (counter storytelling is essential for real learning)
3. **Whiteness as Property**- Instead, recognize white privilege and disrupting injustices that it causes
4. Be the movement. Just do it! (don't wait for **interest convergence**. Allies, recognize that you could be displaced in this process)
5. Explicitly celebrate, affirm, and validate the experiences and Funds of Knowledge of POC. Teach to **liberate**. **Critique** unification without celebration.



# So, What Does This Look Like In the Classroom?



# So, What does this mean in the literacy classroom? How do we do it?

- I. Tapping into **Funds of Knowledge**
- II. Make the **Curriculum SPICIER**
- III. Critical literacy/ **critical stance**
- IV. **Text Selection**



# Tapping Into Their Funds of Knowledge

- \*What do you already know about this topic (prior knowledge)?
- \*What does it look like in *real-world/ life practice*? What skills are needed?
- \*Connections/ life experiences and personal stories based in systemic frameworks- the counternarrative
- \*Identifying cultural capital (Yosso, 2009)



*“From the pirouettes of classical ballet to the most brute of brute facts, all human conduct is culturally mediated. Culture encompasses the everyday and the esoteric, the mundane and the elevated, the ridiculous and the sublime. Neither high nor low, culture is all pervasive.” (Moll, 1989, p. 26)*



# SPICER

**Social Justice, Purpose, Intention, Criticality and Inquiry,  
Engagement, and Relevance in your current curriculum**



# Social Justice Education

Social justice education is concerned with achieving equitable and quality education for all students. As prominent social justice education theorist, Lee Ann Bell (1997) puts it:

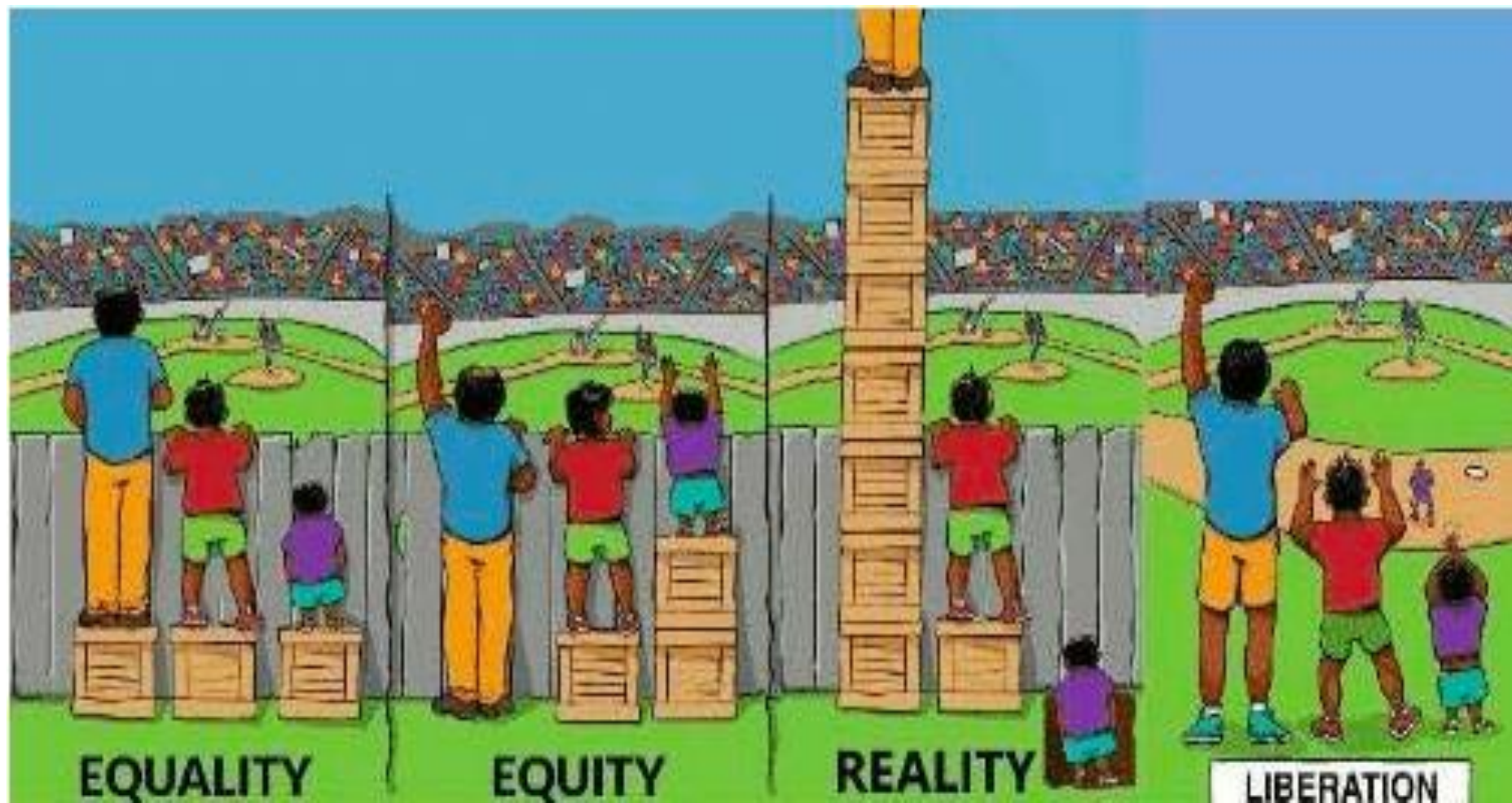
*“... [S]ocial justice education is both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. We envision a society in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop their full capacities), and interdependent (capable of interacting democratically with others).”*

**6 Elements of  
Social Justice  
Curriculum  
Design for the  
Elementary  
Classroom**

**Element One: Self Love and Knowledge  
Element Two: Respect for Others  
Element Three: Issues of Social Injustice  
Element Four: Social Movements and Social Change  
Element Five: Awareness Raising  
Element Six: Social Action**

**(Picower, 2012)**





# Purpose and Intentionality.... *WHY?*



Q: What are we trying to do and why are we trying to do it?

For what?

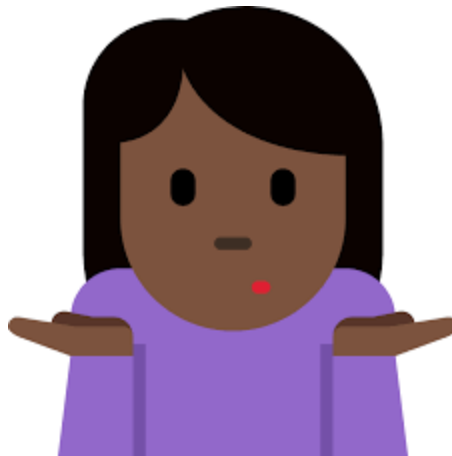
How can I use it?

How will it help me in life?

What do I already know about?- Connect and Engage

EX:

**Daily objective:** Today, we will \_\_\_\_\_ so that we can \_\_\_\_\_.



Or **long-term objectives:** To create\_\_\_\_\_, or to determine\_\_\_\_\_ (prove or solve a problem).

Or an **question of inquiry:**

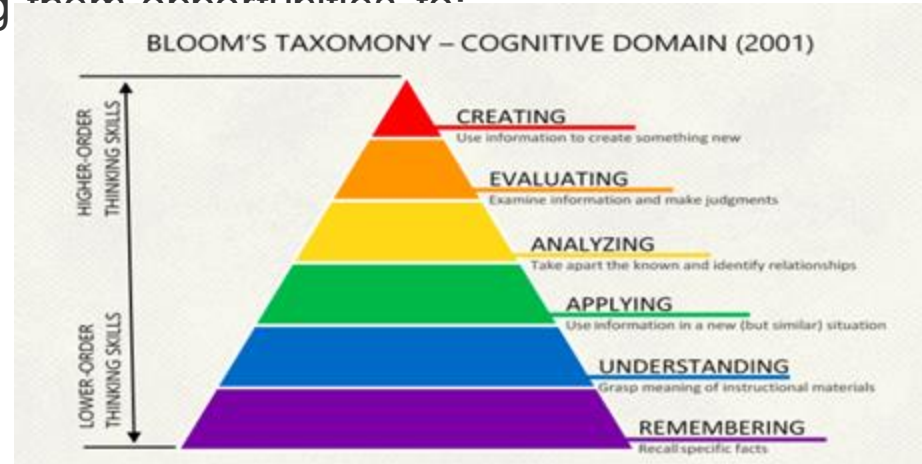


# Criticality and Inquiry



Teach students to think critically by giving them opportunities to:

1. Inquire- Ask questions. ...
2. Encourage decision-making. ...
3. Work in groups. ...
4. Incorporate different points of view. ...
5. Connect different ideas. ...
6. Inspire creativity. ...
7. Brainstorm, and
8. Engage in high-order thinking.

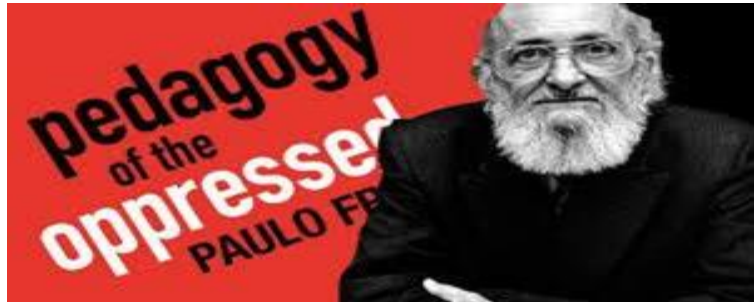


Criticality is the capacity to read, write, and think in ways of understanding power, privilege, social justice, and oppression, particularly for populations who have been historically marginalized in the world (Muhammad, 2018)

Criticality enables us to question both the world and texts within it to better understand the truth in history, power, and equity...Teaching criticality humanizes instruction and makes it more compassionate.”

# Unoppressive Teaching

Reading from a critical stance requires not reading and understanding the words but "reading the world" and understanding a text's purpose so readers will not be manipulated by it (Freire, 1970)



# 10 Critical Question Sets

1. What do you see? What do you notice?
2. What questions do you have about the information presented in the text?
3. Who is telling the story? What are the other perspectives? Are there any counternarratives? Whose voice is missing?
4. Who is the (ideal) audience?
5. How are they telling this story? What tools did the author use? What language sticks out?
6. What connections can you make to this information?
7. What meaning do you make of this text? Is the message straight-forward or metaphorical? What is its real-world connection?
8. Who wrote this text? Why are they telling this story? What is their purpose/ position/ bias?
9. Who has the power in this piece? What everyday or dominant ideas are present?
10. What action can you take as a result of this experience?

# Engaging



***Q: How do you engage students in learning? Give us your best !***



## **BEST LEARNING EVER!**

Think back to your own school experience (some of us may have to think farther back than others). What stands out? What was one of the BEST learning experiences you've had? What was the topic? In what class? What were the teacher moves, activities, or resources you remember most? What engaged you in this learning?

\*Make sure you connect this to the objectives, standards, and conceptual understanding

# Relevant



*Read each example. Which of the following would you most use in your class? Why? Why not the others?*

Example #1	Example #2	Example #3	Example #4
Pre-K/ K  How do you get to school? Let's create a picture graph to show how our classmates get to school. Then, we can present this graph to the principal because they are always asking if people are riding the school buses. This might help them make some decisions about our bus system.	Elementary  We are planning a cookout for the entire 3rd grade. What do we need? List the materials needed, how much they will cost, then divide the responsibility equally amongst your classmates. Don't forget to include yourself.	Middle School  Jada bought some Takis from the corner store and has eaten most of the bag. She notices she has 29 left and 4 friends that want her to share. How many does each friend get?	High School  What will you do after high school? What will your classmates do? Research current statistics regarding what students do after high school and compare the statistical averages.

**THINK....**

**What is ONE thing you can do to be more liberatory with your literacy practices?**

**Type your idea in the chat**



**Mo Thomas**

[mochamblethomas@gmail.com](mailto:mochamblethomas@gmail.com)

[mo.thomas@urbanteachers.org](mailto:mo.thomas@urbanteachers.org)

[mthom149@jhu.edu](mailto:mthom149@jhu.edu)



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# Ending Book Apartheid: Reexamining Literary Spaces

christopher stewart

“I have learned over the years that when one’s mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear.”

— Rosa Parks

“‘We, the people.’ It is a very eloquent beginning. But when that document was completed on the seventeenth of September in 1787 I was not included in that “We, the people.” I felt somehow for many years that George Washington and Alexander Hamilton, just left me out by mistake. But through the process of amendment, interpretation and court decision I have finally been included in ‘We, the people.’”

—Barbara Jordan



**1 in 4**

**119,304**

DC residents, ages 16 to 74, are at or below Level 1 Reading Literacy

**1 in 3**

**179,844**

DC residents, ages 16 to 74, are at or below Level 1 Math Literacy

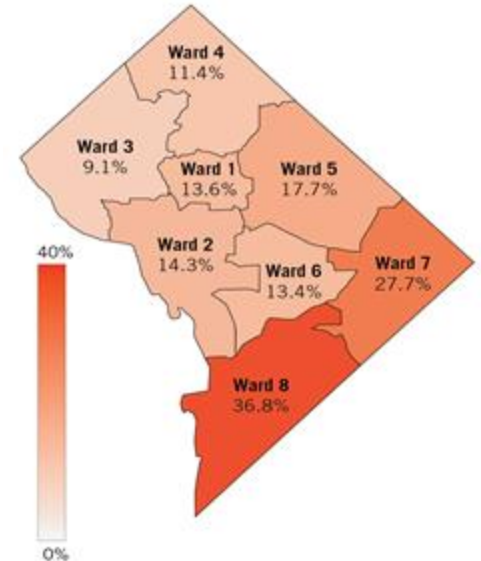
# Book Desert v. Book Apartheid

Natural



Human made

**Poverty rates in D.C.**





## Eyes Wide Open...

*Literacy and income are married. Due to race and gender-based discrimination, Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) earn incomes that are not comparable to their white counterparts, regardless of educational levels and work experience.*

**(Rea, 2020)**

That Part.



As Educators, as community members,  
as humans, what do we do?

**We work to dismantle a  
system of oppression  
BY CREATING  
WHAT IS  
NEEDED, AND  
NEVER ASKING  
FOR PERMISSION  
TO LOVE**



# What people are DOING

**Visiting families at home, to ensure that students receive educational resources.**

Ms. Shaw, DCPS

**Handing strangers money for food, housing and medication, with no strings attached.**

Dr. McQuirter, Library of Congress

**Resume and employment classes for the family, education and housing resources.**

DCPS Librarians

Meditation Moment



Full & Whole-Family  
Supports  
For each **child,**  
**parent/ guardian, and**  
**community member.**

Meditation Moment





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**You are**  
**Incredible!**  
**Thank you!**

**@christopherpaix**

(on all platforms)

(e) christopherastewart8@gmail.com





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**Q & A**

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