

# Info Sheet

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Teaching



September 2021

Critical Race Theory is a practice – a way of seeing how the fiction of race has been transformed into concrete racial inequities. It’s an approach to grappling with a history of white supremacy that rejects the belief that what’s in the past is in the past, and that the laws and systems that grow from that past are detached from it.” Kimberle Crenshaw (one of the founding scholars of CRT)

CRT is a convenient buzzword for those who object to DEI training and teaching. Very few people are actually learning CRT in any form. However, it is important to know what CRT is.

CRT main points:

- Race is not biologically real but is socially constructed and socially significant.
- Racism is a normal feature of society and is embedded within systems and institutions, like the legal system, that replicate racial inequality.
- Rejects popular understandings about racism, such as arguments that confine racism to a few “bad apples.”
- CRT rejects claims of meritocracy or “colorblindness”.
- CRT is taught in higher learning and advanced degree programs but NOT in the K-12 schools.
- CRT is being conflated with conversations about diversity, equality, and inclusion. Critical Race Theory is NOT the same as DEI.

**Diversity** includes all of the similarities and differences among people, not limited to gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, age, religion, sexual orientation, indigenous origin, marital status, etc.

**Equity** is an approach based in fairness to ensuring everyone is given equal opportunity; this means that resources may be divided and shared unequally to make sure that each person has a fair chance to succeed.

**Inclusion** refers to the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes within a group.

DEI in K-12 schools

- Supports Critical Thinking Skills
- Increases Engagement by Recognizing a Student’s Individual Story
- Promotes Empathy and Understanding

### Equity focus in teaching IS about...

- Growth
- Learning about each other
- Understanding each other
- Valuing each other
- Feeling great about your new understanding
- Seeing things differently
- Talking about hard things with the goal to learn and grow together
- Strength and courage to take action so all are treated and valued equally

### Equity focus in teaching is NOT about ...

- Blaming
- Shaming



Many teachers and students have spoken in favor of learning about and discussing different points of view about history.

Supporters of equity teaching in schools: NEA, American Federation of Teacher Unions, Communities for Just Schools Fund, National Council for Social Studies, Missouri Equity Education Partnership, Teaching for Change.

Studies show the impact on children when taught about race.

- When parents talked to their white children about race, the children became less prejudiced over time, compared to children who did not have those conversations.
- White children who had learned about racial discrimination had more positive attitudes toward Black people than children who were not exposed to that curriculum. Also, classroom discussions about racial discrimination also had a positive impact on Black children.
- Children of color also benefit from conversations about race and racism. When families of color regularly talk about their culture's values and traditions, children develop a strong sense of identity and pride, and they fare better in terms of self-esteem, psychological health, and academic success.
- Children who hear teachers talk explicitly about race are better at identifying bias than students who are given vague messages about kindness and equality.

Opponents to DEI teaching in K-12 public schools (mis-labelled "CRT"): No Left Turn in Education, The Heritage Foundation, The Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism (FAIR), Parents Defending Education, 1776 Action

How might DEI teaching affect voters of the future? Thinking critically about our past and our institutions helps future voters understand the root causes of disparities within our society. Tackling equity issues requires this learning. A variety of ideas are needed to solve these complex problems. Understanding each other better will help society discover better solutions, and voters will be more informed when voicing opinions on government policies to remedy our racial disparities.

What may voters see in 2022 regarding DEI? DEI teaching may be an important issue in school board elections and there may be legislation in MO General Assembly.

League positions/policies relating to this teaching DEI:

- Equality of Opportunity position
- LWV DEI policy
- 2020 Resolution Racial Justice for Black People and all People of color
- LWVSTL local position (2003): **SUPPORT equal opportunity in education with continued efforts to achieve racial and socio-economic balance and equality within city/county schools.**

**“Schools with policies that are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in teaching and practice are working to achieve racial and socio-economic balance and equality. DEI are fundamental values that are needed for the future success of engaging all individuals, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.”**