A Guide To Navigating Critical Race Theory
A significant amount of parents across the United States are concerned with their children’s education. There are many reasons for their dissatisfaction, but chief among them is the implementation of critical race theory (CRT) in education.

Critical race theory is concerning because students are being taught that the country they are growing up in is inherently racist, that its institutions are irredeemably biased, and that their race will always be a factor in their day-to-day lives.

If you’ve been paying attention to current events, you may have noticed that parents are voicing their concerns and demanding answers from school board officials for their efforts to impose critical race theory materials in their children’s curricula. Concerned parents have had success in scrutinizing these racist educational materials and demanding that race not be a driving factor in education.

Building Education for Students Together (BEST) is organizing a parent-led movement to keep critical race theory away from K-12 education. This campaign has gained nationwide attention. Part of BEST’s mission is to highlight the negative impacts of critical race theory and to restore parental choice in education.

How do we know BEST’s efforts are successful? Well, President Biden’s Department of Justice recently opened the door for domestic terrorism investigations against parents who air their grievances at their local school board meetings. In fact, shortly before the Justice Department’s announcement to go after concerned parents, the National School Board Association (NSBA) sent a letter to the Department demanding that, among other things, they use the USA PATRIOT Act - a law used ostensibly to spy on terrorists - on this parent-led movement. The NSBA has since then retracted the aggressive language in their letter.

What started as a collegiate level theory to understand the intersection of race and public policy has crept into the very core of our children’s classroom education. BEST and its community of parents are leading the charge against critical race theory and federal government intervention in local education.
American History and the Civil Rights Movement

Before one starts discussing the issue of critical race theory, it is important to understand that the United States has an imperfect past. For more than a hundred years, minorities in America did not hold equal rights under the law, despite the underlying promise of freedom and individual liberty in our founding documents.

Our country has endured a troubling past: slavery, the Civil War, and Jim Crow laws. Yet, the promise of freedom and individual liberty ultimately prevailed. As we acknowledge our country’s shortcomings, it is imperative to highlight and celebrate the achievements we’ve made to secure equality under the law for all Americans.

For example, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a landmark legislation in American history, helped eliminate discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity. The stated goal of the this law is:

“To enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the attorney general to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes.”

Ironically, the Montana Attorney General states in his opinion on critical race theory that:

“Many of the activities undertaken in the name of CRT across the country in public education – such as “privilege walks” and disciplining or grading students differently based on race – and in the workplace – such as telling employees to be “less white” – are violations of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Article II, Section 4 of the Montana Constitution; and the Montana Human Rights Act. Schools or entities that violate state or federal civil rights laws jeopardize their funding and may be liable for damages.”

Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act, our country has made great strides to achieve racial equality; yet, despite this progress, many scholars have sought to institute a new way of thinking about American history and its institutions.

1 https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-78/pdf/STATUTE-78-Pg241.pdf
**Where Does Critical race theory Come From?**

Critical race theory developed during the post-civil rights era by several scholars, including Derrick Bell, a Harvard Law School professor who was displeased with Americans’ attitudes towards civil rights in the 70s and 80s. Professor Bell’s pessimistic outlook led to critical race theory, which seeks to show that America’s institutions, laws, and public policies are racist, up to and including our founding documents. Bell’s beliefs infamously led him to advocate against Brown v. Board of Education, a landmark Supreme Court case that held that segregated schools were unconstitutional. Professor Bell argued that the ruling actually failed to remove barriers to racial discrimination.

According to an Executive Order issued by President Trump, critical race theory “is grounded in hierarchies based on collective social and political identities rather than in the inherent and equal dignity of every person as an individual. This ideology is rooted in the pernicious and false belief that America is an irredeemably racist and sexist country; that some people, simply on account of their race or sex, are oppressors; and that racial and sexual identities are more important than our common status as human beings and Americans.”

CRT proponents Richard Delgado and Jean Stancic’s critical race theory: An Introduction concludes in it’s first paragraph: “Unlike traditional civil rights discourse, which stresses incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.”

Critical race theory is rooted in Marxism. Karl Marx’s governing idea was to divide people by class, whereas CRT seeks to divide people by race. Dividing Americans by race is only undoing the progress that was made with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**How Is critical race theory Implemented in K-12 Education?**

**Equity Vs. Equality**

Critical race theory advocates want to impose equity among racial classes instead of equality before the law.

According to the Pacific Legal Foundation, “Critical race theory has woven itself into almost every facet of our society, prioritizing “equity” over “equality.” While equal opportunity and equality before the law are foundational tenets of our country, critical race theory undermines those by prioritizing equity between racial groups,
which forces us to separate individuals into arbitrary classifications and give some more opportunities than others."

Government entities cannot legislate prosperity. The pursuit of equity leads to tyranny as the ruling class decides what is “equitable.”

**Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**

Social emotional learning is another avenue through which critical race theory advocates mask this ideological teaching. The five pillars of SEL are self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness, and relationship skills.

While these pillars may seem harmless at first glance, proponents of SEL use this method to impose a critical race theory-like agenda in classrooms. By using this method, teachers are usurping the role of parents and psychologists to get kids to deal with whatever alleged biases they may have about society due to their race and class status.

The Education First Alliance has called social emotional learning “the new common core but adds a heaping dose of critical race theory and brainwashing. Teachers are made into a therapist and children into victims.”

SEL goes well beyond basic childhood development and includes decisions and direction that should be at the discretion of parents. Schools exist to teach children skills while families are responsible for teaching values.

**Social Justice**

By definition, social justice promotes equity and teaches students that justice can be applied based on any number of social groups. This is in contrast to justice which needs no modifier and is equal treatment under the law without bias.

The American Federation of Teachers recently published a resource guide for teachers seeking to educate students on social justice.³ The material in this guide is concerning because it seeks to teach students how to become social justice activists instead of becoming well versed in our country’s constitutional foundations.

For example, the guide breaks down resources into five sections. Those sections are Activism and Peaceful Protests; Immigration; Teaching Tolerance and Respect; Helping Students Express their Feelings; and the U.S. Justice System.

³ https://www.aft.org/education/classroom-resources-teach-about-civil-rights-and-social-justice
What Organizations Are Advocating for Critical race theory?

Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter movement is very involved in the advancement of critical race theory in education. This movement has found powerful allies in the national public education establishment and teachers’ unions.

The National Education Association in partnership with Black Lives Matter have pledged the following: 4

“As educators and allies, we will work to address the inequities that result from institutionally racist policies and practices in our schools and the communities in which our students live. We choose not to accept these conditions as they exist, but to accept the responsibility for changing them.

We pledge to take actions that will address access and opportunity for all students, by highlighting inequities and increasing awareness, organizing for change, and growing the movement.”

National Education Association

The National Education Association is one of the biggest proponents of a centralized, government-run education system, and is also an advocate of Critical race theory in education.

According to the National Education Association, the organization is “working tirelessly to dismantle systems of oppression that prevent children from accessing a great public education because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, or nationality.”

American Federation of Teachers

The American Federation of Teachers is an influential teachers union that has also been a leading proponent of critical race theory in education.

Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers, has come out in full support of teachers who are disciplined for teaching critical race theory, outside of state and local guidelines. Weingarten said, “Mark my words: Our union will defend any member who gets in trouble for teaching honest history ... Teaching

4  https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/just-equitable-schools/core-values/implementing-racial-justice
5  https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/racial-social-justice
the truth is not radical or wrong. Distorting history and threatening educators for telling the truth is what is truly radical and wrong.”

The proponents of critical race theory often claim that it is simply about teaching history, or even worse, that those who oppose CRT want to suppress history. This could not be further from the truth. Critical race theory looks at history through a biased lens and treats correlations as causation. The existence of disparate outcomes does not necessarily mean that a society is oppressive.

**Critical race theory in the Federal Government**

**Department of Education**

The federal government has no role in local education. After President Carter signed legislation creating the Department of Education, both President Reagan and the Republican Party promised to limit its size and scope. Since then, Republicans and Democrats have expanded the Department of Education’s role into all levels of education.

More than 40 years since its creation, the Department of Education has used its federal powers to go after school districts that do not adhere to its one-size-fits-all policies, including the imposition of critical race theory in local education. In fact, Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said, “I don’t think we should be in the business of excluding what students are discussing or what they’re seeing for fear they can’t handle it … I think they can handle it and I think we can become stronger as a nation if we do it well.”

Earlier this year, President Biden’s Department of Education proposed a regulation that would have coerced schools to teach critical race theory in order to receive federal grants. FreedomWorks activists submitted over 5,000 comments against this regulation, which was subsequently pulled by the Department due to the loud opposition by concerned parents.

**Congressional Action**

In May 2021, Representatieve Chip Roy introduced (TX-21) H.R. 3163, the Combating Racist Teaching in Schools Act. This bill prohibits the award of federal funds to schools that promote race-based theory to students.

Specifically, Representative Roy’s bill would prohibit federal from being funds awarded to elementary and secondary schools, as well as institutions of higher education, if such institutions promote race-based theories or compel teachers or students to “affirm, adhere to, adopt, or process beliefs in a manner that violates title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.”
Race-based theories described in Representative Roy’s bill include:

1. Any race is inherently superior or inferior to any other race, color, or national origin.

2. The United States is a fundamentally racist country.

3. The Declaration of Independence or Constitution of the United States are fundamentally racist documents.

4. An individual’s moral character or worth is determined by the individual’s race, color, or national origin.

5. An individual, by virtue of the individual’s race, is inherently racist or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously.

6. An individual, because of the individual’s race, bears responsibility for the actions committed by other members of the individual’s race, color, or national origin.

Finally, Representative Roy’s bill ensures that protected speech is not restricted for students, teachers, or any other individual outside of a school setting; ensures that students, teachers, or other individuals are allowed to access materials related to critical race theory for the purpose of research or independent study; and ensures that schools teaching the theories described above are taught “in contexts that make it clear the school does not sponsor, approve or endorse such theories or materials.”

Congressman Roy’s bill mirrors goals of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by defending children from being taught that they are inherently superior or inferior.

**Critical race theory in the States**

**California**

In October 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom signed A.B. 101, which among other things, would require public and charter schools to “add the completion of a one-semester course in ethnic studies” as a requirement to graduate from high school.

The bill sets the following requirements for government-approved ethnic studies courses.

“(A) a course based on the model curriculum in ethnic studies developed by the commission, (B) an existing ethnic studies course, (C) an ethnic studies course taught as part of a course that has been approved as meeting the A–G requirements
of the University of California and the California State University, or (D) a locally
developed ethnic studies course approved by the governing board of the school
district or the governing body of the charter school. The bill would prohibit a course
that does not use ethnic studies content as the primary content through which the
subject is taught from being used to satisfy the ethnic studies course requirement.”

So, why is A.B. 101 bad? This bill will definitely open the door to Critical race theory
curricula in California’s schools. According to Cal Matters, sample lessons that are
being considered in response to this law include: Migration Stories and Oral History,
#BlackLivesMatter and Social Change, Afrofuturism: Reimagining Black Futures
and Science Fiction, US Undocumented Immigrants from Mexico and Beyond, The
Immigration Experience of Lao Americans and This is Indian Land: The Purpose,
Politics, and Practice of Land Acknowledgment.

**Texas**

In June 2021, Governor Greg Abbott signed H.B 3979, which bans critical race
theory from education without directly mentioning critical race theory in the bill.
The bill addresses concerns raised by parents about the social studies curriculum in
the state.

The bill aims to develop “student’s civic knowledge, including an understanding
of: The fundamental moral, political, and intellectual foundations of the American
experiment in self-government, as well as the history, qualities, traditions, and
features of civic engagement in the United States ... and the founding document of
the United States.”

The bill ensures that history is taught with accuracy. It also states that teachers are
not compelled by any Texas governing body to “discuss current events or widely
debated and currently controversial issues of public policy or social affairs,” and if
they choose to discuss these matters, they must do so “without giving deference to
any one perspective.”

**Florida**

In June of 2021, the Florida State Board of Education voted to ban Critical race
theory from Florida classrooms. Before this vote, Governor DeSantis had urged the
board to adopt rules that would ban critical race theory. This ruling by the State
Board of Education states that:

> “Instruction on the required topics must be factual and
> objective, and may not suppress or distort significant historical
> events, such as the Holocaust, slavery, the Civil War and

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6 https://www.foxnews.com/politics/newsom-signs-ab101-requiring-ethnic-studies-all-california-students
Reconstruction, the civil rights movement and the contributions of women, African American and Hispanic people to our country.”

This ruling showcases critical race theory as an example of a theory that distorts historical facts.

The pressure from Governor Desantis and eventual ruling from the State Board of Education represents a path to stop critical race theory other than the legislative process.

**Resources To Help You Navigate Critical race theory Discussions**

**BEST’s Guide to Woke Language in Education**

This resource breaks down common terms used in “woke” education and by biased actors. When it comes to protecting your children, this will help you see the warning signs in your district and understand them.

**Anti-Racist Art Teacher’s Strategic Guide to Anti-Racist Teaching**

This resource includes some of the resources radical groups are spreading to further bias education and stop parents input.

**Oregon Association of Scholars Guide To Understanding Social Justice Rhetoric**

Get the cheat sheet on social justice terms and how to respond.

**Get Involved With BEST**

Building Education for Students Together focuses on building parent-led coalitions, promoting school choice, combating anti-American content, and recruiting, training, and educating communities about identifying and selecting like-minded school board members.
What Are They Saying?

**Christopher Rufo, Senior Fellow at Manhattan Institute**

“Critical race theory is an academic discipline that holds that the United States is a nation founded on white supremacy and oppression, and that these forces are still at the root of our society. Critical race theorists believe that American institutions, such as the Constitution and legal system, preach freedom and equality, but are mere ‘camouflages’ for naked racial domination. They believe that racism is a constant, universal condition: it simply becomes more subtle, sophisticated, and insidious over the course of history. In simple terms, critical race theory reformulates the old Marxist dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed, replacing the class categories of bourgeoisie and proletariat with the identity categories of White and Black. But the basic conclusion is the same: in order to liberate man, society must be fundamentally transformed through moral, economic, and political revolution.”

**Montana State Attorney General Austin Knudsen**

“Committing racial discrimination in the name of ending racial discrimination is both illogical and illegal. It goes against the exceptional principles on which our nation was founded and has no place in our state ... Montana law does not tolerate schools, other government entities, or employers implementing CRT and antiracist programming in a way that treats individuals differently on the basis of race or that creates a racially hostile environment.”

**Dr. James Lindsay**

“Equality before the law is an absolutely bedrock principle in a nation that is going to be a nation of laws, in a nation that works to minimize corruption in the system. Certainly, the system is not perfect. Certainly, the system can be better and has been worse. But at the same time, if you want to achieve the minimization of corruption, you have to start with a principle of equality before the law.”

These resources can be found at [www.parentsknowbest.com](http://www.parentsknowbest.com).