

CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE IN IDAHO K-12 EDUCATION

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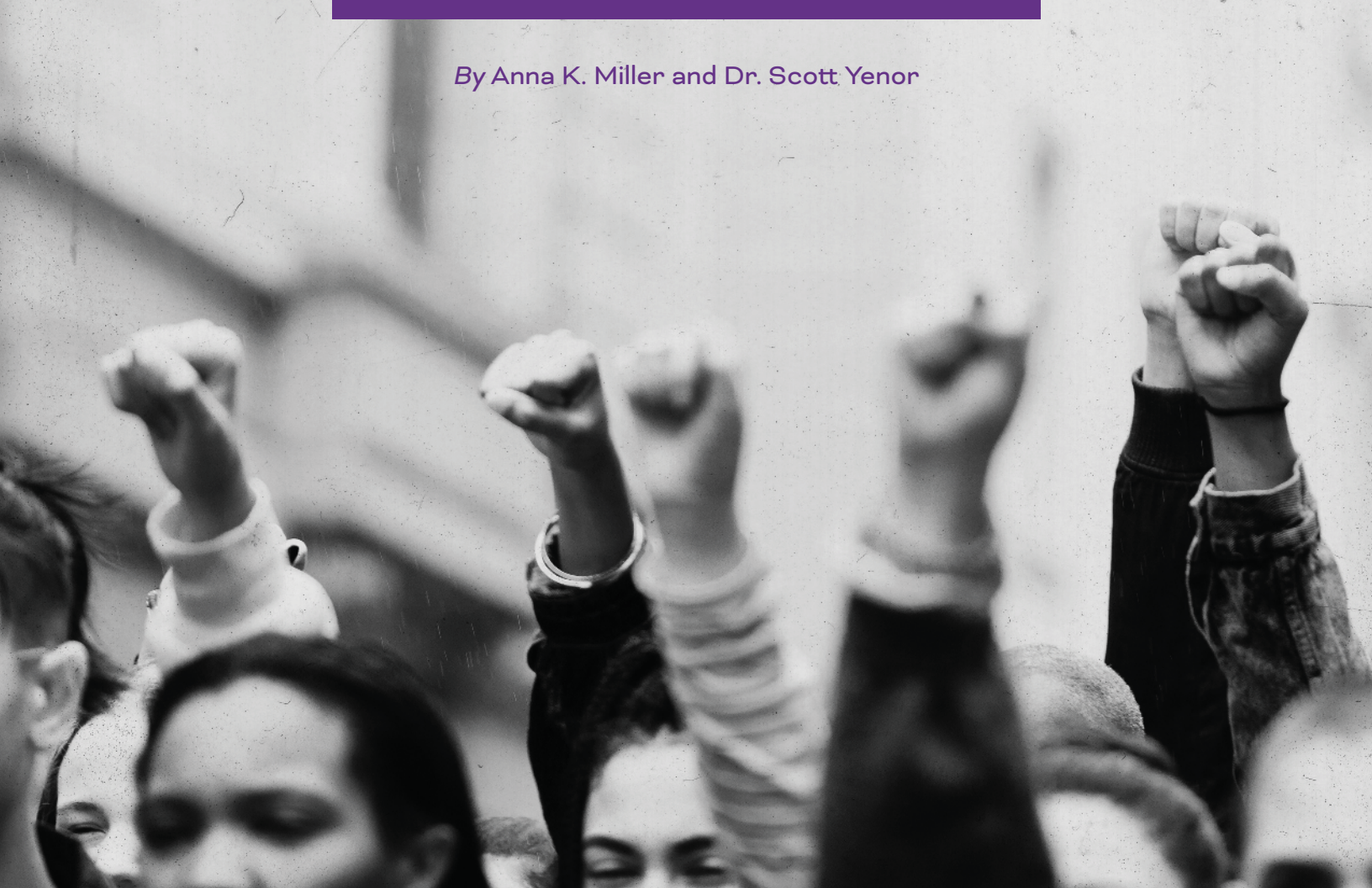



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**“IT’S AN UNIVERSAL
LAW—INTOLERANCE IS
THE FIRST SIGN OF AN
INADEQUATE EDUCATION.
AN ILL-EDUCATED PERSON
BEHAVES WITH ARROGANT
IMPATIENCE, WHEREAS TRULY
PROFOUND EDUCATION
BREEDS HUMILITY.”**

– Alexander Solzhenitsyn

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Critical Social Justice (CSJ) is written into the DNA of Idaho's public education system. At the most fundamental level, Idaho's education system is designed to replace the influence of parents on the opinions and sentiments of children with the influence of public institutions. Our public education system emphasizes the principles of CSJ, a false and harmful anti-American, anti-Christian ideology that sows racial hatred, gender confusion, and resentment. There is no making peace with this imperial ideology. It must either be rooted out of our system (a tall task) or parents must be assisted in walking away from the system.

Idaho has many solid laws that discourage CSJ education. But these laws are undermined by other state regulations and federal programs. Idaho has been participating in the Common Core program since 2014, for instance. Common Core was a centrally planned attempt to establish level academic standards. Aside from the negative externalities of centrally planning classroom instruction, the common core was corrupted by CSJ and became a vehicle for teaching anti-white, anti-male hatred in schools. Idaho also adopts accreditation standards and curriculum from national institutions promoting CSJ, and it is also embedded in teacher certification standards. The most easily available curriculum peddles the ideology. Teacher training often expands the ideology. Through these means, Idaho's education system comes to resemble education systems in other parts of the country.

Furthermore, our State Board of Education (SBOE) and many public school districts have made conscious and revocable decisions to expand upon the framework sown into our national and regional institutions. For example, the SBOE adopted certification standards requiring teachers and professional school personnel to be trained in culturally responsive teaching, and many of the states largest school districts have adopted the anti-racist social emotional learning curriculum known as Second Step (See Section I).

Addressing this problem requires that we understand the many layers governing Idaho's education system and how far CSJ has advanced within that system.

Section I of this report describes the ambitions of CSJ in education, describes the common vehicles used to promulgate the ideology in schools, and assesses how far the ideology has advanced in statewide school programs, policies and curriculum.

Section II identifies who is responsible for promoting CSJ in the education system among varying levels of government bureaucracy, special interests, and national trends, and what can be done to stop its advancement.

SECTION I



WHAT IS CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Idaho's K-12 schools are not what they were 50 years ago. Teachers and administrators have adopted ideologies alien to the American experience and traditional family values. These new ideologies come under a variety of names, but all of them are dedicated to promoting left-wing political activism and fundamentally rejecting the principles of American society. We call this new ideological bent Critical Social Justice (CSJ) (Pluckrose and Lindsay 2020).

CSJ manufactures a problem and a solution. The supposed problem is that American society is made up of an intersection of structures of oppression. The privileged have built these structures to keep the disadvantaged groups weak, unequal, and scattered. According to the CSJ lens, America is racist, sexist, misogynist, intolerant, ableist, cisgendered, and homophobic.

But CSJ adherents believe K-12 education promises the solution to this problem (J. Lindsay 2020b). Instead of imparting truth to children, K-12 schools will teach oppressors to identify with the plight of the oppressed. Schools will cultivate feelings of shame among the supposed oppressors for their whiteness or their so-called "toxic masculinity." Schools will engage in various forms of remedial activism on behalf of victim groups. On the whole, the new education will emphasize conflict and change-oriented (or revolutionary) values at the expense of assimilation into the old American society (J. Lindsay 2020b).¹

Activists promise a future where the formerly oppressed are liberated from these oppressive structures. Then all people will supposedly enjoy success regardless of their race, sexual orientation or gender.ⁱⁱ

There are eight main vehicles for integrating CSJ into the K-12 system. All of these vehicles first seek to be critical of or to disrupt American culture and family values and then to create a new culture dedicated to social justice or liberation. Some vehicles try to shape the mindsets, beliefs and behaviors of children. Some change disciplinary standards to suit bad behavior of supposedly oppressed cultures. Some teach students to protest for leftist political causes. Others foster racial discrimination or the sexualization of kids.

It is difficult to understand our school system without understanding each of these concepts. Proponents of CSJ sow confusion by deploying complicated and confusing terms like culturally responsive teaching, anti-racism, implicit bias and equity. Citizens need clarity of how they all fit into a system of education. CSJ reflects the overall diagnosis. These vehicles are the policies and programs presented as remedies in K-12 schools.

Culturally responsive teaching caters to stereotypes associated with identity groups (Khalifa et al. 2016). This teaching method denigrates those perpetuating the supposedly dominant culture and coerces students into modifying their behavior to suit supposedly marginalized cultures. Two key practices include

the rejection of colorblindness and replacing instruction about facts with narrative stories. For example, Curriculum Associates, a nonprofit partnering with Idaho schools, promotes culturally responsive math. The curriculum introduces skepticism around achieving the right answer to a math problem and encourages using math to create social change through students engaging in public policy advocacy (Ellis 2021).ⁱⁱⁱ According to the State Department of Education at least 15% of school districts use culturally responsive practices (SDE Report to the Legislature 2021).

Social-emotional learning cultivates certain attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and behaviors in children (Effrem, Robbins, and Ryan 2019). It is important to distinguish between Standard and Transformative SEL. Standard SEL programs' core objective is to fill the void of secularism in public schools. At its core, Standard SEL shifts away from the Judeo-Christian understanding about morality and objective truth and towards the self and group norms (Appendix C). Standard SEL programs typically include psychological evaluations of children which have been criticized by psychologists as being harmful to students' mental health (Effrem, Robbins, and Ryan 2019). Transformative SEL programs seek to displace and stigmatize the old, supposedly oppressive cultural, moral religious institutions central to a child's health and well-being such as the nuclear family, meritocracy and the church (Sailer 2021). In their place, it encourages children to embrace ideas such as gender fluidity, anti-white racism, toxic masculinity, white privilege, and the fundamentally unjust nature of American society. For example, the Second Step program used in many Idaho school districts teaches children to adopt the belief that white people are privileged and to become activists for Black Lives Matter and LGTBQ causes. According to the State Department

of Education, 48% of Idaho districts implement social emotional learning in their guiding framework (Idaho State Department of Education 2021).

Action civics displaces traditional, knowledge-based civics education with training students to protest (T. Lindsay 2020). The goal is to raise up a new generation that believes good citizenship means fundamentally transforming America through radical activism. To achieve this, civics must be redefined as progressive political activism. For example, iCivics curriculum used in Boise School District's Third Grade Citizenship unit teaches children that NFL players kneeling in protest at the playing of the national anthem is a sign of civic engagement, rather than disrespect to the country.

Equity is equality of group outcomes. Students must be treated differently based on their race, culture and socioeconomic background. Resources and access to opportunities must be redistributed in schools based on racial favoritism and equal outcomes must be achieved despite loss of genuine academic advancement or learning attainment for individuals. For example, Wood River High School's Equity Task Force, which is empowered to make recommendations to the Blaine County School Board, have discussed the complete elimination of talented and gifted programs because they have a disparate racial impact.

Restorative justice makes school discipline of students a race issue (Vaandering 2010). Any disparity among races in school discipline is seen as evidence of systemic racism. Schools then must make changes to disciplinary standards, including things like banning out-of-school suspensions (OSS) for low-level conduct offenses (use of profanity, failure to

follow classroom rules) or reducing OSS length for more serious infractions (violence, drug abuse). For example, in an effort to show that fewer black students are suspended, a district will not suspend students for fighting, theft, drugs or alcohol abuse. Studies have shown these changes tie teachers' hands, undermine their authority in the classroom, create an unsafe school environment and do not improve academic achievement for students (Eden 2020). According to the State Department of Education, 27% of Idaho districts implement restorative justice practices in their guiding framework (Idaho State Department of Education 2021).

Whole child or "student centered" view of education sees schools as a mechanism to socially engineer emotionally literate citizens by introducing activities that encourage children to reveal their emotional vulnerabilities to state employees (Pondiscio 2021). The competing, traditional view of education is "teacher centric," meaning an expert in his or her field imparts knowledge to students and expects them to prove proficiency in that subject. Schools are expected to teach "the best that is thought and written" and promote character formation and basic critical thinking to preserve Western civilization (Cothran 2016). School districts that adopt a "whole child" or "student centered" approach in their guiding frameworks implement more social-emotional learning and trauma-informed programs in schools rather than teaching basic academic disciplines such as English, math or history. According to the State Department of Education, at least 28% of Idaho districts implement whole child practices in their guiding framework (Idaho State Department of Education 2021).

Trauma-informed practices invite the state to assess the private psychological condition

of children and intrude further into a child's life. This therapeutic education model is rooted in the concept of "safetyism," which makes emotional safety a virtue and creates a feedback loop wherein "kids become more fragile and less resilient, which signals to adults that they need more protection, which then makes them even more fragile and less resilient" (Lukianoff and Haidt 2019). Combined with a focus on equity, trauma-informed practices risk over-diagnosing trauma and stigmatizing entire groups of children (Pondiscio 2021). According to the State Department of Education, at least 35% of Idaho districts implement trauma informed practices in their guiding framework (Idaho State Department of Education 2021).

Queer theory asserts that all sexualities and taboos must be actively promoted. It endorses experimentation with homosexuality, bisexuality, transgenderism, transsexuality and in some cases even pedophilia (S. Thompson 2015). Queer theory's central purpose is to criticize all societal norms and deem those norms to be intrinsically oppressive. The aim is thus to reject traditional views about heterosexuality, monogamy, marriage, and the natural family. In schools, this ideology manifests in districts changing their policies regarding gender identity, parental notification, transgender students' use of bathrooms or locker rooms, and adopting comprehensive sex education curriculum.

These practices are, to varying degrees, vehicles for CSJ in K-12 education. In the interplay between these frameworks and the individual teacher—and between these frameworks and different school districts—lies the key to understanding how far CSJ is implemented in Idaho's K-12 system.

RECENT EPISODES OF CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE IN IDAHO: WHAT IS HAPPENING AND WHY?

Several recent episodes are canaries in the coalmine. Head-scratching, radical events across Idaho are the logical outgrowth of this ongoing CSJ revolution. Things that were unthinkable five or 10 years ago now are everyday practices in public schools across America (C. Thompson n.d.). Is it reasonable to think that Idaho is somehow immune from such episodes? Idaho has adopted Common Core and accepts the same accreditation standards. Its teachers and school administrators are prepared in the same colleges. Its school boards are trained by the same organizations. Of course, Idaho is not immune from them. All of these Idaho episodes are well documented in the footnotes.

- ▶ School administrators in Coeur d'Alene manipulated an eleven-year-old girl into believing she was a boy and should undergo gender transition surgery (Weeks 2021).
- ▶ Districts across Idaho, including West Ada, Pocatello-Chubbuck, and Coeur d'Alene, teach kids that parents are "roadblocks" to their goals, white children are privileged, and they should protest for antiracist political causes such as Black Lives Matter (Utah Parents United 2021).
- ▶ Meridian Middle School pressures teachers to judge students by the color of their skin (Hurst 2021).
- ▶ The recommended statewide sex education curriculum teaches elementary school age kids that there are five types of sex: "Vaginal penetration, Anal penetration, Oral (mouth) contact with a partner's genitals, Manual/

Digital (hands/fingers) contact with a partner's genitals, Skin-to-skin contact with a partner's genitals" ("Idaho Teen Pregnancy" n.d.).

- ▶ Children across Idaho are given live condom demonstrations in sex education classes (Education, Training, and Research 2020).
- ▶ The Department of Health and Welfare sex education program directs kids to use Planned Parenthood clinics ("Idaho Teen Pregnancy: Resources" n.d.).
- ▶ Teachers in Blaine County schools are trained in gender ideology, intersectionality, implicit bias and microaggressions (Parents Defending Education n.d.).
- ▶ Nampa School District collects highly sensitive and extremely personal data on children's lives (including race, ethnicity, income level, discipline records, grades, test scores, disabilities, mental health, medical history, counseling records, and adoption of Social Emotional Learning competencies). These are collected in a Statewide Longitudinal Data Base without parental consent (Miller 2021b).
- ▶ School administrators in Blaine County address students by preferred pronouns corresponding to their gender identity regardless of parental wishes or knowledge (Blaine County School District 2016).
- ▶ The chairman of the Blaine County School Board promised to protect teachers from parents' concerns about what is taught to their children (Parents Defending Education n.d.).

HOW MUCH CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE IS PRESENT IN IDAHO'S K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM?

These events are powerful evidence that suggests CSJ pervades Idaho's education system. Public officials may claim that these events are simply one-off, random occurrences. This claim is used to justify political inaction, complacency, and appropriating more money for public education. Such public officials demand data and evidence to show that these episodes are systematic. Perhaps our public officials are sincere and willing to look. Perhaps this rhetoric is designed to distract and confuse—to suggest that “it is not happening in Idaho” but really to say “and it is good that it is happening!” In any event, concerned citizens are right to ask for evidence that this is happening across the system.

Though it is impossible to know what happens in every classroom and what fraction of the day is dedicated to CSJ for each school and student, an honest assessment is possible. Such factors vary by school district and within school districts, by schools and within schools. We can describe and understand the system as a whole. We can identify the policies that govern at the national, state and local levels. We can survey the decisions school districts make in certain areas. We can see if systems in place are biased heavily in the direction of CSJ. These data show that CSJ is systemically embedded into the DNA of Idaho K-12 public schools.

Two recent episodes illustrate how CSJ has come to Idaho.

WHITE SHAMING: HOW IDAHO'S SYSTEM PROMOTES COLLECTIVE GUILT AND RACIAL SCAPEGOATING

How did districts across Idaho begin teaching students that white children are privileged, parents are “roadblocks” to their goals, and they should protest for antiracist political causes such as Black Lives Matter? How did Meridian Middle School come to pressure teachers to “reject the myth of colorblindness” and treat students differently based on their level of “privilege?” (Butcher 2021).

On one hand, Idaho's social studies standards never embrace ideas of systematic racism or anti-racism. School districts are required to cultivate an understanding of American democracy as well as our country's noble achievements such as extending the right of individual freedoms to all citizens. Standard textbooks often support these views, though not as consistently as one might hope. All appears to be good enough in these limited ways.

What Idaho demands in its standards is undermined in its execution, or rather Idaho's other standards undermine its official standards. From teacher training and teacher preparation to school programming, the whole infrastructure of education undermines intentions at the state level. Teachers arrive in schools steeped in teaching techniques designed to dismantle traditional culture, reject colorblindness, adopt social constructivist views of truth and culture, and promote

anti-racism. Teacher training reinforces and expands these early efforts. Education nonprofits offer curriculum and programming packages to school districts and principals to bring these elements and techniques into the daily experience of the classroom.

State certification standards for teachers and administrators require educators to be versed in critical race theory and to impart it to students. The Idaho standards for certification of professional school personnel require that not only teachers, but also principals, superintendents, social workers, school psychologists, ELA teachers, special education directors, and literacy teachers be trained in **culturally responsive teaching** (SDE 2019).^{iv}

Colleges of education at Idaho's largest **public universities** train future educators in social justice and anti-racist activism and corresponding pedagogical methods such that graduates believe CSJ is equivalent to good teaching.^v

School districts collaborate with leftist interest groups. School districts reinforce teacher standards through mandatory teacher training farmed out to Leftist groups. Most districts do not share information regarding teacher training on their website. This transparency problem makes it nearly impossible to assess the actual number of teachers districts require to undergo subversive training. What we know comes from the interest groups or from whistleblowers. For example, the Nampa School District has offered "SEL Everyday: Integrating SEL into Instruction" conducted by **Transformative Educational Leadership** (Transformative Educational Leadership 2021). The training includes how to use SEL for instruction about equity, anti-racism, decolonization, intersectionality, racial

justice, white fragility, white privilege and white supremacy (Nampa School District, public records request, May 2021).

Teachers in at least 13 districts are required to take Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) trainings (Parents Defending Education n.d.).^{vi} The training is provided by **Vector Solutions** under the misleading title of "SafeSchools." Whistle-blower teachers in Blaine County shared the training materials with Parents Defending Education, revealing that the training includes implicit bias, microaggressions, and Kimberle Crenshaw's work on intersectionality and gender ideology. Districts claim Vector Solutions trainings are "proprietary" and will not release training materials to the public.

The **Idaho Education Association** (IEA) hosted Equity Trainings for thousands of teachers across the state. The training in 2020 included the topics implicit bias, microaggressions, antiracism, systemic racism and the works of Ibram X. Kendi (Blaine County School District, public records request, 2021). IEA's Winter Training Series 2021-22 includes "Equitable and Just Schools I and II" which trains teachers in understanding unconscious bias, institutional racism, "examining the 'isms' that exist in our system," microaggressions, privilege, internalized and transferred oppression, and social justice (Idaho Education Association n.d.).

Idaho Stars, a nonprofit working with childcare providers and partnered with the IDAEYC, has trained educators and childcare providers in DEI. For example, the group offered a "Reducing Implicit Bias" module in 2021 which focused on "the importance of culturally responsive practices" and recognizing "implicit bias" (Idaho Stars 2021). The group also recommended childcare providers use a list of "Diversity and Inclusion" Christmas books

stigmatizing the Christian understanding of the holiday season (Idaho Stars 2021).^{vii}

Districts also provide extra resources to guide teacher instruction and understanding of content. For example, Boise School District's Third Grade Citizenship curriculum resources for teachers include the **NPR** article "How to Talk to Kids about Black Lives and Police Violence" which argues that educators "need to explore their own identity as white" and "we also need to expect that white teachers teach for black lives" (Kamentz 2020). Another recommended **Learning for Justice!** resource "Who Decides What's Civil?" argues "civility has [] been used as a tool of oppression" and that Black Lives Matter should not be criticized for being uncivil (Dillard 2018). There is no transparency among school districts in the type of extra resources provided to teachers to guide their classrooms. Thus, it is impossible to determine exactly how many school districts are pressuring teachers to politicize the classroom.

District curricular decisions. All Idaho school districts implement some type of **social-emotional learning** (SEL) program that is usually paired with other therapeutic education models: 35% of districts use Trauma informed practices, 27% use whole child practices, and 48% have adopted SEL in their district's guiding framework (Idaho State Department of Education 2021). SEL prioritizes the cultivation of supposedly "correct" attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and behaviors over the promotion of knowledge and understanding.

It politicizes another corner of curriculum. Transformative SEL programs nowadays seek to displace and stigmatize the old, supposedly oppressive cultural and moral religious institutions central to a child's health and well-being such as the nuclear family, meritocracy,

and the church. In their place, they want children to embrace ideas such as gender fluidity, anti-white racism, toxic masculinity, white privilege, and the fundamentally unjust nature of American society.^{viii}

Some school boards adopt district wide frameworks to guide the infusion of Transformative SEL into every school. Such frameworks ensure every school will define the core competencies SEL seeks to foster through the lens of racial privilege and power. Coeur d'Alene's SEL framework, for example, defines Social Awareness as students "recognizing the many factors influencing equity in the social context including power dynamics, cultural demands, race, class and privilege" (Coeur d'Alene School District 2020b). Nampa school district's strategic work plan similarly requires that SEL integrates diversity, equity, and inclusion (Nampa School District 2021).

The **Second Step** program, used in 21% of school districts, is a quintessential example of using SEL as a vehicle for critical social justice (Idaho State Department of Education 2021).^{ix} Second Step is an anti-racist, transformative SEL program promoted by the nonprofit **Committee for Children** (Second Step n.d.). This Committee believes SEL is "fundamental for achieving social justice" (Austin 2021). Many of Idaho's largest school districts like West Ada, Coeur d'Alene, and Pocatello implement the Second Step program in their K-12 curriculum (Second Step n.d.).

The eighth grade Second Step curriculum provides examples of what schools using this program are teaching. By the end of eighth grade children are reprogrammed to believe white children are privileged, be activists for Black Lives Matter, and view parents as roadblocks to their goals. Children are told to seek advice from teachers, friends, mentors,

counselors, administrators, other students, study groups, band, instructors, partners and community members for advice before parents, if they are listed at all, as a reliable source for help (Utah Parents United 2021).

Other Transformative SEL programs are also popular in Idaho schools. According to the State Department of Education, at least 23% of school districts reported using **Zones of Regulation** and 25% use **Sources of Strength** (Idaho State Department of Education 2021). Zones of Regulation teaches the four zones Blue, Green, Yellow and Red. The Red Zone is intended to train students to become activists for antiracism and Black Lives Matter (Zones of Regulation 2021). Sources of Strength uses SEL to promote equity and views the purpose of education as not to understand the world but to change it (activism) (Sources of Strength n.d.).

The presiding authority on SEL, **Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning** (CASEL), recommends training teachers to evaluate whether students' behaviors and attitudes are developing as desired. Thus, already-burdened teachers conduct psychological evaluations to measure students' adoption of SEL competencies steeped in CSJ ideology antithetical to the values of many families and religious institutions. Then data from these amateur psychological evaluations of students' intimate personal attitudes and behaviors are eternally stored in a Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). All this data is collected without obtaining parental consent (Miller 2021b).

This is not just coffee-table psychology attempting to improve students' mental health or imparting moral relativism to kids. Transformative SEL is about the politically powerful crafting children into the people the

state wants them to become, rather than the people parents hope their children become.

The flyer posted by Meridian Middle School officials was developed by the education nonprofit **Advancement Via Individual Determination** (AVID), whose mission is to prepare students for college. However, AVID is also committed to anti-racism (AVID 2021). AVID has been impacting Idaho schools for 20 years and by its own account it is present in at least 10 districts, 36 secondary schools, and 11 elementary schools and has trained thousands of educators administrators and counselors (AVID 2019).

AVID's website contains many examples from its curriculum and teacher trainings reminiscent of the white shaming flyer handed out at Meridian Middle School. For example, AVID provides a **Privilege Walk** activity for both teacher training and classroom instruction wherein educators and students deconstruct their racial and sexual identities and rank themselves according to their power and privilege. Another lesson on "Colorblindness: The New Racism?" teaches "Failure to see and acknowledge racial differences makes it difficult to recognize the unconscious biases everyone has," and, "White people have the hardest time opening their eyes." The lesson further prompts students to become "awake" to the understanding that racism is present everywhere and perpetuated by white people. AVID implements SEL into its programs and advocates for transformative SEL, claiming "We can't afford whitewashed social-emotional learning" (AVID 2021).

How much collective guilt and racial scapegoating is being fostered through AVID programs in public schools? District officials claim that any curriculum or teacher training materials AVID provides are "trade secrets"

and refuse to release any information to parents. This lack of transparency in AVID's programs prevents a definitive conclusion regarding the pervasiveness of this problem.

Action civics, a national civics trend teaching children to protest for antiracist political causes, has also penetrated school curricula with full endorsement from the State Department of Education (National Association of Scholars n.d).

The **State Department of Education** recommends **iCivics** as a leading curriculum resource for social studies classes (State Department of Education 2021b). iCivics endorses action civics and antiracism (iCivics 2020a). Louise Dube, executive director of iCivics, has said iCivics is committed to "pointing out institutional systemic racism in teaching about our institutions," even though this "will alienate some" (Kurtz 2021b). Many school districts have followed the SDE's directive to adopt iCivics curriculum. For example, iCivics is used in the Boise School District's Elementary Citizenship curriculum and Coeur d'Alene School District's eighth grade social studies curriculum.

iCivics curriculum pushes the narrative of systemic racism. For example, iCivics leaders have argued that the younger generation's approval of NFL players kneeling in protest at the playing of the national anthem is a sign of civic engagement rather than disrespect to the country (Shaped Staff 2021). This likely explains why Boise School District's Third Grade Citizenship curriculum requires students to read a Scholastic News article about NFL players "kneeling to protest unfair and sometimes violent treatment of black people by the police" and to "write a paragraph expressing your opinion about whether or not you support their protests" (McCollum 2017).

No counter argument on respect for the national anthem or policing is offered.

iCivics was closely involved in transforming civics education toward anti-racism and critical race theory in Illinois classrooms which has led to the Illinois State Board of Education to mandate culturally responsive teaching (Kurtz 2021c). The new standards require teachers to adopt ideas like systemic racism, make it clear that students must be made aware of their power and privilege, and be pushed into progressive activism (Kurtz 2021c).

iCivics aspires to make civics in every state like the Illinois model (iCivics 2020b). The iCivics report on the implementation of the Illinois civics law states that a "universal takeaway" of the Illinois civics experience is "if you're not schooled and aware of whiteness or privilege, then civic courses can very quickly become oppressive to young people of color" (iCivics 2020b). Under the SDE's direction, Idaho districts will continue to use iCivics curriculum and replace more social studies class time with resources like the 1619 Project or Howard Zinn's "A Peoples History," activism for anti-racist political causes, and lessons on systemic racism, white shaming, and fostering hatred for American values.

CONCLUSION: Despite sound intentions at the state level, most teachers arrive in schools steeped in an ideology concerned with dismantling traditional culture, rejecting colorblindness, adopting social constructivist views of truth and culture, and promoting anti-racism. Teacher training expands these efforts. Many anti-racist interest nonprofits offer curriculum and programming packages to school districts and school principals to bring the ideology into the daily experience of the classroom.

THE SEXUALIZATION OF CHILDREN: HOW IDAHO'S SYSTEM SEXUALIZES EDUCATION

How could Coeur d'Alene School District encourage the gender transition of a confused child? How could live condom demonstrations become a common practice in Idaho schools?

Much in Idaho's system would suggest that the sexualization of children cannot happen here. Unlike many states, Idaho's schools are not required to teach sex education. Local school districts can teach sex education, but only within the limits of state law and policy. Idaho Statute 33-1608 says the primary responsibility of family life and sex education rests with a student's home and church and that schools should do nothing to upset those established standards. If local school districts offer sex education, the program's "major emphasis" must be on "an appreciation of the important place the family holds in the social system of our culture." The Idaho Department of Education translates these laws into Idaho Content Standards for Health Education. Schools must teach content about "the consequences of sexual activity" beginning in sixth to eighth grade while by graduation students should be encouraged to abstain from sexual activity with "factual, medically accurate and objective" information.

But other parts of Idaho's government undermine the legislative intent. Idaho's Department of Health and Welfare has been implementing the **Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program** (APP) in K-12 schools since at least 2017 ("Idaho Teen Pregnancy" n.d.). APP claims to teach abstinence, but really encourages kids to engage in sexual activity and toward normalizing alternative lifestyles. APP claims to be operating in every school district, affecting more schools every year.

The Department of Health and Welfare never reports the names and numbers of school districts who follow the APP curriculum—a transparency problem that can hardly be accidental. The APP curriculum standards for sex education require students to affirm ideas about sex, gender and the family that contradict state board policy and undermine healthy family life (Future of Sex Education Initiative 2012). According to these standards, students will be activists for transgenderism and other LGBTQ issues by the time students graduate from high school, and they will promote safety for sexually active kids rather than abstinence and marital sex. The standards include the following:

By the end of second grade students are reprogrammed to

- ▶ "Provide examples of how friends, family, media, society and culture influence ways in which boys and girls think they should act."
- ▶ "Identify different types of family structures" such as families with two moms or two dads.
- ▶ "Demonstrate ways to show respect for different types of families."

By the end of fifth grade students are reprogrammed to

- ▶ "Define sexual orientation as the romantic attraction of an individual to someone of the same gender or a different gender."

By the end of eighth grade students are reprogrammed to

- ▶ "Analyze external influences that have an impact on one's attitudes about gender, sexual orientation and gender identity."
- ▶ "Access accurate information about gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation."
- ▶ "Demonstrate the use of effective

communication and negotiation skills about the use of contraception including abstinence and condoms,”

- ▶ “Describe the steps to using a condom correctly.”
- ▶ “Differentiate between biological sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression.”

Between ninth and twelfth grade students are reprogrammed to:

- ▶ “Advocate for school policies and programs” that promote the LGBTQ community.
- ▶ “Advocate for sexually active youth to get STD/HIV testing and treatment.”

Advocacy groups are active in promoting sex education material and radical gender policies at the local level. Sometimes school districts quietly adopt APP curriculum, sometimes they quietly allow alternative sex education advocacy groups into the schools to offer programs. There is no transparency, so it is impossible to know what any individual school district is doing. We know that advocacy groups are very active in school districts because the interest groups themselves brag about it, even though school districts don't inform the public about it.

The **Committee for Children** SEL Curriculum **Second Step** encourages students to question their sexual orientation and gender, be activists often for issues such as for transgenderism and homosexuality, and use the website loveisrespect.org for sex advice. The website includes resources such as “5 tips for your first time [having sex],” and “dating in the closet.” It refers places to get an abortion and promotes sexual taboos like polyamory (Utah Parents United 2021).

The **North Idaho Pride Alliance** targets students at schools to organize LGBTQ+ clubs

and provide resources on transgenderism and gender identity to minors. Many of these clubs have been formed in Idaho schools, including the Gender and Sexuality Alliance at Lake City and Post Falls high schools. **Planned Parenthood of North Idaho** facilitates a Youth Empowerment program. This program trains teenagers to be “peer educators” and advocate for sexually active youth, “reproductive justice,” and “intersectional social justice” by presenting to their peers in local schools (Planned Parenthood 2021). The **Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children** (IDAEYC), an advocacy group promoting the sexualization of children ages birth to five, claims to be impacting 15 communities through the development of early learning programs (Schaffer 2019). The IDAEYC partners with left-wing organizations and local school districts to establish preschool programs. For example, IDAEYC has partnered with the **United Way of North Idaho** in Coeur d'Alene to continue work on the community's early learning program (Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children n.d.). United Way is committed to DEI, embraces intersectionality and seeks to “dismantle systems of oppression” and “privilege” in Idaho (United Way of North Idaho n.d.). Now, Coeur d'Alene's Early Learning program's strategic plan prioritizes being “inclusive” of LGBTQ individuals and supporting them through policies and practices (Kootenai County n.d.).

The group hosts yearly conferences to train early childhood educators through workshops such as “Boy? Girl? Both? Neither? What does that mean in our classroom?” This session examined “the language around gender” and shared “children's books on diversity” for educators to introduce toddlers to transgenderism (Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children 2017). The

IDAAYC actively seeks public funds to expand its early learning programs every year.

Idaho Education Association, the state's largest teacher's union, holds regular conferences for educators with workshops bearing titles such as "Teaching the Rainbow-Creating Safe Spaces for LGBTQ Students in Idaho" (Idaho Education Association 2020). No similar interest groups promoting abstinence or traditional marriage appear in Idaho Education Association workshops.

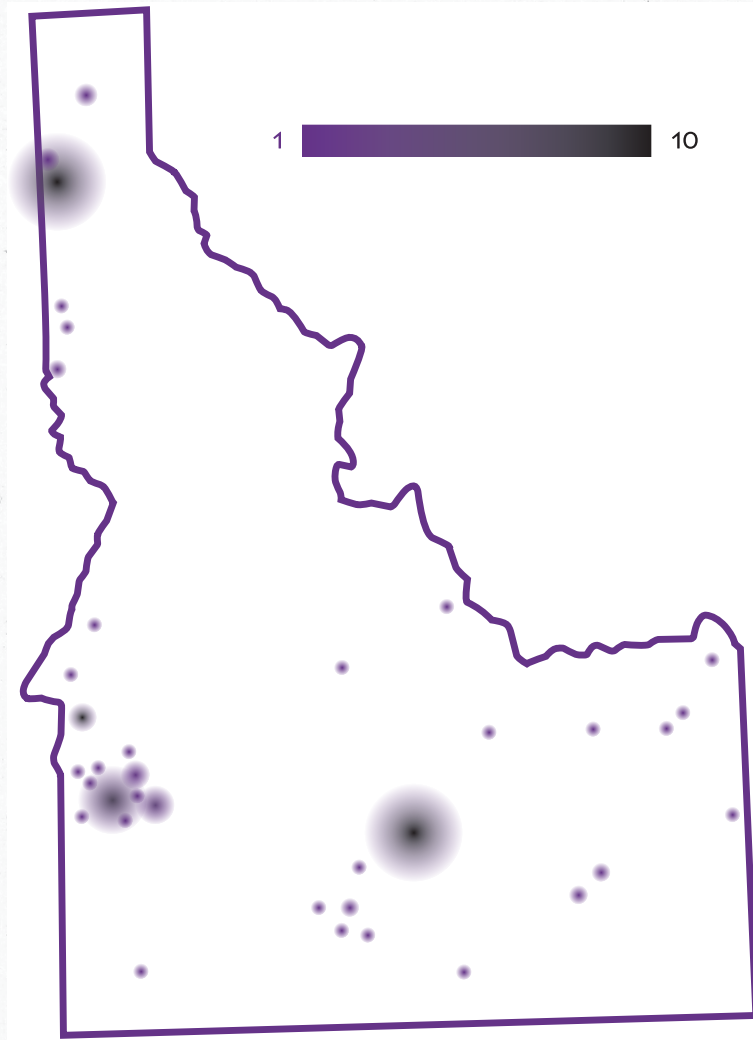
The **Idaho School Boards Association** (ISBA) implores school districts to allow transgender students to use the bathroom of their identified gender, rather than their biological sex (Dindinger 2021). Idaho school districts have begun following the ISBA's guidance. For instance, Coeur d'Alene School District officials announced that staff are now required to address students by their preferred pronouns and that transgender students will be allowed to use bathrooms and locker rooms opposite of their biological sex (Kootenai County GOP 2021).

The work of these advocacy groups, abetted by local school districts and sympathetic teachers, has borne fruit. The advocacy group **Sex Ed for Social Change** (SEICUS) claims much success in convincing local school districts to teach progressive sex ed. According to their data, 13.7% of Idaho's sixth to eighth graders and 36.3% of high school students have been taught "how to correctly use a condom in a required course." SEICUS data suggests that LGBTQ affirming curricula are widely available in Idaho's education system. About 31% of Idaho's middle schoolers and 50.6% of high schoolers are taught about sexual orientation and similar numbers are taught about "gender identity" and "gender expression" (Sex Ed for Social Change 2021).

According to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network's data, 12% of schools teach curriculum promoting the LGBTQ agenda and 47% of school libraries provide students with LGBTQ related resources (GLSEN 2019). Precisely how these activities square with state law is never explained.

Progressive advocacy groups have succeeded in establishing a statewide framework to ensure children from cradle to college are inundated with radical gender ideology. However, these progressive triumphs are still not enough for sexual revolutionists. SIECUS, for example, demands implementation of more sex education curriculum and amending current statute to require sex education statewide (Sex Ed for Social Change 2021).

CONCLUSION: Though Idaho state laws require support for abstinence and family authority in sex education, the state Department of Health and Welfare, local school districts, and prominent activist groups have found a way to work around those laws and sexualize education at ever earlier ages. No State authority knows how widespread it is but interested groups suggest that about 14% of 6-8 graders gain practice putting condoms on in a required course, 12% of schools teach curriculum promoting the LGBTQ agenda, 47% of school libraries provide students with LGBTQ related resources, and nearly 51% of high school graduates have been taught to be LGBTQ+ allies in their required courses.



The geographic breakdown of this report depicts incidents of indoctrination in every region of Idaho. As shown above, there is no specific statistical pattern of indoctrination across the state between metropolitan and rural areas. Although there seems to be a concentration in more of the urban areas.

WHY CSJ IN K-12 EDUCATION IS BAD FOR IDAHO

Is it appropriate for a public school official to teach a 13-year-old how to put a condom on, or to encourage students to question their gender? How soon should such concepts be put at the heart of public education, if they should be there at all? Is it appropriate to teach students that having white skin means they are oppressors by definition? Should our education system encourage students into becoming activists for corrupt political causes like Black Lives Matter and anti-racism?

For many Idahoans, the idea of teachers probing into their child's sex life, judging them for their immutable characteristics such as the color of their skin, or pressuring them to protest is repulsive. As a recent Manhattan Institute survey revealed 66% of parents oppose teaching CRT in schools (Salaz 2021). And for good reason. Decent people who just want to live and let live know that they are not oppressive. They know that they just want all children to get a fair chance in life. They want education to be about the three Rs, not leftist indoctrination. This is what our laws demand. This is what our State Board professes to be concerned about.

For this reason, Idaho is not Portland, Oregon where the school system is intoxicated by revolution and considered to be "training child soldiers" (Rufo 2021). But the same CSJ ideology that eventually radicalized Portland schools has become systemically embedded into Idaho's K-12 education system. Left to proliferate, Idaho's problem will one day

resemble Portland's. And it is not possible to get from CSJ to a peaceful, unified and happy nation. Our schools promote CSJ teachings on race and sex. This will have medium and long-term deleterious effects for Idaho and for America.

CSJ undermines key American notions like color-blindness, meritocracy, and republican self-government. Critical theorists think that oppressive structures linger underneath our seemingly liberal framework. They therefore promote color-conscious and sex-conscious polities to students. Those from oppressor groups who achieve great things are stigmatized for having done them by unearned privilege. This cannot encourage their ambition and drive. And they encourage the transfer of government authority from representative institutions to government bureaucracies. Representative institutions are, after all, reflections of the people themselves and the people are oppressors. Only anti-racist experts, for instance, can be trusted to examine curriculum or institute teacher trainings so the public does not overly taint the results.

CSJ sows social turmoil and antipathy. Most CSJ ideologies teach that the oppressive structures and hostile attitudes of one group for another are sown into the nature of human life. They are ineradicable. If they cannot be overcome, there is no way out of the treadmill of oppression: it is only a question of who is on top. The liberal concepts of colorblindness and merit have been used to tame tribal tendencies

in human nature, but these concepts are thrown out under CSJ ideologies.

CSJ undermines our attachment to our nation. Teaching that America is inherently racist or systemically racist is a lie. It is the big lie. No good results can proceed from such a lie. America is much more than that—it is a land of hope and a land of promise. Undermining attachment to the country, based on lies and half-truths, will undermine the country in the long-term.

CSJ undermines America's competitive advantage in education. The traditional view of education sees a school's mission as imparting objective, academic knowledge and skills to students. The CSJ view of education uses schools to teach children how knowledge is subjectively built on power and privilege. Traditional education values individual merit while CSJ stigmatizes achievement and rejects individuality in favor of group identities. Traditional education seeks to cultivate students' minds for their own sake while the CSJ view of education trains students to become activists for their chosen political cause.

CSJ undermines traditional family life. Traditional education views character formation as only a supporting role complementing the work of families, religion, culture and other institutions and relationships in American life. This is the position of Idaho law. CSJ education intrudes into family life by limiting the power of parents and by teaching children to avoid starting a family. Traditional education respects parental rights to decide where and how their child should learn, but school districts taken by CSJ believe parents have no right to dictate what schools teach their children. The ideology strips away the delineation between private and public life

in schools. Proponents know that a stable American society based on family life, parental rights and child protections will not produce radicals.

CSJ is a recipe for further extensions of state power. Under a school system taken by CSJ education, the state alone determines what children learn to be good, true, or beautiful. Practices such as white shaming or the sexualization of kids are intentional pieces of a broader plan. Childhood innocence and family stabilizations are roadblocks to revolution. But sexualizing children will lead to the creation of a gender fluid society that normalizes sexual deviancy. The line between childhood and adulthood will be erased. "Equity" is more easily achieved. The racial shaming of children will lead to a culture of victimization and group rights antithetical to freedom of speech and equal treatment under the law. "Diversity" and "inclusion" can be accomplished. This sexual and racial exploitation cultivates anger, resentment, and hatred in kids. The generation will grow up to be radical adults resentful of their parents' norms and religious values, and ripe for the political change CSJ proponents seek.

Public officials must reinstate the unalienable authority of parents in family life to direct their child's education and care if we are to stave off these disasters. A traditional education model of objective truth and human dignity must be regained. Parents must stand up against an ideology that has gained much power in schools. Citizens and public officials must understand how this happened in Idaho schools and who is to blame. Section II provides an answer to this pressing question.

SECTION II



WHO PROMOTES CSJ IN OUR SCHOOLS?

Clearly some school districts are less taken with CSJ ideology and its vehicles than others. There is variation among school districts, principals, and teachers; Boise School District is different from Horseshoe Bend School District. School districts do not enjoy unlimited freedom, however. Powerful incentives are in place pointing to the adoption of CSJ and the ignoring of traditional education. Several political actors put strings on their independence of action. These strings place limits on or shape what each school district must do. Among these actors are the federal government, the state government, the state board of education and department of education, the department of health and welfare, the legislature, mayors and city councils, local school boards and superintendents, and public university teacher education programs.

The adoption of Common Core in Idaho is the most pivotal string changing the trajectory of Idaho's education system. The Core requires the state to assign a single uniform standard to the public education system to receive federal aid. The nature of Core standards established new expectations for the school system and necessarily required shifts in classroom practice. These shifts revolve around two major vehicles for CSJ ingrained within the Core standards for reading and math: Social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching.

This has created a culture of compliance penetrating the actions of all government actors controlling public education. As a result, the Core has restricted teacher autonomy in the classroom and restricted school districts' use of traditional education models. For instance, the National Council on Teacher Quality now grades teacher training programs based on whether "the program trains teacher candidates to teach reading as prescribed by the [Core] State Standards" (National Council on Teacher Quality n.d.). A Harvard University study that examined five states' implementation of Core also found that teachers in all five states had to make major changes in their lesson plans and instructional materials to meet its standards and had to include the Core-aligned student outcomes in teacher evaluations (Kane et al., 2016). As a result, teacher and professional school personnel certification standards, classroom curricula, teacher preparation programs, school culture, and policies have all been changed to comply with the Core.

This culture of compliance presented a tremendous opportunity for left-wing education interest groups to pressure school districts and education agencies to adopt their SEL programs and curriculum, conduct equity audits, or implement culturally responsive teacher trainings. For example, the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) demonstrated that many Core standards would not be used for academic achievement but for psychological training of

children.* Now Idaho's state education agencies follow CASEL standards for SEL programs and school boards and superintendents across Idaho have followed suit by using CASEL's guidance in district wide frameworks. In 2011 and 2013, when state adoption of the Core began, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) revised their model teaching standards, Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards (InTASC), to mandate aspects of culturally responsive teaching (Muniz 2019). The national accrediting body, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) endorsed these standards ensuring nation-wide alignment. Idaho's state education agencies adopted the InTASC standards without significant changes. The standards have had a ripple effect — they shifted teacher training programs at public universities and changed what teachers are required to know and how they must perform to work at a public school.

As Dr. George F. Will previously warned, “It is not about the content of the standards, which would be objectionable even if written by Aristotle and refined by Shakespeare. Rather, the point is that, unless stopped now, the federal government will not stop short of finding in Common Core a pretext for becoming a national school board” (Will 2014). This warning has come to fruition. The Core has enabled the federal government to function as a default national school board forcing every state public education system to adopt CSJ ideology. State policymakers alive to the dangers of the ideology such as Alabama, Arkansas and Idaho are now scrambling to regain control by passing legislation or resolutions rejecting CRT.

This section demonstrates the resulting snowball effect of the Core's adoption in Idaho. State and local government actors,

with Core as their original impetus, have been collaborating with left-wing interest groups and accepting increasingly more federal grants to replace traditional education models in public schools with vehicles for CSJ.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The federal government provides education funds to states annually. Strings are attached to these funds. These strings direct programs and priorities in Idaho's education system. Since 1994, the federal government has been directing Idaho's education system toward the new progressive view of CSJ education.

Federal String 1: The first federal string came in 1994 from President Bill Clinton Administration's Goals 2000: Educate America Act (US Metric Association 2015). States were required to adopt the statutes' National Education Goals to receive federal funding through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Goals 2000 was disguised as an effort to prepare all children to be “ready to learn” when they start school. Instead, the progressive education officials in the federal government stipulated that schools must focus on instilling the supposedly correct attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs in students — social-emotional learning.

This is explicit in Goal 8: “By the year 2000, every school will promote the partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.” Goal 8 established parents as mere “partners” with the government in directing their child's education and care.

Federal String 2: The mother of all strings came in 2011 through the Common Core State Standards Initiative, which produced K-12 standards adopted by Idaho in an effort to

qualify for increased funding. Idaho adopted the Core in 2013-2014. Proponents promised that the Core would increase academic rigor in schools, but Core standards actually abetted schools in adopting SEL programs and implementing culturally responsive teaching.^{xi}

Federal String 3: The third string came in 2017 from the Health and Human Services Department sex education grant program known as the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP). Idaho Department of Health and Welfare applied and accepted these grants to implement the Idaho Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (APP) program, which has accelerated the sexualization of children in public schools across the state.

Federal String 4: The fourth string came in 2021 from the Biden Administration's American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School relief funds. The plan provides \$122 billion dollars to states to support school reopening and operations and emphasizes using funds to meet students' social and emotional needs.

Possible Federal String 5: The fifth string comes from the Biden Department of Education proposed rule to establish grants in American History and Civics Education programs. The rule gives priority to "projects that incorporate racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse perspectives" and praises the 1619 Project, culturally responsive teaching and the work of Critical Race Theorist Ibram X. Kendi (Department of Education 2020). If passed, this rule would advance the radical goals of the Civics Secures Democracy Act. The bill is designed to force "evidence-based practices" also known as Action Civics (political protests for course credit), and critical race theory into schools (Kurtz 2021a). It appropriates \$1 billion for federal grants

to support K-12 curriculum development, teaching training, and research on the K-12 teaching of history and civics around those goals. This policy has not been abandoned by the Biden administration and is symbolic of what will likely be enacted sooner or later, furthering the politicization of curriculum and instruction in Idaho's education system.

COMMON CORE

Further explanation is needed for the mother of all strings, Common Core. Core standards function as a centrally-planned blueprint for classroom instruction. The Core set content standards for the curriculum every school district would adopt at every grade level. Content standards pinpoint what children should learn and when they should learn it without identifying how that goal should be reached. Statewide standards intend to affect curriculum — deciding what should be taught has implications for how it would be taught.

As Dr. James Shuls of the Show-Me Institute explained, "The fact is that curriculum standards don't tell teachers how to teach in the same way that a high jump bar doesn't tell a jumper how to jump. You could theoretically jump over a high jump bar in whatever way you would like; but because of how the jump is structured there is a clear advantage to doing the old Fosbury Flop" (Shuls 2013). It has a profound effect on the classroom. Fourth grade Idaho students improved by 19 points over a ten year period on the Nation's Report Card math exams but have remained stagnant on the subject since Core was implemented. (National Assessment of Education Progress 2020). Additionally, an assessment of fourth grade reading also shows test scores have remained stagnant and grade 8 reading scores are still below proficient and pre-

Common Core levels (National Assessment of Education Progress 2020).^{xii}

To put it bluntly, despite whether Core intended to implement CSJ or not, the Core has been used to teach students to “expose bias” more than to master material. This happens in many different ways. The Core implements two key vehicles of CSJ: social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching. Idaho’s English Language Arts standards contain, for example, the SEL core competency of “Self-Awareness,” requires students to “demonstrate awareness of their emotions,” “recognize and label emotions/feelings,” and “describe their emotions and feelings and the situations that cause them (triggers)” (Anchorage School District 2012). Idaho’s ELA Standards for first and second grade students include the following: “Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure” (State Department of Education 2017).

This standard expects first and second graders to understand their own thoughts and feelings as well as those of others around them. First and second graders are still learning to read, yet this standard expects students to demonstrate the sophisticated psychological concept of “closure” (Effrem, Robins, and Ryan 2019).

The Core required several shifts in literacy instruction by changing standards for what students read and how students read. Key among these shifts are an emphasis on informational and nonfiction texts (50% of what’s read in K-5 and 70% in 6-12), the use of shorter passages that call for slow and close reading, and a shared responsibility for

teaching literacy across subject areas.

Emily Chiariello, culturally responsive standards specialist and **Learning for Justice!** fellow, explains the connection between these shifts in literacy instruction and culturally responsive teaching:

“Imagine the impact on anti-bias education if, on a daily basis, in multiple classes, students have the opportunity to question, unwrap, expose and interrogate the words they read and hear? With students engaging in close critical reading of shorter complex informational texts, the dialogue between authors and students becomes better matched” (Chiariello 2012).

This approach reflects the goal of culturally responsive teaching to train students to deconstruct supposedly westernized knowledge to make room for other supposedly marginalized forms of knowledge. As Geneva Gay, professor of multicultural education at the University of Washington-Seattle, explains, “Emotions, beliefs, values, ethnos, opinions, and feelings are scrutinized along with factual information to make curriculum and instruction more reflective of and responsive to ethnic groups” (Gay 2018).

This has created a colossal opportunity for interest groups to get their curriculum, programs, and teaching training into schools to meet these standards in school districts. For example, schools adopt SEL curriculum like Second Step promoted by the Committee for Children. We offer a detailed explanation for how social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching are written into Common Core, which was renamed the Idaho Content Standards in Appendix B and C.

THE GOVERNOR

Social-emotional learning gained a strong foothold in Idaho schools through implementation of the Core in 2014. However, Idaho Governor Brad Little played a key role in accelerating the adoption of SEL curriculum, programs and teacher trainings in schools beginning in 2019.

Gov. Little's task force "Our Kids, Idaho's Future" recommended "Addressing Social and Emotional Issues to Support Student Learning" including increasing SEL training for school staff members and implementing SEL in classroom instruction (State Board of Education 2019). This recommendation was followed by Gov. Little requesting \$1 million for training of school personnel on SEL in the professional development funding distribution for K-12 schools.

STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

The State Board of Education (SBOE) and State Department of Education (SDE), at the Governor's request, led every school district to adopt SEL curriculum, programs and teacher trainings, and adopted professional school personnel certification standards to require teachers, principals, social workers, school psychologists, ELA teachers, special education directors, literacy teachers, and superintendents to implement culturally responsive practices. After receiving community backlash for SEL programs, these agencies have tried to hide their advancement of SEL by renaming these initiatives mental health programs.

The transformation began in 2019 at the Governor's request when the State Department of Education (SDE) actively

sought state and federal resources to support local school district efforts to implement restorative justice and to expand social-emotional learning programs, curriculum and training (State Department of Education 2019). By 2020, the SDE and SBOE included SEL in their back to school framework and recommended CASEL as a resource for K-12 schools (State Department of Education 2020). At this point, the state education agencies appeared to be advancing the standard form of SEL. However, in 2021, the agencies were approved to distribute Biden Administration's American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Relief funds (State Department of Education 2021). The state education agencies, required to submit their state plan to the federal government, committed to disseminating "resources to support the broader social and emotional needs of students returning to school, such as the CASEL SEL Roadmap for Re-Opening Schools." This resource argues schools and educators should adopt "anti-racist practices," focus classroom lessons on "social justice," and conduct staff-wide "implicit bias" training. Additionally, the education agencies provided Idaho schools with resources on SEL's connection to "racial justice," and "creating more equitable systems" (Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning 2020).

Parents soon began pushing back against SEL programs. In response, the State Department of Education decided to rebrand the term "social-emotional learning" to "supporting students' mental and behavioral wellbeing" (Edge 2021b). As SDE Spokeswoman Kris Rodine stated, "We are not distancing ourselves from the concept of SEL, and the important work of supporting students. But the term 'social-emotional learning' has recently been co-opted to become a point

of controversy and interpreted to mean something we do not advocate” (Edge 2021b). Instead of abandoning this politicized program, the SDE doubled down on pushing SEL into schools under the guise of mental health advocacy. “Despite hesitancy over the term, the SDE still intends to support SEL,” Rodine said (Edge 2021b).

The SDE released a plan with 10 recommendations to advance SEL programs in schools under its new name. The plan left out an initial recommendation to adopt a statewide framework for SEL developed by CASEL due to rebranding efforts. Among other priorities, the new plan recommends increasing collection of highly sensitive and personal data about children, training teachers to conduct amateur psychological evaluations of children, and expanding SEL programs in rural school districts (Edge 2021a).

TEACHER AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL PERSONNEL CERTIFICATIONS STANDARDS

State certification standards dictate knowledge (what the candidate needs to know) and performance (what the candidate is able to do) required of teachers and administrators to work at a public school. The State Board of Education adopts the certification standards, and they are presented to Idaho’s Legislature for approval. If the legislature approves the standards, they are incorporated in the official State Board Rule. Teacher preparation programs are expected to evaluate new candidates in a manner consistent with the state standards. Thus, state certification standards determine the expected pedagogical practices and competency of future public-school teachers and administrations.

All states embed some combination of culturally responsive teaching competencies into their teaching certification standards (Muniz 2019). Idaho is one of 18 states that has adopted the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards without many significant changes. The state education agencies renamed these standards the Idaho Core Teaching Standards. Additionally, the agencies have developed separate certification standards for other professional school personnel including principals, social workers, school psychologists, ELA teachers, special education directors, literacy teachers, and superintendents, which all include some elements of culturally responsive pedagogy (State Department of Education Certification Standards 2019).^{xiii}

The standards cite Gloria Ladson-Billings’s definition of culturally responsive teaching. She is known for introducing critical race theory to education (Ladson-Billings 1998). The standards reflect many different aspects of culturally responsive teaching. For example, teachers are required to reflect on personal and cultural biases. Idaho requires that teachers must “understand[] how personal identity, worldview, and prior experience affect perceptions and expectations, and recognize[] how they may bias behaviors and interactions with others.” In performance, the teacher is expected to “identif[y] and reflect[] on his/her own beliefs and biases and utilize[] resources to broaden and deepen his/her own understanding of cultural, ethnic, gender, and learning differences to develop reciprocal relationships and create more relevant learning experiences.” According to the InTASC Learning Progressions for Teachers, a more advanced teacher “assists others in exploring how personal identity can affect perceptions and assists them in reflecting

upon their personal biases in order to act more fairly.”

Idaho standards include a commitment to culturally responsive pedagogy in classroom instruction, too. First, the teacher must be “committed to culturally responsive teaching.” Teachers are expected to “understand[] the relationship between motivation and engagement and know[] how to design learning experiences using strategies that build learner self-direction and ownership of learning (e.g., principles of universal design for learning and culturally responsive pedagogy).” According to the standards, “the teacher understands the importance of creating a safe, culturally responsive learning environment that promotes engagement and motivation” and “demonstrates the ability to create a culturally responsive classroom environment.”

School principals are also required to “understand how to implement and align coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that promote the mission, vision, and beliefs of the school, embody high expectations for student learning, align with academic standards, and are culturally responsive.”

The Standards emphasize Action Civics (often called service learning or project-based methods) and teachers’ ability to replace classroom instruction about facts with narrative stories or “real world issues.” In performance, teachers are expected to engage students “in applying content knowledge to real-world problems through the lens of interdisciplinary themes (e.g., financial literacy, environmental literacy).” In planning for instruction, teachers are expected to “select[] a variety of real-world computing problems and project-based methodologies that support active learning.” Additionally, school social workers are expected

to “understand[] how service learning and volunteerism promote the development of personal and social responsibility.”

School social workers and special education directors are required to recognize and redress systemic biases. For example, school social workers must “incorporate[] social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society.” Further, school social workers must “understand[] the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and how these factors impact student learning.”

Teachers, principals, superintendents, counselors and numerous other professional school personnel are required to advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and social justice. For example, teachers are required to “understand[] laws and responsibilities related to the learner (e.g., educational equity...),” school principals are required to “strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote all students’ academic success and well-being” and “understand[] how to address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership,” and counselors are expected to know “principles of school counseling, including prevention, intervention, wellness, education, multiculturalism, social justice, and advocacy.”

Conclusion: The development of comprehensive professional school personnel standards that incorporate requirements for culturally responsive teaching was a foundational step taken by Idaho’s education agencies to embed CSJ into school practices and teacher development. Far from being a side-lined requirement, culturally responsive teaching is integral to the certification of Idaho school’s leaders, administrators, and teachers.

UNIVERSITIES - COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

The State Department of Education requires all prospective teachers to complete a bachelor's degree program from an approved accredited institution with a focus on education. Idaho's public universities are responsible for preparing and training many of the school systems' prospective teachers each year. Teacher education programs at these universities' Colleges of Education are designed to promote CSJ in required courses, policies, training, and events. Students in these programs are steeped with programming in culturally responsive pedagogy, antiracist practices and therapeutic education models. Prospective teachers graduate these programs with the understanding that CSJ practices are the equivalent of good teaching. Colleges of Education at Idaho's flagship universities, Boise State University and the University of Idaho, demonstrate the problem.

Administration at the Colleges of Education typically push the ideology into the structure of teacher education programs by changing hiring practices; implementing DEI programs, classes, and trainings for students and faculty; and focusing on recruiting students based on their race or sex rather than their qualifications. For example, the University of Idaho's College of Education, Health and Human Sciences (EHHS) is openly dedicated to "equity, social justice, diversity, and inclusion." In the spring of 2020, the College established a working group "dedicated to anti-racism and anti-oppression ... social justice, and inclusion" (University of Idaho College of Education, Health and Human Sciences 2020). The working group established several goals for the 2020-2021 academic year including hiring more DEI personnel, developing DEI programs, activities and practices for students, and discriminating

among applicants to ensure more minority students are represented in its programs.

Boise State University's Teacher Education program "strives to develop reflective, inquiring professionals who advocate for equity and possess the capacity for change within inclusive communities of practice" (Boise State University 2021a). Similarly, the Department of Early and Special Education seeks to develop educators to service "diverse communities," the Department of Literacy, Language and Culture prepares candidates to implement "culturally and linguistically responsive instruction" in the classroom, and the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Foundational Studies strives to promote "diversity" and prepare students to contribute to a "global community" (Boise State University 2021b).

Students seeking an education or teaching degree are subjected to varying degrees of CSJ education in required classes. Agricultural education or career and technical education students are likely to receive less CSJ instruction, while students seeking degrees in curriculum and instruction, elementary education, special education or seeking an advanced degree must navigate more CSJ content. No student, however, can avoid CSJ in curriculum and instruction. For example, the University of Idaho encourages students to get a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning Undergraduate Certificate which includes many courses on "social justice inquiry," "education equity," "culturally responsive pedagogy," "best practices for working with and empowering gender non-conforming, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in schools" and "best practices for working with and empowering students of color in schools" (University of Idaho Curriculum and Instruction 2021).^{xiv} Other curriculum and instruction

courses include a focus on social-emotional learning and creating culturally inclusive classrooms.

Students are also subjected to varying degrees of CSJ through campus trainings and events. For example, Boise State College of Education is home to the Center for Multicultural and Education Opportunities, which sponsors various teacher training programs such as TRIO Teacher Prep and hosts DEI trainings, events, and seminars for future teachers to attend. In 2022 alone TRIO Teacher Prep plans to host numerous events on “social justice, equity and inclusion,” and partner with **Learning for Justice!** to host an Anti-Bias training to help teachers and school leaders “shape their schools into ... equitable communities” (Boise State University n.d.).^{xv} The Center is not yet planning to sponsor any events promoting academic excellence, educational integrity, or American values. Other past events for intern teachers have included a seminar focused on social-emotional learning (Semmelroth 2019).

Conclusion: University Colleges Of Education are expected to prepare teachers to meet the certification standards for culturally responsive teaching established by the state education agencies. Thus, to some extent, the nature of their teacher programs’ focus on CSJ is forced upon them by government regulation of the teaching profession. However, Boise State and University of Idaho’s education programs go to great lengths to emphasize social justice and DEI in programs, events, hiring and recruiting practices, and trainings. The deliberate advancement of this ideology does not prepare teachers to be content experts in a particular academic field or to impart knowledge to students. The result is a field of teachers trained to promote CSJ in the classroom.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE

The Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) was incentivized by grants from the federal government to create a sex education program in K-12 schools (“Idaho Teen Pregnancy” n.d). The DHW partners with local public health districts to implement this sex education program in schools and train teachers or other personnel to teach the curriculum. Idaho Code requires that if a school chooses to implement a sex education curriculum it must encourage abstinence. Therefore, the reasonable expectation of parents is that sex education in their child’s school will focus on abstinence. The DHW, however, interprets “abstinence” contrary to parents’ expectations.

The DHW implements the Idaho Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (APP) program. Beginning in 2017, the program intended “to serve 750 youth per year at 18 sites” but now impacts every school district in the state (Health and Human Services Department 2017).

The program uses Reducing the Risk, Wise Guys, and “¡Cuídate!” curriculum in K-12 schools. Reducing the Risk curriculum does not encourage children to remain abstinent until marriage, nor to remain abstinent at all. The curriculum teaches children about different contraception methods, including withdrawal, and is designed to incorporate language erasing an understanding of biological sex and replacing it with “inclusive” language regarding “gender identity, sexual orientation and behavior” (Advancing Health Equity 2020).^{xvi}

The curriculum instructs teachers to shirk school guidance on abstinence education. For example, if a condom demonstration violates school guidelines, Reducing the Risk recommends replacing the live demonstration

with a mini-lecture or video providing the same instruction (Education, Training, and Research 2020). The program even recommends that the teacher should lead the class in roleplays to discuss sexual topics (Education, Training, and Research 2020). For example, one lesson instructs teachers to lead the class through Situation B wherein:

“Tony and Dylan have been to a party and then go to Tony’s home to be alone. They start to kiss and undress each other. Dylan Reaches into a jacket pocket and realizes that the condom they planned to use is gone. Dylan says, “I think somebody stole the condom I had” (Reducing the Risk 2020).

The class is then instructed to answer the questions “What can Tony and Dylan do to avoid unprotected sex?” (Education, Training, and Research 2020). Another lesson explains to students, “You do not need a parent’s permission to get birth control at a clinic. No one needs to know that you are going to a clinic.” The program’s website directs children to Planned Parenthood clinics (“Idaho Teen Pregnancy” n.d.). Avoiding pregnancy or STD/HIV and encouraging children to use abortion clinics is not teaching abstinence.

Reducing the Risk’s message is clearly contrary to how the average parent would understand abstinence. As the group explains, “It is very important to emphasize the message of RTR, namely that people should avoid unprotected sex either by not having sex or by using condoms and other forms of contraception” (Education, Training, and Research 2020b). An introductory lesson in the program states, “This program uses a specific definition of abstinence: abstinence means choosing not to do any sexual activity that carries a risk for pregnancy or STD/HIV” (Education, Training, and Research 2020).

Conclusion: The DHW has been infiltrating sex education curriculum into schools and directing children to Planned Parenthood clinics since at least 2017. The DHW will continue to utilize federal grants advancing the sexualization of children in schools unless the legislature takes action to stop them.

MAYORS AND CITY COUNCILS

Mayors and city councils can affect the public education system to varying degrees. Some cities grant mayors direct control over schools; however, this is not the case in Idaho (Wong and Shen 2013). Regardless of the school governance structure in a city, mayors have substantial power to shape a broad set of policies and programs that directly impact students and families. Mayors can orient the culture of a city toward their desired result for students, for example by emphasizing academic achievement or career outcomes. They can directly or indirectly influence many policies that enable schools to function including student health and safety and transportation. They can bring together businesses and other agencies in a community to create change and partner with school districts to impact programs such as sex education toward their political goals. Some Idaho mayors, such as Lauren McLean, are more outspoken about their agenda in schools than others.

Beginning in 2020 Boise Mayor Lauren McLean used her electoral victory to promote “A More Equitable City for Everyone” (City of Boise 2021). The plan included proposals to “collaborate with the Boise School District to establish sex education at pre-k level to 12th” and to provide “free contraception as defined by the CDC, abortion and reproductive health care.”

During the same year, the Boise City Council bolstered McLean's efforts by approving spending \$60,000 on city-wide DEI training, the development of a strategic plan for diversity and an assessment on how the city can become more "diverse, inclusive and equitable" (Camel 2020). The Boise Police Department and the Department of Arts and History have already received this diversity training. The Department of Education will soon follow suit.

By 2021, McLean signed a resolution in support of critical race theory in public K-12 education (Miller 2021a). The resolution was co-sponsored by mayors from cities that were ravaged and shattered by violent riots during 2020, including Ted Wheeler of Portland, Greg Fischer of Louisville, and Lori E. Lightfoot of Chicago (United States Conference of Mayors 2021). The resolution explicitly states that the mayors "support the implementation of CRT in the public education curriculum." After public outcry against the resolution, McLean blamed the appearance of her sponsorship of the resolution on "staff error" (Day 2021). However, McLean's preexisting agenda to radicalize the city's education system reflects her true intentions.

Conclusion: Mayor McLean has exercised her influence over Boise schools to encourage critical race theory in classrooms and the acceleration of the sexualization of children. McLean has worked with the city council to set a new tone of DEI-CSJ advancement for the local government agencies, which has already impacted the daily lives of students and families by attempting to shift prevailing cultural values.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS AND SUPERINTENDENTS

School districts are governed by local school boards and a superintendent who derive their authority from the consent of the governed and are meant to be responsive to parents' concerns. However, in recent years school boards have become captivated by politically interested individuals and usurped the interests of parents. Yet, school boards are responsible for performing many important functions, such as reviewing a school district's annual budget, selecting a superintendent to oversee the daily operations of the district, and approving curricula for use in local schools. The superintendent functions as the district's chief executive and is responsible for implementing the board's policies and overseeing the district's daily operations.

School boards and superintendents have been implementing policies, programs and trainings advancing CSJ for years. It is rare for school board members or superintendents in Idaho to express dedication to family or American values. We use three school districts to illustrate this problem: Coeur d'Alene, Blaine County, and Nampa.

A school board's district-wide transformation usually begins with the hiring of an outside left-wing consulting group to conduct an equity audit. For example, Coeur d'Alene school district hired **Curriculum Management Solutions, Inc.** (CMSi), in 2019 to conduct a Curriculum Audit for educational equity (Coeur d'Alene School District 2019). CMSi promotes using critical race theory in K-12 schools (CMSi 2021a). The audit identified achievement gaps between white students and minorities and concluded the curriculum, school practices, and policies must be reimaged to achieve equity. Initially, the audit would have

seemed innocuous to most parents. Its goals are cloaked in bureaucratic language that would not sound harmful to most readers. But the audit's recommendations had a profound impact on the future of the school district. CMSi recommend that the Board "define equity specifically in terms that clearly contrast it with equality," completely "eradicate" any factors contributing to inequity, and require equity training for staff and teachers. It also recommended the Board "institutionalize the importance of equity in all curriculum through the district including all planning, monitoring, curriculum revision, curriculum delivery and program development and implementations. Require that departments and schools collaborate to address equity issues from a system perspective."

School boards often respond to recommendations in an equity audit by developing a new strategic plan to guide the school district toward its progressive future. For example, Coeur d'Alene adopted a district-wide Equity Framework (Coeur d'Alene School District 2020). The Equity Framework included the adoption of culturally responsive teaching models, implicit bias training for teachers and staff, restorative justice practices, and implementing "equitable curriculum" by embracing an identity-based view of knowledge that prioritizes story telling over facts.

Often paired with the advancement of equity in district wide strategic plans are "whole child" practices which signal a district will use schools as a mechanism for social engineering emotionally literate citizens and encouraging children to expose their emotional vulnerabilities to state employees. For example, Blaine County School District (BCSD) announced a five-year Strategic Plan in 2015 centered on whole child practices, equity and diversity (Blaine County School District 2015).

As the plan reveals, whole child practices are a trojan horse for therapeutic education models such as SEL. By 2020 the BCSD board adopted SEL Standards, provided curriculum and staff training on SEL, and expected all students to be instructed in these standards (Blaine County School District 2020). Another plan released in 2020 doubled down on advancing equity, established a schedule to provide for SEL instruction at least two times per week, and integrated SEL into each grade's weekly lessons (Blaine County School District 2020).

Coeur d'Alene has adopted a district-wide SEL framework requiring schools to advance Transformative SEL as the "foundation" of education (Coeur d'Alene School District 2020). For example, the Coeur d'Alene framework defines the core competency of social awareness as students "recognizing the many factors influencing equity in the social context including power dynamics, cultural demands, race, class and privilege." The framework requires all schools to implement SEL throughout classroom instruction at every grade level (including STEM fields such as mathematics) and teacher and staff training and school culture.

Similarly, Nampa School District's 2020-2021 strategic work plan includes mandatory SEL training for teachers, integrating DEI into SEL, and infusing SEL into curriculum (Nampa School District 2020a).

These strategic plans are then translated into policies, curriculum and trainings. Radical trainings are sometimes given to teachers under the guise of SEL or DEI. For example, Nampa School District Assistant Superintendent Greg Russell approved an SEL equity training for staff members and the school board with Swell Collective, an

anti-racist organization supporting Black Lives Matter (Swell Collective n.d.a). The Swell Collective training includes power and privilege and its connection to systemic oppression and wealth, becoming change agents, intersectionality and implicit bias (Swell Collective n.d.a and Nampa School District, public records request, June 2021). Another training for teachers on Professional Development Day on August 17 featured Meena Srinivasan, Founding Executive Director of Transformative Education Leadership. The training included implementing Mindfulness and SEL through an “equity lens,” and explaining that “Mindfulness and SEL are vehicles for advancing a world built on belonging.” According to Srinivasan, belonging requires understanding key terms including “equity, anti-racist, decolonization, cultural appropriation, intersectionality, race, racial justice, structural racism, white fragility, white privilege, white supremacy, etc” (Nampa School District, public records request, 2021).

BCSD Teachers reported that they were required to complete DEI training in 2021. The training, provided by Vector Solutions included implicit bias, microaggressions, Kimberle Crenshaw’s work on intersectionality and gender ideology (Parents Defending Education n.d.).

Sometimes “coaches” are assigned to mentor teachers as they learn to implement SEL in the classroom. Such coaches are given anti-racist resources to guide how they mentor teachers. For example, Nampa School District provides its coaches with the racial equity book “Coaching for Equity” which argues “almost every corner of this world we live in has been polluted by white supremacy” and that schools “need to focus on race” (Nampa School District, public records request, July 2021).

Next, school boards change various policies on topics such as discipline practices, gender, or grading. For example, Coeur d’Alene School District officials require staff to address students by their preferred pronouns and allow transgender students to use bathrooms and locker rooms opposite of their biological sex (Kootenai County GOP 2021).

Sometimes task forces focused on equity are empowered to make policy recommendations to the board. For example, Wood River High School’s Equity Task Force recommended the board adopt a Grading for Learning policy. Grading for Learning, also known as Grading for Equity, is an anti-racist grading measure intended to disrupt and dismantle meritocracy (Arnesto 2020). Grading for Learning practices could include giving students infinite opportunities to take quizzes, replacing letter or number grades with narrative assessments, or eliminating penalties for cheating on an exam. In August 2020, the board officially approved Grading for Learning, which is expected to be implemented for all secondary schools in the district (Blaine County School District, public records request, 2021). Under this grading policy, behavioral factors no longer impact student academic grades. Examples of behavioral factors include work completion, late work, missing work, class participation, cheating, attendance, and extra credit.

Blaine County School District enforces a Gender Inclusion Policy that requires school personnel to distinguish between biological sex and gender identity, assist students undergoing gender transition at school, and address students by their preferred pronoun corresponding to their gender identity. It also allows transgender and gender non-conforming students to participate in the opposite sex’ sports, clubs, sex education or overnight trips or other school activities,

and grant transgender students access to restrooms, locker rooms, and changing areas aligning with their gender identity (Blaine County School District 2016).

But the districtwide transformation is not complete until DEI-CSJ is embedded into classroom curriculum. Districts often remold curriculum by adopting SEL programs that can be easily integrated into every grade level and every subject to ensure children are constantly inundated with the ideology. For example, Nampa School District will implement SEL in every school and grade level by the end of 2022-23 (Nampa School District K-12 Health Curriculum 2021). The board has approved various transformative SEL programs including Second Step, which teaches about white privilege and sexualizes kids; Zones of Regulation, which trains students to be anti-racist activists; and Character Strong, which focuses on race and equity (Zones of Regulation 2021; Character Strong 2021).

Idaho parents began pushing back against the politicization of their schools in the summer of 2021. In response, school boards and superintendents typically deny all charges. For example, the Coeur d'Alene superintendent, Dr. Shon Hocker, responded to parents by asserting CRT is not taught in any form in schools (Hocker n.d.). These blatant denials have been the only response of school districts. No effort has been made to make any changes to their strategic plans, curriculum, trainings or programs that concern parents. Public officials in Idaho regularly voice their confidence in local school boards to handle such political problems. However, local control ceases to be a solution when school boards no longer reflect the input of parents.

Conclusion: Public schools are institutions created by “We the People” and should be responsive to parents and the broader voting public at the state and local level. Yet school boards and superintendents are increasingly representing political interests above the interests and needs of students and families. Local control is useless to citizens if parental agency, transparency and choice are not regained in our K-12 public schools.

THE LEGISLATURE

Many of Idaho's government agencies are beholden to CSJ. But the state's supermajority Republican legislature is waking up. Legislators have repeatedly held institutions of higher education accountable for the advancement of CSJ instead of following their core mission (the pursuit of truth), rejected the federal grant requested for a statewide pre-K system by the IDAEYC, and passed the first law in the nation banning universities and schools from compelling students to affirm or adopt certain divisive tenets of critical race theory.

Despite these successes, the Legislature has failed at times to identify the infiltration of CSJ and to exercise proper oversight of state agencies advancing the ideology. The Senate Education Committee, for example, voted unanimously to adopt the Common Core State Standards in 2011. Republicans in the senate repeatedly vote against school choice policies and killed a bill requiring parents to opt-in their child for sex education in public schools. The law addressing CRT and compelled speech is silent on divisive anti-racism, implicit bias and diversity training required of teachers and administrators. Although the law may protect students from

subversive mandatory trainings, the rest of the circumstances described in this report persist and will continue to fester in schools under the law. The effort to “ban” CRT may have roused public support and action among parents to reform the system, but it does very little to fundamentally reform the system.

Legislators are often duped by shallow statements put forth by establishment

appointees to the state education agencies that “every student is entitled to a position-neutral education” (Oppie 2021). It is not possible to establish a “neutral” school system. Those with political power will always teach their beliefs in exclusion of others. Legislators must decide who should be given primary control over the schools and the next generation, get out of the business of banning, and start demanding.

**“JUSTICE IS THE FIRST VIRTUE OF
SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AS TRUTH IS
OF SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT...”**

– John Rawls



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As this report illustrates, evaluating a state's K-12 education system presents a colossal knowledge problem. The necessary information is dispersed among many layers of government bureaucracy, school administrations, and thousands of classrooms and teachers. There is no centralized location enabling a central authority to understand all of the factors impacting the children in a state's public school system.

All of the relevant knowledge of what is occurring in public schools ultimately exists at the individual, parental level. Parents have the opportunity every day to interact with their children, to ask questions, to observe homework and test scores and more. Government cannot know children as intimately as parents; it can only create a rough approximation through its parasitical methods. However, even parents' knowledge of the type of education their children receive in public schools is complicated by a lack of transparency and accountability in the system preventing access to curriculum and supplemental materials often provided by outside education organizations to schools.

The experience of the last decade has suggested that the anti-competitive nature of the public school system allows a small, politically organized group of incumbents to maintain a monopoly on the ideas taught in schools. Economist Mancur Olson first laid out this problem when he discussed the costs of political engagement for large groups of people to free ride on the engagement of other small

interest groups (Olson 1965). The groups who benefit from regulation of public schools are incumbent and politically powerful groups like teachers unions and school boards. These groups are easily able to organize and defeat reforms.

Further, the constant battle in American school systems over what content should be taught illustrates a deeper reality. Idaho is made of diverse people who are passionate about their ideas and beliefs. It is always going to be difficult to force these vibrant and thoughtful people into a standardized one-size-fits-all and highly politicized public school system.

So as long as public schools exist those with political power will continue to teach their ideas to the exclusion of others. Controversy simply cannot be avoided. Rather than forcing the interesting and diverse people of Idaho into an ideologically driven system, Idaho has several options to increase educational freedom, transparency and choice which could lead to improved curricula in public schools and avoidance of political fights. Policymakers can demand reforms that replace the corrupt public institutions with new, uncorrupt ones. Here are some of the options the legislature has:

- ▶ Provide every K-12 student and their family with the ability to choose how and where a child learns. Parental choice in education is the best approach to restore genuine accountability in a state's school system. Instead of forcing families to send their child

into a school system inculcating their child with ideas antithetical to family values and sincerely held religious beliefs, Idaho could embrace the diversity of ideas among families and avoid political fights by allowing money to follow the child. School choice would allow people to select education options compatible with their religious beliefs and backgrounds, rather than requiring them to fight for control over the public education system. Then children would be able to get coherent instruction suited to their needs and compatible with their family's norms.

- ▶ Reject federal education grants to ensure more strings are not attached to our public system that lead to further corruption. Additionally, the legislature could ban the Department of Health and Welfare from implementing federal grants, such as PREP, that finance sex education curricula.
- ▶ Require parents to opt in their children for sex education instruction in public schools.
- ▶ Strengthen charter schools by allowing them to establish their own teacher certification programs and opt out of state certification requirements.

- ▶ Increase transparency by requiring public schools to make all materials and activities used to train staff and teachers and to instruct children easily accessible to parents.
- ▶ Prevent school districts from contracting with providers for teacher professional development who promote racially essentialist doctrines and practices that violate the Civil Rights Act.
- ▶ Move public school board elections to be held on-cycle – in the same years and at the same time as the election for the highest office in the state.
- ▶ Complete elimination and replacement of Idaho Content Standards (Common Core).

Public education is always political, and numerous Idaho public officials have proven that they cannot be trusted with it. Policymakers who care could demand education institutions return to the hard work of imparting academic knowledge and truth to students and – more importantly – restore the rights of parents to direct their children's educations.

CONCLUSION

Citizens cannot surf the internet without seeing stories about social justice radicalism in K-12 school districts around the country. The school board in Loudoun County, Virginia, for instance, not only adopted radical curriculum, but also allegedly failed to report rapes for fear of offending those interested in promoting the transgender ideology. Fort Worth School Board's Racial Equity committee attacks parents who object to mask mandates (O'Neil 2021). School libraries become stocked with books like "Gender Queer" and "Lawn Boy" instead of traditional books. National assessments reveal a significant drop in reading and math scores (Berry 2021). There is a sense across the country that something is amiss in our school system. Something is deeply amiss.

But there is some solace in the sense that Idaho is immune from these disturbances. Our school districts seem responsive and responsible. Our laws emphasize conservative values. We have Republican supermajorities. What could go wrong?

Answer: Lots. Idaho is not immune from nationwide trends. Several incidents have happened in Idaho, and they happen here because Idaho is part of the American system of education. There may be an Idaho difference, but the difference is not what people think. Idaho is uniquely complacent about the trends that people in other states see. CSJ ideologies are meeting more resistance in other states than they are

in Idaho. And such complacency is not the foundation for a promising future. Radicals are growing up in our midst, and they reject the American way of life.

These ideologies are false and destructive, but they are powerful. These ideologies come under an alphabet soup list of names — SEL, culturally-responsive teaching, restorative justice, and so on. All of them pose a threat to the state. CSJ undermines key American notions like colorblindness, meritocracy, and republican self-government. CSJ sows social turmoil and antipathy. CSJ undermines our attachment to our nation. CSJ undermines America's competitive advantage in education. CSJ undermines traditional family life. CSJ is a recipe for further extensions of state power.

Perhaps the system itself is so compromised that it is necessary to give unwilling parents the option to just walk away from the schools. Perhaps reforms can be undertaken to redirect the system toward emphasizing excellence, a mildly patriotic, realistic education, and a stable foundation for citizenship. Something is happening here, and what it is is exactly clear. We encourage lawmakers and citizens to recognize these perilous movements and to act at the appropriate level to limit their reach and rollback their gains.

APPENDIX A: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

The rise of Critical Pedagogy began with the post-Marxist educator Paulo Freire, best known for his book “The Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (Freire 2017). This book argues that education should include raising a “critical consciousness” to the oppression faced by students.

Another foundational scholar is Henry Giroux who is credited with coining the term “critical pedagogy” and the father of this school of thought. Giroux built on the post-Marxist thought of Friere to justify his belief that education should be used for radical, revolutionary and liberatory change. For example, Giroux wrote:

A critical pedagogy, then, would focus on the study of curriculum not merely as a matter of self-cultivation or the mimicry of specific forms of language and knowledge. On the contrary, it would stress forms of learning and knowledge aimed at providing a critical understanding of how social reality works, it would focus on how certain dimensions of such a reality are sustained, it would focus on the nature of its formative processes, and it would also focus on how those aspects of it that are related to the logic of domination can be changed (Gottesman 2016).

Joe Kincheloe developed this work further by creating programs on critical pedagogy that have intentionally led to the “decolonize” curricula movements rampant in education

systems infused with CSJ. Kincheloe argues that systems of power influence the production, legitimization and understanding of knowledge (Lindsay 2020a). This is known as critical constructivist epistemology – the idea that truth is socially constructed and learned through socialization.

Critical pedagogy seeks to remedy academic achievement gaps based on racial demographics. For example, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (the “nation’s report card”) showed that Hispanic students in Idaho had an average score that was 22 points lower than that of white students in 2019 (improved from the 27 point gap in 2002) (National Assessment of Education Progress 2020). Female students in Idaho had an average score that was higher than that for male students by 10 points. Critical pedagogy advocates, however, are particularly interested in gaps affecting racial groups and see these gaps as proof of persisting racism and white supremacy.

Gloria Ladson-Billings, a professor at University of Wisconsin known for introducing critical race theory to education, rejected the term achievement gap and called disparities in test scores an “education debt” that comprised accrued injustices done to black and Hispanic students and that is enshrined in school funding disparities (Ladson-Billings 2006). In contrast, research has shown that “poor and minority students on average receive one to two percent more resources

than non-poor and white students in the same district” (Shores 2017). Extensive research has further shown that the greatest disparity in educational outcomes is actually social class. Stanford Professor Sean Reardon has shown that the class gap in academic achievement is twice the size of the race gap (Reardon 2018). This is the reverse of what data showed 50 years ago. An alternative to Critical Pedagogy’s focus on race or gender is to identify and foster the cultural traits that lead to academic success across all groups.

These inconvenient facts have been sidestepped most recently by activists like Bettina Love who have argued that “the achievement gap is not about White students outperforming dark students; it is about a history of injustice and oppression [built on] racism and White rage” (Love 2020).

Anti-racism commentator Ibram X. Kendi has argued that standardized testing showing racial gaps is itself racist. Instead, Kendi prefers different standards of academic achievement for different students. For example, Kendi writes:

What if different environments actually cause different kinds of achievement rather than different levels of achievement? What if the intellect of a poor, low testing Black child in a poor Black school is different—and not inferior—to the intellect of a rich, high-testing White child in a rich White school? ... What if we measured literacy by how knowledgeable individuals are about their own environment: how much individuals knew all those complex equations and verbal and nonverbal vocabularies of their everyday life? What if we measured intellect by an individual’s desire to know? What if we measured intellect by how open an individual’s mind is to self-critique and new ideas (Kendi 2016)?

It is difficult to discern how this stigmatization of obtaining knowledge will help any child become successful in life or work. Allowing students, solely based on their race or class, to graduate from high school without ever being taught to read, write or do mathematics will only contribute to greater unequal economic and social outcomes later on.

APPENDIX B: COMMON CORE AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

The Core required several shifts in literacy instruction by changing standards for what students read and how students read.

Key among these shifts are an emphasis on informational and nonfiction texts (50 percent of what's read in K-5 and 70 percent in 6-12), the use of shorter passages that call for slow and close reading, and a shared responsibility for teaching literacy across subject areas.

Emily Chiariello, culturally responsive standards specialist and Learning for Justice! fellow, explains the connection between these shifts in literacy instruction and culturally responsive teaching:

“Imagine the impact on anti-bias education if, on a daily basis, in multiple classes, students have the opportunity to question, unwrap, expose and interrogate the words they read and hear? With students engaging in close critical reading of shorter complex informational texts, the dialogue between authors and students becomes better matched” (Chiariello 2012).

This approach reflects the goal of culturally responsive teaching to train students to deconstruct supposedly westernized knowledge to make room for other supposedly marginalized forms of knowledge. As Geneva Gay, professor of multicultural education at the University of Washington-Seattle, explained “Emotions, beliefs, values, ethnos, opinions, and feelings are scrutinized along with factual information to make curriculum and instruction more reflective of and responsive to ethnic groups” (Gay 2018).

Appendix B of Core recommends the use of texts departing from the classic literary canon. This standard enables teachers to replace classic literature with informational and nonfiction texts focusing on supposedly marginalized voices. This standard requires teachers to select texts for students “that are ‘enabling,’ identity-centered and relevant” (Chiariello 2012).

Common Core standards do not include a required reading list and defer the majority of decisions about what and how to teach to teachers. Education writer Amanda Machado argues, “This gives teachers the power to stray away from conventionally Eurocentric (not to mention: male-centric, Christian-centric, and heterosexual-centric) reading lists, and instead branch off into texts from authors of a wide range of backgrounds” (Machado 2014).

English standards traditionally emphasize defending arguments with fact and knowledge. The Common Core, however, stresses that students support arguments with direct textual evidence. Machado argues this standard creates equity in the classroom: “Students with the financial or cultural privileges of having relevant outside experience can no longer use that knowledge to gain an advantage or an upper hand on testing. Instead, students will all approach a text on an equal playing field, having only the text to use to support their points” (Machado 2014). Machado explains that the Core’s ELA standards emphasis on nonfiction and informational texts “also creates the potential for including more social justice content.”

It's easy to see how a teacher would implement social justice into their teaching under the framework of Common Core. Consider the following Common Core Standard: "Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences" (SDE ELA/Literacy Content Standards 2017).

Charles Alexander, a Maryland educator, explains using this standard to instruct students to "broaden their understanding of narrative techniques as they addressed social justice issues" (Alexander 2020). For example, Alexander instructed students to "engage in counter-storytelling, a concept grounded in critical race theory, to use the power of narrative to counter and disrupt stereotypes and bias against marginalized groups."

Jinnie Spiegler, director of curriculum in the National Education Division of the Anti-Defamation League, explains how Core creates opportunities for turning current events instruction into social justice teaching. "Current events discussions offer ample opportunity for skill building (e.g. vocabulary development, reading and writing informational and analytical text, oral expression, critical analysis – all part of the ELA Common Core Learning Standards). Students can build and practice their social and emotional skills, and these topics often present an opportunity to connect the present with the past" (Spiegler 2016).

STATE CERTIFICATION STANDARDS AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Recognizing and redressing systemic bias

Standards for special education directors explicitly discuss institutional biases. For

example, a special education director is required to "monitor[] and address[] institutional biases of student marginalization and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, and disability or special status."

Standards for school social workers address an understanding of and commitment to redressing institutional bias and prejudice. These standards require a school social worker to "Incorporate[] social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice." Further, school social workers must "understand[] the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and how these factors impact student learning."

Shaping curriculum and instruction

Idaho standards include a commitment to culturally responsive pedagogy in classroom instruction, too.

First, the teacher must be "committed to culturally responsive teaching." Teachers are expected to "understand[] the relationship between motivation and engagement and know[] how to design learning experiences using strategies that build learner self direction and ownership of learning (e.g., principles of universal design for learning and culturally responsive pedagogy)." According to the standards "the teacher understands the importance of creating a safe, culturally responsive learning environment that promotes engagement and motivation" and "demonstrates the ability to create a culturally responsive classroom environment."

Other standards for teachers include:

- ▶ "The teacher engages in respectful inquiry

of diverse historical contexts and ways of knowing, and leverages that knowledge to cultivate culturally responsive relationships with learners, families, other professionals, and the community.”

- ▶ “The teacher demonstrates the ability to create a culturally responsive classroom environment.”
- ▶ “The teacher knows how to integrate culturally relevant content to build on learners’ background knowledge.”
- ▶ “The teacher understands the relationship between motivation and engagement and knows how to design learning experiences using strategies that build learner self-direction and ownership of learning (e.g., principles of universal design for learning and culturally responsive pedagogy).”
- ▶ “The teacher understands the importance of creating a safe, culturally responsive learning environment that promotes engagement and motivation.”
- ▶ “The teacher knows how to apply an effective range of developmentally, culturally, and linguistically responsive instructional strategies to achieve learning goals.”
- ▶ “The early childhood educator understands how to effectively communicate and collaborate with children, parents, colleagues, and the community in a professional and culturally sensitive manner.”
- ▶ “The teacher engages in respectful inquiry of diverse historical contexts and ways of knowing, and leverages that knowledge to cultivate culturally responsive relationships with learners, families, other professionals, and the community.”
- ▶ “The teacher demonstrates the ability to create a culturally responsive classroom environment.”

School principals are also required to “understand how to implement and align coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that promote the mission, vision, and beliefs of the school, embody high expectations for student learning, align with academic standards, and are culturally responsive.”

Advancing diversity, equity and inclusion to promote social justice

Teachers are required to “understand[] laws and responsibilities related to the learner (e.g., educational equity. . .).”

School principals are required to “strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote all students’ academic success and well-being” and “understand[] how to address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership.”

Elementary education teachers must “understand[] culturally responsive pedagogy and the necessity of utilizing it to create the most inclusive learning environment.”

Superintendents are expected to “strive for equity” and “safeguard[] and promote[] the values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, and diversity.”

Special education directors are required to promote “equity, inclusiveness” and “articulate[], advocate[], and cultivate[] beliefs that define the district’s culture and stress the imperative of. . . equity, inclusiveness, and equal access.” Additionally, they must “understand[] leadership roles when addressing equity and cultural responsiveness to assure district policies and procedures are positive, fair, and unbiased.”

English Language Arts teachers are expected to “design[] and/or implement[] English language arts and literacy instruction that promotes social justice and critical engagement with complex issues related to maintaining a diverse, inclusive, equitable society.”

School psychologists are required to “appl[y] professional work characteristics for effective practice, including respect for human diversity and social justice, communication skills, interpersonal skills, responsibility, adaptability, initiative, and dependability.”

School social workers must “recognize[] the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice,” “advocate[] for student, family and human rights and social and economic justice” and “engage[] in practices that advance social and economic justice.”

School counselors are expected to know “[p]rinciples of school counseling, including prevention, intervention, wellness, education, multiculturalism, social justice, and advocacy.”

Literacy teachers must “understand[] foundational theories of literacy and language acquisition as they relate to diverse learners, equity, and culturally responsive instruction.”

Intersectionality

Idaho’s English Language Arts teacher standards specifically call attention to intersectional identity markers of race, ethnicity, and gender. According to the standards, ELA teachers are expected to “demonstrate knowledge of theories and research needed to plan and implement

instruction responsive to students’ local, national and international histories, individual identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender expression, age, appearance, ability, spiritual belief, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and community environment), and languages/dialects as they affect students’ opportunities to learn in ELA.”

Imposing culturally responsive pedagogy on families and the community

Idaho’s standards emphasize the requirement that professional school personnel should collaborate with families and the community to advance culturally responsive pedagogy.

For example, elementary education teachers are expected to “actively engage[] the school environment, families, and community partners to enact culturally responsive pedagogy.”

Additionally, school counselors must “collaborat[e] with parents, teachers, support personnel, administrators, and community partners to create learning environments that promote and support educational equity, success, and well-being for every student.”

Teachers of gifted and talented students are expected to “collaborate[] with families, other educators and related service providers, individuals with gifts and talents, and personnel from community agencies in culturally responsive ways to address the needs of individuals with gifts and talents across a range of learning experiences.”

APPENDIX C: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Proponents of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) call for focusing less on academic content and knowledge in schools and more on cultivating students' attributes, mindsets, values, and behaviors. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)—the main presiding authority on SEL in pre-K and K-12 education—SEL is “the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning 2021). There are two main forms of SEL: Standard and Transformative.

Standard SEL

Standard SEL seeks to foster five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. How could anyone disagree with this? After all, most parents want their children to be responsible, empathetic, and emotionally mature. Parents and various community institutions like churches or sports leagues usually strive to instill these traits in their children. SEL attempts to replace these institutions with a government-endorsed morality curriculum.

SEL's ultimate objective is to fill the void of secularism in public schools. At its core,

SEL shifts away from Judeo-Christian understanding about morality and objective truth and towards the self and group norms. “It's one thing to direct your own moral, ethical, and emotional development or that of your children,” explained education scholar Jane Robbins, “But having a government vendor or unqualified school official implement an SEL curriculum based on coffee-table psychology is quite another” (Effrem, Robbins and Ryan 2019).

SEL can be harmful to students' health. Instead of requiring mental health professionals to conduct children's psychological evaluations, CASEL recommends offering training to teachers or administrators, who will teach the material and evaluate whether students' personalities and character traits are developing as desired.

SEL requires that already-burdened teachers conduct evaluations of children and measure adoption of the five core competencies. This is especially concerning given the ambiguities of assessing social-emotional traits among still-developing children and adolescents. Clinical psychologist Dr. Megan O'Bryan explained, “The idea that our government would sink millions of dollars into training and supporting unlicensed, quasi-trained teachers/interventionists in the hopes that they can improve the social and emotional development of masses of children frankly makes me sad” (Effrem, Robbins, and Ryan 2019).

What happens if evaluations of students are incorrect or misleading? Clinical psychologist Dr. Gary Thompson told the Pioneer Institute, “Allowing inadequately trained, even if well intentioned, people to evaluate students’ attributes, dispositions, social skills, attitudes, and intra-personal resources can be dangerous for the children who may be improperly labeled” (Effrem, Robbins and Ryan 2019).

These amateur psychological evaluations are then stored in a database. Data is often collected without obtaining parental consent. For example, Coeur d’Alene schools’ SEL framework outlines how the district will conduct assessments, but the document never mentions consent; it states, “This aggregated data can also be used to inform community partners and stakeholders about progress in SEL initiatives.”

Recognizing the threat of SEL evaluations and data collection requires understanding the nature of statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS). As Pioneer Institute scholars explain, “It’s only slightly hyperbolic to say that whatever parents know about their child, the SLDS knows it, too.”

Hundreds of data points live in a state’s SLDS, including race, ethnicity, income level, discipline records, grades, test scores, disabilities, mental health, medical history, counseling records, and more. SEL assessments and evaluations are also included in an SLDS.

All of this highly sensitive and extremely personal data about children’s personalities and behaviors is easily shareable outside of schools with postsecondary institutions, other states, non-education agencies, the workforce and in some cases foreign countries.

Transformative SEL

Transformative SEL expands on the standard version by incorporating critical race theory and gender ideology in classroom instruction, its definitions of core competencies and in lesson plans. According to CASEL, transformative SEL is “aimed at redistributing power to promote social justice” (Jagers et al. 2021). This form of SEL integrates “an explicit equity and social justice lens into the conceptualization and implementation of SEL” (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, and Borowski 2018).

Consider the focus on equity. Coeur d’Alene’s SEL framework states, “Social and emotional learning and educational equity ... exist in a symbiotic relationship” and explains the SEL Core Competencies “through an equity lens” (Coeur d’Alene School District 2020a).

Coeur d’Alene officials define “equitable outcomes in education” and the core competency of “self-awareness” based on the CASEL resource “Equity & Social Emotional Learning: A Cultural Analysis,” which argues for “making explicit issues such as power, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, [and] social justice ... in the field of SEL” (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, and Borowski 2018).

Similarly, the Coeur d’Alene framework defines the core competency of social awareness as “recognizing the many factors influencing equity in the social context including power dynamics, cultural demands, race, class and privilege.”

So how will all this focus on students’ immutable characteristics like race and an emphasis on power and privilege play out? In a June 2020 webinar titled “SEL as a lever for Equity and Social Justice,” CASEL’s president and CEO advocated that SEL should be used to favor certain students over others primarily because of their race. The CEO

concluded, “We see SEL as a tool for anti-racism” (Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning 2020).

Anti-racism has been used as a bludgeon to destroy anyone or anything that disagrees with progressive dogma. The term was coined by Ibram X. Kendi as the idea that racism is a white problem (Kendi 2021). As American Enterprise Institute scholar Frederick Hess explained, “Much of what passes for anti-racist education is a poisonous exercise in caricature and rank bigotry. ... What anti-racists mean by ‘education’ is something more typically understood as indoctrination” (Hess 2020).

A hallmark of anti-racism indoctrination is culturally responsive education models, an idea the Coeur d’Alene framework emphasizes in the core competency of “relationship building.” One CASEL resource cited by the framework for integrating culturally responsive pedagogy into schools to train students how to advocate for “social justice through critiques of discourses of power.”

Indoctrination is the central goal of SEL. Students must be taught to adopt the right attitudes and behaviors to become “change agents” or activists primarily for CSJ. This will come about by teaching children to “understand systemic or structural explanations for different outcomes” and “assess personal beliefs and biases,” according to the Coeur d’Alene framework.

Common Core and SEL

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) demonstrated that many core standards would not be used for academic achievement but for psychological training of children.

For example, CASEL states, “National model standards often contain elements of social and emotional learning. For example, 42 states and two territories are in the process of adopting the Common Core Standards in Math and English Language Arts, which contain standards on communication (especially speaking and listening), cooperation skills, and problem solving” (Effrem n.d.).

Idaho’s English Language Arts standards contain the type of SEL elements referenced by CASEL. Consider Idaho’s ELA Standards for first and second grade students:

“Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure” (State Department of Education 2017a).

This standard expects first and second graders to understand their own thoughts and feelings as well as those of others around them. First and second graders are still learning to read, yet this standard expects students to demonstrate the sophisticated psychological concept of “closure” (Effrem, Robbins and Ryan 2019).

One teacher explained that this standard corresponds to the SEL core competency of “Self-Awareness,” which requires students to “demonstrate awareness of their emotions,” “recognize and label emotions/feelings [and] describe their emotions and feelings and the situations that cause them (triggers)” (Anchorage School District 2012).

A federal report found that SEL and the Core are closely and intentionally intertwined: “21st-century competencies (which encompass a range of noncognitive factors,

including grit), and persistence is now part of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics” (U.S. Department of Education 2013).

The Common Core math anchor standard referenced in this quote required of K-12 students is part of Idaho Math Standards, which state 53 times, “Make sense of problems & persevere in solving them” (State Department of Education 2017b).

This standard has been identified as a psychosocial skill for “Responsible Decision Making [that] includes problem identification and problem solving; evaluation and reflection; personal, social, and ethical responsibility” (Inside Education, Outside the Box! 2013).

Core is rife with developmentally inappropriate standards for math that actually create emotional stress instead of improving the social-emotional health of children. For example, an Idaho math standard that applies to all grades requires students to “reason abstractly & quantitatively.” It’s referenced 52 times in Idaho Content Standards.

Psychologist Jean Piaget said the ability to reason abstractly does not develop in children until age 11 or 12 (Sharp 2009). As many school psychologists have argued, Core standards that force children to do math they are not developmentally ready for could cause more stress-induced symptoms (Spector 2015).

Some education researchers view the Core standards as “data tags” that help explain the collection of evaluation data on students’ mastery of SEL competencies in school and statewide databases. Forbes columnist and former teacher Peter Greene wrote:

“We’ve been saying that [Common Core State Standards] are limited because the standards were written around what can be tested. That’s not exactly correct. The standards have been written around what can be tracked. The standards aren’t just about defining what should be taught. They’re about cataloging what students have done” (Greene 2014).

APPENDIX D: EQUITY

Culturally responsive education models demand adjusting the circumstances of students to create equity or equality of outcome (Putnam-Walkerly and Russell 2016). This must be achieved by whatever means necessary, despite loss of genuine academic advancement or learning attainment for individuals.

Advocates of critical pedagogy argue that equity can be achieved in the classroom by treating students differently and therefore catering to what they presume are their distinct needs based on their race, culture or socioeconomic background. Common practices to promote equity in the classroom include:

- ▶ The act of “calling in,” when a teacher singles out a student in a group setting for making a comment dissenting from the status quo of the classroom and therefore deemed “insensitive” or “non-inclusive.” The process of “calling in” requires teachers to constantly be critical of their environment to identify perceived moments of oppression or implicit bias. This practice is intended to make students feel discomfort and to rest in that discomfort so they can confront their privilege (DiAngelo 2018). This pernicious strategy is an attempt to stifle student resistance to critical pedagogy methods in the classroom.
- ▶ Instructing students to point out and share their group identity and cultural background with the class, and directing students to analyze the lesson through a critical intersectional lens.
- ▶ Equity in the classroom posits that teachers should account for students’ “background, identities and experiences” based on students’ “various sexualities, races, genders, and ethnicities” and treat students differently based on those immutable characteristics (DiFranza 2019).

Equity can also be applied through school policies. Examples include New York City Mayor De Blasio’s recommendation that schools completely eliminate gifted and talented programs (Turley 2019) or several high schools in the largest school district in Maryland that chose to eliminate standard courses and put all students in honors classes (Wexler 2019). Blaine County School District’s Equity committee and Wood River High School’s Equity Task Force which is empowered to make recommendations to the school board have discussed the complete elimination of talented and gifted programs and could lead the district to adopt such a change in the future. Eric Toshalis, a member of the task force, wrote in defense of NYC’s elimination of gifted and talented education (GATE) that “There just aren’t defensible forms of GATE identification that exist above and apart from racist, classist, xenophobic, anti-disabled ideologies. They’re inextricable” (Blaine County School District, public records request, October 2021). Toshalis explains that expanding the definition of gifted and talented is not enough. Instead, gifted and talented programs must ultimately be completely eliminated to create equity.

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE COURSE EXAMPLES

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO EDUCATION DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES COURSE EXAMPLES:

ED 592 Decolonizing, Indigenous, and Action-Based Research Methods

Decolonizing, Indigenous, and Action-based Research Methods are forms of social justice inquiry used to engage deeply in questions of educational equity. Through study of research, methodology, and theory, this course interrogates and contributes to current thinking on social justice issues and social justice education practices. Goals of this course include: understanding the theoretical foundations of critical and action-based theories in research, the role of reflexivity, and approaches to research as social change; examining the impact of colonization on social science and educational research; exploring the impacts of Indigenous, minoritized, and community-based epistemologies on research methodologies; developing areas of inquiry, approaches to data collection, analysis and interpretation of data, and an action plan for change.

EDCI 302 Teaching Culturally Diverse Learners

An examination of cultural and linguistic diversity in classrooms. Explores strategies for creating the culturally inclusive classroom that values diversity and supports student success. Examines the use of instructional planning as a tool for motivation and

classroom management. Includes required field experiences.

EDCI 418 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

This course provides a general introduction to the principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. In particular, this module will help students attain a high level of cultural competence, social justice, and diversity such that they can apply this knowledge to lesson planning, pedagogy, and engagement with diverse learners. It will also equip future instructors to work with parents, families, and communities from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

EDCI 408 Integrated Elementary Methods Practicum I

Implementation of elementary content methods, research, curricula, and technology in K-8 classrooms with specific focus on culturally responsive management of a classroom and social-emotional learning, including recognition of early warning signs in students. Course will include 30 hours in K-8 classrooms.

EDCI 420 Gender and Sexual Diversity in Schools

This course provides future instructors with the skills needed to critically and sensitively work with gender non-conforming, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in schools. It will provide those enrolled with a basic understanding of the ways that such students have been and continue to be marginalized within traditional education, the rights of students and communities re: schools, and best practices

for working with and empowering gender non-conforming, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in schools.

EDCI 421 Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Schools

This course provides future instructors with the skills needed to critically and sensitively work with students of color in schools. It will provide those enrolled with a basic understanding of the ways that students of color have been and continue to be marginalized within traditional education, the rights of students and communities re: schools, and best practices for working with and empowering students of color in schools.

SOC 201 Introduction to Inequity and Justice

An interdisciplinary and historical study of social inequities and inclusion in a cross-cultural global context. The course examines multiple forms of diversity and stratification including, but not limited to, culture, class, race/ethnic, gender/sexuality, religious diversity, and political ideology in an effort to raise students' ability to interact with and understand others in our increasingly multicultural world. Courses may vary in their emphasis on United States' or international experiences. May include service learning.

SOC 424 Sociology of Gender

Historical and comparative analysis of the various roles, statuses, and life opportunities of men and women; emphasis on how gender roles develop in society and their effect on social structure, social institutions, and interpersonal interaction.

SOC 423 Economic (In)Justice in the United States

This course investigates how United States' institutions create and maintain conditions of economic inequality and injustice. Various angles of inquiry include the unequal

distribution of wealth amongst different social groups, the rising power of financial institutions, the prevalence of housing insecurity, the causes and consequences of consumer indebtedness and bankruptcy, and unequal community development.

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES COURSE EXAMPLES:

ED-LLC201 Cultural Diversity in the School

An introduction to the forms of diversity most relevant to local schools. In addition to issues of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation, the course introduces students to the psychological, legal, and cultural foundations of bilingual education and English as a Second Language with a special emphasis on Mexican-American culture. Field experience component is required.

ED-LLC150 COE Living and Learning Community

First Year and Second Year Education Residential College participants will explore aspects of success in education through direct connection a series of academic, community service, and team building activities. May be repeated for credit.

ED-LLC204 Film and Contemporary Issues in Education

Opportunity to view, discuss, critique and analyze how important facets of contemporary issues impact education as represented (or misrepresented) in film. Topics are likely to include diverse and marginalized individuals, educational institutions creating a more socially just society, representation of students, teachers, community or teacher/student relationships, and identity or positioning in film.

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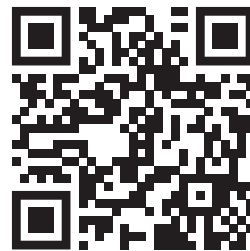


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Scott Yenor is a Washington Fellow at the Claremont Institute's Center for the American Way of Life, and a member of the National Association of Scholars. He writes extensively on marriage and family life in the contemporary world, including his most recent book *The Recovery of Family Life: Exposing the Limits of Modern Ideologies* (Baylor University Press, 2020). He also writes on higher education, American Reconstruction, David Hume, and other topics for numerous websites including Law Liberty, City Journal, First Things, and The American Mind. He neither endorses nor opposes the policy positions reflected in this report (on pages 34 and 35).

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For a full list of references and the endnotes used in this report, please visit IDFree.us/references or scan this QR code with your mobile phone or tablet.



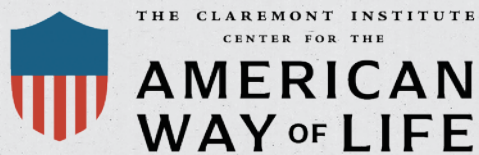


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