



A LOOK INTO AMERICA'S SCHOOLS | Center for 1776
CHERRY CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT
RECORDS REQUEST

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TOP LINE POINTS

- ★ The Cherry Creek School District (CCSD), located near Denver, Colorado, is conspiring against parents concerned about critical race theory (CRT) to ensure it remains in classrooms.
- ★ School district administrators are well versed in CRT and intent on seeing it implemented in classrooms and in the education system.
- ★ The CCSD is actively engaged in promoting the withholding of student information from parents, including supposed changes in a student's name and pronouns.
- ★ The Cherry Creek Education Association, now an overtly political teacher's union, receives assistance from the school district as they work to achieve their political goals.
- ★ Routine, ideological teacher trainings are being implemented to indoctrinate teachers and staff both to embrace the tenets of CRT and to deny biological reality. Individuals have also sought to apply a political lens to these trainings, demonizing those who hold views in opposition to the school districts. These trainings impact not only faculty but students.
- ★ The CCSD curriculum is rooted in bigoted and backward concepts that are antithetical to a meritocratic system and core American values, both crucial to our nation's past and future success.

The America First Policy Institute, in partnership with the Colorado Parent Advocacy Network (CPAN), received thousands of results from a Colorado Open Records request (CORA) of one of the Nation's 100 largest school districts: Cherry Creek School District (CCSD) located near Denver, Colorado.

The information recovered in this request revealed CCSD, and Colorado's education system more generally, to be under greater ideological control than originally imagined. Every facet of CCSD, from teacher training to curriculum, has been corrupted by radical gender ideology and critical race theory (CRT). CCSD serves more than 53,000 students, and many parents have expressed grave concern about the content infiltrating the schools. This recovered information reveals shocking content in CCSD and how district officials conspired to ignore parents' concerns.

Whenever a news outlet or parent network discusses removing the anti-American and pro-Marxist CRT from schools, a common response from progressive educators is that CRT is graduate-level coursework that is not taught in K-12 public schools. Records show that this is far from the truth.

The information found in this open records request is eye-opening and alarming for parents and taxpayers in CCSD—and for all Americans concerned about what is happening in America's schools. Below is a six-part analysis of examples found in the requested documents.



Part 1: Cherry Creek School District Conspires Against Concerned Parents to Keep CRT in Schools

Educators and school district administrators are expected to form a relationship with parents, who trust the school to assume authority over a student for the school day. This requires respect for parental opinions.

Emails between employees of CCSD show opposition to and disrespect for the opinions of parents:

- A parent, who chose to live in the school district because of the excellent education it provides, emailed the School Board expressing opposition to critical race theory (CRT) or gender identity being taught to students, especially elementary students. The parent acknowledged that racism exists and that students should be taught to be inclusive but not indoctrinated. The email was forwarded up the chain of administrators, concluding with Assistant Superintendent for Performance Improvement Michael Giles, replying only to district employees and excluding the parent, *“This is what we are up against.”*
- In August 2021, Giles forwarded one email, sent to the school board by a parent opposing the racist training materials used in teacher meetings, such as Courageous Conversations, to other administrators in the district. In his email, Giles wrote, *“... I think this is good now for you to see the language and arguments being used in opposition.”*
- After what appeared to be a controversial school board meeting with parents standing against CRT, a teacher emailed Assistant Superintendent Giles, along with other district employees, an article and said, *“[this article] helped me to crystalize a lot of thoughts”* and *“helped to dispel the myth that CRT cannot be quantified or validated in school.”* The article’s abstract states: Critical race theory (CRT) has been used in educational literature to emphasize the influence of racism on educational opportunity and the assets of students of color. Quantitative methods appear antithetical to CRT tenets according to some, but this article endeavors to show why this is not the case, based on both historical and contemporary notions. To build this argument, the author presents results from an empirical study that used data from a survey of undergraduates and measurement theory to quantify students’ community cultural wealth, a CRT framework that describes the cultural assets of communities of color. The author concludes with recommendations for incorporating quantitative methods into future CRT studies.
- One parent reached out to the district with concerns that the district would be “push[ing] *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, “onto the students of CCSD.” In response, Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Perry emailed a network titled “.EdOp,” saying, “FYI. You may want to give the principals a heads up.” After all, the book has been scene in the district as seen below:
 - One employee in the records noted that she “did my ‘homework’ (read a few chapters in *White Fragility* for our staff book club tomorrow.”
 - An outside worker of the district said, “Reading *White Fragility* was helpful, but it didn’t encourage these White teachers to have discussions about race with their own elementary-aged children.”

A recent [news article](#) showed how anti-American, dangerous, and blatantly racist these ideologies from DiAngelo can become. On March 1, 2023, DiAngelo, stated in a webinar, *“People of color need to get away from White people and have some community with each other.”*

Part 2: An Administration Focused on Implementing CRT

Not only are the core tenets of race-based policies encouraged in CCSD, but district administrators explicitly urged the implementation of critical race theory. The clearest example is seen below:

After an email from the district in support of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, two administrators thanked then-Superintendent Siegfried in an email, then stated: *“The situation at CCHS illustrates the dangers of racially illiterate youth. The tenets of*



Critical Race Theory provide a framework outlining what we might expect in these times. We have attached the CRT tenets for your reference.”

Attached to the email was the following table:

Tenets of Critical Race Theory

Counter-Storytelling	A method of sharing a story that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted views or myths, especially ones held by the majority. It is a strategy and means of exposing and critiquing dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes.
The Permanence of Racism	The notion that racism is a permanent component of American life. Racism in the USA is pervasive and operates like the air we breathe; it is ubiquitous and omnipresent.
Whiteness as Property	Due to the history of race and racism in the United States and the role that the U.S. jurisprudence has played, whiteness can be considered a property interest in three ways-1.the right to possess 2. the right to use 3. the right to disposition.
Interest Convergence	Civil rights gains for people of color should be interpreted with measured enthusiasm because the first civil rights have been enjoyed by Whites forever because they were basic tenets of U.S. democracy.
Critique of Liberalism	Three basic notions that have been embraced by liberal legal ideology. 1.the notion of colorblindness; the neutrality of the law; and incremental change.

Part 3: A Gender Identity Takeover of CCSD

In recent years, one of the most blatant attacks on parental rights has come from the belief that information can be withheld from a parent because it is deemed by the education establishment to be in the student’s best interest.

Multiple instances implicate the district in such activities:

- In July 2020, one employee of the district, who also acts as a supervisor for the Gender-Sexuality Alliance, sent an email and resources to staff pertaining to pronouns and a “gender support plan for counselors.” The plan was made by Gender Spectrum.
 - In this plan, an attached confidential document asks if parents know about the student’s gender identity and “if not, what considerations must be accounted for in implementing this plan.”
 - The document also asks, “If the student’s guardians are not aware and supportive of the child’s gender status, how will school-home communications be handled?”

PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

Guardian(s) aware of student’s gender status? Yes/No Support Level: (none) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (High)

If support level is low what considerations must be accounted for in implementing this plan? _____

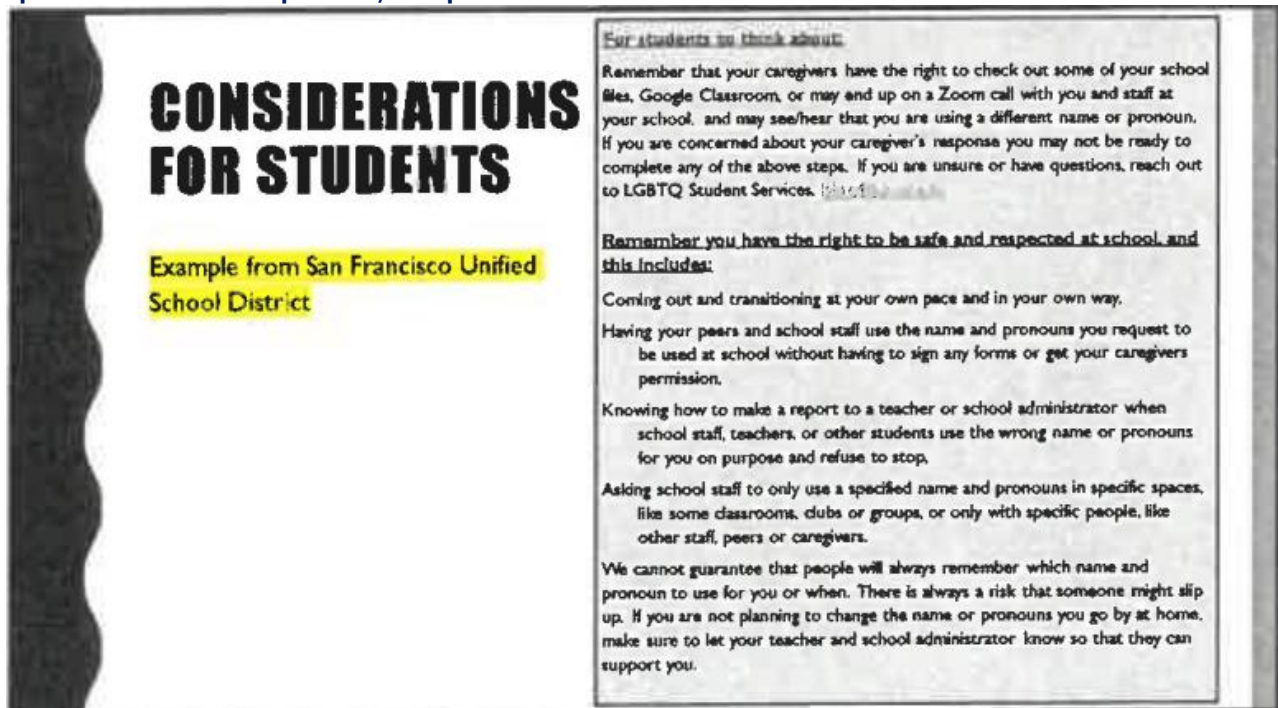
- Emails revealed that as early as 2017, a planned principals’ meeting with a “transgender presentation” had administrators planning to hand out a version of this document to the principals to “look it over and talk about what their first steps might be.”



- And these actions appear to not just be targeted at older students. An email below seems to make age just a number when it comes to sexualizing children.

I am so glad that you are considering all the identities of our students, as we know students begin identifying their sexual orientation at a very young age. Some resources that may be helpful, in the meantime, are Teaching Tolerance (which has an entire webinar series on the history of the LGBTQ community, as well as other rich resources). I also have found Welcoming Schools an amazing website, with booklists and other resources. Local resources include the local community agencies, One Colorado and The Center. The Trevor Project is a national organization as well. Within Cherry Creek, the mental health team has a group of school social workers and psychologists who meet to share resources, as well. Mindy and Ryanne should be able to connect you to that group, if you are interested.

Another email showed a PowerPoint* titled: "CCSD PRIDE." This presentation was subtitled "CSD LGBTQ Guidance Document Draft." Under the slide titled "Considerations for Students," the following information, **which explicitly told students that they could try to hide their new names and pronouns from their parents, was presented.**



* This PowerPoint was dated Feb. 2022, and it is unclear if the consideration was adopted, but for it even to be considered by administrators is concerning to the authority that parents maintain.

Part 4: Teacher Union Policies

When dealing with teacher unions, it is important to note that they are not government entities. Unions often act in political matters, sometimes through endorsements or funding of political causes. The lines between union work and government work often get blurred, and that is when taxpayer dollars can become misused. For instance, according to the contract between the school district and the teacher union:

- “the District will deduct in equal monthly installments from teachers' salaries the dues for the Association as teachers individually and voluntarily authorize, and will transmit the monies to the Association.”

For an example of how taxpayer dollars are being used to support political organizations and activities, see an email from the newly elected administration of the Cherry Creek Education Association:

Michael,
 Thank you for your honest and openness. CCEA has not lead the charge in the past as we had leadership that was afraid of the work. That limited what we could do as an organization. As president elect, I want to change that narrative for CCEA and our teachers of color. The statement that the CCEA Executive Board members put out was the start. We just met and agreed to donate to BLM 5280, NAACP legal defense fund and the Equal Justice Initiative. We also allocated funds to the creation of a CCEA Social Justice Committee to oversee and move forward the work that needs to be done for our teachers of color and our students of color.
 We are beginning to make the changes within the organization that we were not able to do until now. It's not perfect, but it is a step in the right direction for an organization that never took a stand on social justice issues before.

I would love to have you join us in this work.

Best,
 Kasey Ellis
 CCEA Vice President
 FRUU Vice Chair

Part 5: Teacher Training

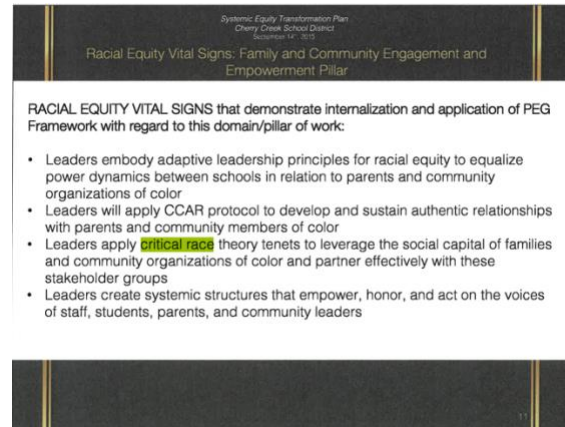
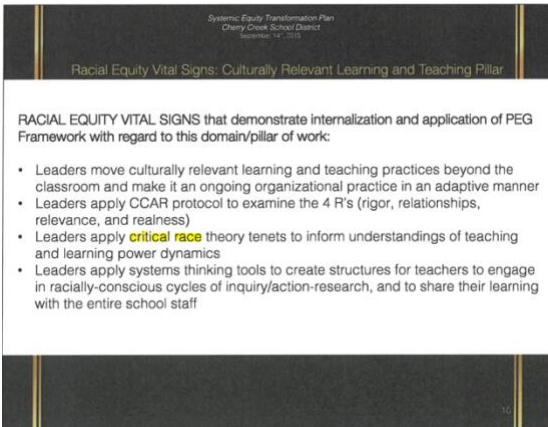
It appears the most pervasive way CRT, gender ideology, and political activity infiltrates schools is through training for teachers. While curriculum, at times, is accessible to parental purview, it is more difficult to find what the teachers are learning. But what teachers are taught can have a large effect on what and how they teach their students. Other times CRT makes its way into the district through vague terms like culturally responsive education.

Racial Training

It appears that the greatest sources of CRT indoctrination taking place in CCSD stems from a teacher training program titled *Beyond Diversity*, a program created by Courageous Conversations. This program is brought to teachers by a group contracted through the school district called Pacific Educational Group (PEG). What is most concerning is that the district, and specifically the school board, has long recognized that Courageous Conversations is instilling CRT inside the schools. As noted above, CRT is more than just a legal theory; it is a way of thinking and a pedagogy that influences teachers day by day. In 2014, the School Board’s approved [minutes](#) describe not only how long PEG has been influencing CCSD but how long CRT has been infused into the district. As it says in the board minutes:

- “In 2003, the District entered into a contract with the Pacific Educational Group and still today, finds great value in the framework. In order to drive both Inclusive Excellence and Culturally Responsive Instruction, the work requires having the Capacity (Systems Thinking), the Knowledge (Specifically around Critical Race Theory), the Skill (to navigate “Courageous Conversations”), and the Will (meaning adaptive anti-racist leadership).”





Concepts that were discussed among district employees include:

- Courageous Conversations acts as a framework to discuss race. As such, three main items help navigate the lessons: a four-quadrant compass, four agreements, and six conditions. The conditions specifically state that the conversations should “2. Isolate Race,” “5. Use a Working Definition of Race,” and “6. Examine the presence and role of Whiteness.”
- Facilitators’ guidelines include “interrupts and de-centers whiteness.”

An email from La Toyua Tolbert, the director of the Office of Inclusive Excellence, noted:

“Yes, the idea of colorism is discussed at the BD seminar. We cover it as we present Condition 5 - Establish a working definition of race, and Condition 6 - Examine the presence and role of whiteness. The idea is also addressed in our exploration of institutionalized white racism. We specifically highlight where colorism shows up in internalized white racism, interracial white racism and intraracial white racism.”

Sexuality Training

One company, *Queer Asterisk*, led by Sorin Thomas, exchanged emails with multiple district employees. Thomas’ trainings were used in various ways, including having his documents on gender identity used in meetings. One email chain shows an attempt to coordinate hosting Thomas to present on gender identity, and based on emails between him and a district administrator, it appears this would not be his first time presenting. While the district did not have enough money for this training to take place, Soren sent a mock statement for what the training could include, which stated:

Gender & Sexuality 101: Awareness and Responsiveness
Our goal in this 101 training is empowerment through knowledge. Together, we will go over the differentiations between biological sex, sexuality, and gender identity. We will discuss and deconstruct the gender binary, and identify the diversity inherent within sex and gender categories. With special attention to the role we play as helping professionals, this training will unpack the term "LGBTQPIA+" and explore an open and diverse language for describing gender and sexuality, with respect to those we serve."

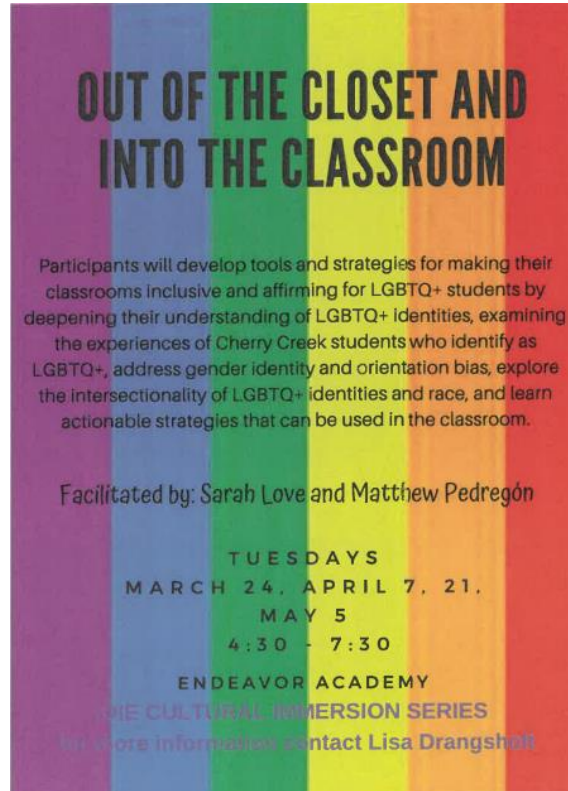
The response to this from Principal Hart stated *“Our staff would benefit from and be open to this training and the description of the session sounds perfect.”*

The district does not only contract out sexuality trainings; some teachers, who are taxpayer-funded workers, create and present these trainings and teach classes. In 2019, two teachers created a proposal for a course titled “Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom.” The course’s proposed description states: Participants will learn about LGBT + students and how to work with them, while exploring the application of Critical Queer Theory to K-12 Education. Topics will include:



An overview of educational research in Queer Theory, LGBT + Identity - including the intersection of Race and Queer, Gender Identity, Understanding curriculum and heteronormative performativity in the classroom and disciplinary situations, Mental health issues, and School and Classroom Safety.

A class series one year later was created with the same name, but different teachers led this course. A flyer for the series can be seen below.



Political Training

As an agent of the government, public schools must respect the commitment to not engage in political activity when working as employees of the government or with government resources. However, emails between administrators at CCSD reveal that engagement in political activity is apparently of no concern to them:

- An email chain among administrators revealed that at a meeting former Superintendent Siegfried asked for examples of MAGA hats being symbols of hate and White Supremacy. Multiple articles were then forwarded to the Superintendent and other administrators, one of which discussed MAGA hats as desiring a return to when American life was “brutally exclusionary for others, most notably women and people of color.”

Training Resources Emailed Among Employees

After one teacher attended a “Racial Identity Development” training, she sent the PowerPoint to Lisa Drangsholt, who works as a partner in the Department of Equity, Culture, and Community Engagement. Lessons taught in the PowerPoint include the following slides:




Strategies for White people

- Learn about the history of whiteness, how it was constructed and what white privilege is.
- Explore how your family has benefitted by being white, and what the impact of that history has been on you.
- Receive feedback non-defensively.
- Take responsibility for your own learning about race and racism.
- Find positive white roles models.

Positive White Racial Identity

-Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D.

- Historically there have been three ways to be White:
 - Ignorant
 - Colorblind
 - Racist
- There needs to be a fourth way: Anti-Racist White



The PowerPoint also included the idea of an “Un-Columbus Day.”

Save the Date: Un-Columbus Day

Join us Thursday, September 28 in Cheltenham from 12:00pm-4:00pm to consider ways to

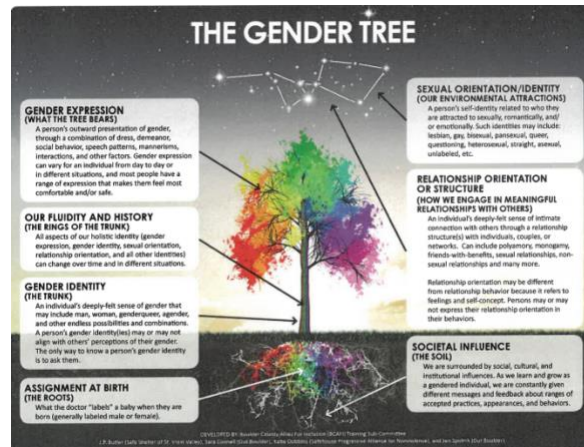
Rethink
Reimagine
Rediscover

Columbus Day and Thanksgiving

Unless the Myths!

After a “mental health meeting”, one district employee sent out to what appears to be the middle school principal notes and “relevant handouts.” A document in that email, which continues the focus on gender, can be seen below:

THE GENDER TREE



GENDER EXPRESSION (WHAT THE TREE BEARS)
A person's outward presentation of gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, speech patterns, mannerisms, interactions, and other factors. Gender expression can vary for an individual from day to day or in different situations, and most people have a range of expression that makes them feel most comfortable and/or safe.

OUR FLUIDITY AND HISTORY (THE RINGS OF THE TRUNK)
All aspects of our bodies identify gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship orientation, and all other (sexes) can change over time and in different situations.

GENDER IDENTITY (THE TRUNK)
An individual's deeply-felt sense of gender that may include man, woman, genderqueer, agender, and other endless possibilities and combinations. A person's gender identifies how they may align with others' perceptions of their gender. The only way to know a person's gender identity is to ask them.

ASSIGNMENT AT BIRTH (THE ROOTS)
What the doctor "labels" a baby when they are born (generally labeled male or female).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION/IDENTITY (OUR ENVIRONMENTAL ATTRACTIONS)
A person's self-identity related to who they are attracted to sexually, romantically, and/or emotionally. Such identities may include: lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning, heterosexual, straight, asexual, unaligned, etc.

RELATIONSHIP ORIENTATION OR STRUCTURE (HOW WE ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS)
An individual's deeply-felt sense of intimate connection with others through a relationship structure(s) with individuals, couples, or networks. Can include polyamory, monogamy, friends-with-benefits, casual relationships, non-sexual relationships and many more. Relationship orientation may be different from relationship behavior because it refers to feelings and self-concept. Persons may or may not express their relationship orientation in their behaviors.

SOCIETAL INFLUENCE (THE SOIL)
We are surrounded by social, cultural, and institutional influences. As we learn and grow as a gendered individual, we are constantly given different messages and feedback about ranges of accepted practices, appearances, and behaviors.

How Training Leads to Influencing the Students

La Toyua Tolbert, the director of the Office of Inclusive Excellence, emailed Assistant Superintendent Giles, discussing the Beyond Diversity curriculum, and noted, “We will continue to unpack how this ideology shapes our students’ experiences in CCSD.”

For the proposed course discussed above, “Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom,” teachers certainly can be seen trying to bring this sexualization and indoctrination into the classroom. In the proposal, a description of one of the sessions says:



Participants will understand how the current curriculum is heteronormative and enacts white heteronormativity and how the prescribed pedagogies further reify this heteronormativity. Altering our curriculum, altering our pedagogy, including making space for open discussion of issues surrounding gender, sex, and orientation through the use of queered instructional material (we teach *Romeo and Juliet*, but why not McLean's *Rosemary and Juliet*? Why not Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*?). How do we incorporate LGBT + into Choice Reading materials? The way we speak as teachers...

[*Rosemary and Juliet*](#) is a rewriting of *Romeo and Juliet* discussing two homosexual girls, who love each other, one coming from a Christian fundamentalist home and the other from a mother who runs an abortion clinic. So yes, these trainings are trying to influence teachers to do away with the educational benefit from classical literature in favor of advancing gender ideology.

Part 6: Curriculum

The records request was not inclusive of all curricula used by the school district; however, through parents' emails to the School Board, many educational assignments were revealed that are counter to fundamental American values.

Classroom Activities

One distraught parent revealed that the parent's daughter had to "critique the movie *Napoleon Dynamite*" from a "social justice" standpoint.

My daughter's class has been assigned to critique the movie "Napoleon Dynamite". This assignment is not to critique the films storytelling, videography, artistic style, writing, or anything relevant to the class itself. It is to indulge the teachers social justice obsessions; pointing out the lack of diversity in the cast and characters, transgenders being unrepresented, and the "white privilege" of the popular white/blonde/female character.

One email revealed a parent's list of other grievances, including:

- "a teacher said something to the effect that 'If I were black, I would hate white people too.'"
- "My child was asked to write about instances of their own racism, in which my child could not name one, and was forced to make something up and then was ridiculed because of it."
- "They were asked to name one book they have read that wasn't written by a 'white Christian male' and forced to seek out books that have gay, lesbian, trans, or minority writers."

Other assignments with the same focus on CRT can be seen taught throughout the school district. Another parent listed in an email three specific complaints about assignments in schools from middle school to high school:

- "HS - In English class, students were given a lesson on white privilege."
- "HS - Also they were asked to publicly declare how they would vote. Student believes the teacher was not happy with her choice and will hold it against her."
- "MS - In English, 7th grader, 12 years old - watched videos on white privilege."

The excerpt from an email below reveals how one teacher introduces sexual undertones into her curriculum.



Or maybe the real question is it ok to draw attention to the LGBTQ community (or "dating preferences" as we've been saying in my class) in small age-appropriate ways like I have been trying to watch for when it comes to race?? I've been working on being aware of the resources I use with my kids and families and will make changes as needed. Such as taking out/covering pictures when making copies, changing names to represent more cultures etc. Would it be wrong to change a math problem to say, "Samar and her partner Francesca wanted to build a garden in their backyard that is 8 meters x 5 meters. What is the area of their garden?"

Hopefully my questions makes sense, but if not I blame your office for making me think so much the last couple of years, ha! If you don't have an answer, maybe you could nudge me in the right direction for my future researching spirals. Any help would be much-appreciated.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]
4th Grade Teacher
Fox Hollow Elementary

Books:

America has long recognized the inherent innocence of children. As a result, national policies have upheld the general principle that children should be protected from exposure to sexually explicit, age-inappropriate content. CCSD takes a different approach and has instead provided students as young as elementary school age access to materials like the below:

- One grandparent emailed the school board, revealing that the grandparent's grandchild brought home a book titled *Teddy*, which is about an animal that changes genders. This student was in second grade and accessed the book in an elementary school library in the district.
- Another resource that was accessible through the Eaglecrest High School server was titled "Playing with race: on the edge of edgy sex, racial BDSM excites some and reviles others." This resource dealt with BDSM and sex play. The resource described how one form of BDSM is "race play," which could be anything from using racial slurs to mock slave auctions to a "Nazi interrogations of Jews."
- After a search in the eBooks available to elementary students, the book *Gender Queer: A Memoir* was found. This book includes graphic sexual imagery and descriptions of explicit sexual relations.

Teacher Requests for CRT:

This open records request uncovered several examples of district employees **requesting that the school district not listen to parents but continue to promote CRT.**

- One second-grade teacher at Indian Ridge Elementary requested that the school board "*not bend or give in to any groups that are trying to control or ban the dialogue on race and accurate history.*" She stated, "*As a white woman educator who has benefited from my privilege, I believe strongly that the work our district has undertaken surrounding race, equity, and anti-racism is imperative for our children.*"

Conclusion

In the end, this is about promoting pro-parent policies, and as such, we can think of no more accurate or rightful way to end this report than by allowing it to be explained by one of the parents:

My students, as well as others are being bullied and shamed simply because of the color of their skin color, their religious faith, and their sexual preferences. This is the opposite of social progress. This is the opposite of social justice. It is rebranded bigotry. I am hoping you will review this email with your team, review your policies with the staff, and make sure students are not being alienated, humiliated, or bullied by the staff's personal opinions and beliefs. I also trust that my students will not be retaliated against because of this email and my concerns.

