Toward a Transformative Justice Teacher Education Framework*

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Suggested Citations


Introduction

This symposium, Toward a Transformative Justice Teacher Education Research Convening, has engaged a group of intergenerational scholars and practitioners willing to work across our disciplinary siloes of math, science, social studies/history, English/literacy, etc. to share ideas and solutions about what it means to teach and learn in the age of mass/hyper incarceration and the ongoing criminalization of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, differently-abled, immigrant, Muslim, and queer bodies.

This document outlines key concepts that can guide teachers and teacher educators in the work of identifying and adopting specific pedagogical stances related to mindset, curricula, and classroom culture/climate that disrupt educational inequities and harmful public schooling practices.

Essential Question

Referring to mass incarceration as the most salient civil rights issue in the 21st century, Alexander (2010) situates the incarceration of Black people within the historical context and tenuous legacy of Black bodies in the U.S. being systematically and systemically controlled and marginalized.

What does it mean to teach in the age of mass/hyper incarceration and the ongoing criminalization of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, differently-abled, immigrant, Muslim, queer, and working class and working poor children and youth?

Priorities our Teacher Education Mission Statement Might Address

• Deliberate investments of time and energy for the self-care necessary to sustain this work and achieve justice.

Key Values

↓ Those in education professions must personally acknowledge all intersections of injustice and the pervasiveness of White superiority discourses, norms, and practices within our communities, schools, and classrooms.

↓ The education sector must embrace the ethical responsibility of centering the lives, values, and legacies of multiply-marginalized students and families to begin to repair harm and avoid inflicting additional harm.

↓ Teachers and teacher educators must acknowledge the centrality of racism and intersecting oppressions in people's lives and futures, reject and disrupt these norms, and honor and build on the rich history of empowerment of and by people of color (see Siddle Walker, [1996] and Lee, [2007]).

↓ Teachers and teacher educators must commit to identifying, cultivating, leveraging, and sustaining historically marginalized epistemologies that support positive learning outcomes and educational paths less harmful and biased than mainstream approaches such as Eugenics, IQ tests, standardized tests, norm-referenced assessments, etc.

Suggested Readings


Spotlight on Transformative Justice Math

• Acknowledging that harm has/is happening in/through math (reparations);
• Return to human practice of mathematical thinking and doing (humanities, humanizing);
• Reclaim the radical histories of mathematics learning and development, e.g., Black educators within Freedom Schools

- RESTORE
  • Authority, Mastery, Purity, Competence imbued by white supremacist, sexists, capitalist, militaristic, hetero-patriarchy;
  • Mathematical learning spaces
  • Relationships to mathematics, mathematical contexts, and multiple identities

- TRANSFORM
  • Liberatory mathematics practice;
  • Support forms of public safety and community that do not deepen incarceration (materially and conceptually);
  • Education for everyone, everywhere

- IMAGINE
Spotlight on Transformative Justice Science

**Essential Question**

*What do we think teachers need to know/do/learn in order to teach science in a way that stops killing?*

The science team approached the question about preparing teachers to disrupt educational inequities as a design challenge for science teacher education curriculum and pedagogies. (see Figure 1)

**Four possible curricular modules for science teacher preparation.**

![Diagram showing four modules:](image)
**Spotlight on Transformative Justice ELA**

**Essential Question**

*What does it mean to learn in the age of mass/hyper incarceration and the increased criminalization of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, differently-abled, immigrant, Muslim, working class and working poor children and youth?*

**We seek to disrupt the hegemony of English Language Arts and the English language by**

1. Acknowledging the “coloniality of being” (Mignolo, 2000) in our institutions, classrooms, curricula, and relationships with others and selves;
2. Sensitizing ourselves and others to the socially constructed nature of language ideologies
3. Transforming our relationships with ourselves, others, and our language practices

**We aim to accomplish this disruption by**

- Centering the importance of dignified relationships with ourselves and others, especially including our students, families, and communities
- Unsettling deficit perspectives of students, their families, their knowledges and language practices
- Deepening understandings of children, youth, and community members
- Assuming the stance of a learner who has much to learn

**In classrooms, we call on teachers and educators to embrace**

- A critical interpretation of academic standards that interrogates power relationships and agency in the production and critique of knowledge
- Assessments that evaluate learners on humanizing and leadership skills to disrupt the hegemony of the English language
- A range of reading and writing experiences that redefine and expand literacy
Spotlight on Transformative Justice Social Studies

“History never leaves us for another inaccessible place...they are a part of us; they inhabit us and we inhabit them even when we are not aware of this relationship to history” (Angela Y. Davis, 2012)

Essential Questions

Why history? Why now?

How can social studies/history create a participatory culture in classroom and school communities?

What is the role of social studies/history classrooms in cultivating purpose and belonging for all students?

What is the role of history across disciplines?

Explore Local Histories

Navigate National Terrain

Connect Global Dots

Four pedagogical stances for engaging in restorative justice work in education


1Angela Y. Davis, The Meaning of Freedom and Other Difficult Dialogues, San Francisco, City Lights, p. 185).
Spotlight on Transformative Justice
Teacher Education Policy

The Teacher Education Policy team addressed how to establish a teacher education policy that honors and reflects the values of restorative justice and seeks to reimagine teacher training as an opportunity to expand the community of educators seeking to actively disrupt patterns of educational inequity and the school/prison nexus.

Such an endeavor requires a multi-level approach that acknowledges the following layers of power and decision-making:

### Structural Level
- Impact federal and state decisions that might shift norms toward restorative justice goals and practices.

### Local, District, and Union Levels
- Develop buy-in and consensus to leverage power and elevate community, union, teacher, student, and parent/caregiver voices in support of equity-oriented processes and outcomes.

### Interpersonal Level
- Shape classroom and school-wide culture in ways that shift dynamics toward a culture of restorative justice.

Note: The local level is where we tend to find the most space for immediate – yet fundamental – change.

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**Essential Question**

*How do we maintain the integrity of restorative justice as it becomes required in education teaching performance expectations (ed TPAs)?*

- Ensure the vigilant and intentional centering of racism, ableism, xenophobia, sexism, and misogyny throughout all aspects of programming and decision-making.

- Actively disrupt systems that perpetuate student criminalization by (1) interrogating the efficacies of punishment, suspensions, referrals, and expulsions; and (2) creating new measures that establish and reinforce restorative justice practices such as community building, a respectful, inclusive culture of communication and belonging, etc.

- Build a transformative justice teacher education pipeline through (1) appropriate pre-admission and admissions processes, (2) the establishment of institutional partnerships with organizations that honor restorative justice values, and (3) hiring teacher educators who have restorative justice values and training.