

# Critical Race Theory Frequently Asked Questions

## What is Critical Race Theory (CRT)?

Critical race theory (CRT) is an academic concept that is more than 40 years old. The core idea is that race is a social construct, and that racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies.

“CRT recognizes that racism is not a bygone relic of the past. Instead, it acknowledges that the legacy of slavery, segregation, and the imposition of second-class citizenship on Black Americans and other people of color continue to permeate the social fabric of this nation. CRT recognizes that race intersects with other identities, including sexuality, gender identity, and others.”

### Bottomline....

**CRT is an analytical framework to understand systemic, institutional racism. CRT asks you to analyze situations with a critical lens in a way that decenters a race-neutral narrative and to focus instead on the root cause of racism and inequities.**

## Why should we engage CRT in Education?

“In the field of education, Daniel Solórzano has identified tenets of CRT that, in addition to the impact of race and racism and the challenge to the dominant ideology of the objectivity of scholarship, include a commitment to social justice; centering the experiential knowledge of people of color; and using multiple approaches from a variety of disciplines to analyze racism within both historical and contemporary contexts.”

## Is it being taught in our schools?

For the most part, CRT is not being taught in the K-12 educational system. Higher education has expanded CRT to other scholarly fields that are now beyond law studies. However there is momentum for CRT to be included in appropriate age levels in education as a tool to critically think about race. The decision is a local decision.

## Is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) trainings the same as CRT?

**No.** CRT is not a diversity and inclusion “training.” It is a practice to use in critical thinking about the role of race and racism in our systems that can be taught as a tool. However, some DEI trainings will include the theory for knowledge purposes but CRT is not a focal point, unless you are in law studies.

## Does SB 5044 include CRT?

The Senate Bill 5044 added equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism to existing cultural competency standards and training for school board directors, district staff, and school staff. This does not include students receiving the training or for it to be taught in schools. There is not a law requiring Washington state public schools to adopt the “critical race theory” curriculum.

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## Critical Race Theory...

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS	TRUTH
Is the same thing as Anti Bias, Anti Racism Education, Culturally Relevant Teaching, Diversity and Inclusion Training, Multicultural Education, Anti-Racism training	Is an academic framework used mostly in higher education. It is a tool rather than a training.
Focuses on racism as an individual act.	Focuses on systemic / structural racism.
Blames white people for all racial inequities in society and atrocities in the past	Recognizes that race and racism are woven into the very fabric of our institutions.
Teaches students with a socialist, communist, anti-American agenda.	If incorporated in education, it equips students with the tools to think critically about issues of race, racism, and inequity.
Educators are asked to teach material that makes everyone uncomfortable	Provides educators with a new lens for examining their schooling practices and rethinking their teaching.
Makes Black, Indigenous and students of color feel like powerless victims and white students guilty.	If incorporated in schools, it would raise students' awareness of how policy shapes life outcomes for people of different races.
Reinvents historical narratives	Encourages educators to critique historical narratives that they are teaching.
Creates division into "oppressed" and "oppressor" groups	Increases awareness of how intersecting identities impact one's power and privilege in society
Reinforces racial stereotypes and traumatizes students	Recognizes that race is a social construct

By Sylvia Duckworth

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## Being Ground while in Conversations about Race and Critical Race Theory

Remember your **Why** in leading this work. A great starting point is to communicate your why and your district's goals around race. If your why is connected to students or community, think about ALL students and community.

Be grounded in the Community Agreements and Practices

- Stay Engaged-Don't let your heart and mind check out.
- Experience Discomfort-Agree to experience discomfort so that we can deal with issues of race in an honest way
- Speak Your Truth-Be honest about your thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Say them in a way that is true to you.
- Expect and Accept non-closure in your understanding about race and race relations. There is no "quick fix"
- Intent and Impact-Recognize that what we say has an unintended impact, even though we may have positive intent. We need to own the impact.

Center relationships. Use your relationship to build a bridge of understanding and inquiry through the conversation. The goal is to share information, and de-center debates.

When developing an opinion, generate space for new information to create thoughtful analyzes. It is okay not to know it all, especially when we are learning about something new.

Call a friend to talk through it before you have the conversation! The PSESD Equity Team is available to talk through the conversation and support you in having tough conversations on race.

## PSESD Equity in Education Team

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## Resources

### Senate Bill 5044

SB 5044 Full Bill site: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billssummary?Year=2021&BillNumber=5044>

### Video of Floor Debate of SB 5044:

<https://www.tvw.org/watch/?clientID=9375922947&eventID=2021041111&startStreamAt=5635&autoStartStream=true>

### Critical Race Theory

- [Critical Race Theory Resources by Cross Cultural Solidarity](#)
- [CRT is a Lens by Which to Examine the Persistence of Racism in Our Society](#) by Mildred Boveda
- [An Introduction to Critical Race Theory.](#) by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic
- [Critical Race Theory: A Primer \(Concepts and Insights\)](#), by Khiara M. Bridges
- [Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement](#), by Kimberlé Crenshaw
- [Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education](#), by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate.
- ["What is Critical Race Theory?": IGTV live with Dr. Angel Jones and Dr. Kate Slater](#)
- [Conflicted: How Black women negotiate their responses to racial microaggressions at a historically White institution \(Using CRT as a Framework\)](#), (academic paper) by Dr. Angel Jones
- [The Weeds Podcast \(The Vox\): What is Critical Race Theory?](#) With Morgan Williams, Jr. (scroll down 60 episodes)
- CNN interview with Kimberlé Crenshaw: ["Politicians attack critical race theory without understanding it, experts say."](#)
- [Letter: In defense of critical race theory](#), by Shawn R. Coon and Vanessa Johnson-Ojeda, The Salt Lake City Tribune
- [The War On Critical Race Theory Continues As Some Call It Anti-White](#), by Janice Gassam Asare, Forbes Magazine.
- [As schools expand racial equity work, conservatives see a new threat in critical race theory](#), by Laura Meckler and Hannah Natanson, The Washington Post
- [What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Is It Under Attack?](#), by Stephen Sawchuk, Education Week
- [Four States Have Placed Legal Limits on How Teachers Can Discuss Race. More May Follow](#), by Sarah Schwartz, Education Week.
- [Critical race theory in the classroom: Understanding the debate](#), by Kiara Alfonseca, ABC News
- [A Lesson on Critical Race Theory](#), by Janel George, American Bar Association.
- [What critical race theory is -- and isn't](#), by Faith Karimi, CNN.
- [Why the panic over "critical race theory" is the perfect right-wing troll](#), by Amanda Marcotte, Salon.
- [I've Been a Critical Race Theorist for 30 Years. Our Opponents Are Just Proving Our Point For Us](#) Opinion by Gary Peller
- [Union will defend teachers in critical race theory fights](#) Seattle Times by Collin Brinkly