

Rep. Allen: Let's talk

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Parents, imagine a classroom where a teacher, in a position of power, made a student feel guilty in front of others, just because of the color of her skin?

Is it the role or responsibility of public education to provide racial sensitivity training?

Based on a constituent inquiry my office conducted an open records request, and Madison Public Schools responded with these [materials](#). The materials have been produced by several organizations, and are distributed by the National Education Association (NEA).

Parents often assume their students are being educated effectively. The primary focus is traditionally on the basics of arithmetics, language arts, science, and history. In academic circles, however, the focus is often on “*affective education*,” which is about developing student belief systems, emotions, and attitudes.

There are certainly areas where this could be seen as a scholarly benefit, such as in encouraging self-esteem through effort and accomplishment. Notably, however, it has always been a sacred purview of the parents to instill religious, philosophical, or political beliefs. As Thomas Sowell noted in *Inside American Education*, we have made a faulty assumption: that racism flows from homes into the schools, rather than from the school into our homes.

Having conversations about race in a multi-ethnic society like the United States may provide value to society. The real questions relate to the content of those conversations. Many programs on racial sensitivity are designed to make the white participants feel guilty, or to declare bedrock institutions as inherently racist, and by default, if you support the institution, you are declared a racist as well.

In a [pamphlet](#) titled “Let’s Talk,” (created by the Southern Poverty Law Center) educators are encouraged to reduce prejudice, and improve intergroup relations. However, as illustrated on [Page 19](#) of “Let’s Talk”, educators are encouraged to follow a chart to promote emotional safety in the classroom during difficult conversations. The strategy to deal with “guilt” instructs educators to “make sure that students are realistic in accepting responsibility primarily for their own actions and future efforts, even **while considering the broader past actions of their identity groups**”. If there is “confusion or denial,” teachers are trained to redirect students to “questions anchored in class content,” because the student is operating from a “place of misinformation or ignorance.”

Who is guilty? Who is confused? What does it mean to “accept responsibility while considering broader past actions”? How does reminding a student of their identity groups past actions create a space of emotional safety? Slavery, Jim Crow, Segregation? Are these the broader past actions that the Southern Poverty Law Center is hinting at? What responsibility do they want students to accept? Haven’t the students learned about these actions in their history classes?

How does reminding students to accept responsibility for their identity groups foster diversity? If anything, this effort pits student groups against one another due to no fault of their own. Rather than utilizing valuable classroom time to teach students about the great achievements of African American’s in America’s history as well as the efforts undertaken on behalf of black Americans by many other races, the NEA and BLM efforts are perpetuating ideas that do nothing to move America forward during a time where we need it most. Rather than teaching diversity or tolerance,

are they instead teaching division and demonization?

In my experience these kinds of conversations are sophisticated and are best suited for college age students or adults. To challenge teens and preteens who inherently are struggling with their own identity issues with these kinds of psychological techniques is simply to go beyond the purview of K-12 public education.

Do we really want BLM and public school educators messing with children's belief systems, self-identity emotions, and attitudes?

What is your child being taught in school?

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