Curriculum Review for District 38

Review done by Kristy Davis

May 10, 2023

SEL Program: Second Step

This program is one of the worst SEL programs I have reviewed to date. I did not have to search very hard to find concerning material because the entire program is a filled with CRT, DEI, Politics, LGBTQIA+, oppression, allyship and many other social justice and advocacy topics, materials, articles, podcasts, you name it and it is in here. Any of these topics can be placed into the search criteria and they can be found easily, but you do not even have to do that. There are tabs on the left and in any one you click on, you will find concerning articles/blogs. Most of these articles/blogs are posted from the Committee for Children that appears to be a part of Second Step. I started with the tab labeled Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and every tab I clicked after that was just as bad.

Here are some of the headlines and information from the articles found within this program:

Under DEI: Articles/ Blogs included for children are:

"Identity and Belonging: Anti-Racist Curriculum and Black Studies in Schools"

-"Each month our policy experts will answer questions relating to these priority areas and racial equity. Our final blog in this series will discuss anti-racist curricula and Black studies, and how SEL can help promote and be strengthened by research-based practices that advance racial equity in education."

"When Bullying Is Racially Motivated: Recognizing It for What It Is and Supporting Kids to Be Anti-Racist Upstanders"

-"All forms of bullying harm kids, but biased-based harassment – when the underlying cause or motivation is prejudice – causes specific, increased harm."

"For Educators Aspiring Towards Allyship: Making an Impact at School"

-"In this blog series, implementation Specialist Casey Escola provides insights on how white educators can collaborate with colleagues in their work towards allyship within schools and offers grace for occasional missteps along the way"

" As this blog series has evolved, we've discussed the empowering and humbling journey towards allyship. This work is internal, self-directed, rooted in discomfort, and can have real effects on a child's perception of the world around them. And, like many of our most meaningful experiences, this work is not done alone. Much of the allyship journey is about the profound ways in which individuals can plant the seed of a new idea that blooms into a new way of thinking. This process entails collaboration, creating spaces for discussion, and respectfully yet firmly advocating for change. Such collaboration is not relegated to anti-racism book clubs or social justice coalitions – it can happen with colleagues in work groups, school settings, and community spaces."

"Seek out official as well as informal channels: When trying to decide where to start, look to the structures that already exist within your school or district. Research shows that when educators take an active and engaged role in supporting students of color, the entire school community benefits. Are there leadership groups to join? District meetings to attend? Review your school's code of conduct or mission statement. Seek out ways that formal policies and procedures could better serve students and families of color. Take the initiative to plan a staff professional development meeting and organize a roundtable discussion." Why is the primary focus on children and families of color? Each student in the school should have equal opportunity, all students should be the focus of the school.

"Meet others where they are: In many realms of conversation, persuasion, and influences, it's important to remember to meet others where they are. Yes, allyship work is messy and requires comfort and discomfort. Yes, true growth and sustainable change can't be attained without a breakdown of formerly held beliefs. But it's been shown that requiring others to meet you at the exact moment of your allyship journey can do more harm than good. Open conversations with curiosity and respect. Ask questions to get to the root of another person's feelings. Introduce new ideas, push to expand perspectives, find factors that will best motivate that person (like fair and equitable outcomes for their students, for example), and remember to be compassionate. We don't always get it right, but what's important is that we strive to make the world better for children everywhere."

This is social justice and extremely concerning to read that an educator would do this in a classroom setting or among peers to try to influence them to breakdown their formerly held beliefs.

"Facilitate discussions with a focus on brave spaces, not safe spaces: When leading a discussion dedicated to racial inequity and allyship in a professional setting, encourage the concept of "brave spaces" rather than "safe spaces". Safe spaces prioritize comfort and support. While some learning may take place in safe spaces, as we've discussed, lifelong allyship work requires facing and sitting with uncomfortable truths. Brave spaces encourage dialogue, participation, and discomfort. To build a brave space, set and abide by discussion norms, consider the experiences of all participants, and make a conscious effort to avoid defensiveness."

Brave spaces in our schools that push kids into a place of discomfort???

"Look for ways to support and highlight infrequently heard voices: In your school community, and especially in your leadership and advocacy work, take the time to consider who is not in the room. Is there a diverse representation of perspectives and experiences? Are these structures or meetings set up to benefit and include some but not all students, community members, or educators? How can you use your own platform and privilege to make these spaces more accessible and amplify voices that are not frequently heard?" Use your platform and privilege???? This is CRT!! They should be concentrating on all students.

"Lead with vulnerability" (This section is very long so I will condense it). "The consequences of racial inequity have profound and far-reaching effects on society and specifically on the lives of the students in the classroom. From the moment a child enters the schooling system – from when they step onto a bus or walk onto the campus, to their interactions with peers, to their classes, to their counselor and front office visits and remote learning log-ins – their mind is guided, inspired, and influenced by your

community. Building allyship and systems of advocacy among the adults dedicated to support them will help provide the best possible environment for children to explore, ask questions, and grow."

Seeing children as vulnerable and that an educator can mold them, that is the job of the parents. School is for learning academics, not finding vulnerability in children and trying to fill a void with racial inequity.

"Why Does SEL Matter in Promoting Educator Diversity?"

-"In this blog, our policy experts answer questions about the importance of teacher diversity and the role SEL has to play in promoting it"

"First Steps in an Educator's Path Toward Allyship"

-"Implementation Specialist Casey Escola provides insights on the many paths toward allyship for white educators and offers some grace for occasional missteps along the way."

"With intense social and political upheaval across the country, adults are stepping into two simultaneous roles: educator and student. Whether a teacher by profession, a parent trying to protect and prepare your child for the world, or an aspiring ally looking to make an impact, the opportunity to teach others is ubiquitous. But we're also being asked to learn, be vulnerable, to break apart assumptions and good intentions, and to dismantle our own basic understanding of how the world operates." Why do they feel the need to dismantle and break apart our belief systems and values? These are educators that have a job of teaching academics to children, this is WAY beyond what I as a parent would be comfortable with my child learning. "In the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others who have been harmed by police, a great national movement has finally reemerged. As both educator and student, the moment to commit to the lifelong work of allyship is now." This entire statement is politically motivated, in line with the BLM movement and anti-police. How is this appropriate for Elementary School Curriculum?

Casey then goes on to introduce herself as a white woman working at Committee for Children. And makes this statement: "I grew up in a homogenous white, middle-class suburb near St. Louis, Missouri, just a short drive from where Michael Brown was murdered in 2014. My own journey of coming to terms with my privilege, my place in society, and my lack of awareness around key issues and perspectives has been at times cringeworthy, heartbreaking, clumsy, humbling, and profound, and sometimes all those things at once." This company, Committee for Children, sounds extremely biased, racist, and unprofessionally run. The people they tote as experts in their fields are pushing CRT concepts, applaud racism and have a very crude structure focused on social justice and political movements. This has no place in D38 or any other District in Colorado or the entire country. It scares me to think how structured and accepted this program is.

"For Educators Aspiring Toward Allyship: Starting in the Classroom"

-"ally" is never a term you can give to oneself. You're deemed an ally by the community you're seeking to support based on your actions and activism." This sounds like a cult, and they are encouraging activism!!

"There's no perfectionism in this work. There's no way to graduate from this class. You'll never receive a "woke medal", and if that's what you're looking for, you're doing it all wrong. So start participating, start talking and making mistakes. Sit in discomfort, apologize when needed, reflect on it, and seek to do better. Seek to do more." This is not appropriate for children.

"Advocate for culturally relevant curriculum and learning materials in your classroom.: Cultivate a library, media, and learning materials that are racially and culturally representative of the students in your classroom and in your community. Not all students will interpret these materials in the same way or see themselves reflected in them. Just as I described my own journey through levels of discomfort and reflection the first time I read *Between the World and Me*, students need time to process and be challenged."

"There are many who worry about dismantling a sense of childlike innocence when it comes to tough topics like race and oppression." This is a huge concern. "These concepts are difficult, complicated, and upsetting for adults; is it fair to burden children with them as well? Research shows that adults delay these conversations because they underestimate children's conceptualization of race. But the truth is, these complexities shape our society and our world both in and out of the classroom." This topic is not appropriate for educators to be having with children, it is clear to the person composing this that these topics are uncomfortable for adults and should not be had with children in a school environment. This is material that should be covered at home with a trusted adult/ parent. Not outside of the home in a classroom, period. " Students are already living with the consequences and effects of our profoundly unequal systems-and they're looking for spaces to explore and understand these concepts." This is another example of CRT.

"Are White LGBTQIA+ Leaders Doing Enough?"

"Last month, Seattle held its last completely virtual LGBTQIA+ Pride festival to reduce the spread of COVID-19. As we continue to celebrate the beauty and resilience of the queer community all year long, its crucial that white queer leaders in business and education, like myself, critically examine our role in our communities, in the organizations we run, and in the movements for social justice." "Now is not the time to grow complacent or lose sight of the historical connections between celebration, joy, and activism in Pride. We've come so far since the Stonewall uprising, but not far enough. So much of the work of eradicating racism is the responsibility of WHITE people, including WHITE queer people, especially those in leadership positions. Within the movement for LGBTQIA+ rights, its critical that white queer leaders actively work to dismantle systems of racism and oppression that disproportionately impact BIPOC LGBTQIA+ members of our community, especially when they're showing up within the LGBTQIA+ community itself. We must be unwavering in our community to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for every member of our community because progress for some, historically has never meant progress for everyone."

"As a white, cisgender, queer woman, some aspects of my identity result in my experiencing bias, power, imbalance, and inequity, but my race still allots me certain privileges and advantages. My fellow queer leaders need to not only recognize this but go beyond mere acknowledgement of white privilege. We must focus on how we stand and amplify BIPOC LGBTQIA+ voices and

disrupt societal systems acting inside and outside of the LGBTQIA+ movement that contributes to inequity and oppression."

"But if white LGBTQIA+ leaders want their organizations and communities to flourish, we must foster brave spaces that explicitly move the critical work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging forward without *centering* whiteness.

This is Critical Race Theory.

"Building an Affirming, Liberating World for LGBTQIA+ Youth with Melanie Willingham-Jaggers"

-"On this episode of *Grow Kinder*, host Andrea Lovanhill speaks with Melanie Willingham-Jaggers (they/she), the Interim Executive Director at GLSEN, a national nonprofit that works to ensure K-12 education is safe and affirming for all students"

"A lecturer at City University New York in the Master of Applied Theater program, Melanie has extensive experience in social justice organizing within and beyond the LGBTQIA+, immigrant, disabled, incarcerated, and other marginalized and intersecting communities. From 2016-2019, they served as board chair of The Audre Lorde Project*, one of the oldest centers for community organizing for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans and Gender Non-Conforming People of Color in the New York City area."

*I googled The Audre Lorde Project. It is a Trans-Justice Group that specifically states: "This is a space for LGBTSTGNC People of Color ONLY." The flier on the front page has the BLM fist prominently displayed. About the Group: Through mobilization, education and capacity-building, we work for community wellness and progressive social and economic justice. Committed to struggling across differences, we seek to responsibly reflect, represent and serve our various communities.

"Committee for Children Releases Award-Winning Captain Compassion Comic Empowering Kids to Prevent Bullying"

-"Committee for Children is launching its fifth annual Captain Compassion campaign during National Bullying Prevention Month to teach kids how to prevent bullying in all forms, with a special emphasis on behavior motivated by racial bias. Developed by Committee for Children in 2018, Captain Compassion is an anti-bullying superhero who teaches upstanders how to recognize, report and refuse bullying through a series of engaging, age-appropriate comic strips."

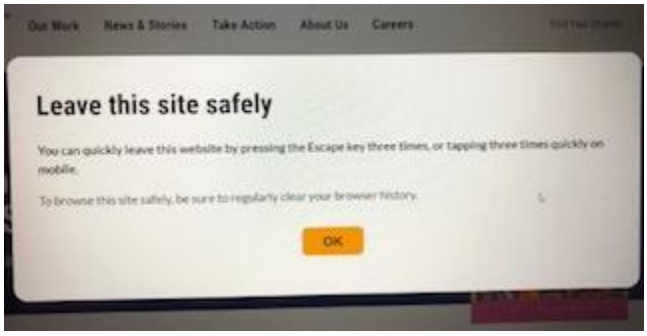
About Committee for Children:

Committee for Children is a global nonprofit that has championed the safety and well-being of children through bullying prevention, child protection, and social-emotional learning (SEL) for more than 40 years. With a history of action and influence, we're known as a leader in social-emotional education and a force in advocacy, research, and innovation in the field. We take a comprehensive approach to SEL, promoting social-emotional well-being from birth to early adulthood – supporting not just classrooms,

but entire communities. As our programs transform the lives of more than 24.4 million children per year, we rise to meet societal challenges to ensure children everywhere can thrive."

This is promoting advocacy!!! Pushing their concepts on to vulnerable children and these concepts are filled with CRT, oppression, DEI, inequality, racism, race-shaming and social justice. This is not what the community of D38 would want in their schools, I surely do not!!

They have Links for resources: LGBTQ+ Student Rights Guide, LGBTQ+ Educator Rights Guide, "Erasure and Resilience: The Experiences of LGBTQ Students of Color". I clicked on the first link: glsen.org/AAPI and immediately received the quick exit screen.



This is the option for children to hide what they are browsing from anyone who may enter the room unexpectedly!

DATA MINING:

"How will Committee for Children continue to demonstrate its commitment to research and evidence in Second Step Programs?

We're a data-driven organization that spends a lot of time listening to what our customers and users say about what's really working in classroom and what's not. My team and I are constantly observing usage data, listening to customers feedback and requests, and working with our team of research scientists to understand and incorporate new data coming from external studies and analyses. For some of our programs, external researchers have published results from randomized control trials showing positive outcomes. For our digital programs, our Education, Research and Impact Team has articulated five key commitments that add up to a difference in quality that educators can expect from Second Step programs through continuous learning and improvement."

This tells me they are data mining information from an unknown source, and using the desired outcomes to support their data. They have not provided who they received this information from and what demographic they were studying. They go on to site that the organizations providing them with the evidence-based research are Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Collaborative for Academics, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

The Five Key Commitments:

1 “Research Expertise”

2 “An approach to Social-emotional learning from an equity framework”

3 “Standing advisory group”

4 “Ongoing data collection”

5“Continued improvement”

The most concerning one to me was the second one, detailed here: “An approach to Social-emotional learning from an equity framework. Our newer programs (the Second Step Elementary and Second Step Middle School digital programs, Second Step SEL for Adults, and Second Step Out-of School Time) are reviewed by experts who provide direction on ways to make them more culturally relevant to a broad range of students.” This program is using CRT concepts embedded throughout.

“This year, we’re applying the data that we’ve collected to improve our programs’ content and implementation supports. We partner with a small number of schools for each program and educators teach the full curriculum. To learn what works and what we can improve, we have different data collection methods: We observe classrooms during lessons, ask teachers to complete surveys, and get feedback from students and educators in focus groups.” All of these methods can be utilized to select the exact demographic they wish to get the desired outcome that they want, especially in a focus group. “For some programs, we also ask the teachers to complete assessments to their students’ social-emotional skills so we can learn how effective the program is, or we get permission to access students grades to look at the effect of the program on academic outcomes.” Do they have parents permission to access grades?o

“Intent vs. Impact with Baionne Coleman”

-“In this episode, host Shauna McBride speaks with Baionne Coleman, founding partner of the nonprofit Global Majority Consortium* and CEO and principal of Rainier Valley Leadership Academy*, an anti-racist middle and high school focused on dismantling systematic oppression through scholar leadership.”

* Global Majority Consortium:

Their “About Us” “Our Why” states:
Problem:

Organizations providing services are not global majority led. There is a gap in anti-racist practices, authenticity, urgency, and honesty due to the lack of black leaders leading the work in white spaces.

Proposed Solution:

Many non-GM folx have been benefiting off of the pain of Black, Indigenous and Global Majority communities using DEI and Anti-racism training as a means for lucrative careers. In order to truly do anti-racist work we must center the Black descendants of the enslaved and Indigenous folx front and center to do this work over our white peers. Our white abolitionist leaders need to be supporting our work, never leading this work. This means businesses and organizations looking to create transformative change, trainings, professional development, accreditations, and everything in between should be hiring

first Black AADOS & Indigenous folx before anyone else. We need those closest to the harm to be the ones leading the work.

*Rainier Valley Leadership Academy

RVLA is an anti-racist school.

What does THAT mean?

We continuously address racism with urgency and action by decolonizing and dismantling systems of oppression to empower our community.

"Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion"

-"At Committee for Children, we believe that social-emotional learning (SEL) is fundamental to achieving social justice."

"SEL and Racial Equity"

-"This brief is a non-exhaustive investigation of social-emotional learning policy and how it can contribute to evidence-based, in-school equity strategies. An Addendum to this brief examines research-based prevention of interpersonal racism and how social-emotional learning policies and practices can contribute to such prevention."

"Violence against Black lives affects all of us, and particularly affects youth people of color. Education in the United States compounds the trauma: it's marked by racial inequity (Garcia & Ozturk, 2018), and some US education processes and practices may also harm young people of color (Zirkel, 2008), Social-emotional learning (SEL) can provide strategies that promote racial equity in education – though it won't be most effective on its own. Our brief considers evidence-based strategies to promote racial equity that work in tandem with SEL."

"In this review, we consider education-focused racial equity strategies that are evidence-based, with qualitative observational, quasi, or true experimental studies, and that might overlap with SEL. This is not meant to be a complete review of racial equity strategies in education. Our goal of identifying these evidence-based practices is to understand what has been most empirically effective in the field at this time, while acknowledging that more research and evaluation are needed. Further research and evaluation will also be needed to assess the role of SEL in supporting strategies for racial equity in education."

There is a "Take Action for SEL" button you can click and it is an ACT NOW to tell your lawmakers your want more access to SEL.

Advocacy Efforts tabs

-Advocacy in Action

-Coalition Activity

-Sign up to be an Advocate

-Advocacy Contacts

“Advancing SEL, Equity, and Social Justice with Justina Schlund”

“Supporting Racial Equity with Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and SEL”