



A DCI Deliberation Guide

Parents and Schools:

Who Should Teach Our Children about Race, Gender, and Sexuality?

Format for Deliberation

Before the Deliberation

- I. Read this document (Required)
- II. Read Human Rights Pulse's "[Why Critical Race Theory Is Essential to an Honest Education in America](#)" (Optional)
- III. Read The Heritage Foundation's "[Keep Racist Critical Race Theory Ideology Out of K-12 Classrooms](#)" (Optional)
- IV. Read Kialo's "[Should Children Learn About Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation in School?](#)" (Optional)

During the Deliberation

- I. Setting Expectations - 5 min.
- II. Getting to Know Each Other – 5 min.
- III. Engaging Tensions around Children's Education - 10 min.
- IV. Engaging Tensions around Teaching about Race and Racism - 10 min.
- V. Engaging Tensions around Teaching about Gender and Sexuality - 10 min.
- VI. Identifying, Evaluating, and Prioritizing Policies - 10 min.
- VII. Reflections – 10 min.

Background

Tensions surrounding responsibilities for teaching race, gender, and sexuality in public schools have become a prominent source of political debate. Some argue that it is the job of educators and schools to support students' various identities, regardless of whether their parents are uncomfortable or anxious about such information.¹ Others argue that parents ought to have control over what their children learn regarding complicated racial, sexuality, and gender matters. Still others are open to schools teaching about these subjects but assert that these materials must accurately represent the country's past and present.

¹ Douthat, Ross. "[How to Make Sense of the New L.G.B.T.Q. Culture War.](#)" *The New York Times*. April 13, 2022.

In recent years, legislators across the nation have been introducing bills to settle such hotly disputed questions on which the public is often divided along party lines. These identity-based issues are intertwined, as bills related to education about gender and sexuality have frequently been coupled with bills related to education about structural racism.²

This guide provides background on some of the substantive areas of debate about what material and topics should be covered in K-12 schools. Much of the focus has been on public schools, but these questions are relevant to private schools as well. The guide begins with an overview of arguments about how issues of race and racism are taught before moving to a summary of disagreements over how gender and sexuality are covered in schools. ***The guide then provides a series of prompts that connect these specific issues to the broader question of whose responsibility it is to teach children about contentious social topics such as race, gender, and sexuality.***

Teaching about Race and Racism

Much of the debate about teaching race revolves around whether ideas related to Critical Race Theory (CRT) should be introduced into public K-12 curricula. Parents are divided along party lines on this issue, with 58% of Republicans opposed to including these ideas in curricula and 60% of Democrats supporting their inclusion. Teachers are divided along party lines as well, with 61% of Republicans opposing them and 66% of Democrats supporting them.³

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was introduced in legal scholarship in the 1970s, and its usage grew in the 1980s and 1990s. According to the American Bar Association, CRT analyzes

how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism perpetuate a racial caste system that relegates people of color to the bottom tiers. CRT also recognizes that race intersects with other identities, including sexuality, gender identity, and others. 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.⁴

CRT asserts that race is a social rather than biological construction. It suggests that racism is systemic, “embedded within systems and institutions, like the legal system, that replicate inequality.” CRT asserts that racism is woven into the very fabric of our society, and its systemic nature results in racial inequality.⁵

² Jones, Dustin and Jonathan Franklin. [“Not Just Florida. More than a Dozen States Propose So-Called ‘Don’t Say Gay’ Bills.”](#) NPR. April 10, 2022.

³ Sailor, Angela and Adam Kissel. [“What Parents and Teachers Think about Critical Race Theory.”](#) The Thomas B. Fordham Institute. July 6, 2021.

⁴ [American Bar Association](#)

⁵ [American Bar Association](#)

Recently, some states have begun to ban CRT or limit how race is taught in public school curricula, prohibiting “race stereotyping,” “scapegoating,” or teaching “divisive concepts” on race. By early 2022, fourteen states had adopted measures through legislation, executive order, or state school board resolutions to restrict how race is taught,⁶ and several other states are considering such measures.⁷

Supporters of measures to restrict CRT-based or race-conscious curricula argue that teaching CRT or focusing on the role of race in U.S. history is divisive, leaving whites feeling guilty and people of color perceiving themselves as victims. Encapsulating many of the arguments against CRT, President Trump referred to it as “indoctrination” that teaches kids to judge one another by their skin color rather than by their character.⁸ Those who support state efforts to restrict discussion of race in the classroom assert that curricula that incorporate CRT and anti-racist movements place a harmful emphasis on race that divides students and gives them a tainted, cynical view of the U.S. These ideologies, they argue, problematically teach that skin color is of the utmost importance as a determinant of life experiences and outcomes and that children of color should see being a victim of oppression by whites as a core part of their identity.⁹

In June 2021, the National Education Association (NEA), the largest teachers’ union in the United States, voted affirmatively for a plan to promote CRT in all 50 states.¹⁰ In response, Nicole Neily, President of Parents Defending Education, said that the NEA is effectively blaming systemic racism for the failures of the public schools system rather than taking responsibility. She further argues that parents do not support their children being racially segregated, schools funding diversity consultants, or districts actively hiding controversial lessons from families. She also asserts that “parents oppose their children being taught that showing your work in math class is ‘white supremacy culture,’ and being forced to locate themselves on an ‘oppression matrix.’”¹¹

Opponents of CRT and related anti-racism ideas also argue that they are not widely accepted and represent a radical racial ideology and an extreme interpretation of U.S. history.¹² While recognizing that race and racism play a part in American history and should be discussed in the classroom, these advocates believe students shouldn’t be taught that systemic racism is the defining characteristic of our nation’s history.^{13,14}

⁶ Issues & Controversies. “Critical Race Theory.”

⁷ World Population Review. “[States that Have Banned Critical Race Theory 2022.](#)”

⁸ Trump, Donald. “[A Plan to Get Divisive & Radical Theories Out of Our Schools](#)” Real Clear Politics. June 21, 2021

⁹ Issues & Controversies. “Critical Race Theory.”

¹⁰ Rufo, Christopher F. “[Going All In: The NEA Pledges to Bring Critical Race Theory to a Public School Near You.](#)” *City Journal*. July 15, 2021.

¹¹ Neily, Nicole. “[Nation’s Largest Teachers Union Chooses Indoctrination over Education.](#)” *Daily Signal*. June 11, 2021.

¹² Issues & Controversies. “Critical Race Theory.”

¹³ Henninger, Daniel. “[Banning Critical Race Theory.](#)” *Wall Street Journal*. June 2, 2021.

¹⁴ Wax, Amy and Richard Vedder. “[The Real Problem with Critical Race Theory.](#)” *Newsweek*. July 2, 2021.

Amy Wax, University of Pennsylvania Law School Professor, and Richard Vedder, Ohio University Economics Professor, argue that CRT offers a one-sided perspective that casts blame for racial disparities on white racism rather than cultural and behavioral differences not tied to slavery, Jim Crow, or structural racism.¹⁵ Those who support state bans on CRT and anti-racist curricula also argue that those ideologies do not teach critical thinking skills or thoughtful deliberation – skills necessary for citizens living in a healthy democracy.¹⁶ Wax and Vedder assert that CRT-based instruction promotes a “one-sided, dogmatic intolerance of any alternative point of view.”¹⁷ Advocates of laws restricting the teaching of CRT assert that differing opinions exist among scholars and policymakers about the roots of racial inequity in the United States and how best to solve the problem. Put simply, they believe CRT and many anti-racism teachings inhibit such discussions.¹⁸

In summary, critics of CRT and anti-racism curricula argue that such education is closeminded, divisive, makes white students feel baseless guilt, and makes students of color feel like victims. They argue that there is a difference between teaching kids an accurate version of history and focusing on CRT – a focus not supported by many parents who find concepts such as “unconscious racism” and “white fragility” coercive and degrading.¹⁹

Opponents of measures to restrict CRT-based or race-conscious curricula argue that education should be racially and socially just and should focus on an accurate history of slavery and Jim Crow laws and their subsequent and continuing impacts. As Becky Pringle, NEA President argues, educators should prepare students to be leaders of a racially and socially just society, and that “we must continuously do the work to challenge ourselves and others to dismantle the racist interconnected systems, and the economic injustices that have perpetuated systemic inequities. We must bring into existence, systems that foster justice and fairness, and equality, and freedom.”²⁰

Some teachers argue that students are already discussing concepts such as race, systemic oppression, and the nation’s history, including protests, and the CRT controversy itself; students are mature and smart enough to learn the complex truth about these topics.²¹ Those who argue against bans to restrict discussions of race in the classroom also assert that limiting education about bigotry and discrimination leads to disparities in wealth and achievement and fosters racist attitudes. If students are not taught that racism exists and has resulted in racial inequality,

¹⁵ Wax, Amy and Richard Vedder. “[The Real Problem with Critical Race Theory.](#)” Newsweek. July 2, 2021.

¹⁶ Issues & Controversies. “Critical Race Theory.”

¹⁷ Wax, Amy and Richard Vedder. “[The Real Problem with Critical Race Theory.](#)” Newsweek. July 2, 2021.

¹⁸ Issues & Controversies. “Critical Race Theory.”

¹⁹ Galston, William. “[A Deeper Look at Critical Race Theory.](#)” *Wall Street Journal*. July 21, 2021.

²⁰ “[Remarks as prepared for delivery by Becky Pringle, President, National Education Association, to the 100th Representative Assembly.](#)” National Education Association.

²¹ Hoover, Janai. “[Critical Race Theory Hysteria Overshadows the Importance of Teaching Kids about Racism.](#)” Vox. July 9, 2021.

they believe that students will draw the conclusion that disparities exist because people of color have less worth.²²

Scholars such as Ibram X. Kendi argue that the problem isn't CRT, but rather the misunderstanding of its meaning. He argues that Republicans have distorted and villainized what CRT actually is.²³ Ibram disputes criticisms of CRT from the right, stating that some opponents of CRT have manufactured a "monster" designed to scare the American public and projected themselves as those who defend the nation from that monster.²⁴ He contends that CRT has been misconstrued and misrepresented for political gain to win over voters who may be uncomfortable with CRT as it has been presented to them.²⁵ In fact, between February 1, 2021 and June 13, 2021, CRT was mentioned by Fox News more than 1,300 times.²⁶ Some argue that this is a Republican "manufactured crisis" used to as a means to criticize how race is taught in schools.²⁷

Others argue that CRT bans are too vague and overly broad, leaving teachers scared to cover material that mentions race or racism.²⁸ They contend that banning CRT and anti-racist education results in the criminalization of curricula that promotes racial equality.²⁹ Some teachers have responded that they can't adequately teach historical events such as the Trail of Tears, Civil War, and Civil Rights movement or utilize texts written by authors of color without addressing race. Critical thinking, they argue, is important in education and can only be achieved by discussing multiple perspectives.³⁰

Some argue that Blacks have been discriminated against throughout the history of the United States, and that they continue to face discrimination, which has led to disproportionately lower socio-economic outcomes. In their view, CRT is an important theory produced from legal scholarship, and like other important theories, it should be discussed, analyzed, and critiqued, not banned.³¹

Teaching about Gender and Sexuality

Recent controversies have also emerged regarding how gender and sexuality are taught in schools. To date, at least a dozen states are considering legislation that bans schools from

²² Issues & Controversies. "Critical Race Theory."

²³ Kendi, Ibram X. "[There is No Debate over Critical Race Theory.](#)" The Atlantic. July 9, 2021.

²⁴ Kendi, Ibram X. "[There is No Debate over Critical Race Theory.](#)" The Atlantic. July 9, 2021.

²⁵ Issues & Controversies. "Critical Race Theory."

²⁶ Galson, William. "[How Adherents See Critical Race Theory.](#)" *Wall Street Journal*. July 14, 2021.

²⁷ Lopez, Brian. "[Watch: North Texas Superintendents Say Uproar over Critical Race Theory in Schools is a Republican 'Manufactured Crisis'.](#)" *The Texas Tribune*. March 9, 2022.

²⁸ Issues & Controversies. "Critical Race Theory."

²⁹ Kreiss, Daniel, Alice Marwick, and Francesca Bolla Tripodi. "[The Anti-Critical Race Theory Movement Will Profoundly Affect Public Education.](#)" *Scientific American*. November 10, 2021.

³⁰ Stout, Cathryn. "['Teaching the Truth': Tennessee Educators Respond to Proposed Limits on Teaching about Racism.](#)" *Chalkbeat*. May 10, 2021.

³¹ Robinson, Nathan. "[Why Critical Race Theory Should Be Taught in Schools.](#)" *Current Affairs*. July 27, 2021.

“using a curriculum or discussing topics of gender identity or sexual orientation.”³² At least 20 states have considered laws “that would either limit discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity in public school classrooms or allow parents to sue to remove books containing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ) themes from school libraries.”³³

In North Carolina, House Bill 755 was passed by the state Senate in June 2022, but legislators do not have the supermajority needed to override a gubernatorial veto promised by Gov. Roy Cooper. The bill would prohibit classroom instruction in grades K-3 on sexual orientation and gender identity, and would require parental notification if kids are using gender pronouns other than those in their school records.³⁴

Florida gained national attention when it passed its Parental Rights in Education Act in March 2022, and was quickly derided by its opponents as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill. The law prohibits classroom “discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity” in grades kindergarten through third or “in a manner that is not age-appropriate” in higher grades. Additionally, under the law, parents have the right to sue if they believe that a school is infringing on their “fundamental right” to make decisions regarding the “upbringing and control of their children.”³⁵ However, most states do not prescribe the way LGBTQ+ issues should be taught, leaving schools throughout the nation’s 13,000 school districts with much discretion.³⁶

When it comes to curriculum involving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) figures and reading materials in elementary schools, Americans are divided, with 54% being comfortable with their inclusion. Parents are evenly divided on the issue, with 50% being comfortable and 50% not comfortable with including this material.³⁷

A recent study reports that among youth aged 13 to 17, roughly 1.4% or 300,000 identify as transgender; these youth make up 18% of the 1.6 million transgender population.³⁸ Among all Americans, 7.1% identify as LGBTQ+ with the percentage of youth rising, according to a recent Gallup poll.³⁹ Support for LGBTQ+ rights has increased over the past two decades, with 71% of Americans supportive of same sex couples having the same rights as “traditional” couples in

³² Jones, Dustin and Jonathan Franklin. “[Not Just Florida. More than a Dozen States Propose So-Called ‘Don’t Say Gay’ Bills.](#)” NPR. April 10, 2022.

³³ Issues & Controversies. “Gay Rights.”

³⁴ Hui, T. Keung. “[Will NC Schools Limit LGBTQ Discussion? It Rests on this Year’s Legislative Elections.](#)” *The News & Observer*. July 12, 2022.

³⁵ Constantino, Annika Kim. “[Businesses Oppose Florida’s ‘Don’t Say Gay’ Ban on Discussion of LGBTQ Issues in Public Schools.](#)” CNBC. March 29, 2022.

³⁶ Sawchuck, Stephen. “[What’s Driving the Push to Restrict Schools on LGBTQ Issues?](#)” *Education Week*. April 19, 2022.

³⁷ Cox, Daniel. “[Public Still at Odds About LGBTQ Issues in Public School.](#)” Survey Center on American Life. September 27, 2021.

³⁸ “[How Many Adults and Youth Identify as Transgender in the United States?](#)” UCLA School of Law Williams Institute. June 2022.

³⁹ Jones, Jeffrey. “[LGBT Identification in the U.S. Ticks up to 7.1%.](#)” Gallup. February 17, 2022.

2022, compared to 21% in 1996.⁴⁰ However, many socially conservative Americans still oppose same sex marriage and view it as a sinful lifestyle while seeing the gay rights movement as a threat to religious freedom.⁴¹

Opponents of laws that limit coverage of LGBTQ+ issues in schools say it's a homophobic attempt to marginalize and ostracize LGBTQ+ people in public places. Like rules that ban CRT, opponents argue the law is vague and will result in teachers not being clear about what they can and cannot teach.⁴² The Biden administration released a statement declaring that the bill "is designed to target and attack the kids who need support the most – LGBTQI+ students, who are already vulnerable to bullying and violence just for being themselves."⁴³ Arjee Restar, assistant professor of epidemiology at the University of Washington, stated, "The institutionalization of these bills is an overt form of structural transphobia and homophobia, and it goes against all public health evidence in creating a safe and supportive environment for transgender, nonbinary, queer, gay and lesbian youths and teachers to thrive."⁴⁴

According to *USA Today*, such measures are leaving youth in the United States feeling frustrated, confused, isolated, and hopeless. LGBTQ+ students worry that their conversations may be monitored and fear discrimination, bullying, and hardship.⁴⁵ Additionally, discriminatory policies can contribute to such problems as truancy, higher dropout rates, lowered GPAs, drug and alcohol abuse, and self harm among LGBTQ+ youth who experience anti-gay and anti-trans harassment.⁴⁶

Research indicates that LGBTQ+ students experience better educational outcomes when they have more affirming adults in their schools, and these youth feel safer and more protected in states with nondiscrimination laws and policies. Research also demonstrates that students report feeling safer and experiencing less harassment at schools with a gay-straight alliance (GSA).⁴⁷ LGBTQ+ students also have about a 40% lower rate of attempted suicide when attending schools that affirm and support their identities versus ones that don't. This disparity is particularly alarming, as over half of transgender and nonbinary youths report they considered attempting suicide in the past year. Schools can be supportive of LGBTQ+ youth by including

⁴⁰ [LGBT Rights](#). Gallup.

⁴¹ Issues & Controversies. "Gay Rights."

⁴² Issues & Controversies. "Gay Rights."

⁴³ Ferrechio, Susan. "[Florida Debates Ban on Teaching Gender, Sexual Identity in Primary School.](#)" The Washington Times. February 22, 2022.

⁴⁴ Constantino, Annika Kim. "[Businesses Oppose Florida's 'Don't Say Gay' Ban on Discussion of LGBTQ Issues in Public Schools.](#)" CNBC. March 29, 2022.

⁴⁵ Stanton, Cady. "[As 'Don't Say Gay' and Similar Bills Take Hold, LGBTQ Youths Feel They're 'Getting Crushed'.](#)" USA Today. May 9, 2022.

⁴⁶ Strain, Daniel. "[From 'Don't Say Gay' to Bathrooms and Sports: How Debates Over LGBTQ+ Rights Impact Kids.](#)" *CU Boulder Today*. University of Colorado Boulder. June 20, 2022.

⁴⁷ Strain, Daniel. "[From 'Don't Say Gay' to Bathrooms and Sports: How Debates Over LGBTQ+ Rights Impact Kids.](#)" *CU Boulder Today*. University of Colorado Boulder. June 20, 2022.

content that positively represents LGBTQ people in the curriculum.⁴⁸ In summary, opponents of such measures cite harm to LGBTQ+ children and their rights as individuals as grounds to permit—and even discourage—active discussion of LGBTQ+ issues in K-12 public schools.

Supporters of laws that limit coverage of LGBTQ+ issues in schools believe that parents should be responsible for what their children learn about these disputed topics. Rep. John Kavanagh of Arizona sponsored a bill that would require parental consent for kids to join school clubs such as gay-straight alliances, citing concerns that such clubs could encourage or influence “controversial” lifestyle choices as normal; he argues that parents ought to consent to LGBTQ clubs and school messaging that promotes such lifestyles.⁴⁹ Rhode Island State Representative Patricia Morgan introduced legislation what would require parental consent before teachers can address students by names other than their given names or pronouns that differ from their biological gender, stating that “activist teachers” were trying to become involved in the “personal and private sexual emotions of children.” She further stated, “The school should be informing the parents right away so parents can get professional help for their child. A professional [counselor] needs to deal with someone, not an ideologically driven teacher.”⁵⁰

These arguments are connected to a concern that the increase in kids identifying as LGBTQ+ is “a form of social contagion which our educational and medical institutions are encouraging and accelerating...There is no clear evidence that any of this is making kids happier or better adjusted; instead, all we are seeing is a worsening of teen mental health, blurring into a young-adult landscape where sex and relationships and marriage are now on the wane. So what we need now is probably more emphasis on biology, normativity, and reconciliation with your own maleness or femaleness, not further deconstruction.”⁵¹

Some suggest that the current coverage of gender in schools promotes a radical gender ideology that, instead of embracing the breadth of what it means to be a man or a woman, asserts that individuals who do not conform to prevailing gender stereotypes should change their gender.⁵² This ideology not only encourages students to become estranged from their bodies, particularly as they go through the natural changes of puberty, but also undermines the progress made in protecting women’s rights, spaces, and identities.⁵³ In summary, supporters of laws restricting how gender and sexuality are taught in public schools cite parental choice and control as well as morality in their arguments for such legislation.

⁴⁸ [“The Trevor Project Research Brief: LGBTQ Youth Suicide Prevention in Schools.”](#) The Trevor Project. August 2021.

⁴⁹ Sawchuck, Stephen. [“What’s Driving the Push to Restrict Schools on LGBTQ Issues?”](#) *Education Week*. April 19, 2022.

⁵⁰ Sawchuck, Stephen. [“What’s Driving the Push to Restrict Schools on LGBTQ Issues?”](#) *Education Week*. April 19, 2022.

⁵¹ Douthat, Ross. [“How to Make Sense of the New L.G.B.T.Q. Culture War.”](#) *The New York Times*. April 13, 2022.

⁵² Parents Defending Education. “Gender Ideology 101.” <https://defendinged.org/resources/gender-ideology-101/>.

⁵³ Wright, Colin. [“When Asked ‘What Are Your Pronouns,’ Don’t Answer.”](#) *The Wall Street Journal*. February 22, 2022.

Summary Table

	Teaching Practice	Supporters' Arguments	Opponents' Arguments
<i>Gender Identity</i>	Schools teach that gender is fluid and disconnected from biological sex.	This practice affirms the dignity of all students (and people) by normalizing different non-conforming gender identities and providing a safe space for them. It also empowers students to explore, question and change their gender identity if they so choose.	This practice encourages students to adopt rigid gender stereotypes and develop an unhealthy relationship with their biological sex. It also undermines the progress made in protecting women's rights, spaces, and identities.
<i>Sexual Orientation</i>	Schools teach that sexual orientation exists on a wide spectrum.	This practice affirms the dignity of all students (and people) by normalizing different sexual orientations and providing a safe space for them. It also empowers students to explore, question and change their sexual orientation if they so choose.	This practice normalizes lifestyles that many people believe to be a choice that is immoral and wrong. It inappropriately teaches moral lessons that should be the responsibility of parents and their faith communities.
<i>Race and Racism</i>	Schools teach that structural racism has historical and current impacts on society and leads to disadvantageous outcomes for people of color. As a result, people have different and defining lived experiences based on their race.	This practice reveals important truths about the effects of racism in society that are a critical part of their education as citizens, critical thinkers, and social justice advocates. It shows how white people are intrinsically privileged and people of color face significant obstacles due to their race. It encourages students to work towards a more equitable society for all.	This practice paints a simplistic and unfair picture of American history that ignores the fact that disparities may exist due to factors other than historical and current racism. It inappropriately suggests that white people are guilty of and the beneficiaries of racism and that people of color are victims and incapable of personal agency.

Setting Expectations (5 min)

In this section, we will review the “Expected Outcomes,” Deliberative Dispositions,” and “Conversation Agreements” below.

Expected Outcomes of the Conversation

The purpose of this deliberation is to deepen our understanding of the arguments about who should have responsibility for educating children about contentious social issues such as race, gender, and sexuality. Over the course of the deliberation, we will have the opportunity to listen to the perspectives of our fellow deliberators as well as share our own experiences and beliefs about these topics. By the end of the conversation, we will have deliberated about the strongest and weakest arguments for either parents or schools being responsible for covering these topics. We will also have discussed our highest priorities for reforming related education policies in the United States. Finally, we will have reflected on our conversation, our areas of agreement and disagreement, and what we have learned from our time together.

Deliberative Dispositions

The DCI has identified several “deliberative dispositions” as critical to the success of deliberative enterprises. When participants adopt these dispositions, they are much more likely to feel their deliberations are meaningful, respectful, and productive. Several of the Conversation Agreements recommended below directly reflect and reinforce these dispositions, which include a commitment to egalitarianism, open mindedness, empathy, charity, attentiveness, and anticipation, among others. A full list and description of these dispositions is available at <https://deliberativecitizenship.org/deliberative-dispositions/>.

Conversation Agreements

In entering into this discussion, to the best of our ability, we each agree to:

1. Be authentic and respectful
2. Be an attentive and active listener
3. Be a purposeful and concise speaker
4. Approach fellow deliberators’ stories, experiences, and arguments with curiosity, not hostility
5. Assume the best - and not the worst - about the intentions and values of others, and avoid snap judgements
6. Demonstrate intellectual humility, recognizing that no one has all the answers, by asking questions and making space for others to do the same
7. Critique the idea we disagree with, not the person expressing it, and remember to practice empathy
8. Note areas of both agreement and disagreement
9. Respect the confidentiality of the discussion
10. Avoid speaking in absolutes (e.g., “All people think this,” or “No educated people hold that view”)

Getting to Know Each Other (5 min)

In this section, we will take less than a minute to share our names, where we are currently located, and 2-3 aspects of our identities that are important to us. These could be our gender pronouns, our occupation, our family status (e.g., husband, mother, etc.), our hometown, our favorite hobby, etc. There is no pressure to do so, but everyone is welcome to type in any, all, or none of these aspects of your identity into your Zoom nameplate (just right-click on your own image and click “Rename”).

Engaging Tensions around Children’s Education (10 min)

In this section, we will examine the arguments for who should be primarily responsible for educating children, both generally and about contentious topics such as race, gender, and sexuality. We will each take 1-2 minutes to answer each of the questions below, without interruption or crosstalk.

- What are the ***strongest arguments for parents being responsible for children’s education?*** Why are they the strongest arguments?
- What are the ***strongest arguments for schools being responsible for children’s education?*** Why are they the strongest arguments?
- Which of these arguments do you find to be ***the most persuasive?***

After everyone has answered these questions, the group is welcome to take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions and responses. Continue exploring the topic as time allows.

Engaging Tensions around Teaching about Race and Racism (10 min)

In this section, we will examine the arguments for and against teaching CRT-based or race-conscious curricula. We will each take 1-2 minutes to answer each of the questions below, without interruption or crosstalk.

- What are the ***strongest arguments for supporting CRT-based or race-conscious curricula and discussions in the classroom?*** Why are they the strongest arguments?
- What are the ***strongest arguments for restricting CRT-based or race-conscious curricula and discussions in the classroom?*** Why are they the strongest arguments?
- Which of these arguments do you find to be ***the most persuasive?***

After everyone has answered these questions, the group is welcome to take some time for clarifying or follow up questions and responses. Continue exploring the topic as time allows.

Engaging Tensions around Teaching about Gender and Sexuality (10 min)

In this section, we will examine the arguments for and against teaching about gender and sexuality in the classroom. We will each take 1-2 minutes to answer each of the questions below, without interruption or crosstalk.

- What are the ***strongest arguments for restricting curricula and discussions that cover gender and sexuality in the classroom?*** Why are they the strongest arguments?
- What are the ***strongest arguments for including curricula and discussions that cover gender and sexuality in the classroom?*** Why are they the strongest arguments?
- Which of these arguments do you find to be ***the most persuasive?***

After everyone has answered these questions, the group is welcome to take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions and responses. Continue exploring the topic as time allows.

Identifying, Evaluating, and Prioritizing Principles and Policies (10 min)

We will now discuss the principles we might use to identify, evaluate, and prioritize specific measures to take related to teaching about race, racism, gender and sexuality in K-12 classrooms. We will each address one of the two question below, and then together we'll explore our areas of agreement and disagreement. We can also generate additional ideas that may transcend and elicit more support than existing proposals.

- **Who should determine what is included in K-12 curricula on these topics, and how should they decide?**
- **What principles might we use to identify, evaluate, and prioritize our education policies and norms with regard to teaching contentious social issues such as race, gender and sexuality?**

As time allows, we should engage with one another on our answers to these questions.

If there is strong disagreement in the group, try to explore the underlying reasons for the disagreement – are they based on different factual interpretations, different value emphases, or different life experiences? Perhaps you can agree on where precisely you disagree, which can be helpful. Alternatively, if there is widespread agreement in the group, try to dig deeper and examine the nuances of these policies – are there particular contexts, for example, where your agreement breaks down? Or perhaps your reasons for supporting particular policies are different? Exploring this complexity can be helpful as well.

Reflections (10 min)

While today's conversation is an important step in the journey, figuring how best to educate children about the complexities of race, gender and sexuality will take time and commitment. Please reflect on the insights from your discussion with your fellow participants today, and then answer one of the questions below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group is welcome to continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

1. What was most meaningful or valuable to you during this deliberation?
2. Where are the areas of both agreement and disagreement in your group?
3. Have any new ways to think about this issue occurred to you as we have talked today? Any new ideas that might transcend our current way of conceiving of the problem and its potential solutions?
4. Was there anything that was said or not said that you think should be addressed with the group? Are there any perspectives missing from this conversation that you feel would be important to hear?
5. What did you hear that gives you hope for the future of conversations on issues related to teaching kids about issues such as race, gender, and sexuality?
6. Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the deliberation you just had?

About This Guide

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The Deliberative Citizenship Initiative

The Deliberative Citizenship Initiative (DCI) is dedicated to the creation of opportunities for Davidson students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the wider community to productively engage with one another on difficult and contentious issues facing our community and society. The DCI regularly hosts facilitated deliberations on a wide range of topics and organizes training workshops for deliberation facilitators. To learn more about these opportunities, visit www.deliberativecitizenship.org.

DCI Deliberation Guides

The DCI has launched this series of Deliberation Guides as a foundation for such conversations. They provide both important background information on the topics in question and a specific framework for engaging with these topics. The Guides are designed to be informative without being overwhelming and structured without being inflexible. They cover a range of topics and come in a variety of formats but share several common elements, including opportunities to commit to a shared set of Conversation Agreements, learn about diverse perspectives, and reflect together on the conversation and its yield. The DCI encourages conversations based on these guides to be moderated by a trained facilitator. After each conversation, the DCI also suggests that its associated Pathways Guide be distributed to the conversation's participants.

DCI Pathways Guides

For every Deliberation Guide, the DCI has also developed an associated Pathways Guide, which outlines opportunities for action that participants can consider that are related to the covered topic. These Pathways Guides reinforce the DCI's commitment to an action orientation, a key deliberative disposition. While dialogue and deliberation are themselves important contributors to a healthy democracy, they become even more valuable when they lead to individual or collective action on the key issues facing society. Such action can come in a range of forms and should be broadly understood. It might involve developing a better understanding of a topic, connecting with relevant local or national organizations, generating new approaches to an issue, or deciding to support a particular policy.

If you make use of this guide in a deliberation, please provide attribution to the Deliberative Citizenship Initiative and email dcideliberativecitizenship.org to tell us about your event. To access more of our growing library of Deliberation Guides, Pathways Guides and other resources, visit www.deliberativecitizenship.org/readings-and-resources.