



MSD of Washington Township (WT)
Statement on Critical Race Theory
July 21, 2021

Today, in our local and national news media, we are hearing much discussion about an academic theory known as critical race theory (“CRT”).¹ School Board meetings across the country have been packed with opposition to the theory and some states (e.g., TN, TX, FL, etc.) have even banned racial conversations about systemic racism in schools. Our Washington Township Board of Education, Washington Township Administration, Washington Township Education Association (WTEA), Washington Township Advancement Center (AC), Washington Township Parent Council Network (PCN), Washington Township Community Coalition, and Washington Township District Equity Leadership Team (DELT) want to make clear that while **CRT is not curriculum being taught in our District, all Washington Township schools are safe spaces however for productive learning where students can talk about race and other humanity-related topics relative to age-appropriate curriculum and learning objectives aligned with the [Indiana Academic State Standards](#).**

CRT first emerged in the 1970s as a part of legal academia under the scholarship of Derrick Bell (*and numerous other scholars to follow*). It was developed to analyze the Civil Rights movement and the slow pace of racial reforms in the United States. CRT begins with the notion that racism is normalized in the fabric of American society. It provides historical contexts and analyses to demonstrate the pervasiveness of racism in our country. CRT tenets are typically taught at the college level (i.e., *interest convergence, permanence of racism, intersectionality*, etc.).

Many ideological groups have made their own interpretations regarding the motives behind the critical race theory and have spread misinformation to further our country’s political divide. The term CRT has been used as a catch-all phrase to discourage and suppress any discussions on race, equity, allyship and inclusion. Teaching CRT as a scholarly body of work does not equate to providing space for students and staff to embrace conversations about race relative to learning and experiences.

¹ When the acronym “CRT” is used within WT among staff it stands for culturally responsive teaching or “CR” for cultural responsiveness. Culturally responsive teaching “is about helping culturally and linguistically diverse students who have been marginalized in schools build their skill and capacity to engage in rigorous work. The focus isn’t on motivation but on improving students’ brainpower and information processing skills,” as defined by researcher and author Zaretta Hammond.

As leaders in WT, we believe the work of creating affirming, educational spaces requires educators to acknowledge the identities, histories, and experiences of students. This includes race and racial experiences. Additionally, we believe that we cannot ignore the inequities on an institutional or societal level that impact the academic performance and well-being of the students we serve (e.g., *racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, antisemitism, ableism, etc.*). We are proud of the diversity found in our student body and believe it's imperative to give our students the tools to advocate for themselves and others while striving to build more cohesive, equitable and just communities for all.

We believe culturally responsive learning environments place students' voices and needs at the center of learning. Our schools have to generate conditions that support learning and actively remove barriers that yield to opportunity and achievement gaps. This requires us to be critical examiners of our own systems and have productive staff conversations about race or any oppressive structure (i.e., policies, instructional practices, etc.) that marginalizes students. It also involves educators understanding how students learn best based on research, and teaching them how to process as well as manage their emotions effectively via social emotional learning techniques.

To accomplish these important objectives, WT Schools developed a framework for teaching & learning self-titled **Elevate**, that does not derive from critical race theory, and establishes a vision that equitable schools operate with the fundamental belief that **every student in every classroom can and will elevate their learning to the highest potential** if:

- students experience **affirming spaces** in schools for learning
- a strong **teacher, student and family learning partnership** is cultivated
- students participate in socially, physically, and intellectually safe learning communities where their **identities and voices are affirmed, valued, and represented**
- there are high expectations for **culturally responsive, student centered instruction**
- educators model a **growth mindset** and commit to purposeful collaboration and professional learning

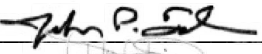

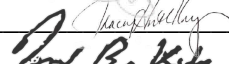


We welcome stakeholders to learn more about WT Schools' efforts to support achievement for all learners at our website:

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) <https://www.msdt.k12.in.us/equity/>

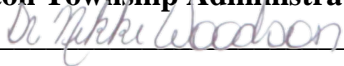
Social Emotional Learning (SEL) <https://www.msdt.k12.in.us/equity/sel/>

Elevate Framework for Teaching & Learning <https://www.msdt.k12.in.us/academic-programs/>

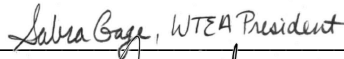
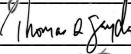


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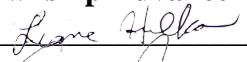
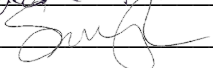
Washington Township Administration

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, Tom Gayda, WTEA Vice President
, Angela Tipton, WTEA Secretary
, Anthony Dean, WTEA Treasurer

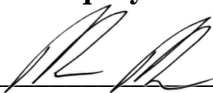
Washington Township Advancement Center (AC)

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MSDWT District Equity Leadership Team (DELT)

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Washington Township Community Coalition

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