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APRIL 2023

DDEL Voices

Council for Exceptional Children

DDEL Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners

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President's Corner

AMPLIFYING DDEL'S VOICE TO RESIST INTERSECTIONAL MARGINALIZATION

DOSUN KO, PHD
DDEL PRESIDENT

In these unsettled times, I want to reaffirm DDEL's collective commitment to racial equity, disability justice, and an intersectional coalition in all of our work. These are not just buzzwords to be thrown around lightly – they represent a moral and ethical compass that must guide our collective efforts to create inclusive learning environments where all students with ability differences can learn, thrive, and actualize their full potential.

At the heart of this work is the recognition that race and disability are inextricably intertwined. Students with and without disabilities from Black, Indigenous, and people of Color

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face compounded challenges and marginalization in the racist and ableist school systems. As members of DDEL, we must be vigilant in challenging these intersectional injustices.

We must also recognize the urgent challenges we face in achieving DDEL's mission. One such challenge is the recent wave of legislative attempts to ban critical theories from our classrooms. The political tactics to ban critical theories are not only misguided but also detrimental to our students, our communities, and our society. These policies perpetuate a system of oppression by erasing the voices and experiences of historically marginalized groups. Critical theories can function as interpretive lenses to critically problematize structural contradictions entrenched in the social, political, legal, and economic systems and take actions to address structural inequities. Without critical lenses, we cannot fully grasp the root causes of the educational injustice we seek to address.

This issue of the DDEL Newsletter purposefully honors and amplifies the voices, resistance, and lived experiences of those directly impacted by laws and policies that seek to suppress culturally sustaining pedagogy and content related to race, ability, gender, sexual orientation, and other intersectional identities. This issue aims to create a dialogic space in which DDEL membership collectively builds politicized solidarity and coalition to protect democratic values under attack. We must collectively problematize and resist these retrogressive political attempts to silence and erase critical inquiry and maintain our commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all. This requires that we come together as a community of resistance and speak out against these misguided policies. We must also continue to collaborate and work together to find new and innovative solutions to the challenges that we face.

We also recognize that this work is ongoing and that it requires a sustained commitment to learning, growth, and action. We must listen to and learn from those who have been profoundly impacted and use our positions of privilege and power to advocate for real change.

I want to thank each contributor to the issue of the DDEL newsletter for sharing their lived experiences and voices. Together, we can create a world that values diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and justice for all learners with intersectional identities.

Dosun Ko, PhD
President, Division of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (DDEL),
Council for Exceptional Children

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Mission

To improve, through professional excellence and advocacy, the education and quality of life for individuals with exceptionalities from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic communities.

Vision

DDEL is an education organization renowned for its leadership in advancing knowledge and practice, and shaping policy to enhance the quality of life for diverse individuals with exceptionalities. DDEL's commitment to forging partnerships results in solutions to persistent and emerging barriers to social justice. DDEL is recognized globally for its expertise and advocacy.

Core Values

Diversity, social justice, equity, and inclusiveness

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Voices from the Field

STILL A SLAVE

CONTRIBUTED BY:

Buruuj Tunsill, Ashley Grays, Sharde Theordore

Still A Slave

I am still a slave
Forced to adhere to your unjust rules, forced to obey
Obey laws that silence my voice
Not giving me options, not giving me a choice
To say what's on my mind
I simply have to adhere to your rules by design
Because a dominant group
Cannot handle a different view
I run the risk of dismantling my future career
By speaking up on topics that you may not want to hear
By your standards, I am only classified as a scholar when my work fits into the White gaze
But if I dare to be brave
And cite the opposition, I am set ablaze
A very narrow road, they paved...
For me
So now I must seek alternative treatment
For a mind debilitating disease
As explosives are going off in my head
I hear voices telling me
"To be careful, be 'professional' do not be too 'crass'"
"Conform for the sake of their comfort"
"Abandon your own comfort."
"And your career might last"
Yes, they're perpetuating
Mental illness

cont. p.5

As I, like many, do not want to be another person on their hit list
Possibly “booted out” of the academy
Due to a different point of view I choose to see
Revealing authenticity
Refusing to be discreet
It’s baffling because nothing really changed
I am still a slave
And day to day, freedom is the only thing I crave
So do I escape, do I run free?
Lose out on money and a life of stability?
I’m hanging by the throat, I can’t speak
Black and outspoken as I want to be
I’m still a slave to your ideology
I want the “American dream”
But I am still at the mercy of your hand
“White is right” and allegiance to the White American dominance, I stand
It’s the Black person’s plight
Utilize free will or be a slave to their deal

- Buruuj Tunsill

cont. p.6

In the United States Black and Brown students have always been subject to laws that muffle their voices. In the 1850s most states outlawed the expression of anti-slavery sentiments, and during the 1950s there were many successful attempts to ban textbooks that did not offer a sympathetic view of the south's loss in the civil war (Blakemore, 2022). In the 1980s, the New York school board banned books from authors like Langston Hughes and Toni Morrison (Blakemore, 2022). Today, states like Florida are passing legislation such as the "Stop Woke Act," which limits educators' and students' exposure to ideas, concepts and experiences that may be different than their own and prevents their ability to have honest conversations about diversity. James Baldwin once said, "a teacher who is not free to teach what he wants, is not a teacher" (Denny, 2019).

Black scholars often feel pressure to be subservient to oppressive work-related demands for the sake of maintaining and accelerating in their career. As scholars, we believe in having open and honest conversations with our peers, students, and professors; however, we can no longer express our thoughts without thinking twice. We are not allowed to truly be free within academia. There is a lurking feeling of unknown consequences for discussing topics that can cause certain individuals to feel guilty or uncomfortable. Transparency has always been what set us apart as educators, resulting in academic and social growth for our students. As we progressed in academia, we expected to carry knowledge and light, yet there is a double standard of what and how we present real issues in the classroom. Current legislature purports to protect White students from "psychological distress" caused by learning their history, but the same concern is not afforded to minoritized students who have systematically been oppressed through these historical realities.

Furthermore, engaging academic experiences such as analyzing lyrics with students and relating literature and real-life events to music have enriched our students' experiences; however, these new laws force educators to eliminate any remnants of non-dominant culture within the classroom. Proponents of these laws feel schools are becoming too political, but in reality, we all live in a world of politics. Therefore, children as well as future educators should be informed on what they are up against in today's world and should learn history from all points of view and not just one. Such an approach would allow learners to form their own evidence-based decisions on how to navigate life. As individuals of many words, having our words restricted has rendered us voiceless. Being silenced makes it difficult to talk to some peers and professors and it will make it that much more problematic to have open discussions with future students. We have always gone against the grain and spoken up on topics that many people did not care to discuss, but nowadays I must tread lightly if I want "success."

When it is all said and done, in the words of Nas (2002), if we "read more, learn more [we] can change the globe," but the reality is that this society does not want to see our youth grow. As Black and Brown students and educators, we are indeed living a "hard-knock life" (Jay-Z, 1998), and sometimes I feel intellectual suppression will continue to seep through until I am laid to rest (Buju Banton, 1995). The laws of this land are letting me know that our culture and our roots do not matter. The laws make it clear that Black educators must be strategic with our language as the comfort of others is still the only priority in rooms where people of color – and children of color– are regularly uncomfortable.

cont. p.7

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Governmental Relations Brief

TRAUMA-INFORMED EDUCATION IN THE COVID-19 ERA: A WARNING AND GUIDANCE

CONTRIBUTED BY:

By: William A. Proffitt, Dian Mawene, Rae L. Tewa, and Germaine Koziarski

On March 13, 2020, the President of the United States (U.S.) issued a proclamation declaring a national emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the U.S. and its respective institutions (e.g., schools, hospitals, and small businesses) have faced an uphill battle adjusting to the challenges and opportunities presented in this new world. Many schools, in particular, struggle to determine the best courses of action for supporting the learning and development of students with and without disability labels. The question of whether to return to business as usual or reimagine and reshape how schooling is done lies at the heart of the problem.

As before the pandemic, educators and other school professionals experience the greatest difficulty meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners who endure multiple intersecting oppressions (e.g., racism, ableism, and classism; Gallegos et al., 2022; Jackson et al., 2018). Creating safe learning environments and experiences that nurture CLD students' social-emotional development is especially demanding for educational leaders. COVID-19 and the corresponding economic downturn disproportionately devastated Black and Brown communities that were already battling decades of systemic racism and government neglect. Examples of systemic racism include the war on drugs and prison system that disproportionately impact Black families (Alexander, 2020), and a color-evasive housing market that segregates racially and economically minoritized students and families in certain parts of their communities (Mawene & Bal, 2020). Many Black and Brown children experienced additional trauma as they lost loved ones to the coronavirus and faced increased food and housing insecurity (Laster Pirtle, 2020). Traditional ways of supporting CLD students' psychosocial well-being are insufficient in this context. And arguably, such practices have always been inadequate.

The growing number of calls to give more directed attention to students' mental health, particularly their trauma, is important (e.g., Burdick & Corr, 2021; Hunter et al., 2021). Too often, what has passed as mental health support in schools are isolated instances of targeted interventions for students labeled "problematic" (Maynard et al., 2019;

Thomas et al., 2019). While the authors of this brief laud the burgeoning interest in cultivating the social-emotional worlds of all students, including vulnerable CLD students, we caution against the creation and adoption of models that seek to heal students without addressing the systemic and cultural forces that produce trauma. Consider the fact that schools–typically viewed as intervention points for trauma–are often, themselves, sites of trauma for many students, especially CLD students labeled disabled (Petrone & Stanton, 2021).

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For instance, in a study by Ferri and Connor (2010), Black and Latina girls labeled learning disabled described many challenges they endured related to their disability labels and special education placement. The labels carried stigma. The girls voiced that their peers and teachers treated them differently (e.g., thought less of them) when they learned the girls received special education services. To avoid these negative experiences, the girls engaged in activities that hid the reality of their special education placement, including withholding the truth about the classes they were in. Some girls also reported that their IEP diplomas limited their post-school opportunities, such as attending college and going to medical school.

Some trauma-informed interventions have been shown to reproduce the very ideologies responsible for Black and Brown people's position at the bottom of the U.S. socio-political hierarchy. Goldin et al. (2021) identified that policies and practices that claim to be culturally responsive or trauma-informed are rooted in "white saviorism" that situates educators to utilize trauma-informed practices to "save" historically marginalized students. White saviorism is deeply rooted in racism. In this context, racism is perpetuated when professionals perceive students' home environments and past histories as the core sources of trauma while ignoring the glaring systemic racism that leads to multiple layers of inequities impacting students' lives. Further, like special education, trauma-informed education is largely rooted in a medical framework that locates deficits within individual people and seeks to fix those deficits via so-called objective interventions (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019; Petrone & Stanton, 2021). The medical orientation toward trauma positions students as passive recipients of treatment rather than active participants in the eradication of oppressive policies, practices, and cultures that generate traumatic experiences.

The employment of any educational intervention is a cultural practice (Kozleski & Proffitt, 2020; Waitoller & Artiles, 2016). How school professionals–teachers, principals, speech-language therapists, psychologists, social workers, and paraeducators–make meaning of and implement a particular intervention is influenced by their personal histories, beliefs, values, and assumptions, and the context in which they conduct their work (Kozleski et al., 2020). The future of trauma-informed education in a post-COVID world must include professionals who (a) recognize the ways culture mediates teaching, learning, and human development (Lee et al., 2020), and (b) are willing and prepared to work with students to contest the dominant culture that privileges bodies and ways of being that are White, abled, English-speaking, male, cisgender, heterosexual, Christian, and middle-class (González et al., 2019; Thorius et al., 2020). Addressing trauma also demands that professionals reflect on the ways they are personally complicit in producing traumatic experiences for children.

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STATE CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

State subdivisions are a great way to build and work together. Please contact these subdivision presidents and organizers to get involved. We meet at least twice a year to share plans, ideas, and strategies.

STATE SUBDIVISIONS COLLABORATION MEETING
Subdivisions leaders, interested in starting a subdivision, chapter presidents and committees are invited to collaborate May 17, 2023 6-7 PM via Zoom

Register to attend:
https://albany.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJModuyvqz0vGNTBlJWelLqtvGY6jzjrEtC-

New York	Rene Parmar, President, parmarr@stjohns.edu
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STATE PRESIDENTS IN THESE STATES ARE WORKING ON SUBDIVISIONS

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Subdivision Chairs Let us know what's happening in your state by contacting DDEL's Membership Chair. The Membership Chair should also be contacted if you are interested in forming a subdivision.
Membership Chair Tammy Ellis-Robinson tellis-robinson@albany.edu

MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Welcome New Members!

Please welcome new and rejoining DDEL members. We are so pleased to have you join the Division of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (DDEL) community and look forward to getting to know you better. We invite you to reach out and get involved with one of our committees.

Professional Development
Governmental Relations
Research and Professional Issues
Membership and Subdivisions
Publications

New Member Highlight

Dr. Aubry Threlkeld

Aubry Threlkeld is the Myrt Harper Rose '56 Dean of Education and Codirector of the doctoral programs in education at Endicott College. Dr. Threlkeld has given 100+ invited talks internationally in pedagogy, disability studies, 2SLGBTQIA+ studies, Mad studies and cultural studies. During the last 16 years, Dr. Threlkeld has taught at Pace University; the Experimental College at Tufts University; and as a lecturer in Studies of Women, Gender and Sexuality at Harvard University. They have advised a number of national projects, including the Collaborative on Racialized Disability (CORD) as part of Easterseals International where they focus on improving the lives of Black children with disabilities.

cont. p.14

New Member Highlight cont.

They also advised a documentary on mental health advocacy and the arts, Orchestrating Change, funded through a Massachusetts Humanities Council, now widely available on public television. They have 25 publications focused primarily on the practical work of curriculum development for children and youth with disabilities, trauma-informed pedagogy, and more recently Mad studies. They have a doctorate in education from Harvard University, a masters in science from Mercy College, and a masters in business administration from Endicott College. They position themselves as Mad, Queer, Genderqueer, Neuroqueer, and as a white person of Romani descent.

Recent Publications

Dr. Threlkeld's memoir/autoethnographic place-based reflection on living with mental illness was published in Tinfoil Hats, edited by Dr. Phil Smith. The chapter is entitled "Charleston Memorial." (April 2023)

Dr. Threlkeld has co-authored a paper with colleagues at Drexel University and Colombia-Presbyterian Hospital for International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health entitled "Community Health Worker (CHW)-Led Models that Address Local Inequities and Bridge Gaps in Care during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond." (April 2023)

Dr. Threlkeld recently co-authored a book review in Teacher's College Record, LGBTQI Allies in Education. (March 2023)

Dr. Threlkeld's co-edited volume Trauma in Adult and Higher Education (2022) is being featured as part of a regional conference on trauma informed pedagogy.

project 2020

Creating a vision of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in all of CEC

"We pledge to uphold the vision of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to support all of our members, volunteers, and staff as well as the infants, toddlers, and students with exceptionalities and families we serve, especially those differentially impacted by systemic racism."

More information about taking the pledge and getting involved in Project 2020 below.
https://exceptionalchildren.org/get-involved/engage/project2020

Networking Opportunities

What's your Thoughts?!

The Research and Professional Issues Committee will host biweekly meeting sessions that will allow all interested DDEL members to engage virtually to share their projects, and ideas, get some writing done in a supportive virtual environment, and get feedback if needed/wanted.

Contact Allison Gunter, docg.perspectives@gmail.com for more information and Zoom link

What'cha doin?!

Follow this link What'cha Doing! to share your latest and (soon to be) greatest works. We want to know what you have been up to and how we can better support each other in this work.

CEC 2023 Convention

DDEL Event Photos

Louisville, KY

CAREER AWARD

DDEL WOULD LIKE TO HEAR YOUR VOICE!
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING TO FUTURE NEWSLETTERS PLEASE CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES.

Voices from the Classroom

featuring an innovative strategy, approach, activity, or accomplishment conducted in a classroom serving exceptional learners who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Submit

Voices from the Field/ Community

featuring programs, research studies, organizations, or opportunities involving exceptional learners who are culturally and linguistically diverse and/or those who are serving this population.

Submit

Research Spotlight

featuring studies related to culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

Submit

Please use the links above to submit your contribution of up to 500 words to the newsletter editor.