

MCPASD, ICS Equity, and CRT Social Studies

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1 Introduction

We will be addressing the redesign of the social studies curriculum, and the general direction of the school district which has turned away from classical liberal values of civil rights, civil liberties, individualism, reason, tolerance, and promoting a common culture based on fairness, understanding, humanity, and the rule of law, into a divisive promoter of radical identity politics, activism, subjectivism, and social constructivism.

2 State of the District

Having watched more school board meetings than I had ever thought I would in my life, I am shocked to see the administration and the majority of the board neglect the state of the district in favour of self-congratulations, vapid platitudes and virtue signalling. Meeting after meeting, the issues raised by the district parents, the plummeting test scores, and plummeting enrolment are ignored, or obfuscated, as the board bows to the technocracy of the administration.

The last enrolment numbers for this school year are projected by the district to be 7147. This represents a drop of 3.5% from last year, and a 5% drop from 2019-20 year. In two years, enrolment has dropped to the levels of 2016-17 while Middleton itself has experienced consistent population growth. While parents are definitely leaving due to the districts handling of the COVID situation, it goes beyond that. Families that can are fleeing the political indoctrination, and political predation that the district is inflicting on its students instead of teaching knowledge and skills.

Looking at the data available from the Wisconsin DPI, we see that MCPASD ACT scores have been trending down since 2014-15. Looking at the Forward exams, we see steep declines in performance. For example, the percentage of 6th graders proficient or above in Math dropped from 73% in 2015-16 to 58% in 2018-19, and English Language Arts, dropped from 65% to 59%. And these data predate the last 1.5 disastrous years of learning loss coinciding with COVID. A report prepared by the superintendent for the May 24th 2021 school board meeting states that “Care for students as human beings needs to trump academics.” While this is clearly a false dichotomy, it is highly suggestive that the school district is preparing a narrative to justify the anticipated poor academic performance of the districts students.

In this school district, many examples of political extremism, political predation, and neo-racism have come out – many of these examples are in direct violation of the board policies, state laws, the civil rights act, and the constitution. Here are 10 examples:

1. Activist training for 7th graders which included the Director of Equity equating the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr to that of that of the Nation of Islam, Black Panthers, Fidel Castro, and Che Guevara.
2. At Northside Elementary, a 4th grade music teacher wanted to talk about historical racism and relate it to present day racism. She separated children by skin color and let the students of color play hand instruments while the white students had to sit silently and “feel what it felt like to be left out.”
3. At Kromery Middle School, CRT-based identity politics and intersectionality were taught to 5th graders.
4. At West Middleton Elementary, 3rd graders were dehumanized and forced to reduce themselves to their immutable characteristics through an “identity journal”.
5. At Pope Farm Elementary, children were taught racial essentialism. In a 3rd grade geography assignment, students were told that race is "a group of people with shared physical and behavioral qualities".
6. At Pope Farm Elementary, with shades of 1930s Germany, students at a school assembly were shown images of professional athletes labeled by race, in order to train the students on how to categorize people by race.
7. At Pope Farm Elementary, children were exploited for political purposes in that they were compelled by their teacher to write to legislators expressing the teacher’s views.
8. At Middleton High School, students were lectured on white privilege and what they were not allowed to say in conversations about race during their AP Physics class.
9. Radical political books such as *A is for activist*, *This Book is Anti-Racist*, *Not my Idea: A Book about Whiteness*, *Intersection Allies*, *How I Resist*, and *Something Happened in Our Town* are being read to elementary school children throughout the district.
10. Political messaging such as Biden campaign posters during the election, BLM posters, and “Pronouns Matter” posters were found throughout the classrooms and the schools (Kromrey and MHS) of the district.

In addition to these examples, we have gathered nearly a year’s worth of training documents. What we’ve collected shows that the district is focused on extreme politicized teacher training through the lens of Critical Race Theory. As a public school district, much of this training violates the rights of the staff and teachers. For example, employees at Saulk Trail were required to study a politically extreme website called WhiteAccomplices.org which, among many egregious calls to action, says explicitly, that, to be a good person you must vote Democrat. In addition, Freire’s Marxist Liberation Pedagogy theory was promoted across the district via a learning framework entitled: Anti-Racist Liberation Adult Learning Framework.

3 ICS Equity

The decline of academic success is tightly linked to the anti-science, anti-rigour, social experiment that the district has decided to undertake on our children in the name of equity through the ICS Equity program. There is nothing particularly novel in the extreme social constructivist, neo-Marxist approach, it has been studied, tried, and shown to be ineffective, but it is a political activist movement that is not concerned with facts, nor is it concerned with your individual children. It is rooted in the extreme ideas of Rousseau, which inspired the Reign of Terror in France; in the extreme ideas of Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, which inspired Nazism, Stalinism, Moaism, Khmer Rouge, just to name a few; and in the Marxist Critical / Liberation Pedagogy of Freire. Frattura and Capper begin *Leading for Social Justice*, the ICS Equity handbook, with a quote from Freire's Utopian political tract *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that masquerades as education theory.

ICS proposes a radical, authoritarian restructuring of the education system: "In sum, for deep, second-order change to occur via ICS, the core of the education system has to be completely assessed and realigned to the principles of ICS" (p.215). Fundamentally, integrated comprehensive services (ICS) means no special education, no gifted or advanced classes, and no remedial courses. The goal of ICS is not rigour or academic excellence or basic competencies, but rather is to "increase the number of school graduates who feel a sense of belonging to our greater society" (p.xxxii). And, ICS demands a religious, anointed devotion to the ICS *heterogeneous* system: "leaders must believe in their core that students learn best when they are educated in heterogeneous educational settings, period. If the leader does not have this belief, then nothing else really matters." (p.27) and "Social justice work is long-haul work, not for the faint of heart. It requires your clearest mind, strongest body, purest heart, and a calm emotional center." (p.231) Virtually none of these words are found in reputable scientifically-based research literature.

Rooted in the Hegelian, and Marxian traditions, ICS believes that their Utopian mission supersedes morality, arguing for the neutering of the school board: "In this model, the school board is a support mechanism, but does not have top-down authority. It actually is at the bottom of the heap, wrapped around the central office as a support." (p.34). It argues for an authoritarian superintendent: "leaders for ICS and social justice may need to boldly take the lead—in some ways, to engage in autocratic leadership to move the school out of the quagmire of failure." (p.35). It advocates lying to parents, specifically on p.13, it encourages teachers and staff "who are working toward dismantling [non-ICS] programs" to tell parents that no special education, no gifted or advanced classes, and no remedial courses exist even if they do – since adopting ICS, multiple parents have experienced just that in district schools, particularly, when inquiring about advanced math courses for elementary students.

4 CRT

MCPASD, under the ICS framework, is bringing critical race theory, practice, and activism, or "praxis" into every part of the school. And, no, we're not talking about teaching obscure legal theory or whatever is the preferred form of gas-lighting at the moment intended to fool parents. So, let me define CRT according to Delgado and Stefancic, in *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, p3, paragraph 1 of the section: "What is Critical Race Theory?":

The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power.

The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, setting, group and self-interest, and emotion and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights discourse, which stresses incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundation of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.”

We completely disagree; how can a public education system not be based on the foundation of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law?

In the same chapter, p7, paragraph 1 of the section: “Spin-Off Movements”:

Although CRT began as a movement in the law, it has rapidly spread beyond that discipline. Today, many scholars in the field of education consider themselves critical race theorists who use CRT’s ideas to understand issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, affirmative action, high-stakes testing, controversies over curriculum and history, bilingual and multicultural education, and alternative and charter schools. (See, e.g., *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* [Edward Taylor, David Gillborn & Gloria Ladson-Billings eds. 2d ed. 2015].)

This connects directly to ICS, where, in the ICS Handbook: “In ICS, the curriculum and instruction are built on a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) [curriculum].” p.21. To further substantiate this CRT connection, Ladson-Billings, in a 1998 paper entitled *Just what is critical race theory and what’s it doing in a nice field like education?* holds up her work defining *Culturally Relevant Teaching* (Ladson-Billings, 1995) referenced in the previous citation as an example of CRT instruction.

Moreover the authors argue that CRT and Culturally Relevant Teaching are the sole criteria for good teaching: “Ladson-Billings suggests that we need to reconceptualize good teaching to mean teaching that is composed of culturally relevant instruction... ...There is nothing magic or mysterious about culturally relevant instruction—it is just good teaching.” p.117

Bringing politics into the school district and into the classroom is not good teaching. It is an abuse of position, and political predation. Good teaching is using proven methods to ensure that the students’ gain the desired knowledge and competencies.

5 Social Constructivism

A common theme through the political philosophy that is being imposed by the district is that of extreme social constructivism – this is to be expected given that the district is basing its pedagogical framework in Rousseauism, Marxism, neo-Marxism, Critical/Liberation Pedagogy, and neo-Racist CRT/intersectionality. As the board may not be fully versed in the term social constructivism, especially how it impacted 20th century history, we strongly suggest that they read *The Blank Slate* by Steven Pinker of Harvard University.

Social constructivism is manifested by continual dehumanizing of the students to nameless racial identities and immutable characteristics to be pitted against one and other – segregating students in class and through affinity groups.

We also see it manifested in the disturbing “Portrait of a Graduate”, where students’ individuality and uniqueness are striped away, and all the district sees is a faceless, completely plastic being that they will mould. This is nothing more than the district’s version of the “New Soviet Man”. On the site PortraitOfAGraduate.org, we see that our “New Soviet Graduates” will no longer learn useless skills like Math, Science, English, and Social Studies, rather they will learn “21st Century skills” like content mastery, communication, and collaboration. They won’t be able to spell, add, reason, or have any foundations of knowledge, but presumably they will be able to use TikTok like a pro.

Connected to this is the district’s attempt to take over the lives of the family as prescribed by ICS: “That is, within ICS, rather than attempting to get families involved in schools, we advocate for schools working harder to become involved in the lives of families.” (p.97), “the educators make home visits a top priority” (p.98), and “all students’ homes are visited at least once a year by someone in the school” (p.98). In a recent video released about the mandatory CRT-based course for Grade 9 students, Shoemaker, the principal of MHS, said “how do we raise compassionate students”. We believe that we speak for most parents when we say that you do not raise our children. You need to get back in your lane and focus on your role: that is focus on education. We will raise our children.

6 Social Studies

We’d like to take a moment to address the politicization, and indoctrination being introduced with the revamping of the social studies curriculum. In general, we encourage the district to abandon its push to CRT-based indoctrination of students, and instead use textbooks and curricula that are dedicated to advancing civil rights and liberties for all Americans, and promoting a common culture based on fairness, understanding and humanity. We would point the district to the curriculum at FAIRStory.org prepared by the Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism, and the associated learning standards; the curriculum of 1776Unites.com, and the many resources of the National Association of Scholars Civics Alliance. There are many non-partisan, apolitical, curricula based on facts without having to resort to polarizing and divisive, political curriculum that contravenes the rights of the children, parents, and teachers of the district.

If we specifically consider the CRT-based indoctrination course called “Land, People, and Power: An Ethnic Studies Approach to US History”. We offer the board the following suggestions with respect to this course:

- First, it should not be a mandatory course. In making it a mandatory course, the district is contravening its own Controversial Issues policy and is infringing on the rights of the students, and staff. You are risking a lawsuit similar to the Clark case in Las Vegas.
- Secondly, the description is seemingly purposefully deceptive, and should clearly say that it is teaching from the Critical Race Theory perspective.
- Thirdly, the design of this course is beyond the knowledge base of students in Grade 9. Without a solid grounding in the history and philosophy that will be tackled in this course, students cannot meaningfully engage with, discuss, or debate the material. As such, it will simply be a rote-indoctrination course. This may, in fact, be the district’s goal as it would fit with the stated purpose of the ICS framework.

Please make it an optional course for higher level (grade 11 or grade 12) students. We also strongly urge the district to consider a 20th century history course to take its place for grade 9 – given the

direction of the district and the general move to identity politics, it would seem useful to teach the students where collectivism – tribalism and Marxism – led us in the 20th century.

7 Science-based learning

Underlying the learning approach of the ICS Equity program called “Co-Plan to Co-Serve to Co-Learn Teams” (abbreviated C3 Teams) are multiple education myths that are not just inefficient, but actually detrimental to the learning process. In particular, ICS requires the myth of “learning styles” and the myth of pure discovery based learning. The methods and ideology touted by ICS follows the general trend in Education Schools and “Education Science” research, where normal academic standards and methods rooted in the scientific method are eschewed for a mythological, religious belief system rooted in technocracy and ideology. To better understand the state of Education Schools and “Education Science”, we suggest the board read two recent articles in the Chronicle of Higher Education: *How Ed Schools became a Menace* (also published in Quillette)¹, and, *How Ed Schools became a Bastion of Bad Ideas*². Also, in *Language at the Speed of Sight*, Mark Seidenberg, a cognitive psychologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, covers these issues in the last part of his book, especially, in Chapter 11: The Two Cultures of Science and Education. We would encourage the board to also read this book to gain a better understand of how children learn to read.

So, in broad terms, we ask the board to forgo the social experimentation on our children, and to adopt pedagogical practices consistent with science – actual science, not educational science, but educational psychology and cognitive psychology. For further reading, there is an excellent text: *How Learning Happens* by Krischner & Hendrick³ which provides a great introduction into 28 key works in educational and cognitive psychology, and the implications to education. We would encourage the board to read this text, and to buy it for the entire district. In addition to covering key works in educational psychology, they also caution against educational myths and the final chapter describes the “Ten Deadly Sins in Education” most of which are promoted by ICS Equity.

Let us consider some of the Deadly Sins in Education that are occurring in this district:

Learning Style Myths: ICS promotes that “The curriculum is based on learning styles, and students aligned in project groups to meet their individual needs” (p.124). Again, this is one of the most damaging myths in education, and is central to ICS’ “child centric” education (Chapter 8) and their C3 approach – this is doing incredible damage to the learning of our children.

The notions of learning styles were invented by an educator not based on research, but based on his belief in magic, much like the belief that is professed by the adherents of ICS: “But one topic that seemed to hold some magic, some explanatory power, was preferred modes of learning, ‘modal preferences’”⁴

To understanding the myth, Chapter 29 from *How Learning Happens* goes into detail. Prior to Chapter 29, they succinctly say on p.46: “LEARNING STYLES: Bogus theory claiming learners

¹2018; <https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-ed-schools-became-a-menace> or Quillette <https://quillette.com/2019/03/06/how-ed-schools-became-a-menace-to-higher-education/>

²2019; <https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-ed-schools-became-a-bastion-of-bad-ideas/>

³Krischner, Paul and Hendrick, Carl. *How Learning Happens: Seminal Works in Educational Psychology and What They Mean in Practice*. Routledge, 2020

⁴Reference: <http://www.vark-learn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Educational-Developments.pdf>

learn best in a preferred style.” and “These so-called learning styles have been exposed as nonsense in research time after time.” This is the second of the “Ten Deadly Sins in Education” of *How Learning Happens*.

Pure Discovery Based Learning: Again, ICS promotes that “The curriculum is based on learning styles, and students aligned in project groups to meet their individual needs” (ICS Handbook, p.124). The second part of the statement of “project groups” references their promotion of pure discovery based learning which is another education myth promoted by educators with anti-science biases.

This myth is discussed well in the article of Mayer *Should there be a three-strikes rule against pure discovery learning? The case for guided methods of instruction.* published in the American Psychologist Journal in 2004, and Chapter 19 of *How Learning Happens*. This is the seventh of the “Ten Deadly Sins in Education”.

Pure discovery based learning has replaced *direct instruction*, Chapter 18 in *How Learning Happens*, the classic and, more importantly, proven method of education.

Whole Language Reading: Whole Language Reading is the discovery-based approach to reading, and is eluded to in the ICS Handbook, in particular, in Chapter 10. This approach is based on the wholly erroneous idea that humans learn to read in the same way that they learn to talk. It was thoroughly discredited over 30 years ago ⁵.

It is typically sold under the moniker of “balanced reading” or “balanced literature”. Although, it is important to note that not all “balanced literature” programs are whole language approaches.

One example of a whole language approach is the very popular *Lucy Calkins* which is being used in MCPASD. A recent review of Lucy Calkins by Achieve the Core ⁶ and reported on by APM Reports ⁷ notes its deficiencies. A particularly salient quote is:

For students who come from homes where they’re exposed to sophisticated oral language and who acquire knowledge from well-educated parents, the lack of explicit instruction in these areas [referring to knowledge-building and language development] might not be a problem. But other students may be left behind, according to reviewer Marilyn Adams, a prominent reading researcher who is a visiting scholar at Brown University. “Students who enter school having had fewer opportunities to grow academic knowledge and vocabulary depend critically on such opportunities to catch up and move forward,” Adams wrote.

Lucy Calkins is not the only reading program – for example, there is LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) which is based on the science of reading, and has had particular success recently in Mississippi.

Anti-science and Pro-activist Science Standards: In the ICS handbook, they call for all teaching to be aligned with the CRT social justice view point as this is the only “good teaching”. As such, MCPASD has taken up the Next Generation Science Standards. The National Association

⁵c.f. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whole_language and the references therein

⁶<https://achievethecore.org/page/3240/comparing-reading-research-to-program-design-an-examination-of-teachers-c>

⁷<https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2020/01/27/lucy-calkins-reading-materials-review>

of Scholars (NAS) has published a comprehensive report on this anti-science, anti-reason, and anti-rigour, “science” standard ⁸.

From the NAS report: “The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) have done more to degrade American K-12 science education than any other “education reform” in the last generation.” and “Education “reformers” who dislike rigor and rich content dislike any proper science education—because scientific reasoning cannot be taught without rigor and rich content.”

Suffice it to say that a science standard that does not teach rigour and the scientific method should not be used.

8 Conclusion

We have a great community that has a history of strong support for the schools. Trust in the school district and the board is quickly eroding and we implore the district to abandon this destructive and divisive path – stop the politics, change course on the social studies revamp, drop ICS, and move to a science-based pedagogical framework.

The neo-racist Critical Race Theory movement, like all other Hegelian/Marxian movements, is authoritarian and totalitarian in nature. It is divisive as it stokes the natural human tribalistic nature through its oppressor-oppressed narrative. We hope that the board’s agenda is not to incite revolution through its students to tear-down Western Civilization to bring about the Marxist Utopia.

As such, we also ask that the board adopt the following resolution based on the Chicago Statement of Freedom of Expression that was recently adopted in New Trier, Illinois:

MCPASD believes that a fundamental aspect of our mission is to develop critical thinkers who can navigate a complex world through civil discourse, respectful inquiry, engaged listening and open consideration of multiple perspectives. Key to fulfilling this charge is the cultivation of a school environment in which all students feel welcome and free to explore a wide range of ideas. Our firm commitment to this principle reflects not only MCPASD’s obligation to prepare our students for their future but our belief that the open exchange of ideas lies at the core of a democratic society in which individuals are accountable for their actions and treat one another with dignity, compassion, and respect.

⁸<https://www.nas.org/reports/climbing-down/full-report>