

A dissection of
Equity in Civic Education
“The White Paper”

Important definitions to know before reading Equity in Civic Education by Generation Citizen and iCivics.

Action Civics – (n) education course for civic engagement that teaches young people across the country how to drive change through the political process (Generation Citizen, 2020)

Civics – (n) the study or science of the privileges and obligations of citizens (Dictionary.com, LLC, 2021)

(n) a social science dealing with the rights and duties of citizens (Merriam-Webster, Inc, 2021)

(n) the study of the rights and duties of the citizens of a society (Collins, 2021)

Equality – (n) the state or quality of being equal; correspondence in quantity, degree, value, rank, or ability (Dictionary.com, LLC, 2021)

(n) the quality or state of being equal (Merriam-Webster, Inc, 2021)

(n) the same status, rights, and responsibilities for all the members of a society, group, or family (Collins, 2021)

Equity – (n) the quality of being fair or impartial (Dictionary.com, LLC, 2021)

(n) justice according to natural law or right (Merriam-Webster, Inc, 2021)

(n) fairness; impartiality; justice (Collins, 2021)

On page 4 of the White Paper it states,

“Even though there are signs of a growing number of leaders of color within the field, a majority of non-profit civic providers still have predominantly white staff and leadership. They also work with a mostly white female teaching force to help educate an increasingly diverse student population, with outdated curricula that do not adequately reflect the lived experiences of all students. Recognizing that the field of civic education grapples with these types of power imbalances and issues of inequity, we wanted to scrutinize the work that we do and the vision of equity we have for the future.”

This passage uses phrases and concepts that are common in academic settings that are focusing on Critical Race Theory. Everything they believe is in the second sentence alone. The fourth tenet of CRT states, *“Recognition of the relevance of people’s everyday lives to scholarship. This includes embracing the lived experiences of people of color, including those preserved through storytelling, and rejecting deficit-informed research that excludes the epistemologies of people of color.”* The implication is that white, female teachers are incapable of teaching a diverse population of students because there is no universal truth, only lived experiences. If we follow that line of thinking to its logical conclusion, we will reach an end that includes completely segregated schools. If white teachers can not teach students of color, then it stands to reason that black teachers can not teach white students.

On page 6 of the White Paper it states,

“By equitable civic education, we mean: a civic learning experience that is inclusive, representative, and relevant; one that promotes diverse student voices and draws on students’ lived experiences and perspectives to engage them in understanding social issues, the power dynamics that cause them, and **the power that young people have to bring about change.**”

Based on the definitions above, does this sound like “civics” or “action civics”?

Still on page 6, it states,

“...revitalizing civic education—**with an emphasis on equity**—holds the potential to undergird an ethos of national unity...”

Based on the definitions above, does this sound like “civics” or “action civics”?

On page 13 of the White Paper it states,

“An analysis of disaggregated data from Democracy Schools showed that the school climate experienced by Black and Latino students compared to white and Asian students was discernibly different even inside the same buildings. This means that the environment alone cannot solve issues of equity and more attention needs to be placed on **shifting existing civic narratives**. If schools are mini polities, adverse experience with civics among students of color may predict lower levels of civic efficacy.”

This passage is exceptionally disturbing. It explains how some racial groups are more engaged than others within the same school. Instead of questioning the cultural relevance of this analysis they decide that the best option is to change the very essence of the class itself. This is where “civics” becomes “action civics with an emphasis on equity”. Instead of learning about the rights and duties of the individual citizen, they are shifting the goal of civics to include advocacy for equity and racial justice to encourage students of color to become more interested in the curriculum.

On page 15 of the White Paper, while explaining the use of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in equitable Civics, it states,

“CASEL asserted that transformative SEL represents a means to better articulate the potential of SEL to mitigate the educational, social, and economic inequities that derive from the legacy of racialized cultural oppression in the US and globally. Transformative SEL represents an as-yet underutilized approach that SEL researchers and practitioners can use if they seek to effectively address issues such as power, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, social justice, empowerment, and self-determination.”

This passage presents “the legacy of racialized cultural oppression in the US and globally” as an absolute truth. While there are some scholars who have proclaimed that black and brown people are oppressed based on race, majority of those claims are wrought with reasonable doubt and are only seen as fact if looked at through the lens of Critical Race Theory. When the entire project (The White Paper) is based on the theory that our nation is systemically racist and oppressive to people of color, the idea of equity takes on a new meaning. If the assumption is that our system is “unfair” as it stands, then it must be changed to create a fair, or equitable, environment. If our system which is based on equality is unequitable then in order to create an equitable system, we must embrace inequality. That seems like a big change based on an assumption.

*We encourage you to look into what Bob Woodson and Thomas Sowell have to say about the oppression faced by black and brown communities.

On pages 18 and 19 of the White Paper it states,

“To advocate for both more and more equitable civic education everywhere—a type of civics that helps young people situate their own experiences in our imperfect but aspirational system of governance. A type of civics that helps students recognize the power they hold as a collective.”

This passage is yet another example of the push for collectivism as opposed to individualism.

On page 21 of the White Paper it states,

“our **constitutional democracy** currently faces a number of noteworthy challenges besides the most recent examples of political and economic inequalities”

Our nation is a Constitutional Republic. The men who designed our government and wrote the documents that have seen an unnumerable amount of people lifted out of various forms of oppression were very deliberate in the choice to be a Constitutional Republic. They made that decision to protect future generations from mob rule.

On page 25 of the White Paper it states,

“During an era when the US public is openly grappling with issues of racial inequity and racial justice, it is paramount for civic educators to address controversial topics in the classroom, specifically about our racialized past and present. Rather than overlooking or canceling historical gaffes, equitable civic education should explore what it means to help young people grapple productively with the realities of our past, present, and future. Doing this work may require civic educators to recognize systemic inequities and the roles that we play in reifying those imbalances so that we can help students engage productively with multiple perspectives.”

The last line of the White Paper says,

“the research presented here suggests that the complex challenges faced by our democratic system can be surmounted if young people have access to curricula that reflects, validates, and builds on their lived experiences in broader school communities that they perceive to be equitable and responsive to their concerns.”

This passage concludes the report by suggesting that the problem with our system is that we don't account for the lived experiences of the individual. Justice is meant to be blind. Our government is based on the Constitution which is the law of the land. If that law is allowed to be bent or skewed because of the skin color of a person, then it becomes weaker. Frederick Douglas, Martin Luther King Jr., and MANY other visionaries and civil rights leaders used the words within the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution to argue that black people should be free and treated equally. They were right and their fights made our country stronger.

We encourage you to read the entire White Paper for yourself. This is, in no way, a complete list of the issues within the document. The push for Action Civics is a push for our children to become political activists based on their lived experiences and their idea of what is fair. As moms, we can tell you that most kids think anything they don't like is unfair.

