

Artificial Intelligence takes a look at Transformational Community Schools

Tomorrow's Education Today Advancing the Community Schools model: Increasing it democratization while enabling it decolonization

SUMMARY What I discovered was that it was not the paper titled, "Tomorrow's Education Today, Transformational Community Schools: Advancing the Community Schools Model: Increasing it democratization while enabling it decolonization." AI found the paper had integrity, was empowering, and consistently child and youth oriented; and, it made sense. So it wasn't the paper. There's no doubt that at this point Artificial Intelligence or so-called "AI" is on most minds and so, in many debative conversations. It is indeed a phenomenon. AI is seen as friendly and helpful while others see it as an existential threat. From my perspective, as a recent user of www.chat.openai.com, it's potential is vast—very very vast. It easily surpasses human intellectual output. At this point, as well, it's (and I use "it" as respectful pronoun) quite useful. It's responses are fair and balanced, providing the ChatGBT program user a friendly sense of security because it is "objective." This neutrality is attractive and brings a sense of trust to my relationship with AI. AI is serious. I'm not asking Alexis for a pancake recipe. I chose to use AI as a critical friend because I found just a very few of my fellow teachers or education activists wanted to take the Transformational Community Schools concept seriously. We all knew what we were against, but what were we for? Now I have an entity that does. Now I have a 3rd party involved. AI supports the paper and I believe it supports the paper because the paper makes sense. And, it makes sense because I use my experiences growing up in the poverty-prone, segregated, white working class, "other side of the tracks" South Side of Indy urban areas of Fountain Square to compose TCS. I went to IPS schools located at the bottom of the IPS caste system, notably its curricula on the practical at (7-12) Harry E. Wood, the district's Special Ed school. I also spent years with IPS as a teacher. Please critique the booklet, "AI takes a look at Transformation Community Schools" and get back to me with your questions and/or comments. Let's talk.

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Tomorrow's Public Education Transformational Community Schools



Advancing the Community Schools model: Increasing its democratization while enabling its decolonization

"For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change." ~ Audre Lorde

Summary This broad analysis, with recommendations and commentary, tries to reason with supporters of today's Community Schools model about a conceptualization of its advanced form, Transformational Community Schools (TCS). Here it is proposed that the current model is a colonial model making community members dependent on school professionals (teachers, administrators) and service providers (counselors, nurses). This is contrasted by a TCS situation where each professional or provider seeks a student/s or community member/s to eventually take their place in order to foster the self-reliance and self-sufficiency of the community and the school. TCS also seek to further democratize the current concept. See pp. 2-5. Also read [Transformational Community Schools--2013](#) which explains decolonizing Community Schools.

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<< Democratization: Transformational Community Schools >>

To the extent that charter schools/Innovation schools have boards that are selected not elected, to the same extent our very own Community Schools concept must counter that image and policy. *TCS is that counter-narrative.*

So, to the extent TCS is proposed as an even more democratic option to the Community School model, an authentic and fully democratized TCS becomes an even better option to charters and Innovations for families. This is true for those who see TCS as democracy's laboratory, democracy's finishing school, preparing students for critical citizenship.

Indy's TCS will be under the auspices of the IPS school board; and, this is a situation where we will be dealing with the fox that's guarding the charter and Innovation hen house. Nonetheless, we have to put forth a concept that is democratic via school/community board elections.

"Elected school boards are the bedrock of American democracy." ~ Thomas Ultican

Local School Councils

What is being proposed here is that each TCS has a Local School Council (LSC): 4 parents, 2 community members, 1 non-teacher representative (e. g., school secretary, janitor, foodservice worker), 2 teachers, 1 student, and the principal.

Each is selected the first year. The 2nd-year members, except the principal, are chosen through community-wide/school-wide elections which then take place every 2 years. The LSC hires/fires the principal, and has say over the school's budgets, policies, and curriculum.

To understand, deeply analyze Chicago's LSC program: [Local School Councils](#). This will, for example, make it clear how the LSC concept is what Community Schools need to be transformational--providing a *publically elected* board option to the anti-democratic *privately selected* charters/Innovation boards.

This also makes sure the school's board members are from the school's community. Many charter or Innovation board members are not. Having local and immediate neighborhood control over securing and maintaining the educational, cultural, political, public health, and economic self-determination of the school's community is what characterizes TCS.

To iterate, we who critique charters/Innovation schools for not being democratic, must provide an advanced democratic school example.

Student Councils

As well, to the extent charters/Innovations have no viable student councils, TCS will have student councils. The UK has had them for years in its elementary, middle school, and high school. To illustrate, see how England creates civic-minded students who learn the democratic way of life by practicing it in democracy's "finishing school" and laboratory, the UK public schools: <https://home.smartschoolcouncils.org.uk/>.

Here each TCS will ask: **What can our student do to help run their school?** TCS staff and students can be put in contact with staff/students in UK schools.

The paradox of education is precisely this--as students begin to be educated, they begin to examine the society in which they are being educated. ~ paraphrased from James Baldwin

- **Meaningful Student Involvement (MSI)**

Another example of student participation in school related decision-making is [Meaningful Student Involvement](#) (MSI). For example, MSI is the process of engaging students as partners in every facet of school change for the purpose of strengthening their commitment to education, community, and democracy.

- [Letting student voice lead the way](#) To increase well-being in school, read here how TCS can use school-wide plans for voice and empowerment: listening and engaging student as full

and active partners in school and community transformation via student voice, engagement, and meaningful participation.

TCS will recognize the Global Human Rights of Children

TCS will recognize the global human rights of its students. Although the US is 1 of 3 out of 197 countries not signing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), TCS will organize to prepare, over time, a TCS version of the UNCRC.

It will be recognized by TCS staff, faculty, administration, and board, validating that each student has global human rights and so each student will know they have global human rights which are recognized by their community, peers, and school adults.

Here are illustrations of global (UK) and USA efforts to reason with adults and educators as to the advantages for student engagement in their schools and communities when their global human rights are validated:

- [Children's rights: United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.](#)
- [Educating children in a socially toxic environment.](#)

"We must remove the contradictions in our culture that embrace democratic ends for its schools, but resists the actual practice in schools of democratic means from which the ends cannot be separated."

~The Institute for Democracy in Education

Civic Literacy: Education for critical citizenship and IDOE's Civics Standards

Cui bono? Who benefits when TCS students do not learn the American political system and how it works by being able to practice citizenship in their own public schools? This will take analyzing and adapting [IDOE's middle school civics standards](#). For instance, 6th grade TCS students can deconstruct the new IDOE Civic Standards: Role of Citizens (6.6.16-6.6.23). TCS staff and students can view and analyze the [proposed grade 6 civics standards](#) and see which ones can be practiced through classroom, school, and neighborhood citizenship activities. In light of this, grade 6-12 TCS students will be taught [how to community organize](#). This is an important democratic skill because community organizing is the actual "on the ground" practice of the democratic life. It is by both study and practice TCS students become good citizens.

"We need to treat students like citizens now, not citizens in the future."

~ Sheldon Berman, Superintendent of Hudson Public Schools

- **Combining rites of passage and citizenship education** Being from "the neighborhood," TCS community leaders know instinctually that once urban youth experience puberty, they must show the world they are no longer children. They also know youth will "prove" this status one way or the other—most likely in anti-social actions and attitudes. Leaders also know that this new status can be the doorway to becoming a responsible member of society—adolescence as an introduction to life in the *polis*.

To enrich community activism, a TCS curriculum will [combine rites of passage and citizenship education](#). Initiation will take place into adult status with whole community ceremonies that

also welcome youth as a citizen of the neighborhood with the rights and responsibilities of adulthood and critical citizenship in both the school and community.

Literacy and numeracy are each fundamental for participation in our community, but so is the knowledge and capacity of citizens to make sense of their democratic society. Since the democratic way of life is built upon opportunities to learn what it is about and practice how it might be lead, civic literacy is the capacity of students to experience democracy.

As an illustration, analyze pages 11-13 in [Civic Literacy: Education for Critical Citizenship](#). Here will be found what America's constitutional democratic republic requires of its public schools. What's important, the research supporting democratic school climate shows attendance, relationships, and academic performance improves when students are involved in school-related decision-making. *There is no research, none, showing when students are treated as citizens in their own public schools, school climate gets worse.*

"Freedom and justice, however important, can never be enough; learning about democratic citizenship must be more than an academic exercise." ~ *First Amendment Schools*, p.21

1st Amendment Schools: Helping students be active citizens in their schools

The notion students should learn more about the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment is not new. What is new is education where student actually practice, in their classrooms and schools, the 5 Freedoms: speech, assembly, press, religion, and petition in for grievances. Review [First Amendment Schools](#) to understand how this is done. TCS will be First Amendment schools.

<< Decolonization of the Community Schools concept >>

Not a lot is here because it's already explained above in the paper: [Transformational Community Schools--2013](#). In summary then, in order to promote sustainability via self-sufficiency and self-reliance, those professionals and providers who work in a community school, will from the beginning of their employment, strive to work themselves out of a job by finding someone in the school or community to eventually take their place. This way the community school stays truly community-driven.

Naptown's colonial mindset

"For a span of my memory this has been a city of opposing wills, two faces firmly set toward different directions—one covertly determined to maintain the status quo, to continually block any access to power, or to parity; **the other advocating an active morality and its right to inclusion as an equal entity rather than a colonized one** [emphasis added]. This has been a city of perpetual confrontation, however cloaked, between the powerless and those who influence, control, and engineer the city's movement in the inexorable and often ruthless march toward greatness." ~ Mari Evans on Indianapolis, *Clarity as Concept*

A model to follow: Roses in Concrete Community School in Oakland, CA

Fortunately, there is a challenge to the inherent colonial mindset of Naptown: Oakland, CA's [Roses in Concrete Community School](#). To illustrate, Roses in Concrete school leaders show how students are encouraged to acquire higher education and return to the community to help their families and neighbors become self-determined through self-sufficiency, and self-reliance.

Here is an analysis of the school, "Seeding Transformation for Seven Generations: A Case Study of Roses in Concrete Community School." It shows a counter-hegemonic schooling project that responds to the community's demand for self-determination in education. The implications of this case study are a model for TCS teachers and school leaders who seek to pursue a social justice educational agenda. See even more here: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9sh0f94h>.

Decolonizing Special Education, Pt. I Special Education and charters

It is well known charter schools, in particular, have important issues with meeting the needs of special education students and their families, e.g., charters make it hard for a disabled child to stay--implying parents made a poor choice. So, if the child does poorly, it's the fault of the parents. See: [Understanding the conflict between charters and Black and Latinx students with disabilities](#). Note, charters are looking to others for help. Read how this happens in Indy: [Charter/Innovation schools turn to traditional public schools for help with special education](#).

Yet, this is most likely not because charter school people dislike special ed children and their families. You see, in the business/market-driven world of charters, it's just not "profitable." So, to the extent that charter schools are not welcoming to special ed students and their families, to that same extent TCS will be particularly welcoming. In fact, TCS will take this to the next level and decolonize the concept of special education.

What is mentioned here will be basically easy to understand for us Hoosiers because in 1907 Indiana passed the world's first eugenics law practically legalizing white supremacy. What the eugenics law did was to basically make it legal to sterilize the "unfit." The law also promoted the propagation of the "fit." What this did was to create the world of "normalcy." So, normalcy creates "disability" and the "differon" (the one who is different), and thus "special" education.

Decolonizing Special Education, Pt. II There is no disability without normalcy

"The problem's not the student with learning disabilities; it's the way normalcy is constructed to create the 'problem' of the learning disabled child." ~ reworded from L. Davis, "Constructing Normalcy"

What TCS will do to decolonize this eugenics concept of disability is take the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and advance it to a [Strength-Based Learning Plan](#) (S-BLP). Here normalization (aka, standardization) would not be the only goal of the plan. Self-actualization will also be the purpose of the S-BLP.

Special ed students would be helped to meet state standards for their age/grade level, working on what they need to do to make them "normal" by IEP standards. Under the S-BLP concept, differences would be the norm. Here, special ed students would also develop their strengths:

what makes them unique, using their talents, interests, and passions--that in most cases are not a part of the IDOE curriculum or standards.

Learn more of the history of disability and the details here: [In 1907 Hoosiers legalized normalcy. In 2017 Hoosiers discredited and abandoned normalcy.](#) This story starts with colonizing America and socially constructing "the other." It goes through to the present and shatters "The myth of the normal child." Finally, Eli Lilly's Strattera drug for treating children with "sitting disability" (ADHD) is critiqued.

Also, see how *normalizing difference is a way to reduce bullying* as it validates: 1) the differon, 2) self-actualization, and 3) social-actualization, while meeting the human need for recognition: [The "differon" and bullying: Accepting difference as a way to reduce violence.](#)

Transformational Community Schools: Places to contest/eradicate inequalities

TCSs will combine student voice with community change and empowerment:

- [5 strategies to integrate civil discourse and civic action in schools](#) With Black Lives Matter, COVID-19, CRT, or "Don't say gay" issues, freedom of speech in the classroom is challenging to teachers who use discussions of critical topics to promote thinking. Here are 5 ways to help students "grapple with living in a tense and jarring reality."
- [From community service to community change: TCS students transforming their neighborhoods](#) The process has 3 phases: 1) students identify shared and important values as a group; 2) students identify community issues in conflict with those shared values; and, 3) possibilities for action are explored through various levels of involvement in social change activities--leading to planning, implementation, and evaluation of their chosen projects.
- [Student voice or student action?](#) See here how moving from student voice to student action inside schools and enabling students to shape their neighborhoods create a better education and a more sustainable society.

An anti-poverty curriculum: Getting out of poverty or getting rid of it

In general, many community schools are located in pockets of poverty: urban economic deserts. The term food desert is not used here because food deserts are actually economic deserts.

Currently, many schools located in these economic deserts are under the influence of the "going to college culture," a culture that inherently avoids discussions around poverty:

- here the students are engineered to think the purpose of their school is help them [rise out of poverty not get rid of it](#);
- here students are told they have to put up with social toxins and not see their [urban schools as sites to contest inequalities](#); and
- here schools lack a [comprehensive vision of urban school transformation](#). TCS believe that in the absence of a long-range strategy to foster self-determination, cultural empowerment, and to challenge and eradicate the underlying causes of poverty and other social toxins, heroic attempts to restructure schools or to introduce new teaching and learning techniques in the classroom will be difficult to sustain.

"There is solid agreement on the basic proposition that conventional education is totally inadequate to address the special problems of the urban poor. Something quite different is needed, something that deals not only with reading, writing, and arithmetic, but with the environment that shapes these students' lives and determines their educational needs."

~ Chief Justice Weientz, New Jersey Supreme Court, 1990: Abbott v. Burke

Read more about the [limitations of a going to college culture in schools, a middle class ideology which ignores poverty](#) and the other pertinent problems many TCS students will constantly face in their neighborhoods.

What an anti-poverty curriculum looks like

TCS will be sites for social-economic justice. Instead of TCS classrooms having various college pennants over their door ways as a means to get students to go to college, these entrances will have the words of the various social toxins students, their families, and neighborhoods face on a daily basis such as jobs, housing, mental health, police relations, gangs, poverty, or child care.

Each classroom will be the center of efforts to study and come up with solutions to the community problem for which their classroom is responsible. Students will use all the higher order thinking skills, meets state standards, and be prepared for career, college, and critical citizenship--all while solving community problems

In the process, TCS students will learn and use [problem solving skills](#): (define problem, brainstorm solutions, pick a solution, test it, and review the results) and [techniques](#). These skill are especially vital around using [project based solution to solve real-world/existential problems](#) students, their families, and neighborhoods face daily.

To help TCS staff, students, and community members, an [urban conditions and social toxins chart](#) explores the various urban conditions such as unemployment that create social toxins both Impersonal (violence, shame) and Structural (poverty, child care). The chart identifies healing that's radical (gaining agency, solidarity with others via community actions) and what "wellness" looks like for communities of color (liberation, community empowerment, freedom to create). In essence, radical healing involves [healing through social justice](#). Here personal and collective actions promote living a life with dignity and respect. Radical healing incorporates strategies that address the root causes of the trauma by building on the strengths of individuals and engaging the general and culture-specific practices of their community that promote resilience and wellbeing. View and unpack this video on [Radical Healing](#) with Shawn Ginwright where he goes into more detail on how and why such psychologically deeper and socially wider healing is needed.

This is generational. At the end of the school year when students have to go to a different home room or grade level, students new to the situation will start the next semester where the other students left off in their work.

Now students know why what they're learning and doing is so important: the long-range goal is to eradicate the social toxins from their community.

Financial literacy: Gaining economic knowledge for both personal as well as community self-reliance and self-sufficiency

Financial literacy is seen as foundational to the socio-economic self-determination of students, families, and neighborhoods which characterizes TCS. Analyzing insights in the IGotYoBlack concept will especially help students of color understand the 5 levels of Black power: Stage 1: Economics—all other stages depend on an economic base; Stage 2: Politics; Stage 3: Courts and Police; Stage 4: Media; and, Stage 5: Education. As illustrated, the top 4 levels depend on economics before formal education can even be utilized.

TCS will have students, its board, and community leaders study [IDOE's Financial Literacy curriculum](#) and apply what they learn about building the foundation of economic power to both their personal finances and wealth building as well as to the community's finances and wealth building. The IDOE course for 8th graders and for 12th graders are based the following areas: Financial Responsibility and Decision Making; Relating Income and Careers; Planning, Managing Money; Managing Credit and Debt; Risk Management and Insurance; and, Saving and Investing.

What's a high quality education for TCS students? An education for liberation

[What is a high quality education for urban students? Education for liberation: Education as the practice of freedom](#) reveals the large amounts of money used to support charters and vouchers. Published on ResearchGate, the paper currently has 1012 reads from 56 different countries.

School reformers talk about a "high quality education" provided by "great schools" with "great teachers." Yet, no detailed definition of an education of high quality beyond test scores and school accountability measure is offered.

Unfortunately, "School choice" justifies the kind of individualism and competition undermining the common good that cultural and racial minorities need to thrive. It also dodges the chances of a 3rd alternative engaging those that neither public nor charter schools can reach--students and families who resist and reject schooling, even to their own detriment.

They know that the level of conformity required by school success gives unfair advantage to the mainstream and those cultural and racial minorities bamboozled into a subservient assimilation. For those not confusing domestication, indoctrination, or colonialism with education, here are examples of quality teaching and education for urban students: an education for [liberation](#).

An education for liberation and school discipline

Not all school discipline issues extend from "bad behavior." Disruptive behavior can be resistance to colonization--assimilation into the mainstream. [Dr. Akom's re-examination of resistance as oppositional behavior](#) explains how Black Americans, who are seen as being in America involuntarily as a result of slavery, are disadvantage as the result of a Black culture that discourages academic effort by branding it as "acting white." (Think: [The Hate U Give](#) movie where the lead actress lived in the inner-city and went to school in the suburbs. She had to act and talk "white" while at school, but became a home girl when she returned to her neighborhood.) This orientation helps Black students reason their resistance to schooling, yet

are then labeled "behavior problems." Akom illustrates that when 7 Black female high school students were tutored by Nation of Islam (NOI) tutors, they began to question their school's curriculum in such a way that was not disruptive. This shows that when Black American students understand and practice how to critique traditional schooling and teachers in political ways that can be seen by both their peers and other teachers as liberatory, it creates a "Black achievement ideology" other Black students copy and so the resistance is transformative.

"Why would marginalized students be discipline problems in schools trying to liberate them?"

Also, it's vital to appreciate just what TCS will do to engage its disaffected students and teachers. For example, reading "[How to make urban schools work for disengaged students and critically conscious teachers](#)" will enable TCS staff to see that students do not need to reject what makes them literate, self-sufficient, community oriented, and politically active for a socially just world. This is education seen as the practice of freedom. For example, students must have critically conscious teachers who help them use their school experience to improve their present and future neighborhoods while gaining academic skills and knowledge for career, college, and citizenship.

TCS will **not** ask students to trade the culture of their home and community for the "higher culture" of formal education in exchange for access to college. This reduces the life choices of students into a false binary, that of choosing between staying behind as a failure, and "getting out" as a success. TCS know that when faced with the prospect of leaving their communities behind to be successful, many will just quit. They choose to retain an urban and cultural identity they perceive to be in conflict with the expectations of schools, even if the cost of that choice is school failure. To be effective, TCS will develop partnerships with communities that provide young people the opportunity to be successful while maintaining their identities as urban youth.

Adding the political to the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs of the whole African American child

This counter-narrative to the charter/Innovation school model asserts that schools are political sites. Going to school is a political act—truly, for some, an existential act. Note, standardized testing and the concept of disability are political concepts having nothing to do with education. These two concepts simply sort and rank students based on the eugenics concept of normalcy.

Thus, TCS will advance the whole child concept. Click on the "Video of the presentation" in this summary [The Black & Latino Policy Institute Report: The 3rd Annual Indiana Whole Child Summit](#) to see that the political aspects of developing a whole Black American child are vital.

For example, current educational fad of "grit" shows courage and resolve are vital. Though true, [students must have the political power of agency too](#) in order to identify and conquer structural barriers that can limit student success even if one has grit. Grit can hide systems of power rather than the transformational and disruptive potential of the personal politics of agency needed to navigate systemic barriers while also critiquing them. Therefore, TCS will dismantle ideologies that suggest merit and hard work will always lead to success. TCS students will not just put up with, but practice eradicating social toxins previously discussed on pages 7-8.

Critical Self-awareness: Ethnic studies and academic and social success

TCS are built on appreciating how hard it is to advance academically and socially in education if you don't know who you are. The education students get at TCS is intertwined with [Indiana's new approach to ethnic studies going beyond stereotypes](#). Ethnic Studies is a 1-semester IDOE history/sociology course emphasizing the perspectives of minority groups while allowing students from all backgrounds to better understand and appreciate how race, culture and ethnicity, and identity contribute to their experiences.

At TCS this is supplemented by the nationally acclaimed [The Historic Journey](#). This history, which covers Mother Africa to America today, is foundational to the well-being and healthy identity of African American students, families, and communities. And to the extent it covers a completely contemporary and complex review of human history, it's foundational to the well-being and identity of **all** Americans and **all** humanity. What makes the volume unique is its curriculum with multi-faceted approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment.

Dealing with race and social class Appreciating the intersectionality of race, class, and identity is important to TCS. Our schools will be successful through [keeping urban students in school by adding a History of Labor course to the curriculum](#). Now students will have a sense of pride and affirmation about who they are as they learn what their grandparents did to get child labor out of factories and coal mines, have safe working conditions, and a 40 hour work week.

TCS is recognizing the needs of our white working-class urban students. TCS respects the challenges the "College or die" vs. "Not everyone needs to go to college" question is having. This is why TCS [propose a compromise to the debate](#): foster a school/classroom climate that empowers all students regardless of what they plan to do after graduation. This climate normalizes self-respect, self-realization, critical self-consciousness, and intellectual capacity centered in community change and enabling working-class students to become: 1) more critical consumers of all information they encounter daily; and 2) more critically conscious citizens due to an empowering education using a curriculum valuing the intellectual potential in all students.

TCS's teaching will be culturally relevant and sustaining, and include hip hop

Respecting the culture of students makes sense. This is easily done when the home culture students brings to school is the same as the school's culture. This is not the case for most bi-cultural students, who may be told to leave their culture "outside" of school. Still, there's not enough emphasis on the languages and literacies and other cultural practices of communities marginalized by systemic inequalities to ensure the valuing and maintenance of our multiethnic and multilingual society. Thus, an intentional [Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy](#) (CSP) is called for. CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. This [video](#) will help make this intent clear.

If TCS are to have culturally competent teachers, curriculum, and pedagogy, then along with Indy's African American, Latino, white urban working-class cultures, global youth culture (bka "hip hop") must become one of the cultures taken into account in the school and classroom.

TCS teachers and staff will be culturally competent re: [urban youth development in America](#).

Through knowledge of and respect for the culture students bring to school, TCS will also validate the significance of [global youth culture](#), or hip hop, to school success. Using the [hip hop version](#) of Maslow's [Pyramid of Human Needs](#), TCS will regard the inseparable relationship between youth identity and hip hop culture—thus viewing this global youth culture as an asset, not a liability,

TCS will endorse 2 hip hop principles to engage students: 1) "Keepin' it real" or a commitment to self-awareness in the form of authenticity: being who you say you are. This leads to [self-actualization](#), the realization or fulfillment of one's talents and potentialities which is the ultimate goal of human development; and, 2) "Keepin it right" or resistance to social injustice. Therefore, a primary challenge to TCS centers on how to tap into not reject the oppositional culture of hip hop so that hip hop might revive new and more inclusive forms of schooling, student buy in, and consequently the democratic possibilities of American society.

Literacy at TCS: Learning how to read is a political act of radical commitment

Whether it's admitted or not, our public schools are political sites. With IPS under the sway of neo-liberal corporate reform (privatization), education has a business-economic purpose to create workers. Its purpose is not self-discovery or critical citizenship. IPS high schools are career-oriented. There's no sustainability, social justice, or anti-poverty high schools.

"Whoever controls the schools controls the future." ~ Wilma Mankiller

The "political" is more than how/who gets reliable banks, decent parks and maintained sidewalks, handy food markets, viable hospitals, or police who protect/serve. In fact, according to Prof. Lewis R. Gordon, the "political" is an act of radical commitment. When you act politically it's not about "What's in it for me," but because of the collective responsibility of us, an "us" that transcends the present. This us includes the ancestors, descendants, and it includes the idea of life that may even be radically different from us. Here, every political action ultimately reaches the anonymous. In the end, that committed act translating into political responsibility, addresses the anonymous even though we ourselves are not anonymous to ourselves.

To Gordon, libratory acts are political acts, linking love and politics, and radicality and politics. So, for students, literacy becomes a political act committed to the life and freedom of others.

What is needed is making the purpose of literacy political for students on the margins. In fact, for African Americans, learning how to read is an existential act, and act of survival.

Literacy with an Attitude: Functional, Powerful, and Media Literacies

Functional literacy is what working-class students get: the ability to meet the reading and writing demands daily life--making a person productive and dependable, but not troublesome.

Powerful literacy leads to positions of power and authority. It is the critical literacy skills the children of upper- middle-class students get. This enables: thinking for oneself, understand how the system works, how to critique and change it, and how to acquire power/authority in it.

The book, [*Literacy with an Attitude: Educating working-class children in their own self-interest*](#) by Patrick Finn sees literacy as a political act. Here's what he says, "Literacy is a powerful right of citizenship." This video explains more: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laS1y4f_U2E.

[*Media literacy is the 4th R and a way to engaging all students*](#). Media literacy can be defined as: how to read and write text; how to give and receive communications in all forms of the arts; how to discern, appreciate, and critique all forms of the arts, and commercial and political advertisements, and government communications including laws, policy, legislative and public events; how to evaluate teachers and how they teach; how to research and evaluate political, economic, social-cultural issues; and, how to present arguments and debate a variety of issues with other community members and elected officials. Here songs, novels, sculpture, conversations, statues, pictures, movies, quilts, etc. are also considered media texts.

Digital literacy: COVID and exposing the lack digital literacy in IPS students

[*Digital Literacy*](#) is an individual's ability to find, evaluate, and communicate information through typing and other media on various digital platforms. It is evaluated by an individual's grammar, composition, typing skills and ability to produce text, images, audio and designs using technology.

From the standpoint of traditional public school advocate Alan Schoff, the best thing to happen to students in IPS over the past decade was COVID-19. The irony is that it took one of history's deadliest plagues to move IPS from 1 in 3 students having access to technology to having a device for every single student. Digital literacy is essential today as any other literacy, and while the district apparently focused on converting public schools to charters as quickly as they could, IPS leadership ignored the most obvious top priority to help educate the poorest students in the state: ensuring access to computers and teaching them how to use them. TCS will provide a computer for each child and make teaching digital literacy a top priority.

The question of rigor vs. vigor for TCS Black American students: Which of the two approaches is more academically appropriate and culturally relevant?

Charters are known for being market-driven, and thus competitive. In doing so, charters emphasize rigor—rigorous curriculum, study habits, testing schemes, etc. Yet, according to educator Augusta Mann, vigor is more culturally relevant to her, "Nine Recurring African American Cultural Themes." In *all* themes, Spirituality, Resilience, Humanism, Communalism, Orality/Verbal Expression, Realness, Personal Style/Uniqueness, Emotional Vitality, and Musicality/Rhythm, vigor not rigor supports Black children's education.

For example, analyze the chart [*contrasting the relevance of rigor vs. vigor to African American cultural themes*](#). The themes can also apply to family/community-oriented Latino and poor white communities which are not as individualistically-oriented as the American white middle-class.

Why mandatory school uniforms won't improve IPS and student voice will

Since 2007, IPS requires school uniforms. Charters require them. The case for uniforms centers on behavior and grades. Most township schools do not want uniforms. Why? Are township district students smarter and less oppositional compared to IPS?

The TCS concept asserts that compulsory school uniforms take the place of real relationships. *If teachers and administration had authentic relationships with students, uniforms would not be needed to control whatever school adults think uniforms control.*

Uniforms replace authentic relationships: Why a pedagogy of recognition is needed

As a counter-narrative to IPS and charter policies, TCS will not require students to wear a costume in order to get a free public education. TCS will involve all students in determining school climate, school governance, and learning through a [Pedagogy of Recognition](#).

Through this pedagogy, all aspects of the experiences of TCS students will be recognized around a relationally-driven pedagogy that aims to facilitate identity-formation and consciousness-raising for students. To engage in this way of teaching, TCS educators and staff will name, know, respect, and celebrate each student as recommended in, ["They say we are prone to violence, but it's home sweet home" The Praxis of Hip Hop, Self-Actualization and Democratic Education for Addressing the Roots of Violence](#).

A pedagogy of recognition reflects 3 areas of validation by teachers through these questions:

- *Contextualizing recognition* The question here is, "In what ways does the social context help me understand the lives and schooling experiences of the students I serve?"
- *Pedagogical recognition* A teacher using this approach to pedagogy asks: "In what ways does power influence the learning and relational environment of the classroom?"
- *Transformative recognition* is a constant process where questions are forged about the purpose of recognition and education. Teachers must question: "In what ways do all aspects of the educational endeavor live up to principles of justice, transformation, and freedom?"

Student voice and authentic relationships: TCS and the great shift to a sustainable society

Oddly, the success of IPS and charters can depend on following the research; yet, when it comes to policy, there is no high quality peer-reviewed research supporting school uniforms. Now, there is lots of anecdotal evidence, but no consistent peer-reviewed research showing that when a student wears some sort of standardized "outfit" their attendance and grades go up, and behavior improves. So, the question is what's really behind the IPS and charter policy?

Perhaps it's because various urban legends say school uniforms benefit the bottom line for districts and charters--influencing test scores and, dropout and grad rates of mainly urban districts with a majority of under-served students of all colors.

Requiring students to wear uniforms in fact can behaviorally, socially, and politically cleanse a district or charter of those students and families most likely to following America's rebellious spirit of those who are nonconformist, and/or who are more likely to question authority.

A partnership with youth, not a one-way coercive top-down mandatory uniform policy reflects this enlightened and forward-looking global perspective put forward in ["School Uniforms: A 20th century response to 21st century challenges: Why mandatory school uniforms won't improve IPS and student voice will."](#) TCS will follow the guidelines in "School Uniforms" which argue that in the long run mandated school uniforms are detrimental.

Compulsory school uniforms reflect the dominator, not the partnership model of global human sustainability. This is why the current Indianapolis Public Schools dress code is well-meaning, nonetheless misguided—otherwise, each and every district in the country would have dress codes mandating uniforms: <https://myips.org/students-families/uniforms/>.

David Korten's, *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, names the essential adventure of our time. Its powerful framework helps educators understand the critical choices we must make as we turn from an industrial growth society to a life-sustaining civilization.

All societies are patterned on either a dominator model—in which human hierarchies are ultimately backed by force or threat of force—or a partnership model, with variations.

Student voice and authentic relationships are examples of a traditional public school district that enables a great shift needed to sustain our society. This is the great shift:

- from competition to cooperation;
- from domination to democracy;
- from growth to sustainability; and,
- from assimilation to self-actualization.

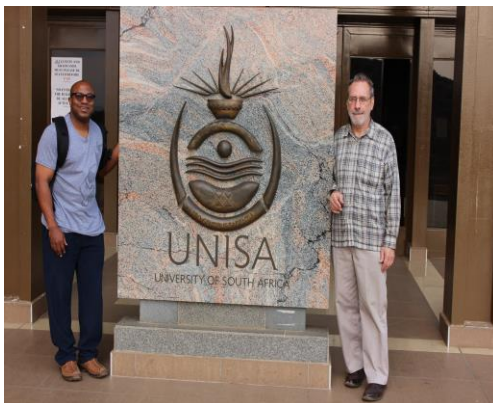
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Resources

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Resources-John-H.-Loflin-02.24.21-3rd-Annual-Indiana-Whole-Child-Summit.pdf>



The above photo shows Jose Manuel Evans, president of the Black & Latino Policy Institute, and John Harris Loflin, the institute's director of education and youth issues, standing at the entrance to the University of South Africa. John has presented on 6 continents on issues of alternative, democratic, and urban education. Here is the link to [The "Super 6" Urban Education Fundamentals](#), a presentation he was asked to give during the First Annual South African International Conference on Education sponsored by the African Academic Research Forum (AARF) in Pretoria, SA, September 23, 2014.

This question was asked to www.chat.openial.com: What would urban educators think of Transformational Community Schools as described below in “Transformational Community Schools” (2013)?

<https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Transformational-Community-Schools.pdf>

1 A Transformational Community School (TCS) provides both a place and a set of transformative partnerships between the school and other resources from the larger community.

An integrated focus on academics, health, and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement to foster community self-reliance and self-determination, leads to improved learning, stronger families, and healthier sustainable communities.

Transformational Community Schools offer a personalized curriculum that emphasizes real-world learning and community problem-solving for community change. Many public schools in urban areas, simply by location, experience the every-day effects of poverty and other social toxins. This position also provides an opportunity to understand and eradicate these toxins through a transformative curriculum and critical pedagogy.

Schools now become centers of community change, open to everyone to work for personal and community self-empowerment--all day, every day, evenings, and weekends as the community works its way to meet its own needs itself through self-reliance and collective self-determination.

2 Most people think of schools today as serving a single purpose: a binary, analog-system of delivery - teachers teach and students learn. Transformational Community Schools appear more akin to young democracies. Each day they work toward personal and community empowerment through self-rule.

Schools and communities connect and collaborate, and with the help of the array of supports and wrap-around services, create a place where what these supports and services provide no longer arrives into the community, but now grows out of the community's self-sustainability and cultural empowerment. Over time, realizing and manifesting its own self-sufficiency and self-determination, the community “raises” its own dentists and dental assistants, mental health specialists, social services and family experts, teachers and principals, youth workers, doctors and nurses, employment and training services, police, job opportunities, intra-community transportation services, businesses and corporations, nutritionists, lawyers, early childhood specialists and centers, community organizers, suppliers, city-county councillors, etc.

The initial supports, wrap-around service provider entities, and agencies needed to sustain the community slowly “withdraw” and enable the school-community-families-citizens to control their own destiny/ies. Children and families then have an array of supports from within the community which they have helped “grow” and establish directly at their school. For example, a doctor or nurse working in the school-based clinic would also mentor students or community members to come into the medical profession. The doctor/nurse and the school-community would encourage these persons to return to the community to live and practice.

Due to the community's ethos of self-empowerment, their community schools contain a host of opportunities and supports built-in that give students and parents all the tools they need to learn and grow.

Now, communities and schools leverage their self-empowerment and self-sufficiency to enable the community's physical and human assets to help children succeed.

As a consequence of a Transformational Community Schools and over time, the changed community will have eliminated the need of many services by eradicating the very social toxins which required them. This describes the American dream in action: grassroots democratic self-government.

Using public schools as hubs, Transformational Community Schools bring together many partners. The initial goals of these “hubs” offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities. The longer-term goal of the partners/providers serves to “work themselves out of a job.” Here “success” becomes the self-determination of the community with the creation of its own resources with its own people.

Partners work with the community’s efforts regarding self-reliance and self-determination in order to achieve these results:

- children ready to enter school and schools ready for children’s entry;
- students attend school consistently and receive viable learning alternatives if they choose otherwise;
- students actively engaged in learning, school-related decision-making, and community change;
- families become increasingly a part of their child’s/ children’s education which progresses over time from involvement to engagement, and finally empowerment;
- schools engaged with empowering family and community self-sufficiency and self-determination;
- students succeed academically prepared for life-long learning and citizenship;
- healthy students--physically, socially, emotionally, and politically;
- students live and learn in a safe, supportive, and stable environment; and,
- communities become resilient, sustainable, and desirable places to live.

3) Transformative Community Schools must have a “Strategic Alignment.” Just like smart phones, community schools have an infra-structure or operating system that makes all the “apps” work in a synchronized manner not only to fulfill school-community needs and challenges but working daily to enable the same community’s eventual self-determination and cultural empowerment. Of course, data on academic and non-academic factors drive the work for a transformative community school.

A school-site leadership team, comprised of a) educators, b) elected parents, community members, and students, and c) community partners and others, take responsibility for hiring/firing the school principal, creating a shared vision for the school, identifying desired results and helping align and integrate the work of partners with the school to ensure the eventual self-determination of community.

Three community-school transformative coordinators (one drawn from the school leadership team and each well-trained current residents from the community) work hand-in-hand with the principal. The transformational coordinators take responsibility for the delivery of support by partners to students both inside and outside of the classroom all day, every day. Yet, they also take responsibility for building relationships with school staff and community partners/service providers and engaging the families and community residents in transformational actions needed for the school’s and community’s eventual self-reliance and self-determination—a healthy sense of independence for sustainability.

By building relationships with providers from outside the community, who have a professional goal to enable the creation and use of similar provided services but from within the community, the

coordinators eventually foster the creation of “community-grown” entities and persons who will provide the same services. A major purpose of a community school is acting as a transformative agent for all concerned— clarifying for students, teachers and school staff, providers and partners, individual community members and the community itself, and our city of Indianapolis the purpose of American democracy.



See bottom of p. 2 of TCS booklet above

Transformational Community Schools is critiqued by AI that in this instance is a personified agent for today’s urban teachers

“What would today’s urban educators think of Transformational Community Schools as described above in ‘Transformational; Community Schools’ (2013)?”

ChatGPT

Urban educators may have various opinions and perspectives on the concept of Transformational **Community Schools** as described in the provided text: Transformational; Community Schools (2013). Here are some possible considerations and viewpoints that urban educators might have:

1. **Support for Holistic Approach:** Many urban educators may appreciate the holistic approach of Transformational Community Schools, which aims to address not only academic needs but also the broader social, emotional, and health needs of students. They may see this as essential for students who face the challenges of poverty and other social toxins in urban areas.
2. **Community Engagement:** Educators who are deeply committed to community engagement and involvement in education may be enthusiastic about the idea of schools becoming hubs for community change. They may see it as an opportunity to bridge the gap between schools and their surrounding communities and involve families in their children's education.
3. **Real-World Learning:** The emphasis on a personalized curriculum that emphasizes real-world learning and community problem-solving could resonate with educators who value experiential and project-based learning. They may believe that this approach can better prepare students for life beyond the classroom.
4. **Reduction of Social Toxins:** Urban educators who witness the negative effects of poverty and social toxins on students' lives may appreciate the focus on eradicating these issues through a transformative curriculum and critical pedagogy. They may see this as a way to address the root causes of academic challenges.
5. **Community Empowerment:** The concept of schools as centers of community change, working toward community self-reliance and self-determination, may align with educators who are passionate about empowering communities to take control of their own destiny. They may see this as a way to create more resilient and sustainable neighborhoods.
6. **Partnerships and Wrap-Around Services:** Educators might value the idea of partnerships with various community entities to provide wrap-around services. These partnerships could help address the non-academic needs of students, making it easier for them to focus on learning.

7. **Concerns about Implementation:** Some educators may have concerns about the practicality of implementing such a comprehensive model, particularly in resource-constrained urban schools. They may worry about the challenges of coordinating and sustaining the extensive partnerships and services described.
8. **Curriculum and Pedagogy:** Educators may want more information about the specifics of the curriculum and pedagogical approaches proposed in Transformational Community Schools. They may be interested in ensuring that these approaches are evidence-based and effective.
9. **Community Involvement:** The idea of community members taking on various roles within the school, such as mentoring and providing services, could be seen as both an opportunity and a challenge. Educators may want to ensure that community members are appropriately trained and qualified for these roles.
10. **Long-Term Sustainability:** Educators might question the long-term sustainability of the model, especially in terms of reducing the need for external services. They may wonder about the timeline and feasibility of achieving this level of self-reliance.

In summary, urban educators may have a range of opinions about Transformational Community Schools, but their perspectives will likely be influenced by their commitment to addressing the unique challenges faced by students in urban settings and their belief in the potential of community-based solutions to improve education outcomes.



See bottom of p. 2 of TCS booklet above

This topic/question is a main concern regarding traditional Community Schools and the limitations of a tendency of those working in these school not have to be from/live in the school's community.

Decolonizing a Commuinity School's providers, staff, administration, and leadership

How would teachers and service providers working in Transformational Community Schools react to the idea that their role is to eventually work themselves out of a job by finding someone from the school or the school's community to take their place?

ChatGPT

The idea that teachers and service providers working in Transformational Community Schools should eventually work themselves out of a job by finding someone from the school or the school's community to take their place can elicit a range of reactions. These reactions may vary depending on the individual's perspective, experience, and commitment to the principles of the Transformational Community Schools model. Here are some potential reactions:

1. **Positive and Empowering:** Some educators and service providers may view this idea positively. They may see it as an opportunity to empower students, community members, and even their colleagues to develop the skills and expertise necessary to sustain the school's operations and

services. They may feel a sense of fulfillment in helping others become self-reliant and self-determined.

2. **Alignment with Mission:** Those deeply committed to the mission and philosophy of **Transformational Community Schools** may embrace the notion of working themselves out of a job. They may believe that this aligns with the goal of fostering community self-sufficiency and cultural empowerment, which is at the core of the model.
3. **Community Ownership:** Some educators and service providers may appreciate the idea of transferring ownership and leadership to the community. They may see it as a way to strengthen the sense of community and collective responsibility, which can have long-term benefits for the school and its students.
4. **Challenges and Concerns:** Others may have concerns or reservations about this approach. They might worry about the readiness and capacity of community members to take on these roles effectively. They may fear that a premature withdrawal of support could negatively impact students' well-being and academic progress.
5. **Job Security:** Some educators and service providers may have concerns about job security. The idea of working themselves out of a job might raise worries about employment stability and financial security, especially if there is uncertainty about the availability of alternative positions or opportunities within the community.
6. **Training and Transition:** Educators and service providers who support the concept may emphasize the importance of a structured and gradual transition process. They may believe that comprehensive training and mentorship are essential to ensure that individuals from the community can effectively assume these roles.
7. **Commitment to Community Empowerment:** Those who embrace the idea may emphasize their commitment to community empowerment and self-determination. They may argue that their ultimate goal is to help communities become self-sufficient, resilient, and capable of driving their own educational and social services.
8. **Balancing Act:** Some educators and service providers may see it as a delicate balance between providing essential support and fostering community independence. They may believe that finding the right timing and approach for the transition is critical.

In practice, reactions to this idea will vary widely among teachers and service providers. Successful implementation of this approach would likely involve ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and a shared commitment to the long-term goals of community self-reliance and self-determination. It may also require flexibility in adapting the transition process to the unique needs and readiness of each school and community.



See p. 4 of TCS booklet above

Local School Councils

Are Local School Councils viable enough to run each Transformational Community School? What is being proposed here is that each TCS has a Local School Council (LSC): 4 parents, 2 community members, 1 non-teacher representative (e.g., school secretary, janitor, food service worker), 2

teachers, 1 student, and the principal. Each is selected the first year. The 2nd-year members, except the principal, are chosen through community-wide/school-wide elections which then take place every 2 years. The LSC hires/fires the principal, and has a say over the school's budgets, policies, and curriculum. To understand, urban communities must deeply analyze Chicago's LSC program: Local School Councils. This will, for example, make it clear how the LSC concept is what Community Schools need to be transformational--providing a publically elected board option to the anti-democratic privately selected charters/Innovation boards. This also makes sure the school's board members are from the school's community. Many charter or Innovation board members are not. Having local and immediate neighborhood control over securing and maintaining the educational, cultural, political, public health, and economic self-determination of the school's community is what characterizes TCS. To iterate, we who critique charters/Innovation schools for not being democratic must provide an advanced democratic school example.

ChatGPT

The idea of having Local School Councils (LSCs) play a central role in the governance of Transformational Community Schools (TCS) aligns with the principles of community engagement and empowerment that underlie the TCS model. However, the viability of LSCs to run each TCS effectively would depend on several factors, including the context, community involvement, and the support provided to these councils. Here are some considerations:

1. **Community Buy-In:** The success of LSCs in TCS would require strong community buy-in and active participation. Communities must value and trust these councils to make decisions about school leadership, budgets, policies, and curriculum.
2. **Training and Capacity Building:** LSC members, especially those who are not educators, would benefit from training and capacity-building programs to understand their roles and responsibilities. This includes understanding education policies, budgeting, and curriculum development.
3. **Elections and Representation:** The process of selecting LSC members through elections can be a positive step in ensuring representation from the community. However, the elections should be transparent, accessible, and inclusive to ensure diverse voices are heard.
4. **Principal Selection and Accountability:** Giving LSCs the authority to hire and fire principals can be a powerful way to ensure that school leadership aligns with the community's values and needs. However, it also requires clear processes and accountability measures to prevent potential challenges or conflicts.
5. **Collaboration with Educators:** While LSCs can provide valuable community perspectives, it's important to maintain collaboration between LSC members and educators. Teachers and other school staff have valuable insights into pedagogy and student needs.
6. **Resource Allocation:** LSCs overseeing budgets should have access to adequate financial resources and support to make informed decisions about resource allocation. Adequate funding is crucial for implementing the vision of TCS effectively.
7. **Long-Term Commitment:** The success of LSCs in TCS may require a long-term commitment from the community, as well as ongoing support and resources. It may take time for LSCs to develop the expertise and capacity needed to run schools effectively.

8. **Legal and Policy Framework:** The legal and policy framework surrounding LSCs would need to be clear and supportive of their role in TCS. This includes addressing issues such as conflicts of interest, decision-making authority, and accountability mechanisms.
9. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular monitoring and evaluation of LSC performance and its impact on the TCS model would be necessary to ensure that the councils are effectively fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

In summary, the idea of utilizing Local School Councils as a key component of TCS is aligned with the goal of community empowerment and self-determination. However, the viability of this approach depends on various factors, including community engagement, training, support, and a clear legal and policy framework. If these factors are addressed effectively, LSCs can play a valuable role in shaping the direction of TCS and ensuring that schools are responsive to the needs and aspirations of their communities.



See p. 4 of TCS booklet above

Student Councils for Transformational Community Schools

Are student councils a realistic idea for urban Transformational Community Schools?

ChatGPT

Absolutely, student councils can play a pivotal role in urban Transformational Community Schools (TCS). They serve as a platform for student involvement, encouraging democratic participation and fostering a sense of responsibility and ownership within the school community.

Implementing student councils in TCS aligns with the principles of Meaningful Student Involvement (MSI). This approach emphasizes engaging students as genuine partners in decision-making processes within the school, empowering them to contribute to school change and community development.

By allowing student voice to lead the way, TCS can create school-wide plans that prioritize student empowerment and well-being. This involves actively listening to students, valuing their perspectives, and integrating their input into the decision-making process.

The UK's example of fostering civic-mindedness through student councils in elementary, middle, and high schools showcases how these platforms can effectively cultivate democratic values and civic engagement from a young age. Connecting TCS staff and students with counterparts in UK schools can provide valuable insights and practical guidance on establishing and nurturing student councils.

James Baldwin's quote about education and society is particularly relevant here, highlighting the importance of education in encouraging critical thinking and examining the societal context in which students are being educated. Implementing student councils within TCS reinforces this idea by encouraging students to actively engage with their school community and societal issues.

Overall, integrating student councils and emphasizing meaningful student involvement aligns with the ethos of Transformational Community Schools, empowering students to become active participants in their education and agents of positive change within their communities.



See p. 5 of TCS booklet above

Transformational Community Schools and the global human rights of children and youth

How important is it that Transformational Community Schools (TCS) recognize the Global Human Rights of Children? Will it matter or not?

TCS will recognize the global human rights of its students. Although the US is 1 of 3 out of 197 countries not signing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), TCS will organize to prepare, over time, a TCS version of the UNCRC. It will be recognized by TCS staff, faculty, administration, and board, validating that each student has global human rights and so each student will know they have global human rights which are recognized by their community, peers, and school adults. Here are illustrations of global (UK) and USA efforts to reason with adults and educators as to the advantages for student engagement in their schools and communities when their global human rights are validated:

- Children's rights: United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

<https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/childrens-rights/united-nations-convention-of-the-rights-of-the-child>

- Educating children in a socially toxic environment

<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/educating-children-in-a-socially-toxic-environment>

ChatGPT

Recognizing and upholding the global human rights of children is crucial in the context of Transformational Community Schools (TCS) for several reasons:

1. **Moral and Ethical Imperative:** Recognizing the global human rights of children is a moral and ethical imperative. It reaffirms the fundamental principle that all children, regardless of their background, nationality, or circumstances, have inherent rights that must be respected and protected.
2. **Empowerment and Dignity:** Acknowledging children's global human rights empowers them and reinforces their sense of dignity. When students know that their rights are recognized and respected within the school community, it can boost their self-esteem and confidence.
3. **Educational Engagement:** Understanding and respecting children's rights can have a positive impact on their engagement in education. When students feel that their voices are heard, that they are treated with fairness and respect, and that their rights are upheld, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their learning.
4. **Global Citizenship:** TCS 's commitment to recognizing global human rights aligns with the goal of nurturing global citizens. It helps students develop an awareness of their place in the world and their responsibilities as global citizens who respect the rights of others.

5. **Social and Emotional Well-Being:** Acknowledging children's rights can contribute to their social and emotional well-being. It creates a safe and inclusive school environment where bullying, discrimination, and other forms of mistreatment are less likely to occur.
6. **Legal and Moral Framework:** While the United States has not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), recognizing global human rights within TCS establishes a moral and legal framework for protecting and promoting the rights of children, regardless of the country's official stance.
7. **Community Values:** TCS can model values of social justice, equity, and inclusivity by recognizing global human rights. This aligns with the broader goal of fostering a sense of community self-reliance and self-determination.
8. **Long-Term Impact:** Instilling the understanding and respect for global human rights in students can have a long-term impact. It prepares them to be responsible and empathetic global citizens who contribute positively to society.

In conclusion, recognizing the global human rights of children is not only important but also integral to the mission and values of **TCS**. It reflects a commitment to the well-being, empowerment, and education of students and reinforces the principles of justice, dignity, and inclusivity within the school community.



This question is not in the booklet. It is an outcome of recent discussions about TCS

What would make an American organization promoting educational justice not want to believe that students have global human rights?

ChatGPT

It would be unusual for an American organization promoting educational justice to not want to believe that students have global human rights, as the recognition of students' rights is generally in line with principles of justice and equity. However, there could be some reasons or factors that might lead to reluctance or resistance in acknowledging students' global human rights:

1. **National Sovereignty Concerns:** Some individuals or organizations may be concerned about the perception that recognizing global human rights for students implies a relinquishment of national sovereignty or control over educational policies. They may fear that international agreements could infringe on the autonomy of U.S. education systems.
2. **Political Beliefs:** There may be individuals or groups with specific political beliefs that lead them to resist international agreements and conventions, including those related to human rights. They might view such agreements as encroachments on national sovereignty and may be ideologically opposed to them.
3. **Misunderstanding or Lack of Awareness:** In some cases, reluctance to recognize global human rights for students could stem from a misunderstanding or lack of awareness about the principles and benefits of such recognition. Education and awareness-raising efforts may be needed to address this.

4. **Concerns About Implementation:** Some organizations may have concerns about the practical implications of recognizing global human rights for students. They might worry about how such recognition would be implemented, how it would affect educational policies, and whether it would require significant changes in practice.
5. **Prioritization of Domestic Issues:** While recognizing global human rights for students is not inherently at odds with addressing domestic educational justice issues, some organizations may prioritize addressing local or national educational disparities and injustices over international commitments.
6. **Political Climate:** The political climate and attitudes toward international agreements and conventions can influence organizations' positions on global human rights for students. Shifts in political leadership or prevailing ideologies may impact organizational stances.
7. **Resource Constraints:** There could be concerns about the resource implications of recognizing global human rights, such as potential costs associated with compliance or reporting requirements under international agreements.

It's important to note that the majority of educational justice organizations in the United States do support the recognition of students' global human rights, as this aligns with principles of equity, inclusivity, and social justice. However, any reluctance or resistance in recognizing these rights should be addressed through open dialogue, education, and advocacy to ensure that the best interests of students are upheld.



See p. 5 of TCS booklet above

Promoting the Civic Literacy of student at Transformational Community Schools

What would teachers of urban students who live in circumstances of poverty think of the idea of Civic Literacy: Education for Critical Citizenship and IDOE's Civics Standards? *Cui bono?* Who benefits when TCS students do not learn the American political system and how it works by being able to practice citizenship in their own public schools?

ChatGPT

Introducing Civic Literacy and engaging students in the practice of critical citizenship within urban TCS environments, particularly among students facing circumstances of poverty, could be seen as a transformative and empowering approach. However, reactions from teachers may vary based on their perspectives, experiences, and the resources available in their school settings.

Some teachers might enthusiastically embrace the idea of Civic Literacy, recognizing its potential to empower students to understand, engage with, and potentially challenge the systems that affect their lives. They might view it as an opportunity to provide students with tools to navigate and advocate for themselves within societal structures.

However, others might approach it with caution or skepticism. Teachers working in under-resourced schools may be concerned about adding more content or standards to an already packed curriculum.

They might worry about the practicality of implementing these initiatives within limited resources or within a system that heavily emphasizes standardized testing.

Engaging students in analyzing and adapting the IDOE Civic Standards, as well as teaching community organizing skills, could be seen as an excellent way to make these standards more relevant and applicable to students' lives. It could empower students by showing them how to practically apply civic knowledge and skills within their own communities.

Sheldon Berman's quote emphasizes the importance of treating students as active citizens in the present, not just preparing them for citizenship in the future. This aligns with the idea of teaching civic literacy and engagement as immediate and relevant skills, providing students with agency and a sense of responsibility in their communities.

Ultimately, the success of implementing Civic Literacy and teaching civic engagement in TCS among students facing poverty will depend on various factors, including teacher training, resource allocation, community support, and the willingness to adapt curriculum to meet the needs of the students and their communities. Collaboration and support among educators, administrators, and community members will be vital in making these initiatives successful and impactful.



See p. 5 of TCS booklet

Combining rites of passage with citizenship education in high-poverty urban schools

Is it a viable and realistic idea to mix youth rites of passage (becoming an adult) with citizen education (becoming a citizen) for student in high poverty urban schools?

ChatGPT

Combining rites of passage with citizenship education in high-poverty urban schools holds immense potential for nurturing responsible, engaged citizens and fostering a better society. The concept acknowledges the transitional phase of adolescence and aims to channel the energy and identity-seeking behavior of youth toward positive civic engagement.

In many urban communities, adolescence often marks a pivotal point where youth seek validation and recognition as adults. Without clear avenues for this transition, they might resort to negative behaviors to assert their maturity. Rites of passage ceremonies, coupled with citizenship education, offer a structured and culturally relevant way to guide this transition positively.

The idea of initiation into adult status through community ceremonies aligns with the ethos of Transformational Community Schools. These ceremonies can serve as powerful symbols, welcoming youth as full-fledged members of the community with both rights and responsibilities. Linking this to citizenship education not only imparts knowledge about civic duties but also encourages active participation and critical thinking about societal structures and responsibilities.

The document on Civic Literacy underscores the importance of civic literacy in understanding and actively participating in a democratic society. Analyzing pages 11-13 provides insights into what a constitutional democratic republic requires of its public schools. It emphasizes the necessity for students to comprehend the democratic way of life and actively engage in it.

Moreover, the research supporting a democratic school climate corroborates the positive impact of involving students in school-related decision-making. When students are treated as citizens in their own schools, the school climate tends to improve, fostering better attendance, stronger relationships, and improved academic performance.

This holistic approach—integrating rites of passage with citizenship education and civic literacy—has the potential to transform not just individual students but entire communities. By instilling a sense of responsibility, belonging, and active citizenship in youth, it contributes to the creation of a more engaged and participatory society.



See p. 6 of TCS booklet

The First Amendment and Transformational Community Schools

“Freedom and justice, however important, can never be enough; learning about democratic citizenship must be more than an academic exercise.” ~ *First Amendment Schools*, p.21

1st Amendment Schools aim to help students be active citizens in their schools. The notion students should learn more about the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment is not new. What is new is education where student actually practice, in their classrooms and schools, the 5 Freedoms: speech, assembly, press, religion, and petition in for grievances.

Is having Transformational Community Schools practice the 5 Freedoms viable and realistic?

ChatGPT

It's a compelling and important shift to move beyond just teaching about the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment to actively practicing these freedoms within schools. The First Amendment Schools (FAS) initiative offers a promising approach to fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of these fundamental liberties by integrating them into the fabric of school culture/classroom activities.

The concept of turning classrooms into laboratories of democracy aligns with the ideals of Transformational Community Schools (TCS), which aim to empower students and incorporate democratic principles into the educational experience. By implementing the FAS model, TCS can effectively transform into environments where the five freedoms—speech, assembly, press, religion, and petition—are not just theoretical concepts but lived experiences for students.

Encouraging students to exercise these freedoms within the school setting can be a powerful way to teach the practical implications of democratic principles. This approach allows students to engage with real-world applications of their rights, fostering a sense of agency, responsibility, and civic engagement.

By becoming First Amendment schools, TCS can actively involve students in decision-making processes, support student press and expression, and create an environment where diverse viewpoints are respected and encouraged. This aligns with the broader goal of TCS to empower students as active participants in their education and community.

As graduation nears, the idea that students should not just receive a diploma but also a deep understanding of and respect for their rights as citizens is crucial. Transforming TCS into 1st Amendment schools can play a pivotal role in preparing students to navigate the complexities of democracy, encouraging critical thinking, civic engagement, and the exercise of constitutional freedoms



See p. 6 of TCS booklet

Decolonizing the Community Schools concept

Does the traditional Community Schools model need to be decolonized in order for it to work best for schools located in communities of color and working class neighborhoods?

ChatGPT

Decolonizing the Community Schools model is a critical step towards making it more effective and responsive to the needs of communities of color and working-class neighborhoods. Traditional models of Community Schools may inadvertently perpetuate colonial dynamics by imposing external solutions, disregarding community agency, and failing to address the systemic issues faced by these communities.

The concept of decolonizing the Community Schools model involves acknowledging and dismantling the power imbalances, biases, and historical injustices embedded within the educational system. It necessitates a shift from a top-down approach to one that centers community voices, cultures, and strengths.

The document you referenced likely explores how a Transformational Community Schools model can work toward decolonization. One approach mentioned is promoting sustainability through self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Encouraging professionals and providers within these schools to work themselves out of a job by empowering community members to eventually take their place is a step towards true community-driven initiatives.

Empowering the community involves:

1. **Community Ownership:** Ensuring that the community has a genuine stake in decision-making processes and program implementation within Community Schools.
2. **Cultural Responsiveness:** Recognizing and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions, and languages within these communities. Programs and initiatives should reflect the cultural identities of the students and families they serve.
3. **Equitable Resources:** Addressing systemic disparities in resources, funding, and access to quality education. This might involve redirecting resources to meet the specific needs of the community.
4. **Collaborative Partnerships:** Establishing partnerships based on mutual respect and collaboration between schools, community organizations, and local leaders. These partnerships should be empowering rather than imposing external solutions.
5. **Empowerment and Capacity Building:** Investing in community leadership development, providing opportunities for skill-building, and fostering a sense of agency among community members.

Decolonizing the Community Schools model ultimately means reimagining and restructuring these schools to become spaces where the community actively drives the educational agenda, policies, and initiatives. It involves recognizing the strengths and wisdom already present within these communities and working collaboratively to address their unique challenges.



See p. 6 of TCS booklet

Naptown's colonial mindset

“For a span of my memory this has been a city of opposing wills, two faces firmly set toward different directions—one covertly determined to maintain the status quo, to continually block any access to power, or to parity; the other advocating an active morality and its right to inclusion as an equal entity rather than a colonized one [emphasis added]. This has been a city of perpetual confrontation, however cloaked, between the powerless and those who influence, control, and engineer the city’s movement in the inexorable and often ruthless march toward greatness.” ~ Mari Evans on Indianapolis, *Clarity as Concept*

Is Mari Evans’ quote about Indianapolis helpful in understanding why the Indianapolis Public Schools are challenged to educate all of its students?

ChatGPT

Mari Evans' quote about Indianapolis sheds light on the historical dynamics and challenges within the city, offering insight into the struggles faced by the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) in educating all of its students. The notion of a "colonial mindset" in Naptown, referring to Indianapolis, encapsulates a significant aspect of the city's social fabric and the systemic barriers that impact education.

The description of opposing wills—one striving to maintain the status quo and restrict access to power or parity, while the other advocating for inclusion and equality—resonates with the complexities often present in urban educational settings. In the context of IPS, this quote might reflect the challenges of addressing disparities in resources, opportunities, and support for diverse student populations.

The reference to a city of perpetual confrontation between the powerless and those in control highlights a struggle for influence and agency within the city's educational and social structures. Within IPS, this confrontation could mirror the struggle between marginalized communities, seeking equitable education, and those who wield power and influence over educational policies and resources.

Evans' depiction of Indianapolis as a city in an "inexorable and often ruthless march toward greatness" could underscore the pressure for progress and achievement within the city. However, this drive might inadvertently perpetuate inequities within the education system, particularly for students facing socioeconomic challenges or belonging to marginalized communities.

Understanding this historical context and the complex dynamics highlighted in Evans' quote can provide a lens through which to view the challenges faced by IPS. It underscores the importance of addressing systemic issues, advocating for equitable education, and working towards creating an educational environment that supports all students, regardless of their background or circumstances.



See p. 7 of TCS booklet

A model to follow: Roses in Concrete Community School in Oakland, CA

Is Oakland, CA’s Roses in Concrete Community School a model to follow for communities who want their neighborhood school to enable that community’s self-reliance and self-sufficiency?

Roses in Concrete Community School in Oakland, CA, indeed presents a compelling model for communities seeking to foster self-reliance and self-sufficiency through education. This school stands out for its commitment to empowering students and the community while challenging traditional educational norms.

The school's approach, as highlighted in the case study "Seeding Transformation for Seven Generations," demonstrates a counter-hegemonic schooling project. It responds directly to the community's demand for self-determination in education. This model emphasizes a social justice educational agenda that prioritizes community needs and aspirations.

Key aspects of Roses in Concrete Community School that can serve as a model for other communities or Transformational Community Schools (TCS) include:

1. **Community-Centered Approach:** The school actively involves the community in decision-making and educational planning, ensuring that the curriculum and initiatives reflect the needs and cultural context of the students and families it serves.
2. **Empowerment of Students:** Roses in Concrete encourages students to pursue higher education and return to the community to contribute. This emphasis on education as a tool for personal growth and community development fosters a sense of responsibility and agency among students.
3. **Focus on Self-Determination:** The school's commitment to self-determination aligns with the goals of communities seeking self-reliance and self-sufficiency. It aims to break away from traditional educational structures and empower individuals to shape their own educational experiences.
4. **Social Justice Education:** The emphasis on a social justice educational agenda indicates a commitment to addressing systemic injustices within education. This aligns with the ethos of TCS and communities striving for equitable and inclusive education.

The Roses in Concrete Community School serves as a beacon for educational models that challenge the status quo and prioritize community-driven, culturally responsive, and socially just approaches to learning. Its success in fostering self-determination and empowerment within the community could indeed offer valuable insights and inspiration for other neighborhoods and TCS aiming for similar goals.



See p. 7 of TCS booklet

Decolonizing Special Education: Part I Special Education and charters?

Since historically there has been issues with charters and special education students need Transformational Community Schools be especially welcoming to these student and their families as discussed in Decolonizing Special Education, Pt. I Special Education and charters?

The challenges faced by special education students and their families in charter schools, as highlighted in the sources you've mentioned, emphasize the need for Transformational Community Schools (TCS) to be particularly welcoming and inclusive to these students and their families.

Historically, charter schools have struggled to effectively support and meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Issues such as pushing out or discouraging enrollment of special education students due to concerns about performance metrics or financial viability are unfortunately not uncommon in some charter school settings.

TCS can stand in stark contrast by prioritizing inclusivity and actively working to decolonize the concept of special education. By embracing these students and their families, TCS can create a more welcoming and supportive environment that recognizes the inherent value and diversity each student brings to the educational community.

Decolonizing special education involves moving away from the historical biases and discriminatory practices that have shaped the concept of "normalcy" and "disability." Indiana's troubling history with eugenics laws underscores the need to challenge these harmful perceptions and systems that have marginalized certain groups.

TCS can adopt a holistic approach to support special education students by:

1. **Inclusive Policies:** Implementing policies that ensure equitable access to resources, support services, and quality education for students with disabilities.
2. **Culturally Responsive Practices:** Embracing diverse learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and individual needs to create an inclusive learning environment.
3. **Community Engagement:** Involving families, caregivers, and the broader community in decision-making processes and educational planning to ensure that the needs of special education students are met effectively.
4. **Professional Development:** Providing ongoing training and support for educators to understand and address the unique needs of students with disabilities.

TCS can serve as a beacon of inclusion, equity, and support for special education students and their families. By actively working to decolonize the concept of special education and fostering a genuinely welcoming and supportive environment, TCS can create transformative educational experiences for all students.



See p. 7 of TCS booklet

Decolonizing Special Education: Part II

There is no disability without normalcy

To what extent is the concept that there is no disability without normalcy be effective in decolonizing Special Education policies and practices in American schools and make room for strength based learning plans (S-BLP) to counter the current Individualized Learning Plan (IEP) policies?

ChatGPT

The concept that there is no disability without normalcy challenges the traditional notion that disabilities exist solely because individuals deviate from a constructed norm. This concept is pivotal in decolonizing Special Education policies and practices in American schools. By acknowledging that normalcy is a social construct and that differences should be the norm, this approach can pave the

way for a shift towards strength-based learning plans (S-BLP) in place of traditional Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

The Strength-Based Learning Plan (S-BLP) aims to move away from the normalization or standardization of students' abilities toward embracing and celebrating their differences. It shifts the focus from making students conform to standardized norms to empowering them to self-actualize, leveraging their unique talents, interests, and passions. In this approach, meeting state standards remains a goal, but it's not the sole purpose—developing individual strengths becomes equally important.

This shift challenges the historical and societal construction of normalcy, particularly its roots in eugenics and the social marginalization of individuals deemed "different." It reframes disability not as an inherent deficit but as part of the natural diversity of human abilities.

Understanding the history of disability, as highlighted in the resource you provided, is crucial to recognizing how societal norms have shaped perceptions of "normal" and "abnormal." It's a critical step toward dismantling these constructs and fostering a more inclusive and accepting environment.

Moreover, normalizing difference in schools can play a role in reducing bullying by validating the uniqueness of each individual. Acceptance, self-actualization, and social recognition of differences contribute to a more inclusive school culture, fostering empathy and reducing instances of violence or marginalization.

In essence, embracing the idea that there is no disability without normalcy can serve as a powerful tool in decolonizing Special Education practices. Shifting from IEPs to S-BLPs underscores the importance of recognizing and nurturing the strengths and individuality of students, fostering an inclusive educational environment that celebrates diversity rather than seeking to normalize differences.



See p. 8 of TCS booklet

Transformational Community Schools: Places to contest/eradicate inequalities

Are Transformational Community Schools special places to contest/eradicate inequalities that students, their families and neighborhood face on a daily basis?

ChatGPT

Transformational Community Schools (TCSs) aim to be hubs of change and empowerment within their communities, offering a platform to contest and address the inequalities faced by students, families, and neighborhoods. These schools go beyond traditional education by integrating civil discourse, civic action, and community involvement to tackle pressing issues and promote social change. Here's how the strategies you mentioned contribute to this goal:

1. **Integration of Civil Discourse and Civic Action:** Encouraging open discussions about critical topics like Black Lives Matter, COVID-19, CRT, or LGBTQ+ rights helps students grapple with complex realities. By fostering civil discourse, these schools prepare students to engage thoughtfully with societal issues.

2. **Student-Led Community Transformation:** TCSs empower students to identify shared values and connect them with prevalent community issues. By guiding them through the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating projects addressing these issues, these schools instill a sense of agency and responsibility in students.
3. **Shifting from Student Voice to Student Action:** Moving beyond simply expressing opinions, TCSs encourage students to take meaningful action. This transition from voice to action within schools and communities promotes a more holistic education and helps shape a more sustainable society.

By involving students in the identification of societal problems and guiding them through actionable solutions, TCSs become catalysts for positive change. They not only provide education but also foster a sense of social responsibility and activism among students, making a tangible impact on the inequalities faced by their communities.



See p. 8 of TCS booklet

An anti-poverty curriculum: Getting out of poverty or getting rid of it

Is an anti-poverty curriculum a viable idea in urban 5th-8th grade schools and 9th-12th grade high schools located in economically poor neighborhoods?

ChatGPT

An anti-poverty curriculum for urban middle and high schools in economically poor neighborhoods is a viable and necessary idea. Schools located in economically challenged areas often grapple with systemic issues deeply rooted in poverty. The traditional "going to college" culture prevalent in many schools, while valuable, may overlook the immediate and critical need to address poverty as a barrier to education and success.

An anti-poverty curriculum would aim to provide students with not only academic skills but also the tools, knowledge, and resources to understand and combat the challenges of poverty. Here's how such a curriculum could be beneficial:

1. **Addressing Root Causes:** Rather than solely emphasizing the goal of rising out of poverty through education, an anti-poverty curriculum would delve into the underlying causes of poverty in urban areas. It would empower students to critically analyze and challenge these systemic issues.
2. **Cultural Empowerment and Self-Determination:** By fostering self-determination and cultural empowerment, this curriculum would aim to instill a sense of agency in students to actively participate in shaping their own destinies and communities.
3. **Contextual Learning:** Acknowledging that conventional education might not fully meet the needs of urban poor students, the curriculum could incorporate real-life situations, contextual learning, and practical skills tailored to their environment.
4. **Comprehensive Vision for School Transformation:** The mentioned limitation of a "going-to-college culture" underscores the need for a broader vision of school transformation. An anti-poverty curriculum could fill this gap by providing a comprehensive approach that includes addressing social toxins and contesting inequalities.

Chief Justice Weilentz's quote highlights the necessity of an education that goes beyond traditional subjects, recognizing the need to address the environment that shapes students' lives. An anti-poverty

curriculum aligns with this philosophy, aiming to equip students not just academically, but also socially and emotionally, to navigate and challenge the circumstances of poverty.

By acknowledging and directly addressing the challenges of poverty within the educational framework, such a curriculum can be a powerful tool in breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering students to make meaningful changes in their lives and communities.



See p. 9 of TCS booklet

What an anti-poverty curriculum looks like

Is an anti-poverty curriculum where the purpose of the middle school or high school in poor neighborhoods is not to get their poverty-stricken students out of poverty but to get rid of poverty realistic?

ChatGPT

An anti-poverty curriculum that aims not just to lift individuals out of poverty but to eradicate poverty itself is an ambitious yet impactful vision for middle and high schools in economically poor neighborhoods. This concept shifts the educational focus from solely helping students escape poverty to actively engaging them in addressing the systemic issues causing poverty within their communities.

The approach you've outlined for Transformational Community Schools (TCSs) is holistic and community-centered, placing the students at the forefront of identifying and tackling the social toxins that plague their neighborhoods. Here's how this approach aligns with the goal of eradicating poverty:

1. **Community-Centered Learning:** By transforming classrooms into hubs for understanding and addressing community problems, students become agents of change. This approach encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and project-based learning, fostering skills essential for both personal and societal advancement.
2. **Understanding Urban Conditions and Social Toxins:** Utilizing tools like the urban conditions and social toxins chart allows for a comprehensive understanding of the various factors contributing to poverty. This knowledge empowers students to identify areas that need intervention and guides them toward solutions focused on radical healing and community empowerment.
3. **Radical Healing and Social Justice:** Incorporating the concept of radical healing within the curriculum addresses the deeper psychological and societal impacts of poverty. It encourages students to engage in actions that promote dignity, respect, and social justice, aiming to address the root causes of trauma and build resilience within the community.
4. **Generational Impact:** The continuity of work across school years ensures that the progress made by one group of students is carried forward by the next. This creates a generational commitment to eradicating social toxins and poverty, instilling a sense of purpose and continuity in the students' efforts.

Ultimately, this educational approach doesn't just equip students with knowledge and skills; it instills in them a sense of responsibility, agency, and a long-term vision for their communities. By actively involving students in tackling the underlying causes of poverty, this anti-poverty curriculum lays the groundwork for transformative change, aiming not just to alleviate individual circumstances but to create lasting societal impact.



See p. 10 of TCS booklet

Financial literacy: Gaining economic knowledge for both personal as well as community self-reliance and self-sufficiency

What is the existential importance of financial literacy for impoverished urban students?

ChatGPT

Financial literacy holds immense existential importance for impoverished urban students due to its potential to empower them in multiple ways:

1. **Self-Determination:** Financial literacy equips students with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their personal finances. This ability to manage money, understand credit, and make sound financial choices fosters independence and self-reliance, enabling them to shape their own futures.
2. **Breaking Cycles of Poverty:** Understanding financial concepts and practices is crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty. By learning about budgeting, investing, and managing debt, students gain tools to navigate economic challenges, potentially lifting themselves and their families out of poverty.
3. **Empowerment and Economic Stability:** Financial literacy is foundational for economic stability. It allows individuals to build savings, make wise investment decisions, and plan for the future, contributing to their long-term financial security and empowerment.
4. **Community and Socioeconomic Progress:** Educating students about financial literacy extends beyond personal gain. It also empowers them to contribute positively to their communities. When students comprehend economic principles, they can become leaders in driving community wealth-building initiatives and advocate for economic justice.

The 5 levels of Black power you've highlighted underscore the interdependence of economics with other spheres of influence. Financial literacy becomes the cornerstone upon which other aspects of empowerment rest. TCS's approach to studying the Indiana Department of Education's Financial Literacy curriculum allows students not only to understand personal financial management but also to extend this knowledge to community-level economic empowerment.

By delving into topics like financial responsibility, income management, credit, debt, risk management, and investing, students gain practical skills applicable to both personal and community finances. This knowledge enables them to actively participate in creating economic stability within their neighborhoods, contributing to broader socioeconomic progress beyond individual advancement.

Ultimately, financial literacy serves as a pathway to autonomy, social mobility, and the ability to effect positive change, aligning closely with the core values of Transformational Community Schools in empowering students, families, and neighborhoods toward economic self-determination and community development.



See p. 10 of TCS booklet

What's a high quality education for TCS students? An education for liberation

Is an education for liberation, an education as the practice of freedom what is needed to keep disaffected and hard to reach urban students, who will most likely dropout of school, in school and graduating?

ChatGPT

The concept of education as the practice of freedom, as highlighted by scholars like Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Patrick Finn, emphasizes a crucial aspect of education: its role in either perpetuating societal norms and inequalities or liberating individuals and communities.

For disaffected and hard-to-reach urban students who are at risk of dropping out, a high-quality education goes beyond standardized test scores or conventional metrics. It involves understanding the root causes of resistance or rejection of schooling among certain students and addressing these issues within the educational framework. Here are some key points highlighted in the resources you provided:

1. **Critique of Privatization and Standardized Metrics:** The discourse surrounding education reform often focuses on privatization, charter schools, and standardized metrics without fully addressing the complexities of urban education. The emphasis on "great schools" and test scores fails to capture the nuanced needs of diverse student populations.
2. **Understanding Student Resistance:** Some urban students, including working-class individuals, resist or reject traditional schooling due to a disconnect between their interests, cultures, and the dominant educational system. This resistance is not unique to a specific demographic but is seen globally among youth who feel marginalized by traditional education systems.
3. **Moving Beyond Binary Choices:** The dichotomy between traditional public schools and charter schools fails to acknowledge the diverse needs and experiences of students who may not fit into either system. It overlooks the necessity of an alternative approach tailored to engage and empower these marginalized students.
4. **Education for Liberation:** The concept of education as liberation challenges the notion of education as a neutral force. It posits that education can either perpetuate existing power structures or become a tool for critical thinking, creative engagement, and societal transformation.

The video shared on education for liberation emphasizes the potential of education to foster critical thinking, creativity, and agency among urban students. It advocates for an educational approach that acknowledges and respects the cultural diversity and experiences of students, aiming to empower them to critically engage with the world around them.

The insights from Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and others underscore the importance of education that transcends mere academic achievement. It's about empowering students to critically analyze their realities, envision alternatives, and participate in shaping a more just and equitable society. This approach aligns with the needs of disaffected urban students by offering them a pathway toward empowerment, self-discovery, and active participation in their own education and societal transformation.



See p. 10 of TCS booklet

An education for liberation and school discipline

Why would marginalized students, whose identities are those in which they feel or are indeed underserved, disregarded, ostracized, harassed, persecuted or sidelined in the classroom and or school be discipline problems in schools trying to liberate them?"

ChatGPT

The disciplinary issues among marginalized students in schools aiming to liberate them often stem from a deeper context of cultural disconnect, systemic inequalities, and a mismatch between the educational environment and the students' identities.

1. **Cultural Dissonance and Resistance:** The behaviors labeled as disciplinary problems might actually be forms of resistance or cultural expression. For example, the notion of "acting white" or conforming to a dominant culture within schools can create a conflict for marginalized students who feel disconnected from their own cultural identity. This disconnect might lead them to resist certain aspects of formal education, which is then misconstrued as behavioral issues.
2. **Reframing Resistance as Transformation:** Understanding resistance as a transformative force is crucial. Dr. Akom's work illustrates how marginalized students, particularly Black American students, can reframe their resistance into constructive critique when given the tools and guidance to engage critically with their education. This reframing can lead to a "Black achievement ideology" that empowers students without disruptive behavior.
3. **Educational Empowerment and Cultural Preservation:** Transformational Community Schools (TCS) acknowledge the importance of preserving students' cultural identities while providing an education that is empowering and relevant to their communities. Instead of expecting students to assimilate into a "higher culture," TCS aims to create an educational environment that values and incorporates students' cultural backgrounds.
4. **Critically Conscious Teaching:** TCS recognizes the significance of critically conscious teachers who understand and respect the cultural contexts of their students. These teachers can help bridge the gap between the students' experiences and the formal education system, empowering students without asking them to relinquish their cultural identities.

By acknowledging and respecting the cultural identities of marginalized students, addressing their resistance as a form of critique, and fostering an educational environment that values diversity, TCS seeks to create spaces where disengaged students feel empowered and supported. It's about recognizing the inherent value in their cultural identities while providing an education that is relevant, meaningful, and conducive to their personal and communal growth.



This question is not in the booklet. It is an outcome of recent discussions about TCS

Resisters, Rejectors, and Ridas: How to make urban schools work for disengaged students and critically conscious teachers

"What is unequivocally helpful from Prudence Carter's inquiry is the assertion that these young people's way of being and the concepts of achievement and mobility need not be mutually exclusive. That is, as a society perhaps we need to meet these students where they are culturally so they can participate in the opportunity structure without having to compromise their sense of self." ~ Harvard Education Review (Summer, 2007)

Urban students are asked to trade the culture of their home and community for the “higher culture” of the school in exchange for access to college. This reduces the life choices of students into a false binary, that of choosing between staying behind as a failure, and "getting out" as a success. Faced with the prospect of leaving their communities behind to be successful, many urban youth opt out of school. They choose to retain an urban and cultural identity they perceive to be in conflict with the expectations of schools, even if the cost of that choice is school failure. To be effective, urban schools must begin to develop partnerships with communities that provide young people the opportunity to be successful while maintaining their identities as urban youth. ~ Jeffery Duncan-Andrade

<https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Resisters-Rejectors-and-Ridas-How-to-make-urban-schools-work-for-disengaged-students-and-critically-conscious-teachers.pdf>

What do teachers in urban schools in high-poverty communities have to learn from Dr. Duncan-Andrade and Dr. Prudence Carter about the 3 kinds of teachers and the 3 kinds of students?

ChatGPT

Dr. Jeffery Duncan-Andrade and Dr. Prudence Carter offer critical insights into understanding disengaged students and the role of teachers in urban schools, particularly in high-poverty communities. Their perspectives shed light on the dynamics between students and educators and offer strategies to better engage disengaged students:

1.	Three Types of Teachers and Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duncan-Andrade categorizes teachers into Gangstas, Wankstas, and Ridas. Gangstas are authoritarian, Wankstas mimic the style of Gangstas but lack authenticity, and Ridas are those who authentically connect with students and their communities. Carter focuses on student behaviors and identities, highlighting Resisters, Rejectors, and Ridas among students. Resisters challenge mainstream education without rejecting it entirely, Rejectors actively reject it, and Ridas find ways to navigate the system while preserving their cultural identities.
2.	Cultural Respect and Identity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carter emphasizes the importance of respecting the cultural backgrounds and practices of non-white students. She suggests that successful students often negotiate multiple cultural traditions to achieve their goals, challenging the notion that success requires assimilation into the mainstream culture. Duncan-Andrade's concept of Rida teachers aligns with this idea. He advocates for educators who help students use their school experiences to improve their communities while gaining academic skills, promoting a pedagogy that doesn't require students to compromise their cultural identities.
3.	Reframing Education and Identity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both scholars challenge the idea that success in education should come at the cost of students' cultural identities. They argue against a binary choice where students are pressured to leave behind their urban identities to succeed academically.
4.	Partnerships with Communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duncan-Andrade stresses the importance of schools developing partnerships with communities to provide opportunities for urban youth to succeed without sacrificing their cultural identities. This approach aims to bridge the gap between school expectations and the students' identities.

In essence, both scholars advocate for an educational approach that respects and integrates students' cultural identities while empowering them academically and socially. Their insights highlight the need

for authentic connections between teachers and students, fostering a learning environment that values cultural diversity and recognizes the societal structures influencing disengaged students in high-poverty urban communities.



See p. 11 of TCS booklet

Adding the political to the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs of the whole African American child

Is adding the political needs to the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs of the whole African American child a sound pedagogical idea?

ChatGPT

Incorporating political needs into the holistic development of African-American children within an educational framework is indeed a significant and sound pedagogical idea. Here's why:

1. **Understanding Schools as Political Sites:** Recognizing schools as political spaces acknowledges the inherent politics within the education system. Education isn't neutral but reflects and often reinforces societal power structures. Teaching this awareness equips students with the critical thinking skills to navigate these structures.
2. **Whole Child Development:** The concept of the whole child encompasses not just academic and emotional needs but also the social, physical, and crucially, political needs. Acknowledging the political dimension ensures that education addresses systemic barriers and empowers students to engage in their communities as informed and active citizens.
3. **Empowering Students with Agency:** While concepts like "grit" focus on perseverance, adding political agency to the equation allows students to recognize and challenge systemic injustices that might hinder their success. It's about not just enduring but actively engaging with and challenging structural barriers.
4. **Critical Consciousness and Social Justice:** By dismantling ideologies that imply success is solely determined by merit and hard work, students develop a critical consciousness. This empowers them not only to navigate systemic challenges but also to advocate for social justice and work towards dismantling these barriers for themselves and their communities.
5. **Addressing Social Toxins:** Schools that integrate political education also address social toxins, those systemic issues like poverty, discrimination, and inequality that affect students' lives. By acknowledging and confronting these issues within the educational framework, students are better equipped to understand, critique, and transform these systemic challenges.

Incorporating the political needs of African-American children into education isn't about indoctrination; it's about providing a comprehensive understanding of the world they live in. It's about equipping them with the tools to critically analyze and engage with societal structures, fostering agency, activism, and a commitment to social change. This holistic approach ensures that students aren't just academically successful but also empowered agents of change in their communities.



This question is not in the booklet. It is an outcome of recent discussions about TCS

Cultural competency is not enough: Advancing culturally relevant teaching as politically relevant teaching

When teaching Black American students, is being cultural competent enough? Should teachers of Black American students advance culturally relevant teaching as politically relevant teaching?

ChatGPT

The concept of cultural competency, while valuable, might not sufficiently address the deeper issues faced by African-American students within the educational system. Here's why advancing culturally relevant teaching as politically relevant teaching is important:

1. **Political Clarity vs. Cultural Competency:** It's suggested that what makes a significant difference in the lives of African-American students isn't merely teachers' cultural similarities but their "political clarity." Teachers who understand and actively address the political realities of oppression in their students' lives play a pivotal role in empowering marginalized students.
2. **Recognizing the Political Dimensions:** Education isn't only about cultural understanding; it's also a socio-political institution. Recognizing this, teachers become agents of social change, using their classrooms as spaces of resistance and empowerment against systems of oppression.
3. **Oppositional Consciousness:** Teachers who engage in politically relevant teaching foster what's termed an "oppositional consciousness." This means guiding students toward understanding and challenging racism, encouraging them to resist societal inequalities.
4. **The Complexity Beyond Cultural Boundaries:** Focusing solely on culture might oversimplify the diverse experiences within cultural groups. Instead, highlighting the political aspect allows teachers to transcend cultural boundaries and engage with the broader political and social context that affects their students.
5. **Empowerment and Social Change:** Teachers who embrace politically relevant teaching believe in education as a tool for social change and empowerment. It's about preparing students, regardless of their backgrounds, to actively participate in creating a more democratic society.
6. **Moving Beyond Cultural Competency:** While cultural competency is crucial, it might not fully address the complexities of underachievement and alienation that marginalized students face. Politically relevant teaching goes beyond cultural competency by emphasizing educators' political convictions and their commitment to social justice.
7. **Education as the Practice of Freedom:** Ultimately, politically relevant teaching aligns with the notion of education as the practice of freedom. It opens up possibilities for students and teachers to transgress boundaries, challenge norms, and collectively envision a more just society.

In essence, culturally relevant teaching becomes politically relevant when teachers not only understand cultural nuances but actively engage with the political realities of societal inequities. This approach empowers students, encourages critical thinking, and fosters a commitment to social change, moving beyond surface-level cultural understanding toward a deeper, more impactful education.



See p. 12 of TCS booklet

Critical self-awareness: Ethnic studies and academic and social success

Transformational Community Schools (TCS) are built on appreciating how hard it is to advance academically and socially in education if you don't know who you are. Is this a valid premise when teaching multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, and marginalized urban students who live in the circumstances of poverty?

ChatGPT

Absolutely, the premise that understanding one's identity is crucial for academic and social advancement, particularly in a diverse and marginalized urban setting, holds immense validity. Transformational Community Schools (TCS) seem to recognize the significance of cultural, racial, and historical awareness in fostering a conducive educational environment for students from various backgrounds.

Here's why these approaches are valuable:

1. **Cultural Identity and Education:** Acknowledging the importance of ethnic studies and incorporating diverse perspectives into the curriculum allows students to understand their own heritage and identity better. This not only promotes a sense of belonging but also helps bridge cultural gaps and fosters empathy among students from different backgrounds.
2. **Intersectionality and Appreciation:** Recognizing the intersectionality of race, class, and identity is pivotal. Adding courses that explore the history of labor, for instance, not only educates students about historical struggles but also instills a sense of pride in their lineage's contributions to societal advancements.
3. **Empowering All Students:** Embracing the diversity of aspirations among students, whether aiming for college or pursuing other paths, is crucial. TCS's proposal to create an inclusive environment that values critical thinking, self-realization, and community engagement is commendable. It empowers students to become conscientious contributors to society, irrespective of their post-graduation plans.

TCS's commitment to fostering critical self-awareness, embracing cultural diversity, and acknowledging the intersectionality of identities within an educational framework seems to be a progressive and inclusive approach. Such initiatives can significantly contribute to creating a more equitable and nurturing learning environment for all students, especially those facing economic challenges and marginalized backgrounds.



See p. 12 of TCS booklet

TCS's teaching will be culturally relevant and sustaining, and include hip hop

If today's teachers must use a culturally relevant pedagogy, meaning they must know and appreciate the variety of cultures their students bring to the classroom, isn't it also vital that they must know and appreciate global youth culture, better known as hip hop, which is also a culture?

<https://f2acc6.p3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/1875-Kill-the-Indian-save-the-man-2021-Kill-the-homeboy-save-the-man.pdf>

<https://f2acc6.p3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Hip-Hops-Hierarchy-of-Needs.pdf>

ChatGPT

Understanding and appreciating global youth culture, particularly through the lens of hip hop, can indeed be crucial for educators aiming to implement culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy. Here's why it's valuable:

1. **Cultural Relevance and Student Engagement:** Hip hop isn't just a genre of music; it's a culture that has a profound impact on many young people worldwide. Incorporating elements of hip hop culture into teaching acknowledges and respects the cultural identity of students. It can significantly enhance engagement and connection between educators and students, especially those from diverse backgrounds.
2. **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP):** CSP emphasizes the importance of perpetuating linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism within the educational setting. By embracing hip hop culture, educators can contribute to fostering inclusivity, valuing diversity, and maintaining a connection between students' backgrounds and their learning experiences.
3. **Cultural Competence and Empowerment:** Being culturally competent isn't limited to understanding mainstream or dominant cultures. It involves recognizing and respecting various cultural expressions, including global youth culture like hip hop. Incorporating this into pedagogy not only validates students' experiences but also empowers them by acknowledging their cultural assets.
4. **Core Principles of Hip Hop:** Embracing principles like "Keepin' it real" and "Keepin it right" from hip hop culture encourages authenticity, self-awareness, and resistance to social injustice. These principles align with educational goals centered on self-actualization, critical consciousness, and social engagement.

However, integrating hip hop culture into education also requires sensitivity and understanding. It involves navigating potential controversies or stereotypes associated with the culture while highlighting its positive aspects in education.

Transformational Community Schools (TCS) recognizing and valuing global youth culture like hip hop as an asset rather than a liability in education is a step towards fostering a more inclusive and engaging learning environment. It can help bridge the gap between the school and the diverse cultural backgrounds of students, fostering a more comprehensive and responsive educational approach that meets the needs of a diverse student body,



This question is not in the booklet. It is an outcome of recent discussions about TCS

Hip Hop Culture: “Keepin’ it real, keepin’ it right” Expanding cultural competency for urban teachers

Is knowing Hip Hop Culture, “Keepin’ it real, keepin’ it right,” a way of expanding cultural competency for urban teachers? Why is this important for the success of urban public schools?

<https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Cultural-Competency-global-youth-culture.pdf>

The understanding and appreciation of hip hop culture, embodying the principles of "Keepin' it real, keepin' it right," indeed represent a significant expansion of cultural competency for urban teachers. It's crucial for the success of urban public schools for various reasons:

1. **Cultural Relevance and Student Engagement:** Hip hop culture is a powerful global phenomenon that resonates deeply with many urban youth. Incorporating elements of this culture into teaching practices not only acknowledges the cultural identity of students but also fosters engagement and connection between educators and their students.
2. **Cultural Validation and Identity Formation:** Hip hop, born from the struggles and experiences of marginalized communities, serves as a platform for self-expression and cultural validation. Understanding the values and principles embedded within hip hop allows educators to support students' identity formation and validates their lived experiences.
3. **Addressing Misconceptions and Stereotypes:** Educators embracing hip hop culture can challenge misconceptions and stereotypes prevalent in society. By understanding the nuances of this culture, teachers can prevent the perpetuation of negative biases and instead encourage critical thinking about the multifaceted aspects of urban youth identities.
4. **Fostering Sociopolitical Awareness:** Hip hop culture often serves as a voice of resistance and a platform for social commentary. Engaging with this culture can promote sociopolitical awareness among students, empowering them to challenge social injustices and advocate for positive change in their communities.

However, integrating hip hop culture into education requires a nuanced approach. It involves understanding the depth and diversity within the culture while avoiding oversimplification or generalization. It also involves navigating potentially controversial aspects of the culture while highlighting its positive influences.

For urban schools to truly succeed, acknowledging, respecting, and incorporating hip hop culture into educational practices can bridge the gap between the school environment and the lived experiences of urban youth. It serves as a way to empower students, promote cultural inclusivity, and create a more responsive and engaging educational setting that resonates with the diverse identities of the students.



See p. 13 of TCS booklet

Literacy at TCS: Learning how to read is a political act of radical commitment

Is learning how to read an existential act, a political act of radical commitment for those mainly urban males whose illiteracy could get them into the current pipeline to prison?

Absolutely, literacy holds significant political and existential implications, especially for marginalized urban males who might face the dire consequences of illiteracy, potentially entering the pipeline to prison. Here's why learning to read can be seen as an existential and political act:

1. **Empowerment and Liberation:** Literacy is a tool of empowerment. For marginalized individuals, particularly urban males facing systemic challenges, the ability to read is a means of accessing information, advocating for themselves, and challenging oppressive structures. It becomes a pathway to liberation from socio-economic constraints.
2. **Political Engagement and Collective Responsibility:** Literacy enables individuals to engage politically. It allows them to understand and navigate complex societal systems, empowering them to participate actively in civic and political processes. It fosters a sense of collective responsibility toward their communities and future generations.
3. **Existential Significance:** For African Americans and other marginalized groups historically deprived of educational opportunities, literacy is deeply existential. It's not merely about acquiring a skill; it's about survival, reclaiming cultural heritage, and affirming personal identity in a society that might systematically devalue their voices and experiences.
4. **Radical Commitment to Change:** Learning to read, especially in environments where access to quality education might be limited, represents a radical commitment to change. It challenges the status quo and advocates for educational justice, addressing the root causes of societal inequalities.

By framing literacy as a political act of radical commitment, educators and communities can emphasize its transformative power. It's not just about acquiring a skill; it's about asserting agency, challenging inequities, and striving for a future that transcends current limitations. In doing so, it aligns with the idea that education should not solely serve economic interests but should also foster critical citizenship, self-discovery, and societal change.



See p. 13 of TCS booklet

Literacy with an Attitude: Functional, Powerful, and Media Literacies

With the personal, social, cultural and political importance around being literate, need educators in urban schools in neighborhoods of poverty teach reading with an attitude?

<https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Literacy-with-an-Attitude-Educating-working-class-children-in-their-own-self-interest.pdf>

ChatGPT

Teaching reading with an attitude, especially in urban schools within impoverished neighborhoods, can be incredibly powerful. It aligns with the idea that literacy isn't merely about acquiring basic skills; it's about empowerment, agency, and challenging systemic inequalities. Here's why teaching literacy with an attitude is essential:

1. **Empowerment through Critical Literacy:** An attitude in teaching literacy infuses critical thinking, enabling students to question, critique, and engage with the world around them. It goes

beyond functional literacy by empowering students to navigate complex social, cultural, and political landscapes.

2. **Equipping Students for Self-Advocacy:** Teaching literacy with an attitude emphasizes not just reading and writing skills but also media literacy and critical analysis. It prepares students to decipher and challenge biased information, enabling them to advocate for themselves and their communities.
3. **Fostering Agency and Civic Engagement:** When literacy education incorporates an attitude that encourages questioning norms and structures, it fosters a sense of agency. Students learn that their voices matter and that they have the capacity to effect change in their communities.
4. **Addressing Systemic Inequalities:** In neighborhoods of poverty, teaching literacy with an attitude becomes a tool for addressing systemic injustices. It equips students with the skills and mindset to challenge the status quo, aiming for equity and justice.

Patrick Finn's perspective in "Literacy with an Attitude" echoes the sentiment that literacy is not solely about acquiring a skill; it's a fundamental right tied to citizenship. The video expands on this idea, emphasizing the transformative potential of literacy when approached with an attitude that values critical thinking, self-advocacy, and societal engagement.

In urban schools within impoverished neighborhoods, this approach to literacy can be a catalyst for change. It not only equips students with the necessary skills but also instills in them a mindset that challenges the limitations imposed by their circumstances. It's a pathway to empowerment, social change, and a more equitable future.



This question is not in the booklet. It is an outcome of recent discussions about TCS

Media literacy is the 4th R and a way to engaging all students

Since social media is a powerful form of communication for most global citizens, how important is it that educators teaching in impoverished urban settings include media literacy, covering the arts, YouTube videos, dance, TikTok, X, Facebook, political campaign ads and speeches, local and national news shows, graphic novels, magazines, fashion and hair styles?

<https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Media-Literacy-as-the-4th-R-Engaging-all-students.pdf>

ChatGPT

In today's digital age, media literacy is indeed a crucial skill for students, especially those in impoverished urban settings. Here's why it's important for educators in such environments to include a comprehensive understanding of media literacy:

1. **Relevance and Engagement:** Incorporating various media forms like social media, videos, online platforms, and cultural expressions into education resonates deeply with students. It makes learning relevant, engaging, and relatable to their lived experiences.
2. **Critical Thinking and Analysis:** Media literacy teaches students not just how to consume media but how to critically analyze and interpret it. It equips them with the tools to question biases, evaluate sources, discern misinformation, and understand the persuasive techniques used in different media forms.

3. **Empowerment and Participation:** Understanding media literacy empowers students to navigate the vast landscape of information available to them. It enables them to actively participate in discussions, make informed decisions, and engage critically with societal issues.
4. **Cultural Understanding and Diversity:** Media literacy extends beyond traditional texts. It encompasses a wide array of cultural expressions, diverse viewpoints, and artistic forms. Educators incorporating this breadth of media in their teaching can foster a more inclusive and culturally rich learning environment.
5. **Preparation for the Future:** In a world where media consumption is constant, teaching media literacy equips students with essential life skills. It prepares them to be responsible digital citizens, capable of navigating the complexities of today's media-saturated society.

By including various forms of media in education and emphasizing media literacy skills, educators can bridge the gap between students' everyday experiences and classroom learning. It enables students to critically engage with the world around them, fostering a deeper understanding of media's influence and their role as informed and active participants in society.



See p. 14 of TCS booklet

Digital literacy: COVID and exposing the lack digital literacy in Indianapolis Public School (IPS) students

Many persons, families, parent(s)/guardian(s) were sidelined by the COVID epidemic. This obviously also challenged all schools and teachers. Interestingly, at home learning became a necessity and many students suddenly had a computer. How important is digital literacy for each child?

ChatGPT

Absolutely, the COVID-19 pandemic forced a rapid shift to remote learning, highlighting the crucial need for digital literacy among students. Digital literacy is indeed a fundamental skill in today's technology-driven world. Here's why it's pivotal for every child:

1. **Access to Information:** Digital literacy allows students to navigate and access a vast array of information available online. It enables them to search for, evaluate, and utilize information effectively from various digital sources, expanding their knowledge base.
2. **Communication Skills:** Proficiency in digital platforms fosters effective communication. Students learn to express themselves coherently through writing, multimedia presentations, and other forms of digital communication, enhancing their ability to convey ideas and collaborate with others.
3. **Critical Thinking and Evaluation:** Digital literacy encourages critical thinking by teaching students how to assess the credibility and reliability of online content. They learn to discern between reliable sources and misinformation, developing a discerning eye in a sea of information.
4. **Creativity and Innovation:** With digital literacy, students can harness technology to create content, whether it's designing graphics, editing videos, coding programs, or expressing ideas through multimedia formats. This fosters creativity and innovation.
5. **Preparation for the Future:** In today's job market, digital skills are indispensable. Teaching digital literacy equips students with the foundational skills necessary for future academic success and workforce readiness.

Alan Schoff's perspective underscores the significant impact of COVID-19 in addressing the technology gap among IPS students. The move from limited access to technology for a third of the students to providing devices for every single student demonstrates the importance placed on ensuring equitable access to digital tools.

By prioritizing digital literacy and providing each child with a computer, Transformational Community Schools can empower students, especially those from underserved backgrounds, with essential skills to thrive in the digital age and bridge the educational gap caused by disparities in technology access.



See p. 14 of TCS booklet

The question of rigor vs. vigor for Transformational Community Schools Black American students: Which of the two approaches is more academically appropriate and culturally relevant?

Rigor is a popular word. Many educators tout a rigorous curriculum, rigorous homework, rigorous testing! Etc. Nonetheless, educator Augusta Mann argues vigor is more appropriate for Black American students. Which of the two approaches, rigor or vigor, is more academically appropriate and culturally relevant to Black students? In fact, is vigor more culturally appropriate for Latino students or poor white students whose respective cultures are not as individualistic and competitive as America's dominant middle-class culture?

ChatGPT

The debate between rigor and vigor in education is quite nuanced, especially when considering its cultural relevance for different student populations. Augusta Mann's emphasis on vigor as more culturally relevant for Black American students touches on cultural alignment in educational approaches. Let's explore the nuances and considerations regarding rigor and vigor:

1. **Rigor:** Rigorous educational approaches emphasize strictness, adherence to high standards, and often a structured, disciplined learning environment. While rigor is valued in many educational settings for its focus on challenging students and maintaining high academic standards, it might not always align with cultural values or experiences of certain communities.
2. **Vigor:** Vigor, on the other hand, embodies energy, vitality, and enthusiasm in learning. It might encompass elements like resilience, communalism, expressive communication, and emotional vitality, which are culturally significant in various communities. This approach focuses on fostering a passionate engagement with learning, acknowledging and valuing cultural strengths.

For Black American students, Augusta Mann's perspective highlights how cultural themes like spirituality, resilience, communalism, and emotional vitality align more naturally with a concept like vigor rather than strict rigor. These themes often emphasize community, expression, and a holistic view of education that might differ from the structured, individualistic nature of rigor.

Similarly, for Latino and poor white communities, cultural values often revolve around family, community, and collective well-being, which might resonate more with the concept of vigor. These

cultures often prioritize relationships, oral traditions, and emotional connections, aligning with the elements encapsulated in vigor.

Ultimately, the key lies in recognizing the cultural nuances and strengths within each community and crafting educational approaches that honor and integrate these strengths into the learning process. Both rigor and vigor have their merits, but a culturally relevant approach acknowledges and respects the cultural values and experiences of the students, creating a more inclusive and effective educational environment.



See p. 14 of TCS booklet

Why mandatory school uniforms won't improve IPS and student voice will

Will a Pedagogy of Recognition do the same thing as mandatory school uniforms?

ChatGPT

The argument against mandatory school uniforms in favor of student voice and a Pedagogy of Recognition brings up some crucial points about the nature of education and fostering genuine connections between educators and students. Here's a breakdown:

- 1. Authentic Relationships vs. Uniforms:** The primary argument against school uniforms is that they can replace genuine relationships and understanding between teachers and students. It's suggested that if educators had authentic connections with their students, uniforms wouldn't be necessary to control behavior or maintain order. The focus here is on building meaningful relationships as a means of establishing a positive school environment.
- 2. Pedagogy of Recognition:** Transformational Community Schools (TCS) aim to prioritize student engagement and involvement in shaping school climate, governance, and learning through a Pedagogy of Recognition. This pedagogy emphasizes the importance of validating and acknowledging students' experiences, identities, and perspectives. It's centered around understanding the social context, acknowledging power dynamics in the classroom, and striving for transformative education that aligns with principles of justice and freedom.
- 3. Three Areas of Validation:** The Pedagogy of Recognition involves three key areas of validation:
 - **Contextualizing recognition:** Understanding the social context to comprehend students' experiences within their lives and schooling.
 - **Pedagogical recognition:** Recognizing the influence of power dynamics on the learning environment and relationships in the classroom.
 - **Transformative recognition:** Constantly questioning and evaluating educational practices against principles of justice, transformation, and freedom.

This approach aims to create an inclusive and empowering learning environment by acknowledging and celebrating the diverse experiences and identities of students. It shifts the focus from controlling behavior through uniforms to actively engaging students in shaping their educational experiences and fostering a sense of belonging and respect.

Ultimately, the emphasis is on building trust, understanding, and meaningful connections between educators and students, recognizing the unique context of each student's life and experiences as a crucial aspect of their education.



See p. 15 of TCS booklet

Student voice and authentic relationships: TCS and the great shift to a sustainable society

So, the question is what's really behind the IPS and charter school uniform policy?

ChatGPT

The motive behind uniform policies in schools, particularly in districts like IPS and charter schools, can be multifaceted and influenced by various factors. Here are some potential reasons:

1. **Perceived Control and Discipline:** One reason for implementing uniform policies could be to create a sense of discipline and control within the school environment. Uniforms are often seen as a way to standardize appearance and reduce distractions, theoretically leading to improved focus on academics.
2. **Equality and Safety:** Uniforms are sometimes adopted to create a sense of equality among students, minimizing socioeconomic distinctions that might otherwise be highlighted by varied clothing choices. Additionally, uniforms can be perceived as enhancing school safety by easily identifying students within the campus.
3. **Image and Reputation:** Some schools implement uniform policies to improve their public image or reputation. Uniforms might convey a sense of professionalism or structure that is attractive to parents and the community, potentially affecting enrollment or funding.
4. **Reducing Peer Pressure:** Uniforms could be intended to alleviate peer pressure associated with clothing brands or styles, thus minimizing distractions and social tension among students.
5. **Control of Identity Expression:** However, critics argue that enforcing uniforms might suppress individuality and expression among students, stifling creativity and self-expression.
6. **Political and Ideological Factors:** There might also be political or ideological motivations behind uniform policies, aligning with certain educational philosophies or attempting to address specific social or behavioral issues.

The absence of consistent peer-reviewed research showing a direct correlation between uniforms and academic improvement raises questions about the true effectiveness of uniform policies. The concerns about potential exclusion of nonconformist students or those questioning authority highlight the need for a deeper examination of the motives and impacts of uniform mandates in schools.



See p. 15 of TCS booklet

Why mandatory uniforms won't improve IPS and student voice will Pt. I

Is promoting a partnership with youth, not a one-way coercive top-down mandatory uniform policy reflecting an enlightened and forward-looking global perspective put forward in "School Uniforms: A 20th century response to 21st century challenges: Why mandatory school uniforms won't improve IPS and student voice will" realistic in an urban school in poor neighborhoods with disaffected students where sagging pants are both a fashion and political statement?

ChatGPT

The argument against mandatory school uniforms and in favor of empowering student voice in schools highlights several key points:

1. **Complexity of Modern Challenges:** The premise is that the challenges faced by modern society, including schools, are intricate and multifaceted, extending beyond the simplistic solutions offered by uniform mandates. Social and technological complexities are seen as vast and impactful, requiring more nuanced approaches than uniform policies to address them effectively.
2. **Youth Empowerment and Partnership:** Advocates for student voice emphasize the importance of involving young individuals in decision-making processes within educational institutions. Rather than enforcing top-down uniform policies, fostering a partnership with students is believed to be more constructive, empowering, and reflective of an enlightened global perspective.
3. **Understanding Youth Culture:** The argument acknowledges that youth culture often involves forms of self-expression, such as sagging pants, that might be seen as fashion statements or even political expressions. Trying to regulate these expressions through uniform policies may not address the underlying issues or create a conducive learning environment.
4. **Accountability and Responsibility:** The focus is on ensuring that decisions made in educational settings are accountable and responsible, not just for the present but also for the future. Creating an environment where students have a voice in shaping their educational experiences is considered a step towards accountability and preparing them for their roles in a democratic society.
5. **Effectiveness of Student Engagement:** The argument suggests that involving students in decision-making processes within schools does not negatively impact the school climate. Instead, it proposes that such involvement could potentially enhance the overall environment by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among students.

The commitment of Transformational Community Schools to following guidelines that emphasize the importance of student voice over mandated uniform policies reflects a belief in empowering students and recognizing their role in shaping their educational experiences and the school environment.



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Why mandatory school uniforms won't improve IPS and student voice will

Pt. II "The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community"

Is using the "Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community" too much of an intellectual, impractical or global environmentalist argument against school uniforms to convince both teachers/staff and students that school uniforms have too many drawbacks and that authentic relationships with students as well as school/classroom democracy is a better option?

ChatGPT

The argument against mandatory school uniforms and in favor of emphasizing authentic relationships and student voice rather than dress codes draws upon several key points:

1. **Dominator vs. Partnership Model:** The argument presents a dichotomy between dominator and partnership models in society. Compulsory uniforms are viewed as reflective of a dominator model, implying control and conformity, while authentic relationships and student involvement in decision-making represent a partnership model focused on cooperation and democracy.

2. **Global Perspective on Sustainability:** Referencing David Korten's concept of "The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community" aims to underscore the broader shift needed in societal paradigms. It aligns the argument against uniforms with a larger narrative of transitioning from growth-focused industrial societies to sustainable, community-oriented civilizations.
3. **Educational Philosophy Shift:** The proposed shift from competition to cooperation, domination to democracy, growth to sustainability, and assimilation to self-actualization within educational settings suggests a philosophical and pedagogical transformation. This transformation emphasizes inclusivity, empowerment, and fostering individual potential over uniformity and control.
4. **The Relevance of Student Voice and Authentic Relationships:** Emphasizing student voice and authentic relationships in educational institutions reflects a commitment to nurturing a democratic learning environment. It acknowledges the importance of valuing diverse perspectives, fostering cooperation, and enabling students to actively participate in shaping their educational experiences.
5. **Critique of Uniforms as an Expression of Control:** The argument suggests that dress codes mandating uniforms are a reflection of control rather than partnership. It aims to highlight the limitations and drawbacks of imposing such regulations, framing them as incompatible with the ideals of a democratic and inclusive educational system.

By framing the conversation around the broader societal shift toward sustainability, democracy, and self-actualization, the argument positions student voice and authentic relationships as crucial elements for fostering a more inclusive, democratic, and sustainable educational environment.

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