

Critical Race Theory Guidance and Messaging for PTAs

This document seeks to provide information on National PTA's position and response to inquiries on critical race theory. PTA leaders are encouraged to use the messaging in this document to guide their own responses to their membership, partner organizations, stakeholders and media on the methodology.

About Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory, or CRT, is an academic concept that is more than 40 years old but has become a highly debated topic in the media and public arena this year, especially in the K-12 space as numerous state legislatures are debating bills seeking to ban its use in the classroom. The concept will likely continue to be a topic of much conversation and debate in the coming months as a new school year begins, legislatures return from summer recess, and our country enters the 2021 election season.

People approach critical race theory from many different angles depending on their lived experience, and there are significant disagreements even among experts about its precise definition, how it intersects with teaching and learning in K-12, and how its tenets should inform K-12 policy and practice. There are also claims that the theory advocates discriminating against white people and making white children feel bad in order to achieve equity.

The core idea of critical race theory is that race is a social construct and racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies. It is an understanding that who we are, the laws we have in place, the histories that have been handed down to us, have been shaped by race. The basic tenets of CRT emerged out of a framework for legal analysis in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the concept is taught in law school and graduate school to adults. In addition to law, CRT has been taught and applied in fields including sociology, humanities, social sciences, political science and teacher education. In the field of education, CRT was introduced in 1995.

National PTA's Position on Critical Race Theory

National PTA does not have a position on critical race theory as a specific methodology, but we do believe students should have an honest and fair understanding of how our nation's history has unfolded, and we encourage the implementation of diverse and inclusive curricula in K-12 public schools nationwide.

In September 2020, National PTA's Board of Directors adopted a [position statement on Inclusive Curricula in K-12 Education](#), which expresses our association's commitment to the creation and implementation of diverse and inclusive curricula in K-12 schools as well as the necessary accompanying professional development that supports culturally and linguistically-responsive teaching and learning so that the history of all students—including but not limited to African American, Latino(a), Native American, Asian and LGBTQ groups—is accurately represented and taught.

National PTA's Board of Directors also adopted a [position statement on Addressing Systemic or Institutional Racism](#) in July 2020, which states that our association strongly urges federal, state and local public officials to invest in educating students and teachers on the history and impact of institutional racism. The position statement also indicates that our association believes professional development and training must be provided for all school staff on implicit bias and culturally appropriate curriculum.

Further, National PTA has a [position statement on Shared Responsibility in Educational Decision Making](#), which outlines that National PTA supports the concept of shared responsibility in the development of school policies and in curriculum decisions, and that PTA urges all school boards to cooperate with parents, teachers, students, principals, administrators, business, civic and community leaders, and the general public in this process.

National PTA's goal is to clearly state what we believe is in the best interest of our students while avoiding the polarizing debates that are more about politics than education.

Talking Points on Critical Race Theory and National PTA's Position

- National PTA does not have a position on critical race theory as a specific methodology, but we do believe students should have an honest and fair understanding of how our nation's history has unfolded, and we encourage the implementation of diverse and inclusive curricula in K-12 public schools nationwide.
- In September 2020, National PTA's Board of Directors adopted a [position statement on Inclusive Curricula in K-12 Education](#).
- As outlined in the position statement, National PTA believes culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning and inclusive curricula are imperative in building socially competent and aware children and youth and enhancing their intellectual capability and psychosocial well-being. This includes recognizing racism, classism, and other issues in the world and developing a student's awareness to openly address these situations.
- As also outlined in the position statement, National PTA supports and advocates for inclusive K-12 curricula and multicultural resources and materials to empower students and families of all backgrounds to understand themselves more effectively in relation to others.

- In July 2020, National PTA’s Board of Directors adopted a [position statement on Addressing Systemic or Institutional Racism](#). As outlined in this position statement, National PTA strongly urges federal, state and local public officials to invest in educating students on the history and impact of institutional racism.
- National PTA believes classrooms that acknowledge diverse histories and cultures break down existing barriers and create supportive and inclusive schools that encourage students to grow and learn in the safest and most empowering spaces possible.
- National PTA believes in the value of all children and helping all children reach their full potential. Our association also believes that providing students with age-appropriate and accurate history lessons in our nation’s public schools will help them become the critical thinkers we need to make this a more just, prosperous and equitable country.

Sample Statement on Critical Race Theory and PTA’s Position

{NAME OF PTA} Statement on Critical Race Theory

{City, State} (Date)—The following statement can be attributed to {insert name}:

“Since our founding, PTA has been the conscience of the country when it comes to issues that affect children and youth. Our association believes students should have an honest and fair understanding of how our nation’s history has unfolded, and we encourage the implementation of diverse and [inclusive curricula in K-12 public schools](#) nationwide.

“Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning and inclusive curricula are imperative in building socially competent and aware children and youth and enhancing their intellectual capability and psychosocial well-being. This includes recognizing racism, classism, and other issues in the world and developing a student’s awareness to openly address these situations. Kids deserve age-appropriate and accurate history lessons in our nation’s public schools, which will help them become the critical thinkers we need to make this a more just, prosperous and equitable country.

“PTA is committed to advocating for inclusive K-12 curricula and multicultural resources and materials to empower students and families of all backgrounds to understand themselves more effectively in relation to others. Classrooms that acknowledge diverse histories and cultures break down existing barriers and create supportive and inclusive schools that encourage students to grow and learn in the safest and most empowering spaces possible.

“At PTA, we loudly use our voices to demand more for our kids and ensure they can become all that they can be. Our association remains committed to tackling tough—but necessary—conversations to ensure access to a better education and create a better future for all of our children.”

{Insert PTA Boilerplate}