Educating Toward a Multiracial Democracy in California

June 2022

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Publication Information

California is home to more than 9 million precious children and youth who—through their diverse identities, languages, and experiences—embody extraordinary potential. As a state, we must provide rich opportunities for young people to understand and tap into these cultural resources. We have a responsibility to enhance their creative and intellectual capabilities and foster their respect for and deep connection to one another and the land that sustains us all. And, because young people today face heightened political division and unprecedented social and environmental challenges, it is imperative that they develop the civic skills and commitments necessary to build complex alliances, address shared problems and envision a more promising future. In short, we must educate toward a multiracial democracy.

The Crisis of Democracy and Its Relation to Diversity and Racial (In)justice

By many measures, American democracy is experiencing a crisis.

> —A summer 2020 Pew Research survey found that less than one third of Americans believed that: "Government is open and transparent"; "The tone of political debate is respectful"; and "People agree on basic facts even if they disagree politically."

> —A spring 2021 Morning Consult Poll found that the responses of more than a quarter of Americans classified them as "highly right-wing authoritarian"—more than twice the proportion in Canada or Australia, and far more still than in many other countries.

> —A fall 2021 PRRI Poll found broad anxieties over increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the U.S. A majority of all Americans—and 98% of those who trust far-right news sources—agreed with the statement, "Today, America is in danger of losing its culture and identity."

Issues of race and racism are deeply implicated in this crisis. America is undergoing profound demographic changes which have significant implications for who holds and wields political power. In 1950, amidst racialized restrictions on access to the vote in the Jim Crow south, White Christians represented more than 90 percent of the American electorate. That figure is projected to fall below 50 percent by 2024 (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2020). Current attacks on democratic practices and principles are often fueled by anxieties around these changes and attendant concerns about how opportunities, wealth, and power are distributed. We see these dynamics most clearly in the recent rash of state legislation creating new barriers for electoral participation.

Of late, public schools—a central institution charged with instilling democratic principles—have become primary sites for pitched battles about how Americans understand our shared history of racial oppression and struggles for racial justice. More than half of all states are considering (and/or already have enacted) legislation or executive action to ban or otherwise limit teaching and learning about race (Education Week, 2022). This campaign has led advocates to challenge any curriculum that highlights historical experiences of racial discrimination or course material such as the picture book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (which recounts how a six year old African American girl walked past angry White protestors to desegregate her local public school). And, over the last year, local school board meetings across the country have been characterized by the spread of misinformation, extreme contention, and threats of violence (Green, 2021; Groves, 2021). To be sure, schools are not the only youth-serving institutions facing abusive criticism for addressing issues of diversity and inclusion; elected officials and non-partisan, community-based organizations have also been subject to vitriolic attacks.

California is Different in Some Important Respects—
But We Have a Lot of Work to Do

Even as many states across the nation have enacted what the first amendment advocacy organization PEN America (2021) describes as "educational gag orders," restricting classroom discussions on race and racism, California has become the first state to formally adopt ethnic studies as a graduation requirement for all students (Gecker, 2021). This action—together with California's new support for civic education through the State Seal of Civic Engagement—signals that California is primed to become a national leader in this work (Hodgin & Bueso, 2021). Whereas public debate in many other states has centered on *whether* to educate toward a multiracial democracy, California is grappling with *how* to do this. There is thus a unique opportunity at this time to create a model of educating toward a multiracial democracy in California that will influence school- and community-based efforts in our state and inform education elsewhere.

California's efforts to educate toward a multiracial democracy are inextricably tied to its rich linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity. California is also the U.S.state with the third largest population of self-identified Native Americans, and people from all over the world have made it their home. As such, the state's public schools serve students from varied backgrounds who must learn how to live in harmony and collaborate to understand and address society's most pressing social and environmental issues. While the unique ethnic/racial, linguistic, and socio-economic composition of individual schools can vary widely, it is important to recognize that over three out of four public school children are people of color. More than half of these children (55%) are of Latinx origin (California Department of Education (CDE), 2020-21). And, according to the Current Population Survey, most are of Mexican and Central American descent (Flood et al., 2021). Meanwhile, about 22% identify as non-Hispanic White, 12% as Asian-American Pacific Islander American, 6% as Black, and 1% as Native American. The remaining identify as two or more races, or did not report their race (CDE, 2020-21). Most of these children—52%—come from immigrant or refugee family backgrounds (Flood et al., 2021), and 38% enter school as English Language Learners (Santibañez & Umansky, 2018). The majority of the state's public school's children are low-income, with approximately 59% qualifying for free or reduced priced meals (CDE, 2021-22). Meanwhile, about 13% are enrolled in a special education program because of a disability (CDE, 2018-19).

Broad societal structures profoundly affect the lived reality of California's diverse youth in complex ways. Existing economic structures and public policies afford them varying degrees of housing, healthcare, food security, and access to clean air and water. They and their family members are granted different rights under current immigration laws, and some grapple with the trauma of escaping violence and persecution in their countries of origin. Their cultural practices and histories, as well as the ways they enact love and express their gender, are affirmed or neglected or dismissed by prevailing media and cultural institutions.

Public schools and other youth-serving institutions must not only embrace the cultural and linguistic assets and diverse identities and abilities of all California's children but also provide young people with the support they need to thrive. As residents of often racially and economically segregated neighborhoods, young people need guidance on how to effectively engage with others outside of their communities. This is a challenging task, but necessary in order to prepare California's diverse young population to collectively define our shared future as a multiracial democracy.

3 out of 4 California Public School Children Are People of Color

California Department of Education 2020–2021

A Latinx

B Non-Hispanic White

C Asian-American Pacific Islander American

D Black

E Two or More Races or did not report

F Native American

E 4%
F 1%
D 6%
C 12%
A 55%
B 22%
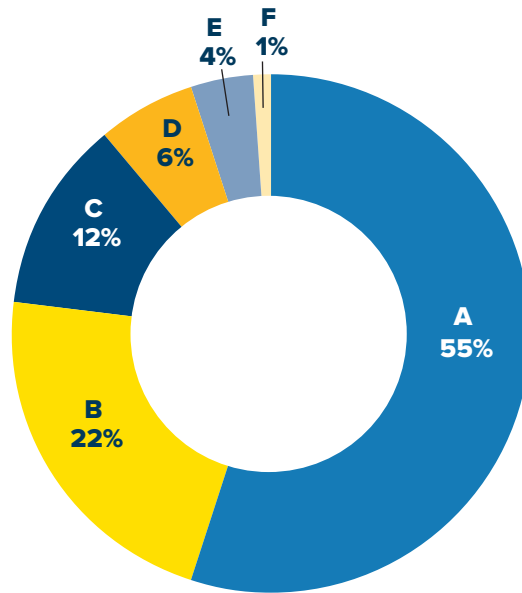
California also embodies a great deal of ideological diversity, and some residents do not embrace the goal of educating toward a multiracial democracy. Many Californians have mixed feelings about this agenda, and some are outright opposed. For example, in a number of communities, residents and educators have expressed wariness about the ethnic studies curriculum. A few California communities have become focal points for attacks on what is inaccurately labeled "critical race theory" (Johnson, 2021). And, too often, groups of students in the state's public schools express discomfort with various forms of diversity or animus toward their classmates (CDE, 2020; Arelleno, 2022).

Moreover, despite a constitutional commitment to establish a system of public schools that ensures "the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people," California has often centered other educational priorities (California Const. art. IX, § 1). As a consequence, to date, many of the state's school districts have invested scant energy, time, and resources into educating toward democracy (Rogers et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, history has taught us that California is capable of dramatic social change. In the 1990s, California in some ways led the nation in policies that criminalized young people, rolled back civil rights legislations, and excluded immigrants. Leaders across many California communities responded in kind. Drawing on legacies of multi-racial organizing that took root during the 1960s and 1970s, social movements organizations emerged, broadened their reach, and became increasingly sophisticated, . Their collective efforts, including campaigns for more inclusive representation, pressured state and local agencies to be more responsive to California's diverse populations (Pastor, 2018; Ramakrishnan & Colbern, 2015).

Given the changes over the last three decades, California has the potential to make strides towards educating toward a multiracial democracy within and outside of schools, in spite of substantial headwinds. Advancing this agenda will surely require democratic engagement—the difficult work of motivating support and building coalitions. Educating toward a multiracial democracy thus demands greater conceptual clarity and a shared understanding of how to achieve this aim.

In the pages that follow, we focus primarily on how California might move towards educating toward a multiracial democracy in the context of K-12 public schools. However, we envision this framework as having broad applicability to other youth-serving institutions. This white paper aims to support public and professional conversations toward this end.

Multiracial Democracy

Our focus on multiracial democracy reflects the central importance of race and racism in California's history and contemporary life. Often, a prevailing ideology of White supremacy has negated democratic and humanistic values, justifying racial violence, exclusion, and hierarchy. Racial oppression has not only existed alongside California's democratic institutions, but, at times, has resulted directly from state action. We recognize, of course, that attention must also be paid to economic inequality and other factors that constrain both democracy and the well-being of communities. True democracy embraces the inherent dignity and value of all people, and hence cannot coexist with racism and other forms of oppression. We use the phrase "multiracial democracy" to express an aspiration for the racially just society we hope to achieve.

Multiracial democracy refers to a political, social, and economic system that reflects and serves all Californians. Through its call to include and center the interests of everyone, multiracial democracy expresses a deep commitment to equality. In such a system, it is impossible to predict important life outcomes—in health, education, employment—on the basis of racial identity. A multiracial democracy foregrounds inclusive participation, respectful engagement across lines of difference, and coalitional work in politics, civic life, and the workplace. These practices legitimize collective decision-making, tap into the cognitive benefits of epistemic diversity, and yield a sum that is greater than its constituent parts.

A multiracial democracy...

▶ Embraces the wisdom of the many and holds a deep suspicion toward the unexamined, unregulated, and unchecked power of the few.

▶ Asserts a fundamental commitment to human dignity, demanding equal regard for all, and respect for the distinctive identities—racial, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, religious, etc.—bound up with each individual's sense of self.

▶ Rejects "othering," exclusion, or oppressive social relationships and advances instead a sense of belonging and mutual regard among diverse people who maintain their distinctive identities.

▶ Creates opportunities for people with diverse linguistic abilities, experiences, and histories to learn from one another, participate in joint endeavors, and make collective decisions about a shared future.

▶ Establishes an affirmative obligation to ensure that human needs such as food, housing, and safety are met.

Educating Towards a Multiracial Democracy

Educating towards a multiracial democracy means valuing the lives of all young people and creating conditions that enable the full flowering of their human capacity. While attending to students' academic development, it centers the needs, experiences, and identities of each and every young person; addresses issues of racial and social justice; encourages respectful, equitable, and informed participation; and supports sustained and humane engagement and problem-solving within and across diverse communities. Schools and community sites that support education for a multiracial democracy are places of joy and discovery where young people figure out who they are in relationship to diverse peers, and how they fit within and can contribute to a more just society.

Of particular importance will be opportunities both in schools and other youth-serving institutions that support:

Caring and Restorative Relationships: Learning environments that foster inclusive, empathetic, and non-violent relationships among students and adults as well as practices such as restorative justice enable youth to grapple productively with anger, loss, pain, and social oppression and promote a sense of belonging and safety. In addition to supporting students in their social-emotional learning and pursuit of joy, a focus on relationships that emphasize caring and dialogue support young people as they clarify or negotiate differences, reflect on histories of conflict and harm, and forge shared understandings and ways of being.

Lived Civics: Curriculum and instruction that fosters dialogue and evidenced-based inquiry grounded in students' lived experiences, identities, and histories that investigates compelling societal issues and examines how to effect change. While broadening students' civic knowledge and understanding of their community, curricular interventions can encourage informed debates about resolutions to pressing social concerns.

Youth Voice: Opportunities for creative and informed political and cultural expression, democratic decision-making, and civic action. This entails creating structures and opportunities for youth to share their talents, interests, and concerns, as well as help shape the institutions affecting their daily lives.

Educating Toward a Multiracial Democracy

Opportunities

New initiatives such as ethnic studies and Seal of Civic Engagement; rich linguistic, racial and ethnic diversity in CA especially amongst youth; young people's commitment to civic engagement

Challenges

Distrust in government and civic institutions; hyper-partisanship; discomfort of some with profound demographic changes; actions to limit teaching about race
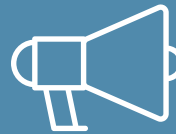
Caring & Restorative Relationships

Learning environments that center restorative justice and other practices that support inclusive, empathetic, and non-violent relationships.

Lived Civics

Curriculum and instruction that fosters dialogue and evidence-based inquiry grounded in students' lived experiences, identities, and histories.

Youth Voice

Opportunities for creative and informed political and cultural expression, democratic decision-making, and civic action.

Multiracial Democracy

A system that foregrounds inclusive participation, respectful engagement across lines of difference, and coalition work in politics, civic life, and the workplace. Multiracial democracy describes promising prevailing practices and expresses an aspiration for the racially just society we hope to achieve.

Caring & Restorative Relationships

Caring and restorative relationships can bring joy and enhance a sense of belonging. Yet we must also acknowledge that a deep and lasting history of exclusion and social inequalities have created, and continue to create, harm and trauma. In recent years, emotional and other hardships have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, racial injustices, economic uncertainties, and climate disasters. Further, increasing levels of political polarization foment acrimony and indifference to the well-being of fellow community members. These dynamics produce destructive conflicts and alienation, particularly in public schools and other institutions that bring together students, families, educators, and service providers who come from a variety of backgrounds, speak different languages at home, and embrace varied views on an array of educational and social issues. Additionally, today's youth are regularly exposed to digital media that can have detrimental impacts on their self-esteem, mental health, and interpersonal relationships (Moon & Mello, 2021; Meeus et al., 2019; Subrahmanyam et al., 2020; Tynes et al., 2019; Woods & Scott, 2016). For these reasons, we believe that educating toward a multiracial democracy must center caring and restorative relationships.

While public schools and other youth-serving institutions face extraordinary challenges during times of social upheaval, they are also uniquely positioned to foster caring and restorative relationships among diverse stakeholders. However, it takes intentional efforts to recognize and celebrate the interconnectedness, humanity, cultural wealth, and linguistic assets of diverse community members. To this end, leaders can promote empathetic dialogue that helps clarify or negotiate differences, while also acknowledging experiences of trauma. Such dialogue can prompt reflection about interpersonal as well as structural causes of conflict and harm.

As a starting point, structured time must be set aside to give students the space to share and listen to one another's emotions and experiences. This can occur through regular guided check-ins or "temperature checks," when students are asked to share how they are feeling in small groups or in an open classroom setting. As part of this process, educators can provide students with guidelines for respectful communication and active listening so that everyone, including English Language Learners and those dealing with personal struggles, feels comfortable sharing. Such thoughtful efforts can help mitigate against unequal power dynamics within the classroom, and foster a culture of mutual respect so that all feel seen and heard.

Indeed, structured time for sharing and listening can enhance students' socioemotional skills in ways that can differ from unmonitored digital communication which can sometimes result in cyberbullying (Kim et al., 2019; Uhls et al., 2017). Hence, schools can engage in practices that go beyond developing relationship skills and cultural competencies. In this regard, the development of caring and restorative relationships aligns with a movement underfoot to promote what scholars are calling Transformative Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) (Jagers, Rivas-Drake & Williams, 2019). Transformative SEL prioritizes social and emotional priorities, and it does so in a manner that is simultaneously attentive to issues of culture, language, and identity as well as to broad societal dynamics of inequity and injustice. Thus, transformative SEL not only reflects the fact that societal inequity and injustice impacts young people's development but also seeks to prepare students to confront the systemic issues that constrain opportunities for both themselves and others.

In supporting caring and restorative relationships, educators must anticipate that harm will occur. Restorative justice principles and practices, rather than punishment, can help address conflict when it does occur (Winn, 2018). Based on indigenous traditions

of conflict resolution, restorative justice often consists of a deliberative process bringing offenders, victims, and other community members together to address students' harmful acts. The goal is to encourage understanding, inclusion, and restoration rather than exclusion and punishment (Gray, 2012). This entails supporting young people as they participate in dialogues—often in the form of circles, conferences, conversations, and mediations in which the perpetrator, victim, and/or other community members collectively discuss misbehavior, hurtful situations, or other shared issues. Working together, the participants aim to develop an agreed-upon solution that addresses the needs of those harmed while also restoring the dignity of the perpetrator. Such dialogue can deepen collective understanding about self, community, society and societal causes of harm, and the possibilities for collective repair.

A focus on caring and restorative relationships should not be limited to the students. Importantly, schools and other youth-serving institutions can adopt a holistic philosophy (rather than discrete interventions) characterized by mutual concern for all members of the community and a shared commitment to human dignity (Gregory & Evans, 2020). Within a context of a polarized and sometimes vitriolic political climate, adults and youth can practice and model communication that respects the human dignity of all.

Lived Civics

The lived experiences of youth are often marginal to the curricular content of academic coursework and youth development programming. Some teachers, to be sure, surface these lived experiences and their civic relevance, but such discussions are generally not part of the standard core curriculum. This inattention has costs with respect to learning and engagement across disciplinary contexts.

An emphasis on "lived civics" could help (Cohen, et al., 2018). We invoke the word "lived" to foreground the importance of everyday experiences, often shaped by our identities. And we hearken to the original meaning of civics as "relating to a citizen," attending to how individuals come together as a collective to identify and address common issues held in common. Thus, by pairing the words "lived" and "civics," we describe an approach to inquiry and to learning that focuses on issues of shared concern, draws upon the distinctive lived experiences and histories of community members, and deepens awareness and understanding of individual and collective identities. Indeed, learning and identity development inform one another (Nasir, 2011). During adolescence, youth are beginning to view their lived experiences in relation to broader social, economic, cultural, and historical factors, and this process is central to shaping their ethnic and racial identities (Umaña-Taylor, et al., 2014) as well as their broader civic and political development (Youniss & Yates, 1997; Erikson, 1968).

School curriculum has not generally fully embraced a multiracial stance. Most often, the lived experiences, actions, and priorities of those with relatively more power (for example, well-off and male White people) have been placed at the center, and the inclusion of others is viewed as an addition to "the core." A lived civics stance aims to help address the impact of this power imbalance by foregrounding the experiences, knowledge, and priorities of young people and of the groups with which they identify. This curricular approach broadens the focus of inquiry, learning, and sense-making.

Students should of course continue to learn curricular content that aligns with state standards. However, combining a lived civics approach with attention to the state standards enables educational priorities and approaches to be co-constructed alongside young people, allowing space for their voices, agency, and expertise. Such efforts can

help transform learning opportunities in ways that make them more compelling—particularly for students from marginalized backgrounds. For example, de los Ríos (2020) highlights ways that teachers have structured opportunities for U.S. Latinx bilingual youth to leverage their lived experience and bilingual capacity by drawing on and further developing their new media literacies for enhanced self-expression and meaningful engagement with hotly contested societal issues—ones that have sizable implications for themselves, their communities, and for the broader society.

Students also stand to benefit from lessons that explore the wide-ranging current and historical examples of diverse communities joining together in alliances to address shared concerns and enhance justice. Such multiracial coalitions offer insights into the complex task of bridging beyond one's own frame of reference and building solidarity for social change. More generally, learning about the lived experiences of classmates can also provide valuable insights—insights that can meaningfully advance the understandings needed to foster a multiracial democracy. As a result, viewed through a lived civics lens, the diversity of California's classrooms can be an enormous asset.

At the same time, educators are not always familiar with or fully aware of how to leverage the diverse cultures, languages, and social class backgrounds of their students so as to enrich learning opportunities for all participants. In addition, organized efforts and "Conflict Campaigns" (Pollock et al., 2022) in which educators, schools, and districts are attacked can make it feel risky and difficult to implement educational strategies that are responsive to this diversity and to students' lived experiences. Thus, it is vital to clearly articulate the priorities of and rationale for a lived civics approach and to provide professional development and supports for effective implementation.

With such supports in place, the benefits can be substantial. This approach can help young people connect their experiences to one another's and to the curriculum standards. Ultimately, these experiences can shape and inspire inquiry and informed action. Fundamentally, a lived civics approach is a lens that enables all to see the relevance of academic learning to their own lives and to those of their families, peers, and fellow community members. Emphasizing lived civics can also help young people make sense of the historical, political, and economic forces that shape different forms of social inequality and the disparate impacts of climate change they see in their own and other communities, as well as contribute to positive identity development by instilling pride in their own identities and understandings of others' identities.

Indeed, if we are to foster a multiracial democracy, one that includes and responds to diverse perspectives and priorities, then we must attend to the diverse lived experiences of students and those living in their communities and beyond.

Youth Voice

Young people exercise voice individually and collectively through creative cultural expression, informed political speech, democratic decision-making, and social action. Youth voice matters because: 1) expressing oneself and being heard are central to human dignity; 2) sharing ideas motivates engagement and deepens the understanding of those who speak and those who listen; and 3) enlisting a diversity of young people's voices stretches, challenges, and diversifies our collective capacity for addressing social and environmental debates.

All young people arrive at school with a distinctive voice. These voices are invaluable resources for learning, identity development, and civic life. Yet schools often are not structured in ways that encourage, respect, affirm, or nurture youth voice.

Ideally, schools create pedagogical practices, systems and structures where student voices are invited in, heard, and acted upon. These include student-driven learning, culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy, and open discussion and deliberation. Democratic pedagogical practices allow students to have a voice in shaping classroom norms, problem solving approaches, and even aspects of the course content (Benner, Brown & Jeffrey, 2019). An open classroom climate—where students engage in discussions about social, political, economic, and environmental issues (Campbell, 2008)—provides opportunities for youth to voice their perspectives and listen to others and encourages broad participation, including from those learning English or with "quiet" voices.

Schools and youth programs can also provide opportunities for young people to participate in civic engagement projects, service learning, or informed action. Such projects can be structured in ways that enable young people to focus on social and environmental issues they care about, as well as draw on their own lived experiences and perspectives. Approaches like Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) can elevate student voice and foster positive student outcomes, developing their sense of agency, belonging, and leadership skills (see Casanova et al., 2021; Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2016; Rodriguez & Brown, 2009; Rubin & Jones, 2007).

Youth voice can be promoted through leadership opportunities, extra-curricular activities (including the arts), participation in decision-making, and advisory groups. Studies have shown that promoting student voice can increase student engagement and belonging, enhance school climate and culture, and improve both grades and attendance (Benner et al., 2019; Cook-Sather, 2002; Fullan, 2015; Mitra, 2009; Kahne, Bowyer, Marshall & Hodgin, 2022). Youth participation in decision-making can and should occur at the district and state level as well. For example, the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) process has created opportunities in California for students to inform funding priorities and allocations at the district level (Lin & Ishida, 2015). However, the inclusive and democratic intent of the process is not always actualized. More broadly, partnerships between school districts and non-partisan local, regional, national, and global organizations can help to expand opportunities for youth voice (Casar, Sasner & Graham, 2022).

Promoting youth voice requires a systemic commitment to ongoing and substantial youth engagement and power sharing. It is not enough for districts, schools, or other youth-serving institutions to merely include youth in meeting agendas constructed by

adults. Youth must contribute to shaping the agenda and framing the broader learning enterprise, and, in turn, adults must "share authority, demonstrate trust, protect against co-optation, learn from students, and handle disagreements" (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Adults' responsiveness to voice is a critical component. If youth perceive that efforts to include their voices are not genuine and meaningful, such initiatives may have the opposite-than-intended effect and alienate young people (Alderson, 2000). Efforts to promote voice are particularly important for youth of color and marginalized youth, who often have fewer opportunities to have a meaningful voice in school (McFarland & Starmanns, 2009), and also typically experience social and political marginalization (Cohen, 2010; García Bedolla, 2005; Junn, 1999).

In a multiracial democracy, educators create space for each young person's distinctive voice while also helping them learn how to exercise that voice in community with others. This is a complex process because young people arrive at school and other institutions with diverse experiences, identities, and viewpoints. Young people should be encouraged to communicate deeply held beliefs in a manner that does not diminish the humanity or dignity of their classmates. They should be provided with the analytic tools to examine issues of power as they consider the extent to which some voices are granted more status than others and some modes of communication and languages are deemed more valuable than others. Students who have been silenced should be supported in bringing their voices forward while others may be asked to step back and listen. Ideally, young people themselves will assert a collective responsibility for ensuring everyone's voice is heard.

It is important to recognize that youth voice can be guided by a commitment to restorative and caring relationships, as well as an understanding of diverse experiences and social issues.

As such, the three components of the framework we have laid out here—caring and restorative relationships, lived civics, and youth voice—overlap and reinforce each other. These components do not need to be considered as three separate discrete interventions, but rather can be implemented in different combinations within schools or other youth serving institutions. When prioritized and integrated together throughout curriculum and programming, the above aforementioned approaches to relationships, civics, and youth voice can help redefine what a multiracial democracy looks like.

Educating Toward a Multiracial Democracy Pushes Against Prevailing Norms

Historically, even as many Californians looked to their schools to foster a more inclusive and equitable future, California's system of public education often reflected the undemocratic values and unequal power relationships prevalent in broader society. Frequently, the state's public schools excluded or sorted out young people of color, working class students, and immigrants, denying them valuable learning opportunities and silencing their voice (Wollenberg, 1978; Garcia, 2018; Oakes et al., 2004; Rumberger & Gandara 2004).

Today, California's public schools aim to serve all students in the state, and, already, a number of teachers and youth service providers effectively center the importance of caring and restorative practices, lived civics, and youth voice. However, much of this work is in uneasy tension with powerful prevailing norms and deeply entrenched structures and practices. Far too often, schools foreground individual success in a highly prescribed curriculum, emphasize adult voices and adult authority, and assert disciplinary control through punitive policies. Socio-emotional well-being, when con-

sidered, is often viewed as a means to sustain student engagement rather than a good in and of itself.

Education for a multiracial democracy provides a framework to re-envision the culture and practice of public schooling. It thus should *not* be understood as a program that can be added on to the existing school day. Rather, it is a holistic way of conceptualizing how adults and young people relate to and communicate with one another, how varied cultural experiences are integrated into and become vital sources for sustained inquiry and academic learning, and how young people express themselves and participate in decision-making.

Ways to Educate Toward a Multiracial Democracy

Public schools have an important role to play in educating toward a multiracial democracy. There are a number of opportunities and openings in California to advance this agenda through existing initiatives such as ethnic studies, restorative justice programs, transformative social and emotional learning, and the State Seal of Civic Engagement. Other processes that periodically occur in school districts—such as reimagining the vision or mission statement, developing a holistic graduate profile, and renewing the Local Control Accountability Plan—also offer opportunities for students, community members, and educators to integrate educating toward a multiracial democracy as a core aim of education in California.

While there are moments and places in public schools and districts where democratic and restorative relationships are nurtured, lived civics is promoted, and youth voice is prioritized, these practices often occur in silos through individual programs reaching only some students, or as a result of an individual educator's impressive efforts. Advancing this work at scale is essential as well as highly complex. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has made this challenging work even more difficult. The pressures on young people, communities, and educators is immense, particularly for marginalized and lower resourced communities. We are only beginning to grapple with the impacts on learning, student mental health, and staff stability. However, the challenges we face in California and nationally make it more critical to begin envisioning what it will take to educate toward a multiracial democracy. These efforts can be integrated alongside current initiatives in ways that explicitly deepen their democratic potential, rather than adding new initiatives to the immense number of demands educators face.

There are important lessons to learn in this regard from the range of youth organizing groups in California. In fact, California is home to at least 112 self-identified youth organizing groups, and many of them have a successful track record of providing opportunities for their high-school-aged members to advocate for changes to government policy and/or engage current and future voters in government elections (Valladares et al., 2021). Offering valuable insights into the concrete practices and activities that educate toward a multiracial democracy, these groups promote inclusive and restorative relationships, center the lived experiences of members, and guide them in exercising their voice in thoughtful and constructive ways.

There is also an important opportunity to integrate the framework of educating toward a multiracial democracy into one of California's most important new educational reforms—the California Community School Partnership Program. Through this initiative, California will invest $3 billion over the next five years to ensure every high-poverty school in the state becomes a "community school" that provides an array of services. Specifically, the California Community School Partnership Program emphasizes integrated services, expanded learning time, family and community engagement, and

collaborative leadership in ways that could potentially align with our framework for educating toward a multiracial democracy. By shifting the distribution of services, the program will enable more students and families to access valued supports. Additionally, this initiative connects schools with community partners in ways that can foster empowered and participatory youth and democratic multiracial communities.

Indeed, the California Community School Partnership Program reminds us that in order to educate toward a multiracial democracy, a range of supports will be needed. For example, school and district leaders, teachers, and classified staff will need to learn new and different strategies for nurturing democratic and restorative relationships, integrating lived civics, and promoting youth voice. Adults will need to shift the norms of schools in order to truly attend to these priorities in authentic and meaningful ways. Progress will not be linear nor fast, so ongoing learning and reflection will be key. Resources, funding, and staff capacity will also need to be dedicated to ensuring that all schools and all students are able to benefit from these efforts. In addition, schools and districts can identify existing programs and efforts that relate to educating toward a multiracial democracy and consider how such efforts can be synthesized to create a more cohesive and impactful approach. Schools and other youth-serving institutions will need to offer professional development, programming, and curriculum that align with the framework, and finally, higher education institutions will need to rethink how diverse K-12 educators and administrators are recruited, prepared and supported.

Building a System to Educate Toward a Multiracial Democracy: Getting Started

This white paper is a call to think differently about our schools and youth-serving institutions more broadly. It also is an invitation to join in creating a system of public education and youth development that embraces California's students in all of their complexity, centers their experiences and voices, and supports them as they learn to live and work with one another.

Multiracial democracy is enacted through inclusive dialogue. The next phase of this work requires that educators, community members, and youth join together to talk about the purpose and practice of education and youth development. They will need to discuss the educational resources that this vision requires as well as broader social policy changes necessary to ensure the well-being of young people. They also will want to address several critical questions:

> How might the project of educating toward a multiracial democracy guide emerging reform initiatives—such as community schools—that promise to bring extensive new resources to public schools?

> What should teacher and principal training programs and ongoing professional learning look like in order to advance capacity and commitment to educate toward a multiracial democracy? What are the implications for how diverse adults are recruited into teaching and how they interact and learn with one another? What are the implications for how adults interact and learn from diverse young people?

> What are the implications of educating toward a multiracial democracy for the shape and content of the academic curriculum and for young people's engagement with it? How are these commitments enacted to support and deepen rigorous academic inquiry and learning?

How can we advance this demanding agenda within a broader context in which so many schools, educators, and students as well as their communities are often struggling to stay afloat?

How can California's students be invited into the process of shaping public schooling in an authentic and empowering way? In answering this question, we stand to learn much from youth organizing groups in California that have extensive experience with caring and restorative relationships, lived civics, and youth voice.

Writing about democracy and race at the end of World War II, W.E.B. Du Bois (1945, pp. 98-9) noted that, to date, "democracy has failed because so many fear" sharing power. Their fear, he reasoned, is grounded in the belief that "a world full of intelligent, healthy, and free people is impossible, if not undesirable." Du Bois declared that "this fear is false." He imagined a more hopeful future made possible by a "vital, gigantic effort" to realize "real education for the broadest intelligence and for evoking talent and genius on a scale never attempted in the world." Today, this bold and capacious future is within our power to achieve. Let us begin.

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