

Oregon Promotes Teacher Training Program to 'Dismantle Racism in Mathematics'



Oregon's Education Department is promoting a training program that will offer a toolkit to help teachers "develop an anti-racist math practice."

As noted in [a newsletter](#) sent by the department, middle school teachers are encouraged to register for a Feb. 21 course titled "A Pathway to Equitable Math Instruction," which they say is designed to help them make use of "key tools for engagement [and] strategies to improve equitable outcomes for Black, Latinx, and multilingual students."

According to the toolkit, one of the ways to achieve this goal is by "visiblizing [sic] the toxic characteristics of white supremacy culture with respect to math." The alleged "toxic characteristics" include, among many others, focusing on getting the right answer, students being required to

show their work, and teachers "treating mistakes as problems by equating them with wrongness."

"Upholding the idea that there are always right and wrong answers perpetuate objectivity as well as fear of open conflict," the toolkit states in reference to setting the focus on getting the right answer. Instead, teachers are recommended to have students "come up with at least two answers" that might solve the problem, and challenge standardized test questions by justifying other answers other than the right one by "unpacking the assumptions that are made in the problem."

Teachers are also expected to learn to "distinguish between a mistake and a misunderstanding" because "white supremacy culture shows up in math classrooms when addressing mistakes," according to the toolkit.

The toolkit links to a workbook titled "Dismantling Racism" for reference. The workbook similarly identifies the belief in objectivity as a characteristic of white supremacy, claiming that it is racist to believe there is such a thing as being objective or neutral, and that one should "assume that everybody has a valid point."

It's unclear to what extent teachers are expected to incorporate the workbook into their teaching. One section of the workbook claims that "only white people can be racist in our society, because only white people as a group have that power."

The newsletter gained media attention amid a heated debate over [critical race theory](#) (CRT) and its role in America's social and cultural institutions. An outgrowth of the European Marxist school of critical theory, the CRT labels the very foundations of the American system, such as rationalism, constitutional law, and legal reasoning, as tools of racial oppression.

Last year, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, which is part of the taxpayer-funded Smithsonian Institute, came under

fire because of [a display about "whiteness."](#) The museum suggested that valuing things such as "the nuclear family," "objective, rational, linear thinking," and "rigid time schedule" are manifestations of the alleged white culture.

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