Critical Analysis Tool

Educational Organizing Community Gathering (Continued!)

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4:00-6:00

Education Justice Coalition of Vermont

Hannah Miller, Celilo Bauman-Swain, V Pearson, Mugabo W'Ishema
Thierry Uwilingiyimana, Alyssa Chen, Christie Nold
Dr. Bettina Love
Co-founder of the Abolitionist Teaching Network, Endowed Professor of Education at the University of Georgia. Read more.

Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings
Former professor of education at University of Wisconsin Madison. Advocate for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Read more.

Dr. Django Paris

bell hooks
Founder of the bell hooks institute; intellectual, feminist, intersectional, radical scholar of culture and social change. Read more.

Dr. Kevin Kumashiro
Former Dean at the University of San Francisco; founder of Center for Anti-Oppressive Education. Read more.

Dr. Z. Nicolazzo
Critical Analysis Tool

Critical thinking ≠ “thinking carefully.”

Critical Thinking ≠ uncovering power hierarchies for the purpose of changing oppressive systems.

Critical Analysis ≠ a process of making a plan, idea, or action more just, equitable, and sustainable.
You showed up today because you want to make change. We want to analyze for equity and justice: why, how, when, and for whom.

Based on the School Reform Initiative’s Consultancy Protocol.

**Critical Analysis Tool (CAT)**

First: Envision your action plan or problem.

Second: Join your affinity group.

Third: Choose one person’s action plan.

Fourth: Use 1 or more “lenses” from the CAT to dig into their action plan.

Be Critical: Analyze your plan using equity and justice as a lens, with change in mind.

Go for it!
Equity: Whose voices, experiences, and ideas are centered? Who are your co-conspirators? Who are the barriers?

Purpose: Who is this for? What are the desired outcomes?

Policies: Which policies can change?

You: When will you rest? How will you sustain?

Research: What have others already done?

Place: What will work HERE?

Barriers: How can you work around walls?

Culture: What are our shared norms and values?

Impact: How will you identify change?

Power: Who makes decisions? Who is at the table?

Space: Your classroom? Your school? Your state?

Time: 6 emails? 6 years?

People: Who are your co-conspirators? Who are the barriers?
Critical Questions

- What is my plan to sustain this work over time?
- Am I being asked to do work to sustain or defend my own rights, identity, culture, self, or family?
- Do I prefer working with “the choir” or “changing minds?”

Journal prompts

- I will know that I need a break when ______
- When I feel discouraged, _____ gives me energy to keep going.
- This work is important to me because ______
- I am doing this work for ___.
What is the timeline for this work?
How will I know when it is time to end the project?
Is there a sense of urgency for this work in my community?
How will I take the time to think about equity and justice?

One thing I have time to do tomorrow to get this started is _______.
I can plan to spend _____ hours per week/month.
One commitment I can remove from my list to make room for equity work is ______.
Critical Questions

- What is the change I want to see in myself?
- What is the change I want to see in my classroom?
- What is the change I want to see in my school or district?
- What are barriers to change at a local scale?

Journal prompts

- My project will have the greatest impact on ______.
- If I wanted to impact more people, one thing I could do is ________.
- If I wanted this work to be more meaningful locally, I might ____________.
Equity

Critical Questions

- Whose experiences are being centered?
- Is lived experience affirmed, and validated?
- Is the lived experience of those with marginalized identities driving the direction for the work?

Journal prompts

- I can avoid burdening those with marginalized identities with this work by _______.
- In my school/community, someone whose voice I haven’t heard yet is _____.
- One way I can decolonize my school is _______.

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People

Critical Questions

- Which co-conspirators do I trust and want to work most closely with?
- Whose voices are heard, and whose are silenced? Why?
- Who are the “insiders” and who are the “outsiders?” Why?

Journal prompts

- When I work with ________, I feel inspired and energized.
- Someone who has been doing a lot of this work and might need help is ________.
- Someone I want to work with but haven’t yet is ________.
● Which people make decisions that have a large impact in my school community?
● What steps have I taken to decolonize my action plan?
● Whose cultural norms decide how we communicate?

● When I think about justice in school, something that makes me feel powerless is ______.
● Something that makes me feel powerful is ______.
● People who have been historically silenced in this work include ________.
How will I know that my plan is resulting in change?
How can I center the impact of my work (instead of my own intent)?
How can I make the impact of this work lasting and sustained over time?

I will know my action plan has been successful when I see ________.
If I realize my plan is not making change, I will ________.
During this work, I plan to check in regularly with ________. 
How would I explain my problem or action plan to someone else?
Who is this work for?
What are the desired outcomes?
Have I thought critically about intent vs. outcome?

One change I hope to see in my own practices or ideas is __________.
One change I hope to see in my school or community is __________.
One change I hope to see in Vermont is __________.
Policy

Critical Questions

• Which policies don’t exist yet but need to?
• If we make a new policy, how can we be sure it will have the impact we want?
• Who are the “gatekeepers” of policy in my school?

Journal prompts

• One policy I know needs to change is _______.
• One reason people might not want this policy to change is _________.
• If I change this policy, I also need to think about _____.
What values are central in my school?
Which norms in my school are harmful?
Which helpful policies already in place have been “swallowed” by culture?
What are signs of colonialism in school?

One cultural norm I would like to change in my school is _______.
One value we don’t currently share that I would like us to share is _______.
I think people are resistant to this work because _______.

Critical Questions

Journal prompts
Research

**Critical Questions**

- What have others learned from doing similar work?
- How can I acknowledge the ideas of BIPOC, PGM, Queer, and dis/abled educators & leaders?
- How will I make the time to examine existing resources?

**Journal prompts**

- Something I think I still need to learn is ______.
- One resource I haven’t explored that I need to make time for is __________.
- Someone whose ideas have greatly influenced my work is __________.
Place

Critical Questions

- What needs to happen in this specific time and place?
- What have we already tried here that has or hasn’t worked?
- What are the unique challenges and barriers in this place?

Journal prompts

- I feel committed to making change HERE because ________.
- My school community prides itself on ________.
- Something I value about my local school is ________.
Barriers

- What is my biggest battle right now?
- Who is telling me this can’t work (and why)?
- Why are others being resistant to this change?
- What are people afraid of losing?

Critical Questions

- Something I haven’t tried yet but would like to is _____.
- Someone who might have a way around this block is ______.
- When I feel “stuck,” something I could try to get “unstuck” is ______.
References


Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press. [Find the book here](#).


Resources

Education Justice Coalition of Vermont

Wayne Au’s *Decolonizing the Classroom: Lessons in Multicultural Education* (published in Rethinking Schools).

Hannah’s running list of anti-racist teaching resources (see list here).

School Reform Initiative’s *Pocket Guide to Probing Questions* and *Consultancy Protocol*.

Collaborative Development team

Hannah Miller, Celilo Bauman-Swain, V Pearson, Mugabo W'Ishema Thierry Uwilingiyimana, Alyssa Chen, Christie Nold
Questions about this tool?

Please share this tool with others.

Hannah.Miller@NorthernVermont.edu