Transformative Literacy Pedagogy

Transformative Literacy Pedagogy Overview

E-SToPP's transformative literacy pedagogy will increase learning opportunities for all students with a special emphasis on a wide range of transformative literacy practices and reading across the curriculum. E-SToPP's transformative literacy philosophy of learning to read (the word and the world) is that when students find purpose in life, take charge of their own learning, and commit to furthering their own education, they will (by default) pass standardized tests and graduate. Transformative literacy, a Freirean-inspired approach to literacy education (Freire, 2000), is the basis for our holistic equity-based educational philosophy and pedagogy. Transformative literacy is defined as the conscious process of simultaneously developing one's literacy skills while changing one's life conditions, regardless of age, social, race, economic, political, or cultural status. Transformative literacy pedagogy empowers all students, especially those who (disproportionately) have experienced at least one of the following racially inequitable obstacles: suspension, expulsion, delinquency, incarceration, serious school failure, dropping out, violence, poverty, substance abuse, abuse, homelessness or foster care, teenage pregnancy or parenthood, "intensive" reading groups or classes.

Transformative literacy *for all* pedagogy addresses academic and social conditions simultaneously at a grass-roots level. Teaching the history of race (via E-SToPP's critical communities of practice) to learn to discern, empower, and do moment by moment acts of kindness in place of violence and name calling in all its forms and places so as to not repeat the same errors of elders (Howze, 2021). It begins with concerted dialogue of acceptance with all students about conditions in their lives (or about becoming cognizant of conditions of others' lives) in order to be able to freedom dream toward dismantling the oppressive conditions around us all. It ensures students that we at E-SToPP schools provide safe spaces together for discerning, interpreting, and transforming issues and oppressive conditions in our lives. Once real-world issues are realized and acknowledged, students set goals for changing their conditions (alongside transformative-minded adults) and act on those goals. As soon as participants stop accepting what someone else has decided their story is, for example, he/she/they may decide that they need to learn to read (no matter what reading level they have been designated by traditional standards – or no matter what reading material they have been provided or been banned from) for a specific purpose – perhaps, in this case, to be able to read to their own babies or to be able to discern racially inequitable history (and other) textbooks. Acting on this realization and goal may involve developing early literacy skills (for themselves and ultimately their own babies) or developing critical (racial) literacy skills (for reading the world from another perspective) by reading children's literature, nonfiction, or picture books, and publishing (retelling) their own versions of these (children's or history) books in the school's publishing company or for the newsletter on our schools' websites. During transformative literacy, complex ideas and topics found in both children's books and the world around them will be discussed and critiqued in

depth, thereby engaging all students in the learning process. These same topics will also be developed and incorporated into school-, program-, community-wide projects, career development, and physical activities.

E-SToPP's transformative literacy goal (Parker, 2022) is for each student and adult to develop *conscientization* through meaningful dialogue, inquiry, and participation per experiential learning of E-SToPP's critical communities of practice process (Howze, 2021). Conscientization initiates awareness of oppressive conditions and leads to a profound desire to change such conditions, learn to *read the word and the world*, and engage in civic activism (Freire, 2000). Transformative literacy education pedagogy initiates E-SToPP's processes of empowering and preparing youth along the path to social entrepreneurship—or owning their education and life changes while increasing compassion and caring for others do as not to repeat racist history. The ultimate goal of teaching race and learning how to replace name calling with kindness per E-SToPP critical communities of practice is all youths' high school graduation and a transformed life away from crime, isolation, racism, and violence (Howze, 2021). Transformative literacy, conducted in critical learning communities (a group of likeminded people who work together to address real-world problems for the betterment of their community and society), is the foundation for each (grass-roots collaborative) endeavor or learning experience with E-SToPP (and necessarily led by transformative-minded adults involved at all levels of public and private schools, programs, juvenile justice systems). Our sustainable transformative literacy pedagogy is the overarching research base for how we do teaching and learning at E-SToPP. It is learned experientially (via a critical social theory or practice framework) by newcomers who become experts in the process and then teach it to the next group of newcomers, youth and adults, in an ongoing reciprocal fashion (such as teenage parents learning to read so that they can read to their children who will both be learning to read simultaneously – or adult teachers/staff/leadership learning to read critically so that they and their students can learn to critically read and act on racially inequitable discipline, relationships, practices, and policies).

E-SToPP's transformative literacy pedagogy will encourage the integration of innovative learning methods and sharing of knowledge (i.e., teach race history, E-SToPP critical communities of practice) to learn and do kindness into each facet of our empowering educational model. Most students and adults will be unfamiliar with this empowering educational model at first, but they will become engaged through our confidence in them to determine and accomplish their own story and goals while increasing compassion, empathy, and caring for others as they gain their own confidence in this type of teaching and learning. Initially, we will draw from our transformative research-based curriculum and project-based lessons as a learning platform from which our new teachers can build their expertise (then, they can pass on what they learn to their students and to new teachers that come to the school after them). Project-based lessons will encourage students to learn academic material through hands-on, inquiry-based, and experiential approaches. Students will document their thinking processes along the way in order to move forward in the learning process. The sustainability of our innovative learning methods

will encourage teams of teachers (and other adults involved) to confidently, creatively, and astutely revise traditional curricula/programs based on their new understanding of the role of Whiteness in disparate educational/disciplinary treatment and of the particular needs/goals of students/youth in their lives. E-SToPP's transformative literacy pedagogy supports teaching and learning outcomes for all students/youths that reflect a systemic shared commitment to anti-racist accountability toward education debt reparations of the historically engrained achievement gap, exclusionary school discipline, and school-to-prison pipeline.

Transformative Literacy Pedagogy 2022

Transformative mindsets (Pane & Rocco, 2014) are needed to name, challenge, navigate, heal from, resist, and transform racializing conditions in which students of color are educated. Transformative mindsets are better equipped to disrupt the new covert racism of K-12 schools and move toward a racially just educational system (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevárez, 2017). Transformative literacy pedagogy is built on points of hope—spaces where something should happen differently—that provide fertile ground for developing practices of hope for reconceptualizing, preventing, breaking, and ultimately transforming the school-to-prison pipeline. Practices of hope transform oppressive institutional and structural school-to-prison pipeline conditions (e.g., referral, suspension, expulsion, school failure, dropping out, juvenile incarceration, and adult prison) into transformative literacy pedagogical spaces (e.g., atmosphere, community, culture, curriculum, expertise, authenticity, and opportunity; Pane & Rocco, 2014). Transformative literacy pedagogy lays the groundwork for E-SToPP's larger effort to eliminate systemic obstacles that disproportionately funnel Black and Brown youth into the school-to-prison pipeline.

Transformative literacy (Freire, 2000) philosophy is designed to lift youths' spirits, minds, identities, and selves as they learn while doing holistically in a consciousness-building environment through dialogue, reading, writing, performing, and creating their own experiences in critical communities of practice that work together to address real-world problems for the betterment of their community and society.

Transformative literacy goals initiate youths' critical consciousness through youth participatory action research (YPAR), which is both a deliberate pedagogical practice to increase civic engagement and a collective model of research grounded in three principles: (a) a problem is jointly investigated; (b) "indigenous" knowledge is used to better understand a problem; and (c) there is a desire to take action to address the problem (McIntyre, 2000). In YPAR, youth become "researchers about their daily lives in hopes of developing realistic solutions for dealing with the problems that they believe need to be addressed" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 109). Transformative literacy/YPAR counters deficit notions about youth of color by insisting on the need for student voice in articulating the issues within their own schools or other educational

spaces, based on an understanding of the definitive history of racist ideas in the U.S. (Cherry-Paul, S., Reynolds, J., & Kendi, I., 2021; Gherardi, 2022; Kendi, I., 2020; Kendi, I., 2016).

In YPAR, youth develop critical consciousness, or conscientization, as Freire (1970/2000) named it, by researching structural and material inequities through their own experiences and perspectives. When youth develop the ability to name their world (Freire & Macedo, 1987), identify problems, and deconstruct the racial-social-cultural realities that impact their lived experiences, they are better prepared with the knowledge and resources to engage and participate in the public sphere (Bautista, Bertrand, Morrell, Scorza, & Matthews, 2013). Conscientization initiates awareness of oppressive conditions and leads to a profound desire to change such conditions, learn to read the word and the world, and engage in civic activism (Freire, 2000). Gaining conscientization empowers and prepares youth along the path to social entrepreneurship—or owning their education and goals for life changes.

E-SToPP's long-term purpose is to empower and prepare youth (and adults involved) to take an active role in learning, living, and improving society. E-SToPP integrates transformative literacy pedagogy, YPAR, critical communities of practice, experiential learning, structured dialogue, inquiry processes, anti-racist frameworks, and racial literacy to promote critical conscious awareness (e.g., understand the role Whiteness plays in disparate treatment), community-building, conflict resolution, congruent communication, anti-racist leadership, advocacy, and civic engagement to build on incarcerated and all youths' cultural and racial histories, strengths, talents, and positive goals; and to prevent, avoid, and abolish exclusionary school discipline, truancy, delinquency, violence, and dropping out.

E-SToPP provides a safe reentry space, grounded in transformative literacy and anti-racist pedagogical frameworks, for disproportionately Black and other youth of color, who are from trauma-burdened disadvantaged neighborhoods and disproportionally represented in the school-to-prison pipeline, to problematize critical issues and topics relevant to their lives. E-SToPP's safe reentry spaces are set up at touchpoints (referral, suspension, expulsion, and/or incarceration "school-to-prison pipeline" locations found in E-SToPP's systems mapping project) throughout a grass-roots network of transformative schools and educational opportunities to give youth and adults involved access to each other's diverse perspectives (e.g., learn from and about each other's resilience, struggles, biases, privileges).

At each of these touchpoints, E-SToPP organizes, operates, maintains, and supports the exploration and evolution of sustainable Black literary societies and pop-up libraries (reading rooms) to focus on transformative literacy anti-racist pedagogical processes for Black boys and other youth of color modeled after the rich literacy of Black Americans and historical excellence of Black education. E-SToPP approaches this work of setting up safe reentry spaces throughout the network as part of our *education debt reparations goal*—that of creating a literary space for everyone (we are all involved) to learn about historical excellence of Black education and to

cultivate Black males as readers, writers, speakers, and thinkers—and that of creating a highly collaborative safe space that prompts racial literacy and social responsibility to share one's knowledge gained from acts of literacy together rather than keep education to oneself (Muhammad, 2020). This racially equitable strategy of experiencing transformative literacy anti-racist pedagogical processes will encourage youth to feel more confident, efficacious, and better prepared to name, challenge, navigate, heal from, resist, and transform systemic obstacles in their/others' lives while embarking on their/others' re-integration to family, school, and community**.**

Our local community seeks sustainable ways (practices, policies) of reducing truancy, delinquency, youth violence, and dropout. Long-term progress toward improving high school graduation rates and reducing youth violence, particularly for Black and Brown males, has proven especially challenging—what we have been doing for years has not worked. E-SToPP supports transformative literacy anti-racist pedagogical critical communities of practice safe reentry spaces instead of deficit-oriented behaviorally informed approaches. E-SToPP recommends transformative literacy pedagogy—for sustainable changes made from the hearts and minds of everyone involved (that is, the people, researchers, practitioners) in setting up safe reentry spaces along E-SToPP's grass-roots network of transformative schools and educational opportunities (Gherardi, 2022). E-SToPP promotes transformative literacy anti-racist pedagogical critical communities of practice in safe reentry spaces as sustainable change emerges from within those involved together in reading the word and the world. E-SToPP also promotes transformative literacy and anti-racist pedagogical frameworks implemented at an institutional level as supported by transformative anti-racist leadership policy and practices, an understanding of the role Whiteness plays in racially disparate treatment, and positive, sustainable, and empowering outcomes for students, adults, families, and communities.

Through transformative literacy and anti-racist pedagogical frameworks, positive, sustainable, and empowering outcomes include increased (a) voice, self-confidence, and creativity; (b) critical communication, literacy practices (e.g., reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, researching, documenting, performing), and thinking skills; (c) anti-racist leadership qualities; and (d) constructive social-racial interactions among students, adults, families, and communities. Long-term goals and benefits from continued participation in sustainable transformative literacy and anti-racist pedagogical frameworks, YPAR, and transformative literacy relationships include racially equitable access to safe haven spaces that lead to successful high school graduation, college, work, and a healthy life as leaders in their school, community, and society. Ultimately, these positive, sustainable, and empowering outcomes translate to safer communities; more people working; more children attending school successfully; fewer (or no) students referred, suspended, expelled, and/or incarcerated; more community members engaged in positive activities; more money spent on building transformative schools and educational opportunities; and less money spent on building prisons and other oppressive educational conditions.

For more information joining our proposed network of transformative anti-racist schools and educational opportunities, please contact E-SToPP's Founding President, Debra Mayes Pane, Ph.D., debrapane@gmail.com.

Additional Resources 2022-2023

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