




**Abolitionist Teaching  
Network Presents**

**Guide for  
Racial Justice &  
Abolitionist Social  
and Emotional  
Learning**

**August 2020**





**Abolitionist Teaching Network's mission is simple: develop and support educators to fight injustice within their schools and communities.**

**This guide builds from the premise that injustice manifests differently in different schools and communities.**

**Abolitionist Teaching cannot be distilled to a list of “best practices” because it is a way of life.**

**Abolitionist Teachers believe that no Black, Brown, or Indigenous child is disposable. We must embody the spirit of Black Lives Mattering, not just say Black Lives Matter.**

**This guide is an invitation for Abolitionist Teachers to individually and collectively generate critical reflection and action.**

**Abolitionist Teachers will always center the injustices of their own school and community when taking action.**

**There will always be risks associated with fighting injustices in our schools and communities. This is why Abolitionist work requires solidarity from coconspirators.**

**Abolitionist Teaching promotes justice, healing, joy, and liberation for all Black, Brown, and Indigenous folx, inclusive of all intersecting identities.**

**Don't be basic.**

## What is an Abolitionist approach to social and emotional learning (SEL)?

SEL can be a covert form of policing used to punish, criminalize, and control Black, Brown, and Indigenous children and communities to adhere to White norms (Kaler-Jones, 2020).

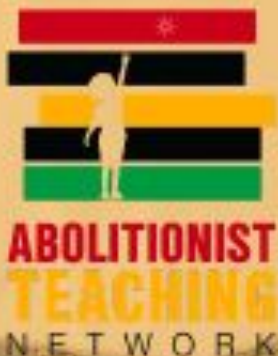
Most SEL standards are rooted in Eurocentric norms, not to empower, love, affirm, or free Black, Brown, or Indigenous children.

The practice of Abolitionist SEL is critical, healing centered, reciprocal in nature, culturally responsive, transformative, and dialogical.

Abolitionist SEL models center vulnerability, healing, joy, and community, resist punitive or disciplinary approaches, and do not involve school resource officers or police.

Integrate Abolitionist SEL into curriculum, daily personal/classroom rituals, restorative justice circles, and racial justice initiatives.

Abolitionist SEL is not an isolated lesson. It is a way of being that informs all aspects of teaching, learning, and relationship building with students, families, and communities.





## Ways to engage with colleagues in the pursuit of Abolitionist SEL

Learn about the beauty, joy, and resilience of Black, Brown, and Indigenous folx and the complexity of the African diaspora (because not all Black folx are African American).

Cultivate an ongoing personal practice of learning prior to and after engaging in critical conversations with colleagues and students.

Investigate how existing SEL frameworks are weaponized against Black, Brown, and Indigenous children and communities.

Work with administrators to remove and replace models which harm Black, Brown, and Indigenous children.

Partner with and compensate community members to develop and implement Abolitionist SEL models.

Advocate for or create ongoing humanizing professional development to support school-wide Abolitionist practices that affirm the inherent worth of Black, Brown, and Indigenous children and communities.

## How should Abolitionist Teachers guide students toward Abolitionist SEL?

Create classrooms that center the beauty, joy, resiliency, and variety of Black, Brown, and Indigenous experiences.

Remove all punitive or disciplinary practices that spirit murder Black, Brown, and Indigenous children.

Cultivate relationships and community by consistently reflecting on and honoring students' full humanity.

Integrate Abolitionist SEL rituals and routines that welcome the full range of emotions and provide tools to support students in processing and asking for support.

Support students in embedding Abolitionist SEL practices in relationships with their peers, families, and their communities.

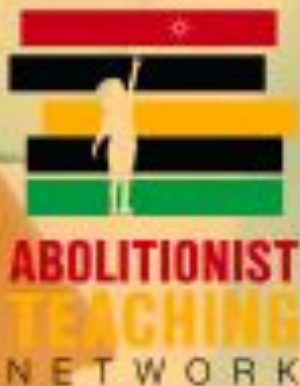
Build a school culture that engages in healing and advocacy. This requires a commitment to learning from students, families, and educators who disrupt Whiteness and other forms of oppression.



## An Abolitionist Teacher's Demands

### Hiring and Support:

- Hire, support, and retain Black, Brown, and Indigenous teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselors, and other personnel
- Hire, support, retain, and develop Abolitionist educators
- Invest in ongoing critical professional development to support and deepen Abolitionist Teaching practices
- Free, radical self/collective care and therapy for Educators and Support Staff of Color
- Free, antiracist therapy for White educators and support staff
- Community involvement in hiring and/or holding administrators accountable for sharing in the responsibility and support of Abolitionist Teaching with time and resources
- School boards that reflect or exceed the diversity of the student population and community
- Equitable funding at the local, state, and federal levels
- Reduce class sizes so that Black, Brown, and Indigenous children can thrive



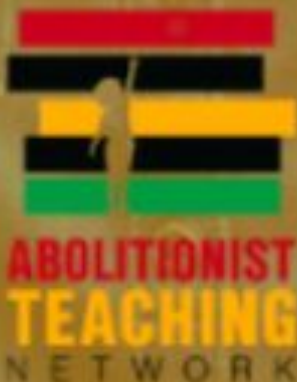
## An Abolitionist Teacher's Demands

### Discipline:

- School-wide culture committed to restorative justice for all members of the school community
- Remove any and all police and policing from schools
- Address how policing practices show up in our own work, even when police are not present in our schools
- Tear down schools that were built like prisons
- Invest in state-of-the-art green school facilities that are worthy of Black, Brown, and Indigenous children
- Reparations for Children of Color stolen by the school-to-prison pipeline

### Evaluation:

- Curriculum that reflects People of Color and their contributions, humanity, and joy
- End high-stakes standardized testing
- Teaching standards, learning standards, and teacher evaluations that are grounded in the pursuit of Black, Brown, and Indigenous liberation, criticality, excellence, and joy (Muhammad, 2020)
- Opportunities for teachers, students, and families to evaluate support offered by school



## Six Questions Abolitionist Teachers Can Ask to Build Relationships with Students

1. What can you tell me that helps me better understand you as a person?
2. How can I be the best teacher for you?
3. How can your school be a place where you feel seen, valued, and excited to learn?
4. What matters most to you (i.e., in life, at school, in your community)?
5. How can I support you mentally, emotionally, and in your community?
6. What is your love language (see resources for more info)?







## Seven Questions Abolitionist Teachers Can Ask Administrators

1. How will we embody the spirit and goals of Black Lives Mattering in everything we do as a school?
2. What long-term antiracist professional development will we implement for all faculty and staff?
3. How will we implement antiracist curriculum that centers the beauty, joy, and resiliency of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people? How will we also learn and teach about the African diaspora?
4. What school policies can we eliminate that are harmful or oppressive to our students of color? How can we replace them with healing centered policies?
5. What administrative actions are we implementing to ensure teachers feel supported to practice Abolitionist Teaching?

*These final two questions are particularly relevant to the COVID-19 global pandemic:*

6. What supports are in place to ensure students and families are socially, emotionally, and materially supported during virtual learning?
7. What plans are in place to promote faculty and staff wellness during and after COVID-19?

## Resources for Understanding Racial Justice and SEL

[Teaching to Thrive: A Conversation with SEL Expert Rosalynne Duff About Racial Justice & SEL](#) (Abolitionist Teaching Network Podcast)

[When SEL is Used as Another Form of Policing](#) (Cierra Kaler-Jones)

[The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing and US Social Transformation](#) (Fania E. Davis)

[Why We Can't Afford to Whitewash Social Emotional Learning](#) (Dena Simmons)

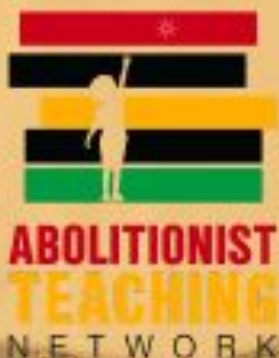
[\(At Least\) 10 Things Educators Can Do to End the Prison Industrial Complex](#) (Chrissy Anderson-Zavala, Farima Pour-Khorshid and Erica R. Meiners)

[Teaching For Black Lives Book](#) (edited By Dyan Watson, Jesse Hagopian, & Wayne Au)

[How to Be an Anti-Racist Educator](#) (by Dena Simmons)

[Love Language Test for Students](#) (by Gary Chapman)

[Teachers 4 Social Justice: 2020 Resources for Abolitionist Teaching and Solidarity in These Times](#) (by Teachers 4 Social Justice)



# An Abolitionist's Teachers Resources

## [Abolitionist Teaching and the Future of Our Schools](#)

(Bettina Love, Gholdy Muhammad, Dena Simmons and Brian Jones)

## [Repurposing Our Pedagogies](#) (Stephanie Cariaga, Bettina

Love, Sagnicthe Salazar, Carla Shalaby, Marilyn Zuniga, Farima Pour-Khorshid, and Chrissy A. Z. Hernandez

## [Dear White Teachers: You Can't Love Your Black](#)

[Students If You Don't Know Them](#) (Bettina Love)

## [Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered](#)

[Engagement](#) (Shawn Ginwright)

## [Black Lives Matter at School](#) (Black Lives Matter at

School)

## [The Abolitionist Toolkit](#) (Critical Resistance)

Abolitionist Organizations:

[Assata's Daughters](#)

[Black Organizing Project](#)

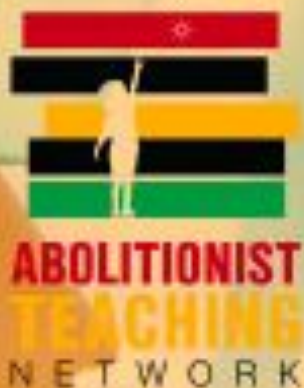
[Black Youth Project 100](#)

[Critical Resistance](#)

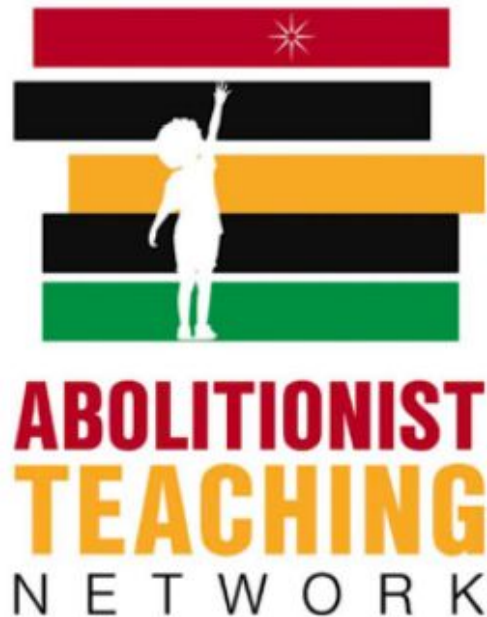
[Education for Liberation Network](#)

[Quetzal Education Consulting](#)

[Teachers 4 Social Justice](#)



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