

The Power of Teaching in the Struggle for Justice

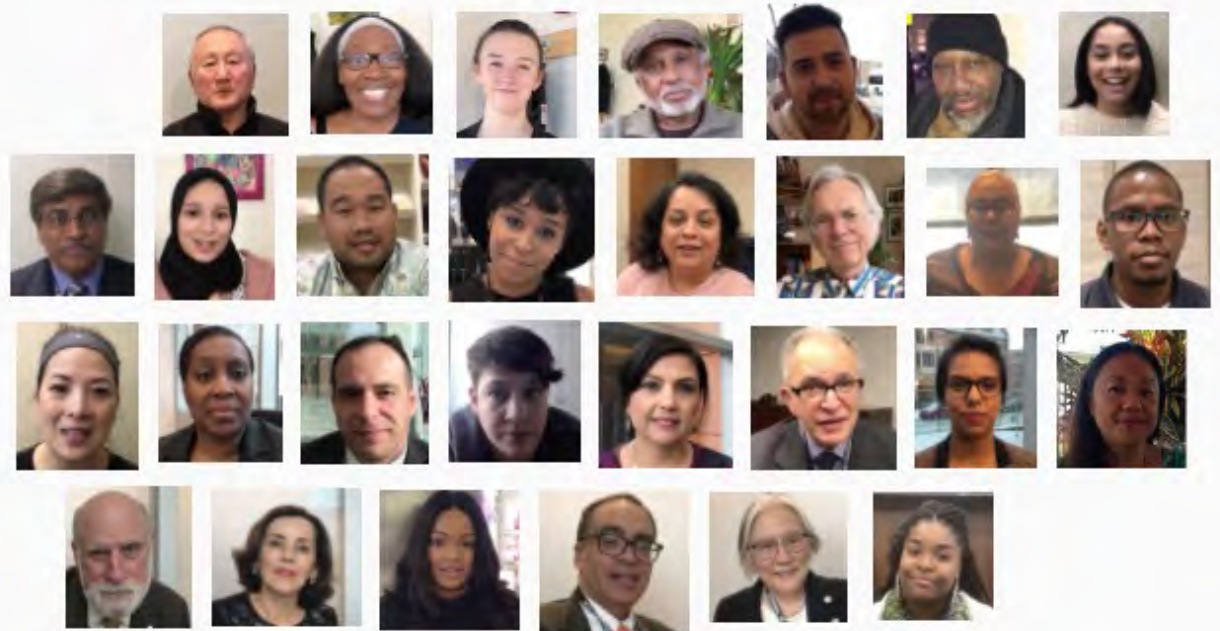
Deborah Loewenberg Ball

 @deborah_ball

Saint Anselm College • Bean Distinguished Lecture Series
May 4, 2023 • Manchester, NH



1. How is teaching powerful?



Video: Is there a teacher who had a significant impact on you?



Understanding the power of the work of teaching and its role in equity

What is it to do the “work of teaching”?

What does it mean to foreground the “power” of that work and why does it matter?

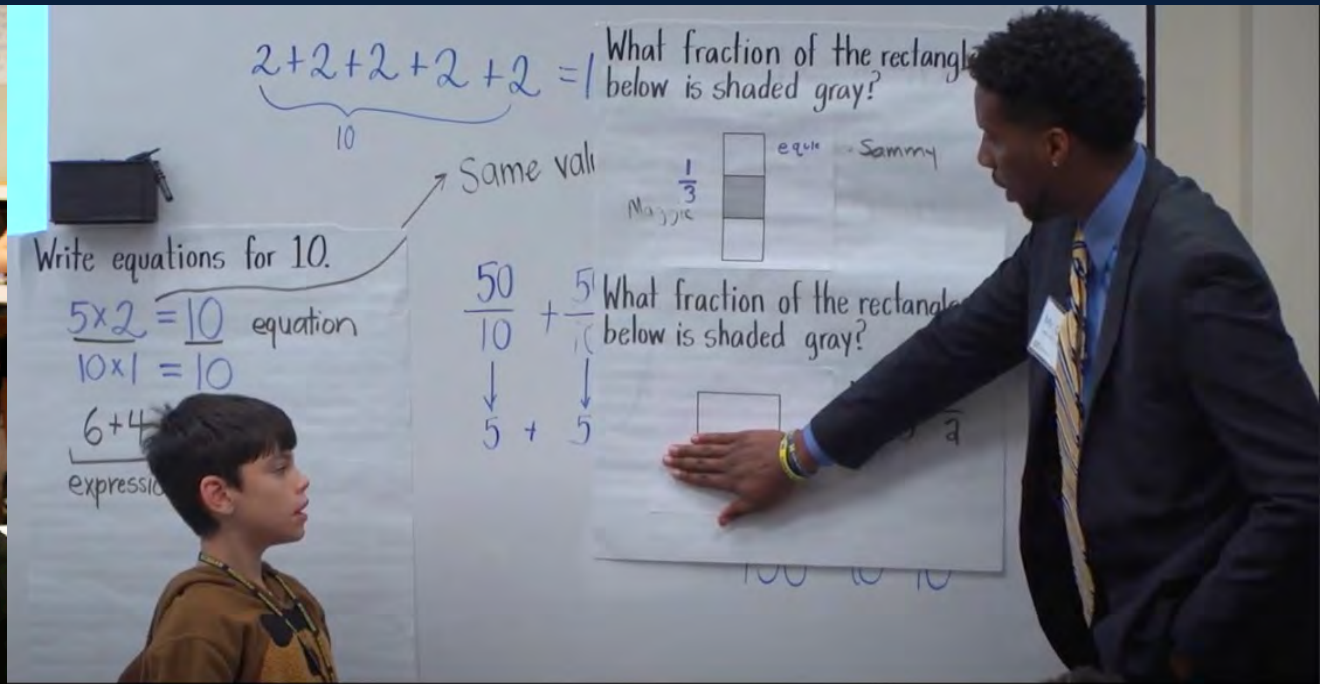
What are continuing challenges in trying to understand that work, and why should we care?



What is it to do the “work of teaching”?

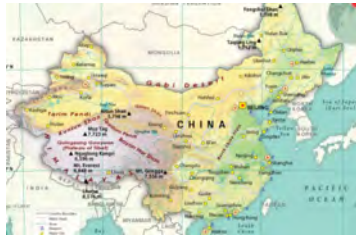


Teaching: So common, and yet so complex



It's common

72.5 million teachers worldwide



15 million teachers



1 million teachers



756,900 teachers



4 million teachers



410,000 teachers

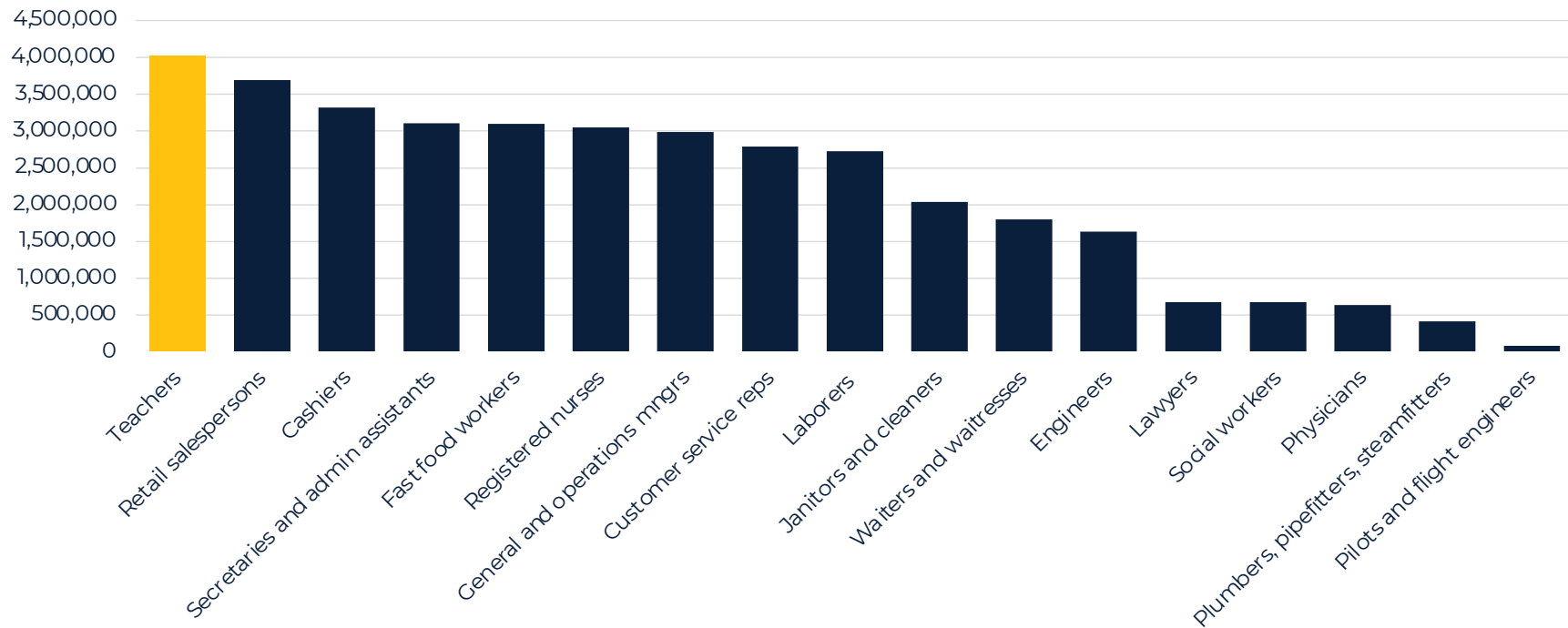


8.7 million teachers

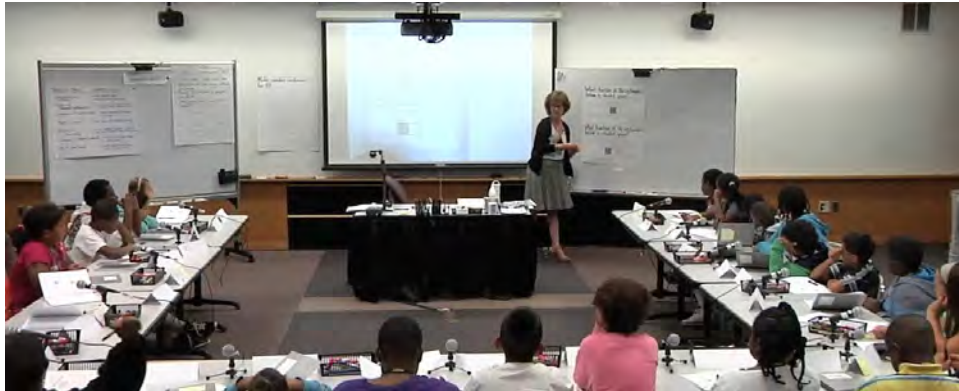


866,600 teachers

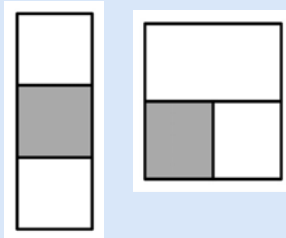
The scale of the teaching profession



It's "complex"

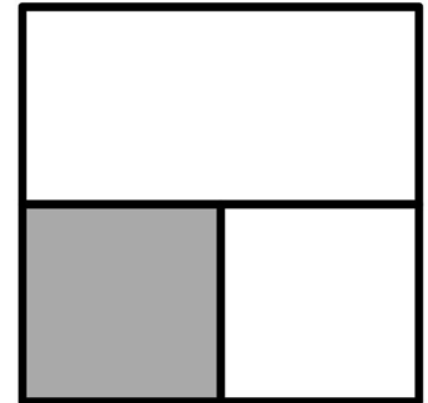
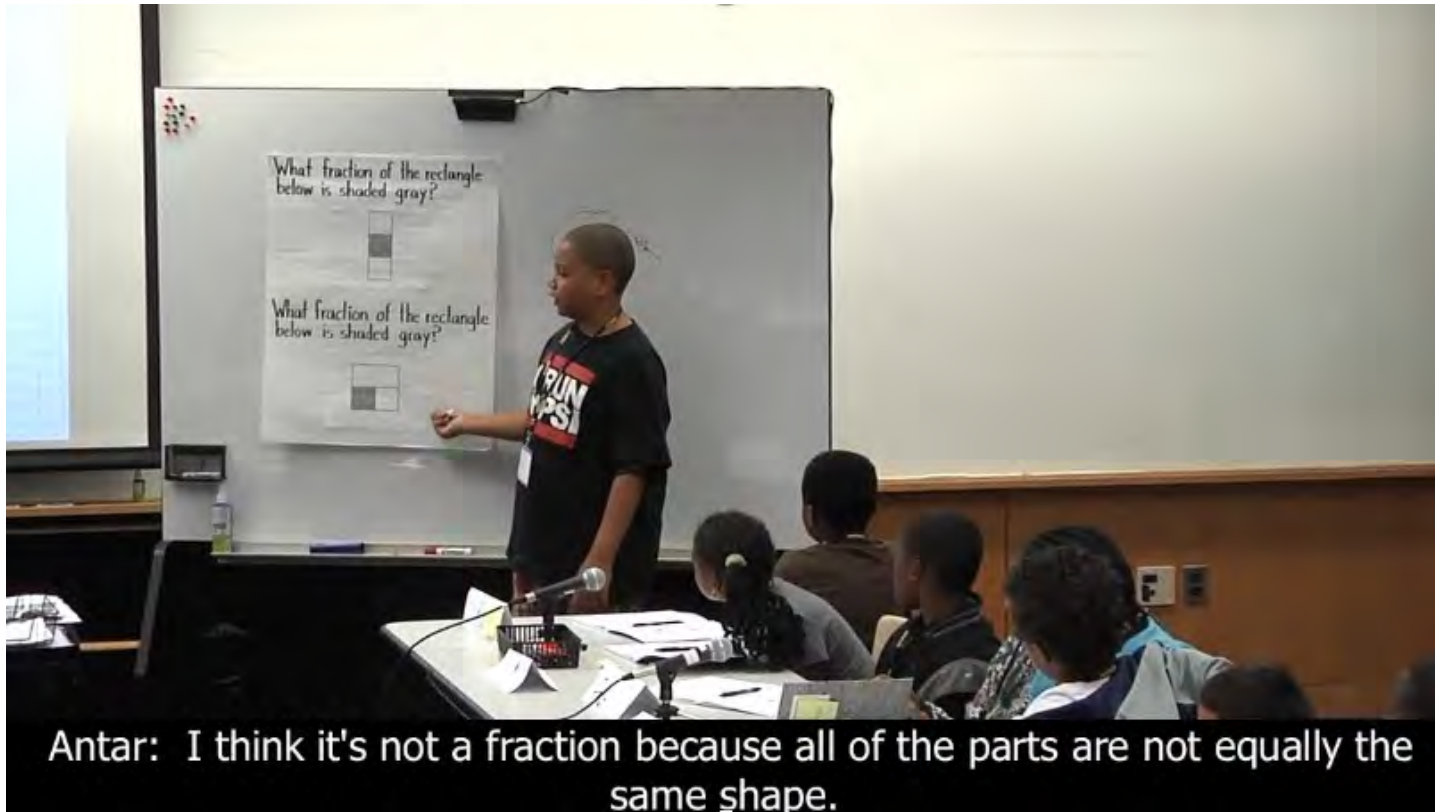


What fraction of each rectangle below is shaded gray?



What do you pay attention to?
What is "complex" here?

Video: Antar, Gabrielle, and Gabi



What is meant by “complex”?



How is Antar being positioned?

What is the mathematical point of this?

What does Antar mean by "it's not a fraction"?

Should I put another example up or keep working on this figure?

Should Antar stay at the board while Gabi presents?

Shall we stay in whole group or turn and talk in smaller groups?

How shall I try to position Antar and Gabi?

What shall I say or ask next?

Should I explain or keep the children talking together?

Whom shall I call on?

Are those two students over on the side following this discussion?

Where shall I stand?

How can I get other students to build on what Antar and Gabi have said?

Is this a good moment to give Gabi the "sticky" line?

How is Antar feeling about his contribution?

M | MARSAL EDUCATION

 TeachingWorks

What do I mean by the “work of teaching”?

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
MARSAL FAMILY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
TEACHINGWORKS



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M | MARSAL EDUCATION

 TeachingWorks

What do I mean by the “work of teaching”?

- In part, this is the ongoing inquiry.
- It rests on trying to understand what is involved for teachers in their interactions with learners in contexts, in broad sociopolitical environments.
- It is fundamentally both a theoretical and practical question.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
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What do I mean by the “work of teaching”?

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- It rests on trying to understand what is involved for teachers in their interactions with learners in contexts, in broad sociopolitical environments.
- It is fundamentally both a theoretical and practical question.

1. How to understand the power of teaching to perpetuate or to disrupt injustice, racism, oppression.
2. How to leverage its possibilities for a different world.

What does it mean to foreground the “power” of the work of teaching and why does this matter?



The commonness and complexity of teaching have powerful consequences for patterns of racism and oppression in society.





COVID-19 inequity in the US, by the numbers

BLACK PEOPLE REPRESENT



13% OF THE U.S. POPULATION

BUT ALMOST



25% OF COVID-19 DEATHS

COMPARED TO WHITE PEOPLE, BLACK PEOPLE ARE ALMOST **TWICE AS LIKELY** TO DIE FROM THE VIRUS.

AN ESTIMATED

60%

OF COVID-19 DEATHS OCCURRED IN DISPROPORTIONATELY BLACK COUNTRIES.

BLACK PEOPLE ARE ABOUT

FIVE TIMES

MORE LIKELY TO BE INFECTED WITH THE VIRUS THAN WHITE PEOPLE.

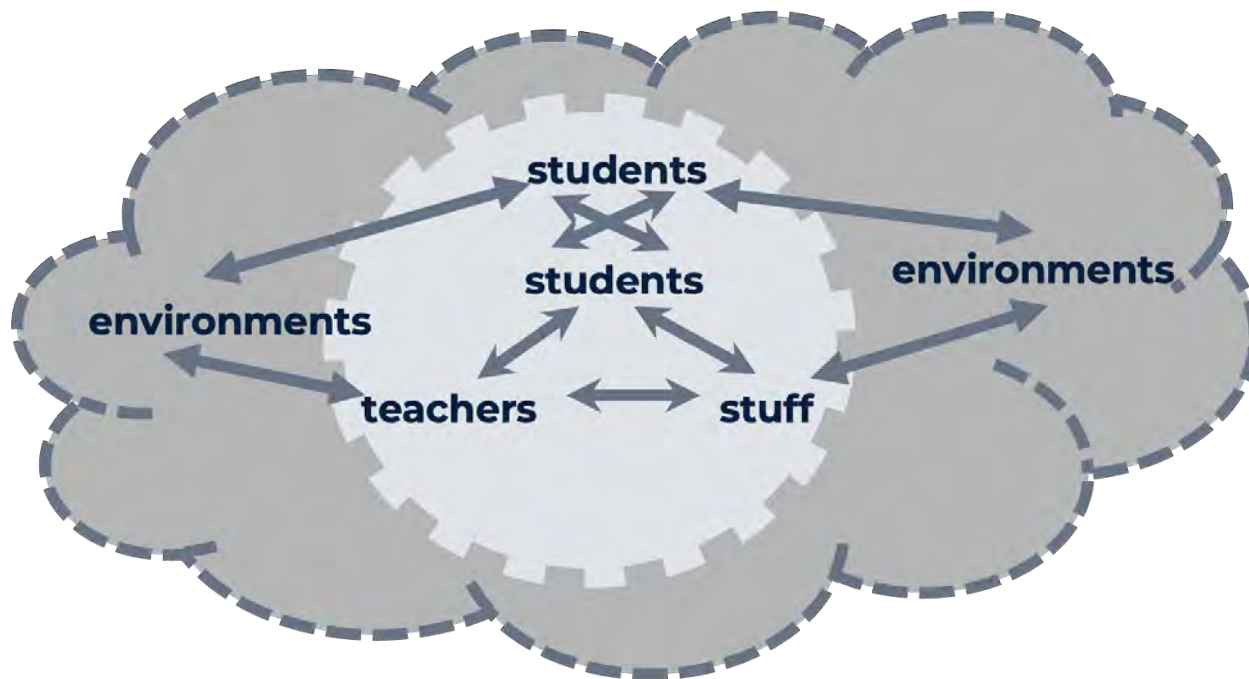
As of July 28, 2020.
Credit: Cat Weeks
Source: Gilead Sciences Inc.

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

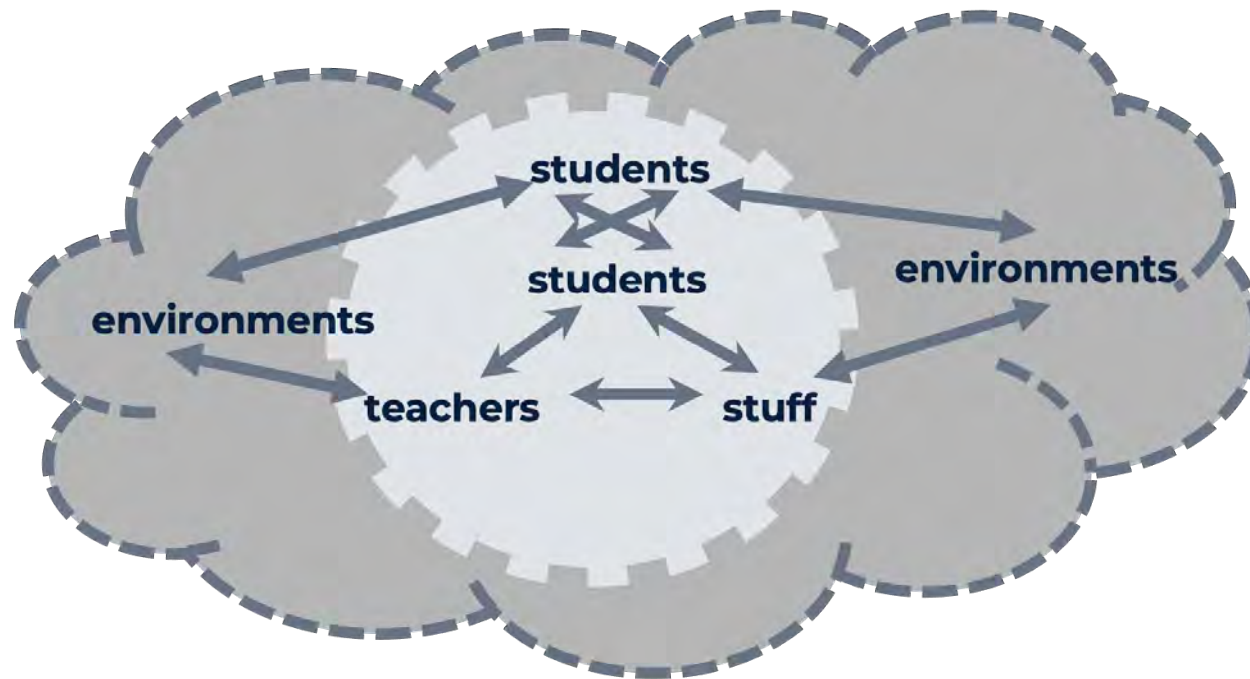


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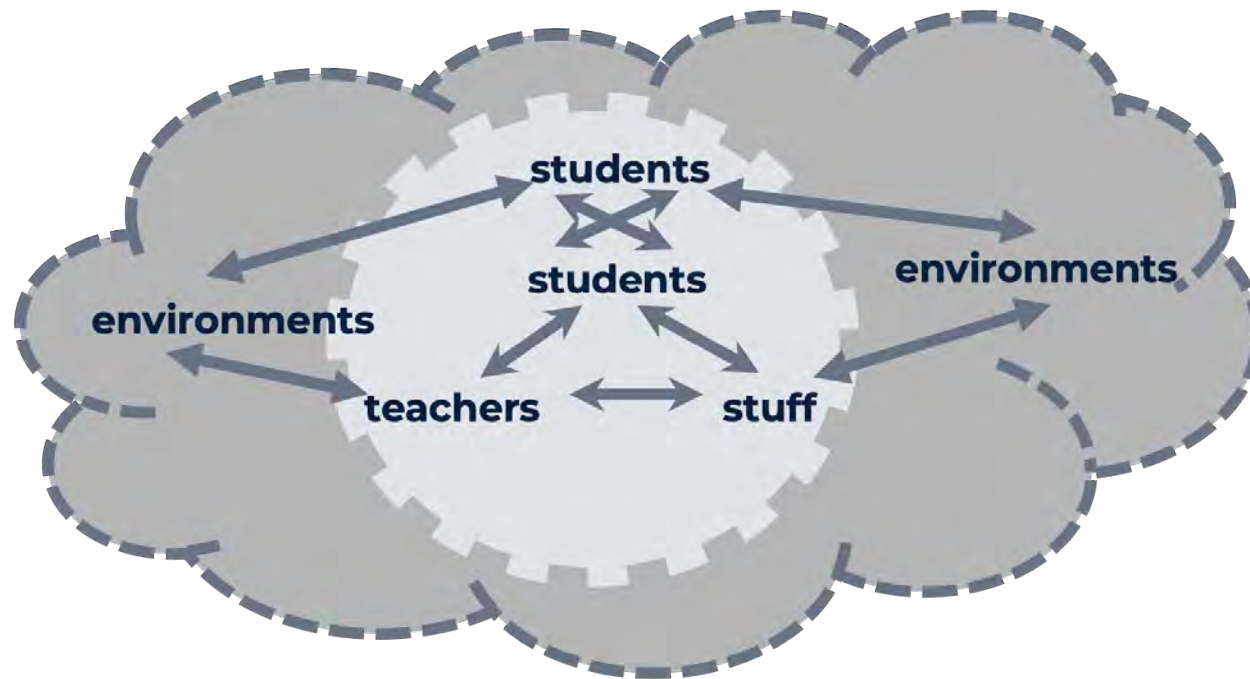
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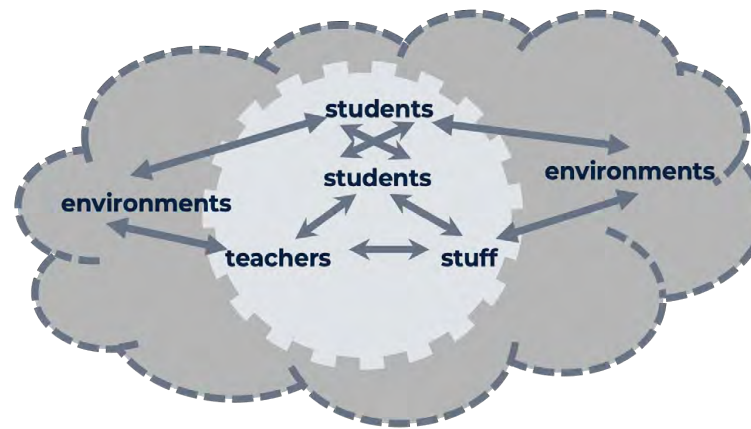
1. Teaching and learning are constructed interactively and are interpretive.



1. Teaching and learning are constructed interactively and are interpretive.
2. They take place within broad historical and socio-political environments.

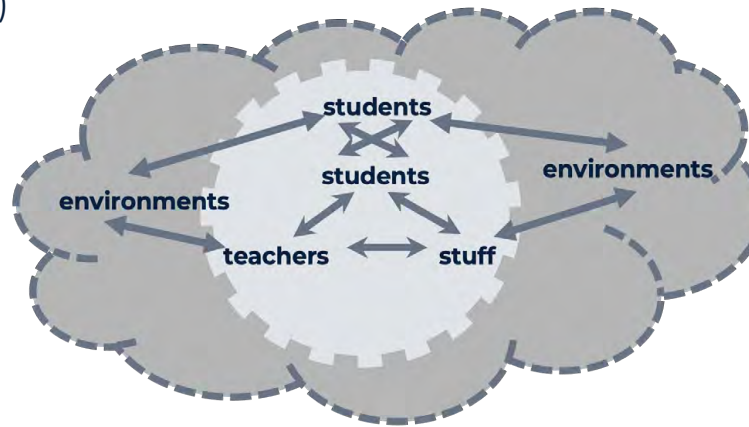


How do macro level factors interact with everyday practices?



How do macro level factors interact with everyday practices?

The relationships between—
Macro-level structures (in environments)
(e.g., institutional racism, history of intelligence as the property of white people, anti-Black “scientific” racism; legacies of violence against Black and Indigenous people)

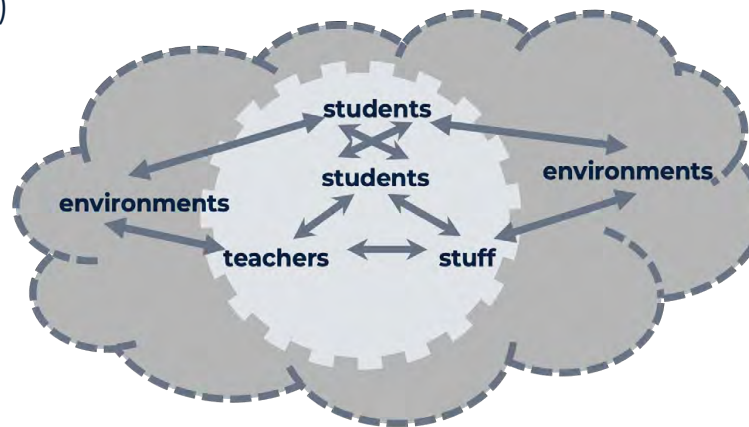


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The relationships between—
Macro-level structures (in environments)
(e.g., institutional racism, history of intelligence as the property of white people, anti-Black “scientific” racism; legacies of violence against Black and Indigenous people)

and

Micro-level interpersonal interactions
(in everyday life and in classrooms)
(e.g., teachers’ judgments of students, who is seen as “smart,” disproportional punishment and assignment to special ed and gifted programs)

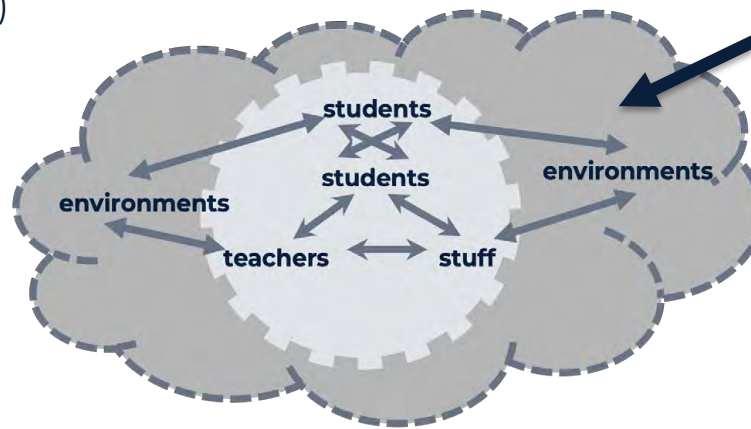


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Notice that the arrows run both ways.

The environments in which we are all steeped shape what we take for granted and do, but learning these as normal further reinforces their persistence in society.







1. **Teaching is powerful.** When it is done with care and judgment, students can thrive—learn content, develop positive identities, learn to value others and work collectively.
2. Teaching also involves **enormous discretion.**
3. How that discretion is exercised can either reinforce racialized and oppressive patterns of social, personal, and epistemic injustice and harm, or it can **disrupt these patterns.**

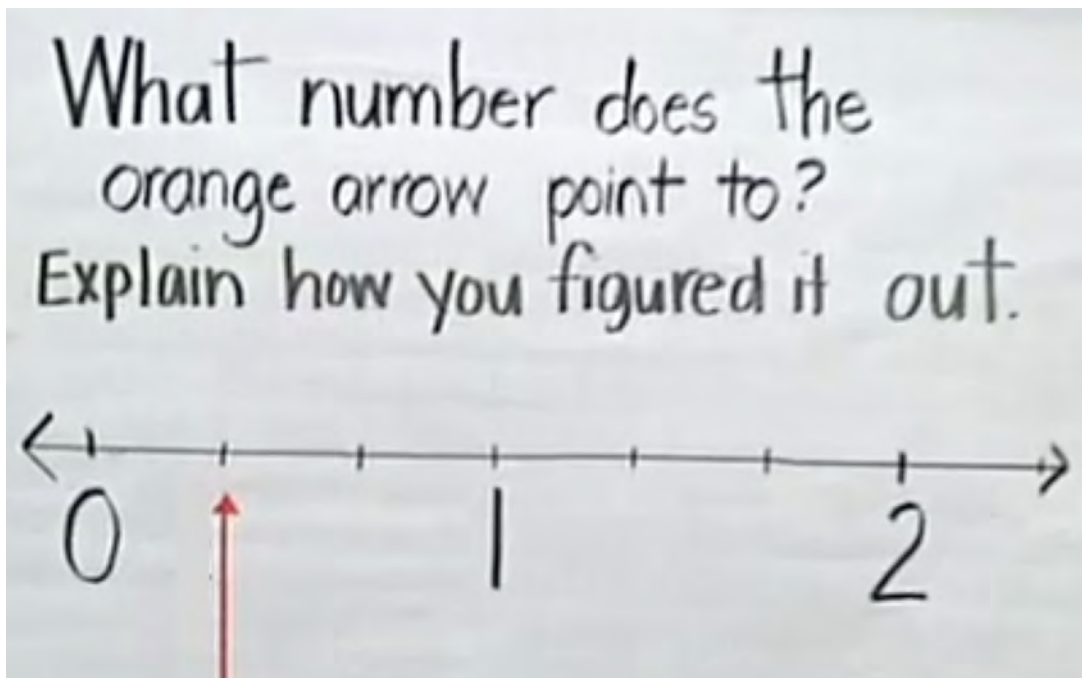
Teaching requires a dynamic application of knowledge in context, combined with knowledge about students, learning, and equity.



Fractions as numbers: The instructional goal for student understanding

3.NF.2.a

Represent a fraction $\frac{1}{b}$ on a number line diagram by defining the interval from 0 to 1 as the whole and partitioning it into b equal parts. Recognize that each part has size $\frac{1}{b}$ and that the endpoint of the part based at 0 locates the number $\frac{1}{b}$ on the number line.





Aniyah



Toni

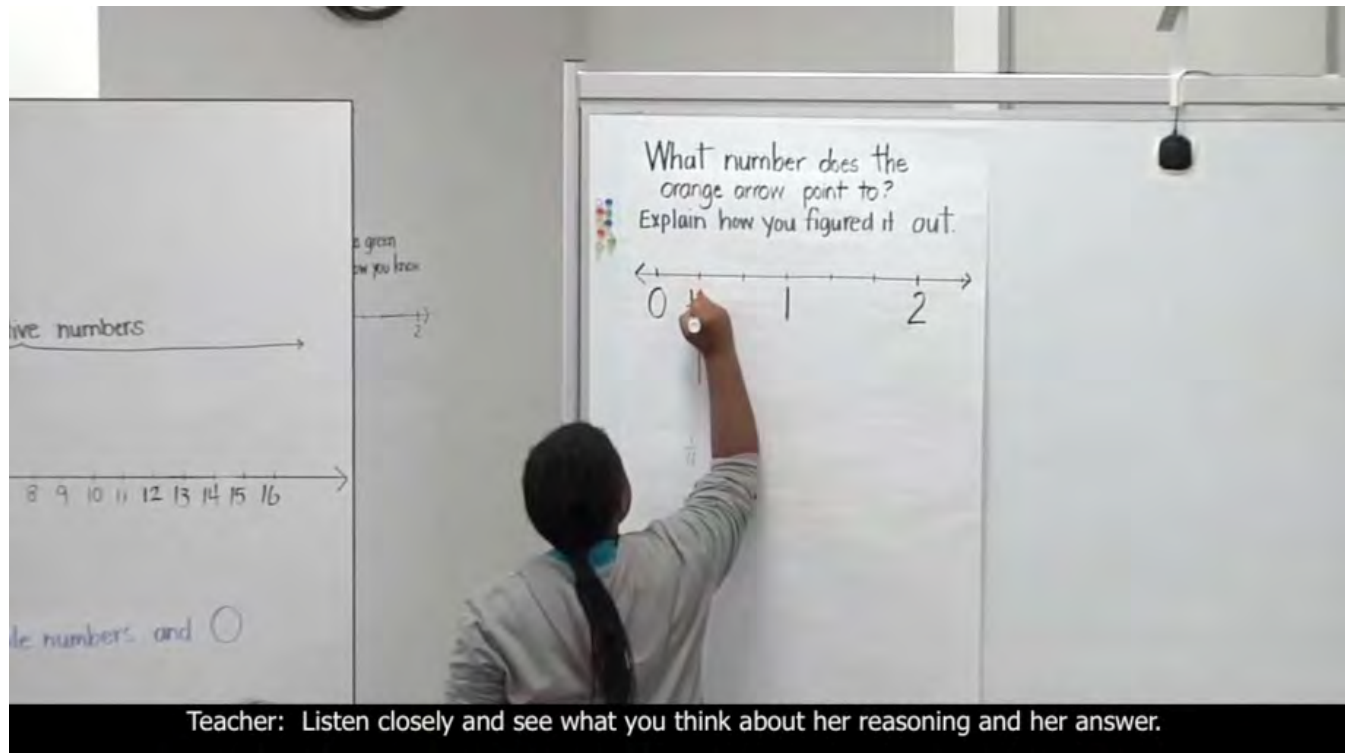


Viewing focus

What do you see about each girl's mathematical knowledge and skill?



Video: Aniyah and Toni



This video and additional supporting materials are available online [here](#).

Discuss

What do you see about each girl's mathematical knowledge and skill?



What would
happen
next?

What are the
possible
results?



In the next moment, what is likely to happen?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

RESULTS



In the next moment, what is likely to happen?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Can someone help Aniyah out and show what we call the whole on the number line?”

RESULTS

- Aniyah is excluded and her mathematical contributions are sidelined.



In the next moment, what is likely to happen?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Can someone help Aniyah out and show what we call the whole on the number line?”
- “Great, Aniyah, almost! But remember that the whole is from 0 to 1.”

RESULTS

- Aniyah is excluded and her mathematical contributions are sidelined.
- Aniyah’s answer is signaled to be incorrect and she is positioned as not having contributed to the work.



In the next moment, what is likely to happen?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Can someone help Aniyah out and show what we call the whole on the number line?”
- “Great, Aniyah, almost! But remember that the whole is from 0 to 1.”
- “Thumbs up if you agree with Aniyah; thumbs down if you disagree.”

RESULTS

- Aniyah is excluded and her mathematical contributions are sidelined.
- Aniyah’s answer is signaled to be incorrect and she is positioned as not having contributed to the work.
- Aniyah’s solution is “voted” on by her classmates.



What else is likely?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

RESULTS



What else is likely?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”

RESULTS

- Toni is publicly excluded from the discussion.



What else is likely?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”
- “You need to be a better listener, Toni. Aniyah already explained why she picked one-seventh. Who else has a real question for Aniyah?”

RESULTS

- Toni is publicly excluded from the discussion.
- Toni is judged to not be listening, her question is judged as not good, and she is excluded from the discussion.



What else is likely?

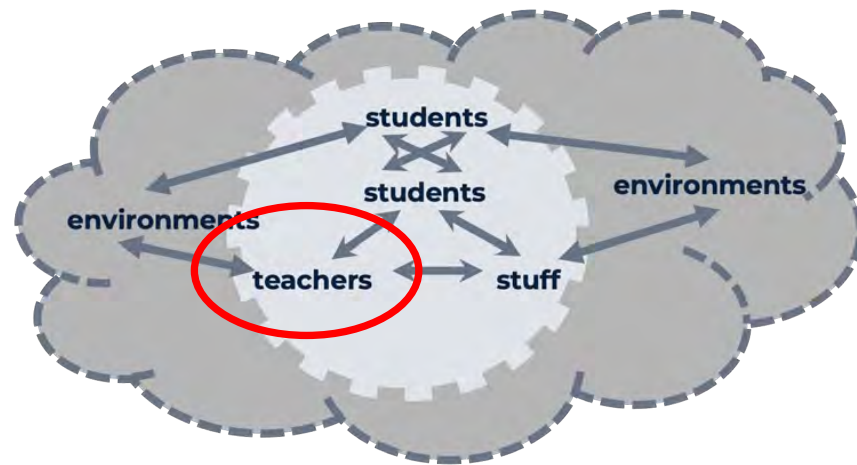
NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”
- “You need to be a better listener, Toni. Aniyah already explained why she picked one-seventh. Who else has a real question for Aniyah?”
- “In this classroom, we are respectful of one another. When you are ready to be respectful, you can rejoin the discussion, Toni.”

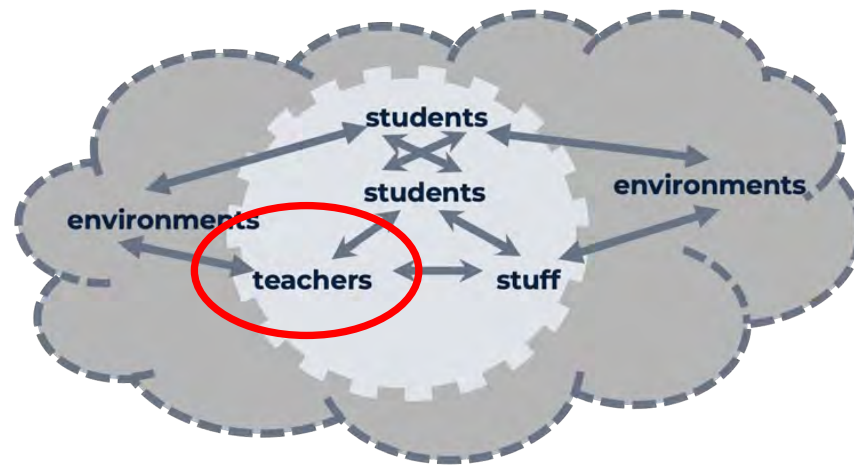
RESULTS

- Toni is publicly excluded from the discussion.
- Toni is judged to not be listening, her question is judged as not good, and she is excluded from the discussion.
- Toni is publicly named and shamed as “disrespectful,” rebuked, and her role in advancing the mathematics is sidelined.

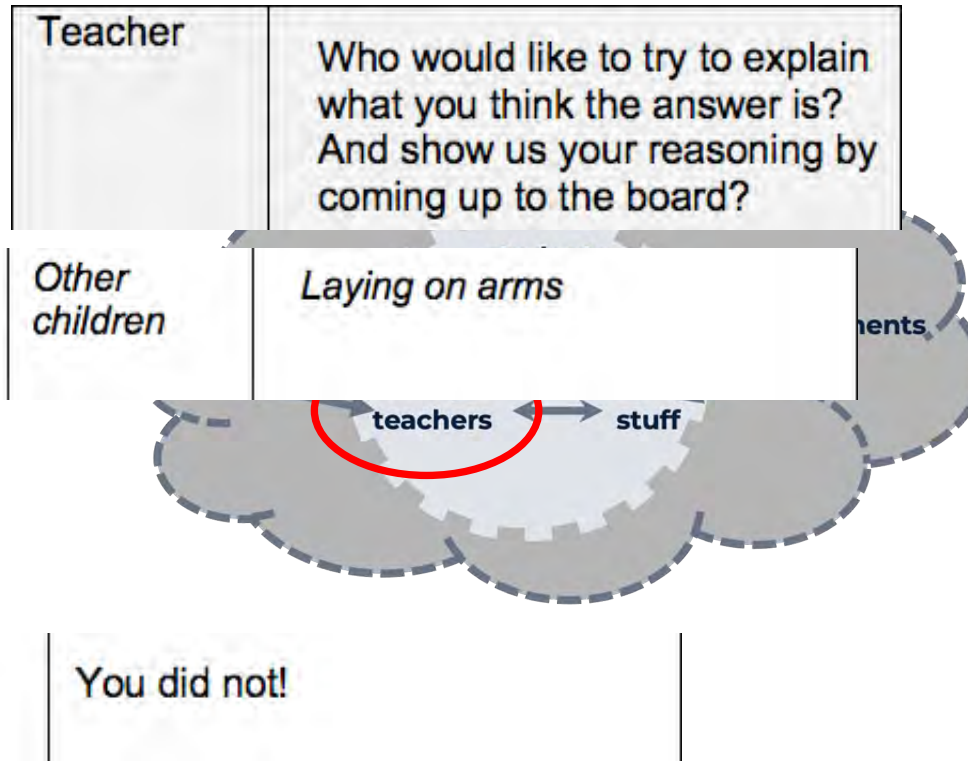




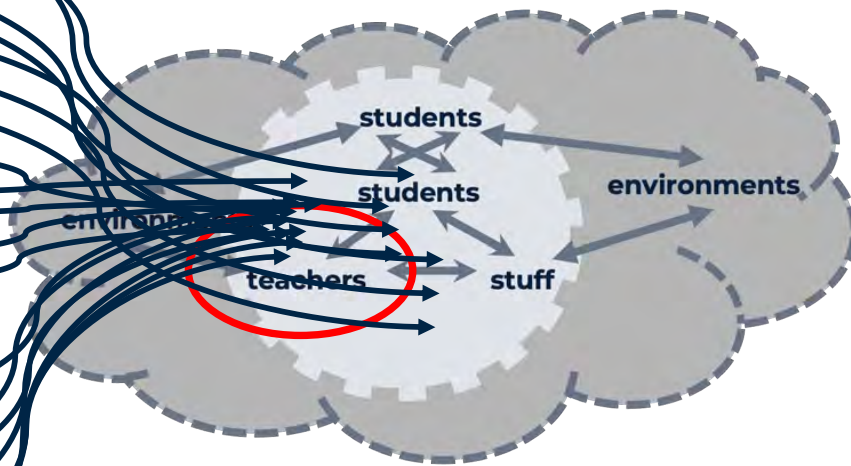
Speaker	Talk	Discretionary space
Teacher	Who would like to try to explain what you think the answer is? And show us your reasoning by coming up to the board? Who'd like to come up to the board and try to tell- And you know, it might not be right. That's okay because we're learning something new. I'd like someone to come up and sort of be the teacher and explain how you are thinking about it. Who'd like to try that this morning?	1. Deciding when to open whole-group discussion 2. Deciding what to do to launch discussion 3. Framing the expectation for presenting 4. Framing of what it "coming to the board" entails
Teacher	Okay. Aniyah?	5. Selecting a student to present
Toni	Playing with hair	6. Deciding whether to comment
Other children	Laying on arms	7. Deciding whether to comment
Teacher	When someone's presenting at the board, what should you be doing?	8. Setting norms for what to do when a student is presenting
Students in chorus	Looking at them.	
Teacher	Looking at that person-	9. Responding to students
Teacher	Uh-huh?	10. Taking up an individual student question
Aniyah	You want me to write it?	
Teacher	You're trying to mark what you think this number is and explain how you figured it out.	11. Clarifying task
Teacher	Listen closely and see what you think about her reasoning and her answer. [Aniyah writes 7/ by the orange line].	12. Setting task for the other students
Aniyah	I put one-seventh because there's-	
Toni	Did she say one-seventh?	13. Responding to student
Aniyah	(turns to Toni) Yeah. (continues to class) Because there's seven equal parts, like one, two, three, four, five, six, and then seven. (Uses her fingers to count the parts on the number line).	
Teacher	Before you agree or disagree, I want you to ask questions if there's something you don't understand about what she did. No agreeing and disagreeing. Just: All you can do right now is ask Aniyah questions. Who has a question for her?	14. Setting task for responding to student explanation
Teacher	Okay, Toni, what's your question for her?	15. Selecting student to speak
Dante	You did not!	16. Responding to student speaking across room
Toni	Why did- (laughs at another student who says something to her from across the room)	17. Responding to student laughing
Teacher	Go ahead, it's your turn.	17. Responding to student laughing
Toni	Why did you pick one-seventh?	
Dante	You did not!	18. Responding to student speaking across room
Teacher	Let's listen to her answer now. That was a very good question.	19. Setting task for class 20. Responding to student



Speaker	Talk	Discretionary space
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Teacher	Okay. Anyah?	5. Selecting a student to present
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Other children	Laying on arms	7. Deciding whether to comment
Teacher	When someone's presenting at the board, what should you be doing?	8. Setting norms for what to do when a student is presenting
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Anyah	You want me to write it?	
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Teacher	Listen closely and see what you think about her reasoning and her answer. [Anyah writes $\frac{1}{7}$ by the orange line].	12. Setting task for the other students
Anyah	I put one-seventh because there's-	
Toni	Did she say one-seventh?	13. Responding to student
Anyah	(turns to Toni) Yeah. (continues to class) Because there's seven equal parts, like one, two, three, four, five, six, and then seven. (Uses her fingers to count the parts on the number line).	
Teacher	Before you agree or disagree, I want you to ask questions if there's something you don't understand about what she did. No agreeing and disagreeing. Just: All you can do right now is ask Anyah questions. Who has a question for her?	14. Setting task for responding to student explanation
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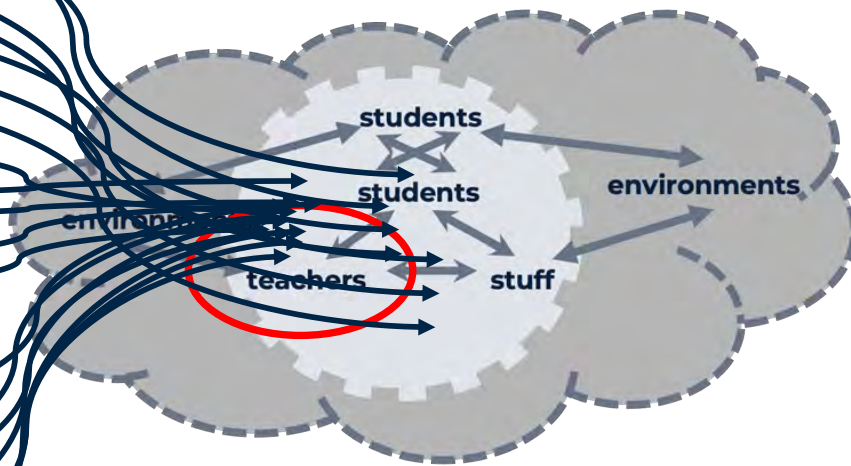


Speaker	Talk	Discretion in space
Teacher	Who would like to try to explain what you think the answer is? And show us your reasoning by coming up to the board? Who'd like to come up to the board and try to tell- And you know, it might not be right. That's okay because we're learning something new. I'd like someone to come up and sort of be the teacher and explain how you are thinking about it. Who'd like to try that this morning?	1. Deciding when to open whole-group discussion 2. Deciding what to do to launch discussion 3. Framing the expectation for presenting 4. Framing of what is "coming to the board" entails
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Teaching is dense with “discretionary spaces”

Speaker	Talk	Discretionary Space
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Teacher	Let's listen to her answer now. That was a very good question.	19. Setting task for class
		20. Responding to student



20 in 1:28



Video: Aniyah and Toni



This video and additional supporting materials are available online [here](#).

Using discretionary spaces with care



- Interpreting Toni as asking a real question that she means.
- Hearing Toni's question as central to advancing the mathematical content.
- Reinforcing her mathematical identity, not choosing to read her body as disruptive.

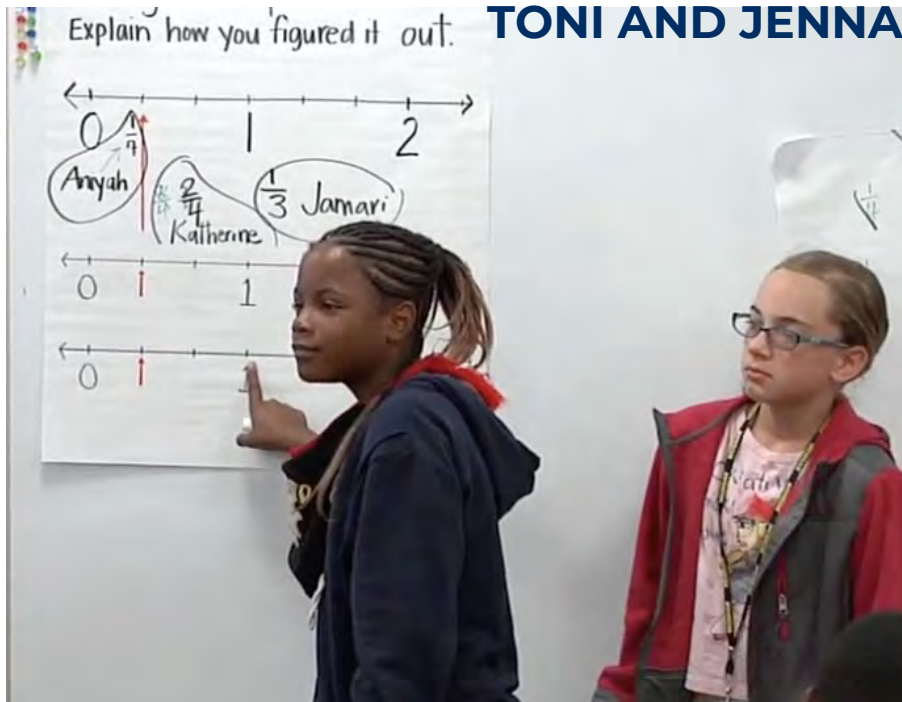


- Other children hear Aniyah as getting the discussion going, and Toni as asking an important mathematical question.
- Aniyah and Toni are both positioned as contributing to the discussion.
- Children see a teacher attending to Black girls as mathematical thinkers and contributors to collective work.



- Interpreting Aniyah as competent to answer questions about her ideas.
- Hearing Aniyah's explanation as central to advancing the mathematical content.
- Reinforcing her mathematical identity, not choosing to read her body as struggling.

14 minutes after where we stopped

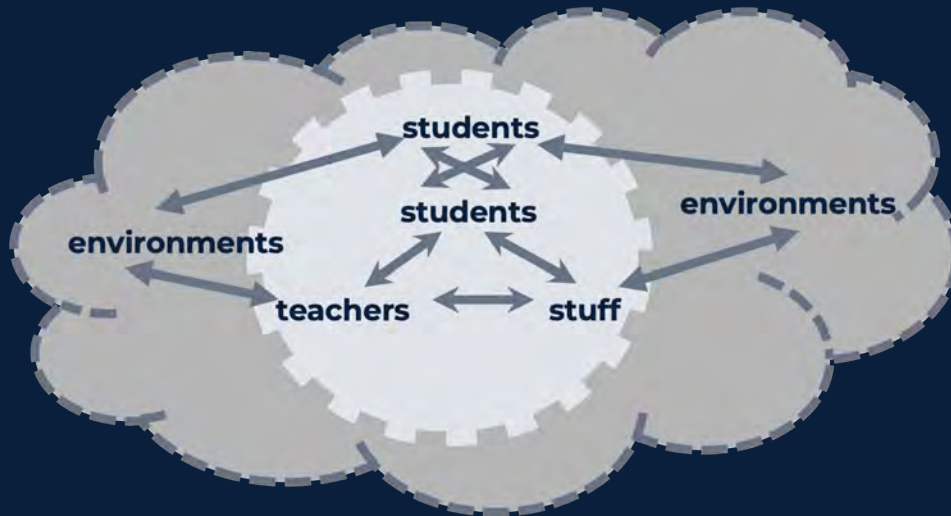


ANIYAH

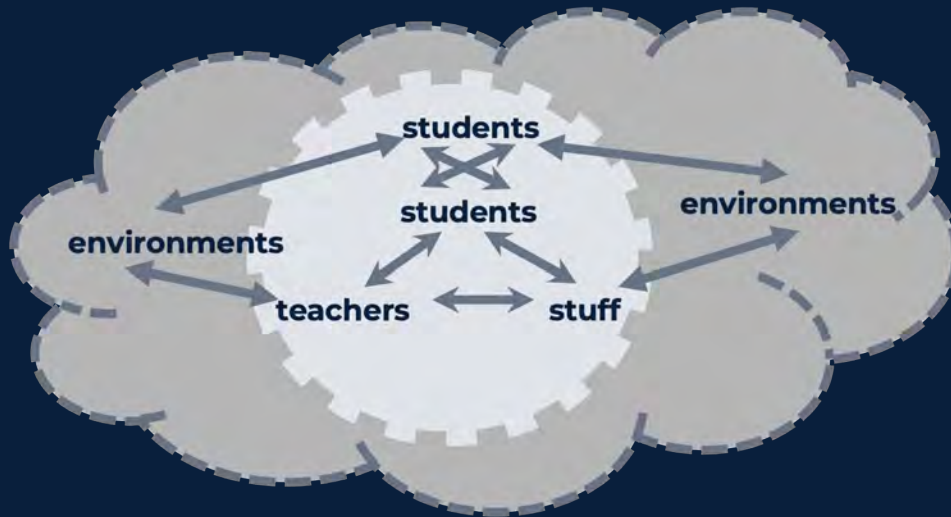
I did well on my goal today because my goal was to to share my ideas with the class and I did I went up to the board and share my idea with the class on Fractions.

AND: On an “exit ticket,” 28 of the children were able to correctly identify a different fraction ($\frac{2}{5}$) on the number line.

What regularly fills the discretionary spaces in teaching?



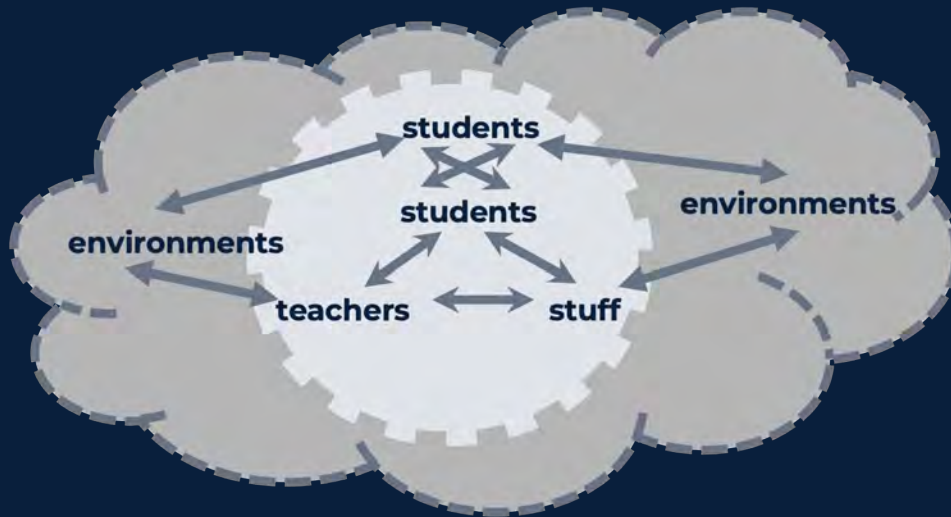
What regularly fills the discretionary spaces in teaching?



1. Teachers' experiences in a society filled with racism and oppression.

Lortie (1975), Banks, Grant and Koskela, Moll

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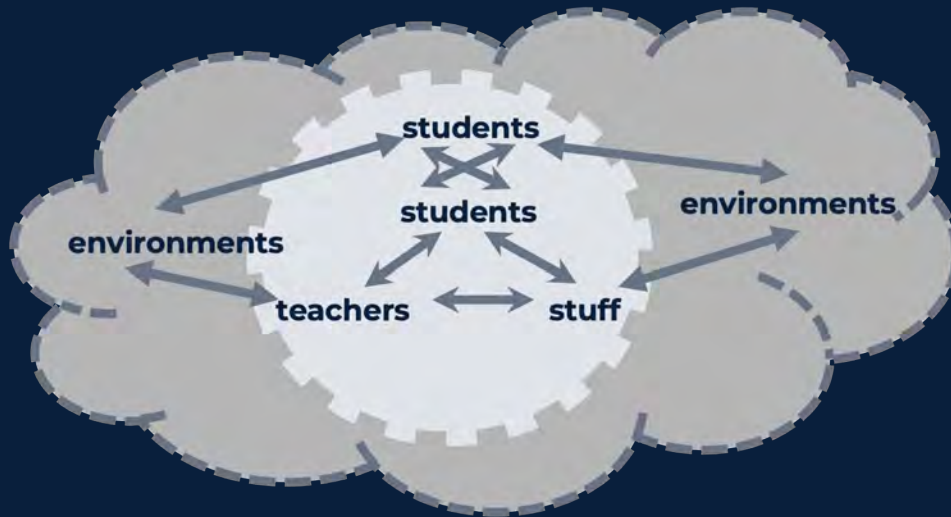


1. Teachers' experiences in a society filled with racism and oppression.
2. Normalized practices in schools that institutionalize dominant values and habits.

Lortie (1975), Banks, Grant and Koskela, Moll
Anyon (1981), Heath, Martin, Tuck

What regularly fills the discretionary spaces in teaching?

Professional education does not effectively intervene on these.



1. Teachers' experiences in a society filled with racism and oppression.
2. Normalized practices in schools that institutionalize dominant values and habits.

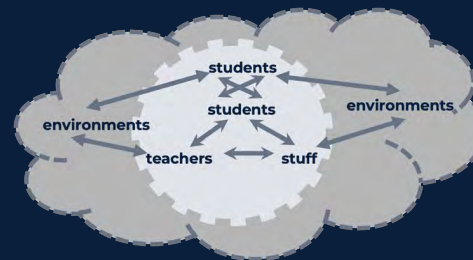
Professional education and teaching experience often teach these.

Lortie (1975), Banks, Grant and Koskela, Moll
Anyon (1981), Heath, Martin, Tuck

What does it take to disrupt the patterns that marginalize and reinforce racism?



Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015

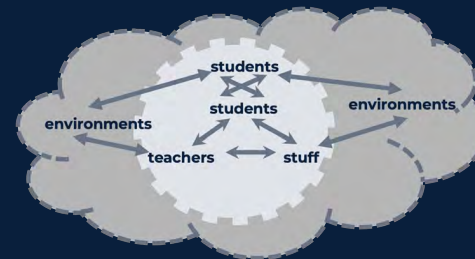


What does it take to disrupt the patterns that marginalize and reinforce racism?



- Seeing Aniyah's explanation and Toni's question as key to the class's work

Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015

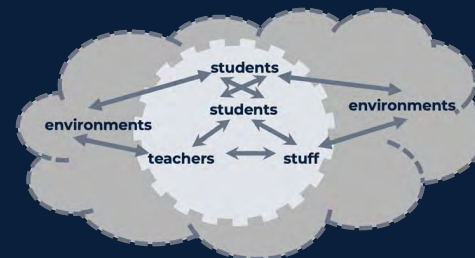


What does it take to disrupt the patterns that marginalize and reinforce racism?



- Seeing Aniyah's explanation and Toni's question as key to the class's work
- Taking as axiomatic the brilliance of Black children, and thus Toni and Aniyah

Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015



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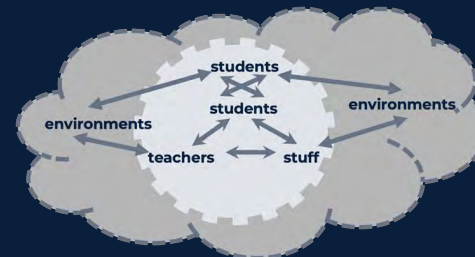


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Knowing and using mathematics in teaching (MKT)

Interpreting Toni as asking a mathematical question that she means

Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015



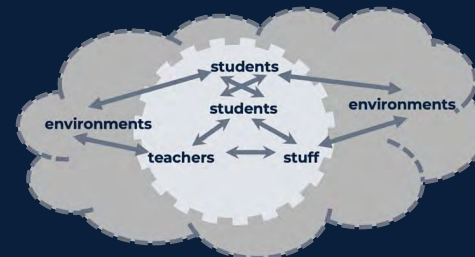
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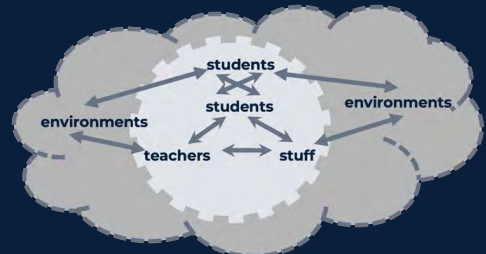


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- ... AND having something different to DO

Knowing and using mathematics in teaching (MKT)

Interpreting Toni as asking a mathematical question that she means

Having a repertoire of practices that can be adapted and used in contexts



Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015



In these examples, what was needed?

- A special kind of mathematical nimbleness and being able to see ideas from someone else's point of view
- An acuity of mathematical listening to hear Antar, Gabi, Aniyah, and Toni
- The mathematical insight to disrupt pervasive patterns of interpreting and responding to Black children
- The mathematical depth to use the discretionary spaces to support mathematics learning

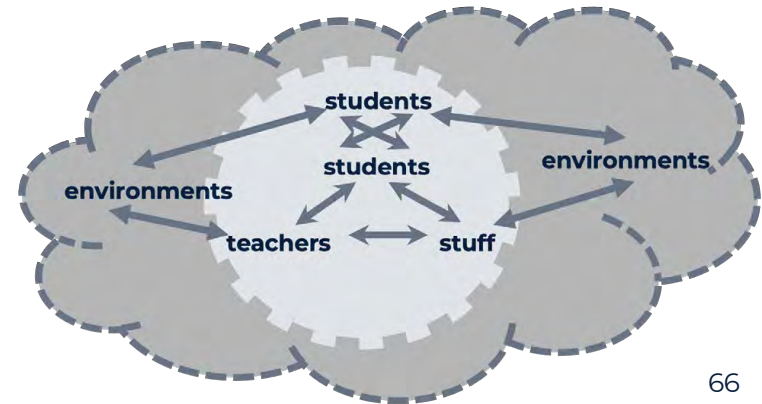
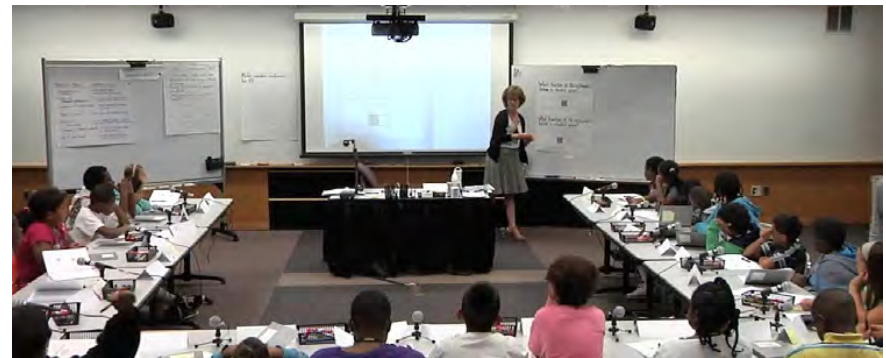


What are continuing challenges in trying to understand that work, and why should we care?



Challenges in studying the work of teaching for equity

- Combining the embodied and relational dimensions with the cognitive and knowledge entailments.
- Building theory and insight while contextualizing the work and centering identities.
- Connecting the dots between macro-structures and micro-interactions.
- Using care to distinguish prescription from detail.
- Representing the work in a usable discourse of practice.



And also . . .



10 key asks



10 key asks

Of society

1. See and value the power of teaching.
2. Stop taking skillful disruptive equitable teaching for granted.
3. Stop reinforcing conceptions of teachers as individual heroic people who figure this out on their own.



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Of policymakers

4. Require people to demonstrate that they have entry-level capability before they teach children.
5. Support teachers to develop and improve their practice over time.
6. Change the economic model for paying for public education, especially for teaching.



10 key asks

Of society

1. See and value the power of teaching.
2. Stop taking skillful disruptive equitable teaching for granted.
3. Stop reinforcing conceptions of teachers as individual heroic people who figure this out on their own.

Of ourselves as educators

7. Unpack what this sort of teaching entails and have the professional wisdom and agency to stand up for the complexity and learnability of this practice.
8. Radically change how we compose the teaching force to create a diverse resourceful profession.
9. Identify the resources, experiences, and commitments needed to be a successful learner of this complex work.
10. Take responsibility for teaching this complex practice to people who bring the resources to learn to do it.

Of policymakers

4. Require people to demonstrate that they have entry-level capability before they teach children.
5. Support teachers to develop and improve their practice over time.
6. Change the economic model for paying for public education, especially for teaching.



- Developing our approaches to understanding the work of teaching for equity is collective work.
- It demands diversity in who “we” are as scholars and as an educational community.
- This will broaden what we consider evidence, what we think the objects of study are, and what we value: epistemology, ontology, axiology.



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Map of the United States of America.
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Image on slide 7:
Map of People's Republic of China.
Retrieved from <https://www.mapsofworld.com/answers/geography/what-are-the-key-facts-of-peoples-republic-of-china/#>



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Map of Turkey.
Retrieved from <https://www.bespoketurkey.com/top-sights-in-turkey/>

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Image on slide 7:

Map of Canada

Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Political_map_of_Canada.svg



Image on slide 7:

South Africa Provinces Map.

Retrieved from <https://hansjohnnie.blogspot.com/2020/08/south-africa-provinces-map.html?m=0>



Image on slide 7:

Political Map of India.

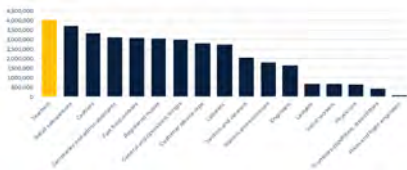
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Image on slide 7:
Map of France.

Retrieved from <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/France/345690>



Data on slide 8:

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). May 2021 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates. [Data chart]. Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm



Image on slide 18:

Photo from “Mass Incarceration Is Declining — But Not For Women” by Robert P. Alvarez, Institute for Policy Studies.

Retrieved from <https://ips-dc.org/mass-incarceration-is-declining-but-not-for-women/>

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Image on slide 18:
Photo from “Housing cuts would exacerbate inequality” by Laura Mascuch, Kristin Miller, Jolie Milstein, and Barika Williams, *New York Daily News*.
Retrieved from <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-housing-cuts-would-exacerbate-inequality-20200623-k2gxn6btrvh6bos6sgwlijokby-story.html>

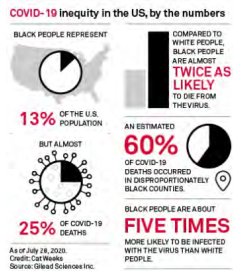


Image on slide 18:
Graphic from “Enough is enough: Gilead-Morehouse study racial, ethnic disparity in COVID-19,” by Michael Gibney, S&P Global Market Intelligence.
Retrieved from <https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/enough-is-enough-gilead-morehouse-study-racial-ethnic-disparity-in-covid-19-60035253>



Image on slide 18:
Graphic from “Six policies to reduce economic inequality” by John A. Powell, Othring & Belonging Institute.
Retrieved from <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/six-policies-reduce-economic-inequality>

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Photo from “On International Day, UN spotlights indigenous peoples' right to education,” United Nations.
Retrieved from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/08/536292-international-day-un-spotlights-indigenous-peoples-right-education>



Image on slide 18:
Photo from “UN agrees to urgent debate on racism and police violence,” Deutsche Welle (DW).
Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/un-agrees-to-urgent-debate-on-racism-and-police-violence/a-53807879>

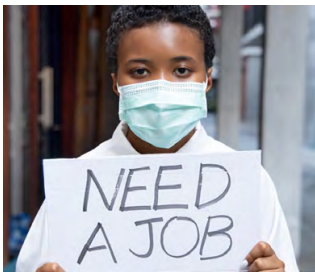


Image on slide 18:
Photo from “Black and Hispanic women, less educated workers among those hardest hit by COVID-19 job losses” by Sara Savat, *The Source*, Washington University in St. Louis.
Retrieved from <https://source.wustl.edu/2021/04/black-and-hispanic-women-less-educated-workers-among-those-hardest-hit-by-covid-19-job-losses/>

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Image on slides 26–28:

Photo from “Why You Need an Experienced Real Estate Agent” by Elizabeth Weintraub, the balance.

Retrieved from <https://www.thebalance.com/experienced-real-estate-agents-1798883>



Image on slides 26–28:

Photo from “Black doctors earn less than white peers, study reveals” by Stacy M. Brown, The Philadelphia Tribune.

Retrieved from https://www.phillytrib.com/lifestyle/health/black-doctors-earn-less-than-white-peers-study-reveals/article_2d359910-85c8-524b-b6d2-15d1705ad762.html



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Photo from “Trump Rioters Storm U.S. Capitol (photos),” Variety

Retrieved from <https://variety.com/gallery/trump-rioters-storm-us-capitol-photos/congress-electoral-college-8/>



Image on slides 27–28:

Photo from “20 Classroom Interventions for Children with Anxiety Disorders” by Jerry Kennard, Ph.D., HealthCentral.

Retrieved from <https://www.healthcentral.com/article/20-classroom-interventions-for-children-with-anxiety-disorders>

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Photo from “10 Ways Well-Meaning White Teachers Bring Racism Into Our Schools” by Jamie Utt, *everyday feminism*.

Retrieved from <https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/08/10-ways-well-meaning-white-teachers-bring-racism-into-our-schools/>



Image on slide 67:

Map of the World.

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Image on slide 67:

“A Large Group Of Diverse People Standing Together.”

Retrieved from https://www.vhv.rs/viewpic/hTmTiix_a-large-group-of-diverse-people-standing-together/