

The Work of Teaching and the Challenge of Teacher Education

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4th Annual (Online) Conference
9 September 2022



Acknowledging the land I am on



Understanding the power of the work of teaching and its role (in)justice

What is it to do the ‘work of teaching’?

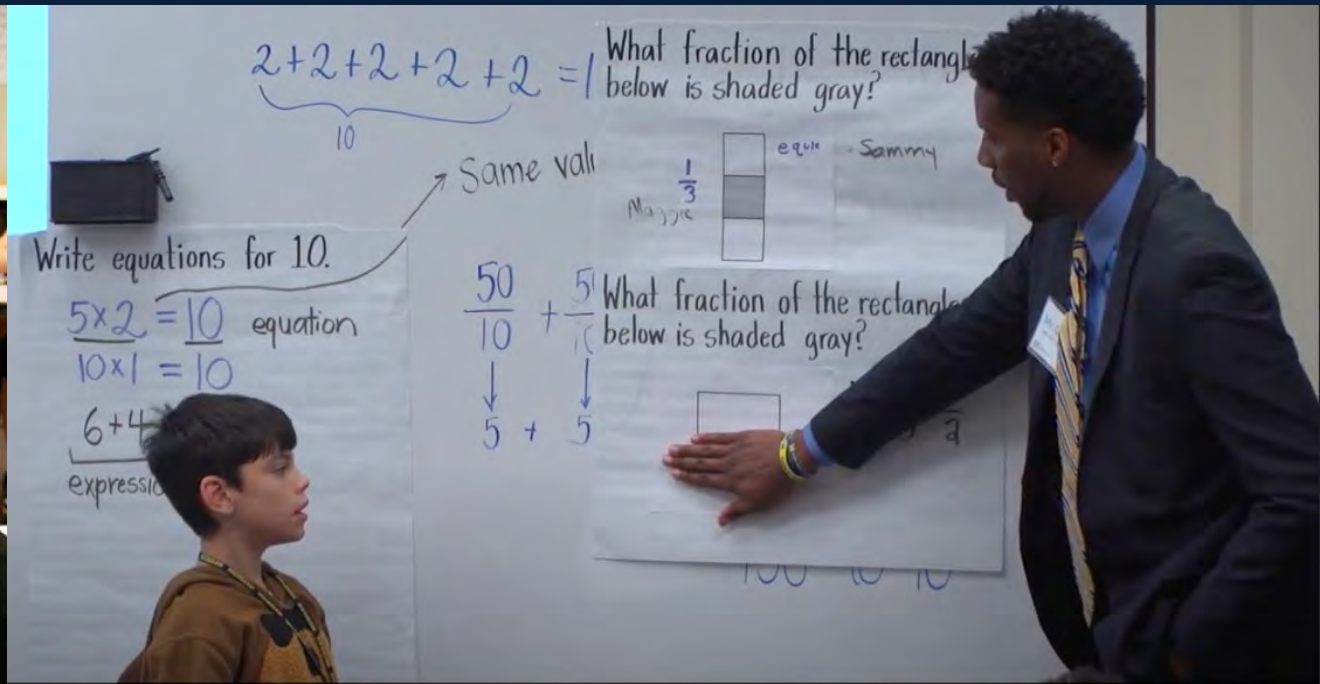
What does it mean to foreground the ‘power’ of that work and why does it matter?

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

What is it to do the 'work of teaching'?

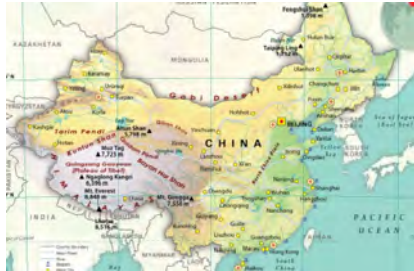


Teaching: So common, and yet so complex



It's common

72.5 million teachers worldwide



15 million teachers



1 million teachers



756,900 teachers



8.7 million teachers



410,000 teachers



1.4 million teachers



866,600 teachers

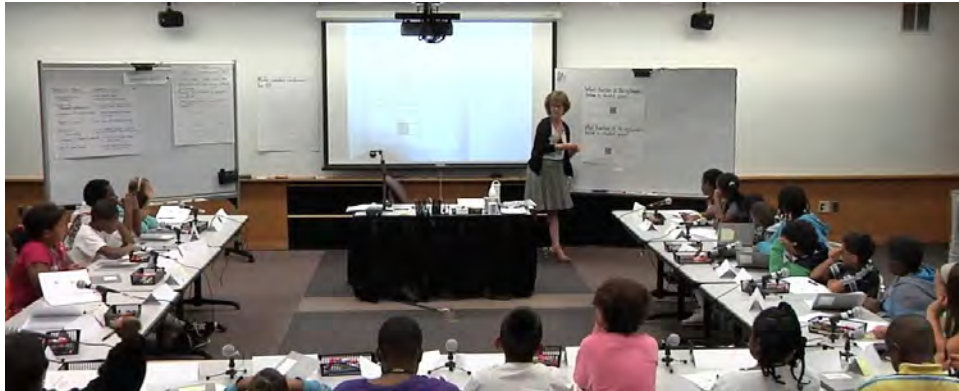


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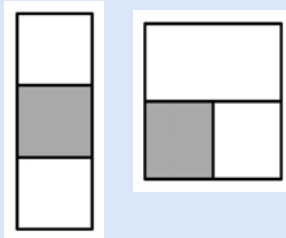
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It's 'complex'

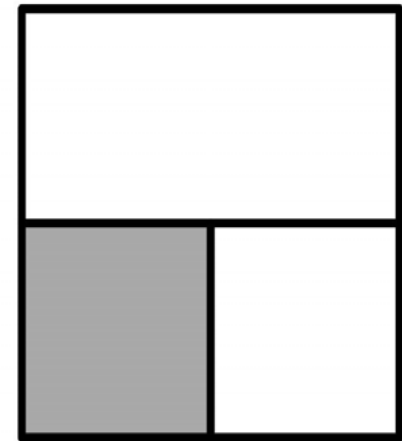
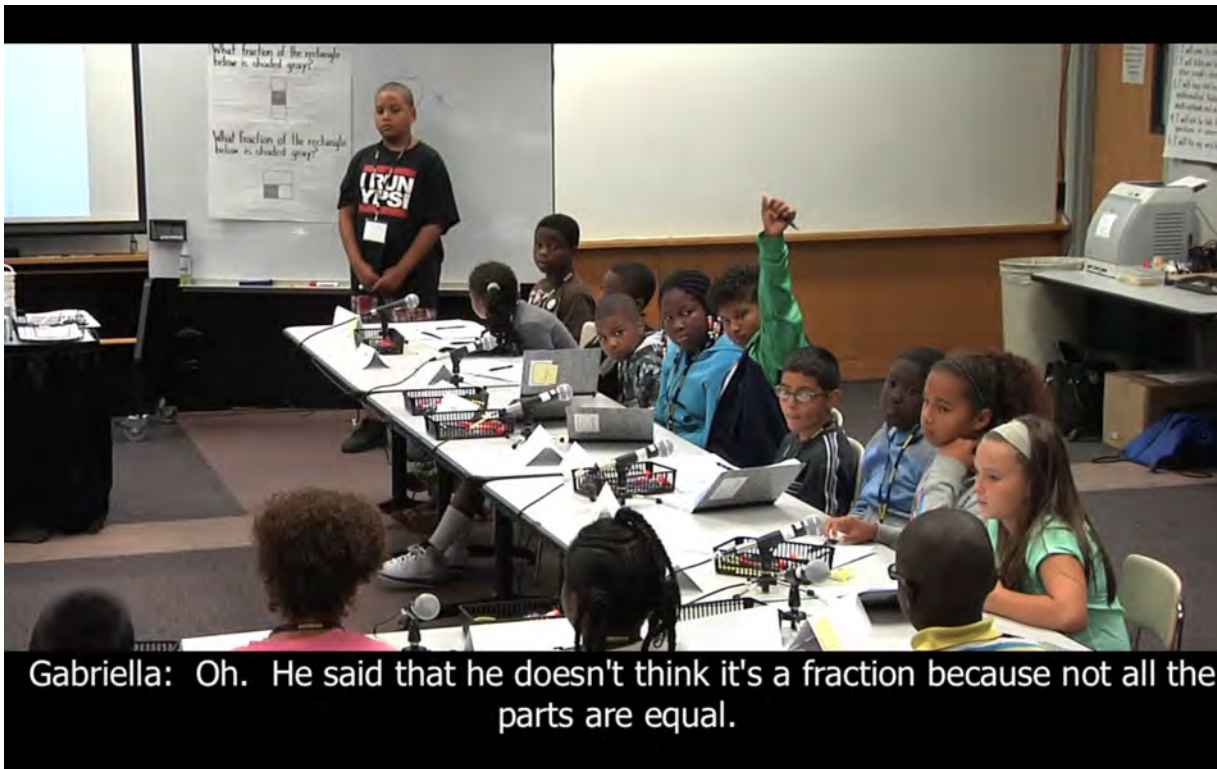


What do you pay attention to?
What is 'complex' here?

What fraction of each rectangle below is shaded gray?



Video: Antar 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?

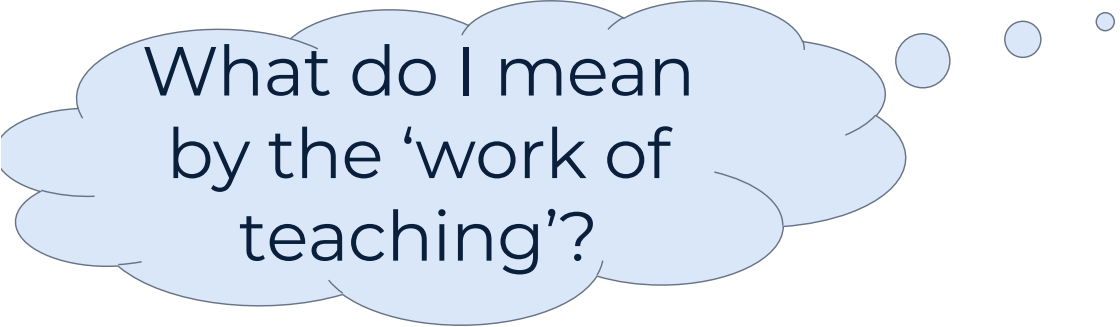
Are those two students over on the side following this discussion?

Where shall I stand?

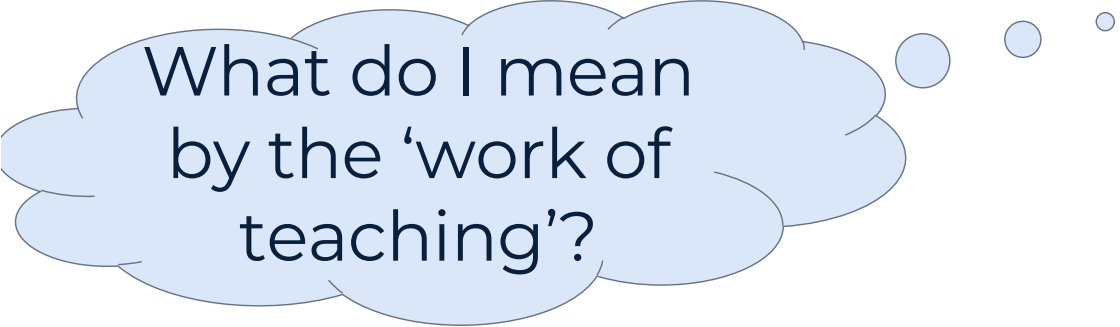
How can I get other students to build on what Antar and Gabi have said?

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

How is Antar feeling about his contribution?

A light blue thought bubble with a black outline, containing the text "What do I mean by the 'work of teaching'?". Three smaller circles of the same color trail off to the right from the top of the bubble.

What do I mean
by the 'work of
teaching'?

A large, light blue thought bubble with a black outline, containing the text 'What do I mean by the 'work of teaching'?'. Three smaller, light blue circles of decreasing size trail off to the right from the top of the bubble.

What do I mean by the 'work of teaching'?

'Using myself as the object and tool of my inquiry, I teach mathematics daily to a heterogeneous class of third graders at a local public elementary school. . . . I am increasingly aware that there are many resources beyond knowledge that contribute to wise practice: patience, respect, flexibility, humor, imagination, and courage, for instance.' (Ball, 1993)

The perspective that we adopt here is that curriculum materials could contribute to professional practice if they were created with closer attention to processes of *curriculum enactment*. Our perspective is premised on an understanding of the nature of teaching itself. While "curriculum" is often taken to refer strictly to the textbook or curriculum materials, the enacted curriculum is actually jointly constructed by teachers, students, and materials in particular contexts. Even close use of materials is a con-

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'... the core tasks that teachers must execute to help pupils learn. . . . leading a discussion of solutions to a mathematics problem, probing students' answers, . . . [as well as] planning for instruction, meeting with parents. . .' (Ball & Forzani, 2009)

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WHY "WORK" OF TEACHING?"

1. To focus our attention on what teachers DO and to distinguish this from other features of classrooms, such as instructional formats, classroom culture and norms, what students are doing, how the curriculum is designed
2. To honor the effortful and deliberate nature of teaching and not to leave it invisible, implicit, and taken for granted

What do I mean by the 'work of teaching'?



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- 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.
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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?

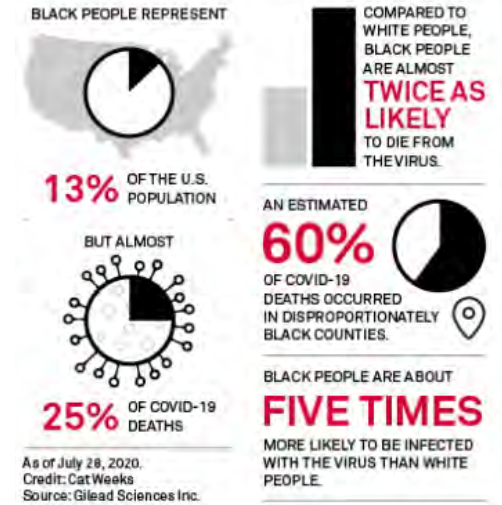


The commonness and complexity
of teaching have powerful
consequences for patterns of
racism and oppression in society.

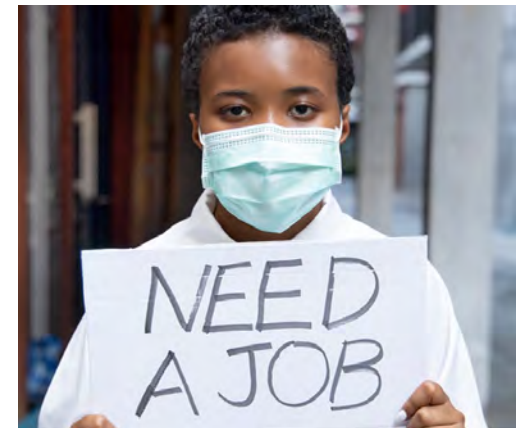




COVID-19 inequity in the US, by the numbers



ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

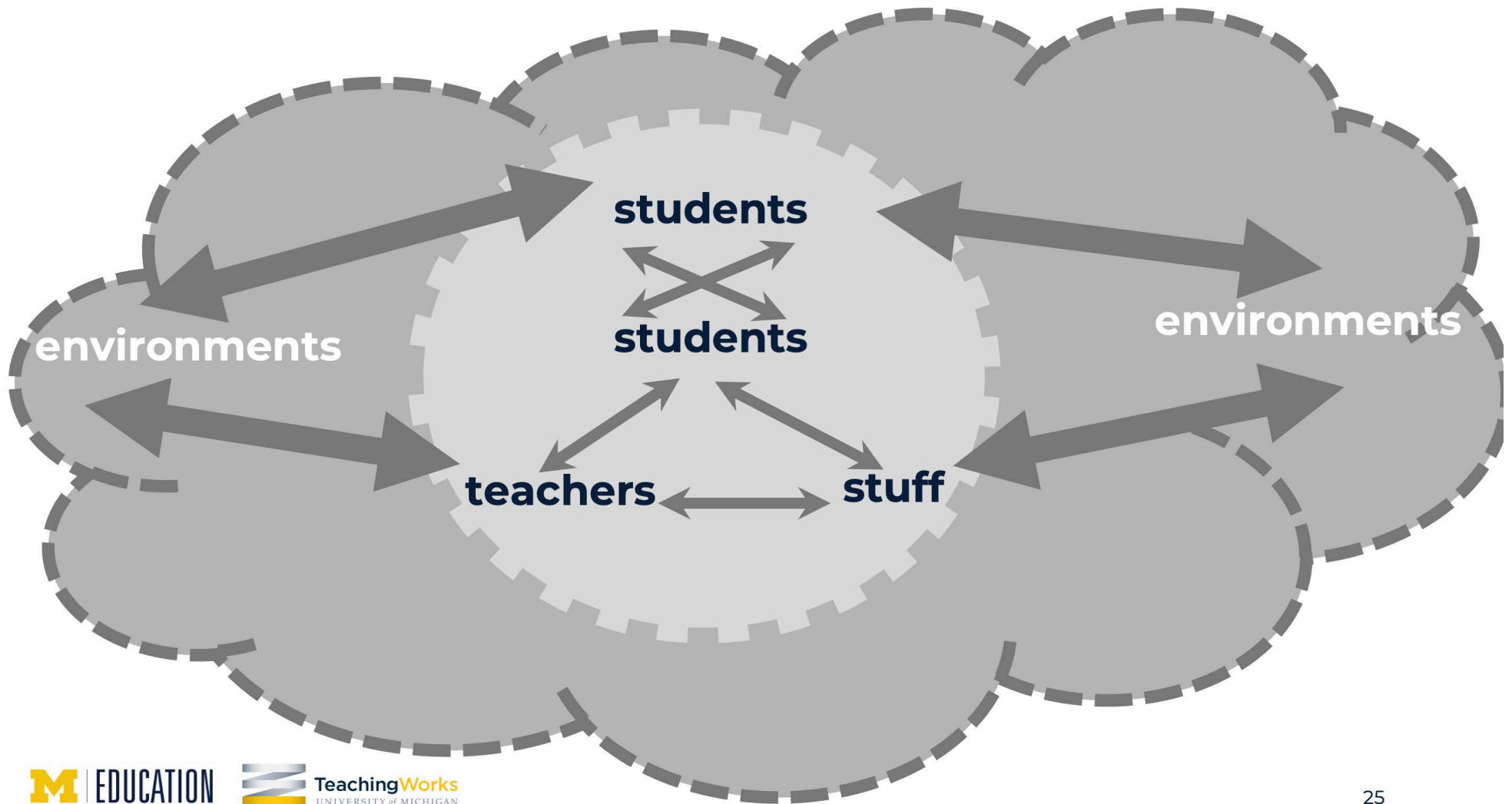




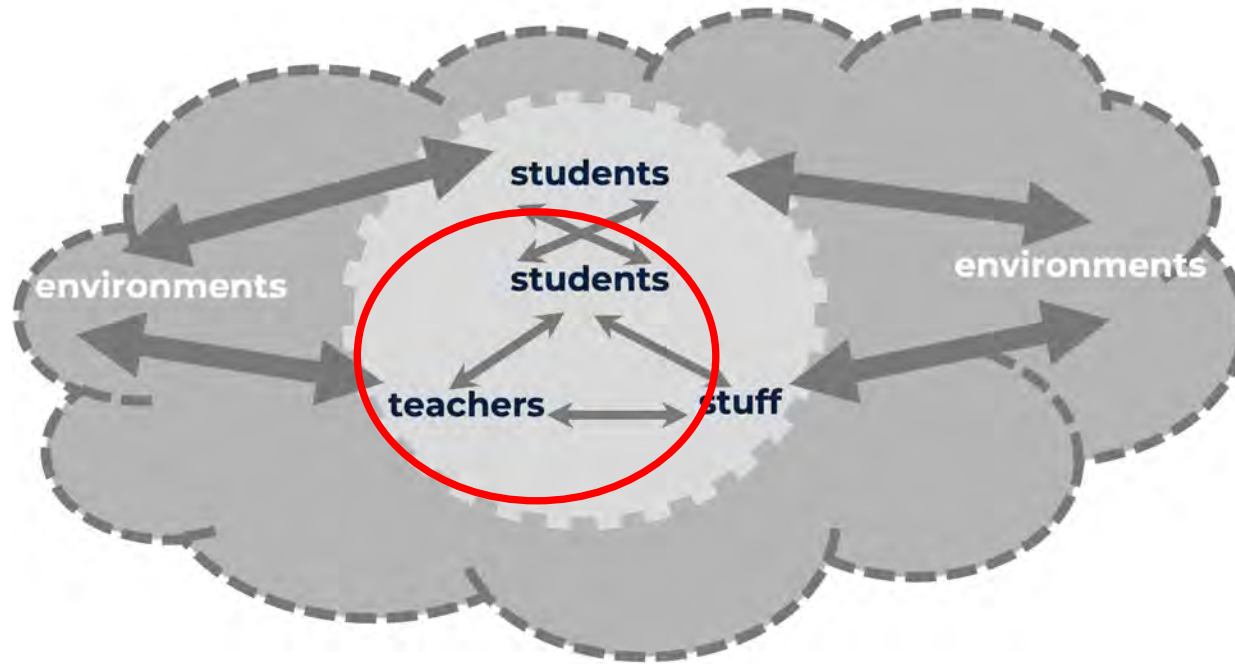




1. **Teaching is powerful.** When it is done with care and judgment, students can thrive — learn mathematics, develop positive identities, learn to value others and work collectively.
2. Teaching also involves **enormous discretion.**
3. How that discretion is exercised can either reinforce racialized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

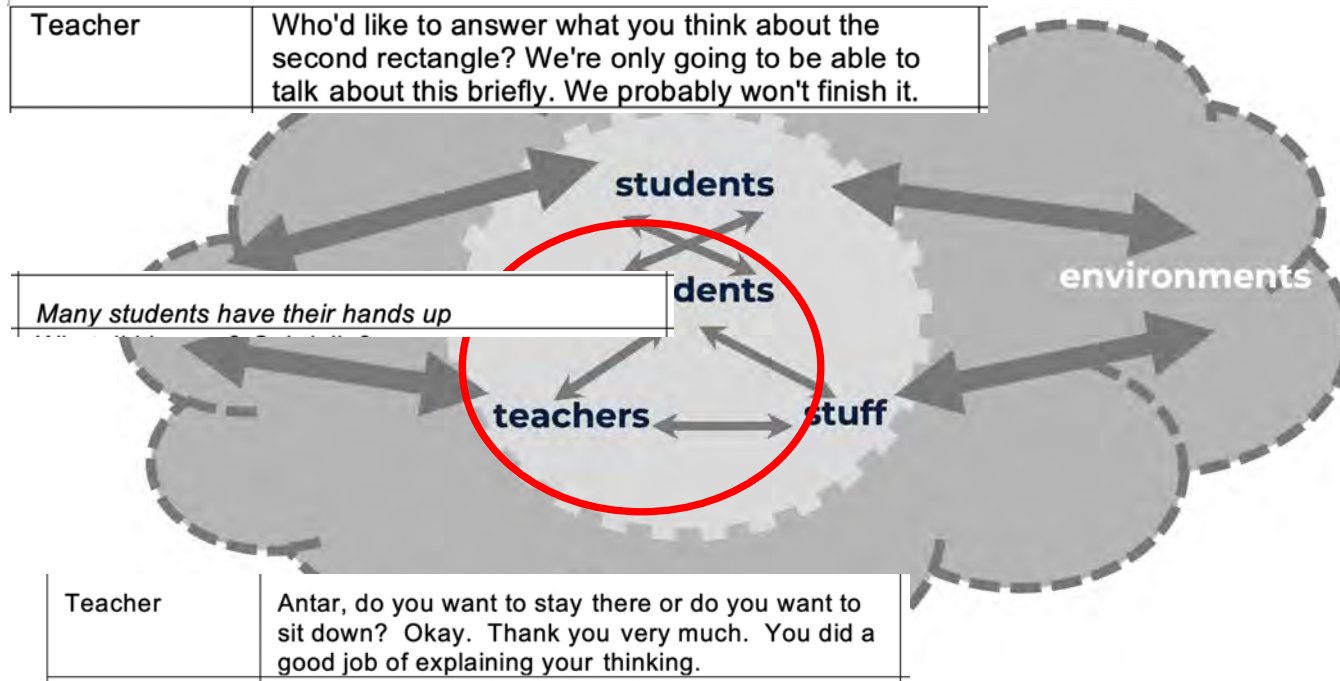


Teacher	Who'd like to answer what you think about the second rectangle? We're only going to be able to talk about this briefly. We probably won't finish it.	Launch discussion
Teacher	Who'd like to explain what you think? Antar, what do you think?	Choose student to call on
Teacher	Could you come up to the board and explain? Thank you.	Frame task for student who is presenting
Teacher	I really like the way that people who are coming to the board are doing today. You are explaining really well.	Acknowledge competence
Teacher	Here's a marker. Can you explain your thinking?	Provide material support
Antar	I think it's not a fraction because all of the parts are not equally the same shape.	Listen
Teacher	Can you say that one more time to the class?	Support presenter
Antar	I think it's not a fraction because all the parts are not equally the same.	Listen
Teacher	Can someone repeat what Antar said? Very nice, Antar.	Orient students to presenter
	<i>Many students have their hands up</i>	
Teacher	What did he say? Gabriella?	Choose student to call on
Gabriella	Oh. He said that he doesn't think it's a fraction because not all the parts are equal.	Listen
Teacher	Is that what you said?	Position first student as authority
Teacher	Okay, would someone like to comment on that? Agree or disagree with him?	Orient students to one another
Teacher	Okay, let's see, how about Gabi.	Choose student to call on
Gabi	I disagree.	Listen
Teacher	What do you think?	Pose question
Gabi	I think the fraction is one-fourth.	Listen
Teacher	One-fourth? Do you want to come up and say why you think it's one fourth?	Frame next step, support next presenter
Teacher	Antar, do you want to stay there or do you want to sit down? Okay. Thank you very much. You did a good job of explaining your thinking.	Position student with agency, acknowledge competence
Teacher	So, let's hear what Gabi's thinking.	Orient students to one another
Gabi	I think it's one-fourth because, like he said, all the fractions aren't the same, but you can make them the same by dividing a line down the middle.	Listen
Teacher	Here's something you can use so if someone wants to take it off again, they can. Okay, so now explain what you've done. Talk to the class, okay?	Provide material support
Gabi	I divided it down the middle because, since it's not equal, you have to make it equal.	Listen
Teacher	And so then you decided?	Probe
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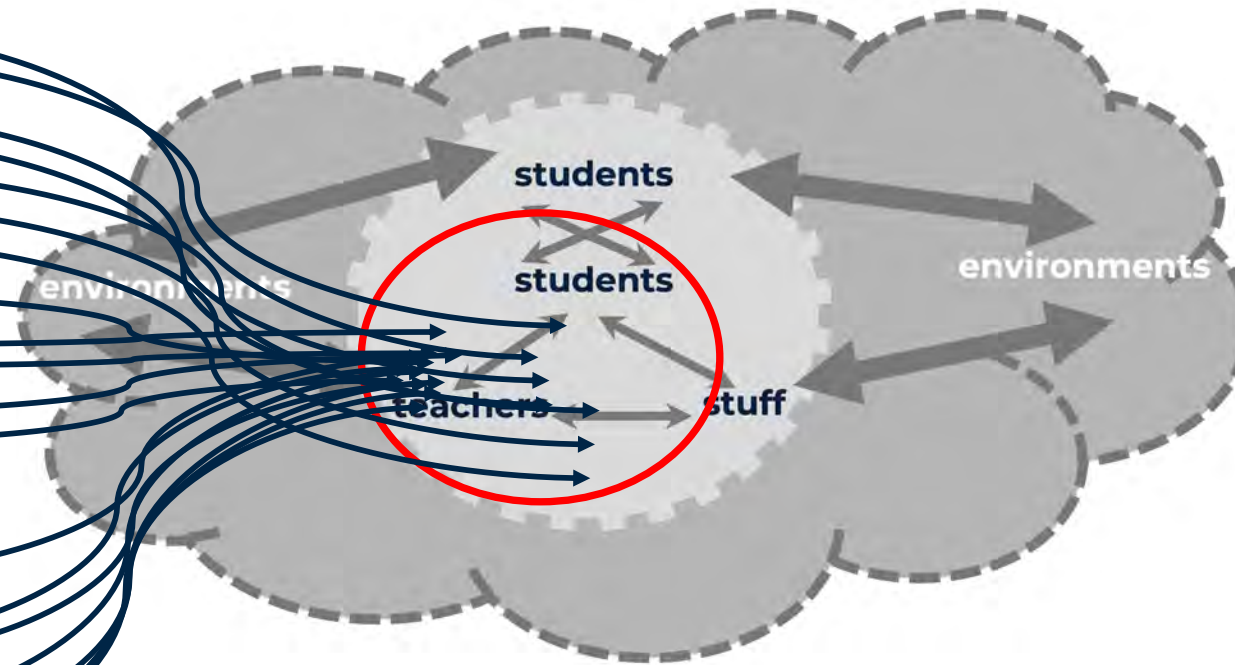
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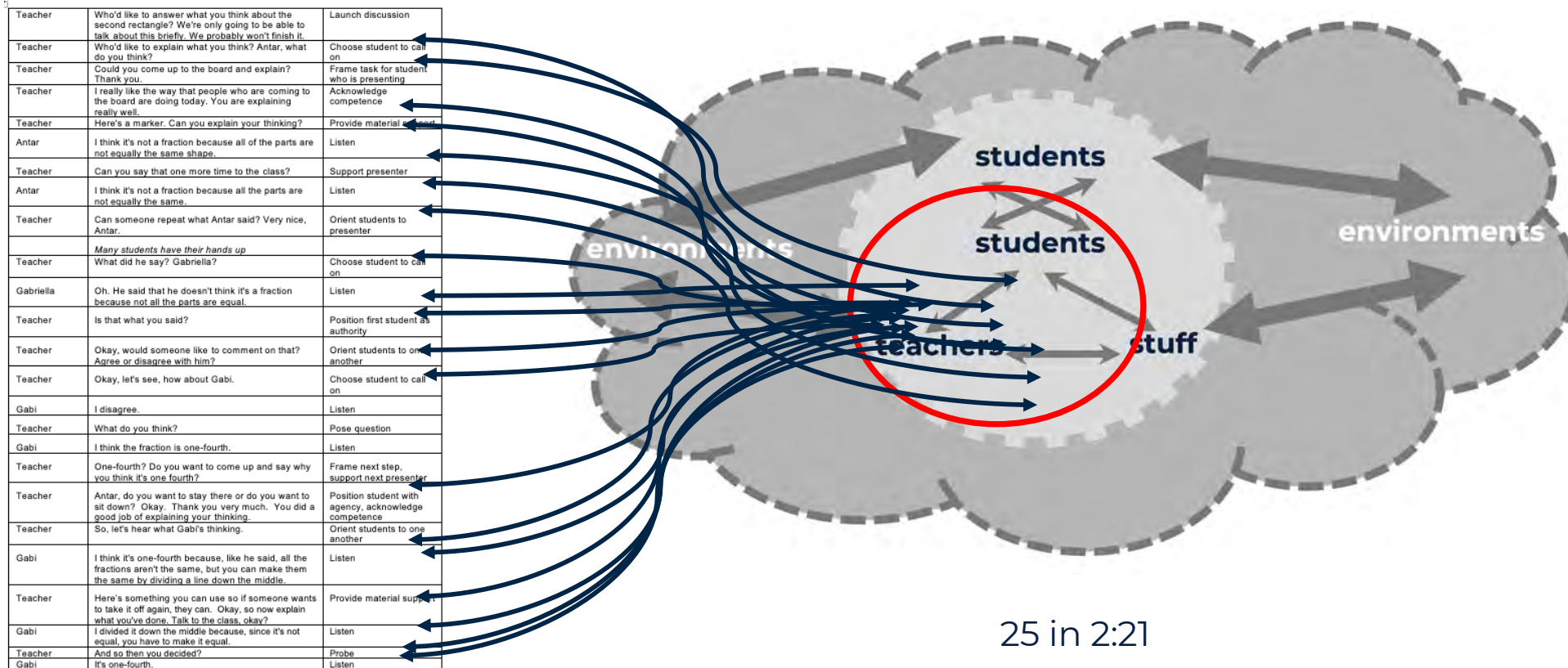
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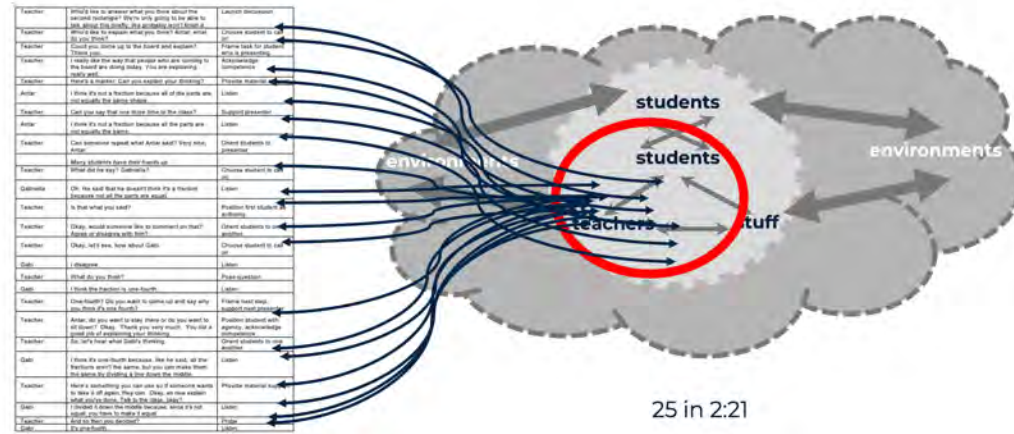
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Teaching is dense with 'discretionary spaces'



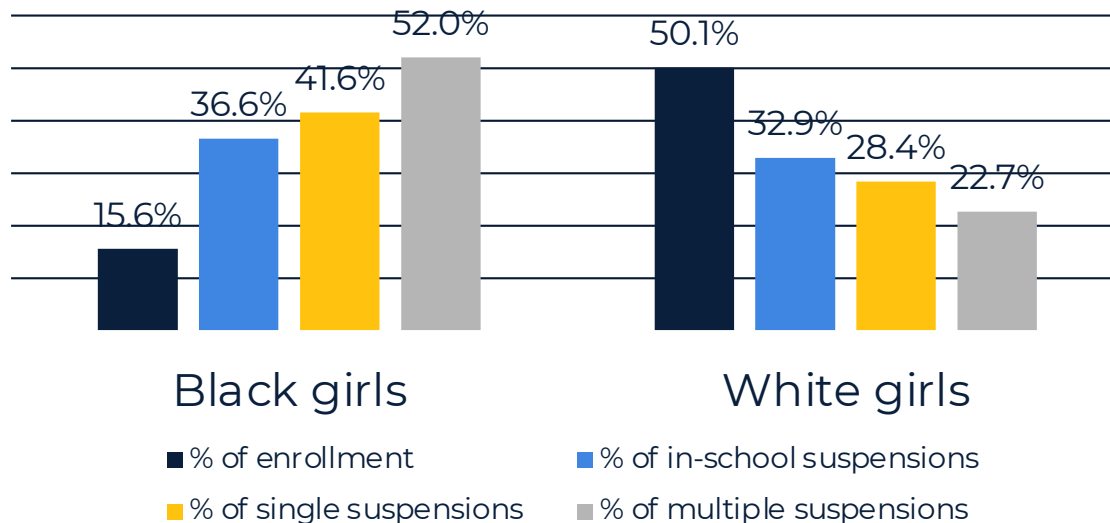
Discretionary spaces and the power of teaching

- A discretionary space is where interpretations, next moves, comments, or questions are necessarily determined by the teacher—and not by a policy or curriculum.
- These interpretations and actions are learned through firsthand experience in society and in school.
- These interpretations and actions are also habituated. (Ngo, 2017, Noel, 2018, Sfard)



Harnessing the power of discretion

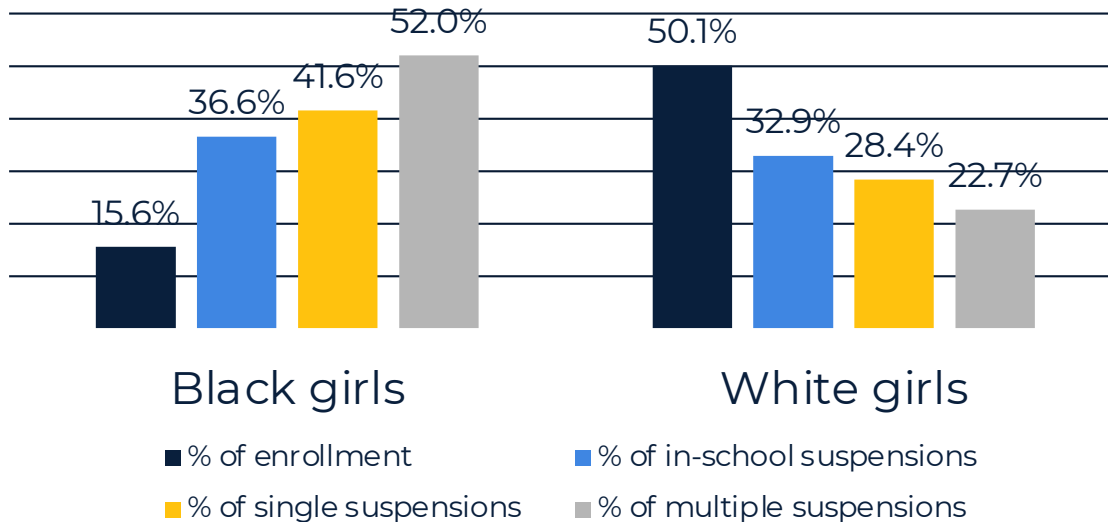
Teacher education could work to disrupt habits that are embedded in normalized and oppressive patterns of practice.



Epstein, R., Blake, J., & González, T. (2017). *Girlhood interrupted: The erasure of Black girls' childhood*. Washington, DC: Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality.

Harnessing the power of discretion

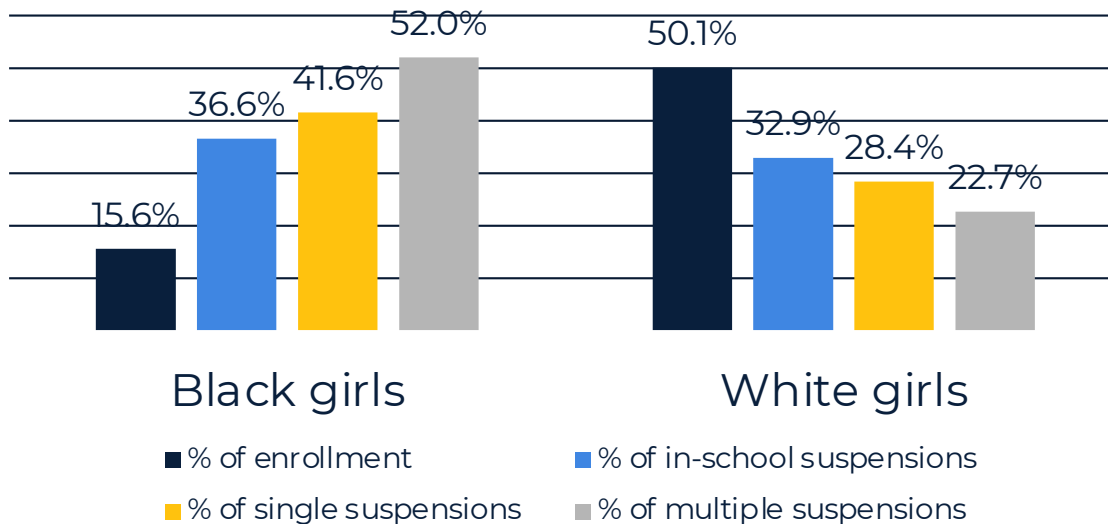
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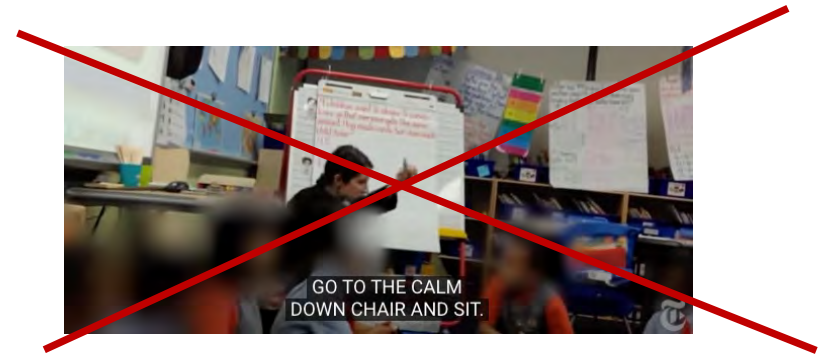
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But teachers would need more than awareness and commitment: **They also need knowledge, repertoires of practice, and judgment.**



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This is the work of teaching.
Studying its broad and powerful
role in(justice) is necessary.
But such research is challenging.



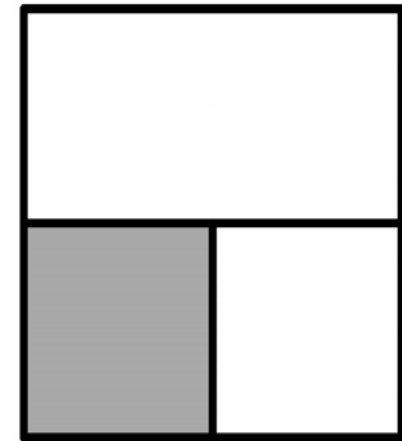
What are continuing challenges in trying to understand the work of teaching, and why should we care?



Let's return to the classroom.



Video: Antar and Gabi

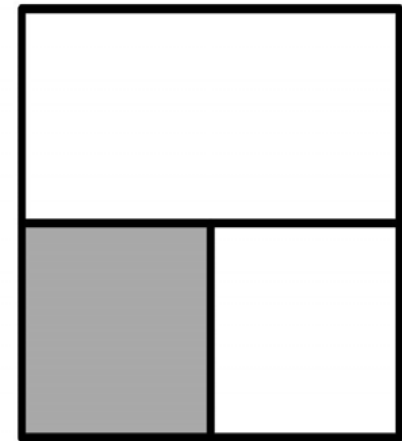
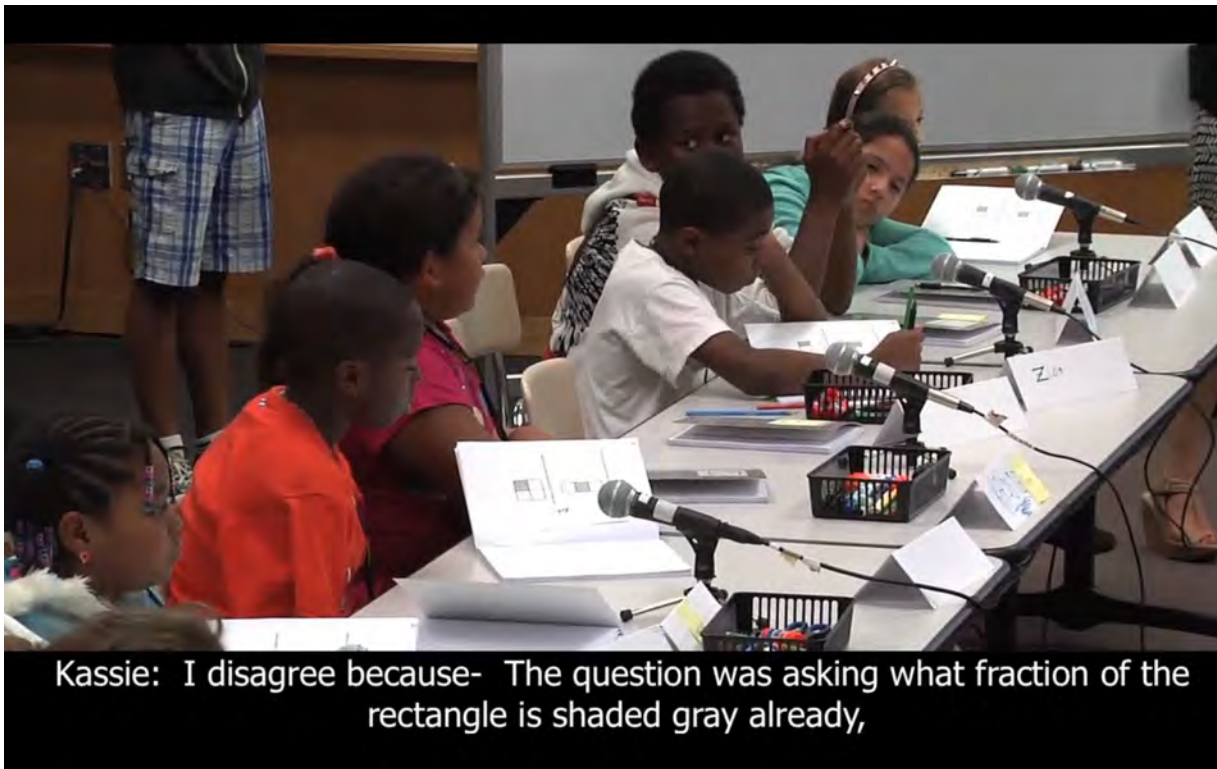


And as the lesson is ending...



Antar's
right. It's
not equal.

Video: Kassie

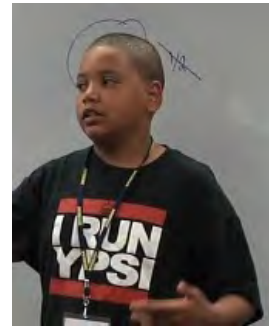


These moments: Filled with
discretionary spaces related to
reinforcing or disrupting
patterns of racism and harm



These moments: Filled with discretionary spaces related to reinforcing or disrupting patterns of racism and harm

What are some of the discretionary spaces and risks?



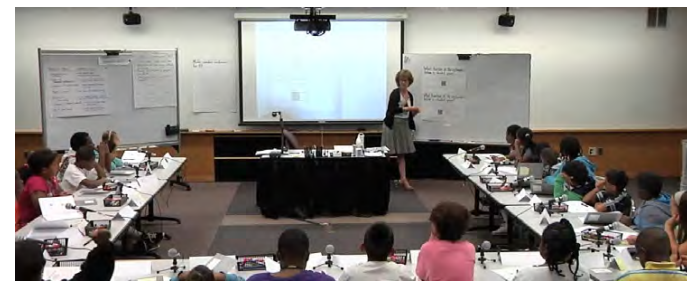
Antar



Gabi



Kassie

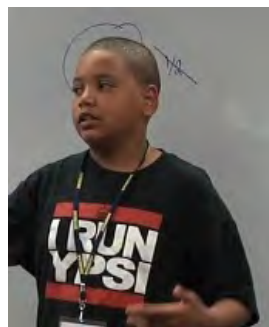
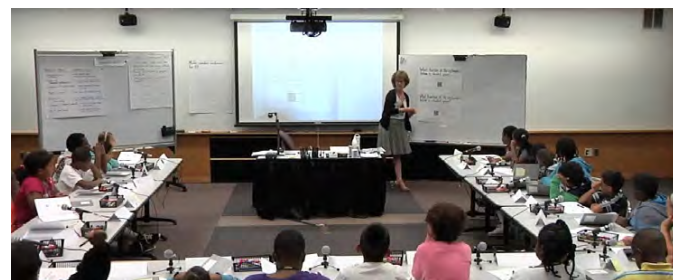


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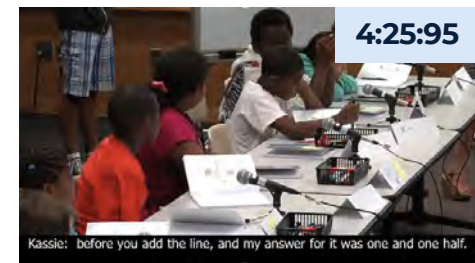
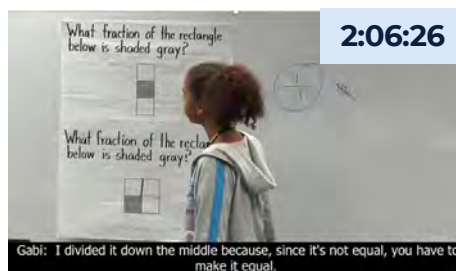
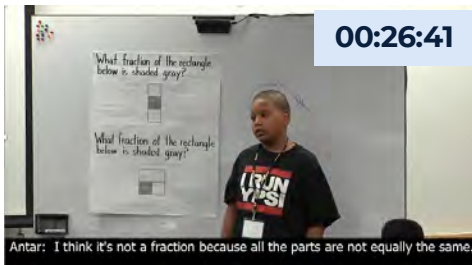
- How are these three different Black children—Antar, Gabi, and Kassie—positioned in front of their classmates—as contributing to the mathematics, as lacking understanding? Are their brilliance and humanity seen?
- What is signaled about being a ‘doer of mathematics’—both what and who?
- What mathematical understanding is developing in the class?
- How are Antar, Gabi, and Kassie experiencing their teacher, their peers, this lesson?
- What are the other children in the class learning about Black children, about who and what it means to be ‘smart’?

(Gholson, 2021; Wilkes, 2021; Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015)

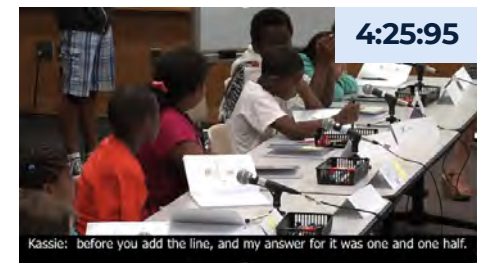
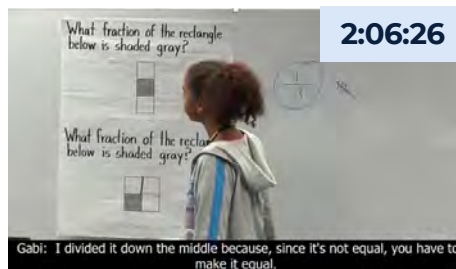
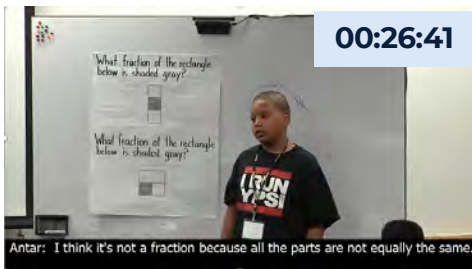
What are some of the discretionary spaces and risks?

**Antar****Gabi****Kassie**

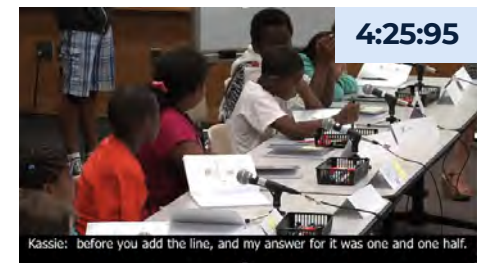
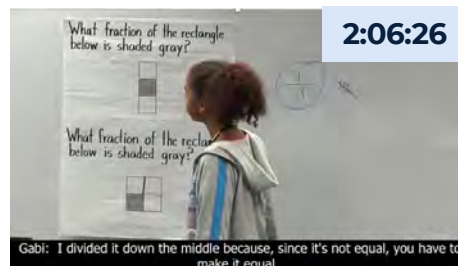
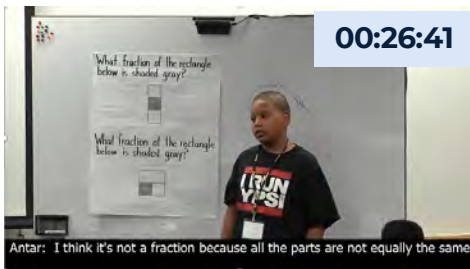
Practicing (in)justice: Understanding the work of teaching



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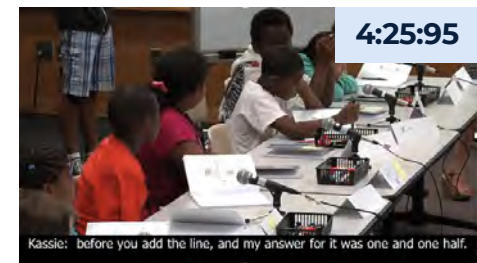
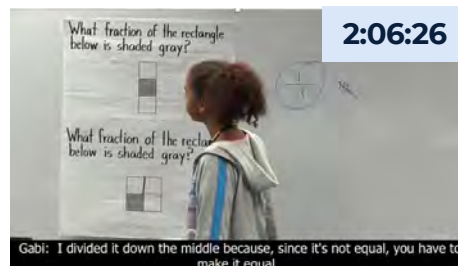
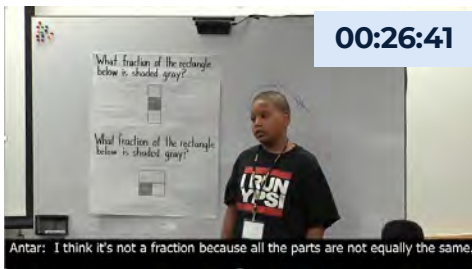
Practicing (in)justice: Understanding the work of teaching



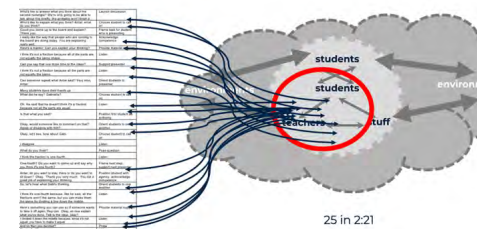
- Racial narratives about 'ability' and struggling learners (Nasir & Shah, 2011; Shah, 2017)
- Patterns related to Black girls (Gholson, 2016, 2021; Joseph, 2017; Sengupta-Irving, 2020; Sengupta-Irving & Vossoughi, 2019)
- Area models with fractions
- Patterns related to being a 'doer of mathematics' 'while Black' (Martin)
- Views of mathematics as centered on narrow ideas about 'correctness' and 'errors'



Practicing (in)justice: Understanding the work of teaching

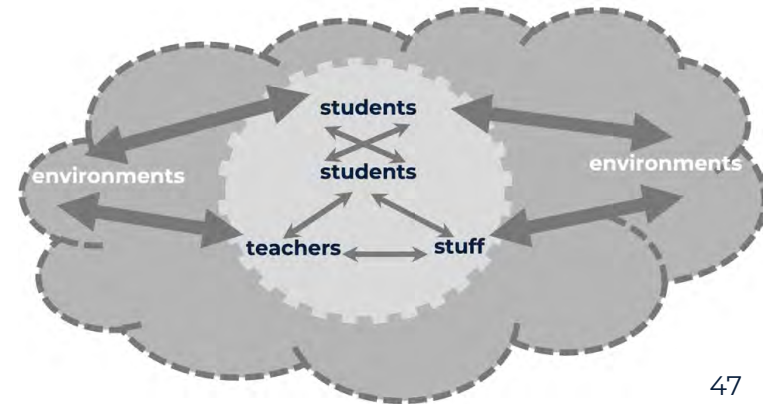
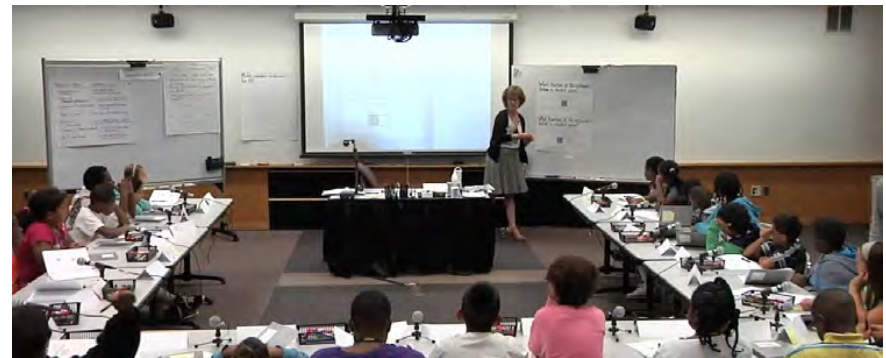


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- Area models with fractions
- Patterns related to being a 'doer of mathematics' 'while Black' (Martin)
- Views of mathematics as centered on narrow ideas about 'correctness' and 'errors'



Challenges in studying the work of teaching (in)justice

- 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

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.



10 key asks

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1. See and value the power of teaching.
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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 (in)justice 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.



THANK YOU!

dball@umich.edu

Slides will be available on my website

<https://deborahloewenbergball.com/>

(Google Deborah Ball)



Credits



Image on slide 2:
Location map of the State of Michigan in the United States.
Retrieved from https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/USA/michigan_map.htm



Image on slide 2:
Map of treaty lands in what is today called Michigan.
Retrieved from <https://theways.org/map>



Image on slide 2:
Photo from “The Post-Post-Apocalyptic Detroit” by Ben Austen, *The New York Times*.
Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/13/magazine/the-post-post-apocalyptic-detroit.html>

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Image on slide 2:
Photo from “The 10 Best Places to Retire in Michigan,” New Home Source.
Retrieved from <https://www.newhomesource.com/learn/top-places-retire-michigan/>



Image on slide 2:
Photo from “Lake Michigan Beaches,” Experience Grand Rapids.
Retrieved from <https://www.experiencegr.com/things-to-do/beaches/>



Image on slide 6:
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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Image on slide 6:
Political Map of India.
Retrieved from <https://surveyofindia.gov.in/pages/political-map-of-india>



Image on slide 6:
South Africa Provinces Map.
Retrieved from <https://hansjohnnie.blogspot.com/2020/08/south-africa-provinces-map.html?m=0>



Image on slide 6:
Map of Canada
Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Political_map_of_Canada.svg

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Image on slide 6:
Map of Turkey.
Retrieved from <https://www.bespoketurkey.com/top-sights-in-turkey/>



Image on slide 6:
Map of France.
Retrieved from <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/France/345690>



Image on slide 6:
Map of Brazil.
Retrieved from <https://www.go-today.com/brazil-vacations.aspx>



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Image on slide 20:
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/>



Image on slide 20:
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>

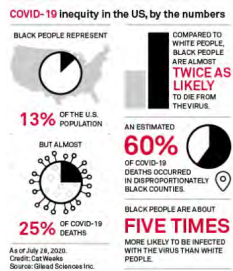


Image on slide 20:
Graphic from “Enough is enough: Gilead-Morehouse study racial, ethnic disparity in COVID-19,” by Michael Gibney, S&P Global Market Intelligence.
Retrieved from <https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/enough-is-enough-gilead-morehouse-study-racial-ethnic-disparity-in-covid-19-60035253>

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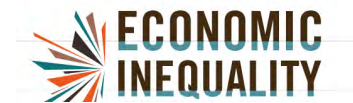


Image on slide 20:
Graphic from “Six policies to reduce economic inequality” by John A. Powell, Othering & Belonging Institute.
Retrieved from <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/six-policies-reduce-economic-inequality>



Image on 20:
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 20:
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>

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Image on slide 20:

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/>



Image on slides 21–23:

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 21–23:

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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Image on slides 21–23:
“Police.” by Flickr user G20 Voice
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Image on slides 21–23:
Photo from “Want to be a poll worker? Philly says it’s responding to ‘unprecedented’ number of applicants” by Ximena Conde, *WHYY*
Retrieved from <https://whyy.org/articles/want-to-be-a-poll-worker-philly-says-its-responding-to-unprecedented-number-of-applicants/>



Image on slides 21–23:
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/>

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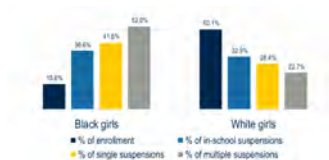
Image on slides 22 and 23:

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>



Image on slide 23:

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/>



Data on slides 31–33:

Epstein, R., Blake, J., & González, T. (2017). *Girlhood interrupted: The erasure of Black girls' childhood*. Washington, DC: Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality.

Retrieved from <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/poverty-inequality-center/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2017/08/girlhood-interrupted.pdf>

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Image on slides 32 and 33:
Still image taken from “Teacher Caught Berating First Grader (VIDEO),” The Young Turks.
Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIJqbSkb5Jk>



Image on slide 33:
Photo from “7 Ways to Build Strong Relationships with Students” by Margy Jones-Carey, Getting Smart.
Retrieved from <https://www.gettingsmart.com/2017/02/7-ways-to-build-strong-relationships-with-students/>



Image on slide 48:
Map of the World.
Retrieved from <https://geology.com/world/world-map.shtml>

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Image on slide 48:

“A Large Group Of Diverse People Standing Together.”

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



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