



# TEN NEWSLETTER

Bimonthly Newsletter of the  
Transformative Education Network  
at Montclair State University

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## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SELF-LOVE

If you have been in a school this September, odds are you have seen evidence of “Social Emotional Learning” (SEL) throughout the building. Ever since 2020, schools have been carving out more time for SEL, usually starting the school year by focusing on getting to know activities, and then continuing throughout the year with “the week of respect” and kindness days sprinkled in. But how is SEL really being used with our Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) learners? And what can we do to prevent SEL from being what educator Dena Simmons calls “white supremacy with a hug?” By this she is referring to “the implicit belief that SEL skills are exactly what BIPOC students need to function in underresourced classrooms and to smile through the pain of racism.” This approach targets BIPOC children's emotions as a problem that needs fixing instead of addressing the often hostile racial climates of schools. These pitfalls occur if we don't apply an antiracist and humanizing lens to SEL. It can turn into a well intentioned policy mandate that serves only to “reproduce and reinforce the colonial violence and intersectional oppression [it] seeks to dismantle.” (Camangian, Cariaga)

At TEN, one of the frameworks we use to support transformative teaching is the 6 elements of social justice by Dr. Bree Picower (more on page 4). Element one, self-love/ knowledge, lays the foundation for social justice teaching. “By gaining this knowledge of self, students can move to other elements because they will be able to locate root causes of inequality in social conditions, rather than believe these conditions are inherent within individuals.” It follows that SEL lessons on self-love or respect can prepare students for deeper involvement in social justice curriculum. For this to happen, SEL must be taught in congruence with accurate, cultural and historical knowledge that presents children's identities through an asset lens. If not, “educators can fulfill the aims of [SEL and]... fall short of transforming the dehumanizing structures that impose self-hate.” (Camangian, Cariaga) SEL must move from teaching students to manage their emotions as a means to reach a singular definition of success, to truly liberating practices that embrace their fullness, and the full spectrum of human emotion. As Camangian and Cariaga encourage us to ask ourselves, “are we teaching students to reclaim their emotions and relationships as fuel for political inquiry, radical healing and social transformation?”

As a teacher, balancing liberating practice with the demands of public school is challenging at best. Teachers, ask what purpose you want SEL to serve in your classrooms. Imagine a classroom where genuine relationships are valued as opposed to seen as a box to check off, and then create structures that will foster the environment you imagine. Start by modeling the self-love you want your students to feel, and then making space for children to truly know themselves deeply. Cultivate self-love built on honest understanding of culture and the collective possibility of transformation.

# SPOTLIGHT ON...

*Amanda Faison*



## UPCOMING EVENTS



October 28  
• 9 am -3 pm EST  
Mentor Professional Development

November 29 via Zoom  
• 5:30 pm - 7 pm EST  
CUE: Dr. Harper Keenan, Boxed In: Trans Life and the Struggle for Self Determination at School

December 9  
• 9 am -3 pm EST  
Mentor Professional Development

### **Amanda Faison UTR alumni, Lead Administrative Coordinator, and Field Team Member for Transformative Education Network (TEN)**

• **How and why did you get involved with TEN?**

In graduate school, I got involved with the Urban Teacher Residency (UTR). I was in the Newark Montclair Urban Teacher Residency in the first iteration of the grant. I taught for many years and returned to Montclair last June to work for the UTR. While I was working here, we came up with and created the umbrella term, Transformative Education Network (TEN). I am very happy to say I've been involved with this work, for almost as long as it's been around.

• **What is your "why" for antiracist/social justice education?**

I do not see any other form of education as complete. I believe that you can not educate young people in a vacuum, and the society that we live in is inherently racist. White supremacy, heteronormativity, and ableism are the dominant guiding forces of our society. If we do not teach folks to work against these forces, we're just teaching them to participate in that system. I believe that the students I have worked with, the Black students, the immigrant students, and the students with disabilities deserve to see themselves fully in the world. To be represented and to have agency to know themselves deeply.

• **How do you incorporate SEL in your classroom?**

I incorporated SEL in everything I did in my classroom, it was not a separate space. Working with students with autism, as I did throughout my teaching career, you can not separate SEL time from learning time. The number one thing that many young learners with autism need to learn is how to be self-regulated, co-regulate, and exchange ideas back and forth with another person, so social emotional learning was just learning in my classroom. You can not do it on the side. Social Emotional Learning is the "what," and the students are the "how." So the students are going to inform how social emotional learning is rolled out in your classroom, based on the individual people that are in front of you and their needs.

• **What advice would you give to a teacher in the field experiencing hardship on the topic of self-love?**

My advice would be to listen to your students and listen to yourself. If you want your students to self-regulate, learn how to do that with them. Allow their needs to be your guide. I understand that is complicated in the context of pacing, curriculum mandates, and district evaluations. Figuring out balance is challenging. I always say this to my kid and my husband: "sometimes, when you're in a hurry, the best thing you can do is slow down." If you feel this urgency in the classroom, take a step back, get your kids in the circle, talk, and build that community. You will be able to push them more to reach the goals you have for them, because you'll have their trust, and you'll have trust in yourself and in the relationships between you and your students.

• **What is one change that you would like to see in public education?**

I want to see teachers making more money. This translates in our society as people being valued. I want to see teachers being valued for their work, the love they are giving our students, and the relationships they are building. If a teacher is stressed out and worried and does not feel appreciated, then it's hard to pass along these strategies of Social Emotional Learning that we want our communities and schools to have.

• **What's the book that changed your life?**

Emergent Strategy by Adrienne Maree Brown



Don't Miss This!

# CRITICAL URBAN EDUCATION SPEAKER SERIES PRESENTS:

## DR. HARPER KEENAN AND PER SIA

New Date!

[Click Here to Register](#)

Transformative Education Network's  
**CRITICAL URBAN EDUCATION  
SPEAKER SERIES PRESENTS:**



**NEW DATE!**  
11/29/2022  
5:30-7PM EST  
Via Zoom



**Dr. Harper Keenan**  
Boxed In: Trans Life and the Struggle for Self Determination at School

Opening Performance by: Per Sia, Educator & Drag Performer  
with Drag Queen Story Hour

CRITICAL URBAN EDUCATION SPEAKER SERIES  
Mansfield State University

RSVP <https://bit.ly/CUEKeenan>

Free and open to the public  
ASL interpretation  
and live transcription provided



What are the conditions currently facing trans and gender non-conforming children and teachers in PK-12 public schools, and what might those conditions reveal about the role of school in society? This talk will offer insights into how schools can serve to teach the public about the social meaning of gender, including how gender interacts with race.

(Read this policy brief co-authored by Dr. Keenan [here](#).)

The evening will be kicked off with a read aloud and Drag performance by Drag Story Hour founder, Per Sia! A fun, fabulous, and informative evening for sure! See you there.



# SELF-LOVE AND SELF-CARE RESOURCES: TEACHER EDITION



"Personal power really begins with care of the self." - bell hooks

- An Introduction to Critical Wellness: The Link between Political Activism and Self-care by Mariela Georg
- Trauma-responsive Education: Supporting Students and Yourself  
Co-Hosted by Kinette Richards & Barbie Garayúa Tudryn



- Supporting Social and Emotional Safety in the Classroom: Learning for Justice

- Y(our) Pain Matters: Toward Healing and Abolition by Farima Pour-Khorshid
- The Four Pivots: Reimagining Justice, Reimagining Ourselves by Shawn A. Ginwright, PhD
- Healthy Relationships: SELspace
- The Value of Educator Self-care: Learning for Justice



- Thirty-minute restorative yoga flow with The Black Women's Yoga Collective led by founder, Mel Douglas.
- Classroom Yoga Tips- Elementary School
- Yoga in the classroom
- Classroom Yoga: SELspace



# DID YOU KNOW?

Dr. Picower's [Six Elements of Social Justice Curriculum Design for the Elementary Classroom](#) can help direct social justice learning. This newsletter edition focuses on element one. Volume 2 of the newsletter will focus on a different element each edition, stay tuned!



## Element One: Self-love & Knowledge

- Teachers provide students opportunities to learn about who they are and where they come from.
- Students study different aspects of their identities and the histories associated with it.



## Element Two: Respect for Others

- Teachers provide students opportunities to share knowledge about their own cultural background with their classmates.
- A climate of respect for diversity through students' learning to listen with kindness and empathy to the experiences of their peers is created.



## Element Three: Issues for Social Injustice

- Teachers move from “celebrating diversity” to an exploration of how diversity can be experienced oppression that has differently impacted various groups of people.
- Students learn about the history of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and religious intolerance and how these forms of oppression have affected different communities.



## Element Four: Social Movements & Social Change

- Teachers share examples of movements of iconic and everyday people standing together to address the issues of social injustice they learned about in Element Three.
- Teachers help students understand that by working together, ordinary people have united to create change.



## Element Five & Element Six: Awareness Raising/ Social Action

- Teachers provide opportunities for students to teach others about the issues they have learned about.
- Students identify issues they feel passionate about and learn the skills of creating change firsthand.

Check out [Usingtheirwords.org](https://www.usingtheirwords.org) which includes children's literature and classroom projects organized around the six elements.