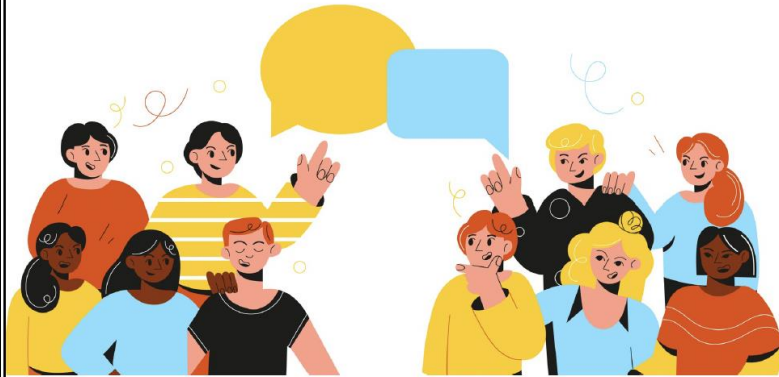


Developing Critical Consciousness among Black and Latino Boys: A School-Based Approach

Dr. Michael A. Medina
Boston University
June 2026



Critical Practice Makes Perfect: Classroom Observations of Debate-Inspired Education



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BOSTON
DEBATE
LEAGUE



Evaluation PDF



Program Summary

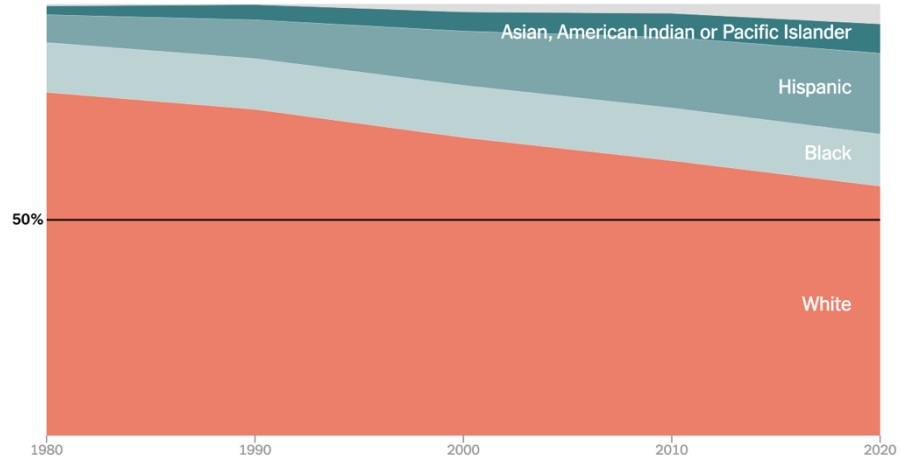


Abdul, Pakistani, 7th Grade Student

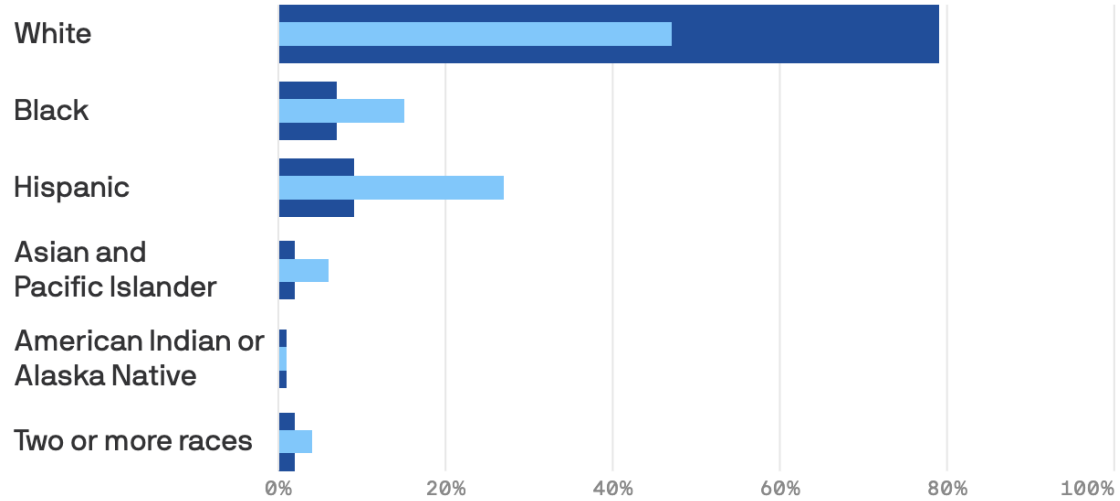
Interviewer: When we first started talking, you identified as Pakistani. Is this important to you, or not such a big deal?

Abdul: “Well, it sort of saves me a spot. It’s, imagine like a pie chart and it’s like cut into different pieces. The biggest part would be White people because that’s the largest population in the United States now. And then, there’d be a bunch of tiny little slivers, and I’d be one of those extremely tiny slivers because I’m probably one of the only Pashtun Pakistani in school. It just diversifies everything, and just adds more color, and just kinda proves that the world isn’t black and white - it’s so many different things...it’s a million pieces with a million pieces.”

How the population makeup changed in the U.S.



Notes: Other races are shown in gray. The Census Bureau added a multiracial option in 2000. Data for each group labeled on the chart since then reflect only a single race or ethnicity.



A Color-Blind Educational Ideology

Color-blindness is a prevailing educational approach (Bonilla Silva, 2022)

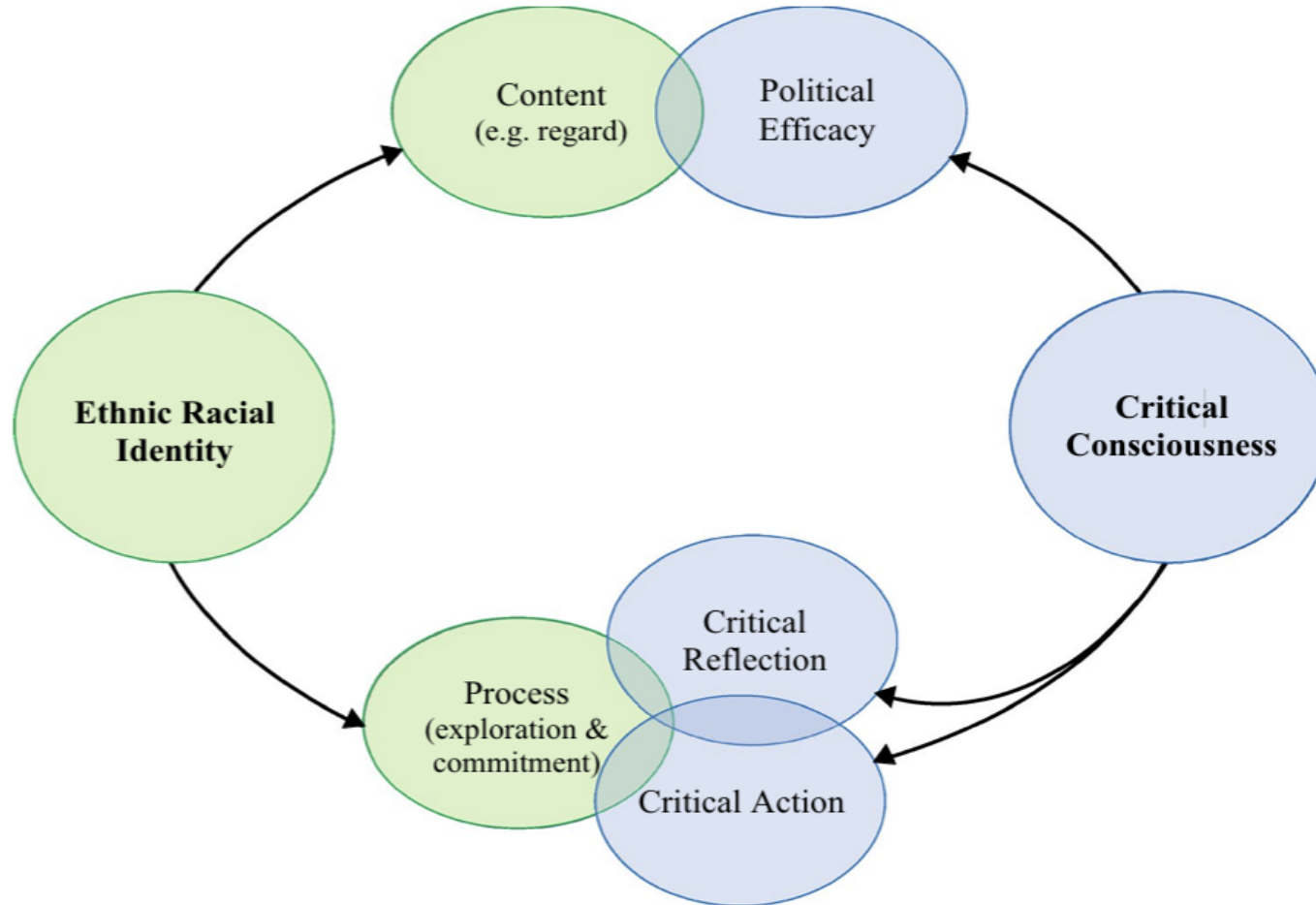
- Not represented among curricula, funding, teaching demographics, or student perspectives

“But deeming race irrelevant in law does not make it so in life.”

- Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, 6/29/23



The Cost to Racial Identity and Critical Consciousness



Awareness, beliefs, and understanding of the salience of race in society (Bañales et al., 2021)

Linked to feelings of agency, togetherness, pride, and self-efficacy



The Resolved Program

A learning initiative...

- for Black and Latino students
- taught by Black and Latino educators
- on co-constructed, culturally-relevant topics



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Their Guiding Questions

1. What constructive, critical, and collective experiences were students sharing?
2. What transformative skills were being developed and could they transfer?
3. What teacher practices facilitated these outcomes?



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Our Methodology

From 2023 to 2024, across 4 public schools, we evaluated...

- 12 classes
- 24 Resolved sessions
- 3 coaching sessions



Student...

Perspective-taking

Identity development

Visibility

Teacher...

Supportive practices

Climate building

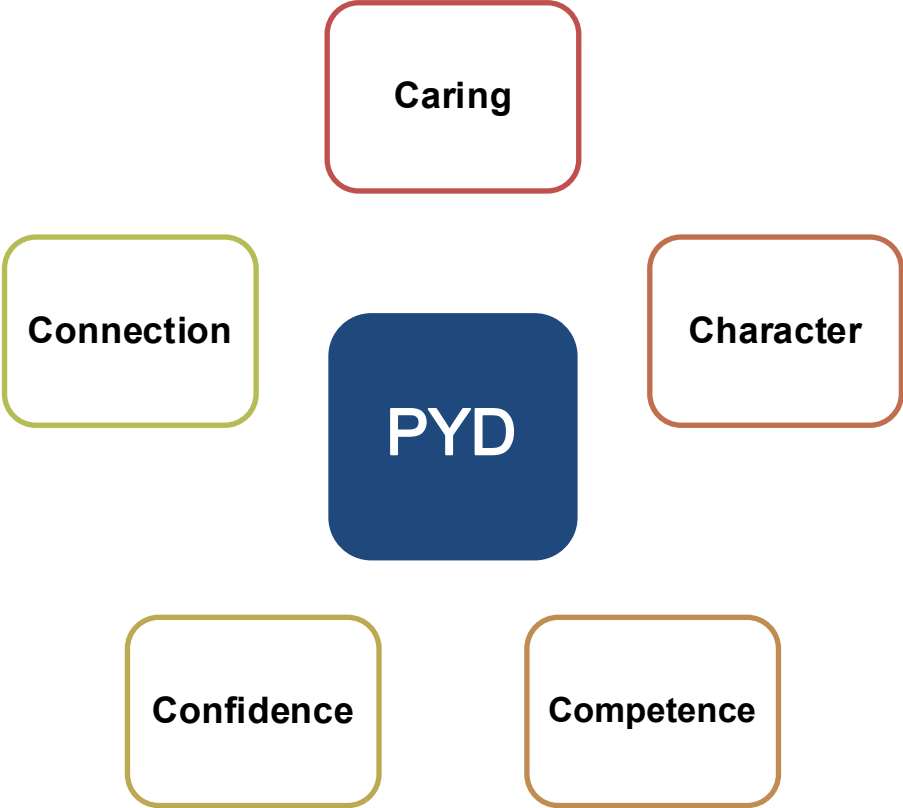
Classroom activities

Student...

Perspective-taking

Identity development

Visibility



Teacher...

Supportive practices

Climate building

Classroom activities

Engage in DI

Students actively engaged in rich instructional experiences provided by teachers (i.e., engaged in DI activities)

Environment Setting:

Teachers facilitate a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment for learning

Teachers implement DI activities, emphasizing:

- (1) Student discourse
- (2) Empowering students in the learning process
- (3) Providing content-specific knowledge,
- (4) Meeting students various learning styles and needs

Short-term Goal

Students:

- (1) Become engaged and empowered learners actively involved in DI classrooms
- (2) Develop strong peer-to-peer and teacher-to-student relationships
- (3) Become more intellectually assertive

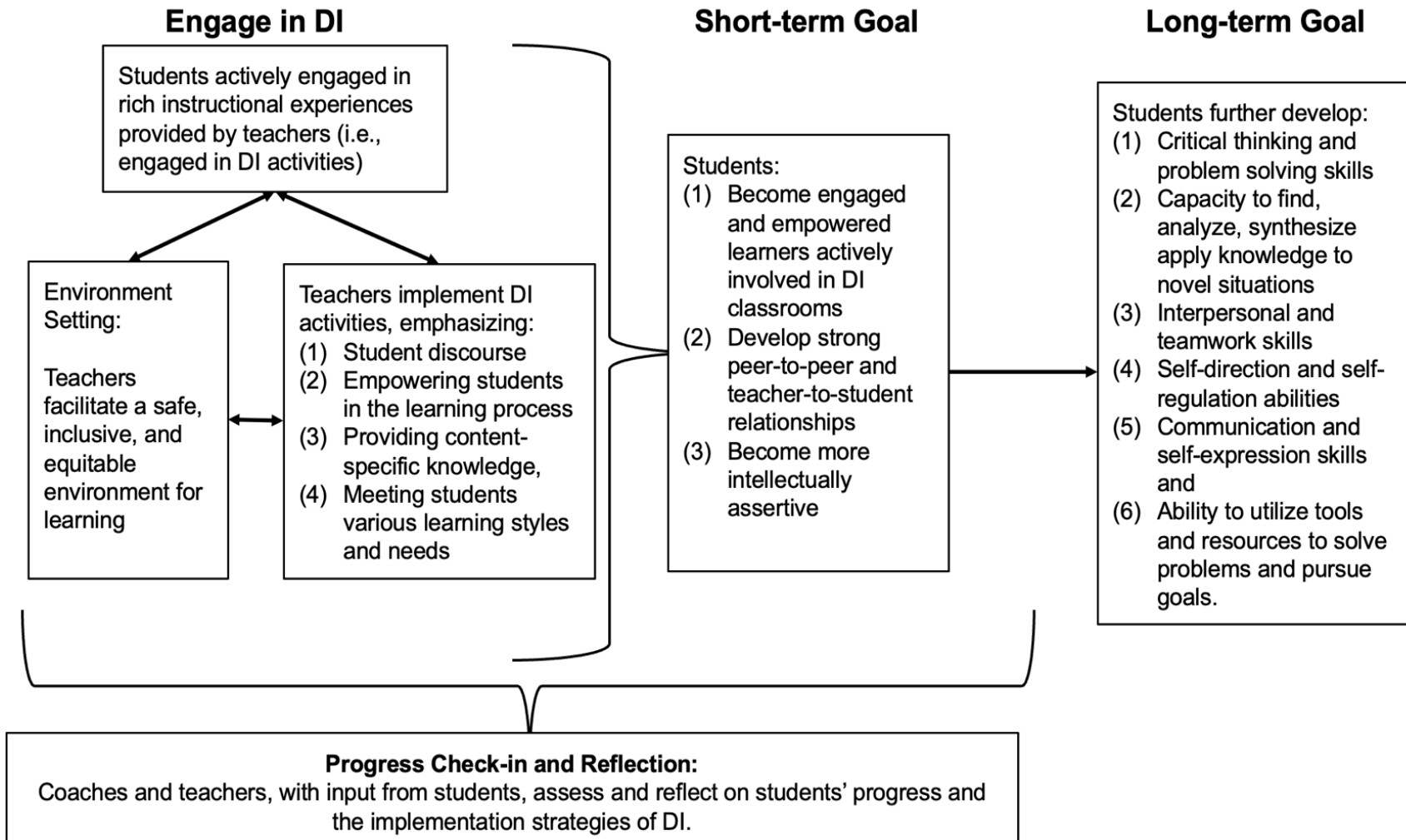
Long-term Goal

Students further develop:

- (1) Critical thinking and problem solving skills
- (2) Capacity to find, analyze, synthesize apply knowledge to novel situations
- (3) Interpersonal and teamwork skills
- (4) Self-direction and self-regulation abilities
- (5) Communication and self-expression skills and
- (6) Ability to utilize tools and resources to solve problems and pursue goals.

Progress Check-in and Reflection:

Coaches and teachers, with input from students, assess and reflect on students' progress and the implementation strategies of DI.



Resolved Program:

Improving Student Engagement

- Refine curricula
- Observe student behaviors
- Pivot to skill development

Routines &
repetition

Student
joy

Student-driven-
learning

Attendance &
arrival times

Recapping &
signal posting

Student
voice

Debate,
discussion, clash

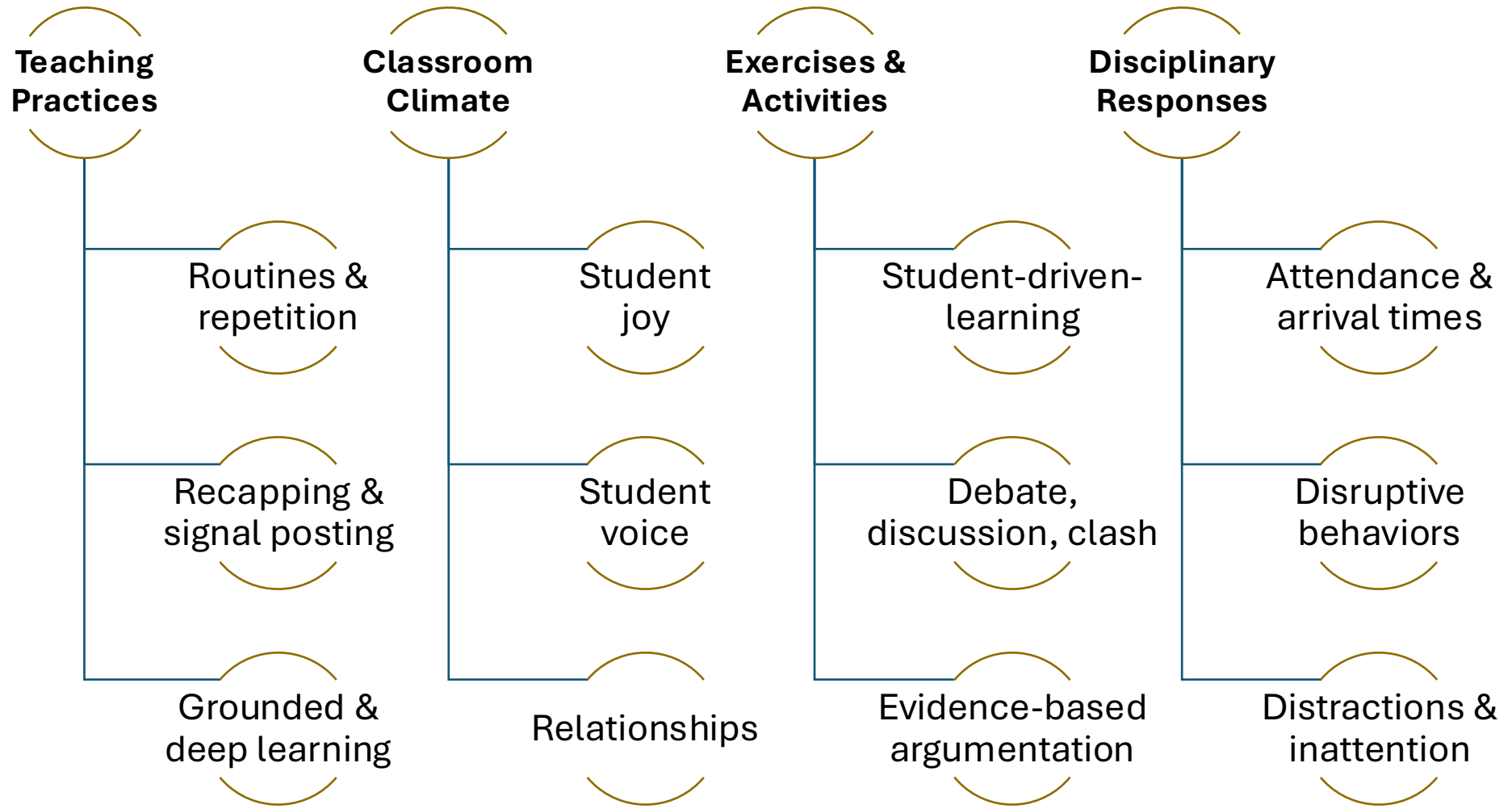
Disruptive
behaviors

Grounded &
deep learning

Relationships

Evidence-based
argumentation

Distractions &
inattention



Consistency

Teaching Practices

Routines & repetition

Recapping & signal posting

Grounded & deep learning

Classroom Climate

Student joy

Student voice

Relationships

Exercises & Activities

Student-driven-learning

Debate, discussion, clash

Evidence-based argumentation

Disciplinary Responses

Attendance & arrival times

Disruptive behaviors

Distractions & inattention

Evaluation PDF



Consistent and transparent practices fast-tracked student identity exploration.

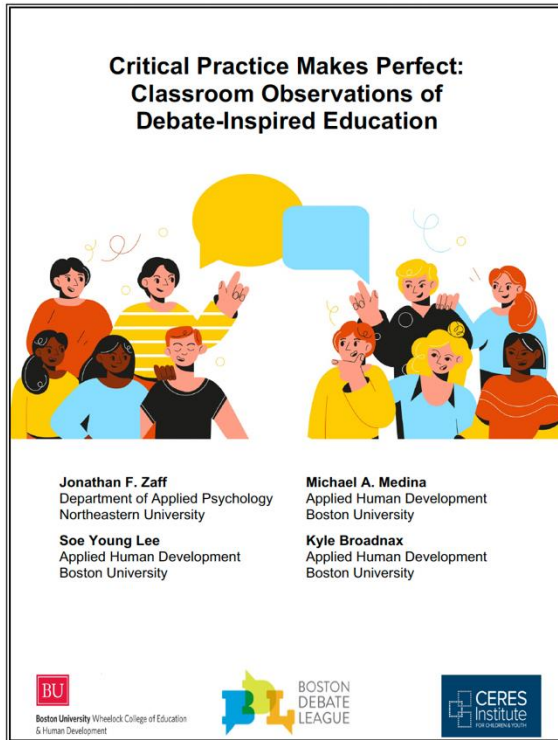
Students were more communicative, collaborative, and exploratory in these spaces.

These practices were more effective when shared and repeated across classrooms.

Students were explicitly aware of these practices and worked to maintain them.

Benefits persisted across grade level, subject areas, and teacher experience.

Program Summary





Trump to Sign Order Aimed at Dismantling Education Department

Bender, Kanno-Youngs, Montague, March 19, 2025



***Trump's Battles With Colleges Could
Change American Culture for a
Generation***



Pete Gamien

Vladeck, March 20, 2025



Discourse

Students learn better when they talk more, and with each other. The Debate-Inspired Classrooms™ approach trains teachers to cultivate authentic student discussion, driven by curiosity and problem-solving.



Vibrancy

Debate-Inspired Classrooms™ fosters a unique environment of energy and joy. Our program nurtures a love of learning, transforming classrooms into vibrant, buzzing communities in which students – and teachers – collaborate to shape learning.



Engagement

When students' voices, ideas, and intellect are the center of instruction, they are more engaged in the classroom. Students are the authors and architects of their own learning in Debate-Inspired Classrooms™.



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An Anti-Racist Approach



In response to the landscape in education and the global context in which young people learn, we are committed to supporting young people in building the power and agency to challenge injustice.

We believe that a debate-inspired classroom is an anti-racist classroom. In anti-racist classrooms, students and teachers see themselves and their lived experiences as valued; experience classrooms in which they are free to be their full selves; act as both leaders and learners in the classroom community; and develop skills and agency to disrupt racism.

Supporting Critical Racial Consciousness

Students are cognizant – both of our tensions and our efforts

Critical conscious development is content, and context, agnostic

Creating spaces for dialogues and clashes is collaborative

Thank you!

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