

THE ROOTS: A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE & ANTIRACIST ARTS FRAMEWORK

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS, SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 25, 2021

The "roots" of this framework were planted in order to establish a learning community that nurtures whole, complex, creative young people. By tending to these roots, educators can ground themselves and their students in ways that promote growth, community and agency.

The Antiracist Arts Education Task Force recommends using this framework in the following ways:

- This document serves as a reflective tool for educators. Students come in as their most perfect selves. In order to provide space for students to remain whole human beings, teachers must do the internal work to shift our mindsets in ways that are deliberate, thoughtful, and culturally-inclusive. In traditional educational models, we ask all students, especially BI&POC, to change themselves in order to survive. In a culturally responsive educational practice, teachers engage in healing work by examining their teaching practices.
- Examine one root at a time.
- Determine how you want to process these questions. (e.g. journaling)
- Begin by applying one root to one lesson, strategy, project, standard, or unit. Focus your lens on an aspect of your classroom space.
- Revisit this framework multiple times throughout the year and notice your emotional and physical responses. Document your growth and evolution.
- Consider using this framework to supplement your evaluative growth goals.

Theory of Action

We create curriculum and learning environments and teach in ways that are culturally responsive, relevant, and antiracist so that students experience learning that is...

- Relational...
- Empowering...
- Liberatory...
- Transparent...
- Healing...

Vision

To provide all students arts learning experiences through which their intellect and imaginations are sparked; their knowledge and experiences are affirmed and expanded; and their agency is put into practice.

Definition of Purpose

- To support arts educators to create curriculum and learning environments that are culturally responsive, relevant, and antiracist
- To support arts educators on *how* to deliver a curriculum that is culturally responsive, relevant, and antiracist.
- To help arts educators develop their thinking around issues pertaining to racism and culturally responsive and relevant teaching practices through activities designed to expand their understanding and self-awareness.

ROOT	DEFINITION
Relational	Develops healthy student-centered relationships within learning community; authentically connects to broader community -- all rooted in empathy and compassion
Liberatory	Challenges limits to freedom of thought and cultural/creative expression; affirms and broadens learning community's cultural references; highlights and affirms equal value of cultural difference (or affirms inherent value of various forms of creative expression)
Healing	Centers students' identities; nurtures well-being by transforming the root causes of harms within institutions; incorporates narrative stories that center and celebrate students' intersectional identities and varied experiences
Transparent	Empowers students to engage in collective reflection and assessment about anti-racism and arts learning experiences; actively encourages, affirms and accepts student voice as a part of the collaborative reflective process; and models accountability through ongoing professional learning and action in anti-racism
Empowering	Centers student agency and collectivism; affirms and supports student voice and connections to social action in their communities and classrooms; provides opportunities for students to create/express work that connects to themselves and/or their communities, so that students identify with a collectivist, interracial body

ROOT	DEFINITION	GUIDING QUESTIONS
Relational	Develops healthy student-centered relationships within learning community that is rooted in empathy and compassion;	<p>How are you creating a relationship with each student that affirms their inherent worth and whole selves?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Have your students created a pledge or self-affirmation*? If not, how will you go about doing this?</i> → <i>How are you welcoming your students into the learning space and honoring their full humanity -- their feelings, their experiences, relationships and perspectives throughout your time together?</i> → <i>When students are feeling a particular way, how are you showing empathy, compassion, and curiosity with no judgement?</i> → <i>How are you providing space for hope, affirmation, and joy?</i> <p>How are you strengthening authentic relationships with each student based on assets and strengths (not deficits) to give confidence and hope to them as learners?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>When students are feeling discouraged, experiencing a self-identified failure, what are tools you can use to inspire them to move through the discomfort?</i> → <i>How are you disrupting the idea that teachers need to fix and repair every conflict experienced by students both internally and collectively?</i> → <i>What structures for interactive dialogue do you have in place to support the development of positive relationships?</i> → <i>How are you modeling and facilitating transparent, open, honest, and respectful conversations with your peers and with your students?</i> <p>How are you structuring the learning environment to be conducive to the development of positive relationships?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>How are your posters, affirmations*, and other classroom artifacts allowing students to experience themselves as successful and healthy individuals in relationship with their learning community?</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>How are you inviting students into art making spaces?</i> → <i>How are you consistently modeling hospitality*?</i> → <i>How do you structure time and provide space for an ongoing dialogue that allows for deeper insights into students' creative needs?</i>
	<p>Authentically connects to broader community -- all rooted in empathy and compassion</p>	<p>How do you build relationships with students by providing opportunities for them to share their experiences, perspectives, communities and cultures on an ongoing basis?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>How do you have an ongoing dialogue throughout the lesson?</i> → <i>Are you providing a space where students can share their self-authored cultural identities and community memberships?</i> → <i>Are you being prescriptive about your definitions of culture? How are you remaining open to students' own examples of culture?</i> <p>How are you inviting the community/families into art-making spaces?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>In what ways are we modeling hospitality? (e.g. greetings; introducing guests; including guests in the learning process, etc.)</i> → <i>Are you actively creating partnerships with community artists/arts organizations?</i> → <i>How are you making sure that invited guests are being held to the same expectations as the students and educators?</i> → <i>In what ways are you honoring community cultural wealth*?</i> <p>Does this support the shared goals of the community in which you teach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Does the lesson/project allow for community (e.g., student/teacher, families, local, city, etc.) input as well as serving the shared goals of the community?</i> → <i>Does the lesson/project examine ways in which the knowledge generated can be put into social action in the community?</i>

Liberatory

Challenges limits to freedom of thought and cultural/creative expression

What does freedom look like in your classroom to you?

- In what ways are you evaluating if your students agree with your view of freedom in the classroom?
- How are you challenging the pedagogy(ies) that you are conditioned and mandated to use in order to make it more socially just?
- How are you challenging the curriculum(a) that you are conditioned and mandated to use in order to make it more socially just?
- How are you liberating the physical space in your classroom? (e.g., student movement, seating, etc.)

How are you allowing students to be who they are in all their complexity and contradictions?

- How are you honoring their intersectional and self-authored identities?
- What is the impact of having conversations about how students are perceived (e.g., racial, ethnic cultural identity; gender, etc.)?
- How are you modeling flexibility and openness to different ways of learning, doing, and being?

How does schooling in its current iteration limit and/or help students' identity development?

- How success is represented?
- Who are you representing as being successful?
- What types of successes are valued?
- What kinds of behaviors are valued?
- What knowledge is valued?

How do you examine your content/classroom/building structures and policies in a way that decenters whiteness and results in liberation for both teachers and students?

- How do you define, identify, and disrupt false hierarchies and other social constructs?
- How are you collaborating *with* your students to explore topics that your students express interest in? How does this challenge power dynamics?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Where do your expectations come from? Which philosophies or worldviews are they grounded in? → What are the ways in which you are leveraging institutional power when reacting to students? <p>Define the culture of your learning space. (i.e. visible behaviors, norms and values, beliefs) How are your definitions of excellence culturally bound? How are you challenging those limits in order to open up opportunities for students to feel empowered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How are you placing limits upon students' artistic ability? → How are you allowing western/euro-centric norms around performance to hold students to false definitions of artistic excellence? → Who is establishing the limits/or what the goals are? → How have your students been forced to assimilate? <p>How is perfectionism a trait of white supremacy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How do you challenge the norm of perfectionism? → How do you challenge students to risk uncertain outcomes? → How are you focusing on artmaking as a process and not the "product"?^[SEP] → How are you honoring the process of learning in your classroom?^[SEP] → How are you encouraging risk-taking?
	<p>Affirms and also broadens learning community's cultural references</p>	<p>How are cultural representations in your classroom representing groups as dynamic, in flux, and changing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Does your curriculum reinforce cultural assumptions and stereotypes?</i> → <i>How are you moving your classroom away from individualist culture and towards collectivism?</i> → <i>How are you giving youth the space to determine and contribute to classroom culture?</i> → <i>How are you projecting your perceptions of culture onto your students that perpetuate the idea that BI&POC* are monolithic and static?</i> → <i>How are you reinforcing BI&POC* narratives that have a "white gaze"?</i>

		<p>How are you reinforcing assimilationist and segregationist thinking in your learning space? What steps are you currently taking to move away from culturally subtractive practices*?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Can your students see themselves as successful contributors to the discipline?</i> → <i>Do you include BI&POC* protagonists in your curriculum?</i> → <i>Does your curriculum honor the successes and agency of diverse groups?</i> → <i>Does your curriculum continue to adhere to ideals of the oppressor? Does your curriculum uphold the art of the oppressor?</i> → <i>Do you highlight and affirm equal value of cultural difference (or affirm inherent value of various forms of creative expression)?</i>
	<p>Highlights and affirms equal value of cultural difference (or affirms inherent value of various forms of creative expression)</p>	<p>How are you including community members in ways that affirms their inherent worth and whole selves? How are you allowing them to be who they are in all their complexity and contradictions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Are you including individuals from various intersecting identities*?</i> → <i>In what ways are we celebrating art as independent of the artists' identity while still honoring the context in which it emerged?</i> → <i>How are we not being prescriptive in understanding how the artists' identity informs their work?</i> <p>How are you being intentional with who you bring into your classroom and the perspectives they share?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>How are you challenging the notion of who is considered an arts expert and the various purposes that the arts and crafts serve in a global context?</i> → <i>How are you speaking to the value of everyday art-making? (e.g. singing with family)</i> → <i>How are you preventing tokenism in your choice of culture-bearers?</i> <p>How are you bridging the campus/community gap through considerations of where performances and presentations can be held?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>How are you deconstructing the idea of art as something that is displayed in a museum or performed on a stage?</i>

Healing	Centers student identities:	<p>What are you doing to establish a safe and healthy environment of trust where students can share harms they have experienced?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What have you done to establish a safe and healthy environment where students feel comfortable bringing forward harm that you have done? → What support are you using for students to develop and utilize their self-advocacy? (e.g. provide outside support such as mentor, community leader, student, counselor, admin, etc., to talk with the student and if requested, an advocate on the student’s behalf) → How do you know if you are providing a safe and healthy environment? (e.g. students are speaking up, sharing their knowledge and you are intentionally creating a space for feedback and check-ins, which may include -journal entries, exit tickets, student observations and evaluations) → How do you define vulnerability? Are you willing to be as vulnerable as you expect or request your students to be?
	Nurtures well-being by transforming the root causes of harms within institutions	<p>How are you supporting transformational change within the institution of your classroom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How can you be transparent about how systems of power oppress* people and hold space for students to share their experiences navigating these systems? What support do you need? → What ways are you acting as a co-learner with your students, showing humility and transparency through the process? → How can you create space for feedback from students in a way that helps students feel trusted and believed about their experiences? → How are you inviting students to participate in the process of creating a classroom culture that is supportive, healing, and collaborative? → How do you position yourself as a guide in this process rather than the sole disseminator of knowledge? <p>What mechanisms do you have in place to reflect on, acknowledge, and repair any harms that you have caused?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What mechanisms do you have in place for students to be able to come and talk to you about the harm they have experienced?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How do you typically react when students express concern, frustration, or anger? What could the impact be if you focus on your reactions instead of placing blame on the student for their outburst? → How do you address past instances of cultural appropriation*? → How are you acknowledging and attempting to repair this harm in a safe and respectful way? → How are you centering healing practices in your instruction and curriculum?
	<p>Incorporates narrative stories that center and celebrate students' intersectional identities and varied experiences.</p>	<p>How do you honor the intersectional identities* students embody and the grace, resiliency, and beauty that students demonstrate as they navigate these oppressive* structures?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How can you ensure that the classroom space is one of healing, transformation and transformational change? → How can healing be integrated and essential to the art created and available to students to address their individual needs? (e.g. doodling in the margins or in a different book) → How are you making space for students to grapple with the complexities of their identities? → How are you centering and celebrating various ways of being outside of the dominant culture*?

<p>Transparent</p>	<p>Empowers students to engage in collective reflection and assessment about anti-racism and arts learning experiences</p>	<p>In what ways are you empowering students to explore issues that are relevant to them and their respective communities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>In what ways are you getting out of the way and letting the students lead?</i> → <i>What opportunities are you creating for students to be independent of the teacher and interdependent* with other students? (What foundational knowledge are you teaching to allow students to get to this point?)</i> → <i>In what ways are you accessing student knowledge* and honoring the various ways they demonstrate their learning?</i> <p>In what ways are you engaging students in a transparent, open, honest, and respectful dialogue that seeks to challenge how art perpetuates harmful narratives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>How are you providing space where ALL students feel safe to share their perspectives?</i> → <i>How are you creating an environment where both educators and students are aware of the impact of their words and actions (e.g. refusing to use an individual's pronouns; use of racist language; etc.)?</i> → <i>How are you frontloading strategies and establishing group expectations for educators and students to participate in this transparent, open, honest and respectful dialogue?</i>
	<p>Actively encourages, affirms and accepts student voice as a part of the collaborative reflective process</p>	<p>In what ways are you providing opportunities for your students to guide the learning in the classroom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>How are you helping students to design relevant activities?</i> → <i>How are you helping students to develop strategies to assess and present their own expertise?</i> → <i>What language do you use to support the student's perceptions of themselves as creators of knowledge and authors of their own creative pursuits?</i>

	<p>Models accountability through ongoing professional learning and action in anti-racism</p>	<p>What are my real or perceived limitations, and what personal and professional development have I taken or plan to take to address them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ <i>How have you documented these limitations (e.g. do you maintain a journal or other method to capture your reflections)?</i>→ <i>In what ways have you engaged in self-directed learning outside of the professional development space?</i> <p>What specific actions have I implemented from my anti-racist learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ <i>In what ways have you worked to identify, disrupt, and change racist policy in your specific context?</i>→ <i>How have you identified the ways in which you are complicit in perpetuating racism in education?</i>→ <i>How are you addressing cultural appropriation in your classroom?</i>→ <i>In what ways are you supporting your colleagues who are BI&POC* and developing an awareness of the ways in which you interact with them? How are you accountable to them?</i>
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Empowering	Centers student agency and collectivism	<p>When are students learning from each other?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ <i>What opportunities do students have to acknowledge what they have learned from each other?</i>→ <i>What opportunities are you providing for students to model learning strategies and explore different pathways to a desired outcome?</i> <p>How are you developing a supportive community of learners?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ <i>How are you providing space for interdependence* amongst students (e.g. building consensus through engaging in a collaborative artistic process; having time to collectively reflect on creative choices)?</i>→ <i>How are you providing space to celebrate student's talents and gifts and how do those add value to community building in the classroom?</i>→ <i>How are you expanding opportunities for students to provide constructive feedback on each others' art?</i> <p>In what ways are you providing unfettered* access to opportunities for learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ <i>What types of multiple entry points of access to the curriculum do you provide your students? How will you identify or choose the multiple choices for student exploration?</i>→ <i>How are you supporting and accommodating the various kinds of learners that exist in your learning space?</i>→ <i>How are you working with students to critique the mainstream art world and how it upholds white supremacy?</i>→ <i>How are you providing ample ideational*/material resources (i.e. encouragement; acknowledgement of student insights, understandings, and awarenesses, physical learning materials)?</i>→ <i>How are you providing activities that engage multiple modes of learning?</i>→ <i>How are you incorporating opportunities for community members to share their knowledge and expertise with students?</i>
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		<p>How do you define art and how are you projecting your understanding onto your students?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>How has the mainstream art world excluded BI&POC?</i> → <i>How are you empowering students to create their own artistic paths and define success for themselves?</i> → <i>How have you reinforced or disrupted the “starving artist” or “Trust-fund artist” stereotypes?</i> → <i>How are you supporting and affirming artmaking that exists outside of the dominant culture?</i>
	<p>Affirms and supports student voice and connections to social action in their communities and classrooms; provides opportunities for students to create/express work that connects to themselves and/or their communities, so that students identify with a collectivist, interracial body</p>	<p>Where do students have voice and choice in your learning space?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>What authentic choices are you providing to your students?</i> → <i>How are you making space for students to make their own choices in the learning process?</i> → <i>How are you providing consistent opportunities for students to explore their interests?</i> → <i>How can you be more flexible in your approach to shift curriculum to meet students’ needs and interests?</i> → <i>How are you integrating student voice into the content planning?</i> → <i>How are you holding yourself accountable to asking more questions than you are answering?</i> → <i>How are you allowing students to think differently than you do?</i> <p>In what ways do you provide opportunities for students to be able to recognize the value and application of your arts discipline to social action outside of the school setting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>How are you providing opportunities for students to examine the social contexts from which works of arts emerged?</i> → <i>How are you providing opportunities for your students to use the arts to amplify their social concerns through performance in a variety of settings?</i> → <i>How are you providing opportunities for students to be exposed to other artist@s*?</i> → <i>How are you bridging the gaps between the artistic goals of the classroom and the shared goals of the community?</i>

		<p>In what ways are you presenting the experiences and identities of minoritized* populations as barriers or strengths?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ <i>In what ways are you sharing the successes and collective joy of minoritized groups?</i>→ <i>How are you sharing, encouraging, or inspiring students to share the successes of minoritized groups?</i>→ <i>How are you sharing non-mainstream leaders of diverse identities in minoritized groups?</i>→ <i>How are you sharing history as something that happened to minoritized groups versus something that they helped create?</i> <p>How are students able to recognize themselves as agents of change within your classroom? Within their community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ <i>How do you let students stand in their power and support it?</i>→ <i>How do you provide students opportunities to imagine beyond constraints? How are you cultivating the student imagination? How do you foster that explicit space?</i>
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Authors of “The Roots: A Culturally Responsive & Antiracist Arts Framework” are from The Antiracist Arts Education Task Force and include Jacob Chavez, Carina del Rosario, Donte Felder, Maribel Gonzales, Christopher Mena, Naho Shioya, Jessica Staire, Toyia Taylor.

This is a living document and will change over time. This draft is dated February 25, 2021.