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10/31/2025

### Tea Party Prep & Reflection

**A.)** I drew the position of District Superintendent in support of a ban on Critical race theory in schools. I am arguing against this ban because it teaches children to see race above all else. Teaching this will undermine our traditional American values. To me this is teaching hate and victimhood more than patriotism. Furthermore, harboring this curriculum may lead to increased division among students and staff, helping foster an environment where differences are emphasized rather than celebrated. Instead, I believe our focus should remain on promoting unity and mutual respect, encouraging students to appreciate the diverse backgrounds that make up our nation without instilling a sense of separation or resentment.

**B.)** If I had to encapsulate our recent tea party discussion in a single word, it would be “engaging.” The classroom was nearly evenly split: about half of my peers were strongly opposed to the ban on Critical Race Theory (CRT) in schools, while the other half supported it. I was assigned to take on the role of District Superintendent, arguing in favor of the ban, even though my personal views are more nuanced. This position challenged me to think critically about the rationale behind such a policy and engage with perspectives that I might otherwise overlook.

**Summary** - The activity was structured in two parts. First, all those assigned a supportive role for the ban convened in the hallway. This created space for us to brainstorm and solidify our arguments free from immediate opposition. I was particularly struck by an argument presented by a TSAW teacher. This “teacher” expressed concerns that CRT is sometimes used to introduce equity training into schools under the radar, without open discussion or transparency. This point resonated because it raised an important question for me: what exactly is equity training? Are they simply lessons designed to promote fairness, or do they encompass something broader and perhaps more controversial? The idea helped me realize that terms like “equity training” can mean different things to different people, and that ambiguity can fuel misunderstanding and fear among educators and parents.

After our group discussion in the hall, half of us returned to the classroom where the debate shifted. We were now sharing opposing opinions on CRT. The most compelling counterargument I heard was that CRT focuses on promoting equity rather than equality. Equality means treating everyone the same, while equity recognizes that individuals start from different places and sometimes need different resources or support to achieve fair outcomes. This distinction hit home for me because, coming from a low-income household, I have experienced firsthand how important it is to address unequal starting points. The argument for equity confirmed beliefs I already held, but it also underscored my earlier question: what does equity training look like in practice, and how is it taught to students?

**New Learning** - As the discussion progressed, I found myself reflecting on the scope of the proposed ban. One of my main questions was, why does the ban need to be so broad? The K-12 educational span includes children at vastly different developmental stages. While I do not believe that first graders are ready to grapple with the complex and often controversial ideas embedded in CRT, I am confident that juniors and seniors in high school possess the maturity needed to engage thoughtfully with these concepts. It seems limiting to deny older students the opportunity to learn about systemic inequality, historical injustices, and the ongoing challenges related to race in America, especially as they prepare to enter adulthood and participate in civic life.

**Questions** - In my view, curriculum decisions should not be one-size-fits-all. I believe that CRT should not be introduced in elementary school, specifically for students in kindergarten through sixth grade. These formative years should prioritize foundational skills and values, such as kindness, respect, and curiosity about others. However, for students in grades seven through twelve, I think that exposure to more complex social and historical topics like CRT can foster critical thinking and empathy. Ultimately, I believe the decision to include or exclude CRT from the curriculum should be made at the state level, allowing for flexibility and responsiveness to local communities' needs and values. This approach respects the diversity of thought and experience across our nation, while also ensuring that education remains relevant and inclusive for all students.

**Reflection** - Overall, participating in this tea party deepened my understanding of both sides of the debate and emphasized the importance of open dialogue. It challenged me to question my assumptions, recognize the complexity of CRT, and appreciate the value of considering multiple perspectives. The experience left me with more questions than answers, but also with a greater appreciation for the role that civil discourse plays in shaping our schools and society.