



**Opening Statement of Rep. Aaron Bean (R-FL), Chairman
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
Hearing: “Back to Basics: America’s Founding, Civics, and Self-Government in K-
12 Curricula”
December 4, 2024**

(As prepared for delivery)

Jim Rohn one of the pioneers of personal development, once said: “Time is our most valuable asset, yet we tend to waste it, kill it, and spend it rather than invest it,” and in no place is this truer than in our nation’s classrooms. Our teachers have limited time to teach and our kids have limited time to learn.

New research published earlier this year by NWEA Research shows that four years after the pandemic, eighth graders are a full year behind in math and reading. In fact, the average U.S. student would need more than four months of school to catch up to pre-pandemic achievement levels. Out of 38 major countries, the U.S. ranks 26th in math, 6th in reading, and 10th in science globally. We certainly don’t have time to waste.

So, while students have returned to in-person instruction, it’s clear that our kids are in trouble. Why? Rather than a curriculum that focuses on helping students bounce back from Covid setbacks, our children are taught woke and divisive Marxist inspired ideology.

Today, we’re here to discuss the dangers inherent in the curriculum being taught in many American elementary and secondary schools. Chief among these dangers is that schools are substituting the traditional narrative of this great but flawed nation with a political story built on racial resentment and collective guilt.

That force is called Critical Race Theory, or CRT—a neo-Marxist ideology that’s crept into classrooms across America—and it is reshaping how young people interpret their identity and changing how they see themselves, each other, and our country.

You may hear the other side of the aisle say today, “CRT? That can’t possibly exist in American K-12 classrooms.” Well, I want to assure you that it does, by taking its key elements and thrusting them on young, impressionable children.

CRT teaches that every interaction between people is a struggle between “oppressors” and “victims.” It tells children that race alone defines them. This ideology creates division where none needs to exist, breeding mistrust, resentment, and even hostility between young people who would otherwise share healthy friendships.

Examples of CRT in the classroom abound. Take, for example, California’s Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. This program is rolling out next year, and it will require students to evaluate how their race, gender, class, and sexual orientation involve oppression.

It doesn’t stop there—educators encouraged to “decolonize” their classrooms, even in subjects like math and reading. In New York City, a new Black Studies curriculum teaches students as young as pre-kindergarten to reject so-called “European beauty standards,” and by third grade, students compare the black national anthem to the Star-Spangled Banner.

Additionally, CRT’s framework is distorted and applied to sow division and foster animosity against the Jewish people. We have numerous examples that fails to give the full context of Jewish history or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

And this isn’t just about race or ethnicity. In Chicago, public schools have integrated gender ideology into their curriculum. Kindergarteners now learn about anatomy, and by fifth grade, students are introduced to concepts like puberty blockers.

Even more alarming, the U.S. Department of Education has been quietly backing these approaches. In 2023, it tied diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities to the long-standing American history and civics grant programs.

Parents see this as a clear signal: CRT is coming to their local schools.

Thankfully, there is an alternative. 1776 Unites, the Jack Miller Center, and the University of North Carolina's School of Civic Life and Leadership are all organizations and initiatives built to emphasize the importance of civic literacy, understanding America's founding principles, and promoting a free exchange of ideas.

Ten or 20 years ago, we would simply call this “history.” Now it is borderline rebellious to teach the importance of the American Founding and the virtue of self-governance.

The stakes could not be higher. Woke curriculum seeks to reshape the very foundation of Western civilization by rejecting the values of individual liberty and responsibility that underpin our society. It is educational malpractice to teach a generation of children to feel ashamed of who they are, or to see themselves as victims without hope for change.

We must fight for our kids and their education. The future of our nation, and the strength of our communities, depends on it.