

In August and last week our teachers took part in professional development days. The August training was led by an individual strongly affiliated with an organization called the National SEED project.

Seed has good intent to “to drive...societal change toward greater equity and diversity. “they seek to connect our lives to one another and to society at large by acknowledging systems of oppression, power, and privilege.” These intentions initially seem to create empathy.

Additionally founding principles of Seed include white privilege, and then added male privilege and even heterosexual couple privilege, etc. They want to educate the members of these varying groups to recognize their “unearned advantage, which can also be described as exemption from discrimination.”

If I understand this correctly, this training will build a culture of empathy by teaching our children and teachers that they or their peers are inherently flawed and oppressive if they are white, male or even have heterosexual parents?

To me this sounds like it can quickly turn into a subliminal shaming curriculum: White children are flawed because they are white. Our sons, husbands and brothers are flawed because they are men. Our children of heterosexual parents are flawed because they have a mother and a father in the home.

This discourages unity and divides children of all races, genders and homelife situation. It is divisive and confusing. This will plant destructive seeds of doubt, resentment and inadequacy that will tear at the identity and self esteem of all children.

This curriculum seems to want to first break down our students and teachers - to recognize their flawed natures because of their identity. Because, it is not until they recognize how oppressive they are can they actually even be compassionate, kind or respectful.

The message is confusing. It can quickly shift from collaboration and understanding, to simply tearing down one group in order to elevate another. We know from our gut instincts and history this never works for any group. It only leads to long term, ugly results.

It is true, I will never know what it feels like to be a native american man, or the child of homosexual parents. Nor will anyone ever know what it like to walk the path that I have walked. Yet, our focus should be on building up all people by applying and continuing to work on time tested virtues of love, kindness, respect and compassion for all people.

This philosophy does not seem to be based on time tested virtues, and thereby, is somewhat of a social experiment on our children. I do not wish my children to be involved in a social experiment. It is far, far beyond the scope of public education.

There are other curricula in the realm of character education that can help us to achieve the goal of having an empathetic culture in our schools with greater clarity and less risk of damage to everyone’s self worth.