



Revolutionary Love

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I have never encountered any children in any group who are not geniuses. There is no mystery on how to teach them. The first thing you do is treat them like human beings and the second thing you do is love them.

—Dr. Asa Hilliard



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Eliza Braden is an associate professor in the Department of Instruction of Teacher Education at University of South Carolina. Her scholarship is anchored in critical literacy and language practices, culturally relevant pedagogy, and critical multicultural children's literature.



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Kamania Wynter-Hoyte is an assistant professor in the Department of Instruction of Teacher Education at University of South Carolina. Her scholarship is anchored in countering anti-Blackness in teacher education and early childhood spaces.

One to Know: Revolutionary Love in Education

Educators who practice revolutionary love honor the humanity, intelligence, racial identities, and linguistic practices of children, and they use these values to build curriculum for and with children. Educators who embody revolutionary love in their spaces are not restricted by state mandates and prescribed curriculum. These educators understand that anti-racist, decolonized, and culturally relevant teaching is important for all children, no matter how they identify racially or ethnically.

Revolutionary love is humanizing, powerful love that is steeped in actions that fight for liberation and justice, as it disrupts the social construction of anti-blackness and white supremacist patriarchy (Johnson, Bryan, Boutte, 2018). It is the kind of love that has the power to change the world one person at a time. Revolutionary love is not the surface level love, i.e., “Oh, I see the brilliance in all children no matter where they come from.” Revolutionary love is love that honors the interconnectedness of our humanity and embraces the Ubuntu philosophy: *I am because we are*.

What to Do: Revolutionary Educators Actively Engage with Students, Families, and Communities

What is family engagement through the lens of revolutionary love?

As educators, we must first confront any deficit beliefs about families and communities, which can be challenging. Therefore, during this process, you have to accept a couple of things: (a) accept the fact that we are human beings, and as human beings, we all have been socialized to develop preconceived notions of others; and (b) accept that we have been socialized continuously to believe in the superiority of whiteness and inferiority of all other races.

To support you in this process, we believe that it is important to foster vulnerability and openness, and to do what we are asking you to do, by modeling, in full transparency, owning that our “ist” or “phobia” (e.g., racist, classist, sexist, xenophobic, transphobic, homophobic, etc.) statements such as, *These parents don't care about education*, and *I wish these parents came to conferences like they come to Field Day* are steeped in deficient/deficit beliefs. Hence, revolutionary love supports us to make shifts in beliefs and practices to engage in a more humanizing and liberatory practice with families and children, in order to disrupt a system that does not affirm marginalized children and their families.

Why do we need family engagement through the lens of revolutionary love?

We often share with our preservice teachers that we are unaware of any educators who intentionally seek to send a message that they do not genuinely care for their students. However, white supremacy is so embedded in educational institutions that teachers come to measure every motive, action, and inaction by Black and Latino/Latina families against white, Eurocentric standards and norms. Teachers can build positive relationships with Black and Latino/Latina families and engage in anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices by legitimizing multiple forms of engagement. Anti-racist teachers must investigate literacy engagements other than their own in order to learn more about the knowledge and literacy practices that exist in homes, in order to connect with and involve families in learning experiences in meaningful ways.

What to Do: How to Tell if You Are Centering Revolutionary Love with Families

Teaching through revolutionary love means naming the ways that racism plays into your everyday work with families and disrupting the factors that contribute to those inequities. The table below outlines common communicative practices that are conducted in schools with families. Here we define how these practices can be oppressive to families, and we provide alternative practices that are anti-racist.

Communication Opportunities	Racist Practices	Anti-Racist Practices
Family Outreach	Reach out to families only about behavior problems.	Contact families via phone, text message, virtual Zoom meetings, and/or class apps to share praise of students.
Parent-Teacher Conferences	Focus on what the child is not doing.	Plan student-led conferences. Focus on what the child is doing well.
Meetings and Conferences	Schedule conferences and meetings only during the workday.	Ask families if you might join them for dinner, recreational events, and/or places of worship. Allow families the flexibility to choose times that are convenient for the families. Use virtual platforms to connect with families when feasible.
Curriculum	Believe that families of Black and Brown children can make no contributions to the curriculum.	Decenter whiteness. Expect families to hold experiential, historical, and cultural knowledge that can contribute to the teaching and learning of students. Invite that knowledge into the classroom and use it to build curriculum.
Classroom Visitors	Assume you are the child's only teacher.	Acknowledge that parents or guardians are a child's first teacher. Encourage sororities, fraternities, BIPOC organizations, and/or places of worship to take an active role in educating and mentoring students. Build families into curricular units and designing mini projects in which they can showcase their knowledge.
Community	Assume negative and deficit thinking about the perceived limited resources available in communities.	Promote the community. Our identities are woven into the context in which we grow up. You can create community maps to highlight significant places in the communities and have students narrate why these places have significance to them. Students can create essays/books/ brochures, etc. and put them in the classroom libraries.

More to Know and Do: Provide Children's Literature That Is Focused on Families

Here are some examples of books to share:

- *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales
- *Going Down Home with Daddy* by Kelly Starling Lyons
- *Hair Love* by Matthew A. Cherry
- *Knock, Knock, My Dad's Dream for Me* by Daniel Beaty
- *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña
- *Mango, Abuela, and Me* by Meg Medina
- *Waiting for Papá/ Esperando a Papá* by Rene Colate Lainez
- *When Aidan Became a Brother* by Kyle Lukoff
- *Yo Soy Muslim: A Father's Letter to His Daughter* by Mark Gonzalez

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