

Emdin, C. (2016). For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education, (pp. 27-28). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.

If we are truly interested in transforming schools and meeting the needs of urban youth of color who are the most disenfranchised within them, educators must create safe and trusting environments that are respectful of students' culture. Teaching the neoindigenous requires recognition of the spaces in which they reside, and an understanding of how to see, enter into, and draw from these spaces. In the chapters that follow, I describe how educators may engage in this healing process through an approach to teaching I call reality pedagogy.

Reality Pedagogy

Reality pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that has a primary goal of meeting each student on his or her own cultural and emotional turf. It focuses on making the local experiences of the student visible and creating contexts where there is a role reversal of sorts that positions the student as the expert in his or her own teaching and learning, and the teacher as the learner. It posits that while the teacher is the person charged with delivering the content, the student is the person who shapes how best to teach that content. Together, the teacher and students co-construct the classroom space.

Reality pedagogy allows for youth to reveal how and where teaching and learning practices have wounded them. The approach works toward making students wholly visible to each other and to the teacher and focuses on open discourse about where students are academically, psychologically, and emotionally. In a reality-pedagogy-based classroom, every individual is perceived as having a distinct perspective and is given the opportunity to express that in the classroom. There is no grand narrative.

Instead of seeing the students as equal to their cultural identity, a reality pedagogue sees students as individuals who are influenced by their cultural identity. This means that the teacher does not see his or her classroom as a group of African American, Latino, or poor students and therefore does not make assumptions about their interests based on those preconceptions. Instead, the teacher begins from an understanding of the students as unique individuals and then develops approaches to teaching and learning that work for those individuals.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. How do we bring our students' experiences, realities, and cultures into our leadership work?
2. How do we reframe/adjust/align our instructional leadership work to develop educators in our buildings to become active learners of their students' individual and unique realities, or cultures?