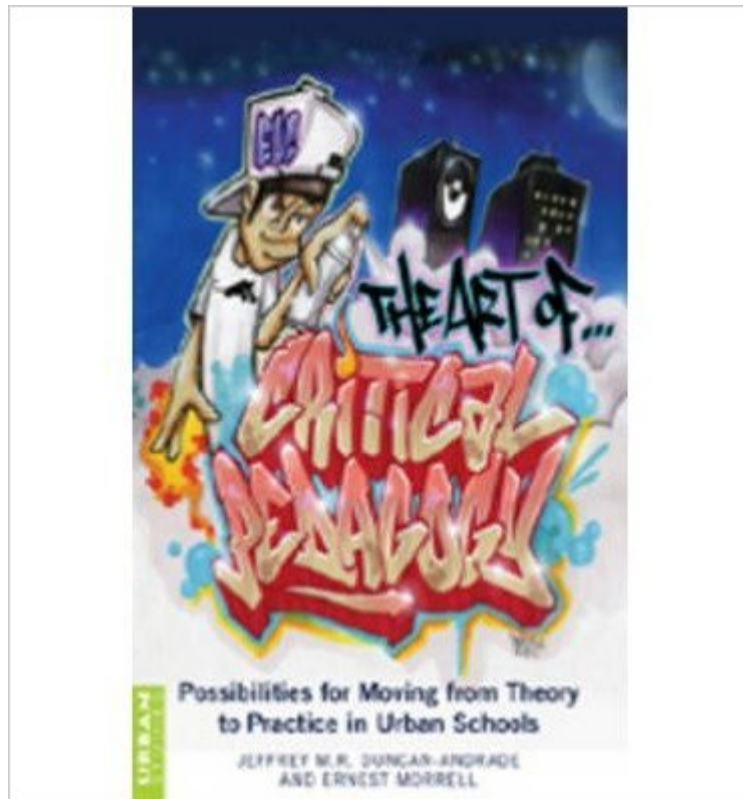


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# The Art Of Critical Pedagogy: Possibilities For Moving From Theory To Practice In Urban Schools



## Synopsis

This book furthers the discussion concerning critical pedagogy and its practical applications for urban contexts. It addresses two looming, yet under-explored questions that have emerged with the ascendancy of critical pedagogy in the educational discourse: (1) What does critical pedagogy look like in work with urban youth? and (2) How can a systematic investigation of critical work enacted in urban contexts simultaneously draw upon and push the core tenets of critical pedagogy?

Addressing the tensions inherent in enacting critical pedagogy - between working to disrupt and to successfully navigate oppressive institutionalized structures, and between the practice of critical pedagogy and the current standards-driven climate - *The Art of Critical Pedagogy* seeks to generate authentic internal and external dialogues among educators in search of texts that offer guidance for teaching for a more socially just world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Let us begin by rethinking the position that urban schools are failing. . . . When one set of schools [in high-income communities] is given the resources necessary to succeed and another group of schools [in low-income communities] is not, we have predetermined the winners and losers. . . . Urban [low-income community] schools are not broken; they are doing exactly what they are designed to do." This in the second paragraph of Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell's brilliant book, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy: Possibilities for Moving from Theory to Practice in Urban Schools*. It's brilliant because it is based in the experience of actually teaching our country's youth,

on working day in and day out with high school students in Los Angeles and Oakland. Most of the book is Duncan-Andrade and Morrell detailing several educational projects on which they've worked, describing their experiences as they try to put their belief in critical pedagogy into practice, and explaining what they learned. As grounded in experience and practice as they are, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell know the theory, too. In chapter two, they give the best overall summary of the work and writing of the major names in critical pedagogy--Freire, Shor, Darder, McLaren, Giroux, hooks--I've seen. In addition, they discuss the efforts of a few "lived examples of critical pedagogy to emphasize that critical pedagogy is more than just a teaching strategy--it is a personal, financial, political, emotional, and spiritual commitment to prioritizing the needs and liberation of people who are suffering under various forms of oppression": Carter G. Woodson, Lolita LebrÃ n, Franz Fanon, Reies LÃ pez Tijerina, Audre Lorde, Gloria AnzaldÃ a, and Subcommandante Marcos.

The praise for "The Art of Critical Pedagogy" which is articulated in these reviews is warranted. It is an extraordinary book and accomplishment. The book receives five stars for demonstrating that an alternative pedagogy inspired by critical pedagogy can be successfully employed in mainstream (urban) public (and private) schools. In fact, young people seem to embrace it as a liberating force. If the reader is contemplating purchase and study of this book, I full-heartedly and highly recommend it. "The Art of Critical Pedagogy" is a must read for teachers, administrators, parents, and policy makers. Unfortunately Duncan-Andrade and Morrell tend to reduce "critical pedagogy" to an 'alternative pedagogy.' I fully endorse the idea in the book that an alternative pedagogy can help underprivileged (minority) students better succeed or more "successfully navigate" (p. 102) contemporary society. Employing pedagogical strategies, relevant media (such as hip-hop music or movies), and a willingness by a teacher to discuss issues of inequality, racism, hegemony, power, oppression, etc. will indeed make learning far more interesting and relevant to the lives of all young people, especially in U.S. urban environments in particular and oppressive conditions more generally. However, a potent alternative pedagogy, employed by superstar teachers, does not change the structural dynamics of society, or the opaqueness of reality. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell report remarkable academic success of their students. However, they do not prepare young teachers (or students) for the far more likely failures. 47 percent of the American labor force make \$25,000 or less. 80 percent make below \$60,000.

THE CONTRADICTIONS AND PREDICAMENTS OF URBAN SCHOOLING In large urban areas

around the country, the public schools are failing to fulfill America's promise. Although society touts the importance of an education, in many instances urban classrooms are a source of self-doubt for urban students rather than self-development. Thus the major factor in the lives of urban students that leads to depression, dropping out, drugs, jail, and suicide appears to be the school experience: ability groups, grade retention, college pressures, working alone, denial of strengths and focus on weaknesses, learning that is information-rich and experience poor, and the irrelevant curriculum that students must endure and frequently ignore. Urban students recognize the importance of learning, but many are unwilling to assume the submissive posture in rigid schools which routinely deny them a sense of curiosity, autonomy, culture, and self-worth. Thus the traditional public school system is seen as a place that competes with urban and global youth culture and is not complementary to a student's own cultural identity and feelings of self worth. TOO MUCH SCHOOLING, TOO LITTLE EDUCATION This is because schooling implies a tie to the social order/nation-state that seeks to assimilate non-dominant groups/classes. Whereas education involves learning that transmits cultural uniqueness of these groups to the next generation. This is why urban schooling which attempts to force urban student to deny their own experiences, their own culture, and common sense are destined to failure.

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