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10 Uncomfortable Truths About U.S. Education

By Elizabeth Rich

January 7, 2020

Change. We humans are not hardwired to alter our convictions readily. But all of us know that to evolve in our chosen professions, our thinking, even our relationships, we must reconsider how and why we do what we do. And that's not easy.

It is in the spirit of change and renewal that we present to you the latest edition of Big Ideas, a collection of essays by 10 Education Week reporters and editors on pressing challenges in education. (The roundup below offers a glimpse at the full report.)

When we began our Big Ideas conversations for 2020, we noticed a theme starting to emerge, a questioning of assumptions: Why do we teach history? Why don't we teach religion? Why can't robots replace teachers? Why does the black-white student testing gap never seem to close?

If this line of inquiry is starting to make you feel uncomfortable or provoked, well, that is to be expected. We hope the discomfort you may feel from reading these 10 essays will empower you to change what is not working anymore for you, your classroom, your school, or your district. Many of the explorations in this report don't lead to tidy conclusions. But they may inspire you to consider what might be standing in your way to disrupt and innovate.

And, as always, let us know what you think. Did this year's Big Ideas resonate with you? Did any of the Big Ideas prompt you to reconsider your perspective on your work? Connect with us directly by using **#K12BigIdeas**.

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Elizabeth Rich

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Why don't black students perform as well as white students on tests? Associate Editor Christina A. Samuels dug into this question and came to a realization: Nobody is blameless. **Read more.**

2. We're thinking about math all wrong. And it could hurt our students.

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Parents—like all people—often do not make decisions with the cool, calculated rationality policymakers and academics may expect, writes Staff Writer Arianna Prothero. **Read more.**

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