



## **HB 1504 Supports a Robust and Equitable Curriculum for All Students**

**IDRA Testimony for House Bill 1504, Presented by Araceli García to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 6, 2021**

Dear Chairman Dutton and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Araceli Garcia, and I am an Education Policy Fellow at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan, education non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. We are in favor of HB 1504.

HB 1504 seeks to include ethnic studies, including Mexican American Studies and African American Studies, to the required social studies curriculum of our state. Research shows that ethnic studies coursework confers several benefits upon students who participate in these classes including better school attendance, higher standardized test scores, higher GPAs, higher graduation rates, and even a reduction in inter-personal prejudice (Craven 2019).

In the 2019-20 school year, 692,925 Black students and 2,899,504 Hispanic students were enrolled in Texas schools, and both populations have increased over the last 10 years (TEA 2020). In total, students of color account for 73% of all students in Texas. Students benefit from a culturally responsive pedagogy that integrates their cultural identities into the main curriculum. This makes school more interesting and exciting for students, which in turn leads to the positive benefits mentioned above, as well as more personal agency in the identity-construction process (Caldera & Rodríguez, 2021).

Beyond the value to individual students, courses like African American Studies and Mexican American Studies help to create welcoming school climates overall. When students see themselves in what they are taught in schools, they are more engaged and create deeper connections to their campuses. Research on culturally sustaining pedagogy emphasizes the power of teaching and curricula to transform how students relate to their schools and understand what they are taught (Ladson-Billings, 1995). These connections are critical to creating safe and supportive schools that prepare all students for success.

We recommend passing HB 1504 to support an equitable and robust curriculum that will benefit and engage all Texas students.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Araceli García, IDRA Education Policy Fellow, at [araceli.garcia@idra.org](mailto:araceli.garcia@idra.org).

## Resources

- Caldera, A., & Rodríguez, N. (March 2021). Students of Color Deserve Culturally Responsive Instruction and Ethnic Studies. IDRA Newsletter. <https://idra.news/NLMar21b>
- Craven, M. (2019). African American Studies Course Will Have a Significant and Positive Impact on Students Across Texas, testimony. San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association. <https://idra.news/SBOEmc111319>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. American Educational Research Journal, 32(3), 465-491. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465>
- Texas Education Agency. (2020). Enrollment in Texas Public Schools, 2019-20. Austin: Texas Education Agency. [https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/enroll\\_2019-20.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/enroll_2019-20.pdf)

*IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.*