



## Focus: Culturally Sustaining Schools

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# Texas HB 3979 Will Hurt Students by Curtailing Schools’ Equity Efforts

by Altheria Caldera, Ph.D.

School district leaders across the United States are adopting research-based approaches to teaching and learning to better meet the needs of all students. This equity work is birthed from an acknowledgment that racially-minoritized students have not excelled in mass numbers because they have been historically under- and mis-served in schools (Robledo Montecel & Goodman, 2010). Attempts at equity can include strategies such as employing culturally sustaining pedagogies and redesigning curricula by integrating ethnic studies. Legislation like Texas’ House Bill 3979 threatens to disrupt these efforts.

HB 3979 restricts teachers’ ability to integrate race-related “controversial” issues and current events and would force them to whitewash U.S. history and government classes by silencing class discussion on how race and racism shaped contemporary society.

Texas is not alone. More than a dozen other states have debated, have passed or are attempting to pass similar bills (see AAPF’s map for the latest list [www.aapf.org/truthbetold](http://www.aapf.org/truthbetold)), using language from a Trump administration executive order. The Georgia State Board of Education passed a resolution on June 3 with language identical to many provisions in Texas’ HB 3979. The resolution declared that neither the state of Georgia nor the United States are “racist,” and that the board believes no school in the state should instruct students on or accept federal or private funding to

promote concepts related to systemic discrimination and racial bias.

After some late-night procedural maneuvering that many believe may be unconstitutional, Texas’ once derailed bill now sits on the Governor’s desk for passage into law.

HB 3979 limits the practice of culturally sustaining pedagogies, defined as instructional strategies that ensure the continuing presence of students’ cultural practices (Paris & Alim, 2017). Integral components of culturally sustaining pedagogies are not only extending the repertoires of students of color to include dominant (white) cultural practices but also valuing and maintaining their own cultures. Bills limiting learning about racism suggest to teachers that race, which is an important aspect of culture, should be disregarded in their teaching and in the curriculum.

HB 3979 discourages teachers from discussing current events even though such discussions are a critical part of learning and social-emotional wellness. It prohibits students from receiving course credit for civic engagement even though such activities can be the best way to learn about civics and democracy. Schools will incur significant costs due to new limits on private funding for curriculum, training or materials as well as the cost of new textbooks to address the numerous conflicts IDRA’s analysis identified with the curriculum  
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*More than a dozen states have debated, have passed or are attempting to pass bills that limit learning about racism and force teachers to whitewash U.S. history instead of recognizing the vibrant cultural diversity that characterizes a pluralistic society.*

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# Culturally Sustaining Instruction Requires Culturally Sustaining Leadership

by Paula N. Johnson, Ph.D.

The pandemic reminded us very quickly that relationships are important for effective student and family engagement. Millions of students found themselves disconnected from the school community when COVID-19 forced schools to go online. Teachers and school leaders have relied on these relationships to keep students engaged.

But disengagement did not start with the pandemic and it will not end when schools reopen this fall. There is growing concern about the continued disengagement that disproportionately affects high percentages of Black students and Latino students.

Despite the fact that this country is deemed to be a pluralistic society, our institution of education – like all of our social institutions (e.g., law, media, sports) – is guided by policies and practices that perpetuate a monocultural, monolingual United States of America. The language, literacy and cultural practices interwoven into the very fabric of our schools generally align with white, middle-class norms. As a result, students who do not identify with the aforementioned social group find aspects of their culture deemed insignificant and unworthy of a place in schools.

For example, the majority of teachers today are delivering instruction to students from dramatically different backgrounds than themselves.

Further, implicit bias is a major threat to welcoming school environments. Biases inform our decision-making and interactions that can negatively impact students academically and emotionally (Staats, 2016). Educators must have the skills to promote equity and inclusivity in the classroom as part of instructional practice.

The IDRA EAC-South is rolling out a set of materials on culturally sustaining instruction and leadership to support educators with tools for challenging, investigating and embracing a new vision for engaging with families and students from marginalized communities (IDRA, 2020a).

In this work, we developed a new framework based on current research in culturally sustaining education (Johnson, 2020b). The frame comprises key leverage points: schools, leadership, educators and pedagogy. This gives educators a path to quantify steps for identifying data points, situating student outcomes through an equity lens, identifying capacity-building needs, creating spaces for continuous community input and support, and evaluating success. The framework can be used from the campus level to the state level. For example, the Virginia Commission on African American History Education used it to inform its recommendations on culturally responsive pedagogical practices (IDRA, 2020).

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# Anti-Racist Schooling for All Students of Color

by Bricio Vasquez, Ph.D., & Altheria Caldera, Ph.D.

Anti-racist schooling occurs as a result of an explicit stance against racism accompanied by purposeful, strategic actions that affirm students of color. It humanizes all students by respecting their cultural backgrounds and exemplifies cultural pluralism rather than cultural homogeneity.

All levels of racism historically have existed in education: interpersonal, internalized and institutional. *Interpersonal racism* is racial discrimination that occurs between individuals and groups. *Internalized racism* is racial bias held by people of color against their own racial group. *Institutional racism* is race-related oppression embedded in institutional policies and practices. Anti-racist educators reject all three.

Anti-racist education is liberatory only if it counters the specific manifestations of racism that inflict violence upon all racially-minoritized students. Said differently, inter-group analyses of racism help educators recognize and reject the distinct ways schools enact racialized violence (cultural, psychological, physical) against students of color.

Because of the longstanding Black-white binary that prevails in race relations work, many educators see racism only in these terms, negating the racism experienced by other students of color. Howard insisted, “There is a moral imperative, an economic incentive, and a national necessity for the country to do all that is possible to effectively educate what soon will be the majority of the nation’s citizenry” (2019). With this in mind, the following discusses separately anti-Asian racism, anti-Latino and anti-Native American racism, and anti-Black racism in education.

## Anti-Asian American Racism

The academic success of Asian American students in certain population groups has led them to be stereotyped as “the model minority,” which places unfair and burdensome expectations on them. The high achievement of Japanese Ameri-

can, Korean American and Chinese American students tends to overshadow the struggles of other Asian American populations: Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Hmong, Samoan, Thai and other Southeast Asian students (Howard, 2019).

As a result of this invisibility, there is a lack of attention to their academic needs. Thus, their schooling experiences are more akin to Black students and Latino students.

Not only are Asian American students subjected to racism, but they also experience the violence of xenophobia. Defined as strong prejudice against those from other countries, xenophobia toward Asian Americans has been exacerbated since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (IDRA, 2021a). Asian American slurs are examples of that xenophobia and cause Asian Americans to experience increased stress.

## Anti-Latino and Anti-Native American Racism

Anti-racist pedagogy means centering Latino and Native American scholars and histories within the broader narrative in school subjects. For example, Texas social studies textbooks generally frame colonization as beneficial to Native American people. Biased textbooks frame Native American populations as helpless and in need of saving. In reality, Native American people thrived in their lands before European invaders landed on this hemisphere.

Framing Spanish colonizers as saviors of Native American peoples in social studies and history textbooks reproduces the belief of white supremacy in our schools and students. In contrast, schools create welcoming and safe environments for all students by providing students with objective and holistic narratives of Latino and Native American peoples.

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*Adopting anti-racist curricula and pedagogies promotes inclusiveness. Representation in curricula enhances students’ race consciousness and their connections to each other and their community.*

(Anti-Racist Schooling for All Students of Color, continued from Page 3)

Another racist and white supremacist tactic in education is the erasure of Latino and Native American histories. Often, the education model in the United States is structured around Eurocentric pedagogies. The individualized nature of U.S. education often rejects group learning, oral histories/ancestral knowledge, lived experiences and spiritual knowledge. The “alternative knowledge” is rarely recognized or validated as legitimate in academia thereby reproducing the belief that Western forms of knowledge are the only legitimate (i.e., superior) forms of knowing.

Colonization did not cease to exist in our past, but rather, it is an active process that continues to this day. Historical narratives of white saviors, erasure of Latino and Native American histories, indoctrination into capitalistic ideals, policing in schools, and competition-based grading practices sustain white cultural hegemony. In doing so, Latino and Native American students struggle to forge ahead socially and economically. As the largest and most segregated student population in Texas and elsewhere, Latino students attend the most underfunded schools as well.

### Anti-Black Racism

Anti-Black racism refers to marked hostility and antagonism inflicted upon Black students. It is rooted in the historical dehumanization of Black bodies and devaluation of Black culture. This history, passed down through interpersonal and institutional racism, influences how school administrators and teachers view Black students, their behavior, their talents and their worth. Consequently, Black students suffer from the malpractice of teachers who mishandle lessons related to slavery and who use racial slurs. They are victimized, too, by peers who learned to see them as commodities to be traded or who use songs with racial slurs. Two such incidents happened recently in Texas.

Black students also are criminalized in ways that result in physical violence at the hands of school resource officers and police, leading advocates to demand an end to policing in schools (IDRA, 2021b). Anti-Black racism in education also is evidenced by segregated, underfunded schools, over-suspension of Black students, disproportionate referrals for special education and under-qualified teachers.

**IDRA Classnotes Podcast #203 & #204**  
**Challenging Colonialism in the Classroom**  
Featuring **Dr. Alexa Proffitt**  
University of Texas at San Antonio  
with **Dr. Lizbet Tinoco**  
Texas A&M University-San Antonio

<https://idra.news/Pod203>    <https://idra.news/Pod204>

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### Creating an Anti-Racist Learning Environment

An important starting point to anti-racist schooling for all groups of racially minoritized students is to ensure the school has a safe teaching environment. This means maintaining the emotional, physical and mental security of Asian American, Black, Latino and Native American students.

- Teachers of color comprised 18% of teachers in 2011-12 while students of color in public schools comprised 49% of students (IDRA, 2017). Anti-racist educational practice for Black students in particular must, for example, include hiring of Black teachers who are uniquely equipped to recognize and cultivate the talents and abilities of Black students. (See IDRA & EAF, 2021, for more recommendations.)
- Anti-racist educational practice for Asian American students must include a recognition of their U.S. citizenship instead of positioning them as “foreign” or “outsiders.” These practices also should be characterized by culturally sustaining responses to distinct Asian American sub-populations instead of seeing them as one homogenous group. (IDRA 2021)
- Schools must avoid curricula that rely on stereotypes and biased historical narratives that reproduce racist perceptions of Latino and Native American students and could subject students to bullying and violence.

Adopting anti-racist curricula and pedagogies promotes inclusiveness. Representation in curricula enhances students’ race consciousness and their connections to each other and their community.

In order to provide an anti-racist education schools must denounce and extract white supremacy from schooling policies and practices. Educators have to disconnect from the dominant culture’s values and expectations.

Additionally, an integral aspect of anti-racist education involves infusing ethnic studies into school curricula. When integrated well, ethnic studies centers people of color instead of marginalizing them and presents members of these groups in ways that counter stereotypes and deficit ideologies. (See Page 5.)

We examined racism against groups separately to help educators recognize ways each student population might be best served in school and school district anti-racism initiatives. This parsing helps to ensure that all students are seen in racial equity work, moving educators away from the Black-white dichotomy that frequently dominates education discourse.

Transforming education using decolonial and anti-racist approaches brings forth the joy and pleasure of learning incorporated with innate human curiosity to the process that invites all students to engage in the learning process.

*References available online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org). Bricio Vasquez, Ph.D., is IDRA’s education data scientist. Altheria Caldera, Ph.D., is an IDRA Education Policy Fellow. Comments and questions may be directed to them via email at [bricio.vasquez@idra.org](mailto:bricio.vasquez@idra.org) and [altheria.caldera@idra.org](mailto:altheria.caldera@idra.org), respectively.*

# Visions and Provisions – Planning for K-12 Ethnic Studies Implementation

by Irene Gómez, Ed.M.

As a Latina raised in Texas, I come from a state where 52% of students are Latino and 12% are Black. These figures won't reflect the full intricacies of ethnic-racial identity – youth who are both Black and Latino, for instance – but they do represent a majority who aren't primarily of European descent (TEA, 2020).

I think back to my senior year of high school, when our English class read Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and I realize that in my 11 years of schooling, we had only covered U.S. racism through two books, both written by white women: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It's fitting that my first school-assigned book authored by and centering a Black American and his perspective on racial justice focused on *invisibility*.

## What is Ethnic Studies?

Ralph Ellison wrote, "When I discover who I am, I'll be free" (1995). Ethnic studies courses are vital resources that support students and their communities in this discovery, as IDRA has championed through research analyses, data collection, coalition-building and policy advocacy. Established at an institutional level out of student-led protests in the 1960s, ethnic studies is a field that analyzes power dynamics in the movements and contributions of historically excluded racial and ethnic groups in the United States. These classes, from kindergarten through college, teach students the hard parts of history, what has worked, and the new possibilities minoritized people are creating for themselves.

At the K-12 level, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Rhode Island, Texas and Washington have implemented high school ethnic studies courses and continue to grapple with decisions over scope and content. As a field, ethnic studies defines high-quality courses as (1) place- and community-based; (2) focused on challenging racial and ethnic power dynamics; and (3) action-oriented. For instance, many ethnic studies curricula include a youth participatory action research

project rooted in the district's local context (Cuauhtin, et al., 2019; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020).

## How Has Ethnic Studies Been Implemented?

Ethnic studies courses offer students many benefits, from social-emotional learning to college, career and community readiness. For example, in an oft-cited 2017 study, Stanford researchers found that a high school ethnic studies program in San Francisco Unified School District boosted the GPA and attendance of students at risk of being pushed out of school (Dee & Penner, 2017).

Several organizational structures aided student learning and district collaboration in the district, such as dual credit university partnerships, support from central office staff, five-year district funding commitments, and formal communities of practice (Beckham & Concordia, 2019; Sacramento, 2019; Tintiangco-Cubales, et al., 2015).

Buy-in from key decision-makers is critical for ethnic studies movements to grow and be sustainable. Thanks to grassroots movements that garnered local support, California leads the nation in the number of districts and universities that offer or require ethnic studies courses (Cuauhtin, et al., 2019).

Yet even in the state where programs are most popular, almost 30% of school board members had "limited to no understanding of ethnic studies." In his analysis, Dr. Russell Castañeda Calleros found that California school board members worried some would perceive the classes as limiting and divisive. (Calleros, 2018)

Calleros reflected, "Since nearly one out of three policymakers are in a position to make policy without sufficient understanding of what ethnic studies is (or is not), the reality is that ignorance of ethnic studies is expensive" (Calleros, 2018; 2019). California found itself contending with this issue at a larger scale through a lengthy and

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*Ethnic studies courses, from kindergarten through college, teach students the hard parts of history, what has worked, and new possibilities minoritized people are creating for themselves.*

(Visions and Provisions – Planning for K-12 Ethnic Studies Implementation, continued from Page 5)

heated adoption process of its statewide ethnic studies model curriculum, which left many experts and advocates dismayed with a final version that they argue glosses over critical elements of ethnic studies, including the perspectives of Arab Americans (Morrar, 2021). Pursuing meaningful implementation of K-12 ethnic studies continues to be a complex and worthwhile endeavor.

### What the Future May Look Like

While Texas has adopted elective knowledge and skills standards for Mexican American Studies and African American Studies courses, much more can be done to expand ethnic studies content and access from initiating dialogue with school board members to developing stronger infrastructure through budget planning and professional development.

Through recently-proposed legislation, lawmakers could have enabled ethnic studies classes to count toward students' social studies requirements and created an African American Studies advisory board to ensure courses contain high-quality content. Instead, a majority opted to pass the truly limiting and divisive HB 3979.

In this struggle, IDRA engages at the forefront of research and advocacy, with a special interest in state-funded grants for ethnic studies innovation at the district level, as well as teacher training and certification that centers the main tenets of ethnic studies pedagogy. When co-constructed with families and community organizations, ethnic studies promotes culturally sustaining content that can support students in transforming society, as educators critically reflect on how their own identities impact the families they work with (Craven, 2019; Tintiango Cubales, et al., 2015; Valenzuela, 2016).

On the path to expand ethnic studies, IDRA offers guidance to districts through the IDRA EAC-South, one of four federally-funded equity assistance centers that provide training, technical assistance, and other supports to schools, education agencies, and related groups.

We also recommend the following resources for districts and coalitions to explore what elements or lessons may be relevant to their efforts:

- *We Don't Want to Just Study the World, We Want to Change It: Ethnic Studies and the Development of Transformative Students and Educators* (Beckham & Concordia, 2019)

- *The Power of Ethnic Studies to Dismantle Institutionalized Oppression in K-12 Education* (Valenzuela, 2020).
- *Strategic Leadership: Building Collaboration in the Establishment of Ethnic Studies Courses in Texas* (Scott & Pérez-Díaz, 2020)
- *Is Your U.S History Text Racist? Five Topics Often Whitewashed* (CARE, 2021)
- *The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement* (Ginwright, 2018)

By the time I took an ethnic studies class in college, I'd spent two decades ashamed of my roots. My parents tried to foster pride, but what my schools did and didn't value weighed heavier. I want to live in a future that sees, celebrates and supports the community cultural wealth of young people and their families. Through intentional design of ethnic studies programs, let us lay the foundation for our students to build that better future.

References available online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org). Irene Gómez, Ed.M., coordinates IDRA's research on culturally sustaining practices. Comments and questions may be directed to her via email at [irene.gomez@idra.org](mailto:irene.gomez@idra.org).

(Culturally Sustaining Instruction Requires Culturally Sustaining Leadership, continued from Page 2)

Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2014) introduced the term *culturally responsive pedagogy*. She reminds us that culture is always evolving due to its nature as an amalgamation of human activity, production, thought and belief systems. As a result, she states that, like culture, pedagogy must evolve to address the issues that face the students of both today and tomorrow.

The newer concept, *culturally sustaining pedagogy* addresses the reality that pedagogies must be more than *responsive*; instead, they need to support students in *sustaining* competence of the cultures within their communities while developing *competence* of the dominant culture (Paris, 2012).

Paris & Alim present it as a means to “sustain the minds and bodies of communities of color within an educational system that has often had the exact opposite goals” (2017).

IDRA agrees that schools should intertwine home and community practices, histories and language with that of the dominant group in ways

that do not devalue them nor pit them against one another (Paris & Alim, 2017). Thus, IDRA has adopted language to reflect this shift to include culturally responsive and sustaining educational practices (see Page 7).

### Beyond Instruction and Pedagogy

Effective implementation of culturally sustaining practices in schools must include leadership. Teachers must have strong support both from the leaders of schools and from the districts where they operate.

Leading with sustaining practices requires intention. We like to start the conversation by posing some key questions to stakeholders (e.g., students, families, teachers, staff and members of the community – in no particular order) (Johnson, 2017; 2020a).

- Do educators have an understanding of the cultural implementation continuum?
- Does the school engage in a continuous criti-

cal reflection of: (a) classroom relationships; (b) family collaboration; (c) instructional practices; and (d) curriculum practices to ensure an inclusive, culturally sustaining environment for all students?

- How involved are the families of marginalized students in the educational decisions and policies that affect their children?

Culturally sustaining pedagogy asks all stakeholders to reimagine “schools as sites where diverse, heterogeneous practices are not only valued but sustained” (Paris & Alim, 2017). Envisioning such a space is a waste of time and energy if school and district leaders do not include all stakeholders in the conversations around a more inclusive educational setting for all students.

Davis (2016) reminds, “Whenever you conceptualize social justice struggles, you will always defeat your own purposes if you cannot imagine the people around you who are struggling as equal partners.” Any attempt to achieve a culturally sustaining school (or district) without including

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# What the Term “Culturally Sustaining Practices” Means for Education in Today’s Classrooms

by Altheria Caldera, Ph.D.

Throughout the decades, IDRA has used several equity-centered pedagogical terms to describe our work with ethnically and racially minoritized children and youth. Like others, we have used the terms *culturally responsive*, *culturally relevant*, and *culturally sustaining* somewhat interchangeably, for example, to convey a wide range of ideas relating to respecting and honoring students’ cultures.

But these terms are not synonymous. To explore the nuances of language, we considered: our own beliefs about the goals of education for students of color; our context and the distinct needs of the student populations we serve; and our existing advocacy and education work for students of color.

- *Culturally responsive pedagogy* refers to teaching that, among other things, demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of students’ personal cultural knowledge and uses students’ prior knowledge and culture in teaching.
- *Culturally relevant pedagogy* helps students become academically successful, cultivates cultural competence by helping students accept and affirm their cultural identities, and develops critical consciousness.
- *Culturally sustaining pedagogy* maintains heritage, values, cultural and linguistic pluralism. It has the explicit goal of sustaining and supporting bi-/multilingualism and multiculturalism.

The term *culturally sustaining educational practices*, as theorized by Paris & Alim (2017), best encapsulates IDRA’s vision for equitable schooling for students of color. *Educational practices* emphasizes the need to include curriculum, climate, programming and policies, rather than just teaching or *pedagogies*.

First, we believe that educational practices in a democratic society should aim to cultivate cultural pluralism rather than to assimilate all students into one “American” culture. Next, we see the need for anti-colonial practices that disrupt the

overwhelming whiteness that results in curricular and pedagogical violence against students of color. Last, we reject any efforts to divorce students from their home cultures to school culture (or encourage them to conform) so that they might achieve academically.

When we use the term *culturally sustaining educational practices*, we are describing work that not only respects and honors but intentionally nurtures and expands ethnically and racially minoritized students’ cultures. These practices uplift, center, and sustain Black, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Indigenous (or Native peoples) cultures, which Paris & Alim (2017) described as “rich and innovative.”

To ensure that students’ cultural heritage and histories are not lost, culturally sustaining practices perpetuate the historically devalued cultures of students of color. Evidence of this stance can be seen in IDRA’s work, such as to establish ethnic studies high school courses; to encourage education policies that center the needs of emergent bilingual students; and to support policies and practices aimed at eliminating discipline policies that disproportionately discriminate against Black students.

Paris & Alim outlined the goals of culturally sustaining pedagogy “to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literate and cultural pluralism.” This means teaching that counters the erasure and elimination of minoritized cultures that occurs through schooling in societies characterized by white dominance. They cautioned that sustaining cultures is ultimately about sustaining the lives of the people who practice them. (Paris & Alim, 2017)

Paris & Alim believe, as do we, that “equity and access can best be achieved by centering the dynamic practices and selves of students and communities of color in a critical, additive and expansive vision of schooling.” Practicing educa-

**IDRA Classnotes Podcast #211**  
**Teaching that is Culturally-Relevant -Responsive and -Sustaining**

Featuring  
**Dr. Altheria Caldera**  
 IDRA Education Policy Fellow

and  
**Dr. Alexandra (Ale) Babino**  
 Assistant Professor, Director of Bilingual/ESL Programs, Texas A&M Commerce

<https://idra.news/Pod211>

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**See a chart of equity-centered pedagogy terms:**  
[www.idra.news/EPterms](http://www.idra.news/EPterms)

Terminology	Definition/Description	Research/Practice	Impact on Equity and Access
<b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b>	Teaching that recognizes and respects the cultural differences of students and uses those differences to enhance learning.	Research shows that culturally responsive teaching leads to higher academic achievement for students of color.	Increases academic achievement for students of color.
<b>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</b>	Teaching that connects students' cultural knowledge to the content they are learning.	Research shows that culturally relevant teaching leads to higher academic achievement for students of color.	Increases academic achievement for students of color.
<b>Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy</b>	Teaching that maintains and builds on students' cultural knowledge and skills while also providing them with the academic skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a global society.	Research shows that culturally sustaining teaching leads to higher academic achievement for students of color.	Increases academic achievement for students of color.

tion from this stance helps to sustain the cultural wealth of groups whose cultures have been disparaged.

## Resources

Paris, D., & Alim, S.H. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*. New York, N.Y.: Teachers College Press.

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## Focus: Culturally Sustaining Schools

*(Culturally Sustaining Instruction Requires..., continued from Page 6)*

the members of the community whose culture that you intend to sustain will fail.

Many of our students do not see themselves reflected in the spaces around them, especially at school. Culturally sustaining pedagogy centers students' cultures, languages and realities by encouraging diversity, equity and inclusion. Allowing students to be their authentic selves empowers them to think more critically and analytically about the world and content they engage in and can yield greater academic success.

*References available online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org). Paula N. Johnson, Ph.D., is an IDRA education associate and director of the IDRA EAC-South. Comments and questions may be directed to her via email at [paula.johnson@idra.org](mailto:paula.johnson@idra.org).*

*(Texas HB 3979 Will Hurt Students, continued from Page 1)*

standards set by the State Board of Education (2021).

HB 3979 and similar bills also have negative implications for ethnic studies. Ethnic studies courses, like African American Studies, Mexican American Studies, and Native American Studies, necessarily include analyses of race and racism and aim to instill cultural pride. Instead of a balanced approach to studying individual and group relationships to society, bills like HB 3979 discourage critiques of the ways the country's founders and leaders discriminated against and inflicted violence on people of color. In this way, the bills stand in striking opposition to ethnic studies and a more holistic version of history and current events.

Supporters of this bill and similar ones in other states argue for highlighting cultural homogeneity instead of recognizing the vibrant cultural diversity that characterizes a pluralistic society. These bills harm the important work many school districts are prioritizing, such as diversity and in-

clusion programs and training to reduce the effects of educator implicit bias on students. They will undoubtedly negatively impact all students, but students of color will suffer the most detrimental effects.

### Resources

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IDRA. (2021). HB 3979 Redundancies and Conflicts. IDRA.

Paris, D., & Alim, H.S. (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Robledo Montecel, M., & Goodman, C.L. (Eds). (2010). *Courage to Connect – A Quality Schools Action Framework*. San Antonio: IDRA.

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