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IDRA's Knowledge is Power is a national resource for educators and advocates to help you do your work for equity and excellence in education in the midst of classroom censorship policies.

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See previous editions of [Knowledge is Power](#) and related resources online.



Texas Lawmakers Propose Laws to Support Black Students, History and Heritage

by *Chloe Latham Sikes*

The month of February is significant in the Texas legislature. In addition to celebrating Black History Month, the legislative committees begin to assemble and consider bills they may pass into law. Several proposed bills this session would support Black students in schools, as well as Texas Black History and heritage.

HB 45/SB 248 – This bill would make ethnic studies, including African American Studies, an option to fulfill high school social studies course requirements. Rep. Christina Morales authored this bill, with a companion Senate bill by Sen. Carol Alvarado.

HB 368 – This bill by Rep. Jarvis Johnson would create an African American Studies Advisory Board to the State Board of Education comprised of experts.

HB 567 – This bill models the national proposal for the CROWN Act, which would end racially and culturally discriminatory dress and hair codes in schools. Authored by Rep. Rhett Bowers, the CROWN Act affirms Black students' hair textures and styles, as well as students' cultural and religious expressions.



HB 1935 – This bill requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to study best practices for recruiting, retaining and advancing Black students, as well as other students from historically-marginalized racial and ethnic groups, in STEM fields in higher education. Minority-serving institutions, such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), would be eligible for a grant program to implement best practices from the study.

SB 194 – Authored by Sen. Borris Miles, this bill would establish the Texas African American Heritage Commission. The Commission would identify, preserve, and spread awareness about historical sites reflecting Texas' African American heritage.

SB 667 – This bill by Sen. Royce West would establish a program to commemorate the grave sites of Texas' Black Legislators who served during Reconstruction, between 1870 and 1875.

Texas' Black History is an essential part of our state and national history. Stay tuned about these proposals and legislative updates on IDRA's website.

Get Texas Updates

Sign up for our [Texas advocacy alerts](#) to stay up to date on education news. You can also follow us on Twitter [@IDRAedu](#) and follow our education policy fellows [@IDRAEduFellows](#).



PolitiFact: Are Texas schools required to teach Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream'?



This week, [Nusaiba Mizan of the Austin American-Statesman](#) turned to experts, including Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., at IDRA, to clarify that Texas' classroom censorship law (SB 3) does not prohibit teaching about Martin Luther King Jr. "Latham Sikes noted that 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' and the 'I Have a Dream' speech are already included in high school U.S. History lessons as per state curriculum requirements.

Learn more in IDRA's guide: [What Texas' Classroom Censorship Law Means for Students & Schools \(PDF\)](#).



Georgia General Assembly Considers Legislation that Would Support Students

by Terrence Wilson, J.D.

Some truly terrible bills have been filed in the Georgia General Assembly, but today we want to take a chance to share a few bills that could help many of our students and families. So here is some education policy good news for you.



HB 3 – This bill would allot categorical grant funding for children living in poverty. Georgia is still one of only six states that does not account for the unique challenges of educating students who are living with poverty. Filed by Rep. Sandra Scott.

HB 8 – This bill would expand state-recognized excused absences to include incidences of mental & behavioral health. Also sponsored by Rep. Scott.

HB 81 – This would potentially help even the funding playing field for many of our rural districts that are in desperate need for facility improvements. This bill has a hearing on Monday. Sponsored by Rep. John Corbett.

SB 82 – The CROWN act would allow any student to wear or style their hair however they choose without threat of racial discrimination in any educational institution, program or activity. Sponsored by Sen. Tonya Anderson.

HB 127 – This bill highlights the access obstacles faced by so many of our multilingual communities. It standardizes requirements for interpreters, with special emphasis on language access for students and families in need of individualized education plans (IEPs). Sponsored by Rep. Mesha Mainor.

HB 157 – This bill provides eligible students access to HOPE grants for coursework for programs of study leading to a certificate, diploma or associate degree, including remedial and developmental courses. Sponsored by Rep. Sacey Evans.

HB 173 – This bill would establish mandatory pre-K kindergarten for all children, which could be huge in overcoming literacy gaps for our youngest learners. Sponsored by Rep. Gregg Kennard.

HB 177 – This bill would expand sex education requirements to include HIV and AIDS prevention and lessons on consent, which Georgia still does not require. We have seen this bill in the past, but it has not gotten much traction before. Hopefully given the decision out of the Fifth Circuit, we might have a little more urgency on teaching our kids healthy relationship skills. Sponsored by Rep. Jasmine Clark.

I would like to give an honorable mention to Georgia's new education committee chairs (Sen Clint Dixon, Rep. Chris Erwin, Sen. Billy Hickman) for bringing a diverse panel of experts to discuss education issues that impact our students across the state and a general sense of organization.

Get Georgia Updates

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The Power of Music – A Reflection for Black History Month

by Alisha “Tuff” Tuff

In preschool, I went to a school called James McCosh (now called Emmett Louis Till Math and Science Academy). Emmett Till actually went to the school prior to his gruesome murder. The school was filled with Black memorabilia and pictures. It gave me a sense of pride as a kid seeing teachers and people who looked like me and also seeing the historical Black figures who paved the way for me.



I remember every morning singing the Black National Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” at the top of our lungs while the teacher played the piano. Our teacher explained to us that kids just like us sang the song, and a man who looked like us wrote it for our families. The song made us feel strong, powerful and connected. I never forgot how singing that song made me feel.



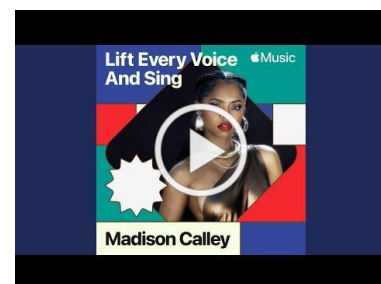
To this day, I still feel pride when I hear the song. My favorite part is “Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us, Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us, Facing the rising sun of our new day, begun Let us march on till victory is won.” I love this part because the pitch of the melody and words to the song get louder during this part.

Additionally, as I got older, I began to love this part even more because it showed the beauty and ugly truths of our journey as a people, and I choose to honor that story every day. I also love the recent videos that have gone viral of young Black children beating on tables and dancing with joy as they sing the song. It reminds me of how my classmates and I did similar actions.

I hope to continue to see the song taught to generations to come! Songs like this unite us and make us feel strong. They can be healing and freeing.

Song lyrics (doc)

My favorite video renditions:
One sung by children and an accoustical version...



IDRA National Virtual Youth Summit – Feb 23



Help us invite students!

IDRA National Virtual Youth Summit – Students United for Education Reform

February 23, 2023 • 6:30-7:45 pm CT

IDRA's national virtual youth summit with help students learn how they can advocate safer and more successful learning environments, especially in communities targeted by inequity education policies.

This free event is designed for students who see issues within their school that affect their peers' education and who want to learn how to advocate for student rights.

Building equitable spaces for all students starts with their voices! Youth have immeasurable power to make a difference in the future of education.

IDRA is facilitating this work, but the plans and actions are student-driven.

#ForStudentsByStudents

[Register Now!](#)

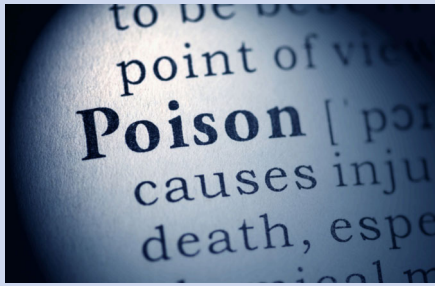
Students under the age of 18 will need a primary adult caregiver to complete this [waiver form](#) fo prior to the event (also [available in Spanish](#)).



Teaching about Race & Culture

IDRA's [school resource hub](#), [We All Belong](#), is designed for educators, families and policy advocates who want to make sure students receive a strong, truthful education in our public schools. It provides lesson plans for all grades, instructional best practices and historical resources to support educators and advocates in promoting culturally-sustaining schools and fighting harmful censorship policies. Below are some highlights!





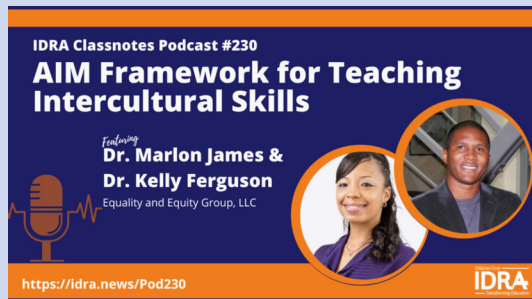
Leading the Fight with Lead

For this middle school science lesson, students analyze the relationship between lead poisoning in children and the racial makeup of communities. Students develop a public service announcement video to share important information on lead poisoning with their peers. This original lesson was developed for IDRA by Dr. Marlon James and Dr. Kelly Ferguson of Equality and Equity Group, LLC. [See lesson](#)



Successes and Failures in Resistance to Slavery

In this lesson, students examine efforts made by African slaves in the New World to resist slavery. Students begin by reviewing the geography of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and identifying colonies held by different European powers around the year 1750. They then view segments of the PBS series *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* to compare several attempts at resistance and revolt. [See lesson](#)



AIM Framework for Teaching Intercultural Skills

America is Me (AIM) is a framework that provides educators with curricular resources to promote students' understanding of equity issues central to the development of U.S. history and contemporary society. In this episode, hear from the developers of the framework, Dr. Marlon James and Dr. Kelly Ferguson of Equality and Equity Group, LLC., on how teachers of all grades and content areas can integrate it into the standards they are focusing on. [Learn more and listen to podcast episode](#)



Tools for Teaching About Race and Culture

In today's climate of classroom censorship, tools for culturally sustaining teaching can be hard to find and implement. In this session, you will get tips for using our latest four-part lesson plan series (see below) that will facilitate thoughtful high school classroom discussions of real-world issues and solutions. This session is led by the developers of the lessons for IDRA, Dr. Marlon C. James and Dr. Kelly N. Ferguson, of Equality and Equity Group, LLC. [Learn more and watch video](#)

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policies.

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Children First
IDRA
— Transforming Education

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization whose mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

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