

**R.E.A.C.H. All Our Students:
Considerations for Ethnic Studies Advocacy**

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Policy Question and Significance of the Issue

Policy Question and Goals of the Project

The following question was answered on behalf of this project's client, Every Texan: *Based on findings from other states and practitioners, how should Every Texan advocate towards making ethnic studies an accredited social studies course for high school students?*

The client wants to use the project as a roadmap for their advocacy efforts in the next legislative term of the Texas state government. Ideally, the client plans to use the project to show the effectiveness of ethnic studies programs. However, this project will inform the client of the policy windows and blocks toward their proposal.

Significance of the Issue

Ethnic studies are accredited extracurricular courses that can be taught in Texas high schools. These courses include Mexican American Studies (approved in 2018) and African American Studies (approved in 2020). Although both courses are listed under the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards, they do not count towards a social studies credit. The client, Every Texan, believe that this should be an accredited course that students can use toward their graduation requirements. This policy option is not meant to require all students to enroll in ethnic studies. Instead, it allows students the option to enroll in a course and creates an incentive through a recognized social studies credit.

Landscape Analysis of K-12 Education in Texas

Education Policy Stakeholders

Texas Education Agency

The Commissioner of Education for the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is Mike Morath who was appointed by Gov. Abbott in 2015 and has served in the position since 2016. Morath previously served on the Dallas ISD and as the chairman of Morath Investments before his appointment to the TEA. According to the Texas Tribune, Morath was a “vocal school-choice proponent” as he advocated for a home rule policy that would have kept Dallas ISD away from state control (Collier 2015). Morath’s appointment was met with mixed reviews as the Association of Texas Professional Education noted that it showed Gov. Abbot’s interests in education reform and the “pro-privatization crowd” (Collier 2015). Morath is currently not affiliated with a political party.

Morath oversees eight offices within the TEA that are administered by nine deputy commissioners. These offices include: the Office of Educator Support, the Office of Finance Administration, School Programs, Office of Governance and Accountability, Office of Operations, Office of Special Populations, Office of Information Technology (IT), and General Counsel.

State Board of Education

The State Board of Education (SBOE) and the Texas state legislature have significant oversight on the policy oversight of K-12 education.

The responsibilities of the SBOE include: setting curriculum standards, reviewing and adopting instructional materials, and establishing graduation requirements. The SBOE has three committees: one on instruction, another on school finance (i.e., the Permanent School Fund), and an additional committee on school initiatives. One of their legislative priorities is to align instruction materials to cover 100% of TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge Skills)/standards” (“State Board of Education-88th Legislative Priorities” n.d.). The SBOE has 15 members that represent 15 districts. A majority of the Board members are affiliated with the Texas GOP:

| Name | District | Party Affiliation |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Melissa N. Ortega | El Paso | Democrat |
| LJ Francis | Corpus Christi | Republican |
| Marisa B. Perez-Diaz | San Antonio | Democrat |
| Staci Childs | Houston | Democrat |
| Rebecca Bell-Metereau | San Marcus | Democrat |
| Will Hickman | Houston | Republican |
| Julie Pickren | Pearland | Republican |
| Audrey Young | Trinity | Republican |
| Keven Ellis (Chair) | Lufkin | Republican |
| Tom Maynard | Florence | Republican |
| Patricia Hardy (Secretary) | Fort Worth | Republican |
| Pam Little (Vice Chair) | Fairview | Republican |
| Aicha Davis | Dallas | Democrat |
| Evelyn Brooks | Frisco | Republican |
| Aaron Kinsey | Midland | Republican |

Table 1: Partisan Breakdown of the Texas GOP

Texas State Legislature

The state legislature is the most powerful group of influencers in determining K-12 education policy. In the state House of Representatives, the Public Education Committee of 13 members oversee K-12 education policy and agencies including the TEA and the SBOE. Rep. Brad Buckley (R-Dist. 54) chairs the committee and Rep. Alma Allen (D-Dist. 131/Houston) is the committee’s vice-chair. In the Senate, the Committee on Education oversees K-12 policy. Sen. Brandon Creighton (R-Dist. 4) chairs the committee and Sen. Donna Campbell is the committee’s Vice-Chair (R-Dist. 25).

Republicans control both chambers of the Texas state legislature. 19 of the 31 senators and 86 of the 150 representatives are members of the Texas GOP. According to the party’s recent platform, they support teaching a “common American identity, which includes the contribution and assimilation of diverse racial and ethnic groups” (Patrick and Nuttall, n.d.). The GOP advocates for removing critical race theory ideology and racial awareness from education programs.

Ethnic Studies in Texas

In 2018, Mexican American Studies became the first ethnic studies course to be incorporated into the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) (The Texas Tribune 2018) . This approval came after a four-year debate in which the State Board debated on offering materials and guidance to teach the course. A previous proposal was rejected in 2014 as some members believed an ethnic studies course would have been “racially divisive” (The Texas Tribune 2018). Instead, board members asked textbook publishers to create textbooks for Mexican American Studies and other ethnic studies courses (The Texas Tribune 2018). This meant that teachers could offer the course but would have to create their own materials and course structure.

In 2020, the SBOE gave final approval for Mexican American Studies. It was the first ethnic studies course approved by the SBOE and possibly the first MAS course approved by any state board of education (Texas Public Radio 2021). The course was available for Texas schools to teach starting in the 2019-2020 school year.

Mexican American Studies

Mexican American Studies (MAS) is only available for high school students and only counts as an elective course. In MAS, students learn about the historical and cultural contributions of Mexican Americans. The knowledge and skills that students learn include:

- **History:** Students will learn about pre-colonial settlements, Spanish colonization, Mexican independence, Mexico’s relationship with the U.S. and Mexican American citizenship from 1975 to the present.
- **Government:** Students will understand Mexican American political power and decisions throughout U.S. history.
- **Citizenship:** Students will explore the debates “surrounding the nature of respectful expression of different points of view in a constitutional republic”.

African American Studies

In 2020, African American Studies (AAS) became the second ethnic studies course to be approved by the SBOE. Like MAS, AAS is an elective course that is only available for high school students. In AAS, students learn about the cultural and historical contributions of African Americans in the United States. The knowledges and skills students learn in this course include:

- **History:** Understanding African history pre-1619, enslavement during the American colonial period, the Civil War period, the Jim Crow era, the Civil Rights Movement, and the contributions of political figures including Condoleezza Rice and Barack Obama.
- **Government:** Students learn the political impact of African Americans throughout history including issues pertaining to voting rights, civil rights, fair housing, education, affirmative action, the War on Crime, and the War on Drugs.

Concerns about Critical Race Theory in K-12 Classrooms

Since 2020, there has been a growing concern amongst conservative lawmakers that critical race theory is taught in public school settings (NowThis News 2022). Critical race theory emerged as a concept in legal education in the 1970s and 1980s (NowThis News 2022). Critical race theory recognized racial disparities that persisted despite the “race-neutral” laws that emerged out of the Civil Rights era (NowThis News 2022). Hence, it is a critical approach in analyzing laws and policies. Thus, it is more appropriate for higher education settings and is generally not included in the primary or secondary levels.

Still, critics argue that CRT is taught in the classroom. As Rashawn Ray and Alexandra Gibbons wrote for the Brookings Institute (2021), “opponents fear that CRT admonishes all white people for being oppressors while classifying all Black people as hopelessly oppressed victims”. Therefore, critics maintain that the theory is taught in K-12 school. These opponents claim that the CRT taught in school undermines individual agency, teaches against an American

identity, and is a pseudo-intellectual movement that is steeped in racism (Burke, Butcher, and Greene 2022).

A. Critical Race Theory Teaches Falsehoods in K-12 Schools

In a commentary on critical race theory by the Heritage Foundation, Jonathan Butcher argues that CRT and its components is being taught in K-12 settings and is used to justify discrimination for school activities. These components teach children that racism is infused in American culture (Butcher 2022). Butcher rebutted this by writing that “racism does not define America” (Butcher 2022). He encouraged state lawmakers to reject “compelled speech” of CRT and to encourage legislation that would make it mandatory for schools to post their content online (Butcher 2022 a).

B. Undermining Individualism

CRT is also critiqued for undermining individual agency . One commentator uses the example of racism being blamed for low proficiency in core subjects. CRT would cite structural racism without evaluating the quality of a child’s school system or the lack of parental choice in schooling options (Rowe 2022). Thus, CRT “narrows the ability to carefully consider the multiple factors that drive down the performance of students of all races” (Rowe 2022, 82).

C. Loss of an American Identity

Next, CRT threatens the “American identity” by separating Americans (Pondiscio 2022). By forcing Americans to consider what makes them different, they are losing what makes them the same (Pondiscio 2022). By focusing on this difference, CRT can actually perpetuate feelings of intolerance amongst Americans (Pondiscio 2022).

D. CRT is a Psuedo-Intellectual Movement that Incites Fear

Lastly, CRT is discredited as a theory not based in science but in emotion. As Robert Maranto (2022) wrote for the Heritage Foundation, it is an “intellectual movement(s) [that] pretend to be what they are not” (128). Maranto state that it has no scientific backing but is instead backed by emotions. These feelings include fear which subdues free speech and free inquiry rights (Maranto 2022).

Critical Race Theory and Connections to Ethnic Studies

Despite conservative concerns, ethnic studies advocates have noted that CRT is not taught in most K-12 schools. However, ethnic studies shares frameworks with the theory. Like CRT, ethnic studies would recognize the significance of racism on marginalized groups. But, instead of assessing policies, ethnic studies will explore the cultural and historical contributions of these groups within their community, state, and the nation. Students would also engage in more “real time practice” through community-based projects and activities. Still, because of its conflation with critical race theory, arguments may be made that (NowThis News 2022):

- Ethnic studies teaches students that America is a racist society

- White students would feel guilty about being white as they would assume responsibility for social disparities
- Ethnic studies gives preferential treatment to students based on their race
- Ethnic studies adds more to the problem by examining everything through a racial lens
- Ethnic studies ruins the self-esteem of Black and brown students

Critical Race Theory and DEI Are Under Attack in Texas

Since 2021, the Texas State Legislature Has Banned Critical Race Theory

In 2020, the Trump Administration implemented an executive order prohibiting DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) training on divisive topics that support CRT. Similarly in 2021, the Texas state legislature sought to ban CRT through House Bill 3979 (HB 3979) (Zeeble 2021). Rep. Steve Toth, the author of the bill, wrote the bill to protect students from being “scapegoated” for past wrongs (Zeeble 2021). Under the bill, educators can discuss the immorality of white supremacy (Toth n.d.). However, the bill mandated:

- Teachers be allowed to opt out of teaching “a particular current event or...controversial issue of public policy or social affairs” (Toth n.d.)
- Teachers explore topics by offering “diverse and contending” perspectives (Toth n.d.)
- That teachers would not be required to participate in training that perpetuated race and sex stereotyping or “blame on the basis of race or sex” (Toth n.d.)

SB 3 (Senate Bill 3) redacted most of the provisions in HB3979 including the teaching of Native American history and abolitionist writings (Hughes n.d.). Additionally, the bill prohibited the teaching of racial supremacy, inherent racism and/or sexism, morality based on race or sex, and responsibility for the actions of one’s ancestors on account of their race and sex (Hughes, n.d.). Teachers still needed to provide “different viewpoints” when discussing historical topics (Hughes, n.d.). SB 3 also required at least one teacher and administrator from a school district to attend a civic training program (Hughes, n.d.). Educators have criticized the measure as it limits the teaching of accurate history. As Mani Morgan wrote for an article in *The Clearing House*, “this law...indicates that these subjects can be taught only by transmitting the idea that such outcomes occurred when people deviated from the country’s founding principles” (Morgan 2022). Senate Bill 3 went into effect in September 1, 2021.

Yet, a growing resentment against CRT existed in some Texas school districts prior to and during the passage of SB 3. In 2020, the Grapevine-Colleyville ISD, the board of trustees voted not to renew principal James Whitfield’s contract because parents accused him of pushing CRT (Hylton, Berk, and Lozano 2021). However, there was no cited evidence that the principal required CRT for students or staff. Yet, there were complaints of Whitfield’s pictures with his white wife, his participation in a district-approved presentation on diversity, his email concerning George Floyd and systemic racism, and, as one school board candidate complained, his “extreme views” (Hylton, Berk, and Lozano 2021).

Later that year, Carroll ISD decided to end efforts of their diversity and equity plan as a part of a settlement. The Cultural Competence Action Plan (CCAP) was formed in reaction to a 2018 video in which a group of Carroll ISD students were chanting the “n-word” at a party (Asmelash 2021). The goals of the plan were to:

- “Promote cultural competence within Carroll ISD” (Carroll ISD 2020)
- “Facilitate communication and understanding among different stakeholders, and serve as a community resource” (Carroll ISD 2020)
- “Advocate for and support culturally competent and responsive programs and policies” (Carroll ISD 2020)
- “Engage students, staff, and faculty to collect feedback on cultural competence in CISD” (Carroll ISD 2020)
- “Propose strategies for reaching cultural competence” (Carroll ISD 2020)

Kristin Garcia, a Carroll ISD parent, filed suit in 2020 stating that the district violated the Texas Open Meetings Act when they accepted the plan (Joy 2021). Later that year, a judge blocked further developments with the plan.

Conservatives GOP Will Continue to Oppose CRT and DEI

Political and social discourse against CRT and DEI have now targeted the state’s higher education programs. This year, Gov. Abbott instructed state agencies and public universities to stop consider diversity in hiring. A memo written by Abbott’s chief of staff Gardner Pate states that using DEI policies “illegally discriminate against certain demographic groups” (McGee 2023). Recently, the Texas Senate has agreed to hear a bill that would ban DEI offices and programs in the state’s public universities (McGee 2023). Former HUD Secretary Ben Carson spoke in favor of the bill noting that DEI is an “ubiquitous virus” that harms free speech and inquiry (Rodrigues 2023). The House has adopted a version of the state budget that prohibits state funds from being used for DEI “practices or similar programs, including personnel, training or activities” (Rodrigues 2023).

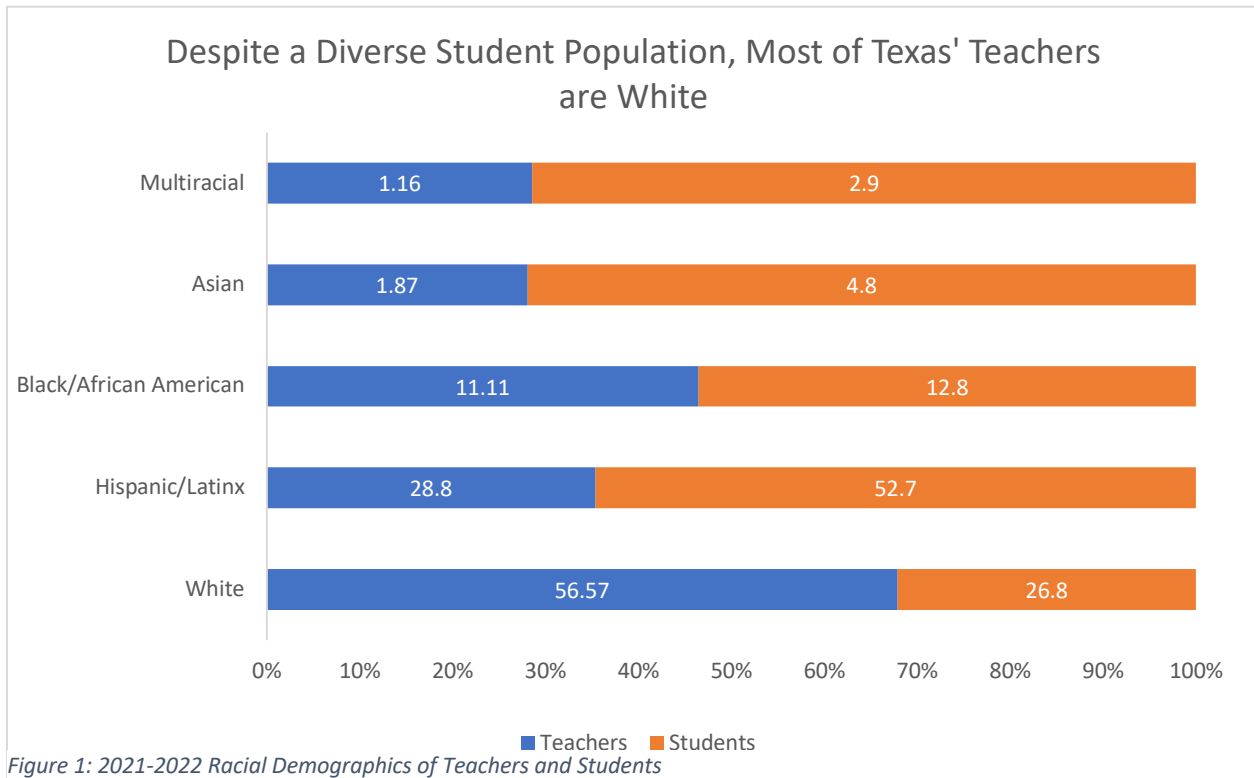
The governor’s office, state legislature, and conservative-leaning school boards have also adopted rhetoric to curtail DEI and CRT that may have effects on ethnic studies. This will most likely continue through their association with conservative-leaning think-tanks and political groups. For instance, the Manhattan Institute published a legislative roadmap that includes proposals that have been incorporated in recent legislation (see Appendix A). These proposals include: abolishing DEI bureaucracies, ending mandatory diversity training, curtailing political coercion, and ending identity-based preferences (Rufo, Shapiro, and Beienburg 2023). Although these proposals apply to higher education in Texas, they could possibly trickle down to K-12 courses like ethnic studies.

Potential Effects of Anti-DEI/CRT Policies on Ethnic Studies

Despite the permittance of ethnic studies in Texas high schools, there is concern to its efficacy with the anti-CRT and anti-DEI legislation. Because of Senate Bill 3, teachers must explore topics “objectively” and “in a manner free from political bias” (Lopez 2021) (Hughes n.d.). Additionally, one teacher and one campus administrator per school district will have to attend a civics training program. This program will instruct attendees on how race and racism should be taught to Texas students.

Still, this limits the instruction within Mexican American Studies and African American Studies as they focus on marginalized groups. And some of these do not have adequate teacher representation and they have underperformed on state testing.

In the 2021-2022 school, Texas mostly taught students of color (Lindsey 2022 (a)). But, most of the state’s educators were white. These students’ white teachers may hold biases that



affect their instruction to these students. Hence, students of color may feel unsupported within the learning space. And according to data from the Texas Education Agency, less than 50 percent of Latinx/Hispanic and Black/African American students were at or above grade level for their reading/language arts and math test scores (Lindsey 2022 (b)) (Texas Education Agency 2022). Yet, over 50 percent of white and Asian students were at or above grade level (Lindsey 2022 (b)) (Texas Education Agency 2022 (b)).

Although these scores are context-specific, the underperformance of students of color could stem from their marginalization in the education system (Pearson 2022 (b)). Sleeter and Zavala (2020) share that if students receive signals that they are not academically capable, they will not perform well in school (3). Thus, educators and scholars argue that ethnic studies can provide students of color with positive identity affirmations that boost academic performance (Sleeter & Zavala 2020, 3). Hence, limiting ethnic studies could limit the academic performance of enrolled students of color. Additional effects can include ending programs meant to help students of color, eliminating anti-bias training meant to limit discipline disparities, and modifying courses. For instance, a Texas superintendent mentioned dropping ethnic studies courses because recent laws “bans showing any preference to any one perspective” (Morgan 2022).

Literature Review

From the Lecture Hall to the Classroom: The History of Ethnic Studies

Before matriculating into K-12 classrooms, ethnic studies originated out of a social movement at San Francisco State University (SFSU) in the late 1960s (Ehsanipour 2020). Black SFSU students pushed for the creation of a Black studies department but the school administration refused their proposal (Ehsanipour 2020). Simultaneously, other BIPOC students formed the Third World Liberation Front. This coalition was comprised of students from different cultures who believed that they had a shared history in white supremacist oppression.

After months of protest, both groups were able to negotiate the country's first College of Ethnic Studies (Ehsanipour 2020). This movement would eventually spread to the University of California-Berkeley and -Santa Barbara as well as to other schools across the nation. Ethnic studies were incorporated in K-12 schools in the 1990s and have since seen a steady increase nationwide (Anderson 2016).

Purpose of Ethnic Studies

Ethnic studies is the “interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and comparative study of the social, cultural, political, and economic expression and experiences of ethnic groups” (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction n.d.). Ethnic studies seeks to empower students to apply their learning within their local communities (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction n.d.). Additional goals of ethnic studies include:

- **Decolonizing curriculum.** Ethnic studies free students from the common and popular narratives that are the product of colonization (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction n.d.).
- **Pushing students toward self-determination.** Students get to make and create their own narratives and see themselves within the material.
- **Eliminating racism.** Students and their instructors should use ethnic studies to “critique racial oppression” at all levels of society “while also showing how each level influences the other” (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction n.d.).

Four common disciplines of studies within ethnic studies include: African American Studies, Asian-American Studies, Latinx Studies, and Native American/Indigenous Studies

Components of Ethnic Studies

Historically, ethnic studies utilized an ARC (Access, Relevance, and Community) approach in which students are provided access to a quality education through curriculum that is relevant to them (Tintiangco-Cublaes et al. 2015, 107). Through community involvement, the students will engage in a reciprocal learning relationship within their community (Tintiangco-Cubales et al. 2015, 107). Ethnic studies include three critical components: culturally responsive pedagogy, community responsive pedagogy, and teacher racial identity development.

| Components of Ethnic Studies Programs | |
|--|---|
| Component | Definition |
| Culturally Responsive Pedagogy | Instruction is culturally relevant when students’ cultures are represented and incorporated within the learning environment (Ladson-Billings 1995, 467). Culturally relevant classrooms also foster a caring environment that makes students feel safe and help them engage in constructive dialogue (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 114) (Sleeter & Zavala 2020, 17-18). |
| Community Responsive Pedagogy | Within this component, teachers help students address the needs in their local ethnic communities (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 115). Students accomplish this through becoming “critical action researchers” in investigating the problem and creating solutions (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 115). |
| Teacher Racial Identity Development | Through teaching ethnic studies courses, educators should reflect on their positionality, or ways of being based on their social context (Pearson 2022 (a)). This component can be relevant for teachers of color and white teachers. |

Table 2: Components of Ethnic Studies

A. Culturally Relevant Teaching and Classrooms

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) indicates that culturally relevant pedagogy takes place when the students’ culture is incorporated within classroom organization and instruction (467). Tintiango-Cubales et al. (2015) wrote that culturally relevant classrooms “[develop] students’ critical consciousness” and “[create]caring academic environments” (113). Due to the stigmatization of marginalized students, a caring environment can provide students with a sense of safety (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 114). Culturally relevant pedagogy can also encourage students to value their own culture, the cultural identities of others, and help them critically assess the world around them (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 114) (Sleeter & Zavala 2020, 17-18).

B. Community Responsive Pedagogy

Community responsive pedagogy includes teacher engagement with local ethnic communities to help prepare students in addressing local needs (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 115). Through community responsive pedagogy, students can apply their learning in a real-world context outside of the classroom (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 115). Students can apply this learning through research. Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is a method of community responsive pedagogy in which students become “critical action researchers”. Through YPAR and community responsive pedagogy, students can build better relationships with themselves and their communities (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 116).

C. Teacher Racial Identity

Another component of an ethnic studies programs is teacher racial identity development through which educators intentionally reflect about their positionality, our ways of being that is based on our social and political contextualization based on race, culture and identity (Pearson

2022) (Tintiangco-Cubales et al. 2015, 117). This component is imperative for teachers of color and white teachers.

Because of their lived experiences, teachers of color are more likely to connect to the content and to their learners of color (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015, 117). Yet, reliance on the same racial identity is not enough. Teachers of color need to assess how racism has affected them and their pedagogical practices (Tintango-Cubales et al. 2015, 117). Moreover, if teachers of color do not originate from the community they teach in, there is additional work in understanding how their “experiences, privileges, and prejudices” hinders their relationships with students and their community (Tintiangco-Cubales et al. 2015, 117).

Effective white ethnic studies instructors can be seen as role models for other white people in understanding how they are placed in a privileged positionality through white supremacy, the systems that systemically enable white people to maintain power over non-white people (TFA, 2022) (Pearson, 2022a). Through their understanding of racism, these white teachers were able to critically assess curriculum, understood the impact of racism in schools, and were able to employ **culturally relevant pedagogy** (Tintiangco-Cubales et al. 2015, 117). But, most white educators lack engagement with understanding race and often try to be colorblind (Tintiangco-Cubales et al. 2015, 117). Hence, they will have to “examine connections between their individual lives and identities, and broader social and political contexts” (Tintiangco-Cubales et al. 2015, 117).

Research on the Benefits of Learning about Racial Identity Development and Awareness

Sleeter and Zavala (2020) found that ethnic studies courses can have positive impacts on students’ personal and academic development (3). For instance, the authors explain that “high racial awareness is linked with young people’s mental health and achievement” (Sleeter and Zavala 2020, 3). Chavous et al. (2003) showed that Black high school students with high racial self-esteem and racial awareness were more likely to graduate from high school and matriculate to college. Additionally, Atschul et al. (2008) discovered that high-achieving Latinx 8th graders had a bicultural identity.

White students can also benefit from a multicultural curriculum. When white children have regular exposure to multicultural curriculum and learning, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards people of different races (Sleeter and Zavala 2020, 19). Furthermore, this can help them reduce their racial bias (Sleeter and Zavala 2020, 19).

Challenges of Ethnic Studies Implementation

Despite the positive gains that ethnic studies can provide for all students, there are implementation challenges that can hinder their effectiveness. These challenges include curriculum design and implementation, teacher training and retention, and social/political opposition.

A. Curriculum Design and Implementation

Intended outcomes for ethnic studies courses include decolonization, self-determination, and to train anti-racist learners (Tintiangco-Cubales et al. 2015, 111-113).

A decolonizing pedagogy is a style of teaching that decentralizes Eurocentric perspectives through critiquing capitalism and resist “structures of domination”, (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 112) includes:

- Focus on students’ individual histories and cultures through concepts of “diversity, multiculturalism, imperialism, oppression, revolution, and racism” (Cubales-Tintiango et al. 2015, 112)
- Allowing students to utilize feelings and emotions as sources of knowledge (Cubales-Tintiango et al. 2015, 112)
- Creating a space for **marginalized** students rooted in unity and cooperation (Cubales-Tintiango et al. 2015, 112)
- Teaches personal and professional life-skills (Cubales-Tintiango et al. 2015, 112)
- A “social action component that models activism toward social change” (Cubales-Tintiango et al. 2015, 112)

These components indicate that ethnic studies need to be intentionally created and implemented. When ethnic studies are effective, students can begin to determine how they see themselves in a personal and academic context. Furthermore, it can teach them anti-racist values that helps them from internalizing and enacting white supremacist oppression (Cubales-Tintiango et al. 2015). For this to occur, ethnic studies courses must be rigorous in its engagement with students’ identities and their communities (Cubales-Tintiango et al. 2015, 120).

B. Teacher Population, Training, and Retention

White teachers often have difficulty recognizing the effects of racism in education and creating **culturally relevant** classrooms (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 117). Thus, even if these teachers were interested in teaching ethnic studies courses, they would need extensive training to be effective (Cubales-Tintango et al. 2015).

This training may include professional development on identity self-reflection, positionality, and their participation in systemic oppression in the education system (Titiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 119-120). Most importantly, these white teachers may have to undergo coaching to recognize their pro-white/anti-black biases (Starck et al. 2020). Pro-white/anti-black biases result in lower student expectations, lower quality instruction, and “less concern for fostering mutually respectful classroom environments” (Starck et al. 2020). These biases negatively impact students of color achievement and are antithetical to the purpose of ethnic studies (Starck et al. 2020) (Titiango-Cubales et al. 2015).

Ethnic studies usually fall under social studies curriculum (Wong 2015). However, general social studies and secondary history teachers are the least qualified amongst other subjects (Wong 2015) (Titiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 108). In a 2015 *Atlantic* article, Ali Wong found that 34 percent of history teachers were not certified in their subject and that there was a decline in the quality of U.S. history teachers. Even if teachers were certified, they may not have the content knowledge or perspective to teach ethnic studies courses (Titiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 108). Lastly, pre-service teachers of color, who can be the most effective in ethnic studies pedagogy, face testing barriers which bars their certification (Titiango-Cubales et al. 2015, 108).

Consequently, there is a limited teacher pool in Texas. The attrition rate for the 2021-2022 school year was 12 percent and 8, 600 teachers retired at the end of the year (Lopez 2022a). This number may grow as more teachers consider leaving the profession in Texas. 77 percent of

Texas teachers surveyed by the Charles Butt Foundation, an education equity organization named after the CEO of H-E-B, shared that they seriously considered leaving the profession (Lopez 2022b). These teachers point to decreased pay, feelings of disrespect from the community and elected officials, burdening workloads, and disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic as indicators for their decision to leave (Lopez 2022b).

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used to answer the client's policy question. Specifically, interviews, case studies, and document analysis were used for this project's findings. Three individuals were interviewed for this project. One interviewee is a university professor with organizing experience. Another interviewee is a senior policy researcher at a research firm in Texas. The last interviewee is a graduate student who also has organizing experience. During these conversations, the interviewees highlighted varying perspectives and suggestions for organizing around the client's issue.

The case studies explored the implementation, contention, and prevention of an ethnic studies requirement in other states. Ideally, these studies will provide the client context of the social-political landscape surrounding divisive topics like ethnic studies. Key documents including laws, board meeting agendas and notes, and court opinions were analyzed for policy context and content.

Interviews

Quintero et al (2022) shared that interviews are used to describe why things happen the way they do and the reasons for which they happen. Thus, the purpose of this project's interviews were to:

- Gain background knowledge of ethnic studies programs in Texas K-12 schools
- Learn how ethnic studies benefits students' overall academic performance and overall well-being (e.g., high school graduation)
- Share advocacy and research recommendations to propose to my client

For this project, three education policy practitioners were interviewed. These practitioners have experience in advocacy, research, and programming. All interviews were conducted in February over Zoom. Each interview was recorded (after the interviewee's consent) and uploaded to Otter.ai for transcription. Each interviewee was informed that the recording would be deleted at the conclusion of the project.

Differentiated sets of interview questions were used based on the interviewees' professional backgrounds (See Appendix B and Appendix C for reference). For example, I asked interviewee about their policy research on ethnic studies programs in Texas based on her research background.

For this project, I interviewed Dr. Angela Valenzuela, Dr. Chloe Latham-Sikes, and Eliza Epstein. Dr. Valenzuela currently teaches at the University of Texas at Austin and has been at the forefront of ethnic studies activism in the state. Dr. Latham-Sikes is the Deputy Director of Policy at the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). Dr. Latham-Sikes has written extensively on public education related issues including ethnic studies. Ms. Epstein has experience in grassroots organizing and is a graduate student at University of Texas at Austin.

Coding

Each interview was coded to discover key themes to relay in this project's findings. Coding "serves as a way to label, compile and organize...data" (Center for Evaluation and Research and Tobacco Control Evaluation Center, n.d.). Hence, these codes were used to organize interviewees' perspectives into distinct labels to craft considerations for the client,

Every Texan. Prior to coding, each interview was reviewed to find initial themes that could be compiled into a “code book”. Throughout the review process, the codes were labeled in main themes and sub-themes and ideas (see Appendix D for reference). The main themes were identifying players, recognizing challenges, and building momentum.

Each theme revealed insights for a potential advocacy campaign. Players could be identified as policy players, accomplices, and/or blockers. Challenges within social-political discourse, education policy, organizing, and within the education system could propel or deter advocacy. Finally, momentum could be built through windows of opportunity, strategizing, and messaging.

Case Studies

Crowe et al. (2011) described case studies as being useful in gaining more “in-depth” information of a “complex issue” in its “natural real-life context” (1). There are three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Crowe et al. 2011, 1). This project used a collective case study approach in which “multiple cases simultaneously [were studied]...in an attempt to generate a still broader appreciation of a particular issue” (Crowe et al 2011, 1).

This project’s case studies included examples of districts and states that had ethnic studies programs but lost them, made ethnic studies a graduation requirement, or outlawed “critical race theories” in schools. These case studies will provide the client with examples of successful implementation of ethnic studies courses and unsuccessful attempts. The successful attempts will be used to highlight successful advocacy strategies and best practices. The unsuccessful efforts will be evaluated to exemplify opposition that blocked the incorporation of ethnic studies courses. The states of Arizona, California, and Alabama were analyzed for this report.

A. Arizona

In 2010, the Arizona Department of Education and the Arizona State Legislature threatened the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) with a \$36 million budget cut if they did not end their MAS program (PBS NewsHour 2010). The legislature and the state superintendent argued that the program encouraged resentment against other races and ethnic groups (PBS NewsHour 2010). They also argued that the course promoted ethnic solidarity and anarchy against the federal government (PBS NewsHour 2010). The TUSD discontinued the program in 2011 (Stephenson 2021). Yet, through federal intervention, TUSD was able to implement culturally relevant pedagogy program as a successor to MAS (Stephenson 2021).

B. California

California became the first state in the nation to implement an ethnic studies requirement for high school graduation (Kornfield 2021). School districts were mandated to “develop coursework that delves into the contributions and struggles of Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans and Asian Americans” (Kornfield 2021). Gov. Gavin Newsom promoted the bill citing students “deserve to see themselves in their studies” (Newsom 2021). However, the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Consortium, who worked on the first draft of California’s ethnic studies model, claimed that the state implemented a watered-down version (Liberated Ethnic

Studies Model Curriculum Consortium n.d.). Yet, parents and local activists have decried versions of an ethnic studies requirement throughout the state (Smith 2021). Furthermore, Jewish rights groups have claimed that certain districts' proposals are Anti-Semitic (Marcus 2022). The Los Angeles Unified School District is currently facing a lawsuit on claims that their ethnic studies curriculum promotes Anti-Jewish ideologies (Marcus 2022).

C. Alabama

In 2021, the Alabama State Board of Education adopted a resolution that banned teaching critical race theory (Davis 2021). The resolution stated that the Board would not support resources that "indoctrinate" students with ideas pertaining to racial or gender supremacy (Alabama State Board of Education 2021). The state House and Senate have also passed measures to prohibit critical race theory.

Policy and Document Analysis

Each of the cases involved various documents which contextualized the political battles, curriculum controversy, and the political movements to ban divisive topics. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis "in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation--'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon'". In this project, the phenomenon being studied is the policy process of implementing K-12 ethnic studies requirements. The intent from studying these policy-related documents were to:

- Understand the decision process for implementing ethnic studies or banning the courses altogether
- Observe the actors and groups that contributed to the policy process

Hence bills, meeting minutes and agendas, model curriculum, resolutions, and even court opinions were used for this analysis.

Concerns and Limitations

Interviews are limited in that "meanings and experiences" will be emphasized at the expense of "contextual sensitivities" (Rahman 2016, 104). The interviewees' expertise and not their proximity to certain communities was emphasized for this project. So, the interview data may not produce relevant policy or advocacy recommendations. In other words, the experts' opinions may not work for certain ethnic groups, regions, and school districts.

Although the case studies provide models for Every Texan to duplicate, it may not match their operational strategy. Therefore, the case studies and document analyses may not be relevant in long-term organizing.

Case Studies: Ethnic Studies and ‘Divisive Concepts’ on the Ballots and Dockets

Across the country, states have adopted legislation that have banned the teaching, training, or programming of ‘divisive’ concepts at the K-12 level. However, other states have accepted these ‘concepts’ by creating curriculum and enforcing graduation requirements for students to enroll in an ethnic studies course during their high school education (i.e., grades 9-12). Both policies have garnered various distinctions of support and disapproval from advocacy groups, local and state policymakers, educators, and even parents.

Each of these states has had a different response to topics pertaining to race and history in K-12 classrooms. Hence, this section will highlight the strategies that each state’s policymakers, and in the case of Arizona a federal judge, and activists used to:

- Block the instruction of ‘divisive concepts’ that were considered anti-American, instilled low self-esteem or victimhood based on race, and divided K-12 instruction
- Spread political messaging against critical race theory and other divisive concepts
- Advance an ethnic studies graduation requirement

Arizona: Mexican American Studies Restored in Tucson After Federal Intervention

Case Background

In 1974, Black and Latino students brought a school desegregation class action against the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) (Wallace-Tashima 2017). Maria Mendoza, Roy and Josie Fisher, and Edward Conteras claimed that Black, Hispanic, and white students were treated differently in TUSD (Smith and Ingram 2022). The district court ruled in favor of the students in that while TUSD had dismantled racial segregation within its school district in the 1950s, the district still acted with “segregative intent” (Wallace-Tashima 2017). Thus, TUSD was ordered by the court to redress this intent. One of the ways that TUSD sought redress was the creation of a Mexican American Studies (MAS) program in 1998. According to federal judge A. Wallace-Tashima (2017) the purpose of the program was to engage “Mexican American students by helping them see ‘themselves or their family or their community’ in their studies, and its purpose was to close the historic gap in academic achievement between Mexican American and white students in Tucson”.

The program was intended for high school students as a series of college preparatory courses that would boost the academic outcomes. Specifically, these series of courses were intended for Hispanic/Latino students (Wallace-Tashima 2017). Which, during the 2010-2011 school year, were the majority of TUSD’s student population (69 percent) (Wallace-Tashima 2017).

‘Republicans Hate Latinos’: The Beginning of the End of MAS

In 2006, the MAS program “drew negative attention” from the Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne and other officials from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) (Wallace-Tashima 2017). Dolores Huerta, a Latina labor and civil rights leader, was invited to speak at the Tucson High Magnet School upon the request of the school’s principal Dr. Abel

Morado. In her speech, Huerta was quoted saying “Republicans hate Latinos” (Wallace-Tashima 2017).

The speech became a subject of debate amongst lawmakers in the state’s House Select Committee on Government Operations, Performance and Waste in a 2006 meeting. During the meeting, it was implicated that Horne, a Republican, sent a press release that stated that Huerta encouraged students to skip school (“Minutes of Meeting” 2006). However, it was noted that Huerta did not give a statement. Still, committee members debated the intentions of Huerta’s speech. Furthermore, committee members pressed Dr. Morado and TUSD’s superintendent Roger Pfeuffer on their failure to review Huerta’s speech and their “poor management” of student activism in the district (“Minutes of Meeting” 2006).

When one of the members expressed concern for Huerta’s speech was a “local control issue”, another member countered that TUSD is the “second largest district in the state, and the amount of money they receive is enormous” (“Minutes of Meeting” 2006). The member added that it was “ironic” that due to TUSD’s desegregation order, they continue to have issues with segregation “within an individual school” (“Minutes of Meeting” 2006). So, it was in the Committee’s purview that to investigate whether a district under a desegregation order and “receiving special taxing authority” has followed the law (“Minutes of Meeting” 2006).

A Ban on “Raza Studies”

To provide a counternarrative to Huerta’s speech, Horne asked his Deputy Superintendent Margaret Garcia Dugan, a Latina Republican, to share the pride she has in her heritage and political affiliation (Wallace-Tashima 2017). After Dugan’s speech, she declined to host a Q & A. A group of students responded in protest by “taping their mouths, turning their backs, raising their fists, and walking out of the auditorium” (Wallace-Tashima 2017).

Horne was in attendance and believed that this was an intentional demonstration by teachers involved with the MAS program. His basis was due to him not observing this type of behavior in other schools (Wallace-Tashima 2017). Horne’s view of MAS was solidified the same day when he saw a librarian wearing a M.E.Ch.A (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) shirt (M.E.Ch.A. is a high school and college student organizing club). Horne visited the University of Arizona M.E.Ch.A.’s website where he read the organization’s founding document (Wallace-Tashima 2017). According to the *González v. Douglas* court opinion, Horne believed the document supported anarchy and anti-American sentiments (Wallace-Tashima 2017).

In 2007, Horne wrote an open letter to Tucson citizens in which he addressed the Dugan protest, textbooks, and reports from teachers of being discriminated against by MAS practitioners for being a “white man’s agent” and for encouraging anti-American/anti-Western sentiments (Wallace-Tashima 2017). He encouraged TUSD terminate the program. When TUSD did not accept Horne’s recommendation, he partnered with legislators to legislate three bills. Of the three bills, House Bill 2281 was successful in banning Tucson’s MAS program.

| (Year) and Name of Legislation | Sponsor | Status | Purpose |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------|---|
| (2008) Senate Bill 1108 | Senator Russell Pearce, Republican | Did not pass | Prohibited courses that featured certain ideologies and beliefs that dissented from American and western values |
| (2009) Senate Bill 1069 | Senator Jonathan Paton, Republican | Did not pass | Prohibit courses that are designed for particular ethnic groups and “advocate ethnic solidarity” |
| (2010) House Bill 2281 | Representative Steve Montenegro, Republican | Passed | Prohibit courses that are designed for particular ethnic groups and “advocate ethnic solidarity” |

Table 3: Legislative Attempts to Ban the MAS Program(s)

House Bill 2281

With the support of Representative Steve Montenegro, Horne helped enact House Bill 2281 (HB 2281) which targeted Tucson’s MAS program. In HB 2281, school districts and charter schools were banned from “including courses or classes that either promote the overthrow of the United States government or promote resentment toward a race or class of people” (Montenegro 2010). Additionally, the bill prevented districts and charter schools from creating courses for students of a “particular ethnic group” or advocated for resentment against another race or class of people (Montenegro 2010).

If the State Board of Education (SBE) or the state superintendent discovered a district’s or charter school’s failure to comply with the law, the school district or charter school had to be notified of their violation. Failure to redress the violation would result in the ADE withholding at most 10 percent of their monthly apportionment of state aid (Montenegro 2010). Moreover, if the ADE, the state’s Auditor General, or the state’s Attorney General learned that the district or charter school failed to comply within 90 days, entitled apportionments would be withheld until compliance is met (Montenegro 2010). Only the SBE or Superintendent could verify when the school district or charter school was compliant.

HB 2281, and its predecessors, were supported by conservative lawmakers and stakeholders in Arizona. Members of the Arizona GOP often discredited the “Raza Studies” (“raza” is Spanish for “race”, the intended translation is “the people”) (Stephenson 2021). One lawmaker even referred to the courses as a “sweatshop for liberalism” (Stephenson 2021). The program was also accused of indoctrinating students with anti-white racism and making people of color see themselves as victims (Stephenson 2021). Sen. Russell Pearce, who authored SB 1108 with Tom Horne, said at a 2008 hearing, “Organizations that spew anti-American or race-based rhetoric have no place... We ought to be celebrating unity as Americans and not allowing, with taxpayer dollars, these organizations” (Stephenson 2021).

Former Gov. Jan Brewer signed the law banning MAS in Tucson in 2010. At the time of the bill's signing, the program had about 2,000 students across five high schools and some middle and elementary schools (Stephenson 2021).

MAS Program Was Proven to Be Successful

As Hank Stephenson (2021) noted in a piece for POLITICO, the MAS program was proven to be successful. Students in the program most likely scored higher on state standardized tests and were more engaged in schools.

In a study to verify the success of the MAS program (before its eventual ban), Cabrera et al. (2012) analyzed the school performance data of 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 graduating cohorts. Cabrera et al. (2012) found that the MAS program contributed to significant achievement for student who took the course (5-7). For the 2008, 2010, and 2011 cohorts; MAS students who failed at least one AIMS (Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards) test were more likely to pass all three of their AIMS tests (i.e. Math, Reading, and Writing) (Cabrera et al. 2012, 5). Researchers also found that MAS students had a higher likelihood of graduating high school (Cabrera et al. 2012, 5). Cabrera et al. (2012) indicate that "[s]tudents who took MAS courses were between 51 percent more likely to graduate from high school than non-MAS students (2009) and 108 percent more likely to graduate (2008)" (6).

Federal Intervention Overtaken Ban

Despite the report, the ban was still enacted. But, the program had a limited revival a few years later. In 2012, a federal court appointed Willis D. Hawley, a "special master", to supervise the negotiations in the district's desegregation case (Stephenson 2021). Hawley ordered the district to reinstate the MAS program while complying with HB 2281. TUSD instated culturally responsive coursework in response to Hawley's order. The program has more students and teachers than the MAS program. In 2021, there were 200 teachers and 6,000 students. However, educators have noted that the program has not had the same level of efficacy that the MAS program had (Stephenson 2021).

Still, students and educators claimed that the ban was unconstitutional especially as it closed the achievement gap for the district's Latino students ("Arizona's Ethnic Studies Ban In Public Schools Goes To Trial" 2017). Hence, they brought the case to court in which a federal judge ruled in their favor.

In 2017's *González v. Douglas*, Judge Wallace-Tashima found that the state superintendent (at the time Diane Douglas) violated the plaintiff's constitutional rights when it forced TUSD to shut down the MAS program and when it enforced a penalty of 10 percent of the districts state funding. Specifically, the judge indicated that the law infringed upon students' First Amendment (i.e., abridging free speech, exchange of ideas, and peaceful assembly) and Fourteenth Amendment (i.e., abridging a citizens' privileges) rights.

Judge Wallace-Tashima stated that Arizona's students' have a First Amendment right to learn and receive information. Those rights were violated when the state removed materials "otherwise available in a local classroom" unless it was for "legitimate pedagogical concerns" (Wallace-Tashima 2017). Additionally, HB 2281 was enacted with a "discriminatory purpose" (Wallace-Tashima 2017). Douglas' predecessor John Huppenthal, who was a vocal proponent for the MAS ban, was motivated to continue the law's enforcement through his racial animus

against Mexican Americans (Wallace-Tashima 2017). This was made evident through a series of anti-Mexican blog posts he made under a pseudonym (Wallace-Tashima 2017) (Depenbrock 2017). The judge also listed other circumstantial evidence of discriminatory purpose including:

- **The impact of the official action and whether it bears more heavily on one race than another.** HB 2281 would have heavily affected Latino students as the MAS program was intended to boost their academic achievement (Wallace-Tashima 2017).
- **The historical background of the decision.** HB 2281 was a bill four years in the making due to conservative outcry (Wallace-Tashima 2017).
- **The specific sequence of events leading to the challenged actions.** The Dugan protest, Horne’s “Open Letter”, and TUSD’s refusing Horne’s request led to the creation of anti-MAS legislation (Wallace-Tashima 2017).
- **The defendant’s departures from normal procedures or substantive conclusions.** Tom Horne, a state superintendent, involved himself in the legislative process through lobbying against a particular local issue that could have been handled at the local level (Wallace-Tashima 2017).
- **The relevant legislative or administrative history.**

Wallace-Tashima struck down the law and banned the state superintendent and the SBE from requiring TUSD prepare reports to prove compliance with HB 2281, conducting HB 2281-related investigations or audits, or withholding state funds as the result of a HB 2281 violation.

California: High School Students Are Required to Complete an Ethnic Studies Course

Case Background

In 2021, California became the first state in the nation to require high school students to complete an ethnic studies course as a graduation requirement. The bill, AB 101, would require districts that did not have an adopted ethnic studies course to create one by the start of the 2025-2026 school year. The ethnic studies requirement joins the state’s A-G requirements (i.e., English, Social Studies, Math) for high school graduation (Medina 2021). Gov. Gavin Newsom and other progressive state leaders have praised the measure in eventually increasing social literacy amongst students. The bill came at a time when some of the state’s largest school districts had implemented their own ethnic studies requirement.

For instance, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) voted to make ethnic studies a graduation requirement by the 2023-2024 school year (Gecker (b) 2021). The Fresno Unified board voted to require two semesters of ethnic studies for incoming high school students in 2020 (Gecker (b) 2021). And in San Francisco, students will need two semesters of ethnic studies courses to graduate (Gecker (b) 2021).

However, several groups from the right and left have decried the measure. Contributors to the state’s model curriculum criticized the negotiations that led to the current version of the model. These contributors believed that this version was watered down to appease interest groups. Parent-rights groups, local school board members, and religious groups have also shared their disdain on AB 101. The model curriculum has been discredited as “left-wing” ideology while Jewish and Arab groups believe that the course material left out their respective histories (Smith 2021) (Gecker (a) 2021).

AB 101: All California High-Schoolers will Need to Take an Ethnic Studies Course

Assembly Bill 101 requires all high school students to take an ethnic studies course as a graduation requirement (Medina 2021). If a school district or charter school has not offered an ethnic studies course prior to the bill's signing, they are now mandated to offer one starting in the 2025-2026 school year (the bill is intended for high school students graduating in the 2029-2030 school year) (Medina 2021). The bill gives districts and charter schools the option to expand the one-course semester requirement into a full-year requirement.

To satisfy the bill's requirements, students must either enroll in:

1. A course that is based on the state's model curriculum
2. An existing ethnic studies course
3. A course taught that was approved in meeting the A-G requirements
4. A locally developed course that was approved by the local school board or "the governing body of the charter school" (Medina 2021)

An Overview of California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

The model curriculum underwent development and revision for several years before being approved by Gov. Newsom. The 800+ page document is meant to serve as a guide for educators, school administrators, and district leaders to implement the ethnic studies requirements ("Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum" 2022). Most importantly, the curriculum encouraged "cultural understanding" of different racial groups' struggle and cooperation towards equality, equity, and justice while experiencing racism, bigotry, and indigeneity ("Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum" 2022). Educators and leaders are expected to use the curriculum to build their own courses and programs.

The curriculum focused on the "four foundational disciplines" of ethnic studies: African American Studies, Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x Studies, Native American Studies, and Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies ("Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum" 2022). The model contained sample lesson plans and learning activities for each discipline. Moreover, these disciplines are explored through four themes: identity, history and movement, systems of power, and social movements ("Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum" 2022). The curriculum also included lesson plans on Jews, Arab Americans, Sikh Americans and Armenian Americans "who are not traditionally part of an ethnic studies curriculum" (Gecker (b) 2021).

Ethnic Studies Advocates Point to Stanford Study of SFUSD

When defending the legitimacy of the ethnic studies requirement, Gov. Newsom pointed to a Stanford study of San Francisco's ethnic studies program (Mays 2021). During the 2010-2011 school year, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) created an ethnic studies course for rising ninth-grade students that "had previously felt marginalized by the traditional curriculum" (Dee & Penner 2016, 135). The course was designed for students to explore their identities and complete service-learning projects (Dee & Penner 2016, 135). According to Dee and Penner (2016), the study's primary researchers, students that took this course increased their attendance by 21 percentage points, increased their GPA by 1.4 grade points, and increased their earned credits by 23 (127). Dee and Penner (2016) concluded that **culturally relevant pedagogy** can provide essential support for at-risk students (127).

Controversy Over Ethnic Studies Requirement

Contributors to earlier versions of the curriculum, pro-Jewish rights groups, pro-Arab rights groups, parent groups, and conservative advocates have vocalized and published criticism of the measure. Some of these groups' advocacy have contributed to slowing down AB 101's incorporation and the State Board of Education's adoption process.

A. Original Contributors

The California Department of Education (CDE) recruited 19 ethnic studies experts to draft the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (EMSC) ("LESMC Story" n.d.). According to members of the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Coalition (LESMC), the original experts, who comprised the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee (ESMAC), hoped to create a curriculum "that captured the silenced, hidden, and often forgotten voices of Californians of color" ("LESMC Story" n.d.). The ESMAC was mostly comprised of educators of color, which the LESMC contributed to the opposition from "privileged voices" they experienced ("LESMC Story" n.d.). These privileged voices pressured the Newsom Administration to reject a previous version of the curriculum because they felt their histories had been mischaracterized or omitted ("LESMC Story" n.d.).

The LESMC cited this incident that led to the disbandment of the ESMAC and a new draft of the curriculum that "bears so little relation to the original draft" ("LESMC Story" n.d.). Members from the original committee formed the LESMC in protest to the CDE's current draft of the curriculum. This coalition has criticized the ESMC for being "watered down" and a product of appeasement to right-wing opposition ("LESMC Story" n.d.).

B. Anti-Israel Sentiments, Jewish and Arab Erasure in ESMC

Throughout the two-year process (i.e., 2019-2021) of adopting the ESMC, pro-Jewish and pro-Arab groups accused each other of trying to silence their histories. Various Jewish groups have claimed that the curriculum and ethnic studies practitioners promote anti-Israel sentiments through their pedagogy (AMCHA, n.d.).

One of the Jewish interest groups at the forefront of ESMC concerns is the AMCHA Initiative, a "non-partisan organization whose sole mission is to document, investigate, and combat antisemitism on U.S. college campuses". In a statement of concerns about the ethnic studies requirements in the California State University system, AMCHA claimed that the curriculum contained a negative portrayal of Zionism, its practitioners supported Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaigns against Israel, and its coursework have accused Israel of participating in genocide and ethnic cleansing (AMCHA, n.d.). Additionally, the organization claimed that ethnic studies has discriminated against Jewish students on college campuses (AMCHA, n.d.).

Their sentiments have trickled down to the K-12 level. Tammi Rossman-Benjamin (2023), the organization's cofounder and director wrote an editorial in EdSource criticizing AB 101. In her piece, Rossman-Benjamin (2023) wrote that the initiative was "expensive" and did "not demonstrate academic benefits". Rossman-Benjamin (2023) even referenced a critique of the Sanford study from Tablet magazine, an online Jewish media outlet. She emphasized that the critique found no conclusion could be extracted from the study and that it "should not have been

published...much less relied upon in the formation of public policy” (Rossman-Benjamin 2023) (Sander and Wyner 2022).

Ethnic studies requirements have also been brought to court by Jewish groups. The Deborah Project (TDP), a public interest law firm, brought a suit against the LAUSD. In a piece for the Jewish Journal, Lori Lowenthal Marcus, an attorney for TDP, stated that they sought to show how LAUSD’s curriculum promoted Jewish hate (Marcus 2022).

Pro-Arab groups have accused Jewish rights groups of silencing their narratives within the ESMC. Lara Kiswani, executive director of the Arab Resource and Organizing Center in San Francisco, said, “They [the Newsom Administration] not only relegated a whitewashed Arab American lesson plan to an appendix, alongside a pro-Israeli Jewish lesson plan, but they have also gutted the entire curriculum” (Gecker (a) 2021). Nadine Naber, an expert in Arab studies and professor at the University of Illinois – Chicago, commented that the changes in the curriculum were an effort to “silence our histories and our stories” which is “colonialist tactics of elimination” (Gecker (a) 2021).

C. Parents’ Rights Groups, Conservative Activists, and Decision Makers

Parent rights groups have also voiced their concern of the AB 101 and other district’s ethnic studies requirements. When the Los Alamitos Unified School District (district covers Orange County) tried to implement ethnic studies coursework, organizers decried it as “divisive” and “anti-white”. In a letter, opponents stated that the course was “filled with hate for America and all America stands for” (Smith 2021). Moreover, they claimed that ethnic studies “teaches children that America is based on white supremacy and that white people are racists, even if they don’t know it”. These parents also believed that ethnic studies would victimize students of color and cause segregation within schools (Smith 2021).

A school board member in the Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District described the ESMC as “ ‘left-wing political ideology” (Smith 2021). And in Santa Clara County, over 500 parents signed a letter calling their board’s ethnic studies initiative “ ‘militant and anti-Western” (Smith 2021).

In his study on parental opposition of ethnic studies in California, Dr. Ethan Chang (2022) noted three key strategies of parental rights groups and conservative activists. These groups used: narratives of white victimhood/innocence, unexpected coalitions, and digital savviness to amplify their message to national media outlets (“The Challenge to Ethnic Studies” n.d.) (Chang 2022) (Chang (a) 2022) (Chang (b) 2022).

In their victimhood narrative, white parents claimed that their children were negatively impacted by the new requirements (Chang (a) 2022). According to these parents, they would be made to hate themselves because of the blame placed on them for past wrongs (Chang (a) 2022). Consequently, other advocates believed ethnic studies did not teach students the “values of hard work and industrious labor” (Chang (a) 2022, 168). Still, more believed that ethnic studies went against their Christian values in that it discriminated against students who were uncomfortable with the content and “ ‘know that there are only men and women as God created us” (Chang (a) 2022, 169)

Conservative groups also partnered with dyslexic advocates to oppose ethnic studies requirements. Chang stated that these groups recruited dyslexic advocates through a “zero-sum understanding of school opportunity” (Chang (b) 2022). In her book *The Sum of Us*, Heather McGhee (2021) explained Michael Norton’s and Samuel Sommers’ research, two Harvard

Business School professors who studied and penned the zero-sum game. They explained to McGhee that the average white person believe if things get better for people of color, it is at their expense (McGhee 2021). In the case of the dyslexic rights groups, conservatives convinced them that an advancement for ethnic studies would mean a depletion in resources for their students (Chang (a) 2022) (Chang (b) 2022). Parents of dyslexic students were able to use their messaging to garner additional resources and media attention to their cause by partnering with anti-ethnic studies groups (Chang (a) 2022) (Change (b) 2022).

Finally, these parents and groups used local, alt-right, and mainstream outlets like *Fox News* to achieve their goals (Chang (a) 2022). In the case of the Inclusive Parents, a parent-rights group, local journalists depicted them as a “ ‘watchdog group” (Chang (a) 2022, 173). In his study of the group’s image by local news, Chang (2022) wrote “Inclusive Parents were cast by journalists as a reasonable and respectable group...who provided...civic oversight of a purportedly radical AUSD [Arrellaga Unified School District]” (173). The group also used social media to spin their messaging towards their favor. For instance, Inclusive Parents posted a video of a father of a dyslexic student on their YouTube channel. The description indicated that the Arrellaga Unified School District did nothing and that monies went to “ineffective, divisive, and secretive social justice programs” (Chang (a) 2022, 170-171). The group’s activism was then broadcasted to *Fox News* and alt-right organizations like *The New American* and *The Daily Wire* (Chang (a) 2022).

Alabama: CRT is Banned, Accurate Teaching is Not

Case Background

In August of 2021, the Alabama State Board of Education (SBOE) voted on a resolution titled “Alabama State Board of Education Resolution Declaring the Preservation if Intellectual Freedom and Non-Discrimination in Alabama’s Public Schools”. In the resolution, the SBOE instilled that “all individuals are endowed with equal inalienable rights without respect to race or sex” (Alabama State Board of Education 2021). Thus, concepts that inferred blame or cause “guilt or anguish” to “persons solely because of their race or sex violate the premises of individuals” violate those rights and have “no place in professional development” (Alabama State Board of Education 2021). Furthermore, the SBOE declared that these concepts should not be taught to K-12 students in Alabama.

The resolution affirmed that the SBOE would not “support, or impart, any K-12 public education resources or standards” that would “indoctrinate” certain political perspectives which “promote one race or sex above another” (Alabama State Board of Education 2021). The SBOE did recognize wrongs such as slavery and racism which, according to the resolution, are against America’s founding principles (Alabama State Board of Education 2021). But the state board wrote that individuals should not be “punished” for past actions but should instead work toward a “better future” (Alabama State Board of Education 2021). Thus, the SBOE prohibited school districts from instruction that would promote divisive ideologies on race and sex. Additionally, the resolution protected intellectual freedoms including “differing opinions”, “intellectual honesty”, “freedom of inquiry”, and “freedom of speech” (Alabama State Board of Education 2021). The resolution was written in response to the concerns of CRT being used in public education. The resolution was cemented into the Board’s administrative code in October of that year (Miles 2021).

Reactions to SBOE Resolution

The SBOE voted 6-2 to adopt the resolution. Board members Tonya Chestnut and Yvette Richardson were the two members who voted no. Chestnut expressed frustration as CRT is not taught in Alabama schools. “ ‘CRT is not being taught in our schools it has not been taught and I’m just curious about the sudden increase, awareness...presented in the form of a crisis’ ” (Davis 2021). Richardson expressed her concern for teachers’ positions in that the resolution may affect “their expertise, the autonomy to do what they know is right and the best interest of our children” (Davis 2021). Supporters of the resolution believed students should learn about equality and that CRT created division (Davis 2021). Opponents believed that the resolution could affect the teaching of historical and current events (Davis 2021).

Anti-CRT Efforts

The Alabama legislature were unsuccessful in extending the anti-CRT ban to all public learning institutions. Senate Bill 7, House Bill 8, and House Bill 9 would have barred public educational institutions, state agencies, municipalities, and state contractors receiving state funding from teaching on “ ‘divisive concepts’ ” including issues on race or sex (NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund n.d.) (“Harmful Legislation Before the Alabama Legislature” n.d.). House Bill 11 would have thwarted attempts from public education institutions forcing students to attest to critical race theory (NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund n.d.) (“Harmful Legislation Before the Alabama Legislature” n.d.). Furthermore, public schools would have been prohibited from using race “or color” to classify achievement disparities (“Harmful Legislation Before the Alabama Legislature” n.d.). Finally, teachers found in violation of the law would be terminated from their positions (“Harmful Legislation Before the Alabama Legislature” n.d.).

The NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the Alabama NAACP have been vocal against Alabama’s anti-CRT efforts. In a two-pager detailing the history of five anti-CRT bills, the organizations wrote that these bills would negative affect academic achievement, school climate, teachers’ job performance, and prevent students “from receiving a full, inclusive, quality education” (NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund n.d.).

House Bill 312

The Alabama passed a “divisive concepts” bill that was penned by state representative Ed Oliver. House Bill 312 bar the state its subdivisions or agencies from (Oliver, n.d.):

- Training education professionals on “certain concepts” pertaining to race, sex, or religion
- Teaching these concepts in public K-12 schools
- But allows institutions and agencies to terminate the employment of employees found in violation of the act
-

House Bill 312 define divisive concepts that relate to (Oliver, n.d.):

- Racial, sex, or religious superiority
- The inherent racism or sexism in the state of Alabama or the United States
- Inherent racism or sexism due to a person’s race or sex

- Racial discrimination
- Responsibility for the past actions of people within the same racial group

The bill does not “prohibit the teaching of topics or historical events in a historically accurate context” (Oliver, n.d.). House Bill 312 passed in the House 65-32 in March of this year.

Oliver claimed that the bill was not an anti-CRT bill (Griesbach 2022). Still, Oliver has expressed concern in the past and has claimed that he was fighting against student indoctrination of Marxism and socialism (Griesbach 2022). Democrats have criticized Oliver’s measure in that it would create more division and stop needed conversations on historical events (Griesbach 2022). One Republican, Rep. Mike Ball, testified against the bill as it would “ ‘conform behavior” (Griesbach 2022).

Interview Findings: How to Advocate for Ethnic Studies Accreditation

Advocating for the state's current ethnic studies courses (i.e., African American Studies and Mexican American Studies) to become accredited social studies courses would require widespread mobilizing. Conversations with Dr. Valenzuela, Dr. Latham-Sikes, and Eliza Epstein revealed three reoccurring dynamics that could influence Every Texan's advocacy goal. These dynamics include the players, challenges, and momentum. Each of these dynamics intersect to either positively or negatively affect messaging surrounding ethnic studies in Texas.

Players

For the purposes of this project, players were defined as the individuals, groups, organizations, and/or institutions involved in the public education advocacy and/or policy process (see Appendix D). These players include the policy players, accomplices, and blockers.

Policy Players and Blockers

These players are best described as the legislators, bureaucrats, and local elected officials who have the ability or inability to codify ethnic studies as standard social studies courses. For example, Gov. Abbott and the State Board of Education (SBOE) would be considered policy players. Still, some of these players are blockers or those with a political interest in preventing ethnic studies from receiving full accreditation.

Two bodies of policy players that could curtail the client's goal are the State Board of Education and the state legislature (Valenzuela 2023). Both bodies shape the public education landscape in Texas schools. Hence, recognizing their political power is important as "the state board is more conservative than it has been" and "our legislatures across the country are getting involved in [K-12] curriculum" (Valenzuela 2023). The SBOE was instrumental in codifying African American Studies and Mexican American Studies. Yet, that was prior to its new conservative shift. So, the SBOE could easily maintain the ethnic studies courses' extracurricular status or seek to remove the curriculum altogether. Still, Valenzuela noted that if this occurred, organizing would have to be done within the legislature since, "within the hierarchy of the state...[the] Texas state legislature and statues supersedes everything" (Valenzuela 2023).

Another set of policy actors that have influenced Texas recent anti-DEI efforts are "nationally influential groups" (Latham-Sikes 2023). These groups include the Manhattan Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and "ALEC-based organizations like the Texas Public Policy Foundation" (Latham-Sikes 2023). These groups could create counternarratives that discredit ethnic studies courses and their efficacy in K-12 school.

Accomplices

Individuals, organizations, and groups who would assist with Every Texan's lobbying and advocacy efforts are their accomplices. Also, other organizations that support ethnic studies education would also be considered accomplices as well.

One of the most important accomplices to consider in this movement are teachers. Teachers are the practitioners that would deliver ethnic studies content to Texas K-12 students. Therefore, they would need to be brought into the movement through conversations and

workshops (Valenzuela 2023). Teachers would most likely join this cause (for ethnic studies) because they “care deeply about it” (Valenzuela 2023).

Collaborating with like-minded organizations such as the Teach the Truth Coalition, Texas Freedom Network, and the Ethnic Studies Network of Texas is instrumental in this cause. Through partnership, these organizations and Every Texan can create a network in which they can exchange ideas, resources, and research.

Dr. Valenzuela (2023) also mentioned finding and recruiting “champions for change”. These champions are the individuals who have the clout to instill policy change. Valenzuela (2023) recommended working members of “multiethnic” and “multiracial” caucuses within the legislature. The members of these caucuses may have a vested interest in the representation of their racial and ethnic identities in an approved social studies curriculum. Valenzuela (2023) identified Reps. Christina Morales, Gene Wu, Alma Allen, and Victoria Naeve as possible partners. It may also be useful to find conservative members who would be willing to advance the policy agenda as well.

Challenges

The barriers that Every Texan and their partners would experience pertain to social-political discourse, policy, building a coalition of policymakers and interested citizens, and the public education system. These challenges could intersect with one another. Thus, organizing would create difficulties in sustaining interest and achieving tangible outcomes.

Social-Political Challenges

One of the most pressing challenges that Every Texan would face is the social perception of efforts surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion. These perceptions can trickle down to the ethnic studies courses that are taught in Texas high schools. Dr. Latham-Sikes (2023) believe that the state is currently a “hostile environment...to inclusive education and histories”.

“I think we’re seeing the current landscape is exceedingly hostile to inclusive racial and just diverse background histories period. Whether they are gender identities, religious, ability and disability, even just inclusive of like, women. Never mind, like the LGBTQ+ histories. All of that is critically important, and especially under attack right now” (Latham-Sikes 2023).

Latham-Sikes (2023) indicated that descriptions of LGBTQ+ identities as “pornographic”, teacher surveillance, and the family empowerment movement has created a “pretty censored state”. This censorship has demoralized teachers as they have seen their supervisors lose their jobs and books taken from their library (Epstein 2023). This puts them in a “precarious position” as their positions, which they receive a limited salary to do, can be terminated if they teach divisive topics (Epstein 2023).

This animosity may deepen with terms that are associated with ethnic. Terms like “black feminism”, “solidarity”, “none of us is free until we’re all free”, “oppression”, and “disempowered” were weaponized in Arizona, California, and Alabama (Epstein 2023). These terms are often used as dog whistles for “anti-white racism” within critical race theory. Consequently, this could lead ethnic studies being associated with CRT.

Moreover, although ethnic studies teach students critical engagement skills through various subjects (i.e., art, history), “it’s not how we define a good education today” (Valenzuela 2023). In his research of ethnic studies opposition, Dr. Chang (2022) noted that one parent believed ethnic studies did not teach skills that children would need to be successful in the workplace. This perception may alienate the public and lawmakers if they find ethnic studies courses to be a distraction from more important subjects.

Policy and System Challenges

One of the main policy challenges that exist within the client’s issue is the political will for politicians to adopt it. Dr. Valenzuela (2023) emphasized that more pressing issues (i.e., balancing the state budget) would have more weight than an education issue. For instance, former California Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed an early version of the state’s ethnic studies bill as he believed it was a local issue that districts should enforce, not the state (Mays 2021).

Besides, there are policies that may take resources from public schools and may add more responsibilities to teachers’ workload. Latham-Sikes (2023) cited a “private school voucher bill” that parents could use to pay or subsidize private school tuition. This could result in less funding for public schools and less availability for an ethnic studies course. Additionally, if ethnic studies become an official social studies course, interested teachers may receive little to no guidance on enacting these standards (Latham-Sikes 2023). This may deter teachers in lower-resourced schools from creating or teaching an ethnic studies course.

Organizing Challenge

This movement would require the momentum of teachers, researchers, politicians, parents, and their students. Despite their importance in these movements, the effects of certain bills and threats of others are “crushing people’s will” (Epstein 2023). Eliza Epstein (2023) was reminded of this during a press conference in which a reporter asked what activists would do since they have lost other fights against anti-trans legislation, Senate Bill 3, and House Bill 3979. Partners could become discouraged as they perceive that the same results (e.g., the rescinding of ethnic studies and other divisive concepts in schools) would occur.

Momentum

Every Texan and their partners need to implement, sustain, and organize a campaign to broadcast their goals. They could accomplish this through taking advantage of opportunity windows, informing the public of the issue, utilizing various strategies, and emphasizing the significance of their campaign.

Windows of Opportunity and Issue Informing

Windows of opportunity, or “the short period of time within which some action can be taken that will achieve a desired (policy) outcome”, are imperative for this issue (Investopedia n.d.). Valenzuela (2023) mentioned that the MAS ban in Arizona was a “time to organize and to move” back in 2013. Two windows of opportunity that Every Texan can take advantage of is the public’s ignorance of ethnic studies courses and the parent rights movement.

Valenzuela (2023) believed that the Texans may not be familiar with ethnic studies courses. Hence, Every Texan should set their policy agenda through educating the public on ethnic studies and explaining the research about potential academic benefits (Valenzuela 2023). This can be achieved through writing op-eds in local publications and hosting (virtual and in-person) town hall events. Epstein (2023) also advised creating a counternarrative to the parents' rights movement. She suggested that "we need to...work on our social movement framing of the issue. Which is like all parents have rights" (Epstein 2023). The parents' rights discourse, according to Epstein (2023), is focused on the perspectives of white parents and politically conservative parents. To counter this, Every Texan and their partners should empower BIPOC and progressive caregivers who do not "want their kids to read the same like white streamed curriculum" (Epstein 2023).

Strategies

The client will need to utilize various to influence the policy agenda of their issue. One of these is the "power of storytelling" (Latham-Sikes 2023). Stories should be used along with data to create and sustain impact (Latham-Sikes 2023). Students are significant storytellers for this issue. Epstein (2023) recounted how, in a graduate class, students recounted their experiences with ethnic studies. These students cited that they were able to build "better relationship[s] with [their] community and family" because of their ethnic studies course (Epstein 2023). Their testimonies may move the public and their elected officials to champion ethnic studies in Texas high schools. Additionally, this could train the next generation of leaders who would represent a "more multiracially and more multi-ethnically" diverse state (Valenzuela 2023).

Another way to create impact is creating community with grassroots organizations and other interested groups across Texas (Valenzuela 2023). This can include events that are tied to "political education" or "public education", but also hosting spaces that "also are just humanizing" (Epstein 2023). Epstein (2023) explained: "[W]here the knowledge that folks have is valued. Where we're not having experts come from the university. But maybe where we're having your grandfather come and talk to us about his personal experience".

Lastly, Every Texan and their partners should consider their internal infrastructure as they are organizing. Valenzuela (2023) emphasized that their resources (i.e., their website) should be accessible for Texans whose English is their second language. Additionally, these organizations should create fellowships and full-time positions (if they have the funding capacity) to hire individuals to sustain this work (Valenzuela 2023) (Epstein 2023).

Significance

Finally, this coalition of organizations and advocates would need to explain the "why" or the reason that Texans should support their movement. One of reasons that Dr. Latham-Sikes mentioned is the "disheartening", "pretty sick", "sad", and "malicious attacks" that state legislators have made against Texas children (Latham-Sikes 2023). "[T]hese are attacking our most vulnerable and marginalized students in schools based on their identity in a twisted way of saying it's protecting their identities" (Latham-Sikes 2023). Ethnic studies allows students the opportunity to learn about their own identities and ways of being (Valenzuela 2023). This movement can work to protect and empower the students that Texan politicians have left behind.

Still, this movement's primary goal should not be towards a particular legislative change. Instead, it should be an opportunity to "enjoy freedom, intellectual and academic freedom" without "waiting for legislation to pass" (Valenzuela 2023). Epstein (2023) and Valenzuela (2023) believe that in the event that ethnic studies is banned from public schools, that grassroots organizations would need to provide outside learning opportunities to engage students. But ethnic studies is an "acknowledged and recognized course" (Latham-Sikes 2023). So Every Texan should emphasize this in its messaging as well.

Recommendations/Conclusion

Based on the findings from the three case studies and interviews with education policy experts, Every Texan should partner with other organizations and activists to **R.E.A.C.H. All Our Students.**

R.E.A.C.H. Campaign

| Theme | Intention/Definition | Examples |
|---------------|--|--|
| Relationships | Every Texan will build a coalition of grassroots activists, educators, parents/caregivers, students, researchers, politicians, and other champions to advocate for the full accreditation of ethnic studies courses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and recruit key policymakers into campaign Host community events across the state to build relationships with families |
| Educate | Every Texan, along with its coalition members, will inform Texans about ethnic studies and explain why it should be an accredited social studies course. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish op-eds and commentaries in local papers Use town hall events to inform communities about ethnic studies |
| Advocate | The coalition will vocalize their message to key decision makers in the public education landscape. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobbying state legislators who have an expressed interest in public education initiatives |
| Challenge | If necessary, the coalition will partner with legal experts in suing unconstitutional measures meant to limit Texas students education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnering with organizations like the Legal Defense Fund to sue the state for violating constitutional rights |
| Hope | The coalition will lead with love, joy and hope. Participation in this coalition should be enjoyable for all involved. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating accessible out-of-school programs and summer camps for students to attend if ethnic studies is removed from TEKS |

Table 4: Components of the R.E.A.C.H. Campaign

The R.E.A.C.H. All Our Students campaign is intended to advocate for educational representation for marginalized public-school students. This includes BIPOC students, low income (or “economically disadvantaged”) students, and LGBTQ+ students. Ethnic studies can increase student success among students of color, who are underperforming on the state’s standardized tests. By making ethnic studies course account for a social studies credit, students of color (and other marginalized groups) may be incentivized to enroll in either African American Studies or Mexican American Studies. It may even push for the inclusion of Asian American Studies and Native American/Indigenous Studies.

Relationships

Every Texan and their partners in this movement would need to focus on relationships with grassroots movements, caregivers and their students, and other stakeholders. This will most likely take time and require collaboration with local activists. Additionally, Every Texan should

lean on these activists in receiving feedback and suggestions on relationship-building. These activists know their communities. Therefore, they are instrumental in creating and maintaining these relationships. Furthermore, Every Texan and their collaborators should discuss how they can exchange resources. For example, Every Texan may help a grassroots group schedule a one-on-one meeting with a state representative in exchange for the group recruiting participants for research on ethnic studies.

Educate

As Dr. Valenzuela noted, the public is unfamiliar with ethnic studies. Every Texan and its partners should use this as an opportunity to collaborate on a research project. This research can



This dashboard provides a map of schools teaching Mexican American Studies (MAS) courses in the state of Texas. Mexican American Studies courses are currently being offered in American History, American Literature, American Studies and more.

Context

It is critical in the academic progress and personal growth of students that they see themselves and their peers positively represented in their courses and class materials. Research shows Mexican American Studies (MAS) courses improve standardized test scores, graduation rates, college attendance rates, and academic mindsets. These courses provide students a critical and holistic history of the United States, asserting contributions and intersectional identities of Mexican and Mexican Americans in North America, and provide a robust learning environment of inclusivity for all students.

Using this Dashboard

1. Select one or more cities you wish to view
2. Select one or more districts in the selected cities to view
3. Select one or more grade levels to view
4. Select one or more school subject/program
5. Scroll over the green cross on the map for additional information
6. To print or share this dashboard, see the tiny icons at the bottom right below the graph

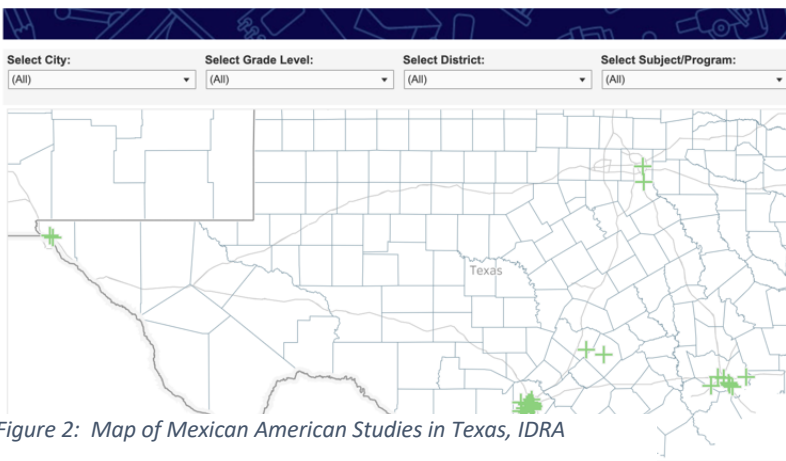


Figure 2: Map of Mexican American Studies in Texas, IDRA

be used to discover new findings or build upon existing ones. For instance, Every Texan can partner with IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association) to build upon their MAS program map (see Figure 2). This map can be modified to include AAS (African American Studies) and inform the public of which districts do not have an ethnic studies program.

Also, Every Texan should partner with local groups to host open house/town hall events in which participants can learn more about ethnic studies. Furthermore, Every Texan should educate policymakers on the benefits of ethnic studies in Texas and how students enrolled in these courses have performed.

Advocate

Every Texan should focus on reaching the state representatives and senators who have opposed anti-DEI and/or ant-CRT legislation. These may be allies that can shift ethnic studies into a core subject credit. However, Every Texan and partners should agree to certain talking points and data prior to this advocacy. The messaging should indicate ethnic studies significance in Texas while also highlighting data on student performance. Some politicians may be persuaded through an emotional argument while others may be more concerned about the performance data (e.g., for student groups like students of color).

Challenge

If ethnic studies is struck down from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards, then the R.E.A.C.H. Network could consider taking the state to court. *Gonzalez v. Douglas* may be a precedent for R.E.A.C.H. to consider. Yet, *Gonzalez* ruled in the plaintiff's favor due to the racial animus against Mexican Americans and the state of Arizona's targeting of the MAS program in Tucson. Since ethnic studies is technically recognized by the state of Texas, it is unlikely that R.E.A.C.H. would need to explore this option. Still, it may be useful to consider legal options given the recent legislation against DEI efforts at the state's public universities (Kyaw 2023).

Hope

Chang noted that in "any movement to redistribute resources or to re-narrate the nation, can expect the most fierce and brutal resistance and the most brutal opposition" ("The Challenge to Ethnic Studies" n.d.). This may drain the political will and hope of the individuals advocating for the re-narration. Therefore, as Chang explained, "our own movements for ethnic studies really need to be shaped by joy and pleasure and passion...it can't be an additional task" ("The Challenge to Ethnic Studies" n.d.). Joy and love must be at the center of this movement. If R.E.A.C.H.'s goals are not accomplished, the coalition can create alternative programming for students who do not have access to an ethnic studies course.

Appendices

Appendix A: Page 2 of The Manhattan Institute’s “Abolish DEI Bureaucracies and Restore Colorblind Equality in Public Universities” Issue Brief

MI

Abolish DEI Bureaucracies and Restore Colorblind Equality in Public Universities

Proposal 1: Abolish DEI Bureaucracies

SECTION 1. PURPOSE

So-called Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) bureaucracies at public universities operate as divisive ideological commissariats, promulgating and enforcing Critical Race Theory and related political orthodoxies as official campus policy. Yet recent scientific surveys of universities in the Power Five athletic conferences demonstrate that students feel *less welcome*, not more welcome, at universities with larger DEI staffs.²

Administrative DEI offices within universities are not covered by norms of academic freedom and are in fact a threat to academic freedom and academic integrity. Administrators in public institutions of higher education should maintain institutional neutrality on controversial political questions extraneous to the business of educating students. Contrary to this obligation, DEI advances primarily political aims rather than educational aims. Additionally, the growth of DEI bureaucracies has fueled bureaucratic bloat and rising costs, contributing to the indebtedness of students and parents.

The purpose of this policy document is to ensure that public universities succeed in their mission to promote the search for truth and knowledge while maintaining academic freedom and integrity, without being transformed into factories of ideological conformity. To this end, the DEI bureaucracies within public universities must be dismantled.

SECTION 2. MODEL LEGISLATIVE TEXT

A. Public or land-grant institutions of higher education in the state of [STATE] may not expend appropriated funds or otherwise expend any funds derived from bequests, charges, deposits, donations, endowments, fees, grants, gifts, income, receipts, tuition, or any other source, to establish, sustain, support, or staff a diversity, equity, and inclusion office or to contract, employ, engage, or hire an individual to serve as a diversity, equity, and inclusion officer.

B. For the avoidance of doubt, nothing in this section shall be construed to cover or affect an institution of higher education's funding of:

1. Academic course instruction;
2. Research and creative works by the institution's students, faculty, or other research personnel, and the dissemination thereof;
3. Activities of registered student organizations;
4. Arrangements for guest speakers and performers with short-term engagements;
5. Mental or physical health services provided by licensed professionals.

C. For purposes of this section, “diversity, equity, and inclusion” include:

1. Any effort to manipulate or otherwise influence the composition of the faculty or student body with reference to race, sex, color, or ethnicity, apart from ensuring colorblind and sex-neutral admissions and hiring in accordance with state and federal anti-discrimination laws;

CONTACTS

To request an information packet about MI, or if you have questions about how to support us, contact SUPPORT@MANHATTAN-INSTITUTE.ORG.

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Appendix B: Practitioner Interview Questions Guide

Consent

- *I would like to make sure that I am accurately portraying your thoughts and responses in this project. To do so, I would like to record this conversation to refer to as I am summarizing my notes. Do I have your permission to record this conversation?*

Ethnic Studies in Texas

- Can you tell me about ethnic studies in Texas public schools?
 - Why is ethnic studies important for K12 students?
- To your knowledge, what have been the benefits of ethnic studies courses in Texas?
- What are the challenges in starting and/or sustaining ethnic studies courses?
- In what ways did you advocate for ethnic studies courses in your current role? OR What have you found from your most current research on ethnic studies?
- If you had a magic wand, what would ethnic studies look like in Texas K12 schools?

Thank you

- *Thank the interviewee for their time and inform them that I will follow up with them via email. In the follow-up, I will invite them to help with the progress of the project.*

Appendix C: Expert Interview Questions Guide

Consent

- *I would like to make sure that I am accurately portraying your thoughts and responses in this project. To do so, I would like to record this conversation to refer to as I am summarizing my notes. Do I have your permission to record this conversation?*

Ethnic Studies in Texas

- Can you tell me about the education policy landscape in Texas?
 - Who are the major players in Texas education?
 - What is their role in education policy?
- To your knowledge, can you tell me about a time when there were restrictions placed on K-12 schools?
- To your knowledge, can you tell me about a time when more progressive education reforms were passed?
- If you were hired by Every Texan as a policy consultant, how would you recommend they advocate for legitimizing ethnic studies courses?
- ****If you had a magic wand, what would the education policy landscape look like in Texas?**

Thank you

- *Thank the interviewee for their time and inform them that I will follow up with them via email. In the follow-up, I will invite them to help with the progress of the project.*

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