FOUNDATION AGAINST INTOLERANCE & RACISM

A Guide to Evaluating Research on Ethnic Studies

Analysis Tools for the Non-Researcher

FAIR in Education seeks to support informed, civic involvement in educational decision making by modeling a process for evaluating the research on Ethnic Studies.

In this handbook, intended for families, educators, school leaders, and policy makers, FAIR In Education provides non-researchers with tools to make thoughtful and objective assessments.

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Introduction

Ethnic studies theory, curricula, and pedagogy are causing sweeping changes to American K-12 education and raising controversy in school communities and state legislatures.

Some states or districts have mandated that students take an ethnic studies course to graduate high school or attend a state institution of higher education.

Other states have revised social studies learning standards to include ethnic studies strands.

Some school districts are implementing ethnic studies curricula from kindergarten through twelfth grade, while other districts are revamping English, history, social studies, arts, and even math courses to include an ethnic studies focus.

Teacher preparation programs are adding ethnic studies requirements, and in some cases redesigning program outcomes around ethnic studies objectives.

In other words, ethnic studies is not only a content area and a discipline, it is a reform movement impacting many aspects of American education.

For a partial summary of ethnic studies requirements by state, please see this list created by researchers at the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law.

When any curriculum, theory, or pedagogy is mandated, it is crucial to understand what it is—not just marketing copy about its supposed benefits, but detailed information about its content, methods, and aims. It is especially important

that teachers, families, administrators, and school board members evaluate research claims in order to make informed decisions about proposed changes to curriculum and instruction.

The history of American school reform is full of instances when advocates of a new curriculum, method, or policy made lofty claims that were ultimately discovered to be false, misleading, or even fraudulent.[1] Ethnic studies advocates claim that students who take ethnic studies courses experience a range of academic, personal, social, and emotional benefits. Although it can be challenging to navigate dense academic studies, a series of questions combined with close reading can provide important insights into research quality and relevance. In this guide, FAIR models this process on What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies, a 2020 research review by Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala **frequently used to endorse ethnic studies in K-12 settings,** and cited extensively in the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (pp. 8-14).

What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies by Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala includes claims that ethnic studies improves students' academic engagement, self-efficacy, personal empowerment, academic performance, graduation rates, and cross-cultural understanding (iv). **FAIR's analysis found that these claims are not well supported**, and that in some cases, studies are being cited as evidence in ways the primary researchers explicitly cautioned against. FAIR also **identified conflicts of interest** that could compromise Sleeter's and Zavala's performance of an unbiased review. In addition to these concerns, FAIR's analysis found that many of the programs and curricula featured in the studies reviewed by Sleeter and Zavala were premised on the notion that students should be taught separately and differently based on race and/or ethnicity—an idea which is contradicted by a robust body of developmental and cognitive learning theories and which is inadequate for a multiethnic, multiracial democracy.

[1] Tyack, D., & Cuban, L. (1995). Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Evaluating Research on Ethnic Studies: Questions to Ask

A Summary of Process and Findings from FAIR's Evaluation of "What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies"

What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies by Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala is organized into two sections. The first section, which includes 41 studies, examines the academic and personal impact of ethnic studies on students of color. The second section, which includes three studies in the combined elementary/secondary section, examines the impact of ethnic studies on the racial attitudes and racial understandings of diverse student groups that include white students. In the analysis below, we will address the sections separately.

For non-researchers evaluating research claims, FAIR recommends the questions highlighted.

SECTION 1: What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies

Academic and Personal Impact of Ethnic Studies on Students of Color

QUESTION 1

Q1

What was studied, and does it support the claims being made? Read all disclaimers carefully.

Sleeter's and Zavala's definition of ethnic studies, which lists seven hallmarks of ethnic studies, does not match the content of the studies they reviewed. As Sleeter and Zavala acknowledge, their review primarily examines projects exemplifying only a few of the seven hallmarks of ethnic studies. The studies' abstracts confirm that most are, at best, only loosely connected to ethnic studies by a general focus on race or ethnicity.

Out of 41 studies, the term "ethnic studies" occurs in only one study's title or abstract—a study by Dee & Penner debunked in 2022 (see list of abstracts).

Moreover, the studies do not address the impact of various ethnic studies curricula and programming being implemented in schools today. Instead, the research reviewed is a loose compilation of a) studies on culturally relevant instruction (which is both distinct from ethnic studies and only one hallmark of ethnic studies, according to Sleeter and Zavala); b) studies broadly connected to literacy, math, or science instruction for students belonging to various ethnic groups; and c) studies of interventions for at-risk youth.

Many of the studies contain disclaimers acknowledging serious limitations or researcher conflicts of interest. Researchers themselves in some cases caution against making some of the very claims based on their studies that Sleeter and Zavala proceed to make in the review.

QUESTION 2

Is this study relevant to my student group? Generalizing research across populations not studied is not permissible.

Q2

40 of 41 studies focus on curriculum, programming, or research subjects identified with a single ethnic or linguistic group. While research on an ethnically homogenous group of students, or research on curriculum and instruction focused on a single ethnic or cultural group, may have important applications, American K-12 public school students are ethnically and racially heterogeneous and culturally diverse. Research with findings limited to specific ethnic/racial groups or practices should not be generalized to drive educational reform meant to serve a structurally and culturally diverse student body.

Only 2 of the 41 studies were performed with K-4 students, highlighting the extreme lack of research regarding elementary ethnic studies programs and curricula.

5 of the 41 studies were performed on college students and findings do not apply to K-12 students.

QUESTION 3

How current is the data or the research?

Q3

Of 41 studies, 10 were published before or in the year 2000. Only 8, including the debunked Dee & Penner study, were published after 2015.

QUESTION 4

What is the size of the student group studied? Can findings be generalized?

Q4

Some of the studies use very small sample sizes (in some cases a single student). The fewer the number of participants in a study, the less able researchers are to generalize conclusions to broader populations. For instance, Sleeter and Zavala include in their review a study of six Filipino American college students (Halagao, 2004), a study of eighteen college students in a Chicano literature course (Vasquez, 2005), a study of twenty-five African American middle school students (Rickford, 2001), and a number of other small studies. While small case studies may provide insights into the needs of a particular group of students or into specific classroom or school cultures, it is not appropriate to generalize findings to large populations, as the researchers themselves usually acknowledge.

QUESTION 5

What investments, commitments and views do the researchers hold? Can they be objective?

Q5

Sleeter and Zavala self-identify as scholar-activists with a vested interest in the program/methods they're studying. Both stand to financially gain from ethnic studies mandates, and both have written extensively about their commitments to Marxist ideology and revolution. In the studies they review, there are additional conflicts of interest such as a researcher examining the impact of a curriculum which she co-developed (Halagao, 2004), a primary researcher using measures created for the purpose of the study to examine outcomes of a program which she facilitated (Thomas et al., 2008), research

which uses writing assessments developed for the purpose of the program (Au & Carroll, 1997), and more.

SECTION 2: What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies)

Ethnic Studies for Diverse Groups That Include White Students

In the second part of Sleeter's and Zavala's review, the authors state: "At the elementary and secondary levels, there is surprisingly little research." It is instructive to read the section on page 18 of the review. Of the three studies reviewed, one study is disclaimed by Sleeter and Zavala as "not as strong methodologically" as another study reviewed; one study was performed by a classroom teacher on the impact of his own social studies course; and one study was performed by a researcher who explicitly rejects traditional research methods in favor of a storytelling approach which he uses to investigate the experience of a single student (download full-text PDF). The findings of this section tell readers very little.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Educational policy makers and stakeholders should require a robust body of research that examines ethnic studies curricula and programs containing all seven of the listed hallmarks rather than an assortment of studies which examine one or two loosely defined components, aspects, or hallmarks of an ethnic studies approach.

Educational policy makers and stakeholders should require the research review to be performed by researchers without direct conflicts of interest.

School leaders, teachers, and parents should educate themselves about the history of race-based education; review all curricula and programming focused on race/ethnicity; assess the research base being used to justify these curricula and programming; and advocate against any curriculum or program that seems likely to increase students' hostilities and divisions along racial or ethnic lines.

Educational policy makers and stakeholders should cross-check research reviews or claims by directly examining the studies in question.

Recap of Evaluation Questions

FAIR recommends these questions for non-researchers evaluating research claims:

1. What was studied, and does it support the claims being made? Read disclaimers carefully.
2. Is this study relevant to my student group? Generalizing research across populations that were not studied is not permissible.
3. How current is the data or research?
4. What is the size of the student group studied? Can findings be generalized?
5. What investments, commitments and views do the researchers hold? Can they be objective?

Additional Recommended Questions

For more in-depth analysis, these additional questions should be applied:

6. What assessments were used, and what were they designed to measure?
7. Are long-term results known?
8. Where did the funding for this research originate?

FAIR in Education Full Report

An Extended Evaluation of "What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies"

Ethnic studies theory, curricula, and pedagogy are causing sweeping changes to American K-12 education and raising controversy in school communities and state legislatures. While ethnic studies programs have existed in American universities since 1968, the discipline has only recently made serious inroads in K-12 schools. Some states or districts have mandated that students take an ethnic studies course to graduate high school or attend a state institution of higher education. Other states have revised social studies learning standards to include ethnic studies strands. Some school districts are in the process of implementing ethnic studies curricula from kindergarten through twelfth grade, while other districts are revamping curricula in English, history, social studies, the arts, and even math to include an ethnic studies focus. Teacher preparation programs are adding ethnic studies requirements, and in some cases redesigning program outcomes around ethnic studies objectives.

In other words, ethnic studies is not only a content area and a discipline, it is a reform movement impacting many aspects of American education. For a partial summary of ethnic studies requirements by state, please see this list created by researchers at the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law.

When any curriculum, theory, or pedagogy is mandated, it is crucial to know *what it is*—not just marketing copy about its supposed benefits, but detailed information about its content, methods, and aims—and to understand its research base. The stakes can be high, as exemplified by a cautionary tale from the field of K-12 literacy instruction. In 2022, the groundbreaking podcast Sold a Story documented that deeply flawed research has for decades been used to promote an ineffective approach to literacy instruction, causing immeasurable damage to American students' literacy development. One in three American fourth graders now read below a basic level, and the 2023 National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates an all-time low in literacy scores. In recognition of these flaws in research and methods, some 17 states have passed laws to change their approach to reading instruction, and five more are considering such legislation. Much of the research used to advance ineffective literacy instruction was performed by researchers with conflicts of interest due to personal or institutional investment in theories, products, curricula, or

services. **The takeaway: Any widespread educational reform movement should be vetted thoroughly by disinterested educational researchers who do not stand to profit from affiliated products or services, and who are not so committed to a specific theory, method, or political goal that their objectivity is plausibly compromised.** Unfortunately, disinterested educational researchers are not always readily available, and there have been many recent instances of academic fraud. Thus, it is especially important that teachers, parents, administrators, and school board members evaluate research claims in order to make informed decisions about new curricula and course requirements.

So, what is ethnic studies, exactly? What is the research being used to justify its inclusion in curricula, state standards, and graduation requirements? Parents, teachers, school leaders, and policy makers must navigate research claims in order to make informed decisions—but it can be challenging to navigate dense academic studies. **FAIR recommends the following simple process.**

Define the terms. What does "ethnic studies" mean?

Become familiar with definitions. Don't settle on the first definition in a web search; look for a variety of definitions offered by diverse sources such as a dictionary, several scholarly articles, news articles, and K-12 schools. If possible, locate definitions offered by both advocates and critics. FAIR found that K-12 schools often offer two different definitions of ethnic studies, one on the school website and one in internal documents and communications. The best way to learn how a school district defines ethnic studies is to submit a FOIA, or Freedom of Information Act request.

Ethnic studies is an academic discipline that emerged in the 1960s in the Bay Area as a result of student protests connected to the Third World Liberation Front. Scholarly definitions of ethnic studies vary slightly, but most conform to the basic elements described by Dr. Amanda Morrison in What is Ethnic Studies?: "an interdisciplinary field of critical race studies [...] widely taught through an intersectional lens in which issues of race and ethnicity are examined in relation to other axes of identity and oppression including gender, sexuality, socioeconomic class, religion, nationality, immigration status, language, and ability." A 2020 book, *Transformative Ethnic Studies in Schools: Curriculum, Pedagogy & Research* by Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala, contains the research review analyzed in this guide and lists the following **seven hallmarks of ethnic studies** (p. 8):

1. **Curriculum as Counter-Narrative:**
   Curriculum from the perspectives of people of color

2. **Criticality:**
   Structural analysis of racism and colonialism that works towards dismantling multiple forms of oppression

3. **Reclaiming Cultural Identities:**
   Deep knowledge of where students come from that challenges deculturalizing processes; learning about the historical contributions of their communities

4. **Intersectionality and Multiplicity:**
   Attending to students' multiple social identities and their positions within intersecting relations of power

5. **Community Engagement:**
   Community-based pedagogies and experiences that bridge classrooms to community and social movements

6. **Pedagogy That Is Culturally Responsive and Mediated:**
   Drawing upon students' lived experiences and sociocultural environments; intentional design of learning spaces

7. **Students as Intellectuals:**
   Respecting and fostering students' curiosity, thinking, and intellectualism

Language from K-12 school districts and curricula add nuance and provide insights into the ways that school districts interpret the definition, mission, values, and practices of the discipline. For example, Seattle Public Schools offers the following definition:

> Ethnic studies involves the teaching of content that critically examines the systems of power and oppression created by white supremacy. Ethnic studies challenges the Master Narrative, which is a focus on white, Eurocentric versions of history. The Master Narrative frequently omits events in history that are unfavorable to white people or rewrites it in such a way as to make the event seem progressive. For example, "The Age of Exploration" or "Westward Expansion," both of which involved the genocide of indigenous groups and the exploitation of indigenous resources.

> Ethnic studies centers the stories and resistance of communities of color and tribal sovereignties. There is an intentional shifting of content to critically examine resistance to and liberation from white supremacy. Ethnic studies empowers students to learn from their ancestors and continue to resist all forms of oppression by strengthening their sense of racial, ethnic and tribal identities.

[For additional examples from schools, please see Appendix A].

For a sample of the kinds of materials represented in ethnic studies curricula, teacher training materials, and supplemental resources, please see Ethnic Studies Curriculum and Resource Samples.

Note on definitions of ethnic studies

K-12 ethnic studies is a contested field. Many families and community groups have objected to ethnic studies because of concerns about race essentialism, divisiveness, political indoctrination, antisemitism, and more. Some argue that politicized instruction about race and ethnicity is not an appropriate aim for public schools in a multiethnic democracy. Others are concerned that ethnic studies curricula force an inadequate and inaccurate framing of human identity based on pan-ethnic group labels. These objections have given rise to distinct factions within ethnic studies, each with different approaches to theory and content. "Liberated" or "critical" ethnic studies, which emphasizes political activism, Critical Theory, and intersectionality theory, comprises the majority of curricula in current use in K-12 schools. For examples of curricula modeling this approach, see the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum or FAIR's samples of ethnic studies curricula, teacher training materials, and supplemental resources from school districts around the United States. "Inclusive" or "constructive" ethnic studies claims to expose students to the experiences and contributions of various ethnic groups without emphasizing political action. Advocates for this less politicized form of ethnic studies provide comparison charts to highlight the distinction between the approaches. **The following discussion of research applies to liberated or critical ethnic studies, the only category of ethnic studies addressed in Sleeter's and Zavala's 2020 research review.** At this time, FAIR is unable to locate a review of the research on "inclusive" or "constructive" ethnic studies.

Identify the research supporting the new curriculum or mandate. If necessary, ask for it.

School leaders, school board members, and teachers should closely read the research cited in support of the proposed curriculum or other changes.

Families should review communications from schools and look for the research cited in support of the proposed curriculum or changes. If citations are not available, ask school leaders to share the research that shows the efficacy of the proposed curriculum or changes.

In K-12 education, research is used to drive instruction. But when the research is of poor quality or low relevance, policy makers are vulnerable to making poorly informed decisions that may negatively impact American students. Any educational reform movement connected to teaching about race and ethnicity carries great importance in this polarized time in America.

Policymakers, educators, and families should observe the high cost children have paid for flawed literacy research, question whether the nation's schools can afford similarly grave missteps connected to race and ethnicity, and carefully scrutinize the research base of proposed curriculum and instruction connected to race and ethnicity.

Three of the most frequently cited studies in support of K-12 ethnic studies are:

(1) A 2017 study by Thomas Dee and Emily Penner

(2) A follow-up 2021 study by Dee, Penner, and Bonilla

(3) "What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies" by Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala, which is extensively cited in the California Model Curriculum and is the subject of FAIR's analysis.

(1) Dee & Penner, 2017 and (2) Dee, Penner, & Bonilla, 2021

The 2017 Dee & Penner study and the 2021 Dee, Penner, & Bonilla study claim to show extensive short and long-term academic benefits for students who take a high school ethnic studies course. Both studies were thoroughly debunked in *Tablet Magazine* on March 28,

2022, by Richard Sander, the Dukeminier Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of California Los Angeles and Co-Director of the UCLA-RAND Center on Law and Policy, and Abraham Wyner, Professor of Statistics and Data Science at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, who write:

> Social science research often generates controversial results, because particular findings can often be legitimately interpreted in multiple ways. This is not the case here. There are well-established, objective methods for evaluating the effects of new programs, and reporting upon and interpreting the results of those evaluations. Those methods were not followed in the Dee-Penner-Bonilla research. The work they present fails many basic tests of scientific method, and it should not have been published as written, much less relied upon in the formulation of public policy. Below we explain what the study authors did, and how their work is fundamentally flawed along three different dimensions: the way their "experiment" was designed, the way they reported their results, and the interpretation of their results. In each of these areas, the authors made multiple serious errors. Far from demonstrating the value of ethnic studies courses, these studies merely demonstrate how easy it is in our overheated political environment to subvert statistical analyses for political purposes. (Para. 3)

(3) **"What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies" by Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala**
FAIR recommends that readers download the research review to read alongside this report.

In 2010, the National Education Association (the nation's largest union, representing 3 million educators) commissioned Christine Sleeter, Professor Emerita at California State University, Monterey Bay, to perform a review of the research on ethnic studies, focused on the following question: *What kind of impact on students does the research actually substantiate?* Sleeter's research review resulted in the 2011 publication of *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies*. In 2020, Sleeter and Miguel Zavala, Associate Professor of Urban Learning at California State University, Los Angeles, updated and expanded that review in Chapter 3 of their book, *Transformative Ethnic Studies in Schools: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Research.* The chapter was also published online as a standalone PDF: What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies. This standalone version includes an introduction by Rebecca S. Pringle, President of the National Education Association, stating the findings that ethnic studies "help foster cross-cultural understanding among both students of color and white students" and that "students who participate in ethnic studies are more academically engaged, develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy and personal empowerment, perform better academically and graduate at higher rates" (iv).

While these findings sound positive, it's important to ask:

What was studied, and does it support the claims being made? Read all disclaimers carefully.

Q1

In the text following Pringle's introduction, Sleeter and Zavala offer a disclaimer that is worth a close read.

> For this research review, we sought published studies and reviews of research that systematically document the impact of ethnic studies (including Afrocentric education, Mexican American studies, and so forth) on US students, pre-K through higher education. [...] **Ideally, the ethnic studies projects that have been researched would exemplify all seven hallmarks of ethnic studies discussed in Chapter 1. In practice, that is not the case.** Ethnic studies is a developing field, an unfinished project. Some curriculum projects in this review exemplified all or most of the hallmarks, most often the creation of curriculum from perspectives of specific marginalized and/or colonized groups. After that, there is wide variation.

This important statement highlights a gap between the studies under review and the actual content and methods of ethnic studies in K-12 classrooms. In fact, the only curriculum project in Sleeter's and Zavala's review which seems to exemplify all seven hallmarks of ethnic studies is the debunked 2017 study by Dee & Penner discussed above. A review of the abstracts of the remaining forty studies in the first section confirms that most of the projects exemplify one or two of the seven hallmarks of ethnic studies, as Sleeter and Zavala acknowledge again in the chapter's conclusion:

> The research on the impact of ethnic studies on students, **while limited in terms of research outcomes and (in many cases) the ethnic studies hallmarks of the projects themselves,** lends strong support to the positive value of ethnic studies for all students—students of color as well as White students. As noted throughout this chapter, almost all projects that were researched gave serious attention to offering curriculum that is grounded in perspectives of specific racially marginalized groups. While some undoubtedly did this better and in more depth than others, attending to the perspective of curricular knowledge is what makes curriculum an ethnic studies curriculum. Attention to culturally responsive pedagogy and cultural mediation was also a common feature of project descriptions. Some projects, such as KEEP (Au & Carroll, 1997), focused on doing this well, and some, such as the Mexican American

> Studies Social Justice Education Project (Cammarota & Romero, 2009), developed their own frameworks for what such pedagogy looks like. **The other five hallmarks received less direct and consistent attention in the program descriptions. (p. 20-21)**

These disclaimers should raise serious concerns for educators, policy makers, and other stakeholders. If the research base is "limited in terms of research outcomes and (in many cases) the ethnic studies hallmarks of the projects themselves," it should not be used to justify sweeping curricular reform. There is also a contradiction between the statement that "attending to the perspective of curricular knowledge is what makes curriculum an ethnic studies curriculum" and the claim that there are seven hallmarks of ethnic studies. At this point, any stakeholder would be justified in dismissing the research review with the following question: **What valid and relevant conclusions can be drawn from a research review which primarily examines projects exemplifying only one or two of the seven hallmarks of ethnic studies?** A review of the studies' abstracts further confirms that most are, at best, only loosely connected to ethnic studies by a general focus on race or ethnicity. **In fact, out of forty-one studies, the term "ethnic studies" occurs in only one study's title or abstract—the discredited Dee & Penner study** (see list).

Educational policy makers and legislators should require a robust body of research that examines ethnic studies curricula and programs that contain all seven of the listed hallmarks rather than an assortment of studies which examine one or two loosely defined components, aspects, or hallmarks of an ethnic studies approach.

It seems, based on a close read of this initial section, that Sleeter's and Zavala's research review is inadequate to providing real insight into the impact of K-12 ethnic studies. Further analysis confirms this is the case. There are additional important questions that stakeholders, especially teachers and school leaders, should ask of any study cited in support of educational reform:

Is the research relevant for my student group?

Q2

Examine who is included in the test population. Are test subjects in a grade level band that allows relevant comparison? Have low-performing or high-performing students been excluded from the study? G**eneralizing research across populations not studied is not permissible.** So, for instance, findings from studies of college students, such as 5 of the 41 studies in the first section of Sleeter's and Zavala's review, cannot be generalized to apply to K-12 students. In fact, **only 2 of the 41 studies were performed with K-4 students, highlighting the extreme lack of research regarding elementary ethnic studies programs and curricula**—though many school districts are implementing ethnic studies beginning in kindergarten.

It's also important to consider relevance connected to other aspects of research foci and populations. In this case, **40 of 41 studies focus on approaches, materials, or research subjects connected to a single ethnic, cultural, or linguistic group.** The "Ethnic studies curriculum perspective" columns in **Tables** 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 list the ethnic focus of each project; e.g., Afrocentric extracurricular program, Filipino studies class, Tucson's Mexican American Studies Social Justice Education Project focusing on Chicano intellectual knowledge, Math in a Cultural Context developed in collaboration with Yup'ik elders, Rough Rock English-Navajo Language Arts program, etc. However, American K-12 ethnic studies courses and curricula purport to instruct a diverse range of students and topically address a range of ethnic groups; at a minimum, the four U.S. Census-created pan-ethnic groups of African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans. This seems to be another instance of "apples to oranges" or research inadequate for meaningful comparison. While research on an ethnically homogenous group of students, or on curriculum and instruction focused on a single ethnic or cultural group, may have important applications, American K-12 public school students are ethnically and racially heterogeneous and culturally diverse. **Research with findings limited to specific ethnic/racial groups or practices should not be generalized to drive educational reform meant to serve a structurally and culturally diverse student body.**

How current is the data or the research?

Q3

With widespread K-12 ethnic studies curricular reform a recent phenomenon, and with the field itself evolving, it is important to base decisions on research which is fairly current. Of the 41 studies in Sleeter's and Zavala's review, 10 were published before or in the year 2000. Only eight, including the debunked Dee & Penner study, were published after 2015. Again, it is notable that none of the titles or abstracts include the term "ethnic studies". Rather they seem a loose compilation of studies on culturally relevant instruction, which is both distinct from ethnic studies and only one hallmark of ethnic studies, according to Sleeter and Zavala; studies broadly connected to literacy, math, or science instruction for students belonging to various ethnic groups; and studies of interventions for at-risk youth.

Studies in Section 1 of Sleeter's and Zavala's review

	Authors	Year	Journal Title (*unless otherwise noted)
1	**Tharp & Callimore**	1988	*Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context.* *Book
2	**McCarty**	1993	Language, literacy, and the image of the child in American Indian classrooms.
3	**Matthews & Smith**	1994	Native American related materials in elementary science instruction.
4	**Krater et al.**	1994	Seeing students, seeing culture, seeing ourselves.
5	**Lee**	1995	A culturally based cognitive apprenticeship: Teaching African American high school students skills in literary interpretation.
6	**Krater & Zeni**	1995	*Mirror images: Teaching writing in Black and White.* *Book
7	**Au & Carroll**	1997	Improving literacy achievement through a constructivist approach: The KEEP demonstration classroom project.
8	**Belgrave et al.**	2000	The effectiveness of a culture- and gender- specific intervention for increasing resiliency among African American preadolescent females.
9	**Ginwright**	2000	Identity for sale: The limits of racial reform in urban schools.
10	**Hilberg, Tharp, & DeGeest**	2000	The efficacy of CREDE standards-based instruction on American Indian mathematics classes.

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	Authors	Year	Journal Title (*unless otherwise noted)
11	**Rickford**	2001	The effect of cultural congruence and higher order questioning on the reading enjoyment and comprehension of ethnic minority students.
12	**Lee**	2001	Is October Brown Chinese? A cultural modeling activity system for underachieving students.
13	**Bailey & Boykin**	2001	The role of task variability and home contextual factors in the academic performance and task motivation of African American elementary school children.
14	**Tyson**	2002	"Get up off that thing": African American middle school students respond to literature to develop a framework for understanding social action.
15	**Doherty et al.**	2003	Five standards and student achievement.
16	**Halagao**	2004	Holding up the mirror: The complexity of seeing your ethnic self in history.
17	**Ginwright**	2004	Black in school: Afrocentric reform, urban youth, and the promise of hip-hop culture.
18	**Vasquez**	2005	Ethnic identity and Chicano literature: How ethnicity affects reading and reading affects ethnic consciousness.
19	**Lipka et al.**	2005	Math in a cultural context: Two case studies of a successful culturally-based math project.
20	**Lewis, Sullivan, & Bybee**	2006	An experimental evaluation of a school-based emancipatory intervention to promote African American well-being and youth leadership.
21	**Lee**	2006	"Every good-bye ain't gone": Analyzing the cultural underpinnings of classroom talk
22	**Lee**	2007	*Culture, literacy, and learning: Taking bloom in the midst of the whirlwind.* *Book
23	**Doherty & Hilberg**	2007	Standards for effective pedagogy, classroom organization, English proficiency, and student achievement.
24	**Thomas et al.**	2008	An evaluation study of the Young Empowered Sisters (YES!) Program: Promoting cultural assets among African American adolescent girls through a culturally relevant school-based intervention.
25	**Cammarota & Romero**	2009	The social justice education project: A critically compassionate intellectualism for Chicana/o students.
26	**Halagao**	2010	Liberating Filipino Americans through decolonizing curriculum.

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	Authors	Year	Journal Title (*unless otherwise noted)
27	**Lewis et al.**	2012	Experimentally evaluating the impact of a school-based African-centered emancipatory intervention on the ethnic identity of African American adolescents
28	**Kisker et al.**	2012	The potential of a culturally based supplemental mathematics curriculum to improve the mathematics performance of Alaska Native and other students.
29	**Duncan**	2012	The effects of Africentric United States history curriculum on Black student achievement.
30	**Hall & Martin**	2013	Engagement of African American college students through the use of hip-hop pedagogy.
31	**Cabrera et al.**	2014	Missing the (student achievement) forest for all the (political) trees: Empiricism and the Mexican American student controversy in Tucson
32	**McCarty & Lee**	2014	Critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy and Indigenous education sovereignty.
33	**Green-Gibson & Collett**	2014	A comparison of African & mainstream culture on African American students in public elementary schools.
34	**Adjapong & Emdin**	2015	Rethinking pedagogy in urban spaces: Implementing hip-hop pedagogy in the urban science classroom.
35	**Lopez**	2016	Culturally responsive pedagogies in Arizona and Latino students' achievement.
36	**Stone & Stewart**	2016	HBCUs and writing programs: Critical hip hop language pedagogy and first-year student success.
37	**Wiggan & Watson-Vandiver**	2017	Pedagogy of empowerment: Student perspectives on critical multicultural education at a high-performing African American school.
38	**Dee & Penner**	2017	The causal effects of cultural relevance: Evidence from an ethnic studies curriculum.
39	**Lopez**	2017	Altering the trajectory of the self-fulfilling prophecy: Asset-based pedagogy and classroom dynamics.
40	**Lopez**	2018	Asset pedagogies in Latino youth identity and achievement. *Book
41	**Sharif, Matthews & Lopez**	2018	Speaking their language: The role of cultural content integration and heritage language for academic achievement among Latino children.

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What is the size of the sample group?

Q4

It is important to note how many subjects are included in a study. Sample size matters; the fewer participants in the study, the less able researchers are to generalize conclusions to broader populations. For instance, Sleeter and Zavala include in their review a study of six Filipino American college students (Halagao, 2004), a study of eighteen college students in a Chicano literature course (Vasquez, 2005), a study of twenty-five African American middle school students (Rickford, 2001), and a number of other small studies. **While small case studies may provide insights into the needs of a particular group of students or into specific classroom or school cultures, it is not appropriate to generalize findings to large populations, as the researchers themselves usually acknowledge.** For instance, in the third study in Sleeter's and Zavala's research review, Thomas et al., 2008 (with 36 students in the intervention and 38 in the control group), the authors offer the following caution in the "limitations" section:

> Another concern is the generalization of the intervention findings to other populations, including other African American adolescent youth. The present study focused on a relatively small number of freshmen and sophomore African American adolescent girls who lived in the same neighborhood and attended the same school. This is not a representative sample of African American adolescents and certainly not of the general adolescent population. As a result, the study's intervention may not positively affect youth of other backgrounds in the same way it affected the participants in the study. Future research that replicates the intervention in a variety of settings and with other populations must be conducted. (p. 303)

This is a responsible disclaimer, and others like it can be found in other studies reviewed by Sleeter and Zavala. **It is a serious oversight to include multiple small studies in a research review without highlighting and acknowledging limitations to the readers relying on the analysis.**

What views do the researchers hold? Can they be objective?

Q5

Recent high profile cases of academic fraud highlight the importance of disinterested educational researchers to perform high stakes analyses. **It is vital to ask whether researchers stand to profit from a program or initiative's success, or whether they are so committed to a specific theory, method, or political goal that their objectivity might be plausibly compromised.** All too often, the researchers or funders of the study are the same people who developed the program or curriculum or who analyze the results and write the conclusions. If this is the case, it is not possible to be truly objective. In another type of conflict of interest, some researchers categorize themselves as "scholar-activists," and their a priori commitments may color their research and undermine its credibility.

Christine Sleeter and Miguel Zavala, as authors of multiple recent books and one co-authored forthcoming book on K-12 ethnic studies (*Transforming Teaching and Research for Ethnic Studies,* Teachers College Press), stand to profit from the success of ethnic studies initiatives. Sleeter has also designed a framework for designing lessons focused on ethnic studies and culturally responsive curriculum. Both Sleeter and Zavala are long-time ethnic studies activists seeking to expand the field, and both hold openly stated political motives that could plausibly interfere with their potential to perform an unbiased research review.

Sleeter's website identifies her as an "author, speaker, teacher, activist"; her activism has focused for years on ethnic studies, multiculturalism, decolonization and anti-capitalism. In a recent chapter on Capitalism and Class, Sleeter argues that racism and capitalism are inextricably intertwined, and that curriculum is a key site for shaping public consciousness:

> In this chapter, I will argue that a class analysis is hindered by blinders that serve to obscure the important roles played by racism, inevitably so, given that racism and capitalism have been inextricably intertwined from the beginning; hence, they cannot be separated. Drawing on Latin American decolonial work (Mignolo 2018; Quijano 2007), Wilkerson's (2020) analysis of racism and caste and Black Marxists' work that connects race and class (Marable 2015; Robinson 2000), I argue that both racism (understood as caste) and capitalism are ultimately derived from European ontology and that such ontological premises provide the foundations for social structures. While I agree with Ryan that curriculum is a key site of contestation, I argue that its power lies not just in its production of workers but more fundamentally with its role in shaping public consciousness. (p. 178)

Later in the chapter, Sleeter states: "I argue that the most effective pushback necessitates marrying a Marxist analysis with a race/caste analysis of both the structures of power and the public consciousness on which those structures rest" (p. 185). Here and elsewhere, Sleeter's clearly stated political agenda informs her work, and while it is not certain that Sleeter's political commitments and financial conflicts of interest interfere with her impartiality, it is a significant enough possibility that stakeholders should demand analysis from a less potentially biased researcher.

Miguel Zavala, too, is a long-time activist. In addition to co-authoring *Transformative Ethnic Studies in Schools*, his numerous publications include books and essays such as:

Zavala, M. & Joubert, E. (in press). We return: Teaching war through ethnic studies. In B. Gibbs (Ed.), *Teaching war.* Lexington Books.

Zavala, M. & Magcalas, P. (2021). Teaching social issues through ethnic studies: Centering race and social activism. In R. Evans (Ed.), *Handbook on the teaching of social issues* (pp. 81 – 90). Information Age Publishing.

Zavala, M. (2019). *Raza Struggle and the Movement for Ethnic Studies: Decolonial Pedagogies, Literacies, and Methodologies.* New York: Peter Lang.

Zavala, M., & Henning, N. (2017). The role of political education in the formation of teachers as community organizers: Lessons from a grassroots activist organization. Urban Education.

Zavala, M., & Golden, A. N. (2016). Prefiguring alternative worlds: Organic critical literacies and socio-cultural revolutions. Knowledge Cultures 4(6), 205–225.

As evident in these and Zavala's many other publications, it is clear that Zavala is committed to political activism through education. The abstract from "Prefiguring alternative worlds: Organic critical literacies and socio-cultural revolutions" is informative regarding his specific political commitments (download full-text PDF):

> ABSTRACT. This paper offers a vision of critical literacies that speak to education, revolution and the institutional arrangements of capitalism. We provide a path forward for educating within/against neoliberalism and for understanding the imperative to prefigure spaces and a language of possibility. Our aim is to situate the need for critical spaces in revolutionary struggles, and to delineate a theoretical

> framing of organic critical literacies while grounding them in generative exemplars. Drawing upon the concept of prefigurative politics, we demonstrate how mediation and place-based praxis must be at the core of critical literacies that challenge capitalism and its institutional arrangements, and that are generative of socio-cultural revolutions.

In the article that follows, Zavala notes, "A fundamental question for us as cultural workers and teacher educators working within capitalist-colonialist institutional arrangements is how we can seed education projects from below, at the grassroots level, that bring to life spaces of hope, love, and what we term sociocultural revolutions, marked not only by radical economic changes but also by ecological and re-humanizing values that lead to the production of new social subjects, communities and our relation to the earth-world" (p. 204). In the same article, Zavala also asks, "To what extent do socialist revolutions in Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia create spaces of hope and possibility from below, spaces that lead to developmentally new values and practices, say of solidarity and egalitarianism, or spaces for the development of humanizing education?" (p. 211). Finally, though lengthy, it is instructive to read Zavala's description of his own work with youth and consider whether he can be objective in analyzing the research on ethnic studies:

> Grounded in Freirean and decolonizing pedagogies (Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Nakata et al., 2012; Tejeda Espinoza & Gutierrez, 2003; Zavala, 2014), Zavala (author) has been a part of the development of alternative liberatory education projects working with Raza migrant farmworker (2002–2005, 2015) and im/migrant (2007–2014) high school youth. An example of critical literacies praxis serving as a prefigurative political space is the six-week summer Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) program in Santa Ana, California. [...] Working strategically within a highly institutionalized and federally funded space, the program was re-designed in 2013, marked by two important shifts: the move from college access to critical consciousness; and, the move from academic research to action-research. This re-orientation was manifest in the infusion of a place-based Ethnic Studies approach to the History of Santa Ana course and the implementation of YPAR as a primary vehicle for the Writing & Research seminar [...] As a way of critically understanding poverty, particular texts were selected that would provide students with a historical and sociological understanding of the causes and effects of poverty. Among the texts were Eduardo Galeano's Open Veins of Latin America, Rudolfo Acuna's Occupied America: A History of Chicanos, and selections from Karl Marx on the development of capitalist societies. The pedagogical and literacy work entailed in connecting students' lives with historical processes requires laborious close-text

> analysis (Vossoughi, 2014) while enabling them to see their lives as encircled within a capitalist-colonialist reality included the use of popular 'texts' and film to draw out experiences and ideas related to these. The second move was to orient writing and reading—conceptualized within the program as multiple literacies for critical consciousness—toward an action oriented strategy: Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Morrell, 2008). The students used the tools of social analysis and research, such as interviewing and demographic analysis, in the development of their action-research projects. This process was a dialectical journey that allowed everyone, including the instructor, to co-create knowledge and deep understanding of the causes and impact of poverty in Santa Ana. This process led to further questions and the eventual refinement of research projects that allowed students to explore concrete manifestations of capitalism and its relation to poverty wages, homelessness, violence, mental health, immigration, and schooling (all themes taken-up by student research groups). (p. 214)

It is clear that Zavala and Sleeter have political commitments and financial conflicts of interest which could reasonably hinder them from performing objective reviews of the research on ethnic studies. In addition to noting these conflicts of interest, policy makers and educators should ask the same question of every study in the research review, where they will find additional conflicts of interest such as a researcher examining the impact of a curriculum which she co-developed (Halagao, 2004), a primary researcher using measures created for the purpose of the study to examine outcomes of a program which she facilitated (Thomas et al., 2008), research which uses writing assessments developed for the purpose of the program (Au & Carroll, 1997) (p. 15), and more.

To summarize, with just five questions, a non-researcher can gain valuable information about the relevance and quality of a study:

1. What was studied, and does it support the claims being made? Read all disclaimers carefully.

2. Is this study relevant to my student group? Generalizing research across populations not studied is not permissible.

3. How current is the data or the research?

4. What is the size of the student group studied? Can findings be generalized?

5. What investments, commitments and views do the researchers hold? Can they be objective?

For more in-depth analysis, these additional questions should be applied:

6. What assessments were used, and what were they designed to measure?

7. Are long-term results known?

8. Where did the funding for this research originate?

Modeling the Evaluation Process

Whenever possible, educators and policy makers should read the full texts of all cited research to confirm relevance, value, reliability, and outcomes. However, if time is limited, even close attention to abstracts and partial reads of studies will produce valuable insights. Sometimes asking and answering one or two questions is all that's necessary to discern whether a study should be accepted as evidence.

As an example, we will examine the first research subsection, **Table 3.1** from Sleeter's and Zavala's review. We will use our first two recommended questions to discern relevance: (1) **What was studied, and does it support the claims being made? Read all disclaimers carefully** and (2) **Is the research relevant for my student group?**

Sleeter's and Zavala's research review includes tables of studies categorized by nature of impact. While useful for quick reference, the language in the tables only provides superficial insights into the design and outcomes of the studies. The outcomes column seems to indicate broadly positive results, but a closer examination of the studies reveals more complexity.

Table 3.1. Ethnic Studies Curriculum and Student Identity/Sense of Self

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	Author(s), date	Ethnic studies curriculum perspective	Research Design	Level	Outcomes
1	**Lewis, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006**	Project EXCEL, an African-centered, 1 -semester class	Pre-post control group	8th grade	Communalism, achievement motivation
2	**Lewis et al., 2012**	Project EXCEL, an African-centered, 1 -semester class	Pre-post control group	8th grade	Ethnic identity
3	**Thomas et al., 2008**	African American after-school program	Pre-post no control group	High school	Ethnic identity, sense of empowerment
4	**Belgrave et ah (sic), 2000**	Afrocentric extracurricular program	Pre-post control group	Ages 10-12	Ethnic identity, self-concept
5	**Wiggan & Watson-Vandiver, 2017**	Multicultural and African-centered school	Case study	High school	Academic achievement, critical thinking, identity
6	**Halagao, 2004, 2010**	Pinoy Teach: Filipino studies class	Interviews	Higher education	Critical thinking, identity, empowerment
7	**Vasquez, 2005**	Chicano literature course	Interviews	Higher education	Ethnic identity

Upon reviewing **Table 3.1**, an educator or policy maker might ask: How are outcomes such as communalism, achievement, ethnic identity, sense of empowerment, self-concept, and critical thinking defined and measured? Are they significant and measurable outcomes that should be attached to mandated courses, curricula, and state standards? Why are findings from three studies of college students (Halagao, 2004; Halagao, 2010, and Vasquez, 2005) used as evidence to advance ethnic studies reform for K-12 students? How are studies of after-school and extracurricular programs (Thomas et al., 2008; Belgrave et al., 2000) relevant to decisions about curriculum and instruction?

Studies 1 and 2: Lewis, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006 and Lewis et al., 2012

What was studied, and does it support the claims being made?
Read all disclaimers carefully.

The first two studies (Lewis, Sullivan, and Bybee, 2006 and Lewis et al., 2012) focus on the same project: "Project EXCEL, which met 3 times per week, taught African and African American history and culture, and African rituals and practices" (p. 3). Sleeter and Zavala acknowledge that:

> In Lewis, Sullivan, and Bybee's (2006) study, youth in the experimental curriculum scored higher than those in the control group on communal orientation, school connectedness, motivation to achieve, and overall social change involvement. But in the Lewis et al. (2012) study, there was a decrease in experimental students' ethnic identity, which was this second study's main outcome. The authors suggest that there may have been too much emphasis on racism and oppression, leading students to distance themselves psychologically from membership in a victimized group.

This is an important acknowledgment that one iteration of Project EXCEL did not produce positive outcomes for participants.

Study 3: Thomas et al., 2008

What was studied, and does it support the claims being made?
Read all disclaimers carefully.

Regarding the 2008 study by Thomas et al., Sleeter and Zavala state: "The goals and nature of this 10-week program were similar to those of Project EXCEL: to nurture Black identity and collectivist orientation, and to develop racism awareness and liberatory action." In a

free download of the full-text PDF, readers will learn: "Specifically, the study explored whether the intervention would have an effect on the following variables: African American ethnic identity, racism awareness, collectivist orientation, intentions to participate in liberatory youth activism, and participation in actual liberatory youth activism" (p. 286) and "The overall goal of utilizing Freire's principles of praxis was to empower YES! participants to engage in activism to bring about social change" (p. 290). At this point, readers might wonder why measures of political activism are relevant to K-12 education reform. The study's authors, Thomas et al., laudably acknowledge the limitations of their research, including a conflict of interest due to the primary researcher facilitating the programming and the co-facilitators sharing their own experiences during the discussions; the fact that the measures used were created for the purposes of the study, and "a lack of follow-up after the initial posttest":

> Additional follow-up data are needed to show long-term durability of the intervention effects among participants. The positive effects of an intervention may vary over time. It is therefore essential to conduct at least one long-term follow-up at an appropriate interval beyond the end of the intervention to attain information on the course and timing of effects and to increase confidence in the inferences made about the efficacy of the intervention (Flay et al., 2005). **Thus, extreme caution is advised when making inferences about the long-term effects of the present study's intervention results. (p. 303)**

This is another responsible disclaimer, and an example of the kinds of insights available to stakeholders who read the cited studies.

Study 4: Belgrave et al, 2000

What was studied, and does it support the claims being made?
Read all disclaimers carefully.

The abstract of the fourth study by Belgrave et al. is:

> **ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of an intervention on strengthening resiliency among African American preadolescent girls using a relational and Africentric focus. The hypotheses were that significant increases in Africentric values, ethnic identity, gender role beliefs, and self-concept would follow participation in the intervention. The target population was African American girls aged 10 to 12 years considered at risk based on socioeconomic context. Fifty-five

girls were in the intervention group, and 92 girls were in the comparison group. Intervention participants met once a week for 2 hours for 4 months and engaged in exercises and activities designed to increase feelings of self-worth, Africentric values, and ethnic and gender identity. Findings from analyses of covariances indicated that intervention participants scored significantly higher on measures of Africentric values, ethnic identity, and physical appearance self-concept than comparison participants at posttest. The implications of the findings for prevention programs are discussed.

The reader might ask why a study of an intervention for at-risk students (as opposed to a curriculum or educational program) that measures Africentric values, ethnic identity, and physical appearance self-concept is relevant to decisions about K-12 curriculum and instruction. It is notable that the intervention participants met once a week for two hours for four months, a total of thirty-two hours.

Study 5: Wiggan & Watson-Vandiver, 2017

What was studied, and does it support the claims being made? Read all disclaimers carefully.

The fifth study, by Wiggan et al., published fairly recently, seems to hold somewhat more relevance, though nowhere in the abstract does it indicate a focus on ethnic studies:

> **ABSTRACT:** Despite decades of education reform, the US school curricula remain virtually unchanged. Multi-billion dollar initiatives such as *No Child Left Behind, Common Core State Standards, Race to the Top, and Every Student Succeeds Act* have not resulted in significant academic gains or curricula change. The exclusion of diversity and multiculturalism in US classrooms and textbooks underserves all students and inaccurately perpetuates a hegemonic narrative. This omission particularly disserves minority students, whose only exposure to Black history is slavery and the Civil Rights Movement. Thus, this qualitative case study examines a high-performing school, Harriet Tubman Academy (pseudonym)–HTA, that utilizes critical multiculturalism and anti-racism education. The findings reveal greater academic achievement, and the students explain that they had a greater understanding and appreciation for multicultural education because of their experiences at HTA. The findings of the study have great implications for urban school reform.

The reader might wonder about the veracity of the claim that "US school curricula remain virtually unchanged" and "The exclusion of diversity and multiculturalism in US classrooms and textbooks underserves all students and inaccurately perpetuates a hegemonic narrative"—when in fact, the curricula and textbooks in most states have changed dramatically over the past twenty years, consistently adding treatment of diversity and multiculturalism. In this case, local information is important. The reader might also be aware that case studies, listed as the research method for this study, are qualitative, generally built on interviews and observations, and especially vulnerable to researcher bias.

Studies 6, 7, and 8: Halagao, 2004; Halagao, 2010; and Vasquez, 2005

Is the research relevant for my student group?

The reader should dismiss the remaining three studies on higher education (Halagao, 2004, Halagao, 2010, and Vasquez, 2005) as irrelevant for K-12 students.

Examination of this subsection of Sleeter's and Zavala's research review indicates that one study found negative outcomes for students, three are irrelevant due to population (higher education), and the remaining four are compromised by weak methodology or potential researcher conflicts of interest, and in some cases contain important disclaimers and limitations not acknowledged in the review. Of eight listed studies, not a single study is explicitly about ethnic studies as defined by Sleeter and Zavala in Chapter 1.

We have curated in Appendix B abstracts of the remaining 33 studies in the first section of Sleeter's and Zavala's review, including full-text PDFs when available. We invite readers to review any of the studies in **Tables 3.2**, **3.3**, and **3.4** of What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies and follow the process outlined above. **FAIR concluded that the research reviewed is only loosely connected to ethnic studies as it is practiced in K-12 schools, includes many studies that are methodologically weak or contain conflicts of interest, and is inadequate to understanding the impact of ethnic studies on K-12 students.** This conclusion should not be taken to condemn the quality of all of the studies in the research review; some may be of sound quality, and in others, the researchers have taken care to acknowledge limitations and conflicts of interest.

*To learn about the research designs indicated in the table such as *pre-post control group and pre-post no control group,* both of which may lack long-term outcome data, Statology offers helpful overviews.

Studies in Section 2 of Sleeter's and Zavala's review

In the second part of Sleeter's and Zavala's review, "Ethnic Studies for Diverse Groups That Include White Students", the authors state: "At the elementary and secondary levels, there is surprisingly little research". It is instructive to read the section itself on page 18 of the review, which includes three studies. Of the three studies, one study is disclaimed by Sleeter and Zavala as "not as strong methodologically" as another study reviewed; one study was performed by a classroom teacher on the impact of his own social studies course; and one study was performed by a researcher who explicitly rejects traditional research methods in favor of a storytelling approach which he uses to investigate the experience of a single student (download full-text PDF). The findings of this section tell readers very little.

Conclusions

American students are diverse across many categories, including those frequently cited (e.g. race, ethnicity, creed, socioeconomic status, disability, etc.) and those difficult to qualify or quantify (e.g. resiliency, psychological health, traumatic life experiences, environmental or epigenetic damage, drug and alcohol use, and more). **But all American students in K-12 settings have two things in common: they are developmentally immature, and they are a captive audience.** The field of child and adolescent development is founded on the recognition that children acquire physical and intellectual maturity over time and are heavily impacted by adult caregivers. Lacking background knowledge and experience of the world, physically and economically dependent, unable to leave the school setting, and at various stages of acquiring literacy and the capacity for critical thought, **children are uniquely vulnerable to adult ideological influence—especially students who are otherwise marginalized. Students with low socioeconomic status and low measures of political knowledge are especially likely to adopt teachers' views without question** (Hess, 2009).[2] Correspondingly, teachers have a responsibility to respect students' immaturity and emerging understanding of the world, to exercise restraint and respect for diverse views and belief systems, and to protect the boundaries of students and themselves.

Given the sensitive nature of instruction about race, ethnicity and human identity, it is concerning that FAIR's evaluation of Sleeter's and Zavala's research review on ethnic studies found many gaps and shortcomings. **FAIR highlights the need for a formal academic analysis of "What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies."**

[2] Hess, D. (2009) *Controversy in the classroom.* New York: Routledge

Recommendations

Educational policy makers and stakeholders should require a robust body of research that examines ethnic studies curricula and programs containing all seven of the listed hallmarks rather than an assortment of studies which examine one or two loosely defined components, aspects, or hallmarks of an ethnic studies approach.

Educational policy makers and stakeholders should require the research review to be performed by researchers without direct conflicts of interest.

Educational policy makers and stakeholders should cross-check research reviews or claims by directly examining the studies in question.

School leaders, teachers, and parents should educate themselves about the history of race-based education; review all curricula and programming focused on race/ethnicity; assess the research base being used to justify these curricula and programming; and advocate against any curriculum or program that seems likely to increase students' hostilities and divisions along racial or ethnic lines.

Recommended groups to educate about ethnic studies:

County and district superintendents, school board members and candidates, parents/ community members, directors of county and district education services, state legislators, curriculum working groups, etc.

Appendix A:
Ethnic Studies definitions from K-12 schools

Samples procured through FOIA by Zachor Legal Institute

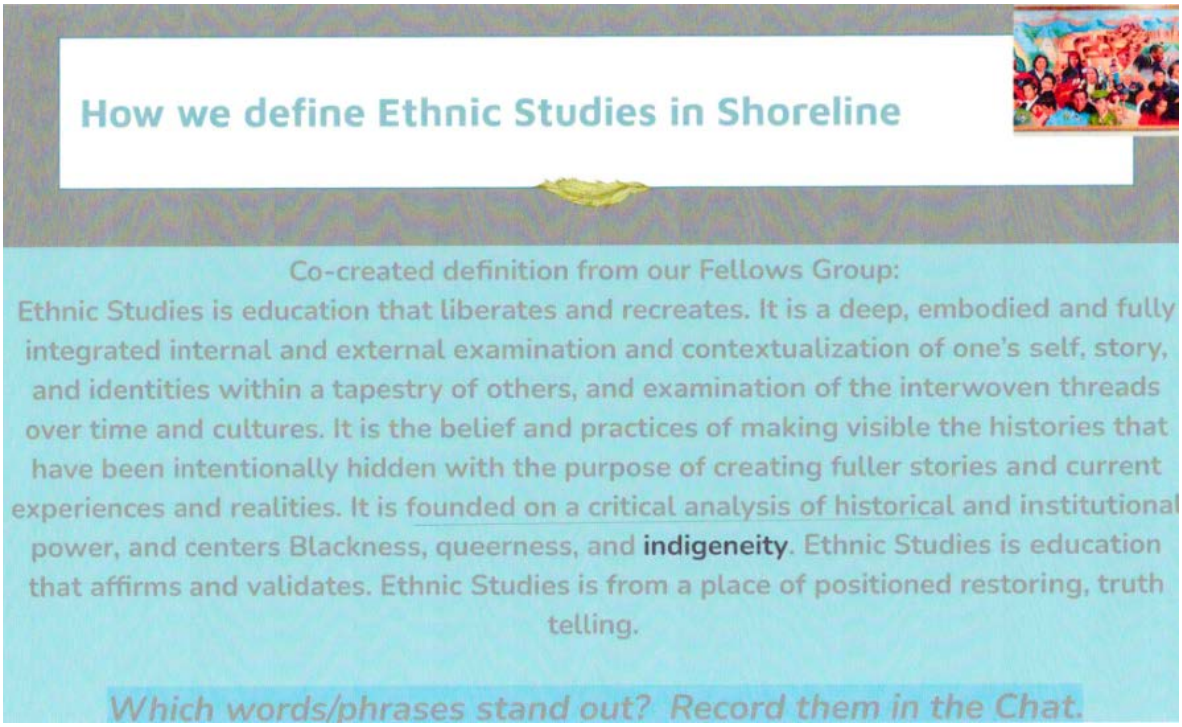
Example 1

Internal documents and training slides from **Seattle Public Schools** (Seattle, WA) offer detailed definitions:

SLIDES 27-30	American Government Ethnic Studies Framework
SLIDES 31-35	Ancient World History Ethnic Studies Framework
SLIDE 36	Content and practice definition of ethnic studies
SLIDES 46-84	Elementary Ethnic Studies 101, General Overview and Pedagogy
SLIDES 120-123	High School ELA Ethnic Studies Framework
SLIDE 132	Elementary Ethnic Studies Vocabulary and Definitions

Example 2

Internal documents from **Shoreline Public Schools** (Shoreline, WA) offer this definition:



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Example 3

This chart of ethnic studies courses from **Anaheim Union High School District** (Anaheim, CA) demonstrates application of ethnic studies across content areas.

Example 4

This **Los Angeles Unified School District** Course Guideline for Ethnic Studies Grades 9-12 (Los Angeles, CA) begins with this definition:

Los Angeles Unified School District
Course Guideline

Course Title: Introduction to Ethnic Studies	**Prerequisite:** None	**Course Number:** 370733
Semester Course: Grades 9-12	**Text:** A Different Mirror for Young People by *Ronald Takaki*	

LAUSD Definition of Ethnic Studies

Ethnic Studies is an interdisciplinary and comparative study of the social, cultural, artistic, political, historical, and economic expression and experience of race and ethnicity that primarily centers the studies of American Indians/Native Americans, Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders, Black/African Americans, and Chicanx/Latinx.

Ethnic Studies centers holistic humanization and critical consciousness, providing every student the opportunity to enter the content from their own space, positionality, and perspective. Ethnic Studies affirms the student identity, experience, and the building of empathy for others. This includes the self-determination of those who have ancestral roots and knowledge who have resisted and survived settler colonialism, racism, white supremacy, cultural erasure, as well as other patterns, structures, and systems of marginalization and oppression. The discipline uses culturally and community-responsive pedagogical practices to empower students to become anti-racist leaders.

Ethnic studies reconstructs and transforms the traditional narrative and curriculum by highlighting the contributions people of color have made in shaping US culture and society.

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Example 5

This **Santa Ana Unified School District** (Santa Ana, CA) History 10 Ethnic Studies World Histories Course overview offers this definition:

History 10 Ethnic Studies World Histories Course

Course Title: Ethnic Studies World Histories

Length of Course: Full Year (Two semesters)

Subject Area: College Preparatory Required "a" Credit – History

Grade: 10th

Prerequisites: Not required

Overview

Ethnic Studies World Histories explores the evolution of people through an intersectional lens that includes the expanded voices of those groups previously marginalized within Eurocentric textbooks. An emphasis is placed on developing a classroom environment that is grounded in the concept of creating safe, brave, and empathic spaces for students and their teacher. It is vital that an emotionally and mentally secure learning climate is established to support this contemporary way of interacting with world history through counter and expanded narratives.

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Appendix B:
Tables and Abstracts from
What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies

Table 3.2. Ethnic Studies Curriculum and Student Achievement

	Author(s), date	Ethnic Studies Curriculum Perspective	Level	Research design	Outcomes
1	**Dee & Penner, 2017**	San Francisco Unified School District's 9th- grade course focusing on critical consciousness, self-love, and action	9th grade	Quasi-experimental	Grade point average (GPA), attendance, credits toward graduation
2	**Cabrera et al., 2014**	Tucson's Mexican American Studies program developed through Chicano and Indigenous epistemologies	High school	Quasi-experimental	Standardized skill tests, graduation rates
3	**Cammarota & Romero, 2009**	Tucson's Mexican American Studies Social Justice Education Project focusing on Chicano intellectual knowledge	High school	Pre–post no control group, interviews	Test scores, graduation rates, sense of empowerment
4	**Kisker et al., 2012**	Math in a Cultural Context, developed in collaboration with Yup'ik elders	2nd grade	Pre–post control group	Math achievement
5	**Lipka et al., 2005**	Math in a Cultural Context, developed in collaboration with Yup'ik elders	6th grade	Pre–post control group	Math achievement
6	**McCarty & Lee, 2014**	Native American Community Academy, developed with community collaboration	Middle, high school	Qualitative; pre–post no control group	Basic skills achievement
7	**McCarty, 1993**	Rough Rock Lnglish-Navajo Language Arts program	Elementary	Qualitative	Reading scores
8	**Matthews & Smith, 1994**	Culturally relevant science content consisting of biographies of American Indian scientists	4-8th grades	Pre–post control group	Science achievement, attitudes toward science and Native Americans

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	Author(s), date	Ethnic Studies Curriculum Perspective	Level	Research design	Outcomes
9	**Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014**	African American cultural infusion	3rd-6th grades	Causal-comparative	School Adequate Yearly Progress rating
10	**Duncan, 2012**	Afrocentric U.S. history course	8th grade	Quasi-experimental	Academic achievement, student self- efficacy
11	**Rickford, 2001**	Culturally relevant texts	Middle school	Post-interviews, no control group	Comprehension, higher-order thinking
12	**Tyson, 2002**	Multicultural literature in social studies, using Banks's transformative and social action curriculum levels	Middle school	Interviews, classroom observation	Use of text, knowledge of social issues
13	**Ginwright, 2000, 2004**	Afrocentric culture infused through curriculum and school as a whole	High school	Qualitative case study	Academic achievement, academic participation

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(1) **Dee, T., & Penner, E. (2017). The causal effects of cultural relevance: Evidence from an ethnic studies curriculum. *American Educational Research Journal,* 54(1), 127–166.**

This study was debunked in Tablet Magazine on March 28, 2022, by Richard Sander, the Dukeminier Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of California Los Angeles and Co-Director of the UCLA-RAND Center on Law and Policy, and Abraham Wyner, Professor of Statistics and Data Science at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

> **SUMMARY QUOTE:** "Below we explain what the study authors did, and how their work is fundamentally flawed along three different dimensions: the way their "experiment" was designed, the way they reported their results, and the interpretation of their results. In each of these areas, the authors made multiple serious errors. Far from demonstrating the value of ethnic studies courses, these studies merely demonstrate how easy it is in our overheated political environment to subvert statistical analyses for political purposes."

ABSTRACT: An extensive theoretical and qualitative literature stresses the promise of instructional practices and content aligned with minority students' experiences. Ethnic studies courses provide an example of such "culturally relevant pedagogy" (CRP). Despite theoretical support, quantitative evidence on the effectiveness of these courses is limited. We estimate the causal effects of an ethnic studies curriculum, using a "fuzzy" regression discontinuity design based on the fact that several schools assigned students with eighth-grade GPAs below a threshold to take the course. Assignment to this course increased ninth-grade attendance by 21 percentage points, GPA by 1.4 grade points, and credits earned by 23. These surprisingly large effects suggest that CRP, when implemented in a high-fidelity context, can provide effective support to at-risk students.

(2) **Cabrera, N. L., Milam, J. F., Jaquette, O., & Marx, R. W. (2014). Missing the (student achievement) forest for all the (political) trees: Empiricism and the Mexican American student controversy in Tucson. *American Educational Research Journal,* 51(6), 1084–1118.**
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ABSTRACT: The Arizona legislature passed HB 2281, which eliminated Tucson Unified School District's (TUSD's) Mexican American Studies (MAS) program, arguing the curriculum was too political. This program has been at the center of contentious debates, but a central question has not been thoroughly examined: Do the classes raise student achievement? The current analyses use administrative data from TUSD (2008–2011), running logistic regression models to assess the relationship between taking MAS classes and passing AIMS (Arizona state standardized tests) and high school graduation. Results indicate that MAS participation was significantly related to an increased likelihood of both outcomes occurring. The authors discuss these results in terms of educational policy and critical pedagogy as well as the role academics can play in policy formation.

(3) **Cammarota, J., & Romero, A. (2009). The social justice education project: A critically compassionate intellectualism for Chicana/o students. In W Ayers, T. Quinn, & D. Stovall (Eds.), *Handbook of social justice in education* (pp. 465–476). New York, NY: Routledge.**

No abstract available.

(4) **Kisker, E. E., Lipka, J., Adams, B. L., Rickard, A., Andrew-Ihrke, D., Yanez, E. E., & Millard, A. (2012). The potential of a culturally based supplemental mathematics curriculum to improve the mathematics performance of Alaska Native and other students. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education,* 43(1), 75–113.**

ABSTRACT: A randomized controlled trial conducted in Alaska examined the efficacy of 2 second-grade modules of the reform-oriented and culturally based Math in a Cultural Context (MCC) teacher training and curriculum. The results show that the "Picking Berries" (representing and measuring) and "Going to Egg Island" (grouping and place value) modules significantly improved students' mathematics performance. The analysis also revealed that the impacts were broad based and significant for most of the subgroups of schools and students examined.

(5) **Lipka et al., 2005**
Lipka, J., Hogan, M. P., Webster, J. P., Yanez, E., Adams, B., Clark, S., & Lacy, D. (2005). Math in a cultural context: Two case studies of a successful culturally-based math project. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly,* 36(4), 367-385.
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ABSTRACT: Math in a Cultural Context (MCC) was developed from ethnographic work with Yup'ik elders and teachers. The need for culturally based curricula seems obvious to those in the field of educational anthropology, but not necessarily to policymakers. Two case studies of novice teachers, one cultural "insider" and one "outsider," illustrate how each effectively taught MCC. The insider transformed her teaching by allowing student ownership through inquiry and cultural connections. The outsider deepened her mathematics content knowledge and found a perfect pedagogical fit through MCC.

(6) **McCarty, T. L. (1993). Language, literacy, and the image of the child in American Indian classrooms. *Language Arts,* 70(3), 182–192.**

No abstract available.

(7) **McCarty, T. L., & Lee, T. S. (2014). Critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy and Indigenous education sovereignty. *Harvard Educational Review,* 84(1), 101–124.**
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ABSTRACT: In this article, Teresa L. McCarty and Tiffany S. Lee present critical culturally sustaining/ revitalizing pedagogy as a necessary concept to understand and guide educational practices for Native American learners. Premising their discussion on the fundamental role of tribal sovereignty in Native American schooling, the authors underscore and extend lessons from Indigenous culturally based, culturally relevant, and culturally responsive schooling. Drawing on Paris's (see record 2012-08712-002) and Paris and Alim's (see record 2014-10229-005) notion of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP), McCarty and Lee argue that given the current linguistic, cultural, and educational realities of Native American communities, CSP in these settings must also be understood as culturally revitalizing pedagogy. Using two ethnographic cases as their foundation, they explore what culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy (CSRP) looks like in these settings and consider its possibilities, tensions, and constraints. They highlight the ways in which implementing CSRP necessitates an "inward gaze" (Paris & Alim, 2014), whereby colonizing influences are confronted as a crucial component of language and culture reclamation. Based on this analysis, they advocate for community-based educational accountability that is rooted in Indigenous education sovereignty.

(8) **Matthews, C. E., & Smith, W. S. (1994). Native American related materials in elementary science instruction. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching,* 31(4), 363–380.**

ABSTRACT: Assessed the impact of the use of culturally relevant materials for science instruction in a sample of 4th–8th grade Native American (NA) students. During the 10-wk study period, teachers in the experimental group used NA-related materials to teach science for 25 hrs and related language arts for 25 hrs; teachers in the control group taught science, using the same instructional materials but without NA references, for 25 hrs and their usual language arts for an additional 25 hrs. Ss taught with culturally relevant materials achieved at a significantly higher level and displayed more positive attitudes toward NAs and science than those in the control group.

(9) **Green-Gibson, A., & Collett, A. (2014). A comparison of African & mainstream culture on African American students in public elementary schools. *Multicultural Education,* 21(2),33–37.**
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ABSTRACT: The public educational system is comprised of diverse demographics wherein each student has a distinct cultural personal history (O'Brien, 1998). In America, the traditional perception was that a melting pot society existed. But deMarrais and LeCompte (1999) maintain that a stew pot or salad bowl would be a more appropriate analogy. Melting pot suggests a European-American, middle- and upper-class orientation, whereas stew pot or salad bowl implies that diverse demographics exist alongside one another with many distinctive cultures enhancing humanity across America (de- Marrais & LeCompte). The melting pot theory has dominated the education system, adversely affecting many African-American students who attend urban, public schools (Carruthers, 1995; deMarrais & LeCompte; Marks & Tonso, 2006; Pai & Adler, 2001). A growing body of researchers have reported that educational leaders are constantly searching to find the best methods for teaching African-American students who attend urban public schools (NCLB, 2002). Leadership stakeholders and educators alike are now beginning to explore the possibility that infusing the cultural history of African descent within the schooling process may help African-American students learn more effectively (Pai & Adler, 2001). While a small number of predominantly African-American elementary schools infuse African culture in the curriculum, most schools do not (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008). The public education system has always been based on Eurocentric values that work to benefit the cultural backgrounds of European Americans. To ensure that education aligns with the norms of African-American students, African-centered education is necessary (Shockley, 2007), but advocates of African culture infusion have yet to convince the public, and even some African-Americans, of the benefits of African cultural infusion. This article describes the results of a causal-comparative design study that compared the educational practices of two predominantly African-American public schools in Chicago based on their AYP reports. It concludes that African-American students who attend mainstream (European-centered) public schools, schools that do not infuse African culture, are failing at a higher rate when compared to African-American students who attend African-centered schools. Based on the study's finding, the article recommends current educational policies in the state of Illinois be reevaluated and rewritten to impose a requirement for all Chicago public schools in predominantly African-American neighborhoods to infuse African culture in the educational experience of attending students.

(10) **Duncan, W. (2012). The effects of Africentric United States history curriculum on Black student achievement. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research,* 5(2), 91–96.**
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ABSTRACT: Relationships between United States History curriculum design, self-efficacy, and test achievement of eighth-grade students and parents in the KIPP:STAR College Preparatory Charter School were examined in this study. An online questionnaire developed for the study, the Parental Questionnaire for United States History Curriculum, was pilot tested, revised, and used to collect data. Collected data were analyzed using the SPSS (v.19) software. Descriptive statistics and frequencies regarding curricular design, test achievement, and self-efficacy were examined. Results revealed a need for an Africentric United States history curriculum, which by definition is more inclusive and comprehensive than the normative Eurocentric curriculum. The mixed-method study indicated that relationships exist between curricular design and test achievement and between curricular design and self-efficacy.

(11) **Rickford, A. (2001). The effect of cultural congruence and higher order questioning on the reading enjoyment and comprehension of ethnic minority students. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 6(4), 357–387.**

ABSTRACT: The thesis of this article is that culturally relevant texts—both traditional ethnic folk tales and contemporary ethnic narratives—combined with higher order comprehension questions of interpretation and evaluation, rather than lower order questions of basic recall and recognition, provide excellent material for teaching reading to ethnically diverse students. Culturally relevant texts increase student enjoyment, interest and motivation, resulting in improved performance in reading comprehension. The data derives from a 2 yr research project conducted in a middle-school classroom in an urban enclave in northern California with low-income "at-risk" students, most of them African American, but also including Latinos and Pacific Islanders. The article demonstrates that despite conventional thinking, weak readers are not necessarily weak thinkers; to the contrary, when afforded the opportunity (through culturally congruent literature) and adequate scaffolding (through strategic questioning), they are quite capable of demonstrating critical and original thought.

(12) **Tyson, C. A. (2002). "Get up off that thing": African American middle school students respond to literature to develop a framework for understanding social action. *Theory and Research in Social Education,* 30(1), 42–65.**

ABSTRACT: The use of children's literature in urban social studies classrooms to facilitate students' engagement in literate behaviors and simultaneously develop a framework for understanding social action is an under-researched area. This paper discusses the use of literature for children and young adults in an urban middle school language arts and social studies block as a pedagogical strategy to facilitate understandings of social action. The African American students' responses to literature supported a development of a working definition of social action and ideas about action/inaction in their urban community contexts. These issues and others offer guidance for how literature can be used as an extension of citizenship education with the development of critical consciousness, political identity, and social action as the objectives.

(13a) **Ginwright, S. A. (2000). Identity for sale: The limits of racial reform in urban schools. *The Urban Review,* 32(1), 87–104.**

ABSTRACT: When multicultural education emerges in urban schools, it usually addresses educational inequality by focusing on cultural histories, principles, and pedagogies. The fundamental argument is that students who perform poorly in school do so in part because the curriculum they encounter has little relevance to their lives and culture. If culturally based education is most commonly practiced in low-income, poor urban schools, what limits does poverty place on this type of educational reform? I provide a case study of a reform effort at urban high school in Oakland, California, which used an Afrocentric curriculum as a means to improve academic performance. I argue that the effort was ineffective because the project failed to consider the ways in which poverty influenced the identities of the students within the school.

(13b) **Ginwright, S. (2004). *Black in school: Afrocentric reform, urban youth, and the promise of hip-hop culture.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.** *Book, not formal study

AMAZON DESCRIPTION: The author examines the conditions and community forces that thwart or promote Afrocentric education reform in urban schools and explores the context and intent behind the community's effort to improve the school, providing a more comprehensive picture about the limits and possibilities for identity based reform in urban schools.

Table 3.3. Ethnic Studies Curriculum Infused into Asset-Based Pedagogies

	Author(s), date	Program or focus of study	Level	Research design	Outcomes
1	**López, 2016, 2017, 2018; Sharif Matthews & López, 2018**	Asset-based pedagogy: academic expectations, critical awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural content integration, beliefs about/ use of Spanish language in instruction	Grades 3-5	Correlation	Reading achievement, math achievement, ethnic identity, achievement identity
2	**Lee, 1995, 2001, 2006, 2007**	Cultural Modeling	High school	Pre-post control group	Literary analysis skills
3	**Krater et al., 1994; Krater & Zeni, 1995**	African American literature infused	Middle, high school	Pre-post no control group	Writing skills (various tests used over time)
4	**Adjapong & Emdin, 2015**	Hip-hop in science classroom	Middle school	Various qualitative	Understanding, enjoyment of science
5	**Stone & Stewart, 2016**	Critical Hip Hop Rhetoric Pedagogy	Higher education	Qualitative	Successful course completion
6	**Hall & Martin, 2013**	Critical Hip-Hop pedagogy	Higher education	Qualitative	Engagement, retention

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(1a) **López, F. A. (2016). Culturally responsive pedagogies in Arizona and Latino students' achievement. *Teachers College Record,* 118(5), 1–42.**

ABSTRACT: Background Despite numerous educational reform efforts aimed at aggressively addressing achievement disparities, Latinos continue to underperform in school. In sharp contrast to the belief that the inordinate achievement disparities among Latino students stem from deficiencies, some researchers assert that culturally responsive teaching (CRT) improves academic achievement because it views students' culture and language as strengths. The body of literature on CRT provides detailed depictions of classroom experiences for traditionally marginalized students, but is faulted as lacking an explicit link to student outcomes that prevents its consideration among policymakers. Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study To contribute to the body of work establishing an explicit link between CRT and student outcomes, the present study examines the extent to which dimensions of teacher-reported CRT beliefs and behaviors are associated with Latino students'

identity and achievement outcomes in reading across grades three through five in Arizona. Research Design Sources of data in this study consist of teacher (N = 16) questionnaires reflecting CRT dimensions and student (N = 244) questionnaires for ethnic identity, perceived discrimination, and scholastic competence, as well as reading achievement. Hierarchical linear modeling was used to address the research questions. Findings/Results Consistent with the assertions in extant literature that CRT is related to students' outcomes, the study found that teachers' beliefs about the role of Spanish in instruction, funds of knowledge, and critical awareness were all positively related to students' reading outcomes. For teachers reporting the highest level of each of the aforementioned dimensions, students' reading scores were associated with approximately .85 SD (Spanish), .60 SD (funds of knowledge), and 1.70 SD (critical awareness) higher reading outcomes at the end of the school year after controlling for prior achievement. Teachers' reported CRT behaviors in terms of Spanish and cultural knowledge (formative assessment) were both also significantly and positively related to students' reading outcomes after controlling for prior achievement. For teachers reporting the highest level of each of the aforementioned dimensions, students' reading scores were associated with approximately 1 SD higher reading outcomes. Behaviors reflecting the use of Spanish in instruction was also significant, albeit very small (about a .03 SD increase). Conclusions/Recommendations Although the present study is not without its limitations, the findings support the extant work focused on CRT, suggesting that teachers who use instruction that considers students' culture an asset can reduce educational disparities. As such, the findings also suggest that CRT merits serious consideration by policymakers and those who train teachers of Latino youth. Notably, most teachers in the present study held a bilingual endorsement, which requires coursework focused not only on bilingual methodology and linguistics, but also on culture and experiences with funds of knowledge practices. Teachers who have said training appear to have high levels of knowledge about critical awareness, and put into practice asset-based pedagogies that are related to student outcomes. This is particularly salient given that the setting for the present study is arguably one of the most restrictive states for Latino youth. Thus, even though teacher-reported beliefs and behaviors regarding the role of Spanish in instruction were related to students' outcomes, future studies are needed that examine the extent to which bilingual endorsement, which exceeds most programmatic requirements regarding diversity, might provide teachers with the necessary knowledge (i.e., critical awareness) that enables them to behave in ways consistent with CRT.

(1b) **López, F. A. (2017). Altering the trajectory of the self-fulfilling prophecy: Asset-based pedagogy and classroom dynamics. *Journal of Teacher Education,* 68(2), 193–212.**

ABSTRACT: Prior research has contributed to our understanding about the ways teachers communicate their expectations to students, how students perceive differential teacher behaviors, and their effect on students' own perceptions of ability and achievement. Despite more than half a century of this work, historically marginalized students continue to be underrepresented in a vast array of achievement outcomes. Scholars have argued that asset-based pedagogy is essential to effective teaching, but reviews of research repeatedly point to a need for empirical evidence. This article describes a study wherein asset-based practices are applied to a classroom dynamics framework to examine how teachers' asset-based pedagogy beliefs and behaviors are associated with Latino students' ethnic and reading achievement identity. Analyses revealed that teachers' critical awareness moderates their expectancy, resulting in higher achievement; and teachers' critical awareness and expectancy beliefs were found to be directly associated with teachers' behaviors, which were in turn related to students' ethnic and achievement identities. Implications for teacher education are discussed.

(1c) **López, F. A. (2018). *Asset pedagogies in Latino youth identity and achievement.* New York, NY: Routledge.**

ABSTRACT: *Asset Pedagogies in Latino Youth Identity and Achievement* explores the theory, research, and application of asset-based pedagogies to counter approaches that fail to challenge deficit views of youth. Presenting details on the role of teachers' knowledge about students' language and culture as strengths as opposed to deficiencies, Francesca A. López connects classroom practices to positive outcomes, preparing teachers to use asset pedagogies to promote academic achievement and implement asset-based teaching practices. Making thorough use of examples from research both in and out of the classroom and concluding with concrete applications from experienced educators, this book provides future teachers with a critical understanding of how to support Latino youth.

(1d) **Sharif Matthews, J., & Lopez, F. (2018). Speaking their language: The role of cultural content integration and heritage language for academic achievement among Latino children. *Contemporary Educational Psychology,* 57, 72–86.**
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ABSTRACT: Asset-based pedagogy (ABP) reflects teacher instructional choices that affirm students' ethnicity and culture in the classroom and curriculum. The current study examines two key enactments of ABPs for Latino children, namely cultural content integration and heritage language (Spanish). Utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, we assess mediation and moderation effects between teacher beliefs (n = 33), their ABPs, and the mathematics achievement of 568 Latino children in grades three through five. Next, we use qualitative interviews to probe teachers' understanding and value of cultural content integration, heritage language, and how these work together in their own instructional practice. The quantitative results reveal that honoring students' heritage language (Spanish) is the mediating element through which cultural content integration predicts mathematics achievement for Latino children. Further, the moderated mediation analysis, cross-validated by the teacher interviews, showed evidence that high teacher expectations alone may not be enough to predict teacher enactment of ABPs. Instead, critical awareness along with high expectations work together to predict enactment of culturally responsive teaching and growth in Latino students' learning. Implications and limitations are discussed.

(2a) **Lee, C. D. (1995). A culturally based cognitive apprenticeship: Teaching African American high school students skills in literary interpretation. *Reading Research Quarterly,* 30(4), 608–630.**

ABSTRACT: This study investigated the implications of signifying, a form of social discourse in the African-American community, as a scaffold for teaching skills in literary interpretation. This investigation is related to the larger question of the efficacy of culturally sensitive instruction. The major premise on which the hypotheses of this study are based is the proposal that African American adolescents who are skilled in signifying use certain strategies to process signifying dialogue. These strategies are comparable to those that expert readers use in order to construct inferences about figurative passages in narrative texts. In order to apply this premise, an instructional unit was designed aimed at helping students bring to a conscious level the strategies it is presumed they use tacitly in social discourse. This approach is offered as a model of cognitive apprenticing based on cultural foundations. Analyses are presented of how the cultural practice links to heuristic strategies that experts use in a specific domain, as well as how instructors modeled, coached, and scaffolded students.

(2b) **Lee, C. D. (2001). Is October Brown Chinese? A cultural modeling activity system for underachieving students. *American Educational Research Journal,* 38(1), 97–142.**

ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the quality of intellectual reasoning of a class of high school students with standardized reading scores in the bottom quartile. The analysis situates the intellectual work on 1 day of instruction in terms of the history of the activity system out of which the dispositions of these students were constructed over time. The analysis deconstructs the historical dimensions of the cultural practices these students learned to acquire. Using a framework of cultural-historical activity theory, the article examines the knowledge base of the teacher, in this case the researcher, to coach and scaffold a radically different intellectual culture among students who were underachieving. The framework for the curricular design implemented and the strategies modeled explicitly aligned the cultural funds of knowledge of the African American students with the cultural practices of the subject matter, in this case, response to literature.

(2c) **Lee, C. D. (2006). "Every good-bye ain't gone": Analyzing the cultural underpinnings of classroom talk. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 19(3), 305–327.**

ABSTRACT: This article explicates the Cultural Modeling Framework for designing robust learning environments that leverage everyday knowledge of culturally diverse students to support subject-matter-specific learning. It reports a study of Cultural Modeling in the teaching of response to literature in an urban underachieving high school serving African-American students from low-income communities who are also speakers of African-American English. The study is situated in the history of research on African-American English as a resource for academic learning, particularly in relation to literacy. Results document the ways that African-American rhetorical features served as a medium for complex literary reasoning and provided contextualization cues to enhance participation.

(2d) **Lee, C. D. (2007). *Culture, literacy, and learning: Taking bloom in the midst of the whirlwind.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.**

How can educators improve the literacy skills of students in historically underachieving urban high schools? In this timely book, the author offers a theoretical framework for the design of instruction that is both culturally responsive

and subject-matter specific, rooted in examples of the implementation of the Cultural Modeling Project. Presented here, the Cultural Modeling Project draws on competencies students already have in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) discourse and hip-hop culture to tackle complex problems in the study of literature. Using vivid descriptions from real classrooms, the author describes how AAVE supported student learning and reasoning; how students in turn responded to the reform initiative; and how teachers adapted the cultural framework to the English/ language arts curriculum. While the focus is on literacy and African American students, the book examines the functions of culture in facilitating learning and offers principles for leveraging cultural knowledge in support of subject matter specific to academic learning. This much-awaited book offers important lessons for researchers, school district leaders, and local practitioners regarding the complex ways that cultural knowledge is constructed and plays out in classroom life, in the life of a school, and in the life of a whole-school reform initiative.

(3a) **Krater, J., Zeni, J., & Cason, N. D. (1994).** ***Mirror images: Teaching writing in Black and White.*** **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.** *Book

In the midwestern suburb of Webster Groves, Missouri, a team of middle and high school teachers—all female, all but one White—refused to accept the chronic underachievement of African-American student writers. Mirror Images is their story. Through six years of action research, they realized that instead of trying to "fix" the kids, they needed to "fix" some other things: their teaching methods, the ambiance of their classrooms, and their own cultural awareness. The teachers' journey is one of self-reflection, painful at times, as they question, hypothesize, act, analyze results, and ultimately change. Hand-in-hand with their changes, readers follow the story of Antwuan, James, and Damon: students who were seemingly disengaged from their classrooms, curriculum, and teacher. They change, too, becoming involved, active, guiding forces in their English classes.Mirror Images offers no recipes, no quick-fix solutions. Instead, it presents rich classroom experiences and a process that will help readers see their own hard-to-reach students with new eyes. Along with principles for good writing instruction, the authors explain key strategies for success with dozens of their own lessons and projects. Classroom teachers, as well as instructional and staff development leaders, who want to get beyond the standard advice on cultural sensitivity and students "at risk" must read this book. Readers will be challenged as well as inspired by this view into real classrooms, through mirrors of race, class, gender—and self.

(3b) **Krater, J., & Zeni, J. (1995). Seeing students, seeing culture, seeing ourselves. *Voices from the Middle,* 3(3), 32–38.**

ABSTRACT: Describes an action research project which began by asking how English teachers could improve the writing of their African American students, and gradually came to ask how the teachers' own cultural assumptions might be blocking their teaching relationships. Identifies and discusses eight principles of their approach, and discusses changes in their own perspectives.

(4) **Adjapong, E. S., & Emdin, C. (2015). Rethinking pedagogy in urban spaces: Implementing hip-hop pedagogy in the urban science classroom. *Journal of Urban Learning Teaching and Research,* 11, 66–77.**
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ABSTRACT: A significant amount of research regarding Hip-Hop Based Education (HHBE) fails to provide insight on how to incorporate elements of Hip-Hop into daily teaching practices; rather Hip-Hop based educators focus mainly on incorporating Hip-Hop culture into curricula. This study explores the benefits of using two specific Hip-Hop pedagogical practices in an urban science classroom. Call-and-response and co-teaching, two different pedagogical approaches that are related to Hip-Hop culture, were implemented and studied to understand their benefits in an urban science classroom. Participants in this study are middle school students who attend an urban school in one of the largest school systems in the country. This study provides insight on ways Hip-Hop can be incorporated into the art and science of teaching, extending current HHBE research, which mainly discusses how Hip-Hop can be used to design curricula based on music and rhymes. Through this study the researchers find that Hip-Hop pedagogical practices studied in this paper support students science content acquisition, connects science content to students' realities, and encourages their voice and agency.

(5) **Stone, B. J., & Stewart, S. (2016). HBCUs and writing programs: Critical hip hop language pedagogy and first-year student success. *Composition Studies,* 44(2), 183–186.**
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ABSTRACT: In the 2015-16 school year, the authors of this article developed an innovative research and assessment project on a new first year composition

curriculum based on a pedagogy they call Critical Hip Hop Rhetoric Pedagogy (CHHRP), an educational approach built upon the classroom-based research of linguistic anthropologist H. Samy Alim ("Critical"; "The Whig"). During the summer of 2015, the primary researchers, Shawanda Stewart and Brian J. Stone, attended the Dartmouth Summer Seminar for Writing Research, led by Christiane Donahue and Chuck Bazerman, in order to develop this project under the guidance of senior research mentors. In fall 2015, with the assistance of a Conference on College Composition and Cummunication (CCCC) Research Initiative Grant, Stone and Stewart piloted this first-year writing course. Research and assessment of this pedagogy is now being carried out longitudinally and in the near future will become an inter-institutional research project seeking to understand how this pedagogy might impact student graduation rates at HBCUs across the nation. The authors discuss the theoretical motivations for their work as well as initial findings of the study.

(6) **Hall, T., & Martin, B. (2013). Engagement of African American college students through the use of hip-hop pedagogy. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning,* 8(2), 93–105.** *Download full-text PDF* *Higher education

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of culturally relevant pedagogy, such as Hip Hop, on African-American student engagement and retention. The overarching question guiding this investigation centered on whether elements of Hip Hop can be used as tools to educate and engage African-American students. Analyzed through the lens of Critical Race Theory were the data sets. The findings highlighted the importance of climate, faculty, and 'Hip Hop' culturally relevant pedagogy to African-American student engagement. The implications of this inquiry for practice in education could impact higher education institutions as they address the issue of engaging African-American students, creating inclusive climates, and using culturally relevant pedagogy.

Table 3.4. Culturally Responsive Teaching, Cultural Mediation, and Student Achievement

	Author(s), date	Program or approach	Level	Research design	Outcomes
1	**Au & Carroll, 1997**	Kamehameha Elementary Education Program: literacy adapted to Hawaiian participation structures	Elementary	Classroom observation, writing portfolio audit	Writing skill achievement
2	**Tharp & Callimore, 1988**	Kamehameha Elementary Education Program	Elementary	Posttest-control group	Reading achievement
3	**Hilberg, Tharp, & DeGeest, 2000**	Eive Standards for Effective Pedagogy	8th grade	Pretest-posttest control group	Math achievement
4	**Doherty et al., 2003**	Eive Standards for Effective Pedagogy	Elementary	Correlation	Reading achievement
5	**Doherty et Hilberg, 2007**	Eive Standards for Effective Pedagogy	Elementary	Nonequivalent pretest-posttest control group	Reading achievement
6	**Bailey & Boykin, 2001**	Academic task variation (verve)	Grades 3-4	Correlation	Academic task performance, motivation

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(1) **Au, K. H., & Carroll, J. H. (1997). Improving literacy achievement through a con-structivist approach: The KEEP demonstration classroom project. *The Elementary School Journal,* 97(3), 203–221.**

ABSTRACT: Evaluated whole-literacy curriculum's effects on literacy achievement among native Hawaiian students in grades K-6. Found that teachers entered curriculum project with proficiency in some areas of implementation, such as classroom organization, but required support in other areas, such as portfolio assessment. Also found that full implementation of curriculum was related to substantial improvements in students' writing achievement. (EV)

(2) **Tharp, R. G., & Callimore, R. (1988). *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.**
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ABSTRACT: Addressing widespread discontent with contemporary schooling, Roland Tharp and Ronald Gallimore develop a unified theory of education and offer a prescription: the reconstitution of schools as "educating societies." Drawing on studies from the family nursery through the university seminar, and on their own successful experiences with thousands of students over two decades, their theory is firmly based in a culture-sensitive developmental psychology but seeks to integrate all the recent work in the Vygotskian tradition with basic concepts in American and British behavioral, cognitive science, anthropology, and sociolinguistics. One of the authors' primary sources is the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP), generally regarded as the world's outstanding research and development program for elementary schooling. It now includes thousands of children in Hawaii, California, and Arizona, and it is influencing school development around the world. The authors conclude by discussing the broader social context of schooling, and by exploring the preparation of schools for the challenge of the twenty-first century.

(3) **Hilberg, R. S., Tharp, R. G., & DeGeest, L. (2000). The efficacy of CREDE standards-based instruction on American Indian mathematics classes. *Excellence & Equity in Education,* 33(2), 32–40.**

No abstract available.

(4) **Doherty, R. W., Hilberg, R. S., Pinal, A., & Tharp, R. G. (2003). Five standards and student achievement. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice,* 1(1), 1–24.**

ABSTRACT: Two studies examine the influence of the Standards for Effective Pedagogy on student achievement gains. Participants were 15 teachers and 266 students (grades 3 to 5) in a public elementary school serving predominantly low-income Latino English Language Learners (ELLs). Study 1 found that higher use of the standards by teachers reliably predicted student achievement gains on SAT-9 tests of comprehension, reading, spelling, and vocabulary. Further analysis found teachers' use of the standards reliably predicted gains in English language achievement when English was the language of instruction. Study 2 found that achievement gains in comprehension, reading, spelling, and vocabulary were greatest for students whose teachers had transformed both their pedagogy and the organization of instructional activities as specified by the Standards for Effective Pedagogy model. These teachers used the standards extensively, both directly at the teacher center and indirectly through multiple, simultaneous, diversified learning activities. Implications for teaching practice and research are discussed.

(5) **Doherty, R. W., & Hilberg, R. S. (2007). Standards for effective pedagogy, classroom organization, English proficiency, and student achievement. *The Journal of Educational Research,* 101(1), 23–34.**

ABSTRACT: The authors examined the relationship between pedagogy, classroom organization, and student achievement gains. Participants in this nonequivalent pretest and posttest control-group design were 23 teachers and 394 students (Grades 3 to 5) in 2 public elementary schools serving predominantly low-income Latino English learners. The authors found that (a) teacher use of the standards for effective pedagogy reliably predicted performance on year-end standardized tests of comprehension, reading, spelling, and vocabulary and (b) achievement gains were greatest for students whose teachers made extensive use of the standards and organized their classrooms into multiple, simultaneous, diversified activity settings. Although low-English-proficient students benefited the most, the instructional model was also effective for English learners and English speakers.

(6) **Bailey, C. T., & Boykin, A. W. (2001). The role of task variability and home contextual factors in the academic performance and task motivation of African American elementary school children. *Journal of Negro Education,* 70(1-2), 84–95.**

ABSTRACT: Examined the effects of task variability on academic task performance and task motivation. Low-income African American elementary students completed four types of academic tasks in low- and high-variability contexts, and they were assessed for task motivation in the two variability contexts. Academic task performance and task motivation were superior when tasks were presented with greater variability.