



ETHNIC STUDIES (ES) BENEFITS FOR ASIAN AMERICANS

Ethnic Studies is the interdisciplinary study of race and ethnicity that centers on the histories, narratives, and issues of communities of color. It improves students' academic performance, especially that of students at risk, and teaches needed cross-cultural skills.

1. Improves student's academic achievement- GPA and school retention

- The San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), of which 60% of students are Asian, saw an increase in attendance by 21%, GPA by 1.4% and in credits earned by 23% after students took an ES course.
- One of the SFUSD groups that received the greatest gains from taking an ethnic studies class is Asian males^[1]
- Students taking ES have higher standardized test scores and graduation rates than students who did not take ES.^[2]

2. Promotes positive identification with one's own ethnic and racial group, which also increases academic performance

- Students with a stronger sense of racial-ethnic identities display greater resilience in the face of academic difficulty.^[3]
- Students who express more understanding of race and racism and have higher regard for being people of color have higher graduation rates.^[4]
- Positive ethnic pride is associated with increases in self-esteem and sense of school belonging, which has positive implications on academic achievement and well-being.^[5]

3. Aids in protecting against racial bullying

- ES helps students develop tools to navigate racially hostile experiences by validating their experiences and by promoting resilience.^[6]
- Students' familiarity with their own racial struggle contributes to their academic motivation and understanding of how to respond to racial bullying.^[7]
- ES reduces prejudicial attitudes.^[8]



4. Contributes to a sense of agency

- ES requires students to recognize and reflect on systems of racism in order to build their capacities for agency.^[9]
- ES encourages students to address social issues that affect their own community.^[10]

5. Builds civic engagement for an inclusive democracy

- ES utilizes Asian Americans' own experiential knowledge and voice to transform their community.^[11]
- Students with ES are more engaged in discussing racial issues and interacting with those holding different perspectives; both of which are important for democratic engagement.^[12]

^[1] Sleeter, C. (2011). The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies. *National Education Association*.

^[2] Cabrera, N. L., Milem, J. F., Jaquette, O., & Marx, R. W. (2014). Missing the (Student Achievement) Forest for All the (Political) Trees: Empiricism and the Mexican American Studies Controversy in Tucson. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(6), 1084–1118. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214553705>

^[3] Altschul, I., D. Oyserman, and D. Bybee. 2006. "Racial-ethnic identity in mid-adolescence: Content and change as predictors of academic achievement." *Child Development* 77 (5): 1155–1169.

^[4] Chavous, T., D. Hilken, K. Schmeelk, C. H. Caldwell, L. Kohn-Wood, and M. A. Zimmerman. 2003. "Racial identity and academic attainment among African American adolescents." *Child Development* 74(4): 1076–1090

^[5] Hernández, M. M., Robins, R. W., Widaman, K. F., & Conger, R. D. (2017). Ethnic pride, self-esteem, and school belonging: A reciprocal analysis over time. *Developmental Psychology*, 53(12), 2384–2396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000434>

^[6] Carter, D. J. (2008). Achievement as resistance: The development of a critical race achievement ideology among Black achievers. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(3), 466–497. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.78.3.83138829847hw844>

^[7] O'Connor, C. (1997). Dispositions toward (Collective) Struggle and Educational Resilience in the Inner City: A Case Analysis of Six African-American High School Students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34(4), 593–629. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1163351>

^[8] Makaiau, A., Sugimoto-Matsuda, J., Glassco, K., Honda, F., Rehuher, D., Hishinuma, E., Kida, L., & Mark, G., Ethnic Studies Now: Three Reasons Why Ethnic Studies Should Be a Requirement for High School Graduation in the United States. In *Oregon Journal of the Social Studies*. 7(1) Spring 2019, 20-51.

^[9] Nojan, S. (2020) Why ethnic studies? Building critical consciousness among middle school students, *Middle School Journal*, 51:2, 25-35, DOI: [10.1080/00940771.2019.1709259](https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2019.1709259)

^[10] Cabrera, N. L., Milem, J. F., Jaquette, O., & Marx, R. W. (2014). Missing the (Student Achievement) Forest for All the (Political) Trees: Empiricism and the Mexican American Studies Controversy in Tucson. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(6), 1084–1118. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214553705>

^[11] Cortés, C. (2020, June 26). High School Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement State of California. Retrieved from https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/20201022_Diversity_Webinar_Setting_High_School_Ethnic_Studies_Requirement.pdf

^[12] Sleeter, C. (2011). The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies. *National Education Association*.

