

Foundation of Education Call in Radio Show

My name is Dr. Christine Sleeter, Professor Emeritus of Cal, and current Vice President of Division K of the AERA. I have wrote countless books on this topic and have won several awards such as the AERA Social Justice Award, and the Paulo Friere Education Project Social Justice Award. I am the former president of the National association for Multicultural Education, and a Certified Expert in ethnic studies. I am calling in support of ethnic studies in schools. I believe ethnic studies are not just about history or culture, but that they're transformative tools for equity and empowerment. Ethnic studies in schools can boost academic engagement, affirm minority students' identity, foster cross cultural understanding, encourage critical thinking, and improve graduation rates. What some call radical indoctrination, I call democratic, ethnic studies shouldn't divide us but challenge injustice in our complex history which is central to a healthy society.

Whether or not ethnic studies should be required in schools is a loaded topic. While advocates aim to promote multiculturalism and equity for minority students, it also sparks debate over the potential for ideological biases, the content of the curriculum making kids feel guilty, and the concerns about politicization, and academic tradeoffs. One concerned parent thought that kids at this age are too young to understand while some think it will cause kids to bully those that are "different". I struggled with understanding some of the arguments to this topic. It may be because I have already made my mind up and I admit I can be stubborn but im not stubborn when it comes to analyzing and trying to understand a competing viewpoints perspective. The point that irked me the most is that children that age are too young to understand but as Professor Carlsson pointed out 4th graders know the n-word and who it is associated with so how could their argument have merit? My question that I raised at the end of class consisted of whether these students learning these things at such a young age is better for the sake of their innocence. They know that they're different but learning it's not a bad thing at a young age should lead to more cultural acceptance. Personally, I think of my only little brother William. William was born in Urdeteta, Philippines. His mother, my stepmom, was born not far from him. I think about how he would feel in public schools, and the importance of learning about his culture and the great things Filipino's have done for our country. This idea of multiculturalism is important to me because of my family, and as I told my class leader group today, if ICE every tried to deport my little brother to El Salvador... Let's just say they'll have to lock my father and I up first. I believe multiculturalism should be taught in schools at a young age so we can teach children to be empathetic and help minority kids grow comfortable with their identity. In 4th grade I had a Korean girl in my class whom I remember crying one day ust because she looked different, and in my vain attempt to console her back then she verbally attacked me telling me how I have no idea how hard it is to be the only Korean in school. I have felt for her, and marginalized groups ever since doing my part to show empathy because I learned this lesson at such a young age.