

**AERA RESOLUTION
REGARDING THE TEACHING OF MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES**

**TO THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1
ADOPTED FEBRUARY 5, 2012**

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) is the nation's leading scientific and scholarly association whose membership is devoted to advancing knowledge about education and to improving teaching and learning through rigorous research and evaluation. Among its approximately 25,000 members are many who have been at the forefront of efforts to improve the performance of minority students and to understand the implications of ethnic studies and similar coursework for both majority and minority students. Reviewing (a) the 2010 Arizona Revised Statutes Relating to School Curriculum as amended by HB2281 regarding the teaching of ethnic studies courses, (b) the December 27, 2011 ruling of an administrative law judge affirming the Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction's ruling that the Mexican American Studies course offered by the Tucson Unified School District No. 1 violated HB2281, (c) the January 6, 2012 order of the Superintendent to withhold 10 percent of the monthly funds of the School District, and (d) accordingly the January 10, 2012 decision of the Governing Board of the Tucson Unified School District No. 1 to suspend courses and teaching activities related to Mexican American Studies, the AERA Council unanimously adopted at its meeting on February 5, 2012 the following resolution directed to the Governing Board:

Whereas:

- A fundamental goal of education is to provide students with the knowledge they need to live and work in the 21st century as productive individuals;
- Educational practices and learning environments must encompass the range of educative experiences integral to providing students with the skills and confidence necessary to achieve this goal;
- The education research literature encourages educators to identify types of learning experiences that relate to a range of desirable outcomes;
- Research examining the impact of curricular and co-curricular diversity activities on a variety of outcomes, and on racial bias in particular, has found that diversity initiatives, which include minority-focused ethnic studies courses, reduce bias and can enhance the climate for learning for all students regardless of race or ethnicity;
- Research indicates that critical thinking skills, including skills that enable individuals to develop their own well-thought-out value commitments and to question dated norms, are effectively fostered by educational practices that are integrative in nature, that challenge students with information and experiences outside their own embedded worldview, and that encourage the application of newly gained knowledge to contemporary problems; and
- Research has shown that well-designed ethnic studies courses can provide students who take such courses, whether members of a minority group that is the focus of the course, other minority group students, or majority group students, with educational and skills benefits, including a reduction in attitudinal bias, that would not be as effectively achieved, if they were achieved at all, by other types of courses.

Therefore, the Council of the American Educational Research Association concludes:

(1) That ethnic studies courses appropriately designed can serve an invaluable purpose in developing cognitive capacity and social sensitivity in both minority and majority students.

(2) That nothing about the Arizona statute should preclude the Governing Board of the Tucson Unified School District No. 1 or any other Arizona school board from offering an ethnic studies course with a Mexican immigrant and Mexican American focus because, if well designed and fairly evaluated, no such course should run afoul of the restrictions in the recently passed legislation.

Hence, by this resolution, the Council of the American Educational Research Association:

(1) Strongly urges the Governing Board of the Tucson Unified School District No. 1 to design and offer a Mexican American Studies course that meets the important educational goals of the course it previously offered.

Furthermore:

(2) To facilitate the development and justification of such a course or courses, the American Educational Research Association will, upon request, aid the Governing Board of the Tucson Unified School District No. 1 in connecting with experienced Association members who can review proposed curricula, materials, and teaching methods to ensure that they meet the high standards of accuracy and fairness that make for a well-designed course, and with experienced Association members who can aid the Governing Board in evaluating the impact of such courses so that reliable non-anecdotal evidence will be available to ensure positive learning experiences and outcomes.