

SUMMARY

Educating Toward a Multiracial Democracy in California

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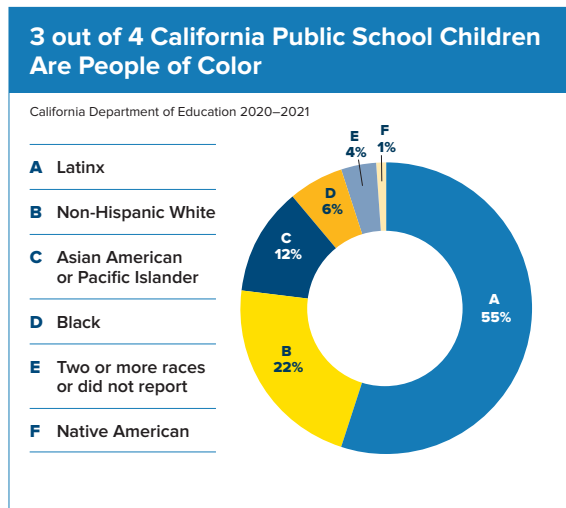
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California is home to more than nine million young people—children and youth—who embody diverse identities, languages, and experiences as well as extraordinary potential. As a state, we must provide rich opportunities that will enable young people to understand and tap into their cultural resources while fostering respect for and deep connections to one another. Because young people today face heightened political division and unprecedented social and environmental challenges, it is imperative that they also develop the civic skills and commitments that are necessary to build complex alliances, address shared problems, and envision a more promising future. In short, we must educate toward a multiracial democracy.

Context

- ▶ **American democracy is experiencing a crisis.** Confidence in democratic institutions has plummeted, and many Americans are concerned that the government is not able to respond to pressing problems and controversial issues. In addition, the tone of political debate is intensely disrespectful. A recent poll by Morning Consult found that 26 percent of the Americans surveyed were classified as “highly right-wing authoritarian,” the highest percentage by far among the countries polled.
- ▶ **Issues of race and racism are deeply implicated in this crisis.** America is undergoing profound demographic changes that have significant implications for those who hold and wield political power. Current attacks on democratic practices and principles are often fueled by anxieties triggered by demographic changes and concerns about how opportunities, wealth, and power are distributed.
- ▶ **Public schools have become primary sites for pitched battles.** More than half of all states have considered or enacted legislation to limit teaching and learning about racial and social inequalities. And over the last year, local school board meetings across the country have been characterized by the spread of misinformation, extreme contention, and threats of violence.

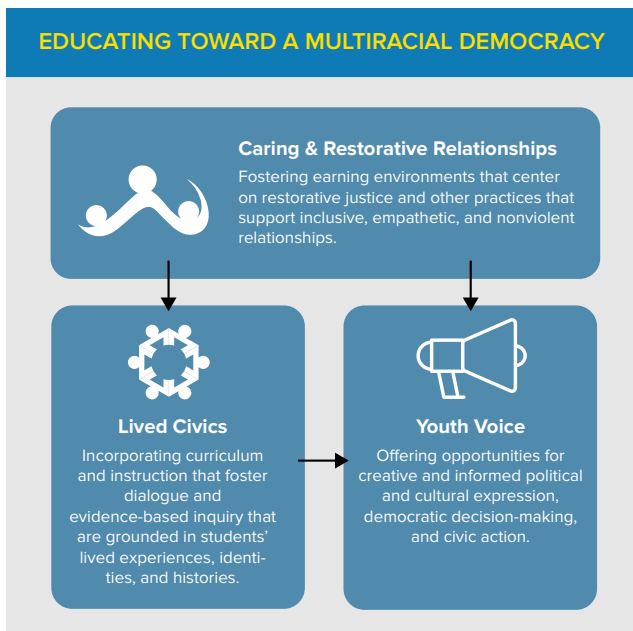
► **California is different in some important respects, but we have a lot of work to do.** California is the first state to formally adopt ethnic studies as a graduation requirement for all students. It also recently implemented the California State Seal of Civic Engagement, which recognizes graduating high school students for their commitment to civic knowledge, skills, and action. California’s efforts to educate toward a multiracial democracy are inextricably tied to its racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. More than three out of four public school children in California are people of color. Yet, inequality and segregation are profoundly felt across California and within its public schools.



A Holistic Framework

Public schools and other youth-serving institutions must reestablish the democratic purpose of education by embracing the cultural and linguistic assets and diverse identities and abilities of all California’s children. We need to offer young people the guidance and support they need to thrive, effectively engage with others in their communities, and collectively define our shared future. This will not be achieved through a single curriculum or program. Instead, we must advance an integrated framework—a set of best practices—that educates toward a multiracial democracy.

The framework we propose, Educating Toward a Multiracial Democracy, comprises three overlapping priorities, each with a specific focus: caring and restorative relationships, lived civics, and youth voice. This framework re-envisioning how we can encourage California’s young people to relate to one another and resolve pressing issues and everyday conflicts. It proposes a holistic way of thinking about how adults and young people communicate, how varied cultural experiences are integrated into sustained inquiry and academic learning, and how young people participate in decision-making.



Educating toward a multiracial democracy means centering instruction and support on the needs, experiences, and identities of each and every young person; addressing issues of racial and social justice; encouraging respectful, equitable, and informed participation; and promoting engagement and problem-solving within and across diverse communities. Public schools and other youth-serving institutions that advance education for a multiracial democracy are places where young people can build supportive communities, figure out who they are in relation to peers from diverse backgrounds, and collectively contribute to a better society for all.

Educating toward a multiracial democracy aligns with a range of existing programs and

initiatives, but it calls for stakeholders to think differently, and in a fundamental way, about how they might be integrated to achieve a broader aim.

The next phase of this work entails conversations among educators, community members, and youth about the purpose of education, the practices and programs that can support education toward a multiracial democracy, and the resources necessary to ensure the well-being of young people. This bold and expansive future is within our power to achieve. Let us begin.

Questions to Consider

1. How might the framework of educating toward a multiracial democracy inform current efforts to build community?
2. What are the implications of educating toward a multiracial democracy for the recruitment and development of educators and others that work with young people?
3. What are the implications of educating toward a multiracial democracy for what and how young people should learn and the conditions needed to support such learning?
4. How can we advance this transformational agenda in the context of public education today, so that it can benefit the many youth-serving institutions that are struggling to meet pressing demands?

FOR THE FULL REPORT, visit [Educating Toward a Multiracial Democracy in California, including references.](#)

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