

## Advancing Equity in Texas Education: Curriculum, Discipline, and Teacher Support

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### Abstract

This introductory article synthesizes three research briefs that examine pressing issues in Texas education through a multicultural lens. The briefs explore the enduring influence of Lost Cause narratives in U.S. history textbooks, the disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline against Black girls with disabilities, and the under-supported role of mentor teachers in residency programs. Together, these studies reveal how systemic inequities continue to shape student and teacher experiences across curriculum, policy, and practice. By highlighting these interrelated challenges, the article calls for equity-centered reforms that honor diverse identities, support culturally responsive teaching, and address the conditions necessary for inclusive, effective learning environments. This synthesis underscores the urgent need for sustained action to ensure all students and educators in Texas thrive within a just educational system.

### Key Words

curriculum equity, emerging scholars, exclusionary discipline, multicultural education, teacher mentorship

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The future of education depends on the voices and actions of emerging scholars—those who will shape the next era of research, practice, and advocacy. This special issue highlights the work of emerging scholars who are critically examining the systemic inequities embedded in Texas' educational landscape and exploring pathways for meaningful change. In doing so, these researchers challenge us to think beyond surface-level reforms and instead address the deep-rooted structures that continue to marginalize historically underserved students and educators.

Each article in this issue reflects a commitment to equity-driven scholarship that bridges research with practice. From the persistence of Lost Cause revisionism in history textbooks to the disproportionate disciplinary practices targeting Black girls with disabilities, and the overlooked needs of mentor teachers in high-need schools, these studies expose the ways in which inequities are reinforced through curriculum, policy, and institutional norms. Collectively, they offer both critical analysis and actionable insights for transforming educational spaces.

As Texas remains a battleground for debates over curriculum content, discipline reform, and teacher preparation, this issue serves as a charge to the next generation of educational researchers, practitioners, and activists. The work presented here not only deepens our understanding of systemic challenges but also calls upon all of us to take part in shaping a more just, inclusive, and responsive education system in Texas and beyond.

### **In this Issue**

The research presented in this issue addresses urgent and overlapping concerns in today's educational landscape, particularly within the context of multicultural education in Texas. Each article highlights how systemic inequities—whether in curriculum content, disciplinary practices, or teacher preparation—contribute to the marginalization of historically underserved student populations. The authors collectively underscore the necessity of equity-driven reforms that recognize and respond to the diverse identities and lived experiences of students and educators.

### **Textbook Myths and Lost Cause Revisionism**

In “Dismantling Lost Cause Fables: A Content Analysis Examining Narrative and Visual Representations of Slavery in U.S. History Textbooks,” Dr. Courtenay Lonquist Forward presents a content analysis of six widely used U.S. history textbooks, highlighting how Lost Cause revisionism continues to distort representations of slavery in K–12 education. By examining both visual imagery and narrative descriptions, the research brief reveals how racialized slavery is often decontextualized, sanitized, or normalized—thus perpetuating myths that obscure its foundational role in American history. These misrepresentations not only hinder students' historical understanding but also reinforce racial hierarchies that persist in contemporary society. Grounded in critical race theory, the author foregrounds the social construction of race and emphasizes the need for curriculum that truthfully represents the brutality and systemic nature of chattel slavery in North America.

This research brief examines how textbooks, as carriers of the formal curriculum, shape students' perceptions of race, power, and identity. In the current educational landscape in Texas—where curriculum standards and textbook content are often influenced by politically charged debates—this research is particularly relevant (Apple, 2019). Texas plays a significant role in determining textbook content nationwide, and the findings call attention to the urgent need for historically accurate, culturally responsive materials that foster critical thinking and racial literacy (Fitt, 2020). By challenging the sanitized narratives of the past, this brief advocates for an educational framework that honors truth, equity, and inclusivity at a time when such commitments are increasingly contested in classrooms across the state.

### **Discipline Disparities for Black Girls**

In “Marginalized, Exceptional, and Disproportionately Disciplined: Using an Intersectional Framework to Analyze Discipline Data for Black Girls with Disabilities in an Urban District in Texas,” Dr. Lynette O’Neal investigates the persistent inequities in school discipline policies, with a focus on Black girls with disabilities—a group disproportionately affected by exclusionary practices. Despite a decade of national efforts to reform school discipline and promote equity, data from the National Center for Education Statistics reveal that exclusionary discipline remains a troubling norm. Students with disabilities are disciplined at twice the rate of their nondisabled peers, and Black girls, both with and without disabilities, are among the most frequently excluded—second only to Black boys. These findings illuminate the intersectional marginalization Black girls experience, particularly when disability compounds racial and gender biases in discipline decisions.

This study emphasizes the need to address systemic inequalities that disproportionately impact students at the intersections of race, gender, and disability. These findings call for a reimagining of disciplinary approaches that affirm rather than punish student identities (Morris, 2016; Crenshaw, 2015). As Texas educators seek to implement inclusive practices,

this research underscores the importance of culturally responsive, restorative alternatives to exclusionary discipline that foster belonging and justice in every classroom.

### Supporting Mentors in Teacher Residencies

In “Behind Every Great Teacher is a Supported Mentor,” Sheneria J. Perry highlights the often-overlooked needs of mentors in teacher residency programs, emphasizing that the success of novice teachers is directly tied to the support structures available to their mentors. While mentorship is widely recognized as a cornerstone of teacher development—particularly in high-needs schools—the literature reveals a gap in attention to the mentors themselves. Without sufficient professional development, time for reflection, and administrative support, mentors may face burnout and diminished effectiveness in guiding new educators.

In the context of multicultural education, especially within diverse and high-need school settings, well-supported mentors are critical to preparing culturally responsive and resilient new teachers (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Zeichner, 2010). As the state of Texas continues to invest in teacher residency models to address staffing shortages and improve teacher retention, this research brief offers a timely reminder that supporting mentors is not a secondary concern but a foundational element of effective teacher preparation. By investing in mentors, programs can better prepare novice teachers to meet the needs of diverse student populations with skill and confidence.

### Conclusion

Across all three articles, a common thread emerges: meaningful progress in education requires not only policy change but also critical reflection on the structures, narratives, and supports that shape teaching and learning. Whether through the development of accurate, inclusive curricula, the implementation of restorative disciplinary approaches,

or the provision of sustained support for mentor teachers, each paper calls for intentional, culturally responsive practices. Together, they offer insight into the ways educators, policymakers, and communities can work toward a more just and inclusive education system in Texas and beyond.

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