

Getting to know...

Equipping Educators For Equity Through Ethnic-Racial Identity

E⁴



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The Equipping Educators for Equity through Ethnic-Racial Identity (E⁴) training is a 32-hour educator professional development program designed to train classroom teachers to administer the Identity Project.¹ The Identity Project is an 8-week curriculum consisting of activities that encourage adolescents to explore their ethnic-racial identity (ERI).²

Recognizing the importance of the school setting and the unique, powerful influence teachers can have on their students' development, researchers and K-12 educators devised E⁴ to equip educators with the skills, tools, and information needed to support youth as they engage in the process of identity development through the Identity Project.

E⁴ Learning Domains

The E⁴ training program is grounded in four learning domains¹:



Gaining ERI content knowledge

- Teachers deepen their understanding of key social and cognitive developmental changes that occur during adolescence and how they relate to adolescents' ERI development.
- Teachers understand the significance of ERI for students' identity development and overall adjustment.



Developing your own ERI

- Teachers explore and reflect on their own ERI and the inequitable systems that shape both their experiences and those of their students, which is essential for effectively supporting their students' own ERI exploration process.



Deepening understandings of systemic inequities

- Through discussions of how ethnoracial systemic inequities are linked to students' experiences, teachers explore how supporting students' ERI development can help disrupt the reproduction of racial inequities in the education system.



Learning and practicing strategies for facilitating conversations about race, ethnicity, and identity

- Teachers build on their existing toolkit of facilitation strategies and consider new strategies for supporting conversations on issues of race and ethnicity in the classroom.
- Teachers practice responding to potential scenarios that may arise in a manner that will support students as they discuss issues related to race and ethnicity.

What is ERI?

ERI recognizes the interconnectedness of ethnic identity (e.g., grounded in traditions, heritage, food) and racial identity (e.g., grounded in racialized experiences due to physical appearance based on factors such as skin tone and facial features).³

Why Focus on Adolescents' Ethnic-Racial Identity?



Identity development is a key developmental task for adolescents. During this developmental period, youth deepen their understanding of who they were, who they are, and who they will become.⁴



Every adolescent embarks on the journey of identity development,⁴ and every adolescent has an ERI of which they will try to make sense. Therefore, this is a universal process that applies to all young people.^{2,5}



ERI development has been linked to positive outcomes for adolescents, including academic⁶ and psychosocial adjustment^{7,8} (e.g., self-esteem, mental health, positive feelings towards other ethnic-racial groups).

Why Train Teachers?



Adults in schools can positively influence students' overall sense of self by creating a climate that values all ethn racial backgrounds.^{9,10}



Teachers can be especially powerful change agents in adolescents' lives, given their proximity to students and ability to affirm or devalue their identities.¹¹



Training teachers to support adolescents' healthy ERI development will contribute to supporting adolescents' overall positive adjustment.^{12,13}

"I think conversations about diversity, identity and race are crucial in education but **many teachers don't know how to lead these discussions**. I really appreciate how the **E⁴ training gave me concrete ways to have these conversations with my students**. The project and lessons helped to build the vocabulary, understanding and confidence that I think teachers want and need. I also really like that this program acknowledges that all people have a culture and race – I think that it is really important that there isn't one race or culture that is seen as the standard or the norm."

9th Grade English teacher in Boston commenting on what they appreciated most from the E⁴ training¹⁴

Building Strong and Inclusive Classroom Cultures

The Identity Project and E⁴ training have also been reported to help educators reach other pedagogical goals,¹⁴ including, but not limited to:



Culturally Affirming Practices



Student Ownership of Learning



Student-Centered Learning



Building Strong Classroom Culture

Through the exploration of topics such as systemic inequities and educators' own ethnic-racial identities, teachers in E⁴ gain greater self-awareness and understanding, which can help reduce students' exposure to experiences of ethn racial marginalization. E⁴ can also provide students with access to a supportive adult who is informed about the negative effects of ethn racial discrimination on students. This is crucial because these often unintentional, yet greatly impactful, marginalizing experiences directly impact students' academics and well-being.^{1,9}

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

The Identity Project and E⁴ training can serve as an entry point for teachers to adopt more culturally sustaining pedagogical practices in the classroom.^{1,15}

Understanding students' ethn racial backgrounds as strengths, CSP embraces students' cultures, backgrounds, and languages – especially those that have been historically marginalized – as educational goods in and of themselves. In turn, CSP turns the schooling process into one that sustains and builds on students' cultural ways of being.¹⁶

Subsequently, these practices create learning environments that foster and sustain each student's ethn racial backgrounds, which has been shown to have a positive impact on students' academic performance.¹⁷ Ultimately, when educators are equipped to understand, affirm, and value their students as whole individuals, they create **stronger learning contexts and lasting positive outcomes for all students**.

What is Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy?

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) seeks to sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism, and considers this a key goal in schooling.¹⁶

References



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