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Focus: Breaking Barriers to Learning

The Importance of Artificial Intelligence in Education for All Students

by Hector Bojorquez and Michelle Martínez Vega

With the advent of ChatGPT, Google Bard, Midjourney and Canva's magic features, artificial intelligence (AI) is quickly becoming an integral part of our everyday lives, transforming industries and reshaping the way we work, learn and communicate. This rapid technological advancement highlights the importance of incorporating AI education into the curriculum not only to ensure that all students are well-equipped for their academic futures but also for workforce development.

With that in mind, it is crucial to consider underrepresented populations as these students are typically left out of the newest technological advancements.

AI Support for Teaching

AI has the potential to revolutionize the education sector by enhancing learning experiences, supporting teachers and offering more personalized learning opportunities for students. We must equip teachers with the knowledge and strategies they will need to use this new technology to improve and streamline everyday processes as well as classroom implementation.

Some areas in which AI can transform the classroom include personalized learning, ideation, adaptive learning, special needs education, bilingual education, gamification and immersive learning.

Personalized learning involves AI-powered systems that analyze students' learning styles, strengths and weaknesses to create tailored lesson plans and suggest resources to serve their individual needs.

Adaptive learning platforms can adjust to each student's progress in real-time, identifying gaps in knowledge, providing immediate feedback, and suggesting targeted interventions to help students master the material. AI can also help teachers automate administrative tasks, enabling them to focus more on instruction and student interaction.

Furthermore, AI-powered virtual tutors can provide round-the-clock support to students, while customized learning solutions can empower students with special needs to reach their full potential. Gamification and immersive learning experiences can make education more engaging, fun and memorable.

AI-driven language translation tools can break down communication barriers, enabling students and educators from different countries or with different languages to collaborate on projects and learn from one another.

All means all. Teaching students about AI is essential for developing digital literacy, critical thinking skills, and preparing students for future academic and career success. A basic (cont. on Page 2)

All Pianos Have Keys & Other Stories – Series Re-release

As we celebrate IDRA's 50th anniversary this year, we are rereleasing chapters from our founder's popular memoir, All Pianos Have Keys and Other Stories, that is now out of print. Watch our social media accounts and the webpage below for each new release.



Stories released to date:

- All Pianos Have Keys
- Silence of the Lambs
- The Epidemic that Never Was
- · Jesus Christ Was Not Bilingual
- · The Shape of the World
- One Minute of Silence
- Bilingual Onions
- My Side of the Story
- A Measure of Progress

https://idra.news/AIIPianosHaveKeys

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understanding of AI systems enables students to engage and ideate with AI technologies safely, responsibly and ethically. Learning about AI also encourages students to analyze and evaluate question structure, complex information, question assumptions and consider the ethical implications of AI technology usage.

Moreover, AI is transforming the job market, with increasing demand for professionals skilled in AI and related fields. Teaching students about AI can help them develop the knowledge and skills needed to pursue careers in technology, data science and other in-demand industries. AI learning can inspire students to generate ideas and solutions, fostering creativity and innovation – essential skills in today's competitive and evolving job market.

It is particularly important to not exclude AI education from underrepresented student populations. In fact, it is vital to integrate diversity, equity and inclusion within this domain to ensure that a broad perspective of values are embraced to combat digital bias and discrimination.

Providing students with access to AI education can help close opportunity gaps, ensure they have the skills and knowledge to compete in the global workforce, and create a more diverse pool of talent in AI and related fields. This diversity can lead to better problem-solving, creativity and innovation in the development of AI technologies and solutions.

AI education can empower underrepresented communities to leverage technologies for social good and drive positive change in their local and global contexts. Lastly, ensuring underrepresented populations are well-versed in AI positions them to contribute to policymaking

Example of AI Personalized Learning

AI systems can analyze individual student performance and tailor learning experiences to meet their unique needs. This personalized approach can be particularly beneficial for underrepresented students and emergent bilingual learners as it can bridge learning gaps and provide targeted support.

ChatGPT can translate passages quickly and with little need for corrections. It also can simplify complex passages to help students.

Put those two together and it can provide comprehensible input for emergent bilingual learners by creating simpler yet accurate translations of history, science and math text.

How? For example, try the following.

- 1. Use this video to learn how to get a Chat-GPT account: https://idra-resource.center/ChatGPTvideo
- 2. Type this prompt: Translate the following passage concerning evolution into Mexican-style Spanish. Please simplify the language into third grade reading level.
- 3. Copy and paste the article found here: https://idra-resource.center/NGaArticle
- 4. You will see a good translation that may still be complex. ChatGPT is not perfect, so you may have to ask it again to simplify the translation.
- 5. Follow up with this request:
 - a. Simplify the translation to a third-grade reading level.
 - b. Elaborate on this text but keep the reading at a third-grade level.

and decision-making processes, shaping the rules and regulations governing AI applications.

Risks of Excluding Students from AI Education

Excluding any student group – either deliberately or by neglect – from learning how to leverage artificial intelligence can lead to several negative consequences, both for individuals and society at large. Following are some of the dangers

associated with excluding students from AI education.

Digital divide – Excluding students from learning about AI can contribute to the digital divide, as they may not have the knowledge and skills needed to navigate AI-driven technologies in their daily lives. This can hinder their ability to access information, participate in the digital (cont. on Page 7)

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Classroom Censorship Laws Sweep Across the U.S. South

by Terrence Wilson, J.D.

Across the country, particularly in the U.S. South, legislative efforts to limit access to accurate and diverse curricula and books have continued in 2023. The practical impact of these laws is that millions of students across the U.S. South have less access to books and curricula that reflect their experience, particularly if they identify as Black, Latino, Indigenous, a person of color, a religious minority or LGBTQ+. This article describes the classroom censorship developments that have taken place across the U.S. South since last year or so.

Alabama

In Alabama, legislators are again pushing through a pair of "divisive concepts" bills. In 2022, legislators held hearings on House Bill (HB) 312, which sought to limit discussion of so-called "critical race theory" (CRT), race, gender and religion in higher education. These hearings featured significant opposition from organizations, individuals, teachers and faculty members from institutions across Alabama. (Griesbach, 2022). This bill passed the Alabama House but did not receive passage in the Senate.

Undeterred, Alabama legislators have again introduced so-called "divisive concepts" legislation in the 2023 legislative session via Senate Bill (SB) 247 and HB 7. Both bills were passed in committee and have yet to have full floor votes. The session will end in mid-June.

Arkansas

In Arkansas, newly-elected Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders issued an executive order on her first day in office designed to "prohibit indoctrination and critical race theory in schools" (EO23-05). This order directs the state education department to ensure that no policies promote CRT. Similarly, the Arkansas legislature supported this plan via SB 294/Act 237 enacted on March 8, 2023.

Florida

Florida's 2022 "Don't Say Gay" law (HB 1557/ Chap. No. 2022-22) prohibits instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity for students in grades K-3. In 2023, the Florida State Board of Education expanded the measure by applying it to teachers of students in all grades (2023).

Florida has continued to seek to limit culturally-sustaining discussions in higher education as well. The Stop WOKE Act (HB 7) is currently enjoined from enactment due to a ruling by Tallahassee U.S. District Court Judge Mark Walker that was affirmed by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. But leaders have continued their efforts to censor higher education. New bills, HB 999 and SB 266, sought to remove degree programs, like critical race theory, critical race studies, critical ethnic studies, radical feminist theory, radical gender theory, queer theory, critical social justice or intersectionality theory, from Florida colleges and universities.

HB 999 stalled in the House, but SB 266 was passed by the legislature. While the final version of SB 266 was revised to not include these explicit references, it still prohibits events or teaching of curriculum that "teaches identity politics" or "is based on theories that systemic racism, sexism, oppression, and privilege are inherent in the institutions of the United States and were created to maintain social, political, and economic inequities." This bill was signed by Governor Ron DeSantis on May 15, 2023.

Georgia

In 2022, despite opposition by many, including the new Georgia Coalition Against Classroom Censorship, a coalition coordinated by IDRA and including over 100 teachers, students, parents and organizations, Georgia enacted HB 1084 that defines race and racism as (cont. on Page 4)



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"divisive concepts" and prohibits their teaching (Arciaga, 2022; IDRA, May 2022).

In 2022, legislators introduced a version of the "Don't Say Gay" bill via SB 88. The bill would have significantly limited students' ability to have conversations and receive information about gender identity and sexual orientation (Arciaga, 2023; Youn, 2023). However, through the advocacy of students, parents, educators and several organizations, including IDRA, the bill was significantly watered down and then tabled in committee. It likely will be considered again in 2024.

Louisiana

While no classroom censorship bills have been filed, one legislator asked for an accounting of how public K-12 and post-graduate schools fund programs and personnel related to critical race theory, diversity, equity, inclusion and transformative social-emotional learning via HR 13. This resolution has not had a hearing by the Louisiana House Education Committee.

Mississippi

Mississippi's classroom censorship law was passed in the spring of 2022 via SB 2113. The law targets K-12 public schools and public institutions of higher education. In 2023, Mississippi did not enact new classroom censorship legislation.

North Carolina

In 2023, legislators introduced HB 187, which parrots so-called "divisive concepts" legislation offered in other parts of the country. Although the bill passed the North Carolina House of Representatives, it has yet to pass in the Senate.

South Carolina

South Carolina legislators have been the most active across the region with regard to proposing classroom censorship bills. HB 3464 would prohibit promotion of so-called "critical race theory" in all secondary and post-secondary schools in South Carolina. Policymakers also introduced "divisive concepts" bills for public schools via HB 3466, HB 3728, SB 246 and SB 424. Of these, only HB 3728 has progressed through the legislature, passing the South Carolina House and Senate Education committees.

Trust Teachers to Provide Accurate & Inclusive Education **IDRA School** Free Tools for Teachers **Resource Hub** Lesson plans & tools **Provides Tools for** for teaching in a climate of classroom **Teaching About** censorship **Race and Gender We All Belong** See announcement https://idra.news/enSRHub Visit our hub https//idraseen/hub

Tennessee

Tennessee legislators seek to expand the reach of their 2021 classroom censorship law via HB 1377/SB 1141. These bills would allow certain residents to file complaints where the law currently only gives students, parents or employees within a district that right. This change would make it easier for conservative advocacy groups to block materials or curricula. The companion bills failed in the Senate Education Committee. They may be reconsidered in 2024.

Texas

In 2022, the Texas legislature passed K-12 classroom censorship legislation first in HB 3979 and then SB 3 in a subsequent special session (Castillo, et al., 2022). In 2023, Texas legislators attempted to ensure that instructional material only portrays the counry and state in a positive light, treats all groups "fairly" and reflects their contributions to the "American way of life" (TLEEC, 2023). This bill, SB 2089, has not been voted out of committee.

Policymakers filed HB 1804, which contains vague language that could lead to classroom censorship, establish discriminatory "Don't Say Gay" language, and restrict how historical events can be conveyed compromising the accuracy and quality of these materials (Latham Sikes, 2023). This bill has not been voted out of committee.

SB 13 and HB 900 seek to ban material deemed "harmful" (Duggins-Clay, 2023). Both of these bills passed their chambers of origin and are in the other chamber. HB 900 progressed through committees and will be signed by the Governor.

The Legislature is also considering two bills

that threaten the quality and accessibility of Texas higher education. SB 17 bans diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in colleges and universities. And SB 18 bans faculty tenure at public higher education institutions in Texas.

https://idraseen/hub

Virginia

Following up on Governor Youngkin's Executive Order in 2022 (IDRA, 2022), Virginia legislators this year offered HB 1448, which would have required the adoption of model policies on book selection and removal in public school libraries, but it died after crossing to the Virginia Senate.

Two other bills focus on parent access to information about what students may read in school libraries. HB 1903 would require the creation of a portal detailing the content of schoolbooks and what students check out, while SB 1463 would require labels on "sexually explicit" books. These bills stalled in committee in their chambers of origin.

Conclusion

What happens in state legislatures and governors' executive offices has a direct impact on marginalized students. The censorship efforts of leaders across the U.S. South impact millions of students who no longer have access to material that reflects and sustains their own cultural and personal identities. The negative impacts of these policies are numerous and include weakened quality curriculum; lower teacher, staff and student morale; limited realworld learning and leadership opportunities for students; and threats to students' civil rights and safe school climates.

Organizations like the American Library (cont. on Page 7)

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Identity-Based Bullying Undermines Student Safety and Success

by Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., and Makiah Lyons

develop safe and healthy school environments, schools must be able to respond to bullying and harassment appropriately and take deliberate action to prevent it. This includes incidences where the bullying is based on or related to a student's identity, such as their race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender, religion or disability status.

Students across the country have increasingly reported alarming examples of identitybased bullying in schools - fueled in part by misinformation spread as a result of attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion in education.

For example, Black students in Lubbock, Texas have been called the "N-word" on a neardaily basis, frequently referred to as "porch monkeys," forced to listen to other students making "monkey sounds" at them in class and told to "go pick cotton." Students in one Lubbock middle school were subjected to the sounds of cracking whips as they walked through the halls. Another Black student, out of breath while working out during football practice, was taunted by other students jeering, "He can't breathe like George Floyd." (IDRA, 2022)

Such incidents are not limited to Texas. We see reports in Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Missouri and New York as well.

Bullying and harassment jeopardize students' ability to learn and undermine a school's climate, leaving many students, staff and communities feeling unsafe and disconnected (Craven, 2022). We must ensure that students, school communities and parents have the necessary tools to prevent and address identitybased bullying and can support all students impacted by it.

Identity-based Bullying, Hate Crimes and Harassment are on the Rise in Schools

According to NCES, 22% of students ages 12-18 were bullied in 2019 (2021). While this, standing alone, is concerning, the urgency of identifying, preventing and responding appropriately to bullying is further underscored when viewing this data from a disaggregated lens: students increasingly report being bullied on the bases of their race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and religion (Alvis, et al., 2023; Brion-Meisels, et al., 2022).

The U.S. Department of Justice defines identitybased bullying as bullying arising from a single significant act or pattern of acts by one or more students that is based on or targets a student's actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, gender, religion or disability status (Lahdon & Rapp, 2021). This includes bullying based on association with a person or group of people with these characteristics.

Unfortunately, incidents of identity-based bullying, harassment and hate crimes are on the rise. A 2021 report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that one in four students experienced bullying based on their race, national origin, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation. And one in four students reported seeing hate words or symbols (such as those referencing racial or homophobic slurs) written in their schools. Another report similarly found that 23% of students reported seeing hate-related graffiti at school (Wang, et al., 2020).

Students also experience bullying on the basis of their religion. While many faith-based groups report such bullying, a survey by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding found that Muslim (60%) and Jewish (58%) students are most likely to experience religious (cont. on Page 6)

One in four students experienced bullying based on their race. national origin, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation.

(Identity-Based Bullying Undermines Student Safety and Success, continued from Page 5)

discrimination, in addition to 43% of white Evangelicals, 29% of Protestants and 26% of Catholics (Mogahed & Ikramullah, 2020).

LGBTQ+ students face identity-based bullying and harassment at alarming rates. According to a 2021 national survey, 82% of LGBTQ+ students reported feeling unsafe in school because of at least one of their actual or perceived personal characteristics – including 51% of LGBTQ+ students who felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation, 43% because of their gender expression, and 40% because of their gender (Kosciw, et al., 2021).

Also concerning, the number of hate crimes in schools has nearly doubled in recent years: in 2015-16, the number was approximately 3,166. It increased to 5,732 in 2017-18 (OJJDP, 2022). The most common bias motivation for hate crimes in schools was race or color.

Youth who reported being the victim of a hate crime overwhelmingly were victims of race/ethnicity- and ancestry-motivated hate crimes. Black children continue to be a primary target of these harmful actions, representing 69% of the single-bias instances reported to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program in 2020 (FBI, 2020).

Given the alarming rate at which these harmful incidents are increasingly occurring, school efforts to prevent and respond to bullying must account for the specific ways that bullying targets students on the basis of their identity and the magnified harm that students and a school community experience when the bullying behavior is motivated by bias or discrimination.

Identity-based Bullying Increases Risk for Mental Health Challenges and Exacerbates Existing Traumas

Effectively addressing bullying and harassment is critical to ensuring school safety and addressing youth mental health. Bullying is associated with negative health outcomes, such as depression and suicide, which can be exacerbated when students experience bullying on the basis of their identity (Alvis, et al., 2023; Kosciw, et al., 2021; Lutrick, et al., 2020; Garnett, et al., 2014).

Decades of research have shown that youth of color are at higher risk of being the victim

of bullying, which may be due to experiences with discriminatory forms of bullying where an individual's identity or identities are targeted through acts of verbal and/or physical assault (Alvis, et al., 2023; Galán, et al., 2021; Peskin, et al., 2006).

The data are likely underestimations, as a recent study found that Black and Latino youth reported more experiences of bullying behaviors (*e.g.*, being threatened or put down by peers) but were less likely to endorse that they have been "bullied" (Lai & Kao, 2018) compared to white youth.

As recently noted by researchers, "The underreporting of bullying victimization among youth of color may be due to cultural stigma and fear of backlash from authority figures who tend to enact more severe punishment of and overpolice Black and Latino communities" (Alvis, et al., 2023 citing Rios, 2011).

While all forms of bullying are harmful and must be prevented and remediated, "identity-based bullying may have more deleterious effects on mental health relative to general bullying" because "identity-based bullying is often experienced as more threatening and severe, can be experienced as a violent assault on one's sense of self, and is inherently demeaning and personal" (Alvis, et al., 2023).

Further, since youth of color are more likely to experience multiple types of traumatic events throughout their lives, they are at greater risk for psychological symptoms in response to identity-based bullying (Alvis, et al., 2023; Douglas, et al., 2021).

Because youth are particularly vulnerable to social and emotional harm during adolescence, addressing identity-based victimization must be addressed swiftly, effectively and with attention to the particular harm caused by discriminatory bullying (Alvis, et al., 2023; Russell, et al., 2012).

Leaders Must Act to Prohibit and Prevent Identity-based Bullying

School districts often do not have the tools they need to address harassment and bullying appropriately. With instances on the rise, schools' inability to respond appropriately compromises student and school safety, jeopardizes students' mental health, and could affect overall school climate and hostile environment.

Researchers continue to stress the importance of attending to identity and the impact of discrimination when addressing instances of bullying and implementing bullying prevention programs and initiatives (Alvis, et al, 2023; Russell, et al., 2012).

Teachers and staff must be empowered to prevent bullying and respond appropriately when it takes place. A study of outcomes for youth that experience identity-based bullying as opposed to more general bullying shows that supportive teachers help mitigate the negative outcomes for students that experience general bullying (Mulvey, et al., 2018).

Researchers also continue to emphasize the need to collect better, more comprehensive data about bullying to ensure more effective intervention and prevention measures, especially for students whose identity or identities may render them more susceptible to experiencing bullying (Mulvey, et al., 2018; GAO, 2012).

Finally, schools must have protocols in place to ensure that investigations of suspected or reported bullying are thorough, prompt and impartial (OCR, 2023; 2017; 2010; 1994). In fact, schools violate the law when they fail to implement meaningful prevention and intervention strategies to stop discriminatory behaviors. Schools should simultaneously assess potential mental health or academic issues and provide support for students experiencing them (Alvis, et al., 2023; Cornell & Limber, 2015).

IDRA is available to partner with schools to establish proactive strategies to build safe, welcoming and supportive environments for all students. In addition, IDRA's free technical assistance toolkit, Interrupting Bullying and Harassment in Schools (https://idra.news/webInterrupt), provides resources to school leaders and policymakers, including research on effective and ineffective strategies.

Citations available online.

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economy and engage with online communities effectively.

Biased AI systems – AI systems often are trained on data collected from human behavior, which can contain biases. For example, facial recognition originally was designed exclusively with white faces because the developers were not diverse. Excluding diverse perspectives from the development and design of AI systems can perpetuate or amplify existing biases, leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes for certain groups of people.

Wider skills gap – As AI becomes increasingly important in various industries, the demand

for professional skills in using AI will grow dramatically. Excluding students from AI education can exacerbate the skills gap, making it more difficult for businesses and organizations to find the diverse talent they need to thrive in the AI-driven economy.

Economic inequality – Students who lack AI education may find it more challenging to secure well-paying jobs as many traditional roles may be automated or significantly transformed by AI. This can lead to increased economic inequality and limit social mobility for those who are not adequately prepared for the AI-driven job market.

Loss of creativity and innovation – A diverse workforce in AI and related fields leads to more creative problem-solving and innovative solutions. By excluding certain students from AI education, we risk losing the valuable insights and ideas that they could bring to the development of AI technologies.

Ethical concerns – As AI becomes more integrated into our lives, it is essential to have a diverse group of professionals involved in the development and regulation of AI systems to ensure ethical considerations are taken into account. Excluding students from learning about AI may result in a lack of diverse perspectives, leading to potential ethical issues and unintended consequences. It also leaves students unprepared to navigate ethical dilemmas.

To mitigate these dangers, it is essential to promote equitable access to AI education for all students, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. This will help to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from the advancements in AI and contribute to a more inclusive and just society.

Hector Bojorquez is IDRA's director of operations and educational practice. Comments and questions may be directed

(Classroom Censorship Laws Sweep Across the U.S. South, continued from Page 4)

Association and PEN America already report record-high numbers of challenges to books and materials, and these trends will likely continue based on continued legislative action across the region (ALA, 2022; Friedman, 2022). PEN America also filed a lawsuit this month against a Florida school district over book bans that restrict access to books on race, racism and LGBTQ+ identities.

See IDRA's Knowledge is Power email alerts and join IDRA's Southern Education Equity Network (https://www.idraseen.org) online for policy and advocacy news.

Citations available online.

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Focus: Personalized Learning

IDRA 50th Anniversary Snapshot - Brown v. Board of Education

This month marks the 69th anniversary of the *Brown v Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling. Since then, great strides have been made in schools. But de facto segregation remains and education equity has still not been reached. Since IDRA's founding, we have been committed to fulfilling the promise of *Brown*.





Dr. Henry Williams, professor of education at the University of Houston – Clear Lake, addresses participants at IDRA's Commemorative Summit Conference, "The Brown Decision in Retrospect, Introspect, Prospect." (July 1980)



Beginning with the 50th anniversary of Brown, IDRA worked in collaboration with the Brown vs. Board of Education 50th Anniversary Commission and the Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research to design our first of a series of cross-race, cross-sector community dialogues that gathered Black and Latino community, business and education leaders in various cities throughout the U.S. South to address key education issues in each respective community. (2004)



IDRA continues to produce resources, such as The Law in Education – Brown v. Board of Education – Classnotes Podcast 223 that gives a picture of the landscape before the ruling, describes the plaintiffs and attorneys, and discusses the ruling's impact. (2022)

See our newest article, "Reactions to Brown Ruling Led to Breakdown in Teacher Diversity," by Makiah Lyons: https://idra.news/KPbvbTeachers