

RESEARCH

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Educators Unveil Program To Improve Knowledge Of Ethnic Groups

A coalition of educators and business leaders has unveiled an education program aimed at cultivating teacher and student knowledge of several ethnic groups.

Saying the dropout rate among minorities ranges from 24 percent for blacks to 77 percent for Puerto Ricans, the program aims to bolster students' confidence, which proponents say will lead to higher achievement.

"Many of our nation's culturally diverse students are not faring well under the existing system," said Roger Fish, assistant superintendent for curriculum in Washington, D.C., whose district is putting the program in place.

"We see this program motivating and stimulating minority children, which we believe will lead to higher ... achievement," added Gail Christopher, co-director for the project.

Tested for the past two years in San Diego and Chicago, preceded by intensive teacher training, the "Americans All" curriculum examines

the history of six ethnic groups: Native Americans, Asians, Europeans, Mexican-Americans, African-Americans and Puerto Ricans.

The curriculum is broken into four units to be integrated into social studies programs already in place for third-, fifth-, eighth- and 11th-graders. Each unit examines the various ethnic groups' heroes and heroines, immigration history, music, families and education.

Nearly 4,000 students have been exposed to the curriculum in five cities, and project officials expect to expand it to other school districts, with Miami and Dubuque, Iowa, expected to implement the program next fall.

Besides expanding to other school districts, project officials want "Americans All" to become part of teacher training, Fish said.

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