The Role of Ethnic Studies in Closing the Achievement Gap: Evidence from Tucson and San Francisco
Nolan L. Cabrera, PhD
Associate Professor, University of Arizona
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Tucson Unified School District
• **Context**
  ○ Mexican American Studies (MAS) courses for juniors and seniors
  ○ Year-long (two semester) sequence in Social Studies or Language Arts
  ○ Curriculum reflecting local concerns and issues, aligned with state standards
  ○ Students who took these courses were: a) Low-income, b) Overwhelmingly Mexican American, and c) Had very low GPAs *prior* to taking MAS classes
• **Results**
  ○ More likely to pass all AIMS (Arizona Standardized tests) including Math
  ○ More likely to graduate from high school
  ○ The more classes taken, the more likely these outcomes (passing AIMS and graduating)

San Francisco Unified School District
• **Context**
  ○ Students with pre-high school GPA <2.0 or <87.5 attendance rate
  ○ Year-long ethnic studies courses targeting “at-risk” students
  ○ Offered to 9th graders
• **Results**
  ○ Attendance: +21 percentage points
  ○ GPA: 1.4 grade points
  ○ Credits earned: +23 credits

Lessons Learned
• Targeting low performing students, but *not* remedial
• Classes need to count for core credit (*not* electives), and oriented in cultural contexts of the students implemented by well-trained teachers
• Classes need to be two semester credits
• Ideally offered as early as possible (Tucson was late)

*Ultimately, ethnic studies courses done well are a promising means of closing the achievement gap.*