**Middle School Ethnic Diversity Benefits All Students**

By Tom Jacobs

1 - How do we make our schools a more welcoming place for students? Newly published research finds one answer is genuine ethnic diversity.

2 - A study featuring 4,302 sixth-graders in 26 Los Angeles-area middle schools found many indicators to suggest well-being was higher in schools where no single ethnic group had a clear majority.

3 - "More ethnic groups of relatively equal size—the hallmark of school diversity—may be protective because the numerical balance of power is less likely to be tipped in favor or one or more large ethnic groups," writes a University of California–Los Angeles research team led by psychologist Jaana Juvonen.

4 - The study, published in the journal *Child Development,* focused on middle schools in middle- and working-class neighborhoods. In six of the 26, the student body contained whites, blacks, Latinos, and Asians, and "no single ethnic group represented a numerical majority." Nine "have two large and relatively equal ethnic groups," while members of one such group were the clear majority in 11 others.

5 - The sixth-graders completed a series of questionnaires measuring, among other things, how safe they felt at school, whether they get "picked on by other kids," and whether they believe their teachers treat everyone fairly.

6 - In addition, researchers measured comfort level with members of other ethnic groups, asking them how likely they were "to eat lunch, get together at their house, dance together at a party, or sit together on a school bus with peers from different ethnic groups in their grade."

7 - Their answers were compared with the ethnic make-up of both their school, and of the specific classes they took.

8 - The results: As the ethnic diversity of middle school increased, African-American, Latino, Asian, and white youth all reported feeling safer in school, less lonely, and less likely to be victimized. Students in more diverse schools were also more likely to report that their teachers provided "fair and equal treatment of all ethnic groups."

9 - In addition, those whose specific classes were more diverse were also less likely to ostracize kids of other races or ethnicities. "The pattern of findings was similar for all ethnic groups," the researchers write, "and regardless of their ethnic representation in a given school."

10 - The bad news is the number of students who receive these benefits may be declining. Juvonen and her colleagues point to recent research suggesting "schools serving ethnic minority youth are more segregated today than in the 1960s." They also note that, in 2007, the Supreme Court overturned one school district's policies to increase diversity.

11 - "The court did not see K-12 diversity as a compelling interest," they write, "and (the justices) questioned whether social-science research had adequately justified the use of race-conscious policies." Well, here's a study that does just that.

Source: <https://psmag.com/education/middle-school-ethnic-diversity-benefits-all-students>

**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. What does psychologist Jaana Juvonen believe about ethnic diversity?
2. What were the main findings from the study featuring 4,302 sixth-graders in 26 Los Angeles-area middle schools?

1. Why types of questionnaires did the sixth-graders complete?
2. According to the study, what makes students feel safe at school?
3. How does the author feel about the current K-!2 diversity policy?

**AUTHOR’S CRAFT**

1. The author begins his article with a question, then answers it in the following sentence. What effect does this have on the reader?
2. Is the author’s description of the study clear and engaging?
3. The author quotes the study quite often throughout the article (paragraphs 3 – 6, and 8 -11). Underline all the quotes that he uses. Are there some quotes that he could have paraphrased instead? If he had used less quotes, how would that have changed his article?