ETHNIC STUDIES

MODEL CURRICULUM

Adopted by the California State Board of Education March 2021

Published by the California Department of Education
Sacramento, 2022

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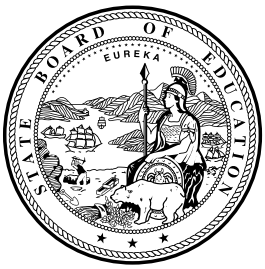

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Notice

The guidance in the *Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum* is not binding on local educational agencies or other entities. Except for the statutes, regulations, and court decisions that are referenced herein, the document is exemplary, and compliance with it is not mandatory. (See *Education Code* Section 33308.5.)

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CHAPTER 2: DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

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KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISTRICT AND SITE ADMINISTRATORS

While effective teaching of ethnic studies is paramount, a supportive district and site leadership is just as important to the efficacy of the work. District and site administrators should also work to develop their understandings of ethnic studies instruction and pedagogies. Below are ways districts can work to best support the development and implementation of a kindergarten through grade twelve (K–12) ethnic studies program, whether it utilizes a stand-alone, integrated, or thematic approach:

- *Ensure that district and site administration support the development of the program, and that the local governing board is fully briefed on the project.* District support is critical to the successful implementation of any new instructional program.
- *Develop a definition of what ethnic studies means to your district.* The purpose statement in the "Developing an Ethnic Studies Pedagogy for K–12 Education" section in chapter 3 notes the importance of connecting the local district and community needs to the historical field of study.
- *Ensure alignment of the district course(s) to state and local policy, district resources, and community needs.* Determine the type of program that is being implemented. Is this a semester or year-long course or set of courses? Will the course be a stand-alone ethnic studies course, or will an existing course be modified to incorporate ethnic studies content, skills, and principles? Which department or departments will house ethnic studies, or will it become its own department? Will an ethnic studies professional learning community be formed to include teachers from multiple disciplines and academic backgrounds? What is the history of race relations in this community? How have demographic or economic changes impacted the community? Is there a vibrant ethnic community, past or present? As you make these determinations, you may also consider how many courses are going to be offered, existing courses that offer opportunities to teach ethnic studies content and lessons, the expectations for student enrollment, how the program will be accommodated within local facilities, and how many teachers will be needed.
- *Consider the local history, demographics, and particular needs of your district's or site's students and their respective communities, including recognition of the Indigenous Peoples wherever a course is being taught.* Administrators should consider conducting research on the cultural values, traditions, Indigeneity, and histories of the diverse populations represented in our society as well as those represented in local schools, as it is important for students to learn about those different from themselves who may not be represented in their communities even as they are learning about the sources of local diversity. Evaluate the demographic makeup of the district. What is the ethnic breakdown of the

student population? Does the district have large numbers of linguistically diverse students? What countries and regions of the world are they from? Are there students who experience poverty? How can this program serve our students? How can the value of and empathy for other marginalized groups be fostered when student populations are homogenous and/or haven't been explicitly or formally exposed to concepts of race and ethnicity? This research can be done by delving into reported student data, consulting student families and community stakeholders about pressing issues and concerns facing these communities, or even inviting scholars specialized in the history of the communities represented in the district. Community organizations, city or county agencies, libraries, and universities may be consulted for data and historical information about a community.

- *Develop a clear funding model that includes the resources available for the program and how those resources will be allocated* (e.g., teacher training, classrooms, administrative support, purchase of instructional materials).

- *Be grounded and well versed in the purpose and impact of ethnic studies.* Similar to ethnic studies educators, administrators should also familiarize themselves with research on the efficacy of K–12 ethnic studies—from developing strong cultural and academic identity and building academic skills within elementary, middle, and high school teachers to facilitating civic engagement with a service and problem-solving orientation. Again, the bibliography included in this document can be used as a starting point. Furthermore, administrators should work to weave the purpose, benefits, principles, and impact of ethnic studies into the fabric of the school, and as a means to partner with parents and the broader community. Administrators should familiarize themselves with the ethnic studies guiding values and outcomes outlined in chapter 1, and keep them in mind as they implement an ethnic studies program.

- *Ensure that students receive appropriate and nondiscriminatory instruction and materials.* Ensure that district guidelines, professional development, syllabi, classroom instructional materials, and other contents of a locally developed ethnic studies course meet requirements for presenting potentially controversial issues in K–12 public school classrooms. While developing instruction and materials, school districts and local educational agencies should ensure that instruction and materials are appropriate for use with pupils of all races, religions, genders, sexual orientations, and diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, pupils with disabilities, and English learners; do not reflect or promote, directly or indirectly, any bias, bigotry, or discrimination against any person or group of persons on the basis of any category protected by Section 220 of the *Education Code*; and do not teach or promote religious doctrine.

- *Ensure fair, balanced, and humanizing pedagogy.* Ensure that pedagogy must support that in the investigation, presentation, and interpretation of facts and ideas within the prescribed course of study, teachers shall be free to examine, present, and responsibly discuss various points of view in an atmosphere of open inquiry, provided that the instruction, material, or discussion is appropriate to the age and maturity level of the students. Ensure that pedagogy is a fair, balanced, and humanizing academic presentation of various points of view consistent with accepted standards of professional responsibility, rather than advocacy, personal opinion, bias, or partisanship.[1]
- *Identify teachers who are willing and committed to invest in developing an ethnic studies curriculum and pedagogy.* Administrators should work within the district and site departments to identify teachers with backgrounds in ethnic studies or a strong interest in teaching in the area, who will be involved in the development and implementation of the program. It is especially important to establish connections between the new program and existing offerings in history–social science and English/language arts. Additionally, ethnic studies can be integrated into existing courses in addition to, or instead of, creating a stand-alone ethnic studies course. Teachers and departments should be provided time to incorporate ethnic studies content and principles into existing curricula and be provided with access to professional development as appropriate. Conducting inner-district outreach campaigns and exploring the possibility of developing ethnic studies teachers from the ranks of paraprofessionals and other support staff are just two ways administrators can work to recruit and develop ethnic studies teachers. Additionally, administrators can work with local teacher education programs and university ethnic studies departments to actively recruit and develop a pipeline for individuals interested in teaching ethnic studies.
- *Develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate instructional support*. In order for teachers to provide a robust ethnic studies learning experience they should be engaged in continual professional development and supported by their site and district administrators who are working in tandem with students and the community. Administrators should consider creating a department or distinct lane of work specifically dedicated to developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating ethnic studies instructional materials and professional development (preferably differentiated professional development trainings specifically based on varying levels of ethnic studies content knowledge). Administrators can develop their own models of ethnic studies professional development or instructional materials by consulting other districts with well-established ethnic

1 Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Multidisciplinary Ethnic Studies Advisory Team. 2017. "Elements of a Balanced Curriculum." https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch2.asp#link1.

studies departments and teachers. It is imperative to consider the number of teachers who currently have experience in this subject area and those who will need additional support and professional development prior to implementation. Administrators can draw upon the expertise of scholars and other stakeholders to help create this tailored training. It is important that administrators seek advisors from multiple communities who are aligned with the model curriculum and the State Board guidelines, and who are well versed in K–12 education.

- *Tribal Consultation:* Conduct Tribal consultation with California Native American Tribes and Tribal organizations in the development of and prior to the implementation of their local ethnic studies programs, and include consultation with Native American and Indigenous organizations in their district, as well as with Native American scholars and educators.

- *Consult with other districts, higher education institutions, and relevant community organizations that have implemented ethnic studies programs at the high school level to see if there are other models and resources that can be adapted to the local program, and ensure a balance of advisors from multiple communities.* Chapter 6 contains a selection of course descriptions from various districts across the state; listings of other courses can be found at the University of California A–G Course Management Portal at https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch2.asp#link2.

- *Consult with the local county office of education.* Your local county office of education may provide consultation, resources, or professional development activities to support the development and implementation of the ethnic studies program.

- *Develop a comprehensive strategic plan for implementation,* including an initial pilot that will enable the district to gather data about what works and doesn't work about the new program. One option is to pilot a semester course and then expand it to a full-year course or even a set of courses as capacity is developed within the district. Utilize a subcommittee, preferably including the teachers who will be teaching the course(s), to select instructional materials for the pilot. Alternatively, the course could be piloted by modifying an existing course so that it is taught using an ethnic studies lens. Conduct the pilot, providing frequent opportunities for participating teachers to collaborate and provide feedback both to each other and to district and site administration. Finally, provide opportunities for students to provide feedback and use assessment tools to quantify the areas that need improvement. The district may utilize the pilot as an opportunity to develop new lessons, resources, activities, and assessments that can be used in the program moving forward.

- Use longitudinal student data to determine student outcomes and assess the effectiveness of the new program over time, and continue teacher professional development to strengthen content knowledge and ensure a smooth transition of new teachers into the program.

GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A LOCAL CURRICULUM WITH ETHNIC STUDIES PRINCIPLES

When developing a local curriculum, the first step is to assemble a team to do the work. These team members should have appropriate professional training on curriculum development. Teachers with an ethnic studies background who will be implementing the curriculum should take the lead on this process, but it should also include teachers from other content areas. Ethnic studies is by its very nature interdisciplinary, and ethnic studies teachers can collaborate with teachers in history–social science, language arts, visual and performing arts, and other subjects as well. This collaboration will help to ensure that the curriculum is aligned to the skill expectations in the state's history–social science and language arts content standards, but beyond that it can help to ensure that the concepts and principles of ethnic studies are present throughout the curriculum and are not limited just to the ethnic studies classroom. For example, the pursuit of justice and equity is not only something that students practice in the classroom, but a skill that they develop for use in later life as citizens and proponents for social change. Schools and administrators should also develop a process for evaluation of courses developed and supported through high-quality ethnic studies professional learning.

Administrative support is also essential to the successful implementation of a new curriculum, as teacher training and other opportunities for professional learning should be incorporated into the curriculum plan. This will help ensure that future teachers will be equipped with the necessary skills, content knowledge, and critical mindsets and be able to refine the curriculum long after its initial development. It should also be acknowledged that there will be districts that may be undertaking this process for the first time, without experienced teachers who are trained in ethnic studies content and pedagogy. In those cases, it will be particularly important for administrators to support their teachers in order to ensure that they are sufficiently prepared to implement a successful ethnic studies program. Further, following the development and adoption process in the school district, having a process in place to include opportunities for the continual development and refinement of the curriculum after its initial development is beneficial.

It is also important to engage students and the community in the curriculum development process. Student participation during the curriculum development process is integral to the effectiveness of ethnic studies curriculum. That participation should begin at the school level.

In order to develop a curriculum that is culturally and community relevant and responsive, teachers and administrators need to be familiar with both their student population and their communities. Chapter 1 of this model curriculum stresses the importance of these connections in order to accomplish the goals of ethnic studies in the classroom. The team developing the curriculum must not consider their work complete because they have developed a curriculum that addresses the races/ethnicities on a demographic report.

They must seek to understand how the lived experiences of their student population affect the knowledge and attitudes that they bring to the classroom and that students have just as much as educators to bring to the table for mutual learning. With that knowledge in hand, it will be easier to develop a curriculum that engages students as peer learners and with mutual understanding and appreciation.

The curriculum frameworks adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) contain information that can guide teachers and administrators in the development of a local curriculum. In particular, the *History–Social Science Framework for California Public Schools (History–Social Science Framework)* and the *English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework for California Public Schools (English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework)* contain useful guidance for current or potential teachers of ethnic studies. Both frameworks contain chapters on assessment that include specific direction on how to use formative and summative assessments to plan and implement an instructional program. They also include chapters on access and equity that emphasize the importance of designing curriculum to support all students, including those who have special needs. One approach for how to differentiate instruction to address those needs is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a set of strategies for planning instruction and presenting content that enables students to access and use disciplinary knowledge in a variety of ways that address their needs, assets, and strengths.[2] Finally, the frameworks include chapters on instructional strategies and professional learning that provide guidance for both teachers and administrators in planning, implementing, and supporting an inquiry-based instructional program that supports student engagement with the curriculum.

The *History–Social Science Framework* is of particular importance and should be considered an essential companion document to this model curriculum for current and prospective ethnic studies teachers. The framework was organized around four key instructional shifts: inquiry, literacy, content, and citizenship. These shifts are strongly aligned with the core principles of ethnic studies as a discipline. The framework contains a suggested elective course in ethnic studies designed to be used as a history–social science elective in grade nine.[3] This model curriculum obviously goes into much more detail, but the framework relies upon a similar instructional approach, presenting essential questions to direct student inquiry, classroom examples, and suggestions for ways that students can participate in service learning or activism in their school or local community.

2 UDL is discussed on pages 540–543 in the *History–Social Science Framework* and pages 910–913 in the *English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework*. UDL is only one of a number of universal access strategies present in both frameworks.

3 *History–Social Science Framework*, Chapter 14, 310–314.

INTEGRATING STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITY

With the field of ethnic studies being born out of a grassroots community movement, community partnership and accountability are central to its identity. By design, ethnic studies seeks to be community accountable and responsive. Districts and sites considering offering ethnic studies should include students, families, and other public and community institutions (museums, community art spaces, local nonprofits relevant to the field, grassroots/community advocacy organizations, etc.) in those plans and discussions to ensure that the particular histories, aspirations, struggles, and achievements of the communities present in classrooms are reflected in the course. One option is to create a steering committee that could include district teachers and administrators, students, parents, and members of community and advocacy organizations that are active in the district area. Provide multiple opportunities for the public to provide comment on the proposed program during the development process. Student participation in service learning activities may serve as a way of confirming community support and addressing concerns during the implementation of the program.

SELECTING EXISTING CURRICULA AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Local educational agencies (LEAs) have a great deal of flexibility when it comes to the selection of instructional materials for use in their schools. *Education Code* Section 60000(c) states that it is the responsibility of an LEA's governing board to establish courses of study and to select the appropriate instructional materials for those courses. While there is a state-level process by which the SBE adopts instructional materials, that process only applies to kindergarten through grade eight materials and LEAs are not required to purchase from the state list. High school materials, including materials for ethnic studies, are adopted at the local level by the LEA governing board (*Education Code* Section 60400).

LEAs are required to adopt materials that meet certain requirements in code, such as the requirement that instructional materials "accurately portray the cultural and racial diversity of our society" (*Education Code* Section 60040). However, the process by which materials are selected at the local level varies significantly. Most LEAs have policies that govern this process. Typically, the process begins when a local selection committee is chosen. *Education Code* Section 60002 states that "each district board shall provide for substantial teacher involvement in the selection of instructional materials and shall promote the involvement of parents and other members of the community in the selection of instructional materials." But how exactly that involvement is carried out depends on the LEA. Another way to honor the principles of ethnic studies is to have students be involved in this process as well, either through direct involvement in district policy development or through community outreach to engage others in the selection process.

Governing boards should make these decisions through an open and public process that provides for public input and teacher leadership throughout the process. It is important that all steps related to the development of a local curriculum, including the selection of materials, are transparent and involve all stakeholders in the community. This process can be time consuming and difficult, but it is the best way to ensure that the materials used are high quality and support effective instruction and student learning.

The SBE has adopted a policy document that provides a set of guidelines for piloting textbooks and instructional materials.[4] While focused on kindergarten through grade eight, much of the guidance in the document applies to the selection of materials for the secondary grades as well. These guidelines include tasks such as the creation of a representative selection committee, the definition and prioritization of evaluation criteria, and establishing a pilot process to determine which available materials best meet local needs. The curriculum frameworks adopted by the SBE also include criteria for the selection of instructional materials that can be used by LEAs as a model.[5]

For example, the Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials in the California *History–Social Science Framework* states that "Materials include the study of issues and historical and social science debates. Students are presented with different perspectives and come to understand the importance of reasoned debate and reliable evidence, recognizing that people in a democratic society have the right to disagree."[6]

In addition, districts and LEAs should keep in mind Section 60044 of the California *Education Code* that states schools may not use instructional materials that contain "any matter reflecting adversely upon persons on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation, occupation."[7]

An example of guidelines written by a district on how to implement ethnic studies is "Elements of a Balanced Curriculum," adopted by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Multidisciplinary Ethnic Studies Advisory Team in 2017.[8] When districts and LEAs create their own guidelines for teaching ethnic studies in their district, this may serve as a model guideline. LAUSD gathered many district stakeholder groups and found language to summarize how to address balanced pedagogy and instructional materials and how to address student and teacher needs in support of teaching ethnic studies.

4 "Guidelines for Piloting Textbooks and Instructional Materials," State Board of Education Policy 01-15 (January 2015). https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch2.asp#link3.

5 See chapter 23 in the *History–Social Science Framework* and chapter 12 in the *English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework*.

6 See *History–Social Science Framework*, 624.

7 California *Education Code* Section 60044.

8 See LAUSD, "Elements of a Balanced Curriculum."

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