

ETHNIC

STUDIES

MODEL CURRICULUM

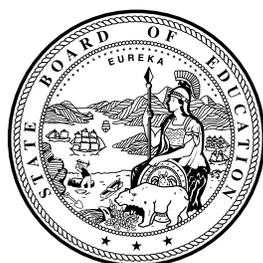


Adopted by the California  
State Board of Education  
March 2021

Published by the California  
Department of Education  
Sacramento, 2022



**ETHNIC**  
**STUDIES**  
**MODEL CURRICULUM**



**Adopted by the California  
State Board of Education  
March 2021**

Published by the California  
Department of Education  
Sacramento, 2022

# PUBLISHING INFORMATION

The *Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum* was adopted by the State Board of Education on March 18, 2021. The members of the State Board were as follows: Linda Darling-Hammond, President; Ilene Straus, Vice President; Sue Burr, Cynthia Glover-Woods, James J. McQuillen, Matt Navo, Kim Pattillo Brownson, Haydee Rodriguez, Patricia A. Rucker, Ting L. Sun, and Zaid Fattah, Student Member. It was developed by the Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division, California Department of Education (CDE). This publication was edited by the staff of CDE Press. It was designed and prepared for printing by the staff of CDE Press, with the cover designed by Aristotle Ramirez. It was published by the Department of Education, 1430 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. It was distributed under the provisions of the Library Distribution Act and *Government Code* Section 11096.

© 2022 by the California Department of Education  
All rights reserved  
ISBN 978-0-8011-1822-7

Reproduction of this document for resale, in whole or in part, is not authorized.

## Additional Publications and Educational Resources

This document is posted on the CDE website at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/esmc.asp>. For information about additional publications and educational resources available from the California Department of Education, please visit the CDE's Educational Resources Catalog page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/>, or call the CDE Press sales office at 1-800-995-4099.

## 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.)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Preface</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview</b> .....	7
<b>Chapter 2: District Implementation Guidance</b> .....	23
<b>Chapter 3: Instructional Guidance for K-12 Education</b> .....	33
<b>Chapter 4: Sample Lessons and Topics</b> .....	73
<b>Chapter 5: Lesson Resources</b> .....	411
<b>Chapter 6: UC-Approved Course Outlines</b> .....	425

[Page iv intentionally left blank.]



# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

---

## Contents

- Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview.....7
- Why Teach Ethnic Studies in a K–12 Environment?.....8
- Defining Ethnic Studies.....9
- The History of Ethnic Studies in California.....10
- The Benefits of Ethnic Studies.....12
- How Do You Teach Ethnic Studies  
    in a K–12 Environment?.....14
- Guiding Values and Principles of Ethnic Studies.....15
- Eight Outcomes of K–12 Ethnic Studies Teaching.....16
- The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum  
        for K–12 Education.....21

---

## WHY TEACH ETHNIC STUDIES IN A K-12 ENVIRONMENT?

Ethnic studies is for all students. The model curriculum focuses on the four ethnic groups that are at the core of the ethnic studies field. At the same time, this coursework, through its overarching study of the process and impact of the marginalization resulting from systems of power, is relevant and important for students of all backgrounds. By affirming the identities and contributions of marginalized groups in our society, ethnic studies helps students see themselves and each other as part of the narrative of the United States. This helps students see themselves as active agents in the interethnic bridge-building process we call American life.

Ethnic studies helps bring students and communities together. This does not mean glossing over differences, avoiding difficult issues, or resorting to clichés about how we are all basically alike. It should do so by simultaneously doing three things: (1) addressing racialized experiences and ethnic differences as real and unique; (2) building greater understanding and communication across ethnic differences; and (3) revealing underlying commonalities that can bind by bringing individuals and groups together. Ethnic studies is designed to benefit all students. Ethnic studies scholar Christine Sleeter posits, “rather than being divisive, ethnic studies helps students to bridge differences that already exist in experiences and perspectives,” highlighting that division is *antithetical* to ethnic studies. Her study of the research on ethnic studies outcomes found that instruction that includes diversity experiences and a specific focus on racism and other forms of bigotry has a positive impact, such as “democracy outcomes” and higher-level thinking.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, research summarized by Sleeter and Miguel Zavala shows that culturally meaningful and relevant curriculum such as an ethnic studies course, which helps students develop the skill sets to engage in critical conversations about race, can have a positive impact on students’ engagement in education and their achievement. The research shows that ethnic studies helps “foster cross-cultural understanding among students of color and white students, and aids students in valuing their own cultural identity while appreciating the differences around them.”<sup>2</sup> Research also shows that curricula that teach directly about racism have a stronger impact than curricula that portray diverse groups but ignore racism. Students that become more engaged in school through courses like ethnic studies are more likely to graduate and feel more personally

---

1 Christine E. Sleeter. 2011. *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies: A Research Review*. Washington, DC: National Education Association, 16–19. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch1.asp#link1>.

2 Christine E. Sleeter and Miguel Zavala. 2020. “What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies” in *Transformative Ethnic Studies in Schools: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Research*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch1.asp#link2>.

---

empowered. By asking students to examine and reflect on the history, struggles, and contributions of diverse groups within the context of racism and bigotry, ethnic studies can foster the importance of equity and justice.

Ethnic studies requires a commitment among its teachers to personal and professional development, deep content knowledge, social–emotional learning, safe and healthy classroom management practices, and instructional strategies that develop higher-order thinking skills in children. It requires a commitment from the school community—parents, administrators, elected officials, and nonprofit partners—to support an ethnic studies program even when it challenges conventional ideals or prompts difficult conversations.

This model curriculum, therefore, is provided as only a small piece of a much larger set of resources necessary for a successful ethnic studies program.

## Defining Ethnic Studies

*The History Social–Science Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve* defines ethnic studies in the following passages:

Ethnic studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that encompasses many subject areas including history, literature, economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science. It emerged to both address content considered missing from traditional curriculum and to encourage critical engagement.

As a field, ethnic studies seeks to empower all students to engage socially and politically and to think critically about the world around them. It is important for ethnic studies courses to document the experiences of people of color in order for students to construct counter-narratives and develop a more complex understanding of the human experience. Through these studies, students should develop respect for cultural diversity and see the advantages of inclusion.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of this field, ethnic studies courses may take several forms. However, central to any ethnic studies course is the historic struggle of communities of color, taking into account the intersectionality of identity (gender, class, sexuality, among others), to challenge racism, discrimination, and oppression and interrogate the systems that continue to perpetuate inequality.

At its core, the field of ethnic studies is the interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, and Indigeneity, with an emphasis on the experiences of people of color in the United States. People or person of color is a term used primarily in the United States and is meant to be inclusive among non-white groups, emphasizing common experiences of racism. The field also addresses the concept of intersectionality, which recognizes that people have different overlapping identities, for example, a transgender Latina or a Jewish African American. These intersecting identities shape individuals' experiences of racism and bigotry. The

---

field critically grapples with the various power structures and forms of oppression that continue to have social, emotional, cultural, economic, and political impacts. It also deals with the often-overlooked contributions to many areas of government, politics, the arts, medicine, economics, and others, made by people of color and provides examples of how collective social action can lead to a more equitable and just society in positive ways.

Beyond providing an important history of groups underrepresented in traditional accounts and an analysis of oppression and power, ethnic studies offers a dynamic inquiry-based approach to the study of Native People and communities of color that encourages utilizing transnational and comparative frameworks. Thus, the themes and topics discussed within the field are boundless, such as a study of Mexican American texts, the implications of war and imperialism on Southeast Asian refugees, African American social movements and modes of resistance, and Native American/Indigenous cultural retentions, to name a few.

Furthermore, considering that European American-centered history and cultures are already robustly taught in the school curriculum, ethnic studies presents an opportunity for more inclusive and diverse histories and cultures to be highlighted and studied in a manner that is meaningful and can be transformative for all students. Ethnic studies provides students with crucial interpersonal communication strategies, cultural competency, equity-driven skills (such as how to effectively listen to others, give people in need a voice, use shared power, be able to empathize, select relevant/effective change strategies, get feedback from those they are trying to help, deliberate, organize, and build coalitions), and positive ways of expressing collective and collaborative power that are integral to effective and responsive civic engagement and collegiality, especially in a society that is rapidly diversifying.

## **The History of Ethnic Studies in California**

The history and genealogy of ethnic studies can be traced back to the activism and intellectual thought of pioneers such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune, Grace Lee Boggs, Rodolfo Acuña, Carter G. Woodson, Carlos Bulosan, Vine Deloria Jr., and Gloria Anzaldúa. These scholars argued that the histories, perspectives, and contributions of those on the social, political, and economic margins—African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Chicana/Latina, and Native Americans—be included in mainstream history (as well as other traditional disciplines) to be able to better understand the past, envision new possibilities, and celebrate the nation’s wealth of diversity.

By 1968, this call was crystallized as Black Student Union members at San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University) began organizing around the issue. Soon after, they were joined by other students, culminating with a student strike. Inspired by youth activism and organizing in the Civil Rights, Black Liberation, American Indian, Chicano, Asian American, labor, and anti-Vietnam war movements, students at San Francisco State College embarked on a strike (November 6, 1968 to March 20, 1969) demanding (1) equal

---

access to public education, (2) an increase in faculty of color, and (3) “a new curriculum that would embrace the history of all people, including ethnic minorities.”<sup>3</sup> Led by the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF)—a coalition of students from the campus’s Black Student Union, Latin American Student Organization, Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action, Mexican American Student Confederation, Philippine American Collegiate Endeavor, La Raza, Native American Students Organization, and Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA)—students refused to attend classes for five months until administrators met their demands.

At University of California, Berkeley in the spring of 1968, the Afro-American Students Union (AASU) proposed a Black Studies program.<sup>4</sup> The administration consistently stalled negotiations and kept deleting elements of AASU’s proposal—particularly the crucial community component. AASU was joined by the Mexican-American Student Confederation (MASC), the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA), and the Native American Student Union (NASU) to form the Third World Liberation Front at Berkeley. They expanded the Black Studies program to an autonomous Third World College to comprise departments of Asian Studies, Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Native American Studies, and “any other Third World studies programs as they are developed and presented.” Demands also included widespread recruitment of Third World<sup>5</sup> students and hiring of Third World people in positions of power in every department and discipline, from admissions to finances. Third World control—self-determination involving students and communities—was to oversee all aspects of the Third World College and programs.

When the University of California (UC) rejected the TWLF demands, the Third World Strike began the longest and bloodiest strike in UC history—from January to March 1969. The UC administration and the State of California violently opposed the TWLF to the point where Governor Ronald Reagan declared “a state of extreme emergency” at UC Berkeley, with unprecedented constant sweeps and tear-gassing by combined forces of not only the campus police but also six East Bay police forces, the Alameda County Sheriff’s deputies, the California Highway Patrol, and even the National Guard. Despite being forbidden from having any sound system or holding mass rallies and the threat of “immediate suspension” for protesting, TWLF strikers showed up in force every day and organized growing multinational support from both within the campus and around the country.

---

3 Denize Springer. “Campus Commemorates 1968 Student-Led Strike.” *SF State News*, San Francisco State University. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch1.asp#link3>.

4 The language in the next four paragraphs was provided by eight members of the public who identified themselves as members of the TWLF and submitted identical suggested edits as public comment.

5 This term was used by contemporaries in the movement to refer to people of color.

---

The first ethnic studies entity in the US was won at UC Berkeley on March 7, 1969, when the UC approved an Ethnic Studies Department that would evolve into a college. Thus it was also the first department hosting African American Studies (originally Black Studies), Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies (originally called Chicano Studies), Native American Studies, and Asian American Studies (originally called Asian Studies) in the country. After AAPA had formed in May 1968—originating the term and concept of Asian American—the San Francisco State University TWLF later broadened their original demand for separate Filipino Studies and Chinese American Studies to Asian American Studies.

On March 20, 1969, the first college of ethnic studies was established at San Francisco State University. Students were now able to take courses devoted to foregrounding the perspectives, histories, and cultures of African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Chicana/o/x, Latina/o/x, and Native Americans. In early 1969, students at the University of California, Berkeley successfully launched a strike that resulted in the creation of the first ethnic studies department in the country. Meanwhile, at the other end of the state, as early as 1968 students at California State University, Los Angeles and California State University, Northridge were establishing Chicano Studies and Black Studies departments. Soon, college students across the nation began calling for the establishment of ethnic studies courses, departments, and degree programs. Over 50 years after the strikes at San Francisco State College and UC Berkeley, ethnic studies is now a vibrant discipline with multiple academic journals, associations, national and international conferences, undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and thousands of scholars and educators contributing to the field’s complexity and vitality.

Since the student movements of the 1960s, ethnic studies proponents have fought for the inclusion of ethnic studies across public schools at the kindergarten through grade twelve (K–12) level and in higher education. Over the last 10 years, this movement has gained substantial traction at the local level as numerous California public school districts have either passed their own ethnic studies graduation requirements or are implementing ethnic studies courses.

At the state level, the California State Legislature has drafted and voted on several bills to help bolster support for ethnic studies implementation at the K–12 level, including Assembly Bill 2016 (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch1.asp#link4>), which authorized the development of this document.

## The Benefits of Ethnic Studies

In a 2011 report for the National Education Association, entitled *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies*, Christine Sleeter stated the following:

There is considerable research evidence that well-designed and well-taught ethnic studies curricula have positive academic and social outcomes for

---

students. Curricula are designed and taught somewhat differently depending on the ethnic composition of the class or school and the subsequent experiences students bring, but both students of color and white students have been found to benefit from ethnic studies.<sup>6</sup>

As the demographics continue to shift in California to an increasingly diverse population—for example, with Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x students comprising a majority in our public schools and students of two or more races comprising the fastest growing demographic group—there is a legitimate need to address the academic and social needs of such a population. All students should be better equipped with the knowledge and skills to successfully navigate our increasingly diverse society.<sup>7</sup> Ethnic studies provides the space for all students and teachers to begin having these conversations. Furthermore, ethnic studies scholars and classroom teachers have established through research that courses in the field have:

- Helped students develop a strong sense of identity<sup>8</sup>
- Contributed to students’ sense of agency and academic motivation<sup>9</sup>
- Helped students discover their historical and ancestral origins
- Reduced stereotype threat<sup>10</sup>
- Aided in the social–emotional wellness of students
- Increased youth civic engagement and community responsiveness<sup>11</sup>
- Provided students with skills and language to critically analyze, respond, and speak out on social issues
- Increased critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and interpersonal communication skills

---

6 Christine E. Sleeter, *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies*, viii.

7 California Department of Education. 2019. DataQuest Reports: 2018–2019 Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch1.asp#link5>.

8 Christine E. Sleeter and Miguel Zavala. 2020, *Transformative Ethnic Studies in Schools*.

9 Christine E. Sleeter, *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies*, 9.

10 See: Claude M. Steele and Joshua Aronson. 1998. “Stereotype Threat and the Test Performance of Academically Successful African Americans.” In *The Black-White Test Score Gap*, edited by Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

11 Christine Sleeter, *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies*, 14.

- Led to an increase in attendance<sup>12</sup>
- Led to an increase in standardized test scores<sup>13</sup>
- Led to an increase in GPA, especially in math and science<sup>14</sup>
- Led to an increase in graduation and college enrollment rates<sup>15</sup>
- Introduced students to college level academic frameworks, theories, terms, and research methods
- Helped foster a classroom environment of trust between students and teachers, enabling them to discuss contentious issues and topics, as well as current events
- Strengthened social and cultural awareness

## HOW DO YOU TEACH ETHNIC STUDIES IN A K-12 ENVIRONMENT?

At the college and university level, ethnic studies and related courses are sometimes taught from a specific political point of view. In K–12 education it is imperative that students are exposed to multiple perspectives and taught to think critically and form their own opinions.<sup>16</sup> Ethnic studies highlights the importance of untold stories, and emphasizes the danger of a single story. In “The Danger of a Single Story,” Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie argues that reducing people to a single story creates stereotypes and denies their humanity. Each ethnic community has its own unique history, struggles, and contributions, and these are to be taught, understood, and celebrated as ethnic studies focuses on US culture and history from the perspective of marginalized groups. In addition, diversity and diverse perspectives within an ethnic group should also be taught to avoid reducing a group to a single story. In order to do this, teachers should trust students’ intellect and teach them to think critically and understand different and

- 12 Julio Cammarota. 2007. “A Social Justice Approach to Achievement: Guiding Latina/o Students Toward Educational Attainment With a Challenging, Socially Relevant Curriculum.” *Equity & Excellence in Education* 40 (1): 87–96.
- 13 Julio Cammarota, “A Social Justice Approach to Achievement: Guiding Latina/o Students Toward Educational Attainment With a Challenging, Socially Relevant Curriculum.”
- 14 Thomas S. Dee and Emily K. Penner. 2017. “The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance.” *American Educational Research Journal* 54 (1): 127–126. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch1.asp#link6>.
- 15 Thomas S. Dee and Emily K. Penner, “The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance.”
- 16 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/ch1.asp#link7>.

---

competing perspectives and narratives, and encourage them to form their own opinions. Care should be taken to ensure that (1) teachers present topics from multiple points of view and represent diverse stories and opinions within groups (staying within the realm of inclusion and humanizing discourse), (2) teaching resources represent a range of different perspectives, and (3) lessons are structured so students examine materials from multiple perspectives and come to their own conclusions.<sup>17</sup>

## GUIDING VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF ETHNIC STUDIES

Given the range and complexity of the field, it is important to identify the key values of ethnic studies as a means to offer guidance for the development of ethnic studies courses, teaching, and learning. The foundational values of ethnic studies are housed in the conceptual model of the “double helix,” which interweaves *holistic humanization* and *critical consciousness*.<sup>18</sup> Humanization includes the values of love, respect, hope, and solidarity, which are based on celebration of community cultural wealth.<sup>19</sup> The values rooted in humanization and critical consciousness are the guiding values each ethnic studies lesson should include. Ethnic studies courses, teaching, and learning are intended to do the following:

1. Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity,<sup>20</sup> self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)
2. Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth
3. Center and place high value on the precolonial ancestral knowledge,<sup>21</sup> narratives, and communal experiences of Native People/s and people of color and groups that are typically marginalized in society

---

17 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. “The Danger of a Single Story.” TED Talk, July 2009. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch1.asp#link8>.

18 R. Tolteka Cuauhtin, Miguel Zavala, Christine Sleeter, and Wayne Au, eds. 2018. *Rethinking Ethnic Studies*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.

19 Tara Yosso. 2005. “Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth.” In *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 8 (1): 69–91.

20 An understanding that a culture’s important teachings will live on

21 As well as Indigenous, diasporic, and familial

- 
4. Critique empire building in history and its relationship to white supremacy, racism, and other forms of power and oppression<sup>22</sup>
  5. Challenge racist, bigoted, discriminatory, and imperialist/colonial<sup>23</sup> beliefs and practices on multiple levels<sup>24</sup>
  6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society, and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic-racism society that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing<sup>25</sup>

## EIGHT OUTCOMES OF K-12 ETHNIC STUDIES TEACHING<sup>26</sup>

The following eight essential outcomes for ethnic studies teaching and learning are offered to assist with K–12 implementation of ethnic studies.

**(1) Pursuit of justice and equity**—Ethnic studies did not arise in a vacuum. It arose with the intent of giving voice to stories long silenced, including stories of injustice, marginalization, and discrimination, as well as stories of those who became part of our nation in different ways, such as through slavery, conquest, colonization, and immigration. Ethnic studies should address those experiences, including systemic racism,<sup>27</sup> with both honesty and nuance, drawing upon multiple perspectives. Ethnic studies should also

---

22 Such as, but not limited to, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, exploitative economic systems, ableism, ageism, anthropocentrism, xenophobia, misogyny, antisemitism, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, Islamophobia, and transphobia

23 And hegemonic

24 Ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized

25 Eunice Ho, UCLA Teacher Education Program Ethnic Studies Cohort, Class of 2019, summarizing the work of R. Tolteka Cuauhtin, “The Ethnic Studies Framework: A Holistic Overview,” in *Rethinking Ethnic Studies*, 72–75.

26 This section was adapted from Carlos E. Cortés, “High School Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement, State of California, Suggested Basic Curriculum Principles,” essay dated June 26, 2020.

27 Systemic racism is defined as the systemic normalization or legalization of racism and discrimination. This often emerges via the unequal and inequitable distribution of resources, power, and opportunity. Systemic racism is also referred to as institutional and/or structural racism.

---

examine individual and collective efforts to challenge and overcome inequality and discriminatory treatment.

The exploration of injustice and inequality should not merely unearth the past. It should also create a better understanding of dissimilar and unequal ethnic trajectories in order to strive for a future of greater equity and inclusivity. In the pursuit of justice and equality, ethnic studies should help students comprehend the various manifestations of racism and other forms of ethnic bigotry, discrimination, and marginalization. It should also help students understand the processes of social change and the role that they can play individually and collectively in challenging these inequity-producing forces, such as systemic racism.

**(2) Working toward greater inclusivity**—The ethnic studies movement arose because of historical exclusion and pursued greater inclusion. California ethnic studies should emphasize educational equity by being inclusive of all students, regardless of their backgrounds. This means incorporating the experiences and contributions of a broad range of ethnic groups, while particularly clarifying the role of race and ethnicity in the history of California and the United States. Yet, due to curricular time constraints, difficult choices will have to be made at the district and classroom level. While ethnic studies should address ethnicity in the broadest sense, it should devote special emphasis to the foundational disciplines while making connections to the varying experiences of all students.

**(3) Furthering self-understanding**—Through ethnic studies, students will gain a deeper understanding of their own identities, ancestral roots, and knowledge of self. Ethnic studies will help students better exercise their agency and become stronger self-advocates as well as allies and advocates for the rights and welfare of others.

Not every student has a strong sense of ethnic identity. However, all students have an ethnic heritage (or heritages) rooted in the histories of their ancestors. Building from the concept of student-based inquiry, ethnic studies should provide an opportunity for all students to examine their own ethnic heritages. Increasing numbers of students have multiple ethnic heritages.

For example, this search can involve the exploration of students' own family histories. Through oral histories of family members and, where available, the use of family records, students can develop a better understanding of their place and the place of their ancestors in the ethnic trajectory of California and the United States. For students with non-English-speaking family members, this would also provide an opportunity to develop research skills in multiple languages. However, educators should be sensitive to student and family privacy, while also recognizing that factors like adoption, divorce, legal status, and lack of access to family information may complicate this assignment for some students.

---

**(4) Developing a better understanding of others**—The essential and complementary flip side of self-understanding is the understanding of others. Ethnic studies should not only help students explore their own backgrounds. It should also help build bridges of intergroup understanding.

This interethnic bridge building can be furthered in various ways. Obviously, it can be enhanced by exposing students to a wide variety of voices, stories, experiences, and perspectives through materials featuring people of myriad ethnic backgrounds. But bridge building can also occur through the classroom sharing of students' personal stories and family histories. In this way students can simultaneously learn to understand ethnic differences while also identifying underlying commonalities and personal challenges.

With mutual respect and dignity being emphasized, students will develop an awareness of and an appreciation for the complexity of diversity and how it continues to shape the American experience. Additionally, students will learn how to transform their appreciation of diversity into action that aims to build community and solidarity.

**(5) Recognizing intersectionality**—Ethnic studies focuses on the role of race and ethnicity. However, these are not the sole forces affecting personal identity, group identification, and the course of human experience. People, including students, are not only members of racial and ethnic groups. They also belong to many other types of social groups. These groups may be based on such factors as sex, religion, class, ability/disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship status, socioeconomic status, and language use.

For each individual, these multiple social categories converge in a unique way. That confluence of identities is sometimes called intersectionality. Those myriad categories influence, but do not necessarily determine, one's life trajectory. They also may influence how a person is perceived and treated by others, including both by individuals and by institutions. The inequitable institutional treatment of certain racial and ethnic groups is sometimes referred to as systemic racism.

To some degree, each person's individuality and identity are the result of intersectionality. The lens of intersectionality helps both to explore the richness of human experience and to highlight the variations that exist within ethnic diversity. By highlighting intragroup variations, intersectionality can also help challenge group stereotyping and polarization.

**(6) Promoting self-empowerment for civic engagement**—Ethnic studies should help students become more engaged locally and develop into effective civic participants and stronger social justice advocates, better able to contribute to constructive social change. It can also help students make relevant connections between current resistance movements and those in the past, and to imagine new possibilities for a more just society. The promotion of empowerment through ethnic studies can occur in various ways. It can

---

help students become more astute in critically analyzing documents, historical events, and multiple perspectives. It can help students learn to discuss difficult or controversial issues, particularly when race and ethnicity are important factors. It can help students learn to present their ideas in strong, compelling, clear and precise academic language. It can help students assess various strategies for bringing about change. It can provide students with opportunities to experiment with different change strategies, while evaluating the strengths and limitations of each approach. In short, through ethnic studies students can develop civic participation skills, a greater sense of self-empowerment, and a deeper commitment to lifelong civic engagement in the cause of greater community and equity.

**(7) Supporting a community focus**—Ethnic studies in all California districts should address the basic contours of national and statewide ethnic experiences. This includes major events and phenomena that have shaped our diverse ethnic trajectories. However, individual school districts may also choose to enrich their approach to ethnic studies by also devoting special attention to ethnic groups that have been significantly present in their own communities.

By shaping ethnic studies to include a focus on local ethnic groups, districts can enhance learning opportunities through student-based inquiry into the local community. Such research can draw on multiple sources, such as local records, census material, survey results, memoirs, and media coverage. It can also involve oral history, providing voice for members of different ethnic communities and allowing students to engage multiple ethnic perspectives. This local focus can also create additional opportunities for civic engagement, such as working with city government or presenting to school boards.

**(8) Developing interpersonal communication**—Achieving the preceding principles will require one additional capability: effective communication. Particularly considering California’s extensive diversity, ethnic studies should help build effective communication across ethnic differences. This includes the ability to meet, discuss, and analyze sometimes controversial topics and issues that garner multiple diverse points of view. In other words, students should learn to participate in difficult dialogues. Further, students participating in ethnic studies will be equipped to analyze and critique contemporary issues and systems of power that impact their lived experiences and respective communities. They will engage in meaningful activities and assignments that encourage them to challenge the status quo and reimagine their futures.

Ethnic studies should help students learn to value and appreciate differences and each other’s lived experiences as valuable assets in our diverse society in order to communicate more effectively and constructively with students of different backgrounds. It should help them communicate and interact with empathy, appreciation, empowerment, and clarity, to interact with curiosity, to listen empathically without judgment, and to critically consider new ideas and perspectives. It should also encourage students to value and respect each

---

other’s position in light of new evidence and compelling insights. Students should not seek to dominate in conversations, but rather practice a model of engagement which places a greater priority on listening, seeking to understand before seeking to persuade.

Even the concepts of “race” and “ethnicity” present challenges. What do they mean? How do they relate to each other? How were concepts of race, like “whiteness” and “blackness,” constructed? How has our understanding of race and ethnicity changed over time? How are race and ethnicity as group identities reflected in public documents, such as the US Census and most formal applications? How do these group identifiers impact social connection and division? Ethnic studies should help students address these and other fundamental issues that complicate intergroup communication and understanding.

By operating on the basis of these eight principles, statewide ethnic studies can become a venue for developing a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges that come with ethnic diversity. It should advance the cause of equity and inclusivity, challenge systemic racism, foster self-understanding, build intergroup and intragroup bridges, enhance civic engagement, and further a sense of human commonality. In this way, ethnic studies can help build stronger communities, a more equitably inclusive state, and a more just nation.

The following guidelines should inform the development of ethnic studies courses, whether they treat one group or several, and whether they are integrated into other content areas (e.g., African American literature, Chicano history) or stand alone.

- In K–12 education it is imperative that students are exposed to multiple perspectives and taught to think critically and form their own opinions.
- Curriculum, resources, and materials should include a balance of topics, authors, and concepts, including primary and secondary sources that represent multiple, and sometimes distinctive, points of view or perspectives.
- Students should actively seek to understand, analyze, and articulate multiple points of view, perspectives, and cultures.
- The instruction, material, or discussion must be appropriate to the age and maturity level of the students and be 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.

---

## The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum for K-12 Education

Ethnic studies incorporates purposeful academic language and terminology, including intentional respellings,<sup>28</sup> to challenge various forms of oppression and marginalization. These language conventions are not foregrounded in this model curriculum for those just beginning familiarity with ethnic studies; however, educators should note that such conventions continue to grow and are common within ethnic studies classes, communities, and scholarship.

The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum serves as a guide to school districts that would like to either develop and implement stand-alone courses or integrate the concepts and principles of ethnic studies into current social science or English language arts courses. It is divided into chapters and appendices.

- Chapter 2 provides guidance to district and site administrators on teacher, student, and community involvement in the development of these courses.
- Chapter 3 provides instructional guidance for veteran and new teachers of ethnic studies content.
- Chapter 4 provides a collection of guiding questions, sample lessons, and topics for ethnic studies courses.
- Chapter 5 provides links to instructional resources to assist educators in facilitating conversations about race, racism, bigotry, and the experiences of diverse Americans.
- Chapter 6 provides examples of courses approved by the University of California Office of the President as meeting A–G requirements.

---

28 Such as “herstory” or “hxrstory” to challenge what appears to be a gendered stem in “history.”

[Page 22 intentionally left blank.]



ISBN 978-0-8011-1822-7



9 780801 118227