

CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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August 23, 2023

Re: Ethnic Studies Curriculum and Instructional Materials

Dear School Leader,

On behalf of the entire Administration of Governor Newsom, let me welcome you to a new school year and new opportunities to help all students excel in learning!

California students are wonderfully diverse, and celebrating the contributions of our various communities in curriculum gives students a chance to “see” themselves in the fabric of our state. For this reason, and others, the State Board of Education in 2021 adopted the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

The model, which was created over years of rigorous vetting, meets the Board's standards of inclusivity, sensitivity, and accuracy. The model is grounded in the foundational curricular areas of the ethnic studies tradition – African American Studies, Native American Studies, Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies, and Latinx American Studies. The focus on the experiences of these four disciplines provides an opportunity for students to learn of the histories, cultures, struggles, and contributions to American society of these historically marginalized peoples.

Given that each California community has its own ethnic make-up and each demographic group has its own unique history, the model curriculum also affords local educational agencies the flexibility to adapt the curriculum to address the demographics and diversity of the classroom. The model curriculum itself includes lesson plans on many communities, including Filipino Americans, Jewish Americans, Arab Americans, Sikh Americans, Armenian Americans and others.

Subsequent to the Board's adoption of the curriculum, Assembly Bill 101 (Chapter 661, Statutes of 2021) (“AB 101”) established expectations that local educational agencies (LEAs) with students in grades 9 to 12 will offer at least a one-semester course in ethnic studies beginning in the 2025-26 school year.

Further, it anticipates that a one-semester course in ethnic studies will be required for graduation in the 2029-30 school year. (EC 51225.3(a)(1)(G)(i).) AB 101 includes the following requirements for all curriculum, instruction, and instructional materials for ethnic studies courses to be offered by LEAs (EC 51225.3(a)(1)(G)(v)):

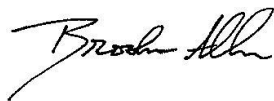
- Be appropriate for use with pupils of all races, religions, nationalities, genders, sexual orientations, and diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, pupils with disabilities, and English learners.
- Not reflect or promote, directly or indirectly, any bias, bigotry, or discrimination against any person or group of persons on the basis of any category protected by Education Code Section 220.
- Not teach or promote religious doctrine.

Vendors have begun promoting curriculum for LEAs to use for ethnic studies courses. We have been advised, however, that some vendors are offering materials that may not meet the requirements of AB 101, particularly the second requirement above, an important guardrail highlighted when the bill was signed.¹

Accordingly, before any curriculum or instructional materials for ethnic studies courses are selected, we strongly encourage you to closely scrutinize them to ensure that they meet the above requirements.

Through implementation of AB 101, all Californian students should see themselves, their classmates, and their community stories reflected in their education.

Sincerely,



Brooks Allen
Education Policy Advisor to the Governor
Executive Director, California State Board of Education

¹ <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/AB-101-Signing-Message-PDF.pdf>