



Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement

Implementation Update

MEMORANDUM

Why Ethnic Studies?

Ethnic Studies as a curriculum is reflective of the experiences of students of color and has “a positive impact on student academic engagement, achievement, and empowerment, especially when linked with culturally responsive teaching grounded in high academic expectations” (Sleeter, 2011).

Background

In 2017, WJUSD staff began actively working towards the implementation of the Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement. One of the key first steps was the development of a Statement of Purpose, or **Mission Statement**, for Ethnic Studies. In the Fall of 2017, the Ethnic Studies Advisory Committee developed this Mission Statement:

In WJUSD, Ethnic Studies is the critical and interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity and indigeneity within and beyond the United States. Our Pre-K to 12th grade curriculum must encompass multiple points of view that reflect the diversity of all of our students including race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, gender, class etc., with a focus on the experiences and perspectives of people of color. Through our Pre-K to 12th grade course work, students will be supported to develop and utilize a critical lens to see the world and their role as an active citizen in a global society.

Because there are no state-adopted **Ethnic Studies Standards**, the Committee also established four Standards to be included in all Ethnic Studies courses. These Standards are modeled after Standards created by the El Rancho Unified School District and are listed here:

In WJUSD, Ethnic Studies courses that fulfill the graduation requirement will:

- 1. Be centered on the experiences of historically marginalized communities.*
- 2. Critically examine concepts such as race, class, gender and sexuality in relation to power, political systems, social structures and social justice movements.*
- 3. Require students to engage in critical and meaningful dialogue that leads to an understanding of self and society and the connections between the two.*
- 4. Empower students to advocate and become agents of social transformation by developing a multicultural perspective and the skills and knowledge that address the needs of the individual, community and the world.*

The Committee also revised **Resolution 35-15**, which was initially written and approved in 2015 to establish the Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement. In November 2017, Resolution 35-15 was revised and approved to clarify how students can meet the requirement using coursework. The language of the resolution reads in part:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Ethnic Studies graduation requirement can be fulfilled by choosing from a variety of multi-cultural course offerings to meet the year long requirement or its equivalent.

This resolution identified the 2017-18 school year as the initial implementation year. However, due to a lack of available course offerings for students to choose from, the District will begin the implementation of this resolution in the 2019-20 school year.

Students entering 9th grade in 2019-20 (the class of 2023) will be the first class required to meet the Ethnic Studies graduation requirement.

Course Offerings

As of April 2019, there are six courses approved to meet the Ethnic Studies graduation requirement. Those courses are:

1. Chicano Studies
2. Race and Social Justice in US History
3. Multicultural Literature for Seniors
4. Art and Culture
5. PUENTE English 9
6. PUENTE English 10

Timeline of Development

2017-18

- Ethnic Studies Advisory Committee formed
- Ethnic Studies Resolution 35-15 revised and approved by WJUSD Board of Trustees
- Ethnic Studies Mission Statement written and Ethnic Studies Standards developed
- Courses created and approved: Race and Social Justice in US History, Multicultural Literature for Seniors, Chicano Studies (revised to be a year-long course)

2018-19

- Course enrollments: 338 students enrolled in Ethnic Studies courses, 5 teachers, 11 sections
- New course created and approved to meet ES requirement: Art and Culture
- Existing courses approved to meet ES requirement: PUENTE English 9 and 10
- Year 1 of Professional Development with monthly training for teachers (cohort 1) and quarterly training for administrators

2019-20

- Continue training for cohort 1 teachers through Summer Institute and quarterly trainings
- Develop an Introduction to Ethnic Studies course
- Train all grades 7-12 History/Social Science teachers in the new History/Social Science Framework and in Ethnic Studies
- Develop timeline and plan for implementing Ethnic Studies in preschool – 6th grade

2020-21 (in development)

- Implement Introduction to Ethnic Studies course
- Revise all grades 7-12 History/Social Science courses to be aligned with California History/Social Science Framework, including Ethnic Studies standards
- Train teachers in additional content areas such as Visual and Performing Arts (to be determined)

Professional Development Outcomes (ref. Acosta Ed. Partnership)

- Ethnic Studies trained teachers will build a culture in their classrooms that will support the development of student critical thought, analysis and action beyond required standards.
- Ethnic Studies trained teachers will build community among local educators that embodies a collective responsibility in the development of curriculum and instruction that represents the diversity of WJUSD students.
- Ethnic Studies trained teachers will identify, apply and share humanizing practices from their classroom implementation of Ethnic Studies.
- Ethnic Studies trained teachers will operationalize humanizing literacy practices in their classrooms through reflective inquiry, student voice, and de-centering knowledge. As a result, students will identify with the Ethnic Studies curriculum and make connections to their academic and personal lives.
- Ethnic Studies teachers will identify, understand and synthesize the tenets of effective Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy.
- Through the Ethnic Studies learning experience, teachers will demonstrate knowledge of self, students, and community.

Evidence of Impact

- Ethnic Studies trained teachers will develop their capacity for identifying and applying humanizing practices in the classroom. This will have lasting impact on teacher acumen as it will be present in their ability to build classroom community, make equitable decisions regarding instruction and curriculum and develop the importance of a de-centered classroom.
- Ethnic Studies trained teachers will gain a sense of confidence that their teaching and curriculum have a direct impact on student's lives. These skills will help to positively impact classroom disruptions, classroom and school environment and teacher morale.
- Students with Ethnic Studies trained teachers will develop self-advocacy and agency skills that benefit them as they navigate their present and future school and life experiences.
- Disenfranchised students who are a part of the ES program will gain a safe and accepting community within the school walls, which in turn will help to improve their and all Ethnic Studies educated students school experiences. The feeling of belonging and being a part of their education will have a positive effect on student attendance and behavior.
- Students with Ethnic Studies trained teachers will experience a student-centered classroom where their backgrounds, lives and culture are examined and affirmed in the classroom and a crucial part of the learning process. This experience over time will develop young analytical learners who are able to reflect, discuss and problematize their community and the world.