



- 7) Requires a school district or charter school that elects to offer a course of study in ethnic studies pursuant to the model curriculum to offer the course as an elective in the social sciences or English language arts and to make the course available in at least one year during a pupil's enrollment in grades 9 to 12, inclusive. (EC § 51226.7)
- 8) States the intent of the Legislature that local educational agencies (LEAs) submit course outlines for ethnic studies for approval as "A-G" courses which meet the admissions requirements of the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU). (EC § 51226.7)
- 9) Authorizes the governing board of a school district or a county board of education, on a districtwide or countywide basis or on behalf of one or more of its schools or programs, after a public hearing on the matter, to request the State Board of Education to waive all or part of any section of this code or any regulation adopted by the state board that implements a provision of this code that may be waived, including graduation requirements. (EC § 33050)

## ANALYSIS

This bill requires all students, commencing with the 2023-24 school year, to complete a semester-long social studies or English language arts course in ethnic studies, based on a state-adopted model curriculum, in order to graduate from high school. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Adds, commencing with the 2023–24 school year, a one-semester course in ethnic studies, in either the subject of social studies or English, based on the model curriculum, to the list of statewide graduation requirements.
- 2) Expressly authorizes that a LEA may require a full-year course in ethnic studies at its discretion.
- 3) Deletes both of the following provisions:
  - a) Encouraging each school district or charter school maintaining any of grades 9 to 12, inclusive, that does not otherwise offer a standards-based ethnic studies curriculum, beginning in the school year following the adoption of the model curriculum, to offer to all otherwise qualified pupils a course of study in ethnic studies based on the model curriculum.
  - b) Requiring a school district or charter school that elects to offer a course of study in ethnic studies pursuant to the model curriculum to offer the course as an elective in the social sciences or English language arts and to make the course available in at least one year during a pupil's enrollment in grades 9 to 12, inclusive.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill?** According to the author, "Ethnic studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that encompasses many subject areas, including: history, literature,

economics, sociology, and political science, among others. It offers an in-depth comparative study of the history, politics, culture, contributions, challenges, and current status of ethnic groups in the United States.

It is important for students to learn the national origins of ethnic groups and their transnational linkages. In Ethnic Studies, students examine the formation process of ethnic minorities in a variety of contexts: political, legal, social, historical, economic, and cultural. Ethnic studies concentrates on the experiences of various ethnic minorities and the ways in which their experiences were impacted by the issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and the interaction among different ethnic groups.”

- 2) ***Ethnic studies model curriculum under development.*** As noted above, existing law requires the development of an ethnic studies model curriculum. The model curriculum must be written as a guide to allow school districts to adapt their courses to reflect the pupil demographics in their communities and include examples of courses offered by local educational agencies that have been approved as meeting the A-G admissions requirements of the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU), including, to the extent possible, course outlines for those courses.

The Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) must develop and submit the model curriculum in ethnic studies to the State Board of Education (SBE) by December 31, 2019, and the SBE must adopt the curriculum by March 31, 2020. The California Department of Education (CDE) held a public input webinar in January of this year, and will be bringing a project timeline, advisory committee application, and guidelines to the IQC in May, and to the SBE for approval in July. CDE reports that advisory committee members will be recruited from late summer and fall, and that the advisory committee will begin meeting in February of next year.

This bill requires the 2024 graduating class to have completed a course in ethnic studies. Under these timeframes, the 2024 graduating class will begin high school before the SBE adopts the model curriculum.

- 3) ***Ethnic studies enrollment.*** Enrollment in, and course offerings of, ethnic studies is increasing, but many social science ethnic studies courses are not “A-G” approved. Enrollment in ethnic studies courses has been growing in recent years, but a significant number are not approved as meeting “A-G” admissions requirements of the UC and the CSU systems, particularly those offered as social science courses. In order for courses to receive approval, course outlines must be submitted to, and approved by, the UC. In recognition of this problem, the statute authorizing the development of the model curriculum requires that it include examples of courses “A-G” approved courses, including course outlines for those courses, to the extent feasible.

The CDE data on course enrollment and offerings in ethnic studies indicates the following:

- In 2016-17, 17,354 students were enrolled in ethnic studies courses (social science and English language arts combined), up from 8,678 in 2014-15.
  - The total above includes 4,662 students enrolled in ethnic studies courses in English language arts, in 210 courses in 82 schools in ethnic studies.
  - In 2016-17, 943 ethnic studies courses (social science and English language arts combined) were taught in 555 schools, compared with 696 courses in 177 schools in 2014-15.
  - In 2016-17, for ethnic studies courses in social science, 395 of the 777 courses (51 percent) were approved as meeting “A-G” admissions requirements.
  - In 2016-17, English language arts ethnic studies courses were more likely to be approved, with 166 of 210 (80 percent) courses approved as meeting “A-G” admissions requirements.
- 4) **Capacity questions.** Requiring students to complete a course in ethnic studies as a condition of graduation necessitates that each high school offers sufficient sections of ethnic studies courses to each student that attends high school. Based on the California Department of Education (CDE) data above, of the 1,945,405 students enrolled in high school in the 2016-17 school year, fewer than 1 percent were enrolled in an ethnic studies course. Accordingly, this means that schools will have to significantly ramp up ethnic studies course offerings, and do quickly, in order to meet the 2023-24 school year deadline in the bill. The 2024 graduating class begins high school in the fall of 2019. With these figures in mind, *the committee may wish to consider:*
- a) Whether school districts and county offices of education have sufficient resources to offer an ethnic studies course and instructional materials for each student?
  - b) Are there enough appropriately credentialed teachers to teach ethnic studies to each student that attends high school?
  - c) Do students have sufficient flexibility in their schedules to absorb an additional required course while retaining the freedom to explore elective courses and career technical education courses or pathways?
  - d) Do additional graduation requirements potentially crowd out or discourage other local graduation requirements? According to the CDE “most school districts in California require between 22 and 26 one-year courses (or the equivalent) for graduation.” The state requires a minimum of 13 courses.

The governing board of a school district or a county board of education may request a waiver from the graduation requirements from the State Board of Education. For the reasons outlined above, *the committee may wish to consider encouraging the author to amend the bill* to account for this authority and to allow

local educational agencies flexibility to take innovative approaches to ensuring that all students receive ethnic studies instruction, as shown below:

“(g)(2) Notwithstanding any other law, this paragraph may be waived by the state board if a local educational agency submits, and the state board approves, a formal plan to ensure that the ethnic studies model curriculum is incorporated into one or more existing courses, such that each pupil receives instruction on the ethnic studies model curriculum, and the proposed approach has unique benefits.”

5) **Existing graduation requirements.** Since the 1986-87 school year, the Education Code has required students receiving a diploma from a California high school to have completed all of the following one-year (unless otherwise specified) courses while in high school:

- Three courses in English.
- Two courses in mathematics, including one year of Algebra I.
- Two courses in science, including biological and physical sciences.
- Three courses in social studies, including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; a one-semester course in American government and civics, and a one-semester course in economics.
- One course in visual or performing arts, foreign language, or commencing with the 2012-13 school year, career technical education.
- Two courses in physical education.

These statewide minimum requirements are not as robust as the A-G admissions requirements of the California State University and University of California, which require:

- Two years of history/social science, including one year of world history, cultures and historical geography and one year of U.S. history, or one-half year of U.S. history and one-half year of American government or civics.
- Four years of college preparatory English that integrates reading of classic and modern literature, frequent and regular writing, and practice listening and speaking.
- Three years of college-preparatory math, including or integrating the topics covered in elementary and advanced algebra and two- and three-dimensional geometry.
- Two years of laboratory science providing fundamental knowledge in at least two of the three disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics.

- Two years of the same language other than English or equivalent to the second level of high school instruction.
- One year of visual and performing chosen from dance, music, theater or the visual arts.
- One year of a college-preparatory elective beyond those used to satisfy the requirements above, or courses that have been approved solely in the elective area.

It should be noted the Legislature has considered a burgeoning list of subjects for a new graduation requirement in recent years, including financial literacy, service learning, health, and now, ethnic studies. Additionally, the Legislature has authorized AP computer science to count toward local math graduation requirements beyond the state requirements, and expanded the foreign language or visual and performing arts requirement to also be satisfied by a career technical education course. Moreover, other bills have attempted to revise the number of courses required for certain existing subjects. *The committee may wish to consider* whether all of these measures – taken together – as well as the differences between the state minimum requirements and the California State University/University of California requirements, indicate a need revisit the state graduation requirements as a whole and perhaps make appropriate changes, including by adding new requirements in existing and new subjects.

- 6) ***Local ethnic studies graduation requirements.*** Existing law authorizes local school district governing boards to impose additional graduation requirements beyond the state-mandated graduation requirements, and several school districts have recently made completion of a course in ethnic studies a local graduation requirement. Among them are Montebello Unified School District, El Rancho Unified School District, Sacramento City Unified School District, and Coachella Valley Unified School District.
- 7) ***What about charter schools?*** According to the California Department of Education, whether students at a California approved charter school are required to complete the 13 minimum courses mandated for graduation “depends on a variety of factors.” Accordingly, students at charter schools may not be subject to the graduation requirement proposed by the bill. *The author may wish to consider* clarifying the applicability of the bill’s provisions to charter school students.
- 8) ***Similar efforts in other states.*** California would not be the first state to consider increasing ethnic studies instruction. Beginning this fall, as a result of Senate Enrolled Act 337, all high schools in Indiana will be required to offer an ethnic and racial studies elective course at least every school. In Oregon, as a result of House Bill 2845, an advisory group is developing ethnic-studies standards into existing statewide social-studies standards where “it fails to recognize the histories, contributions and perspectives of ethnic minorities and social minorities.” The Oregon Department of Education will adopt the ethnic studies standards by adopted by 2020, and must direct each school district to implement the ethnic studies standards by July 1, 2021. While these efforts are

similar, they do not go as far as this bill in requiring ethnic studies as its own graduation requirement.

- 9) ***Ethnic studies course outlined in History-Social Science framework.*** The History-Social Science Framework adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) in 2016 describes high school elective courses in ethnic studies as follows:

“Ethnic studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that encompasses many subject areas including history, literature, economics, sociology, and political science, among others. In this course, students focus on an in-depth comparative study of the history, politics, culture, contributions, challenges, and current status of ethnic groups in the United States. It is also important for students to learn the national origins of ethnic groups and their transnational linkages. In Ethnic Studies, students examine the process of racial and ethnic formation of ethnic minorities in a variety of contexts: political, legal, social, historical, economic, and cultural. The course concentrates, to a great extent, on the experiences of various ethnic minorities in the United States and the ways in which their experiences were impacted by the issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and the interaction among different ethnic groups. Students will also address how individuals within specific ethnic groups think and feel about themselves and their group as it can be represented by literature, memoirs, art, and music. To understand ethnic identity in their local communities, students can volunteer with local community organizations and centers that serve specific ethnic populations.”

In addition, many of these concepts are incorporated throughout the newly adopted framework. For example, as described in the framework’s executive summary, “Students in first grade develop a deeper understanding of cultural diversity and learn to appreciate people from various backgrounds and the many ways of life that exist in the larger world.” At the high school level, one of the four themes in eleventh grade is “changes in racial, ethnic, and gender dynamics in American society.”

- 10) ***Research on academic value of ethnic studies.*** As noted in the Assembly Education Committee analysis, a review by the National Education Association found that “there is considerable research evidence that well-designed and well-taught ethnic studies curricula have positive academic and social outcomes for students.” Another recent analysis found “a consistent, significant, positive relationship between [Mexican American Studies] participation and student academic performance.” A 2016 study from Stanford University (published as a working paper) on the effects of an ethnic studies curriculum piloted in several San Francisco Unified School District high schools found that assignment to a year-long 9th grade ethnic studies course was associated with an increase of ninth-grade student attendance by 21 percentage points, GPA by 1.4 grade points, and credits earned by 23. The authors conclude that “these surprisingly large effects are consistent with the hypothesis that the course reduced dropout rates and suggest that culturally relevant teaching, when implemented in a

supportive, high-fidelity context, can provide effective support to at-risk students.” They also note, “the implementation of ethnic studies in SFUSD was, arguably, conducted with a high degree of fidelity, forethought, and planning. In particular, it appeared to draw upon the work of a core group of dedicated teachers, engaging in a regular professional learning community, with outside support from experts in the subject to create and sustain the program. As scholars from a number of disciplines have noted, the effects of such smaller-scale interventions are often very different when the same policies are implemented at scale.”

- 11) ***Previous legislation.*** AB 2016 (Alejo, Chapter 327, Statutes of 2016) required the development of a model curriculum in ethnic studies and required school districts which elect to offer one course in ethnic studies to make the course available in at least one year during a student’s enrollment in grades 9-12.

AB 1689 (Low, 2015-16 Session) would have required, beginning with the high school class of 2022-23, that at least one of the courses required for graduation include a service-learning component. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 524 (Low, 2015-16 Session) would have required, beginning with the high school class of 2020-21, that at least one of the courses required for graduation include a service-learning component. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

## SUPPORT

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson  
 California Legislative Black Caucus  
 Association of Mexican American Educators, Inc. – East Los Angeles Chapter  
 Association of Raza Educators  
 Black Parallel School Board  
 CAFÉ de California  
 California Association for Bilingual Education  
 California Faculty Association  
 California Federation of Teachers  
 California Latino School Boards Association  
 California Chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education  
 Californians Together  
 California State Conference of the NAACP  
 City of Perris  
 Common Sense Kids Action  
 Greater Riverside Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
 Inland Empire Economic Partnership  
 Latino Caucus of California Counties  
 Latino Network  
 League of United Latin American Citizens #2862  
 Monterey County Board of Supervisors  
 Music Changing Lives  
 Occupy Riverside  
 Riverside Side Branch NAACP

Roberts Family Development Center  
San Francisco Unified School District  
SIATech High School  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center  
Spanish Town Heritage Foundation  
The Cambodian Family Community Center  
The Education Trust—West  
United Teachers Los Angeles  
Xicanx Institute for Teaching and Organizing  
Multiple individuals

**OPPOSITION**

California School Boards Association

**-- END --**