
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No:	AB 2772	Hearing Date:	June 20, 2018
Author:	Medina		
Version:	April 3, 2018		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
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Subject: Pupil instruction: ethnic studies.

SUMMARY

This bill requires all students, commencing with the 2023-24 school year, 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.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes statewide high school graduation requirements, which include, among other requirements, three courses in English and three courses in social studies, and authorizes school districts to establish additional requirements for graduation. (Education Code § 51225.3)
- 2) Requires the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) to develop, and the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt, modify, or revise, a model curriculum in ethnic studies. (EC § 51226.7)
- 3) Requires the IQC to submit the model curriculum by December 31, 2019 to the SBE for adoption, and the SBE to adopt the model curriculum by March 31, 2020. (EC § 51226.7)
- 4) Requires the model curriculum to be developed with participation from faculty of ethnic studies programs at universities and colleges with ethnic studies programs and a group of representatives of local educational agencies (LEAs). (EC § 51226.7)
- 5) Requires that the model curriculum be written as a guide to allow school districts to adapt their courses to reflect the student demographics in their communities, and include examples of courses offered by LEAs that have been approved as meeting A-G admissions requirements including, to the extent possible, course outlines for those courses. (EC § 51226.7)
- 6) Encourages 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. (EC § 51226.7)

- 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)

ANALYSIS

This bill requires all students, commencing with the 2023-24 school year, 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 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 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 University of California (UC) and the California State University (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 California Department of Education (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.
- 3) ***Capacity questions.*** Requiring pupils to complete a course in ethnic studies as a condition of graduation necessitates that each high school offers sufficient sections of financial literacy courses educate each pupil that graduates high school. Based on the 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. *The committee may wish to consider:*
- a) Do school districts and county offices of education have sufficient resources to offer an ethnic studies course and instructional material 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 or career technical education courses or pathways?
- 4) **Local ethnic studies graduation requirements.** 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.
- 5) **Ethnic studies course outlined in History-Social Science framework.** The History-Social Science Framework adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) in 2017 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.”
- 6) **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.”

- 7) 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

Association of Mexican American Educators, Inc. – East Los Angeles Chapter
 Association of Raza Educators
 Black Parallel School Board
 California Association for Bilingual Education
 California Faculty Association
 California Latino School Boards Association
 California Chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education
 Californians Together
 California State Conference of the NAACP
 Common Sense Kids Action
 Latino Caucus of California Counties
 Latino Network
 Monterrey County Board of Supervisors
 Music Changing Lives
 Occupy Riverside
 Roberts Family Development Center
 San Francisco Unified School District
 SIATech High School
 Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
 The Cambodian Family Community Center
 The Education Trust—West
 United Teachers Los Angeles

OPPOSITION

California School Boards Association

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