

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 101 (Medina)

As Amended April 14, 2021

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires students, commencing with the graduating class of 2029-30, to complete a one semester course in ethnic studies, as specified, in order to receive a high school diploma, and requires, commencing with the 2025-26 school year, that local educational agencies (LEAs) and charter schools serving students in grades nine through 12 offer at least a one-semester course in ethnic studies.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires all students enrolled in public schools, including those enrolled in charter schools, commencing with those graduating in the 2029-30 school year, to complete a one-semester course in ethnic studies in order to receive a high school diploma.
- 2) Requires that, commencing with the 2025-26 school year, an LEA and a charter school enrolling students in grades nine to 12 offer at least a one-semester course in ethnic studies.
- 3) Authorizes, subject to the course offerings of the LEA or charter school, a pupil to fulfill this requirement through the completion of any of the following types of courses:
 - a) A course based on the ethnic studies model curriculum adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE);
 - b) An existing ethnic studies course;
 - c) An ethnic studies course taught as part of a course that has been approved as meeting the A-G requirements of the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU); or
 - d) A locally developed ethnic studies course approved by the governing board of the school district or the governing body of the charter school.
- 4) Prohibits a course that does not use ethnic studies content as the primary content through which the subject is taught from meeting this requirement.
- 5) Requires that a student completing a course meeting these requirements also accrue credit for coursework in the subject that the course is offered, including, if applicable, credit towards satisfying a course required to earn a diploma of graduation from high school.
- 6) Requires that instruction and materials for a course:
 - a) Be appropriate for use with pupils of all races, religions, genders, sexual orientations, and diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, students with disabilities, and English learners;
 - b) 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 under existing law; and

- c) Not teach or promote religious doctrine.
- 7) Prohibits the amendments made by the measure from being construed to alter any other requirement of existing graduation requirements for students enrolled in charter schools.

COMMENTS

State graduation requirements. Current law establishes state high school graduation requirements, including the equivalent of three year-long courses in social studies. These courses must include 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.

Existing law does not require course in ethnic studies for graduation, but does require a school district or charter school that elects to offer a course of study in ethnic studies 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 student's enrollment in grades nine to 12.

Current law also permits school districts to establish local graduation requirements which exceed those of the state. Some California school districts have made completion of a course in ethnic studies a local graduation requirement.

Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. This bill makes completion of an ethnic studies course based on the state adopted ethnic studies model curriculum one means of meeting the graduation requirement proposed by this bill. This curriculum, like others developed in the past, was developed for voluntary use by LEAs.

Current law requires the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) to develop and submit the model curriculum in ethnic studies to the SBE by December 31, 2020, and the SBE to adopt the curriculum by March 31, 2021, deadlines which were extended one year from the original statute. Between 2019 and 2021 the IQC produced several drafts and conducted three rounds of field reviews which generated considerable public comment and media attention. The SBE adopted the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum on March 18, 2021.

The Model Curriculum adopted by the SBE is organized into the following chapters:

- 1) Introduction and overview with a discussion of the background of the field of ethnic studies
- 2) Guidance to district and site administrators on teacher, student, and community involvement in the development of these courses
- 3) Instructional guidance for veteran and new teachers of ethnic studies content
- 4) Guiding questions, sample lessons and topics for ethnic studies courses
- 5) Links to instructional resources to assist educators in facilitating conversations about race, racism, bigotry, and the experiences of diverse Americans
- 6) Examples of courses approved by the UC as meeting A–G admissions requirements

According to the Author

"Knowledge of our history plays a critical role in shaping who we become. When I was growing up, the history of those who look like me was not represented in the classroom. As a former Ethnic Studies teacher, I saw firsthand how much more engaged my students were when they saw themselves reflected in the coursework.

California is one of the most diverse states in the country and we should celebrate that diversity by teaching a curriculum that is inclusive of all of our cultures and backgrounds. Ethnic Studies provide students an opportunity to learn about histories outside of the Euro-centric teachings most prominent in our schools. At a time when the national climate drives divisiveness and fear of otherness, Ethnic Studies can play a critical role in increasing awareness and understanding."

Arguments in Support

The California Association of Student Councils writes, "Requiring ethnic studies to be taught in high schools is an integral part of cultivating a classroom environment that is accepting of diversity. It is vital for young people to learn about their history, it is also important for them to feel like they can contribute to their communities in positive ways. AB 101 will help close the achievement gap by reducing student truancy and student enrollment, reduce drop-out rates, and better prepare Californian youth to be college prepared and career ready."

Arguments in Opposition

The AMCHA Initiative writes, "My organization is deeply concerned that classes taught using [the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum] will become vehicles for highly controversial, one-sided and extremely coercive political advocacy and activism that will both subvert the educational mission of our schools and incite bigotry and harm against many students...Considering the catastrophic educational losses and trauma that have already been inflicted on millions of California students due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe it is irresponsible and unethical to pass a bill requiring students to take a course that has not been shown to improve students' academic achievement, and is quite likely to incite strife and hatred."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, unknown Proposition 98 General Fund cost pressures to the K-12 Mandates Block Grant, likely in the millions of dollars annually, for LEAs to add ethnic studies as a statewide graduation requirement. Costs potentially include funding for additional teacher training or hiring; integration of ethnic studies content in current courses or ethnic studies course development; purchase of supplemental materials; and outreach to students and parents about the new graduation requirement. Costs would likely be less for schools that already offer ethnic studies classes or include ethnic studies as part of their school district's local graduation requirements.

VOTES**ASM EDUCATION: 5-2-0**

YES: O'Donnell, Bennett, Lee, McCarty, Quirk-Silva

NO: Kiley, Megan Dahle

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 12-4-0

YES: Lorena Gonzalez, Calderon, Carrillo, Chau, Gabriel, Eduardo Garcia, Levine, Quirk, Robert Rivas, Akilah Weber, Holden, Luz Rivas

NO: Bigelow, Megan Dahle, Davies, Fong

UPDATED

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