

Ethnic Studies Standards FAQ

Timeline:

2017: HB2845 Created K-12 Ethnic Studies Standards for Social Science

2021-2022: Ethnic Studies Standards Available for Teaching

2026-2027: Ethnic Studies Standards Required Implementation

1. **What is ethnic studies and when does this start?**

a. Oregon House Bill 2845 defined ethnic studies as the instruction of public-school students in kindergarten through grade 12 in the histories, contributions, and perspectives of individuals who are Native American or Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, or Middle Eastern descent. It also includes the histories, contributions, and perspectives of the women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

b. Upon adoption by the State Board of Education, the ethnic studies standards will be available for school district implementation as part of the social science standards. School districts electing to utilize the new standards should use these as a replacement for the 2018 social science standards. When the Oregon Department of Education reviews and adopts new social science standards, ethnic studies standards will be integrated within the new social science standards with required implementation for all K-12 public schools.

2. **Why ethnic studies?**

a. In 2016, students from Portland metro area schools organized and advocated for the creation of high school ethnic studies courses. Governor Brown signed HB2845 bill into law in June 2017.

b. In testimony to local school boards and the Oregon Legislature, students identified the need to see themselves reflected in social science classrooms. Students identified the narrow focus of the history, politics, and human geography provided by commonly used textbooks and classroom lessons. Students and teachers identified the benefits to all students with a more complete and inclusive understanding of U.S. and Oregon history.

c. The National Council of Social Studies, American History Association, Oregon Education Association, and Oregon Council of Social Studies, are just a few of the professional education and social science/history organizations supporting a widening of understanding of U.S. and world history with the inclusion of the voices, perspectives, documents, and artifacts, from historically ignored or marginalized individuals and groups. The inclusion of additional voices creates a more complex, comprehensive, and complete understanding of the shared humanity within and across national boundaries. Effective social science teachers have long recognized that instructional materials and

social science topics connected to the lives of students created more engaging lessons and deeper learning.

3. **What are the standards?**

a. The ethnic studies standards are included in the K-12 social science standards for Civics and Government, Economics, Geography, Financial Literacy, History, and Social Science Analysis. The [complete social science standards](#) are available for review.

4. **How were the ethnic studies standards created?**

a. Oregon HB2845 was signed into law in 2017 and called for an advisory group comprised of representatives from community organizations representing the communities identified in ethnic studies to create recommendations for ethnic studies standards.

b. A diverse panel of K-12 teachers from eleven Education Service Districts used the recommendations from the advisory group to align the recommendations to the 2018 social science standards for use in the classroom.

c. The Oregon Department of Education engaged with various community groups and sought public feedback to share the ethnic studies standards, collect feedback, and make adjustments to the standards.

5. **Do the ethnic studies standards replace the social science standards?**

a. School districts adopting the ethnic studies before 2026 should replace the “multicultural standards” currently identified in the [2018 Oregon Social Science Standards](#) document. School districts will not be required to address the ethnic studies standards until 2026.

6. **Are ethnic studies only for social science?**

a. Although many literature teachers utilize ethnic studies curriculum and texts for classroom instruction, HB2845 specifically requires only social science standards to include ethnic studies. Examining history, politics, economics, and geography through the lens of ethnic studies encourages the inclusion of multiple perspectives and experiences. Likewise, approaching a piece of literature through an ethnic studies lens allows a depth of investigation that is missing otherwise. Readers are able to ask whose voices are present, and whose voices are missing in the text, but even more, it allows readers to examine why those voices might be missing.

7. **Are there ethnic studies lesson plans?**

a. No. These are ethnic studies standards. As with all of the K-12 social science standards, school districts and teachers will select materials and design lesson plans that best support the teaching and assessment of learning for these standards.

8. **Is there an ethnic studies course?**

a. No. These ethnic studies standards are intended to be incorporated into social science lessons. In K-8, the standards will be addressed during lessons on Oregon, U.S., or world history. In high school, while some schools might offer an elective based on ethnic studies, all students earning the required 3 social science credits for an Oregon diploma will have the opportunity to be assessed on all of the social science standards including the new ethnic studies standards.

9. What training will teachers need to teach to the standards?

a. The adoption of new standards in any content area often requires the professional development of staff expected to teach to the new standards. Ethnic studies courses have been available in colleges and universities since the late 1960s and some social science teachers have taken course work in ethnic studies or related areas. However, for many social science teachers, ethnic studies will require familiarity with new content. School Districts can best determine how to provide teachers with materials and training to support the successful implementation of the ethnic studies standards.

b. An ethnic studies approach to social science will often include materials, lessons, and conversations that challenge the dominant narratives familiar to students. In addition, the discussion of 'hard history' or examples when people have experienced discrimination, prejudice, or other trauma requires teachers to thoughtfully approach lessons. An understanding of social and emotional learning (SEL) and how to help students manage emotions, feel, and show empathy and maintain positive relationships, is an important component of effective teaching.

c. Many teachers and professional development programs are including the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy/teaching in their approach to classroom instruction. Ethnic studies, by definition, embraces the understanding of culture as central to learning. School districts and teachers should continue training in educational practice which acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures, to help offer equitable access to education for students from all cultures.

d. In 2019 Oregon passed HB2023 to align instructional materials with new social science standards. The law requires the Department of Education to provide professional development to teachers and administrators relating to academic content standards adopted during the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 school years.

10. How should I prepare my community for the introduction of ethnic studies?

a. Until the 2026-2027 school year, school districts can decide if and when they will implement the ethnic studies standards. School districts wishing to implement the standards before they are required may want to create informational materials to explain why these standards are being implemented now. In some communities, misunderstanding or misinformation can be alleviated with clear communication about the nature and purpose of ethnic studies.

11. Are the ethnic studies anti-American?

- a. Ethnic studies seeks to elevate the perspective, contributions, and histories of individuals and groups that are often neglected in the examination of social science topics. Oregon’s ethnic studies standards are inclusive of both world and U.S. history. The standards are intended to broaden the analysis of social science with the inclusion of additional voices.
- b. Patriotism does not require ignoring or censoring the history of the United States. As James Baldwin reminds us, “American history is more terrible and more beautiful than anything anyone has ever said about it.” Ethnic studies may require students to examine a history in which individuals or groups struggled against forces that would deny them equality, but the struggle is part of the American story.
- c. In recent years, ethnic studies courses or curriculum has become a flashpoint in political debates. Some detractors of ethnic studies programs have utilized passages from a specific reading or an example of a lesson to suggest that students are only being taught a negative view of the United States or white people. As a local control state, Oregon allows school districts to select materials that best support their students in achieving the learning required by the standards. Oregon is not requiring any text or curriculum for the teaching of any social science standards including ethnic studies.

12. How do the ethnic studies standards align with Tribal History -Shared History and the Holocaust and other genocide guidance?

- a. In addition to ethnic studies, social science instruction is also adopting lesson plans from SB13 Tribal History-Shared History and learning concepts from SB664 Holocaust and genocide studies. The lessons and concepts of SB13 and SB664 are addressed within the social science standards
- b. As with ethnic studies, the concepts and essential understandings highlighted in Holocaust and genocide studies and Tribal History-Shared history expand the examination of state, national, and world history for the inclusion of often neglected or underrepresented individuals and groups. These are complementary additions to social science standards and instruction.

13. Why is there so much missing from these standards? Why are Malcolm X, Dolores Huerta, Marsha P. Johnson, Winona LaDuke, Yuri Kochiyama, and many others not named in these standards?

- a. The ethnic studies standards, like the other social science standards, avoids creating a list of notable individuals or events. While there are a number of significant events and individuals that should be shared, explored, and discussed with students, the creation of a list within the standards will unintentionally miss a beloved figure or event. Curriculum decision makers at the school district level are encouraged to identify resources and examples that teachers can use to support the standards.

- b. ODE’s guidance for the implementation of ethnic studies standards as required in 2025-2026 will include identified instructional materials as well as supplemental guidance on essential questions and individuals and historic examples that could be used to address the standards.

14. When will the ethnic studies standards be implemented?

School Districts may begin to teach to the Ethnic Studies standards as soon as they are adopted (no later than September 2021) by the State Board of Education and teachers have had sufficient time to review and receive adequate training on implementation. The ethnic studies standards will not be required, as per HB2023, until the 2026 school year.

15. Why the delay until 2026 for the required implementation of ethnic studies?

The perspective offered by ethnic studies represents a significant shift in the traditional approach to the teaching of history, civics, and economics, and geography. ODE recognizes the desire and urgency surrounding the adoption of these standards to facilitate an understanding of the histories, contributions and perspectives of ethnic and social groups traditionally underrepresented in classrooms. The standards create a framework to increase cultural competency and promote critical thinking regarding the interaction between systemic social structures and ethnic or social groups. However, HB2845 does not train teachers, create a curriculum, or identify instructional materials for use in the classroom. The period between the adoption of the standards by the State Board of Education and the required implementation (HB2023) should be used by school districts in providing teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to successfully implement classroom instruction.