



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



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Colt Gill

Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

MOVING EQUITY FORWARD

Senate Bill 227

Senate Education Committee

February 10, 2021

Senator Dembrow, Vice Chair Thomsen and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide a progress update on the implementation of Ethnic Studies Standards (HB 2845, 2017). ODE has no position on SB 227 and we are only submitting additional information for the committee.

Background:

HB 2845 (Ethnic Studies Standards) was passed by the Oregon Legislature and signed by Governor Brown in 2017. The law requires the development of ethnic studies standards to be included in K-12 social science standards and utilized for instruction and assessment in public schools. In 2018, ODE convened an advisory group of community members as outlined by HB 2845. The advisory group was comprised of members selected to represent public school students, Indian Services, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Black Affairs, Hispanic Affairs, the Disabilities commission, commission for women, a representative of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community, ODE's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office, a K-12 educator who is also a representative of the Oregon Education Associations committee on ethnic minorities and civil rights, a professor of ethnic studies, and an expert on Middle Eastern studies or Jewish studies.

The advisory group met for 18 months and issued a report with initial recommendations. ODE sought feedback on the report from July 2019 to December 2019 from multiple community partners. In December 2019, ODE convened a K-12 teacher panel to review the report and the feedback to create K-12 ethnic studies standards. The K-12 ethnic studies teacher panel consisted of teachers nearly matching Oregon's student ethnic/racial demographics. The panel began drafting ethnic studies standards in early 2020; however, the work was suspended due to COVID-19 closures. The closure of schools and the shift to distance learning led ODE to request

an extension on the adoption of ethnic studies standards to be adopted no later than September 2021. ODE was able to reconvene the ethnic studies teacher panel to complete their work on reviewing and revising the K-12 ethnic studies standards for inclusion in social science.

Adoption by the Board of the ethnic studies standards during the 2020-2021 school will allow school districts who choose to implement the standards before the required 2026-2027 school year to plan professional development in preparation for implementation of the ethnic studies standards. If adopted, ethnic studies standards will become part of social science standards and required for instruction in social science classrooms. [OAR 581-022-2000](#) outlines the requirements for student graduation to include three (3) credits of social science to include history, economics, geography, civics, and personal finance. Ethnic studies standards are included in each of these social science domains.

State Board of Education

The statute requires the adoption of Ethnic Studies standards by the State Board of Education (SBE) no later than September 2020. The response to COVID-19 required a delay for the adoption of the standards by the SBE to no later than September 2021. In August, at the Board retreat, ODE staff presented information on the work done to date, explained the reason for delay, and shared a proposed timeline for completing the work. The Oregon State Board of Education will meet on Thursday, February 18, 2021 and will consider Ethnic Studies Standards for final adoption.

Equity Impact Analysis

The adoption of the ethnic studies standards, as an enhancement of [OAR 581-022-2000](#) provides school districts with an opportunity to lead meaningful professional development on the content knowledge and pedagogical approach necessary for addressing the shift in social science content.

HB 2845 defines underserved and underrepresented groups as; Native American or Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino or Middle Eastern descent, and women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Students from each of these groups will be affected by seeing their communities' histories, perspectives and contributions studied and appreciated in the classroom. Adding

ethnic studies standards to the social science standards helps to deepen understanding of the historic and current local, state, and national issues. This allows for a more complete social science education as required by [OAR 581-022-2000](#).

The intent of HB2845 is to create a critical awareness of the perspectives, histories, and contributions of “social and racial minorities.” 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.” A [2016 study](#) by researchers at Stanford University showed that ethnic studies courses helped high school students increase their educational outcomes, attendance and credits earned. Researchers found that students’ GPA improved by 1.4 grade points, attendance rose 21 percentage points and class credits earned increased by 23 percentage points. The Oregon ethnic studies standards will impact all students, but most importantly students who identify with the group(s) named in HB 2845 will experience a social science curriculum with greater relevance to their lives.

Partner and Community Input

Although professional development and community meetings faced new challenges with COVID-19 closures through the spring and summer, ODE has held 18 online presentations and a feedback survey (click [here](#) for result) on ethnic studies standards with community members from around the state, including the following community groups and partners:

- The original advisory group composed of individuals representing community groups and organizations specifically named in HB 2845;
- State-wide administrators during COSA and OSBA conferences;
- In-service teachers during social science professional development in both rural and urban school districts;
- Preservice teachers at Western Oregon, Concordia, Oregon State, and Lewis and Clark;
- Ongoing conversations with national organizations;
- Community groups representing ethnic and racial groups traditionally underrepresented in school curriculum;
- Discussion with education researchers and ethnic studies experts;
- Multiple sessions with OEA equity teams, BIPOC educators, and members;
- State and national social science teacher professional organizations;
- Publication in state and national newspapers; and

- Office of Indian Education, ODE

Since the beginning of 2021, ODE has continued to host engagement and feedback sessions with specific focus on student groups. If approved by SBE and implemented by ODE, all Oregon students will learn the histories, contributions, and perspectives of individuals and groups traditionally underrepresented in Oregon's social science classrooms. These ethnic studies standards are fully integrated into the social science standards with the intent that all social science classrooms will utilize ethnic studies.

Policy Considerations

Currently, Oregon is the only state to design K-12 ethnic studies standards for inclusion in social science standards. Other states and school districts implementing ethnic studies courses or frameworks have encountered a spectrum of criticism from being culturally divisive to not sufficiently challenging the status quo. These potential concerns could be raised with Oregon's ethnic studies standards when we seek public comment and feedback.

Although most of the preliminary feedback from engagement sessions and feedback surveys has been positive, there are some potential unintended consequences indicated in the survey:

- The lack of this approach or inclusion in other content areas creates disconnected learning for students.
- An absence of high-quality instructional materials and specific lesson guidance for teachers that will lead to poor implementation.
- Not enough focus on the importance of religious traditions marginalizing religious communities.
- Although a number of groups are identified in the definition of ethnic studies from HB 2845, socio-economic class is excluded. Oregonians identifying by socio-economic class are excluded.
- The total number of standards continues to grow. Without a strong enforcement mechanism, some standards will not be addressed.

The Department has also attempted to anticipate and address unintended consequences of the adoption and implementation of ethnic studies standards. Without proper training or high-quality instructional materials, well-intentioned teachers may commit unintended harm to students with poorly designed lessons. The Department is encouraging districts to provide

teachers with the appropriate professional development to effectively teach social science with ethnic studies, but this is not a requirement of the bill. The changes in Oregon's social science standards in 2018 and with the adoption of ethnic studies will appear to some as a significant break with tradition. The 2018 social science standards created multicultural standards highlighting some of what had been missing in social science lessons. Ethnic studies standards continue this work more directly and intentionally.

Ethnic studies education begins with student identity helping students celebrate a sense of self in relation to their community and traditions. The origin story of the U.S. and Oregon is complicated by asking questions such as, "Liberty for whom?" "What do we mean by justice?" "Who cared for this land before Europeans landed?" "What does equality look like?" These are difficult questions. Difficult not only because they require critical thinking, but because they challenge the mythology of America. Creating a new understanding of our relation to each other, to history, and to a shared democratic purpose, will generate a great deal of emotion. To successfully implement these standards and the lessons and units they will generate, schools and teachers must be trained to effectively respond to these emotions. Teachers will need new pedagogical tools and content knowledge.

We hope this information is helpful.

Respectfully,

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