

Balboa Families,

¡Hola y buenas noches! Magandang gabi po. 晚上好。Oa mai le afiafi. Chào buổi tối. Good evening and welcome to Balboa's online Back to School Night. My name is **Sergio Robledo-Maderazo**, and I'm your student's Ethnic Studies teacher.



As I reviewed in [my video greeting](#), **Ethnic Studies is a history and social studies class where we study the lives of people of color in the US throughout history, which includes the ongoing fight against racism and other oppression.** The goal is to offer students the opportunity to take an open and honest look at the history of racism and white supremacy in this country, so that they can start to make sense of the things they're experiencing or witnessing daily. During the last few months in this country, we've all felt the rising racial tension, which only shows us that young people need to be studying race and white supremacy. Sadly, way too many of us have been denied this valuable part of our education.

It certainly wasn't a part of what I learned in school. I'm 44 years old. I grew up in an L.A. suburb in the late 70s and early 80s where people of color were a minority. There were very few other Filipino families outside of my own. At home and at school, no one spoke to me about how to understand my experiences of being teased or physically attacked based on my last name, the shape of my eyes, the color of my skin and hair, or my family's accent. There definitely was no class in school like our Ethnic Studies class here at Balboa that could explain it to me. My history classes never taught about the experiences of people of color, or why so many of our ancestors had their land taken by settlers, were kidnapped and sold into slavery, or were forced or pressured to leave their homelands in Africa, the Pacific Islands, Asia, or Latin America. My peers and I couldn't access this important education, so we know very well what happens when we're denied this information. **The clearest impact of not letting young people study racism and white supremacy is simple: the continuation and spread of racism and white supremacy.** This is why the Ethnic Studies class your student is taking this year is such an important part of their high school experience.

Even though we've returned to in-person school, our class still relies heavily on the use of our Google Classroom. Your student has access, but as their parent or guardian, you can also be given access by emailing me using the contact info at the end

of this letter. Our Google Classroom is basically the one-stop-shop to find key information related to the class, including the daily slides, assignments, and more. At this point, students should now be very familiar with how things are organized in the Classroom. **It is especially important for students who have to miss class, because they can always count on accessing each day's slides and materials to keep up with all activities, turn in their work, and follow up with me when they return to school if they need help.**

As far as grades go, there are a few things I want to repeat from [the syllabus](#). First, please note that **the Learning Assessments are what impact your student's grade in this class.** While the smaller activities like classwork or homework don't count for points towards their grade, doing these activities is the best preparation for the Learning Assessments, which are basically the class tests, projects, writing activities, presentations, and more, where students can really show what they've learned by attending class and attempting the classwork and homework. Also, please note that **students don't only have one chance to show what they've learned on these Assessments. They can revisit or redo past Learning Assessments multiple times to try to improve their scores and maintain a passing grade in the class.** The only catch is that they have to revisit all assessments by the deadlines set in the Course Syllabus. Please note that if too many students are requesting multiple revisits too close to the deadline, I reserve the right to deny them. So please advise your student as I have: **Revisit assessments early, well ahead of the last two weeks of the semester.**

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge that **these are not normal times.** If they were, I'd actually get to see you all right now without any fear or concern about people getting sick or spreading the virus. We'd be sharing space instead of doing Back to School Night on the internet, and we'd be able to freely breathe the same air in crowded rooms, etc. But that's not possible. We're all facing unprecedented conditions: the stress of COVID 19, the health and lives lost all around, the impact on our economic lives, and the pushing for and waiting on ongoing government decisions that might help us get back to a somewhat normal life.

All of this is impacting your family's, your student's, and my school year. **I'm committing myself to being as responsive and flexible as possible to make sure that your student's education continues during these challenging times and that they succeed, but not at the expense of their overall well-being.** If ever anything comes up that might impact your students' ability to properly engage in our class, please don't hesitate to email, text, or call. I will do everything I can to accommodate your student's

or your family's needs. Let's work together to get through these challenging times in the most humane and supportive way possible.

With that, I'd like to formally welcome you to the 21-22 school year. I know that this is an especially exciting one for your family, as high school is a new and unfamiliar world for you and your student. Together, let's make this a positive and special year for them.

Yours Truly,

*Sergio Robledo
-March 20*

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→ [Back to School Night Video Greeting](#)

→ [Course Syllabus](#)

