

Subject: Ethnic Studies Instructional Materials Committee - Update #1

Dear OPUSD Families,

In October 2021, the California Legislature passed [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 101](#), which mandates that high school students complete an ethnic studies course as a graduation requirement beginning in the 2029-30 school year. High schools must begin offering a pilot course by the 2025-26 school year. Students can fulfill this requirement through a variety of course types, including:

- A course based on the state's model curriculum,
- An existing ethnic studies course,
- An ethnic studies course integrated into an approved A–G course for the University of California and California State University or
- **A locally developed ethnic studies course approved by the school district's governing board.**

Our discussions around how to implement this new requirement in Oak Park Unified began in earnest during the 2022-23 school year in the OPUSD Curriculum Council. Information was shared at school sites and presented at the January 24, 2023, Board meeting. In 2023-24, an Ethnic Studies Committee was formed to focus on how best to incorporate ethnic studies into the OPUSD high school graduation requirements. The committee, composed of staff, parents, and students, explored various models. These discussions included a one-semester standalone course, integrating ethnic studies into either an English or history course, and researching how other districts were approaching the requirement. The committee created a comprehensive document detailing the pros, cons, and considerations for each model, and recommended moving forward with a "***locally developed ethnic studies course***" which was shared with all members and [presented](#) at the April 16, 2024 Board of Education meeting.

The committee's recommendations align with the four traditional pillars of ethnic studies — African American, Latino/Chicano, Native American, and Asian American/Pacific Islander studies — as emphasized by the California Department of Education (CDE). These pillars allow students to learn about the histories, cultures, struggles, and contributions of these historically marginalized groups to American society. The CDE has built flexibility into the model curriculum, allowing local educational agencies, like ours, to adapt the curriculum to reflect the diversity of our own communities and classroom demographics.

The curriculum, instruction, and instructional materials for ethnic studies must:

- Be appropriate for use with students of all races, religions, nationalities, genders, sexual orientations, diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, students with disabilities, and English learners.
- Not reflect or promote, directly or indirectly, bias, bigotry, or discrimination against any person or group of persons on the basis of any protected category.

- Not teach or promote religious doctrine.

If OPUSD adopts a locally developed course, we are required to bring the proposed course to the Board of Education twice to allow for public comment and ensure full consideration.

After in-depth deliberations, the committee recommended the following:

- **Oak Park High School:** Integration of ethnic studies into 12th-grade English courses.
- **Oak Park Independent School:** A one-semester standalone ethnic studies course.
- **Oak View High School:** Both the integration of ethnic studies into 12th-grade English and the option for a one-semester standalone course.

This school year, the Ethnic Studies Instructional Materials Committee (ESIMC) was formed to curate and review potential ethnic studies instructional materials for next year's pilot courses. The Ethnic Studies Instructional Materials Committee held its first meeting on September 17, 2024, at Oak Park High School. The committee is composed of a diverse group of OPUSD staff, parents, and students. We will be sending regular updates throughout the curriculum review process to keep you informed.

This is our first update, and we will continue to provide timely information as we move forward. You can view the [agenda](#) and [meeting minutes](#) from our September meeting. This update is also posted on our district website under *Department > Curriculum and Instruction*.

Our next committee meeting is October 22, 2024.

Sincerely,

Ellen Chevalier
Director of Curriculum and Instruction