

Vermont Ethnic Studies Framework

Recommendations for Policies

Prepared June 1, 2023

Introduction and Background

After studying Vermont's current history of racism and examining research and policies on the matter, the Working Group (WG) found there was a need to develop a statewide Ethnic Studies framework. A state-level report to the Vermont Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 1999 concluded that "Racial harassment appears pervasive in and around the state's public schools." The commission also observed that "the elimination of this harassment" was "not a priority among school administrators, school boards, elected officials, and state agencies charged with civil rights enforcement." A 2003 follow up report concluded that the problem persisted. One of the many problems highlighted at that time was that some curriculum materials and lesson plans promoted racial stereotypes. In 2017, the Act 54 Report on Racial Disparities in State Systems, issued by the Attorney General and the Vermont Human Rights Commission, asserted that that education was "one of the five state systems in which racial disparities persist and need to be addressed." One of the main suggestions for accomplishing this was to "teach children from an integrated curriculum that fairly represents both the contributions of People of Color (as well as indigenous people, women, people with disabilities, etc.), while fairly and accurately representing our history of oppression of these groups."

As a response to the findings in these reports, the WG, in collaboration with Community Responsive Education, designed an Ethnic Studies framework to embed in Vermont's Educational Content Standards, Pre-K through Grade 12, across the curriculum, and to offer guidance by providing recommendations on how to create or enhance new policies to advance the implementation of an Ethnic Studies framework and criteria in all subject matters.

ETHNIC STUDIES POLICIES

The following [report](#) prepared by WestED in February of 2021 outlines Ethnic Studies policy through the nation. This includes Vermont's Act 1. It also provides briefs on Ethnic Studies legislation in 20 states, including: California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia. Although California is the only state that requires Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement, the other 19 states require Ethnic Studies to be incorporated in the K–12 standards or curricula.

The following offers several types of policy efforts and processes that can support the implementation of Ethnic Studies in the state of Vermont

STATE LEVEL

ACT 1

Vermont has already [ACT 1](#). This can be used as an anchor to remind educational leaders, teachers, practitioners, and families of the initiative that paved the way for the development of the Vermont Ethnic Studies Framework.

State Level Ethnic Studies Requirements

We propose that Vermont consider instituting an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement for high school students. There is precedence in California. Under the AB 101, passed in 2021, high schools must begin offering ethnic studies courses in the 2025-26 school year, and students in the class of 2030 will be the first ones subject to the graduation requirement.

Example: CA Requirement-[AB 101](#)

Ed Source [Article](#)

DISTRICT LEVEL

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) drafted and submitted a Vermont State Plan in response to the requirements of the Vermont Education Quality Standards (EQS) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The Plan primarily describes the state's proposed system for local-level accountability and applications for ESSA-related federal funding, with an emphasis on supporting school and Supervisory Union and District continuous improvement efforts.

At the local district level, policies can support and designate resources needed for an effective Ethnic Studies implementation. We encourage the consideration of the following types of policy efforts:

District Ethnic Studies Support Resolutions

In 2010, [San Francisco Unified School District passed a resolution](#) to gain support for the development of a 9th grade Ethnic Studies course curriculum and pilot. This preceded any requirements in the district and across the state/nation. This resolution outlined the relationship between sites and districts regarding shared costs for the courses. In 2014, SFUSD passed another resolution to solidify that all 19 schools must offer the 9th grade Ethnic Studies course and also that the district provide adequate allotment to support the hiring of teachers and their professional development.

District Ethnic Studies Requirements

In 2014, [El Rancho Unified School District passed a resolution](#) to institute an Ethnic Studies requirement. They were the first district to pass a high school graduation requirement.

Example Equity Policies

In 2019, the San Francisco Board of Education unanimously approved a [resolution](#) that supports the implementation of a humanizing experience for all San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) students. The resolution calls for all content areas, k-12, to integrate a framework of humanization, which includes the knowledge and love of self, solidarity and self-determination. Per the resolution, an Equity Studies Team will be established and composed of curriculum leaders in all subjects, and an Equity Studies Community Task Force will monitor the work of the Equity Studies Team.

In January, 2022, in response to a student movement to encourage the San Mateo Union High School district to address racism and other forms of oppression faced by marginalized communities in the district, leaders and community stakeholders developed a [SMUHSD racial equity policy](#). The policy publicly committed the district to fighting racism as an institution; ensuring that our district is an inclusive and welcoming environment for black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) students, staff and their families, and eliminating opportunity gaps for BIPOC students. The district then outlined actions that will be taken to bring the policy to life.

SCHOOL LEVEL

Schools throughout the nation have been pushing for Ethnic Studies to be part of their curriculum and also weaved throughout school culture. We provide the following examples of school-level implementation:

Elementary School

Oakland Academic of Knowledge centers Ethnic Studies in its curriculum but also throughout school culture. The following shows how their [vision](#), [mission](#), and [school cultural values](#) are rooted in Ethnic Studies.

High School

Jefferson Union High School District in Daly City, CA, offers Ethnic Studies in all high schools. The following website has a [presentation](#) that shows how it is implemented at each school.

VSBA Recommendations:

Ideas for Act 1 Working Group - recommended changes to law/rules

→ *Require all school boards to adopt a library selection policy (VSBA has a model, which was developed in collaboration with the Vermont School Library Association)*

→ *Require all school boards to adopt an equity policy to meet or exceed benchmark standards for improving the experience and opportunities of all students.*

→ *Require a makeup of the State Board of Education that is representative of our diverse education system.*

→ *Require the Agency of Education to report on progress towards a more equitable education system to the legislature each year and to develop a leadership plan on how to support schools in addressing inequities.*

◆ *Tie into the governance standards*

→ *Amend statutory language:*

◆ *amend 16 V.S.A 1 to change “equal” to “equitable”*

◆ *amend 16 V.S.A 561 to add educational equity (board chair/superintendent training)*

◆ *amend Table of Contents re: 16 V.S.A 561 to change “chairman” to “chairperson” or “chair”*

→ *Amend State Board of Education Rules 4504; 4505*

◆ *SBE Rule 4504 does not currently require ethnicity to be documented.*

Examples of Revisions to Model Policies as a result of Recommendations from Equity Consultant and other Stakeholders

A31 School Board Member Education	Under administrative responsibilities: In developing professional training for school board members, the board may consider topics such as educational equity, dispute resolution, conflict of interest, etc.	Issued Jan 18, 2022
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<p>D22 (formerly D31) Selecting Library Materials (was previously "to be</p>	<p>After months of collaboration with both an equity consultant and the VT School Libraries Association, this model policy now includes</p>	<p>Issued May, 2022</p>
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<p>considered," but is now recommended)</p>	<p>definition of "Diverse library collection," which means that the library collection intentionally contains content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences, including those from traditionally marginalized and underrepresented communities.</p>	
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<p>A22 Notice of Non- Discrimination</p>	<p>Updated to include protections under Title VII and adds "gender identity" to the list of protections against employment discrimination.</p>	<p>Issued Sept 13, 2022</p>
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<p>C13 Students who are homeless</p>	<p>Changed title from "Homeless Students" to "Students Who are Homeless."</p>	<p>Issued Sept 13, 2022</p>
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**Examples of VSBA Model policies under review and in need of
substantial change: C2 Student Alcohol and Drugs**

**C22 (Student Activities,
Elementary C23**

**(Student Activities,
Secondary) C24
(InterScholastic Sports)**