

CAPISTRANO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD REPORT

To: Board of Trustees

From: Gregory Merwin, Associate Superintendent, Education and Support Services
Prepared by: Meg Ervais, Executive Director, 6-12 ATP, General Education and Special Education, Curriculum and Instruction

Date: January 15, 2025

Board Item: Ethnic Studies

HISTORY

This is a new item. California Education Code mandates the inclusion of ethnic studies as part of the curriculum in K-12 schools to promote understanding, respect, and engagement with diverse cultural perspectives. Assembly Bill 101, signed into law in 2021, requires all high schools in the state to offer at least 1 ethnic studies course by the 2025-2026 academic year, and mandates it as a graduation requirement starting with the class of 2030. The goal of the legislation is to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the histories, cultures, contributions, and struggles of historically marginalized groups, including African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino/as, and Native Americans.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 2023-2024, staff formed a committee of teachers representing every comprehensive high school in the District to research curriculum options, organize course content, and make recommendations to District staff. Beginning in 2024-2025, the District partnered with Orange County Department of Education to support the work of the committee.

CURRENT CONSIDERATIONS

The committee has developed a preliminary plan for a semester-long freshman course that would be paired with a semester of health. The plan follows the guidance of the California Department of Education (CDE) Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. Per that guidance document, California Ethnic Studies courses “*will focus on the traditional ethnic studies first established in California higher education, which has been characterized by four foundational disciplines: African American, Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x, Native American, and Asian American and Pacific Islander studies.*”

The course will open with an introductory unit that introduces the content of the semester. Each of the 4 primary groups will be the focus of a 3-4 week unit that will focus on the themes found in CDE’s Model Curriculum: History and Movement, Systems of Power, Social Movements, and Equity. The final unit of the course will offer the opportunity for an individual project selected by

the student, which would be related to one of these aforementioned groups or another California group not specifically addressed within the course.

While no specific textbook is recommended for this course, all approved instructional materials will be housed in an online Canvas template available to any teacher assigned to Ethnic Studies. Sample lesson topics from the CDE Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum which could be included in the course are as follows:

African American Studies:

- Classical Africa and Other Civilizations
- United States Housing Inequality: Redlining and Racial Housing Covenants

Latina/o/x Studies

- East LA Blowouts: An Anchor to the Chicano Movement
- Salvadoran American Migration

Asian American & Pacific Islander Studies

- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the Model Minority Myth
- The Japanese American Incarceration Experience through Poetry and the Spoken Word

Native American Studies

- This is Indian Land: The Purpose, Politics and Practice of Land Acknowledgment
- Native American Mascots

In order to gather feedback from the community regarding the course, staff will host engagement sessions that are open to the public as well as a Board Workshop in February 2025. After the engagement sessions and workshop, the course materials would then go to the Instructional Materials Review Committee (IMRC) on April 15, 2025. The course will be available for public review in the Instructional Media Center (IMC) at the District Office for the 30 days after the IMRC meeting. Finally, the ethnic studies course will be presented to Trustees for consideration at the May 21, 2025, Board meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The District received an Ethnic Studies planning grant for \$397,251 which is being used to support the development of the course materials and training.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This is an information item only and no Board action is necessary.

PREPARED BY: Meg Ervais, Executive Director, 6-12 ATP, General Education and Special Education, Curriculum and Instruction

APPROVED BY: Gregory Merwin, Associate Superintendent, Education and Support Services