



For Immediate Release

Contact: Megan VandenBos, 818-792-0679

Los Angeles Unified says Ethnic Studies for All

Board of Education commits to expanding Ethnic Studies courses to all students

LOS ANGELES, August 25, 2020 — Today, the Los Angeles Unified Board of Education voted to approve Board Member Kelly Gonez’s resolution to expand Ethnic Studies classes and content throughout all grade levels and establish the completion of one Ethnic Studies course as a high school graduation requirement.

This resolution comes at a critical time. Across the nation, young people are calling for an education that challenges racism and enables them to understand themselves, their histories, and the ongoing battles for civil rights, equality, and justice. Los Angeles Unified was among the first school districts in California, and the country, to pass an Ethnic Studies resolution in 2014. Although the precepts of the course and its content have been successfully expanded and embedded throughout many K-12 classes since then, the promise to make Ethnic Studies a graduation requirement beginning with the Class of 2019 has not yet been realized.

“Culturally meaningful and relevant curricula lead students to become more personally engaged and more likely to graduate,” Board Member Gonez explained. “This resolution is centered on the principle that every child in our district deserves an education that tells their story, that reflects their identity, and that challenges us all to tear down the systems of oppression, racism, anti-Blackness, anti-indigeneity, and white supremacy that have stained the legacy of our country.”

In addition to renewing the commitment to a graduation requirement, the resolution calls for the District to further integrate Ethnic Studies into the PreK-8 curricula and ensures that all high school students will have the opportunity to take at least one ethnic studies course at their high school by the 2022-2023 school year. It further directs the Superintendent to ensure instructional materials in all grade levels include texts written by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) authors. A report to the Board on a plan to fully implement Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement by the 2023-2024 school year is expected within 180 days.

Board Member Gonez sponsored the resolution, which was co-sponsored by board members:

“As an African-American, who attended segregated schools, I know personally the value of our textbooks reflecting the images and the history of diverse cultures,” Board Member Dr. George J. McKenna III said. “Ethnic Studies is important. Our students need to learn about, and respect diverse races and ethnicities,”

"Ethnic Studies in our schools empowers our students to know themselves and our world with greater humanity," Board Member Mónica García said. "In changing how we talk about race and power in the classroom, we will change future generations and continue to demand adequate funding for education in California."

“Every LA Unified student should have access to an inclusive and relevant curriculum that opens their eyes to different perspectives and teaches them to think critically and form their own opinions,” Board Member Nick Melvoin said. “I support the inclusion of a dynamic Ethnic Studies course as part of this effort, and I hope the District maximizes this opportunity to incorporate these goals into the education of all our kids.”

“When I first started teaching, many of my students had never seen themselves reflected in their textbooks or any books for that matter,” Board Member Jackie Goldberg said. “In the last few decades, Ethnic Studies has evolved, but we need much more inclusion that recognizes the value for our students’ ethnic histories. An Ethnic Studies course is an important step toward the commitment to a public education that imparts justice, empowerment and that speaks for the unheard. All students benefit from learning about their own and other ethnicities, because Ethnic Studies is a history of us.”

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