

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1294

As Reported by House Committee On: Education

Title: An act relating to an ethnic studies curriculum for public school students.

Brief Description: Requiring development of a model ethnic studies curriculum.

Sponsors: Representatives Ortiz-Self, Kilduff, Lovick, Stonier, Orwall, Senn, McBride, Tarleton, Gregerson, Doglio, Santos, Bergquist, Farrell and Frame.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/13/17, 2/14/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to develop a model ethnic studies curriculum for use in grades 7 through 12.
- Directs the SPI to establish an advisory committee to aid in the development of the model ethnic studies curriculum.
- Encourages public schools with students in grades 7 through 12 to offer an ethnic studies course that incorporates the model ethnic studies curriculum.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Johnson, Kilduff, Lovick, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Slatter, Springer, Steele, Stokesbary and Volz.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative McCaslin.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Superintendent of Public Instruction. In addition to its constitutional charge of supervising all matters pertaining to public schools, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and its office has numerous and broad responsibilities prescribed in statute, including:

- making rules and regulations necessary for the administration of public education requirements; and
- preparing courses of study and other materials for the discharge of education duties.

With respect to course preparation, the Legislature periodically considers and charges the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction with developing model curricula for use in Washington's school districts.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements. In 2013 the SPI updated the state Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) for social studies in grades kindergarten through grade 12. An understanding of culture is embedded throughout the EALRs and GLEs, for example, in third grade, students study the varied backgrounds and cultures of people, including American Indians, living in Washington and the rest of the United States, and examine the impact people from various cultures have had in shaping our contemporary society.

Summary of Bill:

By September 1, 2018, the SPI must develop, and periodically update, a model ethnic studies curriculum for use in grades 7 through 12. The model curriculum must be designed to prepare students to be global citizens in a global society with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures. The model curriculum must be posted on the SPI's web site.

The SPI must establish an ethnic studies advisory committee to aid in the development of the ethnic studies curriculum. This committee must advise, assist, and make recommendations to the SPI regarding the development of the model ethnic studies curriculum. The committee must be composed of a majority of educators with experience in teaching ethnic studies from public high schools and institutions of higher education, including educators representing the Washington State Commissions on African-American Affairs, Asian Pacific American Affairs, and Hispanic Affairs, and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs.

The public schools with students in grades 7 through 12 are encouraged to offer an ethnic studies course that incorporates the model ethnic studies curriculum.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Educators want to make sure that their curricula are more inclusive and diverse. They can engage students by helping them understand their part in the state of Washington and what has happened in different social and cultural groups, and by giving them a better understanding of what part they play in a global community. No curriculum is specific to the demographics of Washington that discusses the history, contributions, and heartaches that many of the state's cultures have experienced. This bill just puts a curriculum together so it will be available to schools, if they choose to use it.

This bill provides for the creation of a robust and multifaceted ethnic studies curriculum and it will increase the opportunities for students to have rigorous study of our diverse American and global heritage and history. By increasing student access to an ethnic studies curricula, this bill takes a step forward in overcoming a major cultural gap and divide. Students want courses in ethnic studies. Providing a model ethnic studies curriculum would make it easier for schools to implement an ethnic studies course.

There are gaps in current curricula related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning communities, women, and ethnic minorities. Ethnic studies classes are designed to delve more deeply into these histories and how they play out in the modern world. These courses educate students in perspectives that are not often addressed in other social studies classes. All students must be given the chance to succeed. Ethnic studies classes teach minority students about their own histories and provide essential knowledge all students need to enter a diverse workforce. Ethnic studies focuses the curriculum on groups that have been, and are currently, marginalized. Intersectional study courses, on race and gender, have a profound impact on students who face the greatest disparities.

Ethnic studies curricula have been implemented throughout California as a means of engaging Latino students, and are a graduation requirement for all Portland, Oregon high school students. These curricula work. A 2016 Stanford study found that the grade point average improved by 1.4 points and attendance improved by 21 percent for at-risk youth enrolled in ethnic studies classes.

Some large cities have very large opportunity gaps between black and white students. Some school districts are being investigated for disparate discipline practices. The issues that create these problems are felt across Washington and across America. These disparities should create a state of emergency. These disparities are not treated as an emergency though, because the teaching force is largely white, so they are not feeling the disparities like some of the students that they teach. The predominantly white teaching force bleaches their curriculum by replicating the lessons they were taught. This cycle must be interrupted and this bill provides a strategy to do that.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ortiz-Self, prime sponsor; Carol Coe, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Rachel Hodes; and Jon Greenberg.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.