



# **SCHOOL BOARD ACTION REPORT**

**DATE:** June 5, 2017  
**FROM:** Dr. Larry Nyland, Superintendent  
**LEAD STAFF:** Dr. Kyle Kinoshita, Chief of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction,  
[kdkinoshita@seattleschools.org](mailto:kdkinoshita@seattleschools.org), 206/252-0050

**For Intro:** June 28, 2017  
**For Action:** July 5, 2017

## **1. TITLE**

Resolution 2016-17/17, Supporting Ethnic Studies in Seattle Public Schools

## **2. PURPOSE**

This Board Action Report presents a resolution in support of ethnic studies in Seattle Public Schools.

## **3. RECOMMENDED MOTION**

I move that the School Board approve Resolution 2016-17/17, Supporting Ethnic Studies in Seattle Public Schools.

## **4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- a. **Background:** The Seattle School Board Resolution in support of ethnic studies responds to a January 2017 resolution from the Seattle National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which was endorsed by additional community groups. The NAACP resolution aims to eliminate institutional racism in the district and enjoins Seattle Public Schools to expand and improve ethnic studies in the curriculum. The Seattle Public Schools' Resolution aligns with the intent of Policy 0030, Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity, which states in Section H., Recognizing Diversity: "Consistent with state regulations and District policy and within budgetary considerations, the district shall provide materials and assessments that reflect the diversity of students and staff, and which are geared towards the understanding and appreciation of culture, class, language, ethnicity and other differences that contribute to the uniqueness of each student and staff member". While the District is currently under severe budget constraints, the resolution encourages staff to make every attempt to improve and expand ethnic studies.
- b. **Alternatives:** Not approve the resolution. This alternative is not recommended, as Seattle Public Schools Policy No. 0030, Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity, asserts the district's commitment to actions that eliminate opportunity gaps and promote equitable outcomes for Seattle students.
- c. **Research:** Three studies cited below support the positive impact of ethnic studies on the achievement of students of color, as well as the benefits to their white classmates. The

findings of all three demonstrated that participation in ethnic studies had positive effects on the overall achievement of students of color. The studies are:

Sleeter, C.E. (2011). "The academic and social value of ethnic studies: A research review." National Education Association Research Department.

Cabrera, N.L. and Milem, J.F. (2012). "An empirical analysis of the effects of Mexican American Studies participation on student achievement within Tucson Unified School District." University of Arizona, College of Education.

Dee, T. and Penner, E. (2016). "The causal effects of cultural relevance: Evidence from an ethnic studies curriculum." Center for Educational Policy Research, Stanford University.

The studies note that providing curriculum relevant to the life experience and culture of students of color increases interest, facilitates engagement with academic skills related to study of race and equity, which in turn benefits performance in other academic areas, and promotes a positive academic identity for students. The studies take note of positive benefits for white students as well, in widening cultural awareness and strengthening knowledge of the foundational ideals of equality that American democracy is built upon, but sometimes does not always follow.

**5. FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE**

Expenditure:  One-time  Annual  Multi-Year  N/A

Revenue:  One-time  Annual  Multi-Year  N/A

In order to take action on the resolution, to assess what currently exists in the district's curriculum, and to develop recommendations and guidelines for the development of ethnic studies, a task force, jointly facilitated by the Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction (CAI) division and the division of Strategy and Partnerships, will be convened. In addition, teachers, in a work group coordinated by CAI staff, will work to develop ethnic studies resources for utilization by social studies and English-Language Arts teachers. Both the task force and the work group will incur substitute and teacher compensation costs. Because of the current tension around ethnic studies and deep need to build trust and accord among teachers, community members and the District, a consultant will be employed to help facilitate the harmonious participation of all stakeholders, both on the task force as well as the working group developing curriculum. Total costs for the work during the 2016-17 budget year ending on August 31, is estimated at \$88,000. Costs will be divided 50% each by the two departments involved. In the case of CAI, revenue was obtained by re-allocating Title II underspend from the 2015-16 school year.

**6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

With guidance from the District's Community Engagement tool, this action was determined to merit the following tier of community engagement:

- Not applicable
- Tier 1: Inform
- Tier 2: Consult/Involve
- Tier 3: Collaborate

Many community organizations, led by the NAACP, have been actively involved in bringing an ethnic studies resolution forward, as noted in the background section. Staff have received a draft resolution submitted by the NAACP and have had continued conversations with community advocates on this issue. As the resolution states the will of the Seattle School Board, Board members collaborated to draft the resolution. While the process of developing the Board resolution was a Tier 2 consultative process, it is expected that the resulting work products will be developed in a (Tier 3) collaborative manner.

The draft resolution was shared at the first meeting of the Ethnic Studies Task Force for comment, and feedback was incorporated into the final draft submitted to the Curriculum and Instruction Policy Committee. If approved, the community engagement toolkit will be used to implement the resolution.

**7. EQUITY ANALYSIS**

Use of the Racial Equity Analysis Tool indicates that the resolution would have an overall positive benefit for students and families of color in Seattle Public Schools. Ethnic studies would help the development of a strong, academically-focused identity among students of color.

**8. STUDENT BENEFIT**

The resolution will encourage departments, schools and staff to increase their efforts to expand and improve ethnic studies for all students in the Seattle Public Schools. There is emerging research that demonstrates that a well-designed program of ethnic studies, whether incorporated into existing courses or as independent courses, helps improve literacy skills, attitudes toward learning, and overall engagement in academic studies in students of color. Curricula that are relevant to the life experience of students from diverse backgrounds have been shown to have positive impact on the development of a strong identity connected to achievement. For white students, ethnic studies leads to a greater appreciation to democratic ideals of equity and justice that the United States were founded upon.

**9. WHY THE BOARD ACTION IS NECESSARY**

- Amount of contract initial value or contract amendment exceeds \$250,000 (Policy No. 6220)
- Amount of grant exceeds \$250,000 in a single fiscal year (Policy No. 6114)
- Adopting, amending, or repealing a Board policy
- Formally accepting the completion of a public works project and closing out the contract

- Legal requirement for the School Board to take action on this matter
- Board Policy No. \_\_\_\_\_, [TITLE], provides the Board shall approve this item
- Other: Approval of a Board Resolution

**10. POLICY IMPLICATION**

The Ethnic Studies resolution aligns with Policy No. 0030, Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity.

**11. BOARD COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

This motion was discussed at the May 8, 2017 and June 12, 2017 Curriculum and Instruction Policy Committee meetings. The Committee reviewed the motion and recommended the Resolution move forward for consideration by the full Board at the June 28, 2017 Board Meeting.

**12. TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

The resolution will go into effect on approval of the full Board.

**13. ATTACHMENTS**

- 2016-17/17 Resolution Ethnic Studies (for approval)

**Seattle School District #1  
Board Resolution**

**Resolution No. 2016/17-17**



**A RESOLUTION** of the Board of Directors of Seattle School District No. 1, King County, Seattle, Washington to affirm their support for the development, addition, and integration of ethnic studies in the education of the students of Seattle.

**WHEREAS**, School Board Policy No. 0030, Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity, includes a commitment to raise the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students, and eliminate the racial predictability and disproportionality in all aspects of education and its administration; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2016-17, Seattle Public Schools adopted Superintendent SMART goal #2, “Eliminating Opportunity Gaps in Students’ Access to High-Quality Instruction and Learning Supports”, including explicit, focused strategies, and committed direct funding towards this work; and

**WHEREAS**, the School Board is committed to investing in professional development to strengthen employees’ knowledge and skills for eliminating opportunity gaps and other disparities in achievement; and

**WHEREAS**, numerous schools within our district are making individual efforts to enrich their curriculum to reflect the diversity of the Seattle community, but it is not as yet a District-wide mandate; and

**WHEREAS**, Seattle schools are forming Race and Equity Teams, currently thirty-one (31) sites, supported by the Department of Equity and Race Relations to support equity initiatives and provide training in culturally competent and safe identity teaching practices; and

**WHEREAS**, Seattle Public Schools has trained over 200 teachers to-date in the statutorily required “Since Time Immemorial” Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum and has allocated resources to continue this professional development; and

**WHEREAS**, the School Board acknowledges the academic research that associates the overwhelming dominance of Euro-American perspectives in textbooks, curricula and instruction and marginalization of scholarship and accomplishments by people of color as contributors to disengagement from academic learning of many students of color; and

**WHEREAS**, ethnic studies emerged as an interdisciplinary area of study in the 1960s as a result of the Civil Rights movement that focused on the history, culture, language and literature of people of color in the United States and globally; and

**WHEREAS**, the School Board acknowledges that ethnic studies encourage students of all cultures to explore and develop positive aspects of identity on personal, interpersonal and institutional levels; and

**WHEREAS**, research done by the National Education Association and Stanford University found that high school students who participated in an ethnic studies course showed increases in attendance, grades, and credits; and

**WHEREAS**, the School Board recognizes that students whose history and heritage is taught, understood and celebrated will learn better, be more successful and develop positive aspects of identity and that the availability of and emphasis on ethnic studies in our schools will support the District's goal of eliminating the opportunity gaps and help prepare our students for college, career, and life; and

**WHEREAS**, School Board Policy No. 2015, Selection & Adoption of Instructional Materials, requires all instructional materials to be evaluated for cultural relevancy and anti-bias prior to consideration for adoption, and has been applied to recent adoptions for middle school social studies and K-5 English Language Arts; and

**WHEREAS**, Board Policy No. 0030 directs the District to provide curricula that reflect the diversity of students and staff, and which are geared towards the understanding and appreciation of culture, class, language, ethnicity and other differences that contribute to the uniqueness of each student and staff member, consistent with state regulations and District policy and within budgetary limitations;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, be it resolved, by the Board of Directors of Seattle Public Schools as follows:

1. We affirm our belief that the integration and addition of ethnic studies into the education of Seattle Public Schools' students can have a positive impact on eliminating opportunity gaps.
2. We direct that the Superintendent incorporate ethnic studies into the 2017-2018 SMART Goal #2 as a high-leverage gap eliminating strategy.
3. We direct the Superintendent to assess the current state of ethnic studies within SPS, identify available curriculum resources, and document successful practices already in use within schools.
4. We direct the Superintendent to formulate recommendations for improving and codifying ethnic studies instruction and associated professional development that take into account the availability of budget and organizational capacity.
5. We direct the Superintendent to create a schedule in calendar year 2017 and subsequently implement plans for district-wide integration of ethnic studies into existing and future K-12 curriculum, including courses required for graduation, while

taking into consideration budget constraints, and report regularly to the School Board's Curriculum & Instruction Policy Committee on implementation status.

6. We expect Seattle Public Schools' teaching staff to fully utilize existing instructional materials on the history and literary traditions reflective of the diversity of our country and community and to access professional development opportunities that strengthen ethnic studies content and pedagogical knowledge, skill, and relationship building to effectively engage students with the materials.
7. We expect Seattle Public Schools' teaching staff to fully implement state requirements on teaching about the First Peoples of the region, and the history and government of the 29 sovereign tribal nations within the boundaries of Washington State and to access professional development opportunities that strengthen knowledge and skill to effectively engage students with the materials.

ADOPTED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2017

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sue Peters, President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Leslie Harris, Vice-President

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Stephan Blanford, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Burke, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jill Geary, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Betty Patu, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Scott Pinkham, Member

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Larry Nyland, Superintendent  
Secretary, Board of Directors  
Seattle School District No. 1  
King County, WA