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Seattle Public Schools
ETHNIC STUDIES TASK FORCE
Draft of Work To-Date
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1. Background / Context

In response to the advocacy and petitioning by the NAACP, the Seattle Public Schools is considering a Board Resolution aimed at strengthening current Ethnic Studies initiatives, and expanding the reach and impact of Ethnic Studies across the school system. This consideration is also in alignment with the Board's SMART Goal #2: Eliminate Opportunity Gaps in Student's Access – Transforming Adult Attitudes, Beliefs, and Actions, for which the Superintendent is accountable.

The working draft of SPS **Board Resolution #2016/17-17** includes the following:

“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.”

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

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 instructional 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.”

The Ethnic Studies Task Force was chartered by the Superintendent to propose concrete recommendations and a roadmap. Dr. Kyle Kinoshita (SPS's Chief of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction) and Ms. Rita Green (Education Chair, NAACP) are the lead conveners for the Task Force. Dr. Brent Jones also plays a key leadership role for this project; he oversees the implementation of Board Goal #2 on behalf of the Superintendent.

2. Framing Ethnic Studies in Seattle Public Schools

To be successful long-term, the SPS Ethnic Studies initiative, like any other major initiative, must be responsive to the context within which it exists. That means, it must be **locally relevant and globally credible**.

A. Definition *(consolidated/inspired by Robin Harwick, Ph.D.)*
 Ethnic Studies aims to empower all students by making the curriculum relevant to their lives, background and circumstance. It is fundamentally about teaching the truth about and as experienced by all peoples.

Ethnic Studies occurs in all subjects to counteract the impact of systems of oppression (e.g., colonialism, racism, patriarchy, capitalism). Teachers and students work together to understand the creative and intellectual products (**contributions?**) and present-day experiences of diverse communities.

B. Critical Shifts in Values, Knowledge, and Perspective

Shift from ...	Shift to ...
Systemic injustice and marginalization	??
"Whiteness" as dominant "filter" for experiences by diverse populations	??
Identity centered on "whiteness"	??
Colonized/colonizing curriculum	??
Normalized around narrow ("white") viewpoints and contributions	??
??	Critical consciousness about self and others
??	Connected to broader historic contexts, institutions, and power dynamics
??	Understanding self-identity and honoring identity of others

3. Building Blocks of Effective, Sustainable Ethnic Studies Infrastructure

Building blocks are like the body's skeletal structure or the foundation of a house; they provide a framework for organizing ideas and actions, thereby giving a coherent form to the vision, goals and strategies of a team or an organization.

A house built on a vital-few set of strong foundations could last for decades. In the same manner, an Ethnic Studies initiative grounded on the right structure will be “built to last” for a long, long time – long enough to fulfill the aspirational hopes and dreams of its champions and committed supporters.

The *proposed* **Building Blocks** for Seattle Public Schools' Ethnic Studies initiative were derived from several perspectives: from the ideas and preliminary recommendations proposed by the Task Force; by a review of the Ethnic Studies research literature; and transference from best-practices in school and district continuous improvement.

<p><i>Building Block #1:</i> Family and Community Trust, Engagement, & Partnership</p>	<p>Nurturing empowered and successful students is a mutual responsibility of the schools, families, and community. Therefore, building relationships based on trust, mutual respect, open communication, and sharing power are key to success.</p>
<p><i>Building Block #2:</i> Viable Curriculum & Culturally Responsive Instruction</p>	<p><i>What</i> we teach, <i>how</i> we teach, and <i>who</i> does the teaching are critical factors to the success of an Ethnic Studies program. This is, perhaps, more so because of the honesty, vulnerability, and open-mindedness required to address the topics in challenging, yet affirming, ways.</p>
<p><i>Building Block #3:</i> Professional & Leadership Development</p>	<p>Continuous improvement of knowledge and skills of students, teachers, leaders, staff, and community partners is vital for an effective program. Courageous leadership at every level is also key to building a broad-based ownership and a dedicated pool of advocates and champions.</p>
<p><i>Building Block #4:</i> Resource Equity & Accountability for Results</p>	<p>Although <u>no</u> program can be guaranteed <u>all</u> the resources it needs, every program should have an equitable access to the available resources. Accountability drives a performance-oriented organization; therefore, defining clear, measurable goals and clarifying accountability <i>up front</i> will delineate responsibility, facilitate purposeful action and foster a focus on outcomes.</p>

4. Recommendations

This draft document proposes two sets of Recommendations: one for immediate implementation through the 2017-2018 school year, the other for longer-term implementation (2018-2020, and beyond).

The **2017-2018 Recommendations** are intended to kick-start the implementation of the Board Resolution by building on current efforts within SPS and/or with SPS partners. They are also designed to signal a seriousness and sense of urgency about improving the educational experiences of our students, especially the least-well served and the chronically underperforming student groups. Doing *something meaningful now* is symbolically important and substantively timely.

The **longer-term Recommendations** recognize that building and sustaining Ethnic Studies within SPS is a multi-year effort. Outlining the strategic priorities that will produce an infrastructure that is "built to last" can start now ... so that SPS can factor those Recommendations into its longer-term strategic horizon.

The **Four Building Blocks** described in the previous section provide a framework for thinking about and organizing the proposed Recommendations.

A. Proposed 2017-2018 Recommendations

Building Block	Recommendations
<p><i>Building Block #1:</i> Family and Community Trust, Engagement, & Partnership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Implement a process for engaging and embracing parent/neighborhood and community organizations' involvement in curriculum development efforts, with particular attention to transparent outreach in multiple languages. b) Include a family liaison position at the school to coordinate culturally competent engagement. c) Encourage parents and PTA involvement on the RET. d) Implement a process of engaging the voices of students from marginalized groups.
<p><i>Building Block #2:</i> Viable Curriculum & Social Justice Pedagogy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Implement Ethnic Studies at <u>all</u> schools that currently have <i>Race & Equity Teams</i> (RET) (31 in 2016-2017SY). b) Create a <i>Working Group</i> comprised of selected members of the Ethnic Studies Task Force. c) Convene the <i>Working Group</i> to: review current Ethnic Studies Curriculum; acquire/adapt/develop the Ethnic Studies curriculum; select materials to achieve <i>SMART Goal #2</i>; define professional development needs; and plan field trips, as needed. d) Assign the <i>Working Group</i> to recommend resources other than textbooks, and develop curriculum that integrates Ethnic Studies into existing core classes (for full integration into every school during the 2018-2019 SY), with approval by SPS's Chief of CAI.
<p><i>Building Block #3:</i> Professional & Leadership Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Convene at least one Staff meeting each month, led by the RET, and dedicated to continuous professional development about race and equity. b) Dedicate one early-release day each month to race and equity professional development created by the Department of Equity and Race Relations (DERR), Seattle Education Association's (SEA) Center for Race and Equity, invited community-based organizations, student-initiated groups, or each school's RET.
<p><i>Building Block #4:</i> Resource Equity & Accountability for Results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Create/restore at least two more positions in the Department of Equity and Race Relations (DERR) to support the development, collaboration, and growth of Race and Equity Teams (RET) in schools across the district. b) Institute the position of <i>Ethnic Studies Curriculum Coach</i> in schools that currently have a RET (a career-ladder position that comes with a stipend). c) Propose district guidelines to protect educators who are teaching about race and oppression across SPS. d) Require each principal to actively participate in their school's RET.

B. Proposed Longer-term Recommendations

Building Block	Recommendations
<p><i>Building Block #1:</i> Family and Community Trust, Engagement, & Partnership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Provide additional support for community outreach teams, especially those working with traditionally underserved populations and new immigrants. b) Create partnerships between School-Community Partnerships, School & Family Partnerships, CAI, and DERR, and community organizations that represent marginalized student populations. c) Provide Ethnic Studies training and orientation for families and community members (for example: during school Open House, PTA/PTO meetings).
<p><i>Building Block #2:</i> Viable Curriculum & Social Justice Pedagogy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Embed Ethnic Studies in the regular PreK-12 curriculum, including provision of required resources. b) Ensure that RET include student membership to guide development of Ethnic Studies curriculum (taking care that students are inclusive of marginalized student-groups).
<p><i>Building Block #3:</i> Professional & Leadership Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Establish an expectation of mandatory teacher participation in required Ethnic Studies workshop and training programs, and ensure post-training implementation and follow-through. b) Implement a train-the-trainers model to ensure more coordinated, purposeful DERR capacity-building for Race & Equity Teams. c) Implement professional learning communities (PLCs) across all SPS schools, using the RET as highly skilled mentors for schools new to the process. d) Ensure that required Ethnic Studies training/PD are offered at multiple times, including the paid workday (consistent with Collective Bargaining Agreements).
<p><i>Building Block #4:</i> Resource Equity & Accountability for Results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Expand the Race & Equity Team concept to every school. b) Conduct an annual audit of the effectiveness of implementation and impact of Ethnic Studies programs, facilitated by an external evaluator. c) Incorporate evaluations and incentives for principals into Principals' Union contract, to motivate leadership of Ethnic Studies efforts at their schools. d) Develop a comprehensive action plan to address the implications of large-scale rollout of Ethnic Studies, including: making sure it is in PreK and Elementary levels; expanding RET from 31 to 100 schools; capacity-building that flexes to the needs and developmental stage of each school.

C. Conditions for Success

TBD