



1. What is Assembly Bill 101 that requires the Ethnic Studies in California?

[Assembly Bill](#) 101 passed in 2021 requires at least a one-semester course of Ethnic Studies. AB 101 will take effect for the graduating class of 2029–2030. Districts must begin offering the course by the 2025–26 school year. In DUSD, it will be a 9th grade semester long course.

2. What is Ethnic Studies?

Ethnic studies examines the histories, experiences and cultures of various racial and ethnic groups and explores race and ethnicity in various social, cultural, historical, political and economic contexts. The DUSD Ethnic Studies curriculum explores the histories, contributions, and struggles of Latina/o/x, Native Americans, African-Americans, Asian Pacific Islander and Desi Americans.

3. What is the research that supports the benefits of Ethnic Studies?

According to recent research from [Stanford University](#), assignment of grade 9 students to an Ethnic Studies course significantly increased the probability of high school graduation among students near the 2.0 grade point average (GPA) threshold, improved student attendance, and the probability of post-secondary matriculation. According to Thomas S. Dee, a professor at Stanford Graduate School of Education (GSE) and senior fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR), “The study provides ‘compelling and causally credible evidence on the power of this course to change students’ life trajectories.” In the Fall 2023, our pilot course student end of semester survey indicated that over 86% of students earned a ‘C’ or better in the course. Students in the pilot also highly rated the end of the semester course with a 97% satisfaction score.

4. What topics will be covered in Ethnic Studies?

Ethnic Studies is an introductory course designed for students to explore and celebrate the multitude of ways people of all backgrounds contribute to the history of the United States and our ever changing global community. Some topics that students will learn about include four units:

Unit 1: The story of me: a healthy understanding of self

Unit 2: The story of you: a healthy understanding of others

Unit 3: The story of us: a healthy understanding of community

Unit 4: The celebration of all: highlighting contributions of communities of color.



5. Does DUSD’s Ethnic Studies Course teach “Critical Race Theory?”

Critical race theory is NOT synonymous with Ethnic Studies, and a discussion of critical race theory is NOT included in the district’s Ethnic Studies courses. Ethnic Studies more broadly uses critical thinking to nurture an understanding of how different groups have struggled and worked together in the United States, exploring core concepts such as equality, justice, race, and ethnicity.

6. Is Ethnic Studies a required course for graduation at DUSD?

Under California law, all public high schools must begin offering Ethnic Studies courses in the 2025-26 school year. Additionally, the law requires that students graduating in the class of 2030 complete a one-semester course in the subject. Ethnic Studies will be a required course for graduation for all DUSD students graduating in the class of 2030.

7. Why is DUSD implementing an Ethnic Studies requirement ahead of the California state requirement?

Downey Unified School District believes that the process of developing a new course should be one centered on continuous improvement and community partner feedback. Over the past three years, students, teachers, administrators, and community partners have worked collaboratively to develop and refine a curriculum that meets the high standards of quality that our students deserve. Piloting the Ethnic Studies course early has allowed our district to implement curriculum enhancements and address professional development needs. The DUSD Ethnic Studies curriculum was reviewed and adopted by the Downey Unified School Board in March of 2024.

Additional Resources:

- **Assembly Bill 101 - [AB 101 CA Legislation](#)**
- **California School Board Association - [CSBA FAQ](#)**
- **Stanford University Study - [Stanford Research Ethnic Studies Findings](#)**
- **Research Study- [Ethnic Studies Increases Longer - Run Academic Engagement and Attainment](#)**