

9th High School Ethnic Studies Curriculum Adoption

June 4, 2025

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**OAKLAND UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Community Schools, Thriving Students

Our Vision

All OUSD students will find joy in their academic experience while graduating with the skills to ensure they are caring, competent, fully-informed, critical thinkers who are prepared for college, career, and community success.

Our Mission

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) will build a Full Service Community District focused on high academic achievement while serving the whole child, eliminating inequity, and providing each child with excellent teachers, every day.



Ask of the Board

- Approve adoption for revised 9th Ethnic Studies curriculum to support instruction

Outline

- Background
- Curriculum Development Process
- Fiscal Impact
- Supports Needed

Background:

The adoption is an opportunity to:

- Ground in the history and long time commitment in Oakland to Ethnic Studies that is teacher and community developed
- Update and improve the learning and teaching experience for students & teachers. The current Ethnic Studies curriculum was last updated in 2018
- Offer teachers an opportunity to align across sites with Ethnic Studies standards
- Offer rich, engaging primary and secondary sources to all students
- Offer new teachers a strong set of materials to start their careers in OUSD.

Framework for Ethnic Studies

The Ethnic Studies framework was developed by OUSD educators between 2017 - 2022.

Educators developed the guiding pedagogy, key themes driving curriculum and standards to provide clarity for how to teach Ethnic Studies and the learning goals for student knowledge and skills.



Theme 1: Origins, Identity, Culture



Theme 2: Power, Privilege, Oppression



Theme 3: Resistance and Liberation



Theme 4: Action

Ethnic Studies Syllabus & Reader

The [syllabus](#) synthesizes the course with four core units , essential questions, concepts and end of unit assessments. [The reader](#) captures the theories, stories tools and texts that help students unpack the themes and achieve the standards.

Grounded in the four curricular [themes](#) , the four core units explicitly connect to the Ethnic Studies [standards](#):

THEME 1: Identity,
Origins, & Culture

*Unit 0 : What is Ethnic
Studies?*

Unit 1: Who Am I?

ESS 9-1.1,9-1.2,9-1.3,
ESS9-3.1, ESS 9-3.2, ESS9-
4.1

ELA Literacy 9-10.1, 9-10.2,
9-10.6,W9-10.1, W9-10.1a,
SL 9-10.1

THEME 2: Power,
Privilege, & Oppression

*Unit 2: Living Power:
Analyzing Systems to
Empower Change*

ESS 9-2.1, 9-2.2, ESS9-3.1

ELA Literacy 9-10.1, 9-10.2,
9-10.6, W9-10.1, 9-10a.1, SL
9-10.1

THEME 3: Resistance
& Liberation

*Unit 3: Agents of of Our
Own Education*

ESS 9 -2.1, 9-2.3, 9-3.1, 9-
3.2 ,9 -3.3, 9-3.4

ELA Literacy 9-10.1, 9-10.2,
9-10.6,W9-10.1, W9-10.1a,
SL 9-10.1

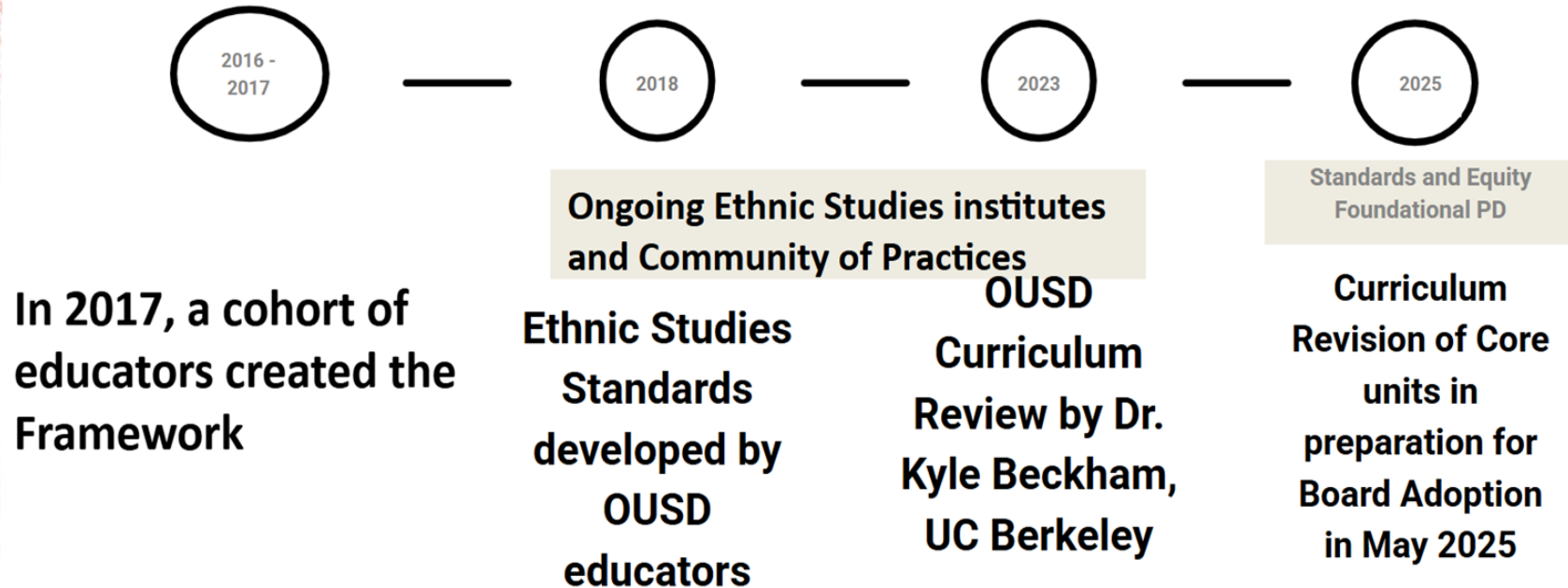
THEME 4: Taking
Action

*Unit 4: Taking Action
Project*

ESS9-4.2, 9-4.3

ELA Literacy 9-10.1, 9-10.2,
9-10.6,W9-10.1, W9-10.1a,
SL 9-10.1

History of Ethnic Studies Curriculum Development



Curriculum Development Process

- **23 - 24 SY Ethnic Studies curriculum audit** by Dr. Kyle Beckham, UC Berkeley resulted in key recommendations.
- **24-25 SY Curriculum Working Group: 7 teachers** representing **5 High schools** met monthly to review the audit results and make recommendations for changes, provide feedback on unit progress development, co-created and revised a Final Syllabus and developed a Reader.
- **Piloting:** Lessons from unit were co-taught by Ethnic Studies TSA and Ethnic Studies teacher at Oakland High, followed by a student led listening session and Ethnic Studies department debrief.
- **Additional stakeholder input:** Feedback from students, families and community members was sought online and in person. Ethnic Studies educators were explicitly sought out to provide their expert review.
 - [Family Engagement event](#) in March
 - [Community Survey](#) in May

Outcomes Addressed in Curriculum Development

- Focus on literacy strategies and high quality tasks
- Student centered for high level of student collaboration and discourse
- Skillful language and literacy Instruction
- If taught with integrity, students are actively thinking, speaking and asking questions.
- Focus on evidenced based writing
- Curriculum usability and accessibility
- Clarity of course concepts and pacing with syllabus

Strengths

- Ethnic Standards standards and Common Core aligned curriculum
- Rigor & increased opportunity for building language & literacy skills.
- Access to primary and secondary sources, informational and narrative writing in the Reader
- Focus on building students' skills to consistently & effectively communicate orally and in writing
- Space for student reflection and revision of work built into the curriculum
- Intentional lessons built in to build community beyond the first semester.
- Units are organized thematically to provide flexibility within the content to incorporate various racial groups
- Overall aligned with secondary instructional goals

Strengths of Syllabus - Teacher Feedback

“Easy to read, clear division of units, core texts look interesting and relevant”

“I appreciate the proposed order of the units. It, for the most part, reflects what I am already doing. I have not done all of the unit tasks. I have done a version of them or only a few of them. I think we are looking at a very strong introduction Ethnic Studies course.”

“The syllabus is clear and easy to follow.”

Trial Lessons: Outcomes and Feedback



- Clear learning goals for every lesson
- Student discussion in every lesson
- Opportunity to fine tune lessons in the moment to adjust the needs for students which increased modelling and reducing quantity of tasks.
- Increase student engagement through question formulation technique to allow for students to generate questions at the beginning of the unit.
- Daily exit tickets provided opportunity for student reflection on the lessons

Trial Lessons: Teacher and Student Reflection

Jenny Clark, Oakland High School Ethnic Studies teacher says, “ Good thing was that the lessons included student talk, but it may have cut down on time for the writing tasks. Needed more time for the writing tasks. However, the goal is to slow down the pacing so they have the time to complete the writing.”

Student “ Something that worked well was having a group to share and collaborate with. I think it was well planned just need more time for the paper.”

Student “What worked well for me today in this lesson is getting others peoples perspective on what they think power is.”

Student “ I need more options in sharing what Ive learned - art, drawing, creativity - I want to be able to show what I know in different ways”

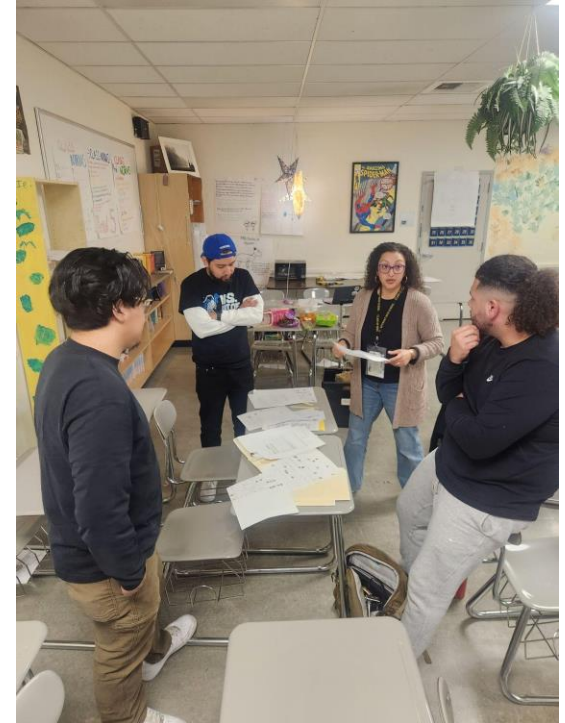
Student, “ What if we broke the Four I's of Oppression concepts one day at a time, with like more examples? That would help me really understand it.”



Trial Unit Overview with Oakland High Ethnic Studies Educators

Educator Medina, “ I am interested in using it next year, liked that we tested four of them and wrote down areas that didn’t work well. More questions will arise as I start using it more.”

Educator Kurose, “Looking at the lessons, I think it’s rigorous, lots of opportunities for student talk. Liked seeing the questions students are asking, like that strategy and asking their questions, show their interest in what they want to learn and demonstrate their agency.”



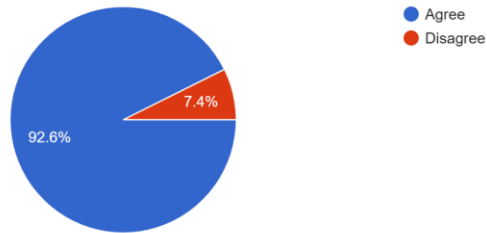
Ethnic Studies Landscape

- In 2025, there are currently 27 Ethnic Studies teachers in 9th grade across all high schools.
- Many of these teachers also teach another subject area, including History, English and Math!
- In addition to Ethnic Studies, Latino Student Achievement and African American Male Achievement offer affinity courses at most high school sites. These courses align in Ethnic Studies values and framework. Finally, there are a limited number of Advanced Ethnic Studies courses, such as Chicano Studies, African American Studies.
- Three Ethnic Studies courses adapted for newcomer student access.

Supporting Data - Belonging and Well Being

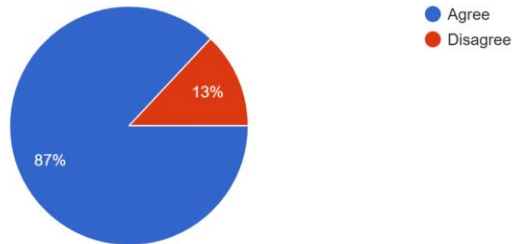
My Ethnic Studies class is helping me to understand people who are different from me; who have different points of views, different cultures, and different communities.

1,047 responses



I feel like I belong in my Ethnic Studies class.

1,047 responses

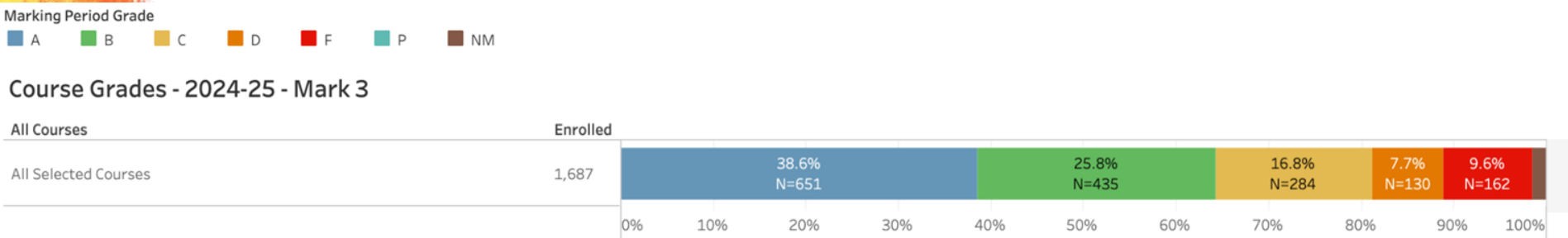


In Fall 2024, over 1,000 9th grade students across 9 high schools shared their early reflections on Ethnic Studies.

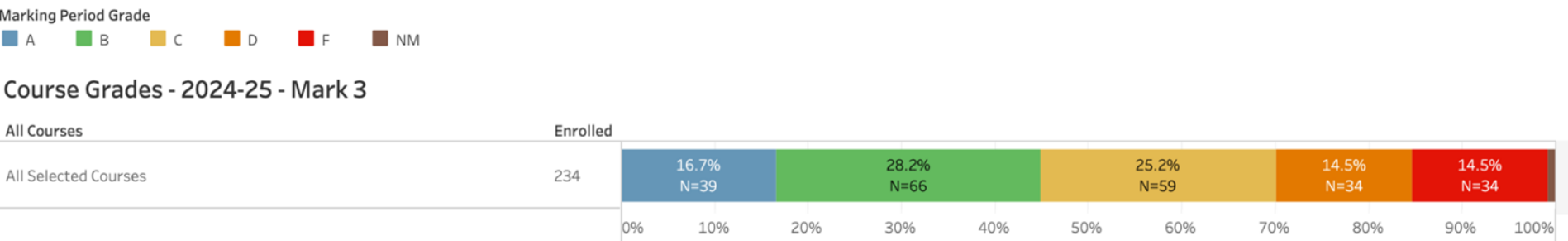
Ethnic Studies is bringing values of belonging, respect for different cultures and points of view to the 9th grade experience in OUSD.

Supporting Data - Current Ethnic Studies Grades

General Student Population



African American Males



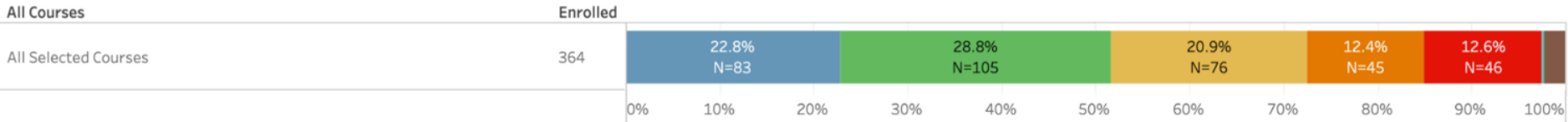
Supporting Data - Grades

Latino Males

Marking Period Grade

A B C D F P NM

Course Grades - 2024-25 - Mark 3

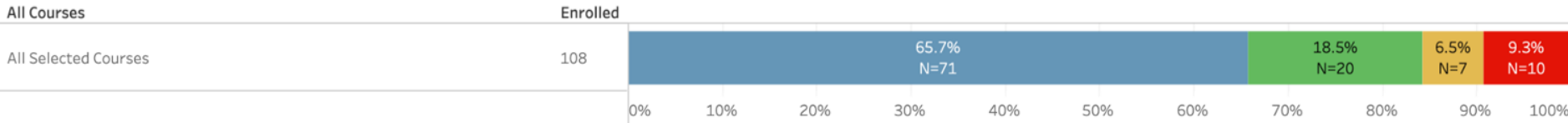


Newcomer Population

Marking Period Grade

A B C F

Course Grades - 2024-25 - Mark 3



Support for Implementation

- Summer Standards and Equity Institute to support teachers in being trained in the new units
- Fall 2025 committee of teachers to support with Implementation at their school sites.
- Ensure ongoing PD to unpack and understand the curriculum at regular and timely intervals in the school year.
- Focused training on student engagement, literacy strategies and bringing teachers up to date on current scholarship on Ethnic Studies.

Ask of the Board

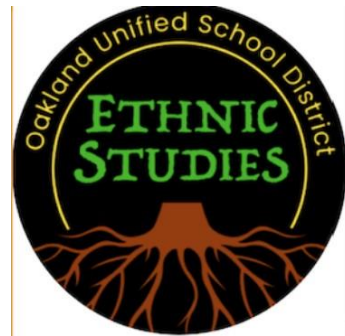
- Approve adoption for revised 9th Ethnic Studies syllabus and supplemental materials to support instruction



Thank you!

For more information, please reach out to:

ethnicstudies@ousd.org



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Additional Slides

Not part of presentation
For additional information and/or in
response to Board member questions



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