

Resolution (draft) concerning the scope and structure of TUSD's Ethnic Studies programs and maintaining political balance in classrooms.

Whereas:

The traditional high school core curriculum substantially ignores the experience and contributions of many ethnic minorities.

The Mexican-American Studies (MAS) courses are meant to fill at least the part of this gap which pertains to Mexican-Americans, but in any given year fewer than 5% of TUSD's high school students take any of the MAS classes. The MAS classes typically attract enrollment far below their capacity and are about half the size of the regular core classes.

According to certain measures, among certain sample populations, staff analysis dated 3/11/11 shows that students who take MAS classes outperform those who do not. If this relationship is causal, then, averaging over the past three years, the MAS courses have helped about 10 more TUSD juniors per year to pass the AIMS reading test (with smaller gains for the writing and math tests) and have similarly helped about 10 more seniors to graduate.

The MAS teachers and curriculum have increased many students' motivation to succeed, by the students' own convincing testimony.

The annual cost of the MAS program is slightly over \$1 million, several times the cost of educating the MAS students in standard core classes. The combined annual cost of the other three Ethnic Studies programs is about \$1.6 million.

TUSD has not systematically evaluated how the four Ethnic Studies programs affect student achievement. Collectively, those programs have had no apparent success in closing the achievement gaps.

Students who are Latino but not Mexican-American fall outside the purview of TUSD's current Ethnic Studies programs.

The state's requirements for the high school Social Sciences core are long and specific and will be augmented in academic year 2011-12 by a new Economics requirement. There is flexibility in how to cover the required topics but also an inherent limit on how much time can be spent covering particular events and themes. Whether the MAS Social Studies courses have maintained adequate coverage of the core topics is questionable.

The state's requirements for the high school English core emphasize skills but also include familiarity with American, British, and world literature, classic works of literature, and major literary periods and traditions.

The MAS courses are deliberately founded upon a specific political and educational philosophy. A central component is "a counter-hegemonic curriculum." Students who rely on these courses to satisfy core requirements may thus hear, like those who rely on traditional core courses, a relatively narrow range of viewpoints.

Many persons have expressed concern that some MAS instructors display and promote a strong political bias while teaching or otherwise representing the district; these concerns include strongly encouraging students in the MAS classes to participate in political activities which have a consistent partisan orientation.

Therefore, the TUSD Governing Board resolves that staff should recommend policies and undertake actions to achieve the following goals, in TUSD's high schools:

The traditional core sequences in Social Sciences and English should be strengthened by adding a significant component which focuses on the contributions and viewpoints of Mexican-Americans and other ethnic minorities, especially in this region, to create a multi-cultural perspective. The staff of the current Ethnic Studies departments should help to develop this component. The new core material cannot come at the expense of adequate treatment of the topics required by the state.

The MAS courses should continue to be offered, in accordance with student demand.

Commencing with the 2011-12 academic year, the MAS courses cannot be used to satisfy the state's core Social Science requirements. The courses used to satisfy those requirements should be taught by regular high school faculty and expose all students to a common set of diverse viewpoints. This change shall not affect the Social Science core credit earned by students who took the MAS courses in previous semesters.

Staff should develop a recommendation concerning whether a student should be able to use MAS literature courses to satisfy part of the state's core English requirement and whether this would require any changes in those courses. The MAS literature courses shall continue to be an option for satisfying the state's core English requirement, for academic year 2011-12.

The Ethnic Studies departments (however titled) should adopt academic support for individual students as a primary mission, using proven models. Staff should develop instruments and methods to evaluate these support programs and to determine whether they are actually improving students' academic results and providing satisfactory return on the resources invested.

These support programs should extend their scope to serve students of Latino, African American, Native American, Asian and Pan-Asian background, students who are refugees, and other minority populations.

Total funding for the Ethnic Studies programs should be increased, to reflect these expanded roles, as finances allow. The relative funding of the programs should be adjusted to reduce the disparity between these funding levels and the composition of the district's student population.

Staff should study ways to reduce administrative overhead in the Ethnic Studies departments, potentially including consolidation of functions.

Staff should consider the appropriate role of the internal and external compliance officers in monitoring the achievement of these goals and, if appropriate, make recommendations to the Board.

Staff, working with the Board's policy subcommittee, should recommend new policy, regulations, or procedures to reinforce Board policy IMB on teaching sensitive issues, in particular to ensure that classroom treatment of political topics is reasonably balanced. It is impractical to require absolute objectivity, but students should be exposed to and encouraged to express, evaluate, and compare a wide range of viewpoints, without being steered toward one side of current policy debates or controversial issues.

Staff should require teachers to keep copies of their course examinations on file for a set number of years, for the purpose of examination and analysis.

Staff should make a progress report to the Board in January 2012.