


Act 1 of 2019: Ethnic Studies and Social Equity Working Group

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Remembering the Why

Remembering the Why: 1999

The Vermont Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights published a landmark report titled “Racial Harassment in Vermont Public Schools.” It found racial harassment appeared to be:

“pervasive in and around the State’s public schools”

...and its elimination was

“not a priority among school administrators, school boards, elected officials, and State agencies charged with civil rights enforcement.”

Remembering the Why: 2017

The **Act 54 report** on “Racial Disparities in State Systems,” issued by the Attorney General and Human Rights Commission Task Force, concluded:

“Education is one of the five state systems in which racial disparities persist and need to be addressed.”

- We need to **change the culture of our state** with regard to race
- Suggests we **“teach children from an integrated curriculum** that fairly represents both the contributions of People of Color (as well as Indigenous people, women, people with disabilities, etc.), while fairly and accurately representing our history of oppression of these groups.”

Remembering the Why: 2019

Key findings from the **2019 YRBS** include:

- LGBT youth are **2x as likely (31% vs 15%) to have been bullied** in the last 30 days than their heterosexual peers.
- LGBT youth are **3.5x as likely (38% vs 14%) to have experienced unwanted sexual contact** in their lifetime than their heterosexual peers.
- LGBT youth are **3x as likely (13% vs 5%) to have skipped school in the last 30 days because of feeling unsafe** than their heterosexual peers.
- LGBT youth are **4.5x as likely (19% vs 4%) to have attempted suicide in the last 12 months** than their heterosexual peers.

What is Act 1?

2019

An Act Related to the Ethnic and Social Equity Standards for Public Schools

- A 2019 Vermont law
- Act 1 was advocated for by a coalition of BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities to further education justice in VT
- **CENTER**: inclusion, culturally responsive, anti-racism, anti-discrimination and equity

Who is the Act 1 Working Group?



- State leaders in education, high school students, civil society advocates, and community members who care deeply about education, justice, inclusivity, and social and racial equity in Vermont.
- Half were selected by the Education Justice Coalition (DBA Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools) to represent diverse communities and half are appointed by the state and include education stakeholders in Vermont (representatives of VPA, VSA, VSBA, VT-NEA, VCLA, VISA, VHRC, Office of Racial Equity).

Education Quality Standards

Definition: Education Quality Standards

A governmental rule (in the form of a manual) authorized by the State Board of Education, which impacts all Vermont schools. A broad, multi-faceted guide, the EQS, broadly speaking:

(a) articulates important school values, objectives, and aspirations;

and

(b) provides direction to school districts as they develop curriculum and choose learning materials and instructional practices.

EQS ...is...

Educational Quality
Standards



EQS

then & now

2013 2022

Transformation of Vermont schools,
most pointedly with respect to:

- direct instruction
- curriculum
- expanded anti-discrimination protections
- professional development of school staff
- flexible pathways to learning
- school board policies and administrative leadership
- school-community collaboration
- restorative justice practices.

The Act 1 Working Group reviewed EQS to make sure it guides schools to:



Promote critical thinking around the history, contributions, and viewpoints of many different ethnic and social groups



Encourage students to explore questions about ethnic and social identities as well as issues around equality and racism



Provide welcoming spaces for all students



Develop pathways for families to talk about their child's experiences related to race, ethnic, or social group identity at school

Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose:

“The purpose of these rules is to ensure that all students in Vermont public schools and approved independent schools are afforded educational opportunities that are substantially equal in quality, equitable, anti-racist, culturally responsive, anti-discriminatory, and inclusive, and enable them to achieve or exceed the standards approved by the State Board of Education.”

Ways the Updates Support All Students

The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Prepare students to work, train, and learn in socially and culturally inclusive spaces
- ✓ Create learning spaces that improve student wellbeing including opportunities for movement in the classroom
- ✓ Create classroom cultures based on restorative justice that center the values of relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration
- ✓ Provide students with high-quality, evidence-based reading instruction in the early grades

Ways the Updates Support All Students (Continued)

The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Have administrators take part in professional development that will help further equity in the supervisory union/school district
- ✓ Offer counseling services that are respectful of students' identities and support students who experience or witness racism or discrimination
- ✓ Engage students, parents/legal guardians, and community members when developing Ethnic Studies programming and resources embedded across the curriculum
- ✓ Teach about ways different social, cultural, racial, linguistic, ethnic and Indigenous groups have throughout history and currently contributed to building and strengthening democracy in the US and globally

Ways the Updates Support Students Living in Poverty

The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Recognize and reduce any financial barriers to accessing flexible pathways such as out-of-school learning opportunities
- ✓ Further economic justice by asking schools to teach about and help students understand why everyone should have economic opportunities

Ways the Updates Support BIPOC Students

The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Create opportunities for educators to explore their own identities and biases
- ✓ Create learning environments where students can explore ethnic, cultural, and racial perspectives and issues within and beyond the classroom
- ✓ Collect data to see if there is disproportional representation in school programs such as suspension and detentions, special education, or advanced placement courses

Ways the Updates support LGBTQIA+ Students

The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Develop flexible pathways that understand and respect students' LGBTQIA+ identity
- ✓ Provide access to counseling on gender identity and gender transition
- ✓ Provide health services that are respectful to students' lived experiences as LGBTQIA+ young people



Ways the Updates Support Students with Disabilities

The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

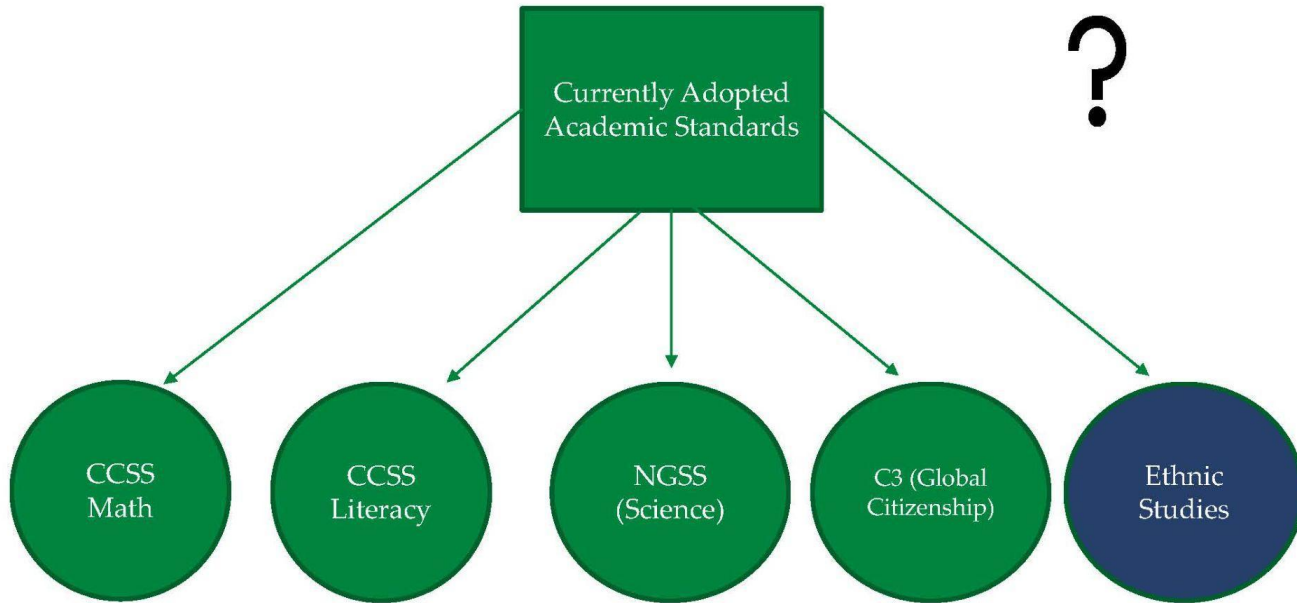
- ✓ Providing learning experiences designed for neurodiversity that include multiple ways for students to access learning
- ✓ Use using educational and assistive technology to reduce barriers to learning
- ✓ Offer flexible pathway learning opportunities that recognize the lived experience of students who are neurodiverse and/or have disabilities
- ✓ Have a collection of accessible print, multimedia, alternate format instructional materials (e.g. MP3 audio files, electronic braille, and other forms of E- texts)

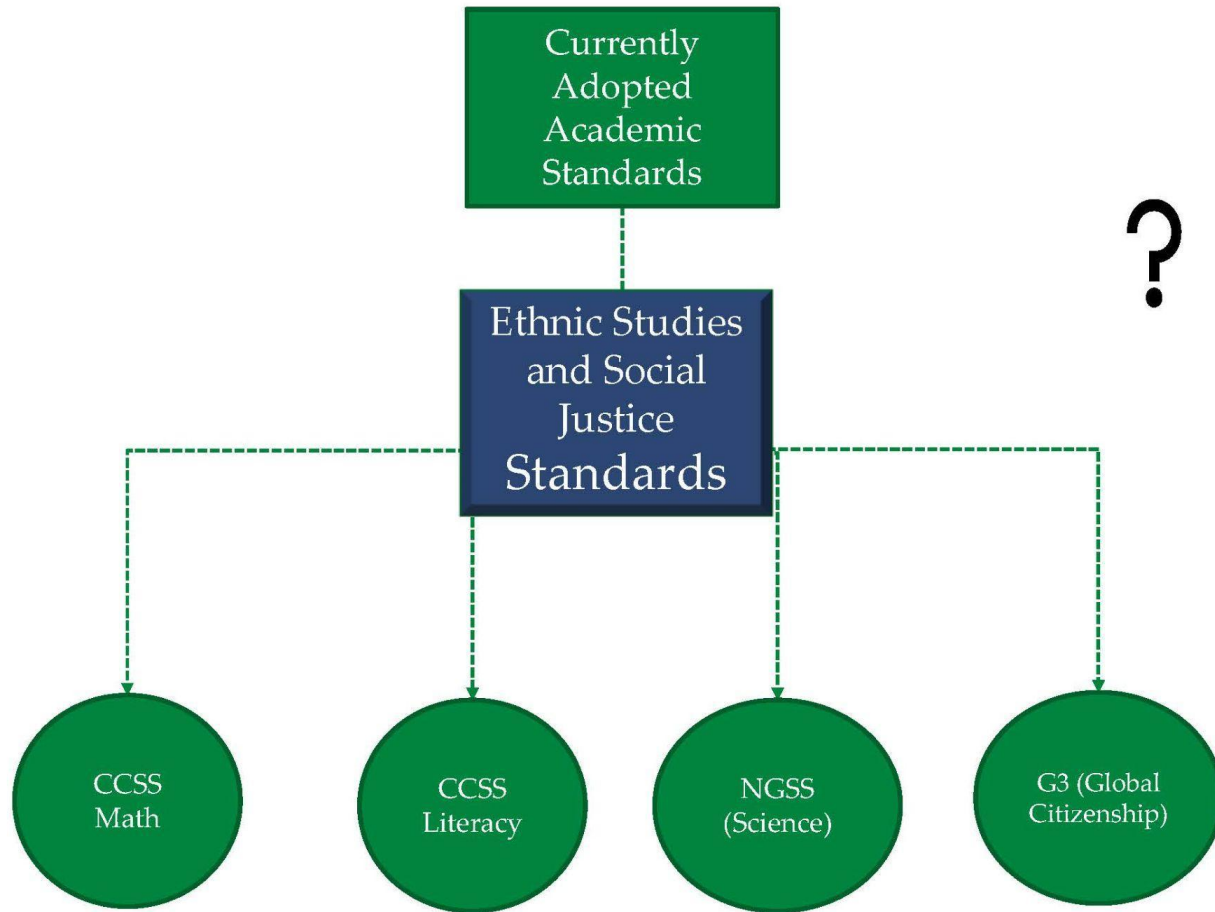


Ways the Updates Support Multilingual Students

The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Communicate to parents/legal guardians about opportunities for flexible pathways in ways that are culturally and linguistically inclusive including using their home language
- ✓ Communicate the technical center eligibility requirements to students, staff, and parents/legal guardians in inclusive ways such as using the home language
- ✓ Provide multilingual students programs and accommodations that make sure multilingual students have access to grade-level learning so they can move through the grades and graduate
- ✓ Make sure multilingual students have access to all instruction and school-based programs by providing interpretation, technology, and other services





What are we working on now?





Overview of Ethnic Studies Frameworks

Act 1 Working Group: Framework vs. Curriculum
Slides prepared by Michael Martin



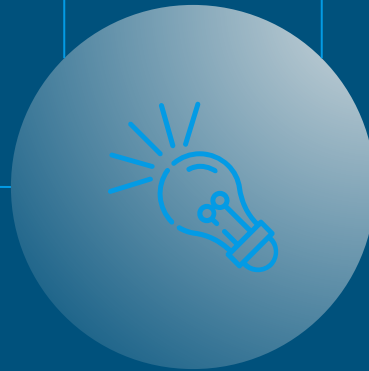
Culturally Sustaining-Responsive Education Framework: The 4 Principles

History

Civic Action

Identity

Power



The New York State Education Department Culturally Sustaining-Responsive Education Framework (with sections for students, teachers, school leaders, district leaders, families & community members, higher education faculty & administrators, and education department policymakers)

Washington State Ethnic Studies Framework

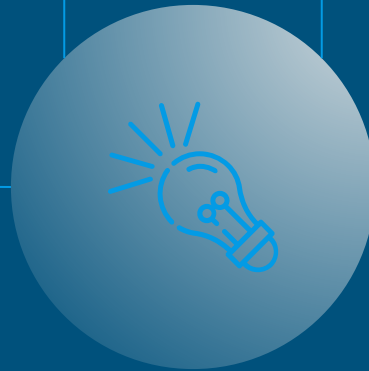
The 4 Domains

History

Civic Action

Identity

Power



[The Washington State Ethnic Studies Framework](#)
(also: ES Self-Assessment for Districts & Educators,
Grade-Level Crosswalk with Social Studies Standards)

Culturally & Historically Responsive Education: The 5 Pursuits

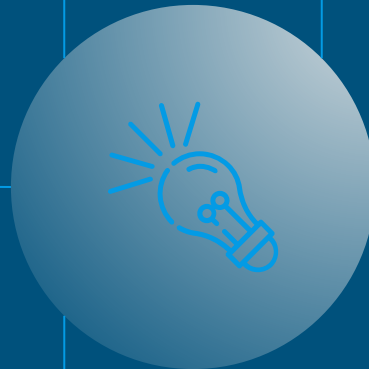
Identity

Skills

Intellect

Joy

Criticality



Dr. Ghody Muhammad's CHRE Framework
Sample CHRE Model Learning Goals

Learning for Justice: Social Justice Standards

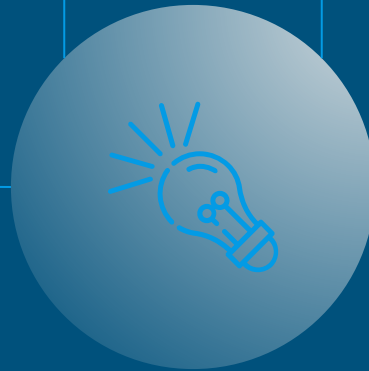
The 4 Domains

Identity

Justice

Diversity

Action



Social Justice Domains & Anchor Standards
(also: Grade-Level Outcomes & Scenarios)

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

refers to teaching that, among other things, demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of students' personal cultural knowledge and uses students' prior knowledge and culture in teaching.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

helps students become academically successful, cultivates cultural competence by helping students accept and affirm their cultural identities, and develops critical consciousness.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

maintains heritage, values, cultural and linguistic pluralism. It has the explicit goal of sustaining and supporting bi-/multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association
([Caldera, 2021](#))

“The term *culturally sustaining educational practices*, as theorized by Paris & Alim (2017), best encapsulates IDRA’s vision for equitable schooling for students of color. *Educational practices* emphasizes the need to include curriculum, climate, programming and policies, rather than just teaching or *pedagogies*.

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association
([Caldera, 2021](#))



Policy Recommendations

What can the legislature do to support this work?

- Encourage the State Board to adopt the recommended changes for formal rulemaking
- Consider the work of the Act 1 Working Group when working on any new instructional initiatives
- Explore whether the Agency of Education has the capacity to support the field in this work