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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
53rd Legislature, 2nd Session, 2018

Bill Number	<u>SJM20</u>	Sponsor	<u>Lopez</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.209958.2</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SRC/SEC</u>
Short Title	<u>Volunteer School District Ethnic Studies</u>		
Analyst	<u>Terrazas</u>	Original Date	<u>2/2/18</u>
		Last Updated	<u></u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Joint Memorial 20 (SJM20) requests the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), the Public Education Department (PED), and the University of New Mexico (UNM) College of Education to convene a task force of community, academic, and professional partners to identify the next steps required to develop ethnic studies curricula in volunteer school districts, including the development of PED approved academic standards.

FISCAL IMPACT

Legislative memorials do not carry appropriations.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

According to the National Education Association (NEA), ethnic studies includes units of study, courses, or programs that are centered on the knowledge and perspectives of an ethnic or racial group, reflecting narratives and points of view rooted in that group's lived experiences and intellectual scholarship.

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) began offering ethnic studies courses at all 13 of its high schools in August 2017. Students in 11th and 12th grade can choose courses with Hispanic-American, African-American, Native-American, and Asian-American content as English and social studies elective options. Though actual costs are unclear, APS originally expected the classes to cost about \$30 thousand, including training, books, and materials. Prior to this, only three of the school district's high schools offered courses focused on minority experiences – Chicano studies and Mexican-American literature at Albuquerque High School and Highland High School and Native American Studies at Del Norte High School.

A 2016 study by Stanford Graduate School of Education (GSE) found that participation in a high school ethnic studies course improved the attendance and academic performance of students who were at risk of dropping out. Attendance jumped by 21 percentage points, grade point average by

1.4 points, and credits earned by 23. Students in ethnic-studies courses covering discrimination, stereotypes, and social-justice movements earned 23 more credits toward graduation. The four-year pilot ethnics studies program showed the effects were positive across male, female, Asian, and Hispanic groups of students, with the largest gains found among boys and Hispanic students and in the subjects of math and science. A similar study on Tucson Unified School District's Mexican American Studies (MAS) program, before it was eliminated in 2012, showed MAS participation was significantly and positively related to passing Arizona state standardized tests and high school graduation. These studies suggest culturally relevant pedagogy can have real benefits for students.

NEA agrees ethnic studies are valuable to boosting student performance, with the caveat that significant results can only be achieved when ethnic studies curricula is well designed and well taught. The NEA states that to see significant improvements, ethnic studies teachers must be able to relate well with their students, believe in students' academic abilities, and know ethnic studies content and perspectives well. Results are more significant if teachers are members of the same ethnic background of most of their students. NEA also adds both students of color and white students have benefited academically and socially from ethnic studies.

Ethnic studies requirements in other states. Oregon is the only state to require ethnic studies curriculum for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. In 2017, the governor signed a bill that requires the Oregon Department of Education to convene an advisory group consisting of 14 individuals, each from a diverse background, to “identify where current statewide social studies standards fail to recognize the histories, contributions, and perspectives of ethnic minorities and social minorities” by June 2018. The advisory group is tasked with developing ethnic studies standards to be adopted by 2020 for implementation in schools set for 2021.

Indiana passed a law in 2017 that requires all high schools to offer ethnic and racial studies as an elective course at least once every school year.

California passed a law in 2016 that directs the state's Instructional Quality Commission to convene a group of scholars and school teachers to create a model ethnic studies curriculum for the state's high schools.

In one Connecticut school district, high school students will be required to take a course in African-American Studies, Latin American Studies, or Perspectives on Race to graduate beginning in the 2021-2022 school year.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The task force would need to report its findings to LESC by November 1, 2018.

Copies of SJM20 would need to be transmitted to the LESC chair, the secretary of public education, the dean of the UNM College of Education, PED for distribution to all department offices, state agencies and organizations mentioned in this memorial, and others PED believes would be interested in the task force and its charge.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Indian Affairs Department reports the secretary of their department may be unable to support the task force requirements and responsibilities, due to limited existing resources and budget.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Are there existing ethnic studies academic standards?

Does ethnic studies include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer studies?

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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