

Coachella Valley Unified School District



Golden Bell Application 2022

CVUSD a National Leader in the Implementation of Ethnic Studies

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Ethnic Studies was born out of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's, in order to challenge and dismantle the inequalities and inequities faced by many students of color in the K-20 Educational system. Amid the 1960s, an era of the social transformation, college students of color in the California Bay Area, began to organize themselves to address the issues of representation on college campuses. Merritt Junior College was the first established "Black Studies" program, followed by San Francisco State University and then later at University of California, Berkeley. This change ranged from demanding faculty of color and more representative curriculum being taught to all students. They demanded a more critical holistic view to the American social, political and cultural history and literature of people of color. What sprang forth, was Ethnic Studies: "The interdisciplinary and comparative study of the social, cultural, political, and economic expression and experience of U.S. racialized ethnic groups and U.S. racialization— together with the humanities and the social sciences potentially provided a matrix yielded clarification, accuracy, and connection among human difference" (Butler, 2001, p. 21).

Below is a display of our Timeline for the implementation of Ethnic Studies at CVUSD:

- Spring-Summer 2015 – Stakeholders organized to make Ethnic Studies a graduation requirement at CVUSD.
- November 2015 – CVUSD Board approves Ethnic Studies Resolution and mandates ES graduation requirement for class of 2020.
- December 2015 – CVUSD became the 5th school district in the state to pass Ethnic Studies to be a graduation requirement and was the first rural school district in the state with this Board approval.

- 2016-2017 – Curriculum planning (Four courses using Ethnic Studies frameworks)
- 2017-2018– Implementation of all four courses & creation of nine courses (Four of which are weighted as UCOP honor course). Staff participated in six days of professional development, with guest professors.
- 2018 – CVUSD Approves an Ethnic Studies Seal
- 2019-22 – CVUSD Offers 15 A-G Ethnic Studies Courses and Special Education courses

Students enjoy and engage in culturally relevant research, activities, and discussions. Ethnic studies classes allow for a growing need for “culturally relevant pedagogy.” In the Stanford University Study (2016), *The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence from an Ethnic Studies Curriculum*, the authors tested the causal effects of an ethnic studies curriculum piloted in several San Francisco high schools. They researched 8th grade students with GPAs below a threshold who enrolled in Ethnic Studies in their ninth grade. Their results indicated that due to enrolling in this class, their attendance rate increased by 21 percentage points, GPA by 1.4 grade points, and credits earned by 23. These surprisingly large effects are consistent with the hypothesis that the course reduced dropout rates and suggests that culturally relevant teaching, when implemented in a supportive, high-fidelity context, can provide effective support to at-risk students.

CVUSD Ethnic Studies engages our students in a critically rigorous academic discourse that challenges repressive hegemonic constructs in order to examine their own standing in a highly globalized world so they can build collective power and transform our community to become critically conscious and reimagine a more just society. On September 21, 2021, the University of Michigan research team traveled to Coachella Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) to conduct data collection for the Ethnic Studies and Student Development Project agreed upon by the CVUSD and University of Michigan ACCME lab. In total, 457 freshmen students completed the online survey across the two high schools participating in the study: CVHS and DMHS. Please see Table 1 for the demographic breakdown of the sample and site specific breakdowns. Of the 457 students who completed the survey, 19 of these students also participated in focus group interviews.

Importantly, baseline confirmatory factor analyses revealed that our survey measures are holding up well in this sample. Confirmatory Factor Analysis is a rigorous statistical procedure that clarifies whether a set of survey questions properly measure a particular construct (e.g., school engagement), and thus provides evidence of construct validity for our survey measures.

Means at baseline revealed that students started the school year with fairly high levels of school engagement, as indicated with average scores above 3 on a 4-point scale. Furthermore, students reported low to medium scores on the critical consciousness variables (i.e., critical reflection; critical agency; critical action). Lastly, regarding ethnic-racial identity variables (i.e., ERI centrality; ERI exploration), students reported medium levels of centrality and exploration. Altogether, these initial findings suggest that students are properly interpreting the survey questions and have room to grow in the primary variables of interest over the school year. CVUSD will be receiving the summary readout and data from the University of Michigan Study in the Fall 2022.

Table 2. Baseline Means and Standard Deviations for Primary Variables of Interest

Construct	Example Item	Response Range	Combined Sample Mean (SD)
School engagement (Cognitive)	“I look over my schoolwork and make sure it is done well.”	1 (Not at all like me) - 4 (Very much like me)	3.07 (0.71)
School Engagement (Emotional)	“I am happy at school.”	1 (Not at all like me) - 4 (Very much like me)	3.02 (0.66)
Critical Reflection	“Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get good jobs.”	1 (strongly disagree) - 6 (strongly agree)	3.40 (1.46)
Critical Agency	“There are ways that I can contribute to my community.”	1 (strongly disagree) - 6 (strongly agree)	4.71 (0.87)
Critical Action	“Joined in a protest march, political demonstration, or political meeting.”	1 (Never did this) - 5 (At least once a week)	1.24 (0.51)
Ethnic-Racial Identity (Centrality)	“I feel close to other people of my ethnic group.”	1 (strongly disagree) - 6 (strongly agree)	4.34 (1.15)
Ethnic-Racial Identity (Exploration)	“I have participated in activities that have taught me about my ethnicity.”	1 (Does not describe me at all) - 4 (Describes me very well)	2.24 (0.84)

CVUSD has been recognized multiple times in the media: **The Desert Sun**. Coachella Valley Unified School District added ethnic studies as a graduation requirement in a move that makes sense for many reasons.

Setting the new requirement is a good local control effort to help boost graduation rates in the district. Class of 2020 students and beyond will have to pass a year-long course during high school in order to receive a diploma.

In CVUSD, the student body is 97 percent Latino, 94% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, and 43% the students in the district are English Learners. The expectation is that a culturally relevant education component will benefit this student body immensely.

U.S. history teacher Alfonso Taboada said ethnic studies spurred him to go to college after he failed to graduate from high school. "A lot of the issues that we deal with, behavior and disengagement, can be related to (students) not being connected to the curriculum," Taboada told The Desert Sun's Kristen Hwang. They don't see themselves in the curriculum, so they reject school in general."

Currently, our CVUSD Ethnic Studies team is working with our four local federally-recognized tribes; Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, Cabazon Band of Cahuilla Indians, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, and Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians. The collaboration is to integrate our local native Cahuilla Histories into our Ethnic Studies curriculum.

A final statement from our current Superintendent, Dr. Luis Valentino: As a legal mandate, Ethnic Studies culminates a decades long journey by Assemblyman Jose Medina, D-Riverside, and advocates across California to establish a curriculum that reflects the state's diverse population, but Ethnic Studies is much more than that. It is an opportunity to create a social justice agenda that honors and advances the ethnic heritage, legacies, and contributions made by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

At a time when the political debate and polarization make their way from the chambers to the classroom, our educators have focused on implementing a more culturally sustaining pedagogy that serves as a targeted universalistic construct which "undermines active or passive forces of structural exclusion and marginalization."