

ATF Motion to Support K-12 Ethnic Studies in APS  
by Jeanette Jimenez (Emerson ES), Zayda Raimundi (Madison MS) and Rosemary Hood (La Cueva HS) on behalf of the  
ATF/Community Task Force on Ethnic Studies  
Discussion item-December 4, 2018

Whereas, we believe that to achieve educational equity, the root causes of inequities must be addressed; and,

Whereas, knowledge about human differences and interconnectedness is a basic requirement for active citizenship in a diverse, pluralistic and equitable society; and

Whereas, if public schools are to promote a just and equitable society, they have a responsibility to teach all students to think critically about prevailing societal norms; and

Whereas, a guiding principal for Ethnic Studies is to equip students with a critical lens to see the world and their place in it; and,

Whereas, the ATF/Community Task Force on Ethnic Studies in APS defines Ethnic Studies as the interdisciplinary study of difference, power and marginalization that addresses uneven power dynamics in society by centering the experiences and knowledge of historically marginalized groups; and,

Whereas, the ATF/Community Task Force on Ethnic Studies in APS further defines Ethnic Studies as a humanizing teaching and learning practice and philosophy where students, educators, families and communities are treated equitably, heard, valued, centered and empowered; and,

Whereas, Ethnic Studies encompasses classroom practices that embed, but are not limited to, the following:

- Situating students' family, community, knowledge and culture at the center of learning.
- Utilizing culturally relevant texts, focusing on the resiliency of marginalized communities (as opposed to victimization), and openly discussing issues of power and privilege as they relate to classroom texts, historical events, current events, statistics, etc.
- Including historically relevant ways of learning to meaningfully engage students (i.e. storytelling, call and response, cultural arts, etc.) and incorporating historical and modern role models of otherwise marginalized people and issues in the American experience.
- Reframing dominant narratives about race, culture, language, sexuality, gender, etc. in order to center marginalized experiences. (i.e.: stories of marginalized groups would not be seen as an "addition" to a story, but rather, the marginalized story is at the center of learning.)
- Developing students' critical consciousness. (The first step in this process is revisiting and reclaiming identity and also encompasses questioning objectivity, emphasizing principles of self-determination, social justice, hope, equity, healing and love.)
- Creating caring academic environments in which educators and students develop mutual respect, mutual trust and realize the humanity in one another.
- Engaging in community responsiveness (i.e. youth participatory action research that allows students to become critical action researchers, develop empathy and understanding for themselves and others and focus on improving social conditions for themselves and their communities.); and,

Whereas, research shows that there is academic and social value for all students who take Ethnic Studies courses, especially those who are in need of remedial interventions in lower grades or credit recovery in High School; and,

Whereas, there is evidence that carefully-developed and well-implemented Ethnic Studies programs in grades K-12 have led to greater student achievement, improved graduation rates, improved attendance, more empowered and future oriented youth and healthier communities; and,

Whereas, over the years, standardized tests have become over-relied upon as a single indicator of student "achievement"; and,

Whereas, research shows that standardized tests advantage students who have the cultural, social and financial resources to access dominant culture; and,

Whereas, Ethnic Studies develops critical thinking skills and challenges students to reach beyond a single answer for solutions; and,

Whereas, despite the injustice of the over-reliance on standardized tests, scores are often as used as a means to justify rewarding or closing public schools, many of which are in historically marginalized communities; and,

Whereas, when educators are in charge of designing tools—like authentic performance assessments—that help our most oppressed communities, we liberate everyone; and,

Whereas, authentic performance assessments:

- Provide an opportunity for collaboration and communication;
- Empower students to have a say in the direction of their learning, ensuring assessments are meaningful and relevant to each student's culture and context;
- Provide students and parents with clear rubrics that make room for self-assessment and move toward improvement;
- Authentically engage students and instill a sense of accomplishment;
- Liberate by working with the intention to close achievement opportunities and transform classrooms into culturally-responsive spaces where all students are set up for success; and,

Whereas, ATF envisions a revolutionary public school system that challenges deficit thinking, acknowledges and values the lived experiences that students bring to the table and builds on the cultural capital that each student possesses; and,

Whereas, ATF believes that an Ethnic Studies pedagogy within our schools—one that recognizes and questions systems of power and privilege while building on students' lived experiences and resiliency—is critical to revolutionizing our public education system, closing the opportunity gap and stopping the school-to-prison pipeline; and,

Whereas, ATF envisions a cultural shift in our K-12 classrooms that moves from students being seen as “receptacles” for learning to a framework that recognizes the simultaneity of student's intersecting identities (race, class, sexuality, gender, citizenship status, differing abilities, primary language, etc.), situates those identities in systems of inequity and resistance, and values these lived experiences as assets in the classroom; and,

Whereas, the APS Board of Education affirmed the critical nature of Ethnic Studies for our students by directing APS Administration to implement Ethnic Studies in our schools; and,

Whereas, recent research from UNM about the initial roll-out of Ethnic Studies elective courses in some APS high schools determined that District Administration, school-site administrative support and counselor recommendations were critical to the success of Ethnic Studies classes and ongoing professional development; and,

Whereas, Ethnic Studies is one avenue to address the recent Yazzie/Martinez ruling which mandates that our public schools shall “include provision of the services, resources, and supports necessary for all children in all districts, including low income, Native American and ELL students ('at-risk students'), to have the opportunity to be college, career and civics ready.”

Therefore, be it resolved that ATF leadership and members:

- Organize alongside community allies to advocate for a carefully-developed and well-supported K-12 Ethnic Studies program that is woven into core content areas, with intersectional justice and equity as guiding principles; and
- Create equitable school environments by providing culturally responsive teaching strategies, authentic performance assessment, and giving all staff members support to become culturally proficient; and,
- Foster support for ongoing practitioner-led professional development for educators in conjunction with APS and community allies; and,
- Advocate alongside community allies for thoughtful implementation that allows Ethnic Studies educators to help determine what resources and teaching materials are most needed to ensure a successful Ethnic Studies program; and,

Therefore, be it further resolved, that ATF leadership and members will organize alongside community allies to engage more stakeholders from APS, UNM, and CNM to encourage an educator preparation, hiring and support pipeline that:

- Utilizes a critical pedagogy that aligns with the integrity of this motion;
- Fosters a healthy awareness and sense of self and position in the world;
- Rejects a color-blind ideology;
- Critically examines “objectivity”;
- Centers the needs of New Mexico's students and families.

