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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
54th Legislature, 1st Session, 2019

Bill Number	<u>SB613</u>	Sponsor	<u>Lopez</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.212288.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SEC/SPAC</u>
Short Title	<u>Public Education Ethnic Studies</u>		
Analyst	<u>Terrazas</u>	Original Date	<u>2/19/19</u>
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BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 613 (SB613) would amend the Public School Code to include “ethnic studies” as part of the minimum instructional areas provided in fourth through eighth grades. For students entering the ninth grade in the 2021-2022 school year, the bill would remove one-half of a unit from the required elective units and assign it to the units required for social science, requiring the one-half unit to be in ethnic studies. SB613 would bring the required social science units to four and the required elective units to seven. The bill defines “ethnic studies” as the interdisciplinary study of multiple perspectives through the examination of social, ethnic, cultural, gender, and historical experiences to build critical thinking skills.

The bill would require LESC, the Public Education Department (PED), and postsecondary institutions to convene an ethnic studies council to study and identify the next steps in developing ethnic studies curricula in schools. The ethnic studies council would need to report its findings and recommendations to LESC by July 1, 2020, and would expire on August 1, 2020.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill does not contain an appropriation.

Public members of the ethnic studies council would need to be reimbursed for per diem and mileage as provided in the Per diem and Mileage Act and would be prohibited from receiving any other compensation, perquisite, or allowance.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

SB613 would require the secretary of PED to appoint the members of the ethnic studies council, which must include representatives from university and public school ethnic studies programs; professional or community organizations that promote Native American, African American, Chicana, Chicano and Latino education and the education of distinct underrepresented cultural and ethnic groups; colleges of education and institutions of teacher preparation; the Office of African

American Affairs; the Indian Affairs Department (IAD); the All Pueblo Council of Governors; public schools; PED's Hispanic Education liaison; the director or the director's designee of the PED Indian Education Division; the director or the director's designee of the PED Language and Culture Bureau; teachers' unions; and other organizations or persons whose work or interests can provide valuable insights into the benefits and costs of ethnic studies.

The chair of the ethnic studies council would need to be elected by the council, which would be required to meet at the call of the chair. The secretary of PED would need to provide staff support for the ethnic studies council in the performance of its duties.

The IAD indicates the bill aligns with the department's mission to support tribal communities' efforts to meet their challenges and expand their opportunities, leverage state resources to tribal benefit, and work to create relationships across state, tribal, philanthropic, educational, and private sectors for the New Mexico Indian nations, tribes, and pueblos. The Office of African American Affairs indicates it has been working with community and state organizations in the creation of ethnic studies in the state's public school system and notes the agency would be available to assist in training teachers by providing technical assistance in African American history for fourth through 12th grades.

A study by Stanford Graduate School of Education found that 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 and grade-point average by 1.4 points. Additionally, 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 had a significant and positive correlation to passing Arizona state standardized tests and high school graduation. These studies suggest culturally relevant pedagogy can have academic benefits for students.

The National Education Association (NEA) agrees ethnic studies are valuable to boosting student performance, with the caveat that significant results can only be achieved when ethnic studies curricula are 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.

In a similar bill introduced during the 2017 legislative session, PED indicated the definition of ethnic studies is "duplicative" to the New Mexico Social Studies Standards and the standards content meet the intent of the bill.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SB613 would require the secretary of PED to appoint the members of the ethnic studies council and to provide staff support for the ethnic studies council in the performance of its duties.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

Much of the research on “ethnic studies” includes “race” as a topic that is examined. The sponsor may want to consider including “race” in the definition.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Nothing in statute prevents schools from offering ethnic studies as an elective.

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) offers ethnic studies in several of the school district’s high schools. APS defines ethnic studies as “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.”

New Mexico school personnel licensure requirements align with the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (inTASC) Model Core Teaching Standards, which are the accepted standards for entry level teacher preparation. InTASC standards address teachers’ understanding of cultural, ethnic, gender, and learning differences that promote equity.

ALTERNATIVES

Pedagogical professional development could be required to embed ethnic studies within existing requirements.

RELATED BILLS

SB632, Additional Ed Dept. Divisions, would require each public school to develop a bilingual multicultural education plan that may include ethnic studies.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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