



HACIENDA LA PUENTE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Hacienda La Puente Unified Fosters Importance of Equity and Justice Through Ethnic Studies Curriculum

CITY OF INDUSTRY – Hacienda La Puente Unified School District’s high school students are gaining insight into different cultures, histories and perspectives through the District’s Intersectional Ethnic Studies classes, which provide them with a deeper understanding of the nuances and complexities that have helped shape society.

The District currently offers eleven sections of Ethnic Studies courses across its five high schools, all in the social studies department. These University of California A-G approved courses include curriculum and pedagogy that focus on the struggles and oppression of minority and marginalized groups and center on the importance of movement toward educational and social justice.

“I’ve dedicated my life to this work and have seen first-hand the powerful and transformative impact that ethnic studies have on students,” Intersectional Ethnic Studies Coordinator Ron Espiritu said. “This type of curriculum is extremely exciting, engaging, and project-based, allowing our students to develop critical thinking and unique problem-solving skills.”

Hacienda La Puente Unified is partnered with the University of California, Irvine History Project to train HLPUSD high school Ethnic Studies teachers how to lead students through the Youth Participatory Action Research Project (YPAR). This project challenges students to identify a problem that impacts their community, conduct first-hand research, including surveys and interviews, develop an action plan to address the issue and present their findings. Students who complete the YPAR projects and who meet district and state criteria will receive the California State Seal of Civic Engagement on their high school diplomas.

“I am so excited for my students to make history doing this project for the first time in HLPUSD,” Workman High School Ethnic Studies teacher Christine Sardo said. “My students have shared that the Ethnic Studies courses have given them a better understanding of their own identity and those of their families and community. It’s incredibly unique and important that our District can provide a space for students to discuss real-world issues and topics about ethnicity, culture and race.”

The District piloted the first Ethnic Studies courses during the 2022-23 school year. Today, more than 300 students across the District are enrolled in the classes. Students are supported by three California grants that fund Ethnic Studies implementation, allowing students to go on field trips, participate in the YPAR project and more.

MORE

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HLPUSD is also partnered with California State University, Los Angeles, and El Rancho Unified School District in the Sal Castro Academy. This program provides a collaborative space for Ethnic Studies educators to meet monthly and discuss ethnic studies pedagogy, as well as learn how to be student-centered advocates in their work.

The Ethnic Studies educators also meet frequently with the District's Teachers on Special Assignment to discover innovative ways to implement the curriculum to its transitional kindergarten through eighth-grade students through innovative lesson plans including, art, dance, storytelling and augmented reality reading activities. In Middle and high schools students have also used virtual reality glasses to experience what it was like to witness Dr. King's I Have a Dream Speech from the audience.

"Ethnic Studies is important for students of all ages because it is vital for students to see themselves and people like themselves centered in the curriculum," Wilson High School Ethnic Studies teacher Robert Oviedo said. "All too often, students of color are alienated from school because they don't see the relevance to their own lives. In our Intersectional Ethnic Studies course, students can see how their own ethnicity intersects with other aspects of their identity, and how that has shaped society."

The District's Ethnic Studies course offerings will expand in the 2024-25 school year to include other disciplines: English Language Arts at La Puente and Los Altos high schools, a Spanish course at La Puente and Workman high schools; and a Film Studies class at La Puente High School.

"At Hacienda La Puente Unified, we embrace the diversity within our communities and are proud to be one of the first Districts in California to catapult this education model to all students," Superintendent Dr. Alfonso Jiménez said. "Adopting these Ethnic Studies principles inspires all students to embrace their own and others' cultures, develop their individual potential, appreciate our common humanity and continue the important work to be more engaged and responsible citizens."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

HLPUSD_ETHNICSTUDIES1: Hacienda La Puente Unified educators participate in a training with the University of California, Irvine History Project to learn how to lead students through the Youth Participatory Action Research Project (YPAR).

HLPUSD_ETHNICSTUDIES2: Hacienda La Puente Unified students in the Intersectional Ethnic Studies enjoy a field trip to the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art and Culture museum on Jan. 12.

HLPUSD_ETHNICSTUDIES3: Hacienda La Puente Unified educators participate in the Sal Castro Academy, a collaborative space for Ethnic Studies educators to meet monthly and discuss ethnic studies pedagogy.

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