



Proposed Revisions

Draft State Board of Education Manual of Rules and Practices

Series 2000-Education Quality Standards

(April 14, 2022 version)

(underscores reflect suggested revisions)

2114 Definitions

Revision 1:

Section 16 (“Ethnic Group”) shall be amended to read as follows (modified slightly for clarity):

“Ethnic Group” means a group whose members identify with each other based on (i) certain criteria including a common history, ancestry, culture, religion, national origin, social, geographic origin, skin color, language, and (ii) experiences of discrimination and social exclusion. Ethnic Group also includes:

(a) Nondominant racial and ethnic groups in the United States, including people who are Abenaki, people from other indigenous groups, people of African, Asian, Pacific Islander, Chicanx, Latinx, or Middle Eastern descent, and

(b) Groups that have been historically subject to persecution or genocide.”

Rationale: Incorporates the enabling legislation (Act 1, Section 1(b)(1))’s “ethnic group” definition. Without this revision, the standards would exclude groups the Vermont legislature enacted be covered i.e. “groups that have been historically subject to persecution or genocide” such as Jews who, during the Holocaust, were targeted because of their perceived racial differences.

Revision 2:

Section 17 (“Ethnic Studies”) shall be amended as follows:

“Ethnic Studies’ means interdisciplinary, age- and grade appropriate curricula and programs dedicated to the historical contributions and perspectives of Ethnic Groups and Social Groups, emphasizing critical thinking, within the United States.”

Rationale:

- This mirrors the enabling legislation (Act 1, Section 1(b)(2))’s language and “ethnic group” and “social group” definitions: “Ethnic studies’ means the instruction of students in prekindergarten through grade 12 in the historical contributions and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups”).

The Vermont State Board of Education may desire to expand this definition beyond what the Vermont Legislature mandated to include “sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability and class” called out in the draft but note that the legislature also designated curriculum on “social groups” which encompasses many of these categories so these could be placed in that definition instead. See Revision 4 below.

- The number and complexity of topics that can be covered in K-12 Ethnic Studies is vast hence the suggestion to restrict Ethnic Studies to Ethnic Groups within the United States which aligns with Act 1

(2019) directive (defines “Ethnic Group” as “nondominant racial and ethnic groups in the United States.”) The draft provided “within and outside the United States.”

- Similarly, this carries forward Act 1’s desire for students to develop critical thinking skills (“These recommended additional standards shall be designed to...promote critical thinking” and “The State Board may recommend to the General Assembly proposed statutory changes with the following goals: (A) ensuring that schools: (i) promote critical thinking”).

Revision 3:

Section 28 (“Racism”) is amended by inserting “individually or” between “expressed” and “systematically.”

Rationale: This recognizes that racism can operate on an individual as well as system level and aligns with the clause preceding it that “racism is practiced by individuals and groups.” Without this change the definition would imply that individual racism is only expressed through systems and organizations.

Revision 4:

Section 33 (“Social Identity Group”) shall be amended as follows:

“Social Group” means women and girls, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, or nonbinary.”

Rationale: : Incorporates the enabling legislation (Act 1, Section 1(b)(3))’s “social group” definition (“means women and girls, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, or nonbinary”).

In contrast, the draft’s definition is expansive and nonspecific and so does not reflect the Vermont Legislature’s intent and mandate (draft: “a group of people who share common characteristics that shape their identity and promote a sense of unity. The characteristics can be... fundamental to identity and to the exercise of rights and freedoms in political, economic, social, civil or any other field.”)

Revisions 5:

Rationale: Consistent use of terminology.

1. Capitalize “racism” in section 3 (“anti-racist”).
2. Capitalize “ethnic group” in section 18 (“Ethnicity”).
3. Change “social group” and “social identity group” to “Social Group” throughout Section 2114.