

## Act 1 Working Group

### Response to State Board of Education EQS Manual Subcommittee

#### Definitional Revisions: Ethnic Studies & Social Identity Group

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Current Definitions in Revised EQS Manual Submitted April 14, 2022	Act 1 Working Group Revisions Approved August 18, 2022
<p>17. "Ethnic Studies" means interdisciplinary, age-appropriate, and grade-appropriate curricula and programs dedicated to the historical and contemporary study of race, ethnicity, and Indigenous People (including the Indigenous People of Vermont, the Abenaki, Mahican, Pennacook, Pocomtuc, and others), with a critical focus on the experiences and perspectives of racial and ethnic groups and Indigenous Peoples that have suffered systemic oppression, marginalization, and discrimination, within and outside the United States. "Ethnic Studies" also involves a critical examination of these experiences and perspectives through the lens of sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, and class.</p>	<p>17. "Ethnic Studies" means interdisciplinary, age-appropriate, and grade-appropriate curricula and programs dedicated to the historical and contemporary study of race, ethnicity, and Indigenous (including the Indigenous People of Vermont, the Abenaki, Mahican, Pennacook, Pocomtuc, and others). <del>and of those who have been historically subject to persecution or genocide.</del> This requires a critical focus on the experiences and perspectives of racial and ethnic groups and Indigenous that have suffered systemic oppression, marginalization, discrimination, <b>persecution, or genocide</b>, within and outside the United States. "Ethnic Studies" also involves a critical examination of these experiences and perspectives through the lens <b>of the characteristics and lives of Social Identity Groups.</b> <del>sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, and class.</del></p>
<p>33." Social Identity Group" means a group of people who share common characteristics that shape their identity and promote a sense of unity. The characteristics can be innate and unchangeable, or otherwise fundamental to identity and to the exercise of rights and freedoms in the political, economic, social, civil, or any other field.</p>	<p>33." Social Identity Group" means a group of people who share common characteristics that shape their identity and promote a sense of unity, <b>including sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, class, socio-economic status, or other characteristics and conditions that are innate, unchangeable, or fundamental to identity.</b> <del>and to the exercise of rights and freedoms in the political, economic, social, civil, or any other field.</del></p>

17. **"Ethnic Studies"** means interdisciplinary, age-appropriate, and grade-appropriate curricula and programs dedicated to the historical and contemporary study of race, ethnicity, and Indigenous/First Nation Peoples (including the Indigenous/First Nation People of Vermont, the Abenaki, Mahican, Pennacook, Pocomtuc, and others). This requires a critical focus on the experiences and perspectives of racial and ethnic groups and Indigenous/First Nation Peoples who have suffered systemic oppression, marginalization, discrimination, persecution, or genocide, within and outside the United States. "Ethnic Studies" also involves a critical examination of these experiences and perspectives through the lens of the characteristics and lives of "Social Identity Groups."

**Rationale for Changes:**

- The Working Group felt that the construction "and of those who have been historically subject to persecution or genocide" was vague by virtue of not explaining or qualifying the pronoun "those." Does "those" in this context refer to individuals, groups, or both? And could that vagueness lead to unintended interpretive complications? For the benefit of school staff, students, families, and local communities in particular, we thought it would be more helpful to make clear that we are referring here to groups of people as defined above.
- The Working Group, respectfully, also felt this revised version reads more smoothly, and that the terms "persecution" and "genocide" align well with the other experiences mentioned in that sentence and so should be grouped with them. Placing them where we did does not change their meaning or purpose in this context.
- We concurred with the insertion of "Social Identity Group" in this definition. We believe the definition is stronger and clearer by adding the words "characteristics" and "lives" before "Social Identity Group."

33. **"Social Identity Group"** means a group of people who share common characteristics that shape their identity and promote a sense of unity, including sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, class, socio-economic status, or other characteristics and conditions that are innate, unchangeable, or fundamental to identity.

**Rationale for Change:**

- A member of the EQS Subcommittee of the State Board of Education at the meeting on August 11 – I believe it was Patrick Brown – raised the point about adding "socio-economic status" to this definition. When this was mentioned at our meeting, the group thought it was a good idea.
- On further reflection, the Working Group concluded that this definition did not need the words "and to the exercise of rights and freedoms in the political, economic, social, civil, or any other field." This is because our primary purpose is to define "Social Identity Group," and that can be done more cogently without the language above that has been deleted.