

July 16, 2025

Board of Education
San Francisco Unified School District
via email: philkim@sfsud.edu, board@sfsud.edu

Dear President Kim and Members of the Board,

We write on behalf of concerned parents and taxpayers in the San Francisco Unified School District to express serious concerns regarding the district's mandatory 9th-grade, year-long Ethnic Studies graduation requirement (the "Program"). As currently structured and implemented, the Program raises significant concerns that require urgent attention and corrective action.

The Program was instituted in March 2021 without formal Board approval, proper public notice, or alignment with the curriculum adoption process required by both California Education Code and SFUSD's own policies. That failure to follow basic procedures not only undermines public trust but also raises questions about whether the district is acting within its legal authority.

Moreover, the Program itself reflects a narrow ideological perspective that pressures students to affirm specific political positions, discourages them from raising questions, and penalizes them for expressing differing views. These practices are incompatible with the foundational principles of public education, including intellectual freedom, equal protection, viewpoint diversity and nondiscrimination.

It is also concerning that SFUSD continues to allocate over \$2 million annually from the Public Education Enrichment Fund to the Program, while cutting essential services, including nursing staff, special education support, and STEM-related learning opportunities. Prioritizing an ideologically driven course over critical academic and support services is not just fiscally irresponsible; it reflects a troubling departure from the district's core mission.

To begin restoring public confidence and ensure compliance with legal and educational standards, we respectfully urge the Board to take the following actions:

1. **Immediately suspend instruction under the current Ethnic Studies Program** pending public review and formal adoption of a revised curriculum that complies with the California History–Social Science Framework and reflects a commitment to balanced, inclusive education.
2. **Reallocate the Program's funding** toward essential academic and student support services.
3. **Rescind the mandatory graduation requirement** until it meets state-level criteria for curriculum approval.
4. **Provide families with meaningful notice and opt-out opportunities** in line with constitutional and California requirements.

We share the goal of exposing students to complex histories and multiple perspectives. But that is not what is happening here. The current program substitutes indoctrination for education, inverts the values of inclusion and inquiry, and turns the classroom into a platform for one-sided activism.

We urge the Board to course-correct — not only to comply with the law, but to recommit to the shared values that make public education a unifying civic good: transparency, fairness, pluralism, and the free exchange of ideas.

Sincerely,
Dana Stangel-Plowe
Chief Program Officer
North American Values Institute

Cc: Maria Su, Superintendent, SFUSD
Daniel Lurie, Mayor, San Francisco
David Schapira, Chief Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education
Rob Bonta, California Attorney General
U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights