



Pittsburgh Public Schools
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<https://www.pghschools.org>

The School District of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh, PA)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Ethnic Studies Curriculum and Instructional Materials

Issuance Date:
Submission Date:

1. Introduction

This Request for Proposal (RFP) seeks applicants who can provide curriculum writing services in collaboration with the Office of Curriculum and Instruction and make recommendations for supporting instructional materials for the implementation of an Ethnic Studies course. The curriculum and instructional materials will ensure all Pittsburgh Public Schools' Social Studies teachers and students in grade 12 have access to the most impactful, culturally inclusive, and highest quality resources aligned to research. The materials should be Pennsylvania standards-aligned and compatible with the learning styles, lived experiences, scholar identities, and educational and occupational aspirations of historically marginalized racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. The RFP includes detailed requirements for all proposal submissions. The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit one or more entities with expertise in secondary education instruction and the study of history, race, and ethnicity to develop curriculum for a high school Ethnic Studies course in Pittsburgh Public Schools. A well-designed high school Ethnic Studies course aligned with Pennsylvania standards can help students develop the skills and knowledge necessary to be informed and engaged citizens in a diverse society. This RFP seeks providers ("Respondents" or "Offerors") who share a vision for ensuring that all students have access to the highest quality instructional resources to ultimately increase student achievement and ensure success in college, careers, and community participation.

About Pittsburgh Public Schools

Pittsburgh Public School believes that every student has the right to an equitable educational experience within the School District of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh Public Schools aims to close the opportunity gap by providing historically underserved students with equitable access to programming and support resources while eliminating policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce individual and institutional bias and create disparate outcomes. Racial disparities stem from the monocultural design and imbalance in the teaching population disproportionately affecting African American students who represent 53 percent of the district. Hanley and Noblit (2009) share that culture is "the basis of prior knowledge, which holistically includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of learning" (pg. 31). However, many school systems across the United States were designed to be monocultural and have reinforced white, middle-class values as the standard, thus invalidating the contributions, perspectives and learning styles of culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse populations.

The Pittsburgh Public School District is the largest of 43 school districts in Allegheny County and the second largest in Pennsylvania. The district serves approximately 20,000 students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12. There are approximately 5,800 students in grades 9-12, about 3,800 of whom are students of color, including 2,900 African American students. Pittsburgh Public Schools has a vision that all students will graduate high school, college, career, and life ready; prepared to complete a two-or four-year college degree or workforce certification. Fifty-three percent of the students who attend Pittsburgh Public Schools are African American and another fourteen percent identify as non-White, but some curricular resources are still outdated and do not consistently reflect the aforementioned representation making it difficult to engage all groups in equitable learning experiences. The Social Studies curriculum is one specific resource that must be updated to include the Ethnic Studies course to ensure people of African, Latin, Asian, Native, and other groups are represented, yielding a timely opportunity to build a course of studies that meaningfully engages and centers voices from the margins.

Introduced in 2019, *On Track to Equity* is the District's racial equity plan. The 97-page plan details 27 key action steps the District is taking toward this goal, each grouped under one of seven focus areas outlined in the Racial Equity Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. As a starting point, this plan illustrates the District's commitment to moving beyond compliance with the MOU to demonstrate our commitment to the continued monitoring of our progress and supporting the work of the Equity Advisory Panel (EAP). One action step in the plan, Action Step Four (4), states its desire for all its students to experience an Ethnic Studies curriculum through the design and/or adoption of teaching and learning materials in Social Studies (*On Track to Equity*, 2019, pg. 25).

The Ethnic Studies course represents culturally responsive education, presenting an opportunity to ensure every child—regardless of his or her background—has equitable access to the same learning outcomes. Hanley and Noblit (2009) offer that, “The use of students’ cultural knowledge as the core of instruction is more likely to engage students in learning” (p. 28.). If each child’s culture (i.e., language, value system, method of knowing, manner of expression) is valued equally and affirmed evenly through both the content we teach and our methods of delivery, we can essentially provide all students with whatever they need to achieve the desired outcome. Sleeter and Zavala's (2020) meta-analysis of research on the academic impact of Ethnic Studies curricula showed positive results on student learning and performance in 12 of 14 studies. Alongside culturally responsive teaching practices, Ethnic Studies courses have the potential to positively impact students' self-efficacy, academic achievement, attendance, and graduation rates.

The PPS Ethnic Studies course critically examines historical and contemporary social issues from multiple perspectives, while centering the experiences of historically marginalized groups, to arrive at a plural and multicultural understanding of society. Ethnic Studies focuses on themes of social justice, social responsibility, and social change, allowing students to identify similar social patterns and universal qualities present in their own and other societies. Additionally, Ethnic Studies incorporates culturally responsive approaches to instruction through more communal, artistic, interactive and inquiry-based methods. The Pittsburgh Public Schools Ethnic Studies courses seeks to align to Pennsylvania’s Social Studies Academic Standards with recognition of the National Council for the Social Studies’ C3 Framework, engage students in exploring history and society through multiple perspectives, prioritize diverse narratives with fairness and equity, unlock hidden histories, center justice, empower students to a deeper understanding of identity, provide opportunities for criticality, and allow for the unearthing of joy in learning through Social Studies education.

[Equity Glossary of Terms](#)

Adopted materials will be implemented during the 2024-25 school year and physical materials will need to be delivered by July 31, 2024.

2. Scope of Services

The requirements outlined in this RFP, although extensive, is not exhaustive and is intended to provide interested Respondents with sufficient basic information to submit proposals meeting minimum requirements but is not intended to limit a proposal’s content or exclude any relevant or essential information. Proposals should address the entire scope of services requested. In this RFP, Curricular and Instructional Materials are defined to be the comprehensive curricula and materials needed for the implementation of an Ethnic Studies course.

Proposals must comply with the following selection requirements as written in PPS Board Policy 106, Adoption of Instructional Materials:

- *The primary criteria for the selection of instructional materials are to address the needs of students as described in the Content Standards at each grade level. All instructional materials and supplementary materials shall reflect in both narrative and illustration a diverse American society and shall provide equal representation of African American and other cultural and ethnic groups. Adopted instructional materials should avoid stereotyped images based on race and gender. Instructional materials should reflect gender and ethnic minorities participating in leadership roles in all aspects of society. The instructional materials that are ultimately selected in each subject area must be challenging and stretch students to meet high standards.*

3. Curriculum and Instructional Material Requirements

Ethnic Studies critically examines historical and contemporary social issues from multiple perspectives, while centering the experiences of historically marginalized groups, to arrive at a plural and multicultural understanding of society. Ethnic Studies focuses on themes of social justice, social responsibility, and social change, allowing students to identify similar social patterns and universal qualities present in their own and other societies. Additionally, Ethnic Studies incorporates culturally responsive approaches to instruction through more communal, artistic, interactive, and inquiry-based methods.

- **General Requirements**
 - The materials should draw on multiple disciplines, including the four components of K-12 Social Studies (history, geography, economics, civics), sociology, anthropology, and literature, to provide a comprehensive understanding of ethnic studies. This will help students to develop a more nuanced understanding of the history, culture, and experiences of ethnic groups.
 - The materials should be multiperspectival, presenting multiple perspectives on the history, culture, and experiences of ethnic groups. This will help students to develop critical thinking skills and to challenge dominant narratives about race and ethnicity.
 - The materials should encourage students to think critically about the role of ethnicity in American history and society. This will help students to develop the skills necessary to challenge racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppression.
 - The materials should provide students with opportunities to take action to promote understanding and respect for diversity. This could involve participating in community service projects, organizing protests, developing policy solutions, or writing letters to elected officials. This will help students to develop a sense of civic engagement and to make a positive difference in the world.
 - The materials should be inclusive, welcoming, and respectful of all students, regardless of their ethnic background. Students should feel comfortable and safe in the classroom to engage in analysis and discussion of deep topics.
 - The materials should support a deeper understanding of the history, culture, and contributions of ethnic groups in Pennsylvania.
 - The materials should support analyzing the impact of ethnicity on individual and group identity.
 - The materials should help students evaluate the role of ethnicity in shaping social, political, and economic institutions in Pennsylvania.
 - The materials should support students with tools and structures to communicate effectively about issues related to ethnicity.
 - The materials should support students in engaging in inquiry-based learning related to course themes.
 - The materials should include a variety of engaging texts and media for analysis.
 - The materials should include opportunities for students to express themselves through writing; argumentative, expository, research, etc.
 - The materials should include opportunities for students to express themselves through verbally: debate, presentation of information, poetry, discussion, etc.
- **English Language Learners and Students with Exceptionalities**
 - Instructional materials provide strategies and supports for students who read, write, and/or speak in a language other than English to meet or exceed grade-level standards.
 - Allow for flexibility in meeting the needs of a wide range of students and include accommodations for special populations, including English Language Learners, students with disabilities, including students who are visually impaired and/or deaf or hard of hearing, those with print disabilities, and students with significant cognitive disabilities, and students identified as gifted and talented. Lessons for whole group, small group, and independent instruction should be included.
- **Culturally Relevant Materials**
 - Include culturally relevant materials and culturally responsive teaching and instructional practices that are inclusive of a variety of cultures and ethnicities and are free from bias in the portrayal of ethnic groups, gender, age, cultures, religion, and people with exceptionalities. Materials should expose children to many forms of diversity (for example, race, ethnicity, family structure, disabilities). Materials need to portray the child's culture and all cultures in a positive, authentic, and realistic light.
 - Materials should never convey that one group is better than another group.
 - Materials need to challenge all forms of stereotypes, such as only men or only women can have certain

careers, or because you are from a particular race, you have a specific talent.

- Materials need to emphasize individual differences and the diversity within large groups.
- The materials include multiple perspectives and provide exposure to the larger world.
- Authors of the texts represent diverse cultural backgrounds.
- The texts represent a variety of cultures congruent with district demographics and include topics that reflect a variety of student identities and experiences.
- The materials create a bridge between students' home and school lives, while still meeting the expectations of the district and state curricular requirements.
- The materials utilize the backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of the students to inform the teacher's lessons and methodology.

4. Pedagogical parameters

- The instructional materials should provide students opportunities for; citing specific textual evidence for understanding, determine central ideas and meaning of words, and evaluating various explanations and viewpoints of the same historical event or issue. (*PA Core Reading Informational Texts in Social Studies*)
- The instructional materials should promote critical thinking about the complexities of human relations in ethnicity, race, and other systems of difference that have effects on power.
- The instructional materials should be sensitive and inclusive to all learners regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, to support learning different perspectives.
- The instructional materials should support presenting topics from multiple points of view, representing diversity and strengthening learners social and cultural awareness.
- The instructional materials should represent student centered learning, allowing appropriate inquiry-based pedagogical methods to be utilized within the learning environment.

5. Usability

- The instructional materials are organized in a systematic way that is comprehensive and clear.
- The visual design (whether in print or digital) supports students in engaging thoughtfully with the subject and is neither distracting nor chaotic.
- The instructional materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content.
- The instructional materials include resources that teachers may edit, adapt, or enrich.
- The instructional materials provide teacher guidance with useful annotations and suggestions for how to enact the student materials.
- Parent materials or any home/school connections must be provided in multiple languages to increase access for non-English speakers.

6. Training and Professional Development

- Professional learning will assist Ethnic Studies teachers with developing a culturally responsive pedagogical orientation to their work. They must believe in their students academically, know how to situate students' questions and lives within Ethnic Studies content, and must know how to lead students through a process of identity exploration and transformation in relationship to Ethnic Studies content.
- The proposal shall describe the initial training and professional development necessary to begin implementation of the proposed instructional materials. The training plan should include mechanisms to train district teachers and central staff who, in turn, will train school staff and provide support districtwide.
- The professional development plan should be designed to supplement, not supplant, the district's existing approach to professional development that includes the development of school and district expertise and capacity to deliver training districtwide; a focus on equity and cultural proficiency; school-based embedded support from school and district staff; and development of blended professional learning models that include

both face-to-face and virtual learning.

7. Parents/Guardians Engagement

- The instructional materials include printable parent/guardians' letters for sharing course content information with parents/guardians.
- Parent/guardian materials or any home/school connections (digital and print) must be provided in multiple languages to increase access for non-English speakers.
- The instructional materials include tools, resources, and documents that provide parents/guardians and others with the necessary resources to provide transparency in the curriculum and to provide support to academic progress at home or outside the school setting.

8. Proposal Submission and Deadline

- All proposals must be submitted **electronically to Mr. Sean McBride (smcbride1@pghschools.org), K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator by 5:00 PM EST on December 22, 2023**, with "PPS Ethnic Studies Materials" as the subject line. Proposals, including any/all attachments and cover letters, should be submitted as a single PDF document. In addition, digital access to all program materials must be provided along with hard copy sample instructional materials units that can be mailed directly to: **Mr. Christopher Taylor, K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator, School District of Pittsburgh Greenway Professional Development Center, Room 224, 1400 Crucible Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15205**. Proposals should be submitted in accordance with the proposal guidelines outlined in this RFP. Pittsburgh Public Schools reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, waive irregularities, and to select the proposal that is determined to be the most advantageous to the school district. Late proposals will not be accepted. Proposals submitted via hard copy or fax will not be accepted.

Upon the release of this RFP and during the conclusion of the selection process, there shall be no communication between any prospective respondents, their lobbyist(s) or agent(s) and any employee of PPS or its elected Board of Directors, except as provided for in the RFP. Any violation of this provision by any prospective firm and/or its agent shall be grounds for immediate disqualification.

All proposal packages shall be submitted to PPS as follows:

Mr. Sean McBride

K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator

School District of Pittsburgh

Greenway Professional Development Center, Room 224

1400 Crucible Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15205

Email: smcbride1@pghschools.org

9. Proposal Introduction

- **Cover Letter:** Provide the name, mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number of the firm submitting the proposal. The cover letter must be signed by an authorized officer of the organization.
- **Table of Contents:** Clearly identify material contained in the proposal by section and page number.
- **Introduction:** Provide an overview of the company and its products as they relate to this RFP. Share relevant data-based evidence of impact, outcomes from prior and current school districts with similar demographics.
- **Program Overview:** Provide an overview of the program and its core components.
- **Independent External Evaluations:** Provide access to findings from independent external evaluations, conducted by non-profit organizations.
- **Confirmation Certification of EBE Compliance:** Include the EBE participation percent.

10. Timeline

- The Pittsburgh Public Schools is requesting proposals from experienced and qualified firms to provide the services described herein. Selection of the firm will be made based upon proposals submitted. There may also be presentations or interviews. A timetable for the selection process is provided below:

RFP Issued	The week of November 20, 2023
Proposals Due	December 22, 2023
Presentations (If requested)	January 9, 2024 January 16, 2024 January 18, 2024 January 23, 2024 January 25, 2024 *Dates are subject to change.
Approval by the Board of Directors	February, 2024
Notification of Board Recommendation to Applicant Finalist	February, 2024

11. Evaluation Criteria and Selection Process

- The contract will be awarded to the qualified proposer whose proposal is most advantageous to PPS, based on the evaluation criteria specified below. The overall evaluation feedback from reviewers will guide PPS in making an award decision based on the evaluation criteria.
- PPS reserves the right to request an interview from those companies determined to be in a competitive range and shall use the information derived from these interviews, if any, in its evaluation.
- An evaluation committee, including but not limited to math teachers, principals, chief academic officer, curriculum and instruction staff, assistant superintendents, district-level staff, board members, parents, and community members, will review the proposals. The role of the evaluation committee is to review and assess to what extent submitted proposals meet the evaluation criteria and to make a recommendation. The contract will be awarded to the qualified bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the district. The evaluation criteria will be considered but will not be the sole factor used to determine the successful bidder.

12. Overall Program Cost

- Include overall costs for the entire curriculum and materials including but not limited to instructional materials and guides, interventions, assessments, professional development, program setup, delivery service, and related materials.

13. ELIGIBLE BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (EBE) PARTICIPATION

- EBE Goal:** An aspirational Eligible Business Enterprise (EBE) goal of 10%, for business diversity spend, has been assigned for this contract opportunity.

An EBE is a collective of firms that are certified in one or more of the following business diversity categories, registered.

in our online EBE directory, and used to track the District's diversity spend:

- Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)
- Women Business Enterprise (WBE)
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)
- U. S. Small Business Administration 8(A)

- Proposed Business Diversity Utilization**

- Is your firm a certified MBE, WBE, DBE or 8(a) firm? If so, please provide proof of current certification from a certifying entity. Self-certification is not accepted.

- Please also provide detailed information regarding any additional business entity that will assist in completing the scope of work as defined by this solicitation. This should include the:
 1. Company Name
 2. Company Contact (including title, email, and phone number)
 3. Scope of Work
 4. Dollar Amount & Percentage of Contract
 5. Company Diversity Type (provide proof for each certified firm) oMBE, WBE, DBE, 8(A), Diverse but not certified, N/A

3. Good Faith Effort

If no portion of this contract will be awarded to a diverse business, specifically \$0 or 0% diversity spend, please provide detailed information addressing your firm's culture for business diversity & inclusion.

1. Diversity Spend: How much money did your company spend with certified MBE, WBE, DBE and/or 8(a) firms last year? What was the diversity percentage based on your total spend?
2. Diversity Count: What is the total number of MBE, WBE, DBE and/or 8(a) firms that your company contracted with last year? Please itemize by each diversity type as well.
3. Membership: Are you a member of any supplier/business diversity organizations? If so, please share the name of the organization and provide details concerning your level of involvement with that organization.

For additional documentation related to EBE policies, the proposer should visit the District's website at: <https://www.pghschools.org/mwbe> or contact Paula B. Castleberry, Minority/Women Business Coordinator at pcastleberry1@pghschools.org.