Resolution Supporting Ethnic Studies in the Las Cruces Public Schools

WHEREAS, school leaders today are embracing ethnic-studies courses to expand and diversify classroom content that more appropriately reflects the diversity of our communities; and

WHEREAS, Stanford University researchers found positive effects on attendance rates, graduation rates, and overall increases in grade-point for students enrolled in an ethnic-studies curriculum for struggling, at-risk students in San Francisco high schools from 2010-2014; and

WHEREAS, Camille Z. Charles, a professor of sociology, African American Studies and Education at the University of Pennsylvania, concludes that there are distinct advantages to all students taking ethnic studies, regardless of whether they are academically at-risk; and

WHEREAS, Professor Charles further asserts that “the way we teach our history and culture...the way that we exclude and minimize certain groups and their experiences, while privileging others, feeds prejudice and negative stereotypes; and

WHEREAS, members of the Providence Student Union, a youth action group dedicated to addressing a lack of representation of the district’s primarily Latino, Black, Southeast Asian, and American Indian population in the school system’s curricula, completed an analysis of American history text books used in Providence and found that out of 1,192 pages, only 55 pages were dedicated to people of color, less than 5 percent of the history curriculum; and

WHEREAS, the National Education Association meta-analysis concluded that considerable research evidence shows that well-taught ethnic studies curricula have positive academic and social outcomes for students of color and White students; and

WHEREAS, Ethnic Studies can encompass a wide range of studies such as Asian American, Latino, African-American, Native American studies; and

WHEREAS, Women’s Studies offer a serious examination of the American experience from a woman’s perspective and whose goals include the enhancement of the woman’s sense of self, the elimination of sexism, appreciation for women centered values, a deepening awareness of the effects of gender for both sexes, and an increased respect among women and between men and women; and

WHEREAS, the research on student outcomes associated with the careful implementation of well-designed and delivered ethnic studies programs is promising; and
WHEREAS, the Board of Education has an adopted policy on sexual harassment and contemporary research points out the obligation of public institutions to intervene in and prevent bullying at school, we must teach students that gender comes in all shapes and sizes and engage students in a discussion of how to stop the problem at its roots; and

WHEREAS, the Las Cruces Public Schools Board of Education has a history of supporting and encouraging innovative options and opportunities to enhance the learning outcomes of all students in a safe, respectful and challenging environment leading to increased college and career readiness, closing of the achievement gap, reducing student truancy, increasing student enrollment, reducing drop-out rates, and increasing graduation rates.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Las Cruces Schools Board of Education requests that the Superintendent create an Ethnic, Gender, and Women’s Studies Task Force whose membership is comprised of students, parents, high school teachers and principals whose membership reflects the diversity found in our community, guidance counselors, and ethnic studies/social justice/women’s studies scholars from NMSU to advise, assist, and make policy recommendations, through the Superintendent of Schools, to the Board of Education about programs and courses that reflect the diversity of the LCPS student population, professional development, curriculum, and the impact of adding an Ethnic, Gender, and Women Studies graduation requirements for high school students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Ethnic, Gender, and Women’s Studies Task Force be convened for SY 2017-18 with progress reports provided to the Board of Education monthly on the progress of the task force; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education requests that the ethnic, gender, and women studies curriculum be designed to engage students and add relevancy for underserved and at-risk populations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Las Cruces Board of Education also supports and encourages the expansion of ethnic-specific elective courses and the infusion of multiethnic and multiculturalism throughout the middle grades curriculum as a foundation for Ethnic Studies in high schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Las Cruces Board of Education supports efforts in recruiting and retaining teachers who have relevant experience and educational background in the study and/or teaching of Ethnic, Gender, and Women’s Studies.

Submitted for consideration this 14th day of May 2017.

Maria A. Flores
President