

Geography - Students will inquire about the role of culture, technology, and the environment in the location, distribution, and impact of human activities using geographic tools and spatial thinking in order to demonstrate a significance of place.

Economics - Students will inquire about decisions made by individuals and groups using economic reasoning in order to understand the historical development and current status of economic principles, institutions, and processes needed to be effective citizens, consumers, and workers participating in local communities, the nation, and the world.

History - Students will inquire about significant events, ideas, beliefs, and themes to identify patterns, trends, and to analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time to make connections to the present in their communities, Maryland, the United States, and the world.

Skills and Processes - Students will inquire about civics, geography, economics, history, and people and nations of the world using disciplinary literacy skills and processes to critically evaluate content through a variety of source materials across disciplines and use reading, writing, and other forms of communication to develop, defend, and critique arguments in order to take informed action.

State Supporting Documents, including State Frameworks, provide guidance for implementing the standards adopted by the State Board of Education. They serve as guides for school systems as they develop local curricula. State Frameworks are developed by working groups of teachers, academics, and members of the community and are not legislatively designed or reviewed. As State Supporting Documents, they are developed, reviewed, and revised by teams of Maryland educators and may also include national models as defined by COMAR. Representatives from higher education serve as academic reviewers of the Frameworks. The development of State Frameworks is typically a two year process. The content identified in lines 5 – 8 on page 3 of SB662 is currently included in the State Frameworks in Social Studies. Those State Frameworks can be found on the marylandpublicschools.org webpage for social studies.

Curricula are developed by local school systems and define how teachers will teach the Standards and State Frameworks. Curricula may include methods, scope and sequence, materials, and assessments.

The purpose of SB 662 is to develop “Standards and a model statewide curriculum for multicultural education.” The goal of multicultural studies is to learn about diverse ethnic and racial groups through thematic, comparative, and interdisciplinary studies. Currently, should a local school system want to develop curricula that is interdisciplinary, writers would draw from the existing standards across subject areas. For example, they might pull from Civics in the State Standards for Social Studies and Reading from State Standards in English Language Arts. A set of interdisciplinary standards and statewide curriculum do not exist. Revisions to the COMAR state definitions and Protocol for Developing and Revising Standards would be needed in order to develop new standards and create a statewide curriculum.

SB662 requires MSDE to provide staff for the Commission on Multicultural Education and develop new standards and state curriculum for multicultural education. **Much of the scope of work described in SB662 would not be possible within the two-year timeframe and appears to be beyond that of a typical task force or commission. The associated costs would be exorbitant and are difficult to estimate.** While the development of standards could be accomplished by a commission, followed by public input and approval of the State Board, the amount of time required for the development of curriculum, model lessons, and courses would be prohibitive for members of a typical volunteer commission. It is assumed that the commission would guide a workgroup of educators and experts managed by MSDE. Representatives from multiple curriculum offices at MSDE would be impacted. Coordinators of Social Studies, English Language Arts, Health Education, World Languages, Fine Arts, Equity and Cultural Proficiency, and Professional Learning and Instructional Improvement would be reassigned from current state agency work for the review of standards, development of the interdisciplinary framework, and creation of new professional development courses. The fiscal impact would be the reallocation of those resources, the potential delay and/or cancellation of current projects, salary for additional staff, and stipends for curriculum writers.

SB662/ Education – Commission on Multicultural Education – Establishment
Ways and Means
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SB662 proposes the creation of “courses in ethnic studies for students in grades 6 through 12.” In contrast to multiculturalism, ethnic studies are course specific to one particular group, and culturally responsive to the student population. According to the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) codes approved for a well-rounded education in Maryland schools, “U.S. Ethnic Studies courses examine the history, politics, economics, society, and/or culture of one or more of the racial/ethnic groups in the United States. These courses may focus primarily on the history of an individual racial/ethnic group or may take a more comprehensive approach to studying the contemporary issues affecting racial/ethnic groups overall.” Requiring additional time, teaching staff, professional development, and materials for the implementation of this course in each of the identified grades in SB662 would have a significant impact on the local school systems. Adding an ethnic studies course to existing course requirements would limit the opportunity for other specialized courses in high school, and could potential extend the school day in grades 6 - 8.

As outlined in COMAR regulations regarding educational equity and teacher preparation programs, MSDE is dedicated to supporting the expansion of high-quality programs that prepare students with the knowledge and skills necessary to be empowered, informed, and socially responsible participants in our nation’s democracy.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **SB 662**. For further information, please contact Zachary Hands, at 410-767-0504, or Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov.