



# **VERMONT'S IRIS**

# **ETHNIC STUDIES FRAMEWORK**

*In pursuit of transformative solidarity,  
Vermont offers an Ethnic Studies  
framework that draws on the “iris” as a  
series of metaphors and as an  
acronym.*



The central focus of Vermont's Ethnic Studies Framework is that of transformative solidarity.

Transformative solidarity recognizes that all movements toward freedom are interconnected and requires deep and sustained relationships based on mutual respect, healing, and willingness to work together to take action to change oppressive systems. Transformative solidarity is the vehicle to build a system that celebrates each other's histories, cultures, and ways of knowing, especially those that have been historically and contemporarily marginalized and silenced. In the context of Vermont, this requires social, moral, and civic commitments to the rigorous study of the histories and contributions of Ethnic Studies Groups, with the objective of collectively building a just, inclusive, anti-racist, and democratic Vermont. Ethnic Studies provides students, teachers, families, and communities an opportunity to see themselves represented in the curriculum and creates a pathway for hope, empathy, love, and joy.

# TRANSFORMATIVE SOLIDARITY



**WISDOM**  
**FAITH**  
**COURAGE**

The iris, specifically the blue flag iris, is a flower indigenous to Vermont. As described by Vermont's Clemmons Family Farm, the wild iris has three petals that symbolize the power of wisdom, faith, and courage. The endeavor to create an Ethnic Studies framework embodies all three.

- Drawing upon the **WISDOM** of those who are indigenous to Vermont and those who have been left out of the mainstream curriculum for generations is being centered.
- The **FAITH** that Vermont has the strength, capacity, and desire to move beyond systems that have been oppressive has guided the work.
- And the **COURAGE** to pursue justice and freedom for all peoples is the purpose of those who have contributed to the development of this framework.



Along with these powers of the blue iris, it has also been used by Native Americans as medicine to externally care for burns, wounds, sores, and swellings. It was even used internally for liver and kidney disease, among other ailments. **The iris is a symbol of healing.**

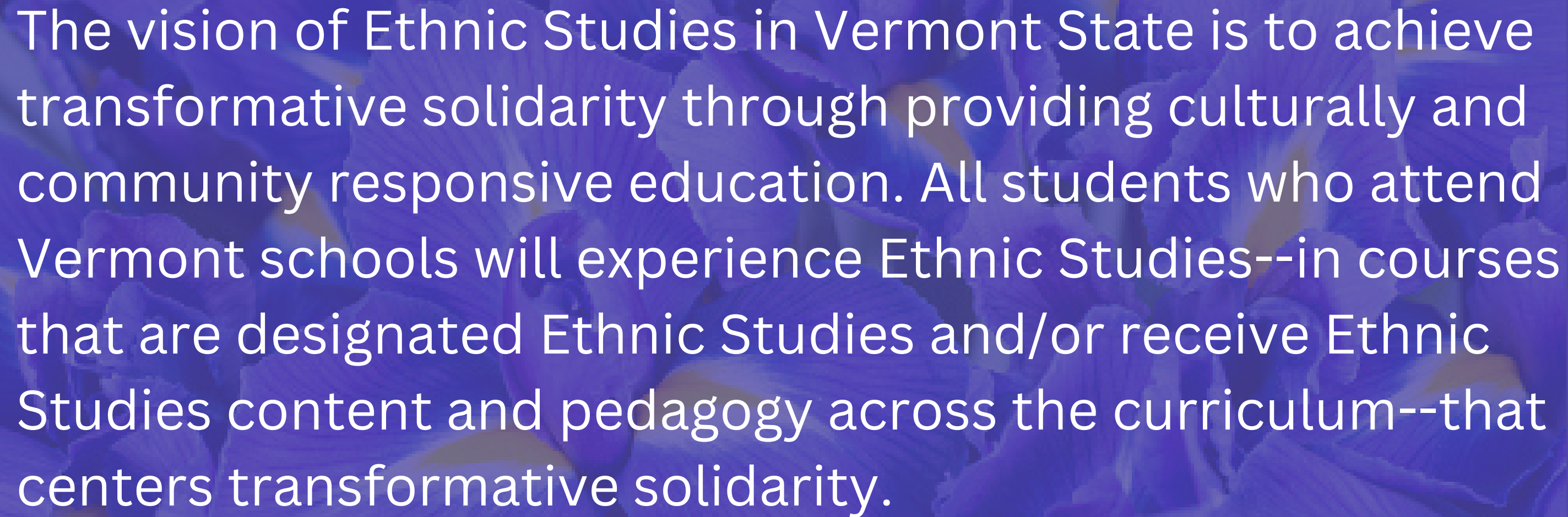
# HEALING



Additionally, along with the iris as a flower, the term iris is also used to describe a part of the eye that serves as a lens to allow light in which provides a means for clarity and dimension.

**In many ways, for Vermont state's Ethnic Studies framework, the iris is a symbol of perspective.**

**PERSPECTIVE**



The vision of Ethnic Studies in Vermont State is to achieve transformative solidarity through providing culturally and community responsive education. All students who attend Vermont schools will experience Ethnic Studies--in courses that are designated Ethnic Studies and/or receive Ethnic Studies content and pedagogy across the curriculum--that centers transformative solidarity.

**For Vermont's Ethnic Studies framework, I.R.I.S is used as an acronym to outline both the student standards and the pedagogical commitments to pursue this vision.**

**VISION**



**I** DENTITY DEVELOPMENT: Students will develop their identities and make connections to the identities, knowledges, histories, experiences of Ethnic Studies Groups.

**R** ESISTING RACISM: Students will develop a systems literacy to understand and change the impact of racism and intersectional forms of oppression on racially marginalized communities.

**I** NTERCONNECTEDNESS: Students will value the community cultural wealth of Ethnic Studies groups and support community actualization at the local, state, and national levels.

**S** OCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: Students will participate in uplifting collective liberation, well being, and joy.





# **CENTERING STUDENTS**



**IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT:** Students will develop their identities and make connections to the identities, knowledges, histories, experiences of Ethnic Studies Groups.

- Identify the contributions, cultures, and histories of Ethnic Studies Groups that have been left out of mainstream curriculum
- Explore the historical, contemporary, interdependent, and multidimensional nature of identity
- Share their lived experiences, their gifts, dreams, stories and languages, indigeneity, immigration journeys and/or ancestral lineages while honoring the lived experiences of all students
- Value storytelling as a way to foster empathy and to understand the importance of mutual interdependence, relationality, and kinship



# R

**RESISTING RACISM:** Students will develop a systems literacy to understand and change the impact of racism and intersectional forms of oppression on racially marginalized communities.

- Examine how systems work to uphold oppression and exclusion (i.e. white-supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, institutional, and structural racism, colonialism and imperialism, etc.)
- Disrupt negative stereotypes and assumptions of Ethnic Studies groups
- Research the ways that systems have impacted their lives, Ethnic Studies groups, and Vermont
- Develop new humanizing systems that value Ethnic Studies groups



**INTERCONNECTEDNESS:** Students will value the community cultural wealth of Ethnic Studies groups and support community actualization at the local, state, and national levels.

- Describe the ways that students, families, and communities of color come from generations of peoples who have rich intellectual and cultural traditions
- Challenge deficit-thinking about Ethnic Studies groups
- Build one's purpose anchored in an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, and intercultural solidarity
- Contribute to community actualization and an equitable distribution of power



# S

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Students will participate in uplifting collective liberation, well being, and joy.

- Understand the impact of social movements and the solidarity efforts that fought for the freedom of all peoples, especially for Ethnic Studies Groups
- Acknowledge that we have a social responsibility to address the ways systemic racism, poverty, and intersectional oppressions have caused harm to all communities
- Engage in difficult yet humanizing conversations about race, and its intersections with language, class, gender, and disability, etc.
- Co-create cultural spaces that center healing and wellness for dancing, singing, eating, and enjoying nature--as an art of understanding each other's humanity and our relationship to our Earth



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# **ALIGNING STUDENT STANDARDS WITH PEDAGOGICAL COMMITMENTS**



**I** **IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT:** Center the identities, knowledges, histories, experiences of Ethnic Studies Groups

**R** **RESISTING RACISM:** Cultivate systems literacy to understand and change the impact of racism and intersectional forms of oppression on racially marginalized communities

**I** **INTERCONNECTEDNESS:** Value community cultural wealth and support community actualization

**S** **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Uplift collective liberation, well being, and joy



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**IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT:** Center the identities, knowledges, histories, experiences of Ethnic Studies Groups by:

- Learning the contributions, cultures, and histories of Ethnic Studies Groups that have been left out of mainstream curriculum; Include scholars, authors, scientists, activists, and artists of color as part of the curriculum as knowledge producers;
- Illuminating and exploring the historical, contemporary, interdependent, and multidimensional nature of identity, understanding that indigenous women and women of color, racially marginalized LGBTQ2S+ peoples and those with disabilities also have a place in Ethnic Studies;
- Co-generating curriculum and opportunities where students share their lived experiences, their gifts and dreams, stories and languages, indigeneity, immigration journeys and/or ancestral lineages; Honoring the lived experiences of all students, valuing different ways of knowing, and legitimizing the learning that takes place outside of school; and
- Valuing storytelling as a way to foster empathy and to understand the importance of mutual interdependence, relationality, and kinship

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**RESISTING RACISM:** Students will develop a systems literacy to understand and change the impact of racism and intersectional forms of oppression on racially marginalized communities.

- Examine how systems work to uphold oppression and exclusion (i.e. white-supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, institutional, and structural racism, colonialism and imperialism, etc.)
- Disrupt negative stereotypes and assumptions of Ethnic Studies groups
- Research the ways that systems have impacted their lives, Ethnic Studies groups, and Vermont
- Develop new humanizing systems that value Ethnic Studies groups



**RESISTING RACISM:** Cultivate systems literacy to understand and change the impact of racism and intersectional forms of oppression on racially marginalized communities by:

- Learning how systems work to critically examine systems of oppression and exclusion of Ethnic Studies groups (i.e. white-supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, institutional, structural racism, colonialism and imperialism, etc.);
- Disrupting racialized stereotypes and assumptions rooted in essentialism, exceptionalism, individualism, and paternalism by providing counter-narratives that place high value on Ethnic Studies Groups;
- Interrogating existing systems and monitoring outcomes of school policies, inequitable practices, student support systems, and discipline systems to move toward restorative and transformative justice.
- Challenging dominance that legitimize and “naturalize” hierarchies of power

**INTERCONNECTEDNESS:** Students will value the community cultural wealth of Ethnic Studies groups and support community actualization at the local, state, and national levels.

- Describe the ways that students, families, and communities of color come from generations of peoples who have rich intellectual and cultural traditions
- Challenge deficit-thinking about Ethnic Studies groups
- Build one's purpose anchored in an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, and intercultural solidarity
- Contribute to community actualization and an equitable distribution of power



**INTERCONNECTEDNESS:** Value community cultural wealth and support community actualization by:

- Learning that students, families, and communities of color come from generations of peoples who have rich intellectual and cultural traditions;
- Challenge deficit thinking by elevating multidirectional learning where educators, administrators, educational support staff, and students can learn from each other and schools, families, and communities are all spaces of learning; Having meaningful engagement and clear channels of communication that address barriers of access. (i.e., translations, interpreters, cultural/family liaisons); and
- Providing educational spaces that encourage the pursuit and discovery of perspectives, talents, and interests that deepen the joy and passion of learning and anchor an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, inter-cultural solidarity; Allowing for intentional and reflexive educational spaces where indigenous peoples, people of color and those from other racially marginalized groups can manifest their purpose and have their needs met;
- Creating diverse ways for students, their families and communities to build their power, gain access to school information and opportunities, and get involved in their school, taking into account diverse family structures, situations, and lived realities; Investing in partnerships with students, their families and communities as key to equity and school reform and also transforming school culture to a place of belonging for all children and young adults, families, and community members;

**S** SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: Students will participate in uplifting collective liberation, well being, and joy.

- Understand the impact of social movements and the solidarity efforts that fought for the freedom of all peoples, especially for Ethnic Studies Groups
- Acknowledge that we have a social responsibility to address the ways systemic racism, poverty, and intersectional oppressions have caused harm to all communities
- Engage in difficult yet humanizing conversations about race, and its intersections with language, class, gender, and disability, etc.
- Co-create cultural spaces that center healing and wellness for dancing, singing, eating, and enjoying nature--as an art of understanding each other's humanity and our relationship to our Earth



SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: Uplift collective liberation, well being, and joy by:

- Learning about social movements and the solidarity efforts that fought for the freedom of all peoples, especially for Ethnic Studies Groups;
- Acknowledging that we have a social responsibility to address the ways systemic racism, poverty, and intersectional oppressions have caused harm to all communities; Encouraging inquiry that addresses racialized violence and intergenerational trauma to create pathways to healing that lead to individual and collective determination;
- Welcoming difficult conversations about race, and it's intersections with language, class, gender, and disability, that are facilitated with the utmost respect and care of all voices and all people by creating humanizing protocols for critical dialogue;
- Providing spaces for students, educators, educational support staff and administrators to take care of one another, learn from each other, and heal together while transforming their educational experience; Creating systems that enable students to thrive in their environments regardless of their academic status, ability, and/or identity; Emphasizing wellness and healing processes through the creation of cultural spaces for dancing, singing, eating, and enjoying nature--as an art of understanding each other's humanity and our relationship to our Earth.