

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Require Classroom Instruction on Latino and Hispanic History

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**PRINCETON** – While observing Hispanic Heritage Month at Drumthwacket, Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation requiring the State Board of Education to adopt New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLs) in Social Studies, ensuring that the rich contributions, history, and heritage of Latino and Hispanic people are taught in K-12 schools. These new instructional requirements align with other efforts by the Murphy Administration to ensure that New Jersey’s students receive a holistic education that reflects the strength and diversity of the Garden State.

Under the bill, a board of education is required to include instruction on the history and contributions of Latinos and Hispanics in the curriculum of students in grades kindergarten through 12 as part of the school district’s implementation of the NJSLs in Social Studies. The instruction is to be historically accurate, culturally relevant, community-based, and developmentally appropriate.

“Through today’s bill signing, we are cementing the legacy of New Jersey’s Latino and Hispanic communities,” **said Governor Phil Murphy**. “I am especially proud to sign this bill during Hispanic Heritage Month, ensuring that the contributions of our Hispanic and Latino communities are taught in our nation-leading public education system. By teaching students about their neighbors, we are raising a more informed next generation of future leaders in the Garden State.”

“New Jersey’s learning standards require instruction that reflects the diversity of our communities and our cultural heritage,” **said New Jersey Department of Education Commissioner Kevin Dehmer**. “Codifying Hispanic and Latino history instruction into law is an important extension of that commitment. The Department will work in partnership with the Commission on Latino and Hispanic Heritage to provide districts with resources that support effective implementation of this requirement, ensuring that students receive a comprehensive understanding of our collective history.”

Under the bill, the Commissioner of Education, in collaboration with the Commission on Latino and Hispanic Heritage, will provide school districts with sample learning activities and resources that may be used to support implementation of the updated instructional requirements.

Prime sponsors of the legislation ([S2335/3096/A3871 \(https://njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2024/S2335\)](https://njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2024/S2335)) include Senators M. Teresa Ruiz, Brian Stack, and Angela McKnight, along with Assemblymembers Julio Marengo, Eliana Pintor Marin, Carmen Theresa Morales, and Annette Quijano.

“A study by Johns Hopkins University found that 87% of ‘key topics in Latino history’ are either left out of textbooks entirely or reduced to fewer than five sentences, leaving a profound gap in the story of America. Latinos have been at the forefront of shaping this country since its earliest days – fighting in every war, marching for civil rights, and using our talents to build businesses and drive the economy forward. Our children deserve to see that history reflected accurately and Latinos represented in exceptional spaces,” **said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz**. “This legislation will diversify our curriculum and shine a light on the contributions of Latinos – the artists, scientists, athletes, public servants, and countless others – who have left an indelible mark on our nation.”

“Nearly one-quarter of New Jerseyans identify as Hispanic or Latino, as does a large portion of my district,” **said Senator Brian Stack**. “It is important for students to see themselves and the diverse community around them reflected in their school’s curriculum. Providing classroom instruction on Latino and Hispanic American history will only enrich New Jersey’s public schools even further.”

“Crafting a diverse curriculum in New Jersey public schools is imperative if we wish to achieve a more inclusive future,” **said Senator Angela McKnight**. “The contributions of Hispanics and Latinos to our state and country are great and deserve to be recognized in every classroom. I thank Governor Murphy for his commitment to ensuring our children learn the rich history of all the beautiful people, cultures, and stories that surround us.”

“Representation matters, especially for children in their formative years, when school is often the first place they look for role models and reflections of themselves,” **said Assemblyman Julio Marengo**. “By integrating Latino and Hispanic American history into the core curriculum, we acknowledge the ever-evolving diversity of America and affirm the need for an education system that is not only equitable in knowledge but also instills pride in all of its students. These stories are New Jersey’s stories, and ensuring our classrooms reflect the communities we serve is essential.”

“A3871 will help Latino and Hispanic children see themselves reflected in the history they learn and understand how leaders from their communities have shaped this country,” **said Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin**.

“Representation matters, and as New Jersey’s Latino population continues to grow, it’s important that our students learn a history that reflects the diverse voices and contributions that make up our state and nation. In my district, this growth is part of our daily life, and I’m proud to support a bill that celebrates Latino culture and strengthens the education of our children.”

“As an educator, I know that equity in the classroom begins with the narratives we choose to tell and the voices we share. For too long, Latino and Hispanic American history has been left on the margins, sometimes not even making it to the books we read or history we learn,” **said Assemblywoman Carmen Morales**. “This bill closes that gap by making the contributions of these culturally rich but underrepresented communities part of the fundamental history lessons every New Jersey student receives.”

“The contributions of Latino and Hispanic communities are intricately woven into the fabric of New Jersey’s history, but are too often underrepresented in the classroom. I am proud to have sponsored this bill, which celebrates equity and inclusion, while deepening students’ understanding of the rich story of our state,” **said Assemblywoman Annette Quijano**. “Every student should see their heritage reflected in what they learn, to feel proud of their roots and to see the contributions and achievements of those who paved the way for them. With this legislation, we are honoring the legacy of countless Latinos and Hispanics who have helped shape our nation.”

“LULAC proudly supports Senate Bill 2335 because every student deserves to see the contributions of Latinos and Hispanics reflected in their education,” **said Roman Palomares, LULAC National President and Chairman of the**

**Board.** "This bill ensures pride, respect, and representation are part of New Jersey's classrooms and America's future."

"At a time when there are ongoing efforts to silence and erase our community's history, this legislation is a step in the right direction," **said Anita Teekah, Chief of Advocacy, LatinoJustice PRLDEF.** "By including Latino history in the New Jersey K-12, we are making sure every student sees a fuller picture of our history, contributions, and recognizes our communities as an essential part of our shared story."

"At HACE, our mission is to break barriers and create pathways for Latino leadership. The signing of S2335 extends that vision into New Jersey classrooms, ensuring Latino and Hispanic history is recognized as a vital part of America's story," **said Patricia Mota, President and CEO, Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement (HACE).** "When students see their heritage reflected in education, it empowers them to break barriers of their own and rise as the leaders of tomorrow."

"Latinos have always been central to the American story, yet their contributions are too often left out of classrooms," **said UnidosUS President and CEO Janet Murguía.** "Integrating Latino history into New Jersey's state educational standards is a powerful step toward telling a more accurate account of our shared history."

"We commend this move to broaden New Jersey's curriculum for all students," **said NJEA President Steve Beatty.** "Latino and Hispanic history is an inextricable part of American history. Understanding that history is an important part of understanding who we are as a nation. As a social studies teacher myself, I know how important it is to be intentional about introducing students to a broader range of voices, experiences, and perspectives. This new law will help us do that more effectively."

"We applaud Gov. Murphy for passing into law a bill that ensures New Jersey's students will receive a well-rounded education that reflects the full history of our diverse population. It's only fitting for this long-overdue addition to our state's learning standards to become official during Hispanic Heritage Month," **said AFTNJ President Jennifer S. Higgins.**

"The NJSBA proudly recognizes the invaluable contributions of our Hispanic community. Hispanic students, educators, administrators, staff, and community members enrich our schools with their knowledge, culture, and spirit. Many also serve as members of local boards of education, further strengthening diversity and representation in our school environments," **said Dr. Timothy Purnell, NJSBA executive director and CEO.** "Hispanic Heritage Month is a meaningful opportunity to celebrate and learn more about the history, traditions, and achievements that continue to shape and inspire our communities."

"Now more than ever, we need to teach our students about the important and diverse communities within our state that have contributed to our history, our priorities, and our successes as a society and nation. For this reason, the statewide membership of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) applauds today's signing of S2335, which will incorporate instruction on the history of Latinos and Hispanics as part of the implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards," **said Karen Bingert, Executive Director of the NJ Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA).** "School leaders across New Jersey look forward to working with their staffs, the NJ Department of Education, and the Commission on Latino and Hispanic Heritage to bring these important cultural histories to life in our classrooms."

"Vibrant and varied, Hispanic culture has shaped New Jersey's communities and become integral to our collective sense of community," **said Betsy Ginsburg, Executive Director, Garden State Coalition of Schools.** "We celebrate this bill, which brings Hispanic heritage into focus in our schools."

“This legislation marks a historic step forward in ensuring that Latino students see themselves reflected in the stories told in our classrooms. Teaching Latino history not only affirms the identity and contributions of our communities but also enriches the education of every student in New Jersey,” **said Dr. Jesselly de La Cruz, Executive Director, Latino Action Network Foundation.** “We applaud the legislature and Governor Murphy for recognizing that Latino history is American history.”

“I am grateful to live in a state that honors its cultural diversity and recognizes the importance of including everyone in its history. Latinos have contributed greatly to the culture, economy and history and this legislation seeks to acknowledge those contributions,” **said Frank Argote-Freyre, Chair of the Latino Action Network Foundation.** “This good news at a time when ethnic and racial diversity is under attack at the national level.”

“I am thrilled that this bill will be signed into law by Governor Phil Murphy. New Jersey has long been a place of refuge for our Latine families, but we haven’t always been given the space to be fully seen. This important step ensures Latino youth across our state can finally see themselves reflected in the classroom, included and celebrated. Latine history is not a side note, it is an integral part of New Jersey, of our nation, and of the world,” **said Natalie Hernandez, Garden State Equality Project Manager and Trainer.** “The history of my people was not something I was taught in school growing up here, and I’m proud that today’s students will have that opportunity. When classrooms include Latine stories, just like LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons and resources, students get the full picture of our shared history. That representation not only affirms identity, it creates safer schools, reduces bullying, and helps raise future leaders who are compassionate, culturally competent, and unafraid to celebrate diversity in all its forms.”

“Helen Zia said ‘racism begins with the idea that some people are less human than others.’ It is so important to intervene as early as possible to teach kids how to see the full humanness of those who are ‘other,’ to have knowledge of and comfort in their own identity, and to know our full history as a nation,” **said Kani Ilangovan, MD, Board Member of The E Pluribus Unum Project.** “As we create a more inclusive curriculum, children will be more prepared for the diverse society in which we live, children will see and value one another more and appreciate one another despite our differences of race, religion, class and sexual orientation, and understand how we all built this country together. Education is the most effective tool we have against hate.”

These topics will be incorporated in the next required review of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, which is currently underway. School districts will implement the new instruction requirement beginning in the 2026–2027 school year.

## Governor Phil Murphy

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