

From: Carla S

Sent: Thursday, November 12, 2020 10:15 PM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>; [emails redacted]

Cc: AROC [email redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum; support for Arab American Studies in main curriculum, including Palestine

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission, Superintendent Thurmond, and President of the State Board of Education Darling-Hammond,

As a retired educator, after 30 years of service to public schools, and a current mentor to new teachers, I support the full inclusion of Arab American Studies in the Ca. Model Ethnic Studies Curriculum.

As a teacher I directly witnessed the necessity of having a strong Ethnic Studies curriculum that centers the narratives of people of color and that provides tools for critiquing and challenging colonialism and racism. For this reason I support a genuine Model Ethnic Studies Curriculum that aligns to the guiding principles of Ethnic Studies.

The original Ethnic Studies curriculum included Arab-American Studies and Palestine, and was written by Ethnic Studies experts. Arab American Studies was part of the Asian American rubric, and Arab American studies cannot be relegated to an appendix. We need to value the expertise of our educators, both with regard to content and pedagogy, and the decisions they made to structure Ethnic Studies to center the voices of communities of color. Ethnic Studies must be a course that stands on its own, with its own guiding principles. Arab American studies and the struggle of Palestine are each central to a discussion of resistance to colonialism. As a Jewish American I know that criticism of Israel is not synonymous with anti-Semitism, and that idea should not be the reason for removing Arab American Studies from its rightful place in the main curriculum, as it was in the original version.

In Hayward, CA I saw how our Arab-American and Muslim students were misrepresented in the curriculum and school activities. My Arab-American and Muslim students were frequently harassed and called "terrorists," while the majority of students had no idea about the depth of the Arab American heritage and culture. I also deplore the divide and conquer techniques that include some Ethnic Studies Units and not others. Again, in Hayward, CA we taught a large Asian Pacific Islander population who were alienated from the school curriculum. All students deserve a safe environment in which to live and learn; and a curriculum to empower them to be the leaders of the future.

Sincerely,

Carla S. Schick

Oakland, CA