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TO: Yolanda Muñoz, Vice Chair, Instructional Quality Commission
Shanine Coats, Executive Director, Instructional Quality Commission

FROM: E. Toby Boyd, President, California Teachers Association

RE: Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

On behalf of the California Teachers Association (CTA), I am submitting comments and recommendations on the second draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. CTA appreciates the California Department of Education's efforts to provide an Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that educators can utilize in developing curriculum for the implementation of an Ethnic Studies course of study. We commend the department for their commitment and efforts to address the concerns of the stakeholders and citizens in this diverse state and their desires to ensure their histories and experiences are seen and heard. We also understand that this model curriculum, being the first in the nation, also needs to be one that California teachers can be proud of and use meaningfully, intentionally, and effectively. Two of our policymaking committees, Curriculum and Instruction and Civil Rights in Education, held several deep and exhaustive webinar meetings to review the model curriculum. They had some hard conversations about this model curriculum draft from the previous draft which they felt was a transformation from a model curriculum with sample lesson plans to now more of a guide for school districts. CTA is submitting the following comments about the second draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, and we will follow up with a separate grid identifying specific recommendations for line by line changes.

This second draft of the model curriculum seems to favor a multicultural perspective tied to the more Eurocentric focus of the History Social Studies Framework. As such, the newly inserted "Eight Outcomes of Ethnic Studies Teaching" have no history in Ethnic Studies teaching and learning, research, or pedagogy. In the Introduction, we were not able to find documentation for research-based data or explainable pedagogy for these eight outcomes. We recommend the deletion of the Eight Outcomes but keep the "Guiding Values and Principles of Ethnic Studies" which are the core values that should be instilled in a strength-based Ethnic Studies course. We recommend that ample templates, course development, curriculum planning, and lessons be developed around these guiding principles.

The Introduction was also not clear about the grade level delineation for the guide. There was mention of K-12 in the topic headings, like “Why Teach Ethnic Studies in a K-12 Environment” on page 2 and references to K-12 in lines 129 and 134 on page 15. We were not sure if the guide is intended for use for a broad-based audience of K-12 educators or specifically focused for grades 9-12 secondary teachers. We got the impression the guide seemed more focused on developing a course that met the A-G admission requirements of the University of California. There was only a slight mention of K-5 with very little guidance of a curriculum on page 23.

The department would be providing a tremendous resource if the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum encompasses all grade levels. It would be a more robust and acclaimed national debut of an Ethnic Studies guide if it was a K-12 guide. While we prefer a universal implementation of Ethnic Studies throughout the grade spectrum in TK-12, we found the guide lacking in the development of a proposed model curriculum for grades TK-8. We wholeheartedly recommend a universal TK-12 curriculum that provides pedagogy and guidelines for developing critical thinking skills in read alouds, questioning, repeating facts, and modeling at the primary level and progressing to diving deeper into the text, comparing and contrasting, analyzing, and showing evidence spiraling all the way up to the secondary level. The department would do well by ensuring that an Ethnic Studies curriculum is built on the platform of the Common Core State Standards, literacy, inquiry, and the Depth of Knowledge using Ethnic Studies guiding principles and content.

Another area that needs clarification is that the second draft is written as a guide which AB 2016 (Alejo) remanded. However, AB 2016 or EC 51226.7 also indicates “the Instructional Quality Commission shall develop, and the state board shall adopt, modify, or revise, a model curriculum in ethnic studies to ensure quality courses of study in ethnic studies”. While we feel that a “how to” guide for school district use was accomplished in Chapter 2, we feel that Chapter 3 on Instructional Guidance has shortchanged the educators who would be teaching the course. Chapter 3 continues with the “how to” for teachers, but it reads more like a research paper than a practical guide. We recommend strengthening Chapter 3 with more examples of the stand alone or thematic models. The templates on pages 38 and 43 have no functional value without an example or a vignette of how a teacher would use the template complete with the thought process involved in organizing the lesson and the use of resources.

The second draft is unlike other models that the department has produced as it is missing all of the practical examples teachers rely on to inform their teaching. What teachers have found most useful from the frameworks and curricular documents produced by the department, are the rich content, practical examples, and explicit discussion of teaching practices embedded throughout the document. Like the frameworks for the content areas, teachers are used to seeing guides that show them “how to” or lets them “see” what a lesson looks like. We recommend adding templates or examples that demonstrate what it looks like to apply a concept or a theme for teachers to see. We also recommend that the department take a step forward into the virtual world by using “how to” videos to show the functionality of the templates or examples. This model curriculum could be the first of the department’s model to evolve

into online preparation and use of its materials. Imagine including a bar code or QR code embedded in the document for quick and easy access to videos demonstrating sample lessons. That will take the first national curriculum for Ethnic Studies to the next level.

We also have some organizational or layout recommendations for the second draft. The bibliography in Chapter 4 seems out of place. We recommend that the bibliography be the last chapter or an appendix in the guide. Instead of an alphabetical listing of authors, we recommend a topical listing such as curriculum, course development, specific ethnic groupings, biographies, grade level materials, etc. We also noticed the references are old and outdated, and we recommend that more recent scholars and thinkers be added. Another recommendation in the bibliography or reference section is to make sure that the guide provides resources to comply with the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful Education Act or the F.A.I.R. Education Act (Senate Bill 48, Leno) which requires the inclusion of the political, economic, and social contributions of persons of color with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people into the model curriculum. The F.A.I.R. Act ensures that the historical contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are accurately and fairly portrayed in instructional materials. Similarly, we feel that Appendix C should be updated with more current references.

Although we understand that Appendix A is a compilation of Ethnic Studies courses submitted by school districts to the University of California Office of the President to meet the requirements for an A-G course, we find it has no context to category, topic, history or theme. It was not easy to read or follow Appendix A. If the educator was looking for a particular topic, they had to read through a large amount of text to find what he/she is looking for. Instead, we recommend that the summary or overview of each of the courses in Appendix A be moved to its own chapter heading in the main part of the guide. The detailed information about the courses could stay in the appendix under the same category or topic. We also recommend that the same categories or topics be created in the new chapter. A suggestion for organizing this new chapter is to organize it by topic or category, like Ethnic History in General or specifically, African American History.

Likewise, if Appendix B is intended for teacher use, the content should be part of the main body of the guide. We recommend Appendix B have its own chapter heading. We also recommend that the sample lessons be built out to show the progression of standard alignment. We also suggest that the IQC take a closer look at the essential questions to ensure that these questions promote robust thinking and application of concepts and content. We recommend that in order to effectively use the inquiry model, the essential questions for the sample lessons involve a greater application of the depth of knowledge progression so that students are not just surface learning and regurgitating the facts. We want our students to be able to analyze what they have read and provide evidence to argue and defend their points and ideas.

Lastly, I am reminded of the comments that the Superintendent of Public Instruction made about revising rather than rewriting the proposed first draft of the Ethnic Studies

Model Curriculum. Upon review of the second draft, we found that it bore little or no resemblance to the first draft. It was disheartening to see that the work of our classroom teachers was simply tossed aside, disregarded, and obliterated with a different approach. True to our beliefs, CTA believes teachers should have the central role in the development, definition, and implementation of curriculum and should comprise a majority of all committees making or recommending decisions in the area. That did not happen in the development of the second draft. The team that wrote the second draft totally dismissed the work and contribution of the original advisory committee. Their dedication and commitment in developing a model Ethnic Studies curriculum was unwavering. CTA urges you to reconsider the focus of the second draft and amend the draft to include the work started by the teachers on the advisory committee. CTA has long been on record that advisory committee members, being the original writers of the model curriculum, needed to be included in the revision work being conducted by the CDE staff. Daly Jordan Koch, CTA Liaison to the Instructional Quality Commission, provided the following testimony at the September 20, 2019 meeting: "CTA believes that within this work, the integrity of the ESMC must be maintained, the outlined process of review and feedback should be allowed to continue, and members of the Advisory Committee must be included for their input on the revision of the draft." CTA still stands by these comments. They deserve every opportunity to finalize the lesson units and vignettes that they started writing. We urge you to consider their valuable input in finalizing the revisions. CTA remains committed to a fair and transparent representation of teacher and student voices in the development of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

In summary, CTA supports a vibrant and robust Ethnic Studies curriculum and believes educator and student participation in Ethnic Studies have positive effects on their personal and professional growth and leads to overall achievement of all students. The positive benefits include widening cultural awareness and strengthening knowledge of the foundational ideals of equality upon which democracy is built. CTA believes in celebrating diversity and its commitment to Ethnic Studies. We support effective ongoing training programs for the purpose of recognizing and eliminating discrimination in the educational setting and endorse positive action plans that establish procedures and a timetable for eliminating discrimination in the curriculum. For that reason, the final point that we strongly emphasize is that this guide needs to promote ongoing relevant professional development to ensure that educators teach Ethnic Studies with a strength based mindset that embodies the core values and principles of Ethnic Studies.

Thank you for your time in reviewing our comments. We appreciate all of your diligence and dedication to the development of an Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

ETB/MF/jdh

c: David Goldberg, Vice President
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