

Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum May 2019 Draft

(Download and use to provide specific recommendations)

Include the chapter of the model curriculum, the page number, and line number(s) to ensure that the California Department of Education and Instructional Quality Commission can reference the content of the document when reviewing your comments. Please email this document as a Word document to ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov. You may contact Kenneth McDonald, Education Programs Consultant, at kmcdonal@cde.ca.gov with any questions regarding this template or the public input process.

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
General	Eve Sutton, Freelance Curriculum Designer	See comments starting on Page 2 Incomplete and imperfect, but enough to get started on some necessary development

California Department of Education, June 2019

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I am a professional curriculum designer with decades of experience developing and editing curriculum at all grade levels, PreK, K-12, Adult Education, University, and Professional Development for teachers. A conversation on NextDoor email list (Palo Alto, CA area) drew my attention to this effort to develop resources for Ethnic Studies courses.

After reading the first 70 pages in detail, and skimming most of the remaining 230 pages, I submit these general comments.

First, I commend the individual(s) who assembled these web links and drafted these lesson plans. Much effort was involved, most likely unpaid or underpaid, and the passion of the curriculum writer(s) is obvious. I realize this is still a draft, and much work still remains for the teams of content developers and reviewers, a project that will require several years, and likely be ongoing.

I offer these suggestions for developing, editing and refining the material.

Grammar: While I appreciate the desire to include non-binary gender, I believe this can be accomplished more often using “one” instead of “their” to indicate a singular, unknown person. Individuals who specifically request “their” as their singular pronoun should be respected, of course.

Historical Figures: The resource includes long lists of historical figures for study. Names alone do not support the teachers; teachers need education even more urgently than students. All names of historical figures should be accompanied by brief but informative descriptions of why they should be studied, the kind of description we expect to find in a dictionary or encyclopedia. Here is an example:

[George Washington – Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington

George Washington (February 22, 1732 – December 14, 1799) was an American political leader, military general, statesman, and Founding Father who served as the first president of the United States from 1789 to 1797. He led Patriot forces to victory in the nation's War for Independence.

Trends and Current Events: Hashtags and memes and URL's will age, and others will arise. “Hxrstory” might have a short lifespan as a word. Please include the year or date range when each movement or vocabulary was current, and pronunciation for more terms that are in another language or are invented in English. Pronunciations could be expanded for more words, like Latina/o/x.

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Ethnic studies (focus and definition): Use something similar to the definition or description from UC Berkeley:

ethnicstudies.berkeley.edu/

Ethnic Studies is the critical and interdisciplinary study of race, **ethnicity**, and indigeneity with a focus on the experiences and perspectives of people of color within and beyond the United States.

or:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_studies

Ethnic studies, in the United States, is the interdisciplinary study of difference—chiefly race, *ethnicity*, and nation, but also sexuality, gender, and other such markings—and power, as expressed by the state, by civil society, and by individuals.

Support for teachers as a curriculum resource: Many suggestions are made about what ‘should’ be studied. The current draft needs more solid, objective content in the disciplines that underlie ethnic studies, not just passing references to what should be studied. This is where your teams of curriculum designers should put most of their energy. Teachers do not have the time or ability to do all the research and vet all the sources. The Model Curriculum must provide much of the related content education (history, geography, language, semantics, psychology, sociology etc.) along with explaining that experiences and perspectives are part of what is studied.

Narrative: The language of the curriculum needs to be more informative and objective, even while discussing topics like bias and oppression. Most social justice movements evolve from the oppressed group taking more control of their situation, and the oppressed group persuading the dominant group to let them have more control. South Africa is a good example of a difficult but peaceful transition, led by a few courageous individuals and many ‘ordinary’ citizens.

The general narrative of the current draft is that minorities have been oppressed by dominant culture, which favors white, straight, (probably Christian), able-bodied men whose ancestors arrived from United Kingdom or Europe. This is generally accurate, but invites counter-examples or defensiveness that the teacher would have a hard time moderating. The examples of oppression need to be factually based, and need to invite empathy, and invite social changes toward equality. This is difficult when we consider the history of a race or group or class, compared to the individual lives of particular people.

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Classroom activities and discussions: Individually, we cannot simply place ourselves in the social order by taking a step forward or backward based on whether we had this or that experience--although that activity was a good start and would lead to discussion of additional factors that might push someone forward or back. We all have intersecting circles or points of view that are not mutually exclusive. One can be part of the dominant (or insensitive) class for being able-bodied or straight, while being part of a repressed class for being female or a person of color. But we do not want classroom discussions to pit one race or group against another in a contest for who is more oppressed, more victimized. Too often, we see one minority group oppressing another, or a disadvantaged individual rising to oppress others. Being repressed is might contribute being abusive, but is not an excuse. A person of color might have social standing or influence that extends to being oppressive and destructive (even murdering), while some rich, white, powerful males (such as our current president) complain of being victimized.

The hard part for a teacher will be to keep a balance: We all have some privilege, and some oppression, and some blindness or insensitivity. We cannot all be victims all the time. But bringing all this emotion to public discussion, in a classroom or around the school, must be done very carefully.

Therefore, the teacher needs this framework or model curriculum to provide solid information, realistic examples, and CAUTIONS for the teacher, who is risking parental ire, social ostracism, administrative reprimand, etc.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eve Sutton
August 4, 2019