

TRANSQUEER RACIAL EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE COALITION

July 28th, 2020

California Department of Education
1430 N St #5901
Sacramento, CA 95814

To: State Superintendent Tony Thurmond, State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond, Instructional Quality Commission Chair Jose Iniguez, and Instructional Quality Commission Executive Director Shanine Coats

We write in support of the original California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Draft (ESMC), and urge you to maintain the powerful [Guiding Values, Principles, and Outcomes of Ethnic Studies Teaching](#) embedded within it. It is imperative to adhere to the root from which this framework was founded upon: achieving *holistic humanity* and helping students develop *critical consciousness*. We recognize the work that the California Department of Education (CDE) has done in support of LGBTQ+ visibility, family acceptance, and gender identity inclusive policies. However, we want to remind you that the CA-ESMC draft furthers this work by centering Trans, Non-Binary and Queer Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) who founded the movements that have paved the way for these important discussions to take place. The framework should be a tool used to support BIPOC in school by giving them a perspective of their story that is representative of their community cultural wealth. The CA-ESMC would teach all students that the struggle for LGBTQ+ visibility, acceptance and gender inclusion were initiated and led by Black and Brown Trans, Non-Binary and Queer activists, such as Marsha P. Johnson and Gloria Anzaldua. It is imperative that you keep the [Guiding Values, Principles, and Outcomes of Ethnic Studies Teaching present in the original draft](#), as well as the language and framing that supports LGBTQ+ communities throughout the document.

In light of the recent global pandemic, the emerging economic recession, and racial injustices, as a coalition of Queer educators and community organizations, we ask the CDE to join the fight to address these ongoing challenges. Through understanding powerful language and terminologies contained in the CA-ESMC, students and educators may bring up the conversation for racial and systemic change in communities across California in specific and nuanced ways. Yes, this includes recognizing the value

and importance of terms that were the target of closed-minded criticism from those who wish to maintain the oppressive status quo, terms found in the CA-ESMC draft and which need to remain within it, including: “cisheteropatriarchy, heteronormativity, transphobia, herstory, hxstory, hxrstory, womxn, xdisciplinary, misogynoir, two-spirit, nepantlas, Fa’afafine, Fakaleti, and Mahu”, and having the courage to think beyond rigid binaries and the limitations of traditional disciplines. Words represent concepts, to censor our language, is to censor our thinking, and our being.

With youth understanding these dynamics of power, students will be able to confront both patriarchy and cisheteropatriarchy, as well as racism and white supremacy, which perpetuate violence against our most vulnerable communities: LGBTQ+ Communities of Color. Ethnic Studies can fundamentally transform the very conditions that have allowed injustice and inequality to exist by uplifting our stories courageously through teaching and learning. This year alone, twenty one Trans and Gender Expansive people have been murdered in our country—the vast majority Trans BIPOC. The CA-ESMC Draft directly works to address and combat Transphobia. Our coalition members who are queer educators are already integrating these powerful and necessary [Guiding Values and Principles](#) into our classrooms, and they must remain.

Detractors of this field of thought have stated that the curriculum will cause divisiveness, or that the terms are “jargon”, as if queer BIPOC students cannot access academic language, including that which directly results from the CA State Board of Education guideline that the ESMC disciplinarily also connect with Gender Studies. It is racist and riddled with low expectations to not allow students to encounter this academic language; as educators, it is our job to teach and “scaffold” content-specific academic language accordingly, not deprive our students of the language and concepts themselves. We urge you to not listen to pressures from status quo whiteness and heteronormativity. We appreciate the solidarity from the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee, and now it is upon the CDE to not dilute or exclude this language of the field.

We want to make it clear to the CDE that the [original Guiding Values, Principles, Outcomes](#), and descriptive language of the CA-ESMC all foster cross-cultural collaboration, empathy, and understanding. These, we believe, are the elements of [authentic social unity](#), and we urge you to not dilute the ESMC draft in any of these regards. The time for Trans Queer racial educational justice, through concepts and language that apply to our lives and to intersectional Ethnic Studies, is now; please respect this and do not negate or erase it in the curriculum.

In hope for solidarity,

Trans Queer Racial Educational Justice Coalition
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Signatories on subsequent page



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State Board of Education ESMC Guideline: Promote critical thinking and rigorous analysis of history (hxstory, herstory, hxrstory, ourstory), systems of oppression, and the status quo in an effort to generate discussions on futurity, and imagine new possibilities. DILUTION IS NOT THE SOLUTION. WE ASK THAT YOU SUPPORT THE ORIGINAL ESMC GUIDING VALUES & PRINCIPLES, & LANGUAGE OF THE FIELD.

**TRANS QUEER
RACIAL EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE COALITION
*Steering Committee***

Guiding Values, Principles, and Outcomes of Ethnic Studies Teaching

HOLISTIC
HUMANIZATION

CRITICAL
CONSCIOUSNESS

Given the range and complexity of the field, it is important to identify key values and principles of Ethnic Studies to aid in guiding and developing Ethnic Studies courses, teaching, and learning.

The foundational values of Ethnic Studies are housed in the conceptual model of the “double helix” which signifies the interdependence between holistic humanization and critical consciousness.

Humanization includes the values of love, respect, hope, solidarity, and is based on the celebration of community cultural wealth.

The values rooted in humanization and critical consciousness shape the following guiding principles for Ethnic Studies teaching and learning. Together, these are the two interwoven guiding values and seven principles Ethnic Studies lessons should include. Ethnic Studies courses, teaching, and learning will:



1. CULTIVATE

empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and People of Color;



5. CHALLENGE

imperialist/colonial hegemonic beliefs and practices on ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels;



2. CELEBRATE

and honor Native People/s of the land and Communities of Color by providing a space to share their stories of struggle and resistance, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth;



6. CONNECT

ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on global and local levels to ensure a truer democracy;



3. CENTER

and place high value on pre-colonial, ancestral, indigenous, diasporic, familial, and marginalized knowledge;



7. CONCEPTUALIZE,

imagine, and build new possibilities for post-imperial life that promote collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.



4. CRITIQUE

empire, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression at the intersections of our society;

SOURCES

Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales and Edward Curammeng, “Pedagogies of Resistance: Filipina/o Gestures of Rebellion Against the Inheritance of American Schooling,” in Tracy Buenavista and Arshad Ali, eds., *Education At War: The Fight for aStudents of Color in America* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2018), 233–238.

R. Tolteka Cuahtin, “The Ethnic Studies Framework, A Holistic Overview” in R. Tolteka Cuahtin, Miguel Zavala, Christine Sleeter, and Wayne Au, eds. *Rethinking Ethnic Studies* (Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2019), 65–75.

Tara Yosso, 2005. “Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth”, in *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.