

From: Liang-Fang Chao

Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 3:22 AM

To: Ethnic Studies; IQC

Cc: [Email Redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Request Genuine Ethnic Studies Curriculum that Comply with 2016 California History-Social Studies Framework

Letter to Request Genuine Ethnic Studies Curriculum that Comply with 2016 California History-Social Studies Framework

Date: September 29, 2020 (version 2)

From: Better Ethnic Studies

To: [Email Redacted]

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission, State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond, State Superintendent Tony Thurmond, and Governor Gavin Newsom,

As the population of the U.S. becomes more and more diverse, the requirement of Ethnic Studies courses in the K-12 schools is essential to prepare our students "to be global citizens with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures", as intended by California Assembly Bill 2016. A well-designed and well-taught Ethnic Studies curriculum is proven to improve academic outcome by connecting students to their ethnic identity and cultures. Many of us are thrilled to finally see a course to teach the next generation about the rich diverse ethnic cultures we have here.

I write to you with deep concern about the current draft of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). I'd like to express my support for the following detailed comments:

- The detailed revision requests on the 2020 draft ESMC sent to you by the Alliance for Constructive Ethnic Studies:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CyXME2uQNrJSjTeSLeYnN_oChI7rYfdO/view)=
- Detailed Analysis and Recommendations of the 2020 draft ESMC by "Stand With Us":
<https://www.standwithus.com/esmc-analysis-and-revisions>
- And detailed requests listed below in this letter: Also available at
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/10hMvPYBFWGIKG8iGf1dMHhkYNKpgir9p/view?usp=sharing> (PDF)

I urge you to create a balanced Ethnic Studies curriculum that genuinely focuses on the ethnic cultures, their evolution and contributions to the American experiences. Our young students deserve a course on their cultures, their identities and their ancestries. Please do not allow this wonderful course to be hijacked by any content that does not even comply with the Ethnic Studies described in the current "California History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools" (HSS Framework), adopted in 2016
(<https://www.cde.ca.gov/Ci/hs/cf/documents/hssfwchapter14.pdf>)

1. Adding the Los Angeles Unified School District's [Elements of a Balanced Curriculum](https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Balance%202017.pdf) (<https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Balance%202017.pdf>) as guidelines against politicizing Ethnic Studies classes. This document starts with

"At the college and university level, ethnic studies and related courses are sometimes taught from a specific political point of view or frame of reference. In K-12 education it is imperative that students are exposed to multiple perspectives, taught to think critically and form their own opinions on these and other issues. Accomplishing a balanced curriculum and pedagogy—a well rounded instructional program—can be a complicated and difficult endeavor to achieve. Therefore, the Division of Instruction has developed the following guiding document in order to assist teachers with this process. ..."

2. Add this statement in the introduction paragraph and the Guiding Principles to be implemented in every lesson:

"The course will include curriculum, resources, and materials, **including a balance of topics, authors, and concepts, including primary and secondary sources that represent multiple, and sometimes opposing, points of view or perspectives** (History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, 2016)."

3. Add this statement to the Guiding Principles to be implemented with every lesson to prevent any lesson from promoting specific political agenda:

"An ethnic studies course should **provide students with depth of understanding in relation to ethnic and social issues, rather than promoting specific political activism, demonstration, protest or the like**. Ethnic studies is a scientific inquiry of ethnic groups and their interrelations (Yang, 2010, pg. 14)" (LAUSD Ethnic Studies Guidance on Social Justice)

4. Add the statement to the introduction paragraph and Guiding Principle so that the students understand that race is a social construct that evolves over time:

"The course examines **how race and ethnicity have been constructed** in the United States, **have changed over time, and continue to shape the country today** (History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, 2016)."

5. Add the following statement to the Guiding Principles since it's important to understand the themes of social justice evolve over time:

"Students will become aware of **the constant themes of social justice and responsibility**, while recognizing these are **defined differently over time**" (History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, p. 420)."

6. **Remove (or rephrase) the Guiding Values and Principles #4, #5, #6, #7 where they represent one prescribed perspective on history, such as** "critique empire-building in history", "challenge imperialist/colonial beliefs", "connect past and "contemporary resistance movements", "build new possibilities for post-imperial life that promotes collective narratives". These principles with prescribed political views are not suitable to the K-12 Ethnic Studies course and they do not comply with "History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, 2016", which states "The course will include curriculum, resources, and materials, **including a balance of topics, authors, and concepts, including primary and secondary**

sources that represent multiple, and sometimes opposing, points of view or perspectives"

ESMC #4. critique empire-building in history and its relationship to white supremacy, racism and other forms of power and oppression

ESMC #5. challenge imperialist/colonial beliefs and practices on multiple levels

ESMC #6. connect ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on the global and local levels to ensure a truer democracy; and

ESMC #7. conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for post-imperial life that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

7. Rephrase Guiding Principles #3 and #4 to use the wording in LAUSD's version

"The course will teach students to understand the concepts of **intersectionality, power, privilege and/or oppression** in relation to:

- Their own identities as human beings and **acknowledging their ancestral roots.**
- The **complexity and diversity of the American experience."**

In particular, this phrase "enter and place high value on the pre-colonial, ancestral knowledge" represents one prescribed view and "understand ... their own identities and acknowledging their ancestral roots" permits "critical thinking". In particular, "empire-building" appears historically in every continent between people within the same race/country or different races/countries.

ESMC #3. enter and place high value on the pre-colonial, ancestral knowledge of Native people/s and people of color that is typically marginalized in society;

ESMC #4. critique empire-building in history and its relationship to white supremacy, racism and other forms of power and oppression

8. Please consider adopting the Guiding Principles from the LAUSD Ethnic Studies since they comply with "History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, 2016" more closely.

- The course concentrates on building the capacity of students to **interact effectively in a culturally diverse society**. As culturally competent persons, students can **assess their own cultural orientation, value diversity, manage the dynamics of differences** and adapt to diversity (Lindsey, 2013).
- The course emphasizes mutual respect, dignity, and self-worth of all students, while also acknowledging that students begin the course with **intellectual assets, knowledge of their culture and that they are sources of community wealth**.
- **Attend to the varied student populations in the classroom by embracing diversity as an asset for engaging in rich and rigorous instruction**. Ethnic studies is inclusive of students and families from a wide range of cultural, ethnic, sexual orientation, race, class, gender, socioeconomic, linguistic, and ability backgrounds.
- Should include examples of civic engagement (e.g., voting and **other peaceful social justice activities**) and the impact they have had on United States history. Students who are considering volunteering, social justice activities, community engagement, etc.,

should consult with their school teacher/advisor and parents/guardians **to evaluate that the activities are lawful, peaceful, and nonviolent.**

- The course will teach students to understand the concepts of **intersectionality, power, privilege and/or oppression** in relation to:
 - Their own identities as human beings and **acknowledging their ancestral roots.**
- The **complexity and diversity of the American experience.**

9. **Remove any use of terms that promote a specific political agenda, since it violates "History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, 2016"**, such as these terms: "resistance", "resistance movement", "critique empire-building".

10. Remove any use of terms that address historic perspective from the Guiding Principles, such as pre-colonial, imperial, empire building etc. Per "History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, 2016", the historic perspective is only one of many methods to design lessons for Ethnic Studies. Thus, such terms do not belong in the Guiding Principles.

11. Remove any use of terms that are not even related to regular Ethnic Studies from the Guiding Principles since they have to be implemented in every lesson, such as these terms "transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing."

12. Aligning all lessons only to the impartial Outcomes, or balanced Guiding Principles modified as suggested above and identify those Outcomes as "Guiding Principles and Outcomes."

13. Include positive figures of diverse ethnicities and diverse political beliefs and from all walks of lives to provide multi-faceted stories to reduce stereotyping any ethnic groups.

- The only author mentioned in the draft ESMC, of all Asian American authors, is Carols Buloson. Buloson, discussed in three different units, was a Philipino-American revolutionary who admired Karl Marx and wrote of "of the rising power of the working classes and what they would achieve in the coming revolution."
(<https://www.historylink.org/File/5202>)

14. Add the guardrails inserted by the Jewish Caucus to AB 311 to require that any ethnic studies instruction

- must "be appropriate for use with pupils of all races, religions, genders, sexual orientations, and diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds,"
- must "not teach or promote religious doctrine" and
- must not "reflect or promote, directly or indirectly, any bias, bigotry, or discrimination against any person or group of persons on the basis of any category" be appropriate for use with pupils of all races, religions, genders, sexual orientations, and diverse protected by Section 220."

Section 220 of the state's education code protects individuals from discrimination based on, among other characteristics, nationality, race or ethnicity, and religion.

15. The ESMC appears to only focus on one method of teaching Ethnic Studies "From a history-social science perspective, students may study the history and culture of a single, historically racialized group" (#3 below). Yet, the "History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, 2016" includes a long list of 8 different methods below. Please

include ALL of these 8 methods plus more in ESMC and actively encourage sample lessons using methods #1, #2, #4, #5, #6, #7, and #8. (For #3. there is already plenty of materials for the historic perspective on one racial group in the draft ESMC)

1. How have race and ethnicity been constructed in the United States, and how have they changed over time?
2. How do race and ethnicity continue to shape the United States and contemporary issues?
3. From a history–social science perspective, students may study the history and culture of a single, historically racialized group in the United States. Examples may include a course on African American, Asian American, or Chicana/o and Latina/o history.
4. The course could also focus on an in-depth comparative study of the history, politics, culture, contributions, challenges, and current status of two or more racial or ethnic groups in the United States.
5. This course could, for example, concentrate on how these groups experienced the process of racial and ethnic formation in a variety of contexts and how these categories changed over time.
6. The relationship between global events and an ethnic or racial group's experience could be another area of study. In this vein, students could study how World War II drew African Americans from the South to California cities like Oakland and Los Angeles or examine a group's transnational linkages.
7. Alternatively, a course could focus on the local community and examine the interactions and coalition-building among a number of ethnic and/or racial groups.
8. In an ethnic studies course, students will become aware of the constant themes of social justice and responsibility, while recognizing these are defined differently over time.

In conclusion, the Ethnic Studies curriculum for K-12 schools must be aligned with the "History-Social Science Framework for California Schools" to present balanced materials, rather than pushing for any prescribed political view.

Thank you for your attention to these crucial problems in the ESMC.

Sincerely,

Liang Chao

Better Ethnic Studies

<https://better-ethnic-studies.blogspot.com>

BetterEthnicStudies@gmail.com

REFERENCES:

- "Ethnic Studies" section in "HISTORY, SOCIAL SCIENCE, FRAMEWORK FOR CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS," adopted 2016:
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/Ci/hs/cf/documents/hssfwchapter14.pdf>

- Comparison of Guiding Principles Between Drat ESMC and LAUSD Curriculum: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EqRQmpuCMo-25uYfHeTLb14uTTwm8rWrtKgS-iM2uOs/edit?usp=sharing>
- Analysis and Comparison of Guiding Principles Between the Drat ESMC and LAUSD Curriculum: https://docs.google.com/document/d/133luql2aL9t79QsLfElo_Jdd-Vd3nhpByhOA1jCk9vU/edit?usp=sharing
- Elements of a Balanced Ethnic Studies Curriculum in LAUSD, 2017: <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Balance%202017.pdf>
- Here are documents for Ethnic Studies from Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD):
 - Guiding Principles of Ethnic Studies and Related Course in LAUSD, 2017: <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Principles%202017.pdf>
 - Ethnic Studies Guidance on Social Justice in LAUSD, 2017: <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Social%20Justice%202017.pdf>
 - Access and Equity Pedagogy Principles for Ethnic Studies in LAUSD, 2017: <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Access%20and%20Equity%202017.pdf>
- The detailed revision requests recently sent to you by the Alliance for Constructive Ethnic Studies: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CyXME2uQNrJSjTeSLeYnN_oChI7rYfdO/view