

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.

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Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
Chapter 2	Osnat Persky, California Resident, Mother of children in the CA public education system.	<p>Hello, I am a parent to children who are part of the CA public school community. I appreciate the process in which parents' voices can be heard regarding the curriculum planned for their children. After reviewing the content of the glossary documents (class and sample lesson plans), I would like to share my significant concerns about the following specific issues as a parent, a woman, an American Israeli and a person of the Jewish minority and faith.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) I welcome courses that teach about ethnicity in the U.S. In a time where language of divisiveness seems to take control of the public sphere and arguably leads to violent acts, teaching our children values of tolerance and acceptance of the other is highly important. 2) On p. 17, line 356, it is stated that one of the purposes of the course is to “critically examine the social construction of race and racism within the United States and its impact and legacy;”. I find it perplexing, therefore, that the content of the model curriculum focuses in part on an anti-Israeli organization and uses anti-Israeli rhetoric and sentiment. Israel, and the Israeli Palestinian conflict, have truly nothing to do with racism within the U.S. 3) Schools – whether elementary, middle or high school – are supposed to be safe haven for all children regardless of their faith/religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation and race. The curriculum, in the context of issues of racism within the U.S., bizarrely targets Israel with divisive and factually incorrect language. In that context, such curriculum betrays the inherent notion of safety, nonpartisanship, and can very well lead to alienation of minors (children/teens) of the Jewish faith and of Israeli nationality. 4) The Jewish faith, to which many American Jews and Israeli American subscribe, is an ethnic/racial/religious minority. 5) The glossary shows teaching content about BDS, an organization that calls to boycott and divest from Israel. In your glossary you state (p. 2): “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)- is a global social movement that currently aims to establish freedom for Palestinians living under apartheid

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		<p>conditions. Inspired by tactics employed during the South African anti-apartheid movement, the Palestinian-led movement calls for the boycott, divestment, and sanctioning of the Israeli government until it complies with International law. BDS proponents and organizers have called for the global community to boycott or withdraw support from Israel and companies associated with it. The second component of BDS calls for governments, banks, universities, and other institutions to withdraw monetary support (divestment) from Israel and its companies. And finally, the third component—sanctions—asks international governments to hold Israel accountable for its actions through legislation, trade and military agreements, among other measures.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- BDS does not recognize and delegitimizes Israel, a member country of the U.N.- It promotes aggressive tactics in U.S. campuses to single out people speaking on Israel's behalf. BDS activism has been tied to rise of anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli incidents. By calling to delegitimize Israel, BDS tries to silence an authentic and well-informed debate about a complex conflict.- The sample lesson plans indicate a biased narrative which will alienate one minority group (Jewish/Israeli Americans) while possibly creating animosity, anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish reactions among other groups taking the class.- Such content which equates Israel and South Africa during the apartheid regime is political, one-sided and highly controversial at the very least. It is also a type of content which is light years away from promoting a sense of inclusion, diversity and support among students as a whole. It is anything but bridging differences between cultures.- The course markets an active and ongoing political anti-Israeli idea or agenda which calls for the taking of active political, commercial, financial, academic steps against a recognized member country of the United Nations. I doubt whether school-age minors, not yet eligible to vote, are able to make a sophisticated distinction between country's controversial policies and the people of the country, and whether – given that teens naturally know so little about the conflict – are able to form an independent and well-informed views and opinions.- The course does not seem to include any ‘for’ and ‘against’ views that would help create a valid, balanced and true academic debate and
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		<p>independent thinking. For example, there are publications about the relationship between anti-Zionism (an agenda that is promoted by BDS) and anti-Semitism (e.g. Saxe, L., Wright, G., Hecht, S., Shain, M., Sasson, T., & Chertok, F. (2016). Hotspots of Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Sentiment on US Campuses; Kaplan, E. H., & Small, C. A. (2006). Anti-Israel sentiment predicts anti-Semitism in Europe. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 50(4), 548-561). Also, given that the BDS relies on disruptive behaviors which lead to harassment and intimidation of Jews who support Israel, shouldn't the students be informed of such issues?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the content focuses on Israel, shouldn't it provide a well-rounded, authentic picture? For example, Israel serving as safe haven for persecuted Jews from all around the world, Israel's peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt, Israel's relationship with Muslim countries such as Turkey, Angola, Ethiopia, Israel's overwhelming scientific contributions to the world in medicine and hi-tech, Israel's Supreme Court protects the rights of minorities, women's rights in Israel, and much more. <p>6) There are multiple phrases throughout the sample lesson plan which indicate clear political bias against Israel, to a point of falsifying factual hxstory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For example, on p. 237, lines 5030 students will be expected to identify Israel as an Arab country named 'Israel-Palestine'; Israel was established in 1948 following UNGA resolution 181 which recognized Israel as an independent Jewish State along-side a neighbor Arab-Palestinian state. Israel accepted the partition plan, while Palestinians refused to have a country neighboring Israel. Israel has since been a member of the United Nations. These are well recorded facts, part of the UN's records. I have not seen this factual hxstory in the description, despite its undeniable relevance. - On page. 242, line numbers 5161 the Arab Israeli war defined as "1948 Palestine War". This, too, illustrates a biased and political narrative. It is well recorded that, following the declaration of the establishment of the state of Israel multiple Arab countries attacked Israel. Such coining of new terms, without any factual hxstory suggests an intention to forcibly dogmatize rather than provide broad and well-informed knowledge composed of different perspective and sources of information. - On p. 234, line 4958 Comparative Border Studies: Palestine and Mexico,
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		<p>is another way of distorting history. Such comparison is misleading. Had the U.S. experience terror attacks, including suicide bombings, to the extent Israel does it would have suffered the loss of approx. 170,000 people (from 1948 to current). The terror attacks in mid 2000s' are the reason the barrier was built and indeed it saved both Jewish and Arab lives. Any attempt to put the two on the same scale distorts the truth.</p> <p>7) Research draws a connection between anti-Israeli sentiments and rhetoric, and anti-Semitic attacks against people of the Jewish faith. Importantly, the recent decade has seen a spike in anti-Semitic attacks in higher education institutions. ADL research from 2014 showed that in 2015 approximately 10% (90 attacks) occurred on college campuses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- In May 2019 in SF State a graffiti in one of the restrooms showed a swastika with the name of the university, a Star of David and the words "Free Palestine." <p>See: https://www.jweekly.com/2019/05/22/anti-semitic-graffiti-found-in-sf-state-restroom/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- In 2017 a freshman in Alameda high school received multiple texts with the words "kike", "Mr. Ethnic Cleansing" <p>See: https://www.jweekly.com/2019/05/22/anti-semitic-graffiti-found-in-sf-state-restroom/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hillel, a Jewish student organization has been barred from 2017 fair of "Know Your Rights" students fair by other students' organization. The biased student-based decision led to SFSU investing in a fund that would promote "viewpoint diversity". <p>See: https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/SF-State-settles-suit-accusing-it-of-tolerating-13706977.php?psid=fXnef</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- There have been many other anti-Semitic attacks against students of the Jewish faith in California schools in the past few years. I was alarmed when I learned of their extent. I encourage reading these articles before deciding what material to integrate in the teens' curriculum. <p>8) My personal concerns on how such content and context will affect my children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Teaching about the BDS or about Israel in the controversial and biased context suggested in this glossary will clearly create a hostile environment
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		<p>(from both teachers and students) towards my children for their faith and dual nationality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The likely hostile environment will not be conclusive to the classroom. It is well known that teenagers express their bias through social interactions and media and outside of the classroom in general. - As a former graduate student of the Fletcher School at Tufts University, I have personally experienced a hostile environment on account of being an Israeli and Jewish (for example, one email on the list-serve suggested that Israel is responsible for the September 11 terror attacks). It was very hard to confront the bias during my 20s'. It is virtually impossible to experience such bias as a teenager and not be emotionally negatively impacted. - Children should be taught to think, and also to voice their opinion, rather than conceal it or feel uncomfortable to share it. However, the content, language and context of the class as described in the glossary, will lead to discomfort (if not fear) to share their knowledge or opinion about the Israeli Palestinian conflict. - My children, similar to any other student in the school, should not be distressed because of their nationality, ethnicity or religion. The content suggested in the glossary promotes just the opposite. <p>9) There are almost 400,000 Jews in the Bay Area. Jews are a racial, ethnic and religious minority. Despite attempts to attribute generalized skin color/race (Caucasians) to Jews, the fact is that Jews reflect a diversity of skin colors and cultural orientations. With such a significant minority, I wonder why the ethnicity class options do not include the Jewish minority – its history, the relationship between U.S. and the Jews, and more.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The glossary's agenda includes hate crimes. Isn't anti-Semitism, which led to the Holocaust, one of the most severe racist expressions of the 20th century? Aren't we witnessing expressions of clear anti-Semitism, including terror attacks towards people of the Jewish faith, in the U.S. today? For example, an ADL study found that anti-Semitic perceptions are 'still alive and kicking' throughout the world (https://global100.adl.org/#map). Isn't it important to teach what racist misconceptions look like so we are able to draw insights towards the slippery slope of falsified racist speech or racist narratives? Isn't it important to show how racism led to unimaginable cruelty of man towards another?
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		<p>10) One cannot but wonder about the motivation behind the attempt to integrate separate themes related to a country (Israel) that has factually nothing to do with the ethnic/racial discrimination problems the U.S. experiences and demonstrates. Israel has nothing to do with the shameful history of U.S. towards its minorities. Integrating clear political agendas (in this case, pro-Palestinian, anti-Israeli) does not serve educational purposes. Rather, it serves an atmosphere of hate and divisiveness. I urge you to consider the implications that such perspective and language could have on teens with young, evolving and impressionable minds.</p> <p>11) <u>The responsibility to provide a fair, well-informed and balanced education lies with you</u>. This should not be just lip service. As people of education who are entrusted with the teaching of minors, it is your duty to bring a fair and cautious perspective to a classroom. Even more so, it is your responsibility to provide a safe place for all children... where they will be able to acknowledge their identity without fear of retaliation, racism or politicization.</p> <p>12) Thank you for your consideration. Should your committee have any questions, I am available via email.</p>
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