

From: dalia weinstein <

Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 2:14 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: [email redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please continue to revise the ESMC Curriculum so it is JEDI (Just, Equitable, Diverse & Inclusive) certifiable

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I, Dalia Zatlin, was happy to see you have made some improvement in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC), but I am extremely concerned by the offensive, one-sided political ideology that still remains in this proposed and egregiously flawed draft of California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. For example The "Guiding Values and Principles" of the ESMC directly reference and are partly based on specific pages from a book called *Education at War*. The relevant section of the book effectively encourages teachers to "develop solidarity and create linkages" with anti-Zionism, BDS, and anti-Israel narratives.

The changes that have been made thus far that are moving the curricula in the right direction include:

- Removal of explicitly antisemitic slurs from the ESMC (though anti-Zionist references remain in footnotes, links, and bibliography)
- Addition of guidance for teachers to expose students to "multiple and often competing sources of information" and foster respect for diverse viewpoints.
- Inclusion of an identity unit in the instructional guidelines

Here are my major concerns in this current draft:

1. ESMC guiding values and principles need revision because they are the basis of each unit and lesson plan. They:
 - a. do not reflect California's shared values, nor the values laid out in AB 2016
 - b. advocate a narrow political philosophy
 - c. establish an "us vs them" agenda
 - d. partly based on the book *Education at War*, which encourages "solidarity" and "linkages" with BDS, and anti-Israel narratives, harmful to many Jewish students
2. The second draft does not prevent teaching offensive politically indoctrinating and anti-Israel elements from ESMC's first draft.
 - a. Add Elements of Balanced Curriculum from the LA Unified School District's Ethnic Studies Curriculum to provide solid ground rules for course development
 - b. Numerous sections of the ESMC need revision to expose students to "multiple and often competing sources of information" and ensure that "diverse viewpoints are respected."
3. The few references to Jews are misleading and offensive.
 - a. Remove links to, and group advocacy of, virulently anti-Israel pro-BDS sites with malicious slander about imaginary genocide
 - b. Include Mizrahi and other Jews of color

- c. Add a definition of antisemitism to address various contemporary manifestations of antisemitism, including stereotyping and double standards against Jews and Jewish institutions from all parts of the political spectrum.
- d. Add specific lesson materials on antisemitism as a form of racism and bigotry

4. References to Middle Eastern communities should not favor one community over others

a. If Middle Eastern communities are considered Asian, then under the “broadly defined umbrella of Asian studies” are Mizrahi Jews and other MENA ethnic groups, which represent ~60% of CA’s MENA population (estimated 500,000 Californians).

b. Include a lesson plan covering contemporary issues of antisemitism, bigotry, and the Middle Eastern-American Jewish experience.

5. The ESMC should be revised to accurately and equitably represent the cultural and racial diversity of California so it is balanced, as required by SBE standards and ESMC Guidelines

. If the ESMC includes ethnic groups from the Middle East, it should include Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Eastern communities proportionately.

I am a Californian parent of two children who, along with their peers, will be grossly misinformed by a curriculum that will perpetuate the cycle of hatred based on limited and one-sided teachings. How will I explain to my children that the State of California favors other religious and cultural groups over them while they are supposedly learning to treat everyone with the same respect, dignity and humanity regardless of their race, cultural affiliation, etc. Why is it that all other groups will be highlighted to receive equal and fair coverage in the curricula EXCEPT the Jews. Why would the California Department of Education allow this curriculum to be even considered for adoption? To truly eradicate inequality and hatred you need to eradicate it from all foundations, premises, and theoretical teaching, especially in a public-school system. But as it stands, it appears that you are promoting a curriculum which is just passing one type of misinformed hatred of one group onto another: replacing one group of recipients of unjust and biased ideology with another. Clearly the intent is not to teach tolerance, love, and kindness for all, but rather for some and not others.

I ask that you continue to do the essential and extremely important work as leaders of our educational system and make significant further revisions to the ESMC to address these concerns. Please revise the Guiding Values and Principles of the ESMC to use more precise and inclusive terminology, to align with the ESMC Guidelines, to build bridges of intergroup understanding, and to ensure critical thinking. Then adjust the lessons and sample topics accordingly to match the revised principles.

Thank you,
Dalia Zatlín

San Mateo, California