

From: Dan Fendel

Sent: Saturday, August 8, 2020 7:43 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Assemblymember.Wicks@assembly.ca.gov; Marvin.Deon@sen.ca.gov

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear CDE and state representatives:

I am a California grandparent of six children in California public schools. My own three children attended California public schools. And I am Professor of Mathematics, Emeritus, from San Francisco State University, after teaching there for more than 30 years. So I speak with both personal concern and professional perspective when I express my serious reservations about the new draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). As a Jew active in my synagogue and community, I am aware of antisemitism and anti-Zionism throughout our educational system, and saw this first hand with hateful speech at San Francisco State.

I want to acknowledge that the revised guidelines for the ESMC are an improvement over the original draft. Here are two important changes:

- * The new draft removes the explicitly antisemitic slurs from the ESMC.
- * The draft provides guidance for teachers to expose students to “multiple and often competing sources of information” and foster respect for diverse viewpoints.

But the ESMC still has a long way to go. Here are some of my concerns, from a Jewish perspective:

- * Anti-Zionist references remain in footnotes, links, and the bibliography
- * The guidelines are partly based on the book Education at War, which encourages “solidarity” and “linkages” with BDS, and anti-Israel narratives, which makes them harmful to many Jewish students. The BDS movement is not a “Palestinian rights” movement but a movement to destroy Israel.
- * Though Jews have played important roles in American history, the few references to Jews are misleading and offensive. Some needed improvements include:
 - Adding reference to Mizrahi Jews and Jews of Color, who make up a substantial and growing portion of the Jewish population
 - Adding a definition of antisemitism, such as the internationally recognized International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition, which has been adopted by many countries throughout the world

I hope my concerns, and those of many others, will be taken into account in order to create an improved version of the ESMC.

Sincerely,

Dan Fendel
Piedmont, CA