

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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Glossary/General	<i>Kate Chavez</i> <i>StandWithUs</i>	<p>Ethnic Studies is a crucial aspect of a person’s education and growth, especially in our beautifully diverse state.</p> <p>The overview of the curriculum states that the courses shall “... empower students to be engaged socially and politically, enable students to develop a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion, and aids in the eradication of bigotry, hate, and racism. In essence, Ethnic Studies helps improve the U.S. democracy by encouraging the participation of all students at all political, social, and economic levels.”</p> <p>These points are more important now than ever and I thank the Department of Education for working toward a more inclusive and understanding future. Still, there are key issues with the proposed curriculum that do not foster an environment of understanding.</p> <p>As a professional who works directly with high school students, I echo the statement of my organization, because our main goal is creating peace through education. From StandWithUs: “However, we are deeply concerned by sections of the curriculum which omit antisemitism as a form of bigotry and openly promote hateful boycotts against the Jewish State of Israel. Despite its stated purpose, the proposed curriculum includes no lessons about Jews as a sizeable ethnic minority and as the American community most targeted by hate crimes based on religion.”</p> <p>I will speak about the issues regarding the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS) movement. The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Glossary states that BDS is a “global social movement that currently aims to establish freedom for Palestinians.” As an Israel and Middle East educator, I witness and hear stories of the atmosphere BDS brings to institutions across the country and the definition the model curriculum puts forth does a disservice to the students learning the material. The students expect a well rounded and diversified education, yet the model curriculum leaves out a crucial voice prevalent in the conversation.</p>
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		<p>I feel blessed to not have dealt with BDS on my college campus because I am aware of the frightening outcomes of both passed and failed BDS resolutions. My peers in California were not this lucky. If our fellow Californians were taught about the history of BDS and the aura it creates in communities when they were in high school, I believe we could find alternatives to debate contentious topics. BDS not only creates a space where antisemitism is accepted and only lightly condemned, but also creates a prominent and irreparable divide between members of a community.</p> <p>A specific story stays with me. A friend attended University of California, Santa Barbara and fought BDS resolutions all four years of her college career. Each season that BDS returned to the campus, there was a rise in hate crimes (eg. spitting on pro-Israel and Jewish students), flyers spreading classic antisemitism (eg. Jews running the media), and swastikas graffitied across the campus. Notably, my friends were also escorted back to their dorms after the BDS hearing by police officers or campus security because of the anticipated violence instigated by BDS.</p> <p>This is common story across the country. BDS and unsafe spaces are directly correlated. Furthermore, I do not believe the curriculum leaves space for dissenters of the BDS movement. The language and the attitude toward BDS in the curriculum will quiet students who disagree. The curriculum endorses BDS as a solution by not presenting the many narratives around the movement.</p> <p>Ethnic Studies promotes nuance and debate and understanding more than one side, yet this is not displayed in the model curriculum. If we look directly at the original authors of BDS, we see language that does not promote the values that Ethnic Studies carry. There is clear language calling for violent means to reach an end, and in the case of BDS, the end quite literally means the end of the Jewish state.</p>
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		I teach the many students I work with about the importance of listening to each other's stories, reaching across the aisle and never accepting there is not more to learn. I implement the values of Ethnic Studies in my education method and I witness students coming together and listening to each other. I want the same experiences for students across our incredibly diverse state. I urge our Department of Education to embody the values of Ethnic Studies and understand their constituents' concerns over the model curriculum.

California Department of Education, June 2019