

November 13, 2020

RE: November IQC Meeting - Item 8 History–Social Science Subject Matter Committee (SMC) - ESMC Edits

Dear Acting Chair Muñoz and Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:

We appreciate the California Department of Education (CDE) team's extensive efforts to summarize all stakeholder comments and interests and their thoughtful recommendations for improving the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) through line item edits and suggested overview to reflect submitted stakeholder comments. As the Commission reviews the list of edits to finalize the ESMC, we recommend prioritizing efforts/edits to: (1) identify, address, and redress systemic racism and (2) elevate civic learning to engage students and to foster change.

The core purpose of the ESCM is to address and redress systemic racism, to foster a sense of belonging for ALL students (particularly those from marginalized communities) and to engage students to usher in a better future for their communities and society as a whole. As ethnic studies experts know, the work to dismantle systemic racism has to be explicit in order to be effective. Racism in the United States is encapsulated in policies and institutions, implicit racial discrimination, and subconscious bias. To root out and dismantle systemic racism, we need our students to understand and recognize its root causes, the role of government policies and practice, and the need for civic participation in eliminating systemic inequities and inequalities.

Civic learning is foundational in the fight against systemic racism. Civic learning includes inquiry of different historical and contemporary issues, conducting deep and thorough investigations, deliberating on current and controversial issues, and taking needed and informed action. Thus, civic learning will enable students to practice taking informed action to strengthen and extend the purpose of ethnic studies and combat systemic racism. Through civic learning, students could engage with the systems of power to advance social and policy changes to undo the harms of racism, bias, and hate.

With increasing public awareness of racial injustices, the ESMC is an opportunity for the state to play a meaningful role in supporting schools and students in identifying, addressing and redressing systemic racism. We commend the thoughtfulness of the goals, [guiding values and principles](#) set in the Ethnic Studies curriculum to honor and uplift silenced, oppressed, and/or excluded voices. We encourage the Commission to not lose sight of the purpose of ethnic studies to name and address systemic racism while elevating student civic participation throughout the Model Curriculum, as it continues to include more marginalized identities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for your continued efforts to create an ethnic studies curriculum that will serve as a model not only to California school districts but to the nation at this critical time.

Sincerely,  
APT (formerly PACCCRAS) Ethnic Studies Team