

**From:** Neil Achtman  
**Sent:** Monday, September 28, 2020 1:32 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] feedback on ESMC Second Field Review

Hello,

I'm writing to provide feedback on the ESMC Second Field Review posted at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/esmc2ndfieldreview.asp>.

1) I support the fact that the ESMC gives individual schools and districts flexibility to adapt the curriculum based on their students' backgrounds. Given this flexibility, the ESMC should ensure there are guardrails so that:

- \* The focus remains on California history and society, rather than drifting into international political topics.

- \* The focus is on learning about different groups' cultures and backgrounds in a positive way, instead of drifting into attacks on other ethnic groups.

For example, without explicit guardrails, I'm concerned that chapter 1/page 9's mention of "past and contemporary resistance movements" will be warped into political debates and biased attacks on certain ethnic groups

2) Preface, page 5 - "Include information on the ethnic studies movement, specifically the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), and its significance in the establishment of ethnic studies as a discipline and work in promoting diversity and inclusion within higher education". While the TWLF made positive contributions in establishing ethnic studies as a discipline and promoting diversity and inclusion within higher education, many of its leaders also publicly made anti-Semitic comments and celebrated leaders responsible for the deaths of millions of civilians. The ESMC should promote a balanced discussion of the TWLF's contributions.

3) Chapter 1, page 9 - "connect ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on the global and local levels to ensure a truer democracy". Because the ESMC does not define "resistance movements", this may be used to teach biased perspectives (e.g. related to Middle East conflicts) that attack certain ethnic groups.

4) Chapter 1, page 9 - add this to the Guiding Values and Principles: "At the college and university level, ethnic studies courses are sometimes taught from a specific political point of view. In K-12 education it is imperative that students are exposed to multiple perspectives, taught to think critically, and form their own opinions."

5) Chapter 3 - Replace the term "Arab American Studies" with "Middle Eastern American Studies", since the use of the term "Arab" erases the diversity of Middle Easterners who have made California home (e.g. Armenians, Persians, Jews, Assyrians, Kurds), and incorrectly gives people the perception that all people from the Middle East are Arabs. Non-Arab Middle Easterners deal with many of the same stereotypes / discrimination that Arabs have dealt with post-9/11. Specifically, in Chapter 3, page 21 - "the unique experiences of Arabs and other Middle Easterners" => This makes non-Arab Middle Easterners sound secondary to Arabs. I suggest simply "the unique experiences of Middle Easterners". This would be consistent with the rest of that section, which mentions regions such as East Asian / South Asian, rather than individual groups such as Chinese / Indian.

Thank you.

6) Appendix A - There is almost no content addressing the Jewish experience in the US and California. The only significant discussion of Jews claims that they have racial privilege (page 7): "Students will write a paper detailing certain events in American history that have led to Jewish and Irish Americans gaining racial privilege". This ignores the racial diversity of Jews (e.g. African Jews) as well as growing anti-Semitism from white nationalists who view Jews as a different race. There should be a course or unit that covers the Jewish experience and anti-Semitism within the US/California, for example based on the lesson plan at <https://www.jimena.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Antisemitism-and-Middle-Eastern-American-Jews-LP-1-1.pdf>.

7) Where are North Africans covered -- as part of Asian Americans (under Middle Eastern) or African Americans? Can the ESMC clarify this?

-Neil