

From: Rachel Reinhard
Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2019 10:35 PM
To: Tony Thurmond; Superintendent
Subject: Continue the ESMC Writing Process

September 10, 2019

California Department of Education
1430 N. Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Honorable Tony Thurmond:

I am writing to express my deep concern and disappointment regarding your recent decision to terminate the effort to finalize a Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) for California's students.

Last summer, as part of my work with history teachers, I was able to convene a panel of long time Ethnic Studies practitioners, some of whom are on the drafting committee. The panel was a highlight during a week of learning for 30 Bay Area teachers who were embarking on establishing their own Ethnic Studies courses, or integrating Ethnic Studies pedagogy into their traditional H-SS course. Following the discussion, the conversation continued as participating teachers peppered the panelists with one on one questions, thanks, and awe. Aside from the radical honesty modeled by the panelists, or perhaps a clear result of it, I walked away with a deep belief that "Ethnic Studies is love," a statement articulated by one of the panelists.

The teachers I worked with last summer, teach in disparate communities across the Bay Area - urban and suburban, impoverished and affluent, consisting of students of color and others disproportionately white. But they all left the week of learning about Ethnic Studies with an understanding of the deep importance of engaging with their own positionality, developing relationships with community members, presenting counternarratives to students, studying moments of organized resistance, and creating opportunities for students to imagine a more just world.

In Ethnic Studies, history matters. Given the long standing marginalization of the narratives of Native American, African American, Latinx and Asian Americans in the United States (the communities that founded the field of Ethnic Studies) and the overwhelming number of students of color in California public schools, the histories of these particular communities must remain the central focus of the field. Consequently, while taking seriously specific comments and concerns to the public draft, we must recognize that expanding Ethnic Studies to include the histories of communities that over time have become white diminishes the overall impact of this effort.

While there are tremendous challenges to the creation of a single resource that speaks to all of California's educational communities, I urge you to protect the curriculum development process and to allow for this draft to be completed. Communities of color across California have fought long and hard to secure their place in our democratic society, and in our curriculum.

All of California's students deserve an opportunity to take an authentic Ethnic Studies course, and benefit from the tremendous academic and social value it provides for students of all races and ethnicities.

Sincerely,

Rachel B. Reinhard, Ph.D.