

From: Alex Volinsky
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 6:06 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: [email redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Draft template ESMC2 Comments

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I appreciate some improvement in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC), including removal of explicitly antisemitic slur from the ESMC (though anti-Zionist references remain in footnotes, links, and bibliography) but I am concerned by the imposition of the offensive, one-sided political ideology that still remains in this proposed draft of California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

Here are my major concerns:

- 1.
 2. ESMC guiding values and principles need revision because they are the basis of
 3. each unit and lesson plan. They advocate a narrow political philosophy, inspired by Neo-Marxist ideas of "us vs them".
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- 2.
 3. Current draft is partly based on the book "Education at War", which encourages
 4. "solidarity" and "linkages" with BDS, and anti-Israel narratives, harmful to many Jewish students, promotes cultural warfare and intolerance.
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- 3.
 4. The second draft does not prevent teaching offensive politically indoctrinating
 5. and anti-Israel elements from ESMC's first draft.
 - 6.

Consider adding Elements of Balanced Curriculum from the LA Unified School District's Ethnic Studies Curriculum to provide solid ground rules for course development. Numerous sections of

the ESMC need revision to expose students to “multiple and often competing sources of information” and ensure that “diverse viewpoints are respected.”

Growing up in the Soviet Union, in an oppressive society, driven by Marxist ideology of class and cultural warfare, I witnessed how Marxist ideology destroyed the society and brought people to a state of a permanent war, instead of building a common future based on liberal values. As a Jewish person, I could see how Anti-Zionism turns from legitimate critics of certain policies of State of Israel into a cover-up for Anti-semitism and how it was used to harass and oppress Jewish people.

I urge you to make significant further revisions to the ESMC to address these concerns. Please revise the Guiding Values and Principles of the ESMC to use more precise and inclusive terminology, to align with the ESMC Guidelines, to build bridges of intergroup understanding, and to ensure critical thinking. Then adjust the lessons and sample topics accordingly to match the revised principles.

I am a Californian parent of two high school students. Ethnic studies is an important subject that can teach American students of different races, ethnic origins and backgrounds how to live in peace and better understand each other. It should not be used to incite a cultural war !

Thank you,
Alex Volinsky,
Campbell, California