

From: sherifrumkin
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 10:58 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: [email redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I, Sheri Frumkin, appreciate some improvement in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC), 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:

Many of the same lessons remain from the first draft, just with less detail, so there is less visibility to what potentially offensive details will actually be taught. Of note: the misrepresentation of Jews and the imposition of a one-sided political ideology still remain in this new draft, as do the same problematic principles and ideological framework from which all lessons are developed.

The “Guiding Values and Principles” of the ESMC directly reference and are partly based on specific pages from a book called *Education at War*. The relevant section of the book effectively encourages teachers to “develop solidarity and create linkages” with anti-Zionism, BDS, and anti-Israel narratives. The guiding values and principles should be revised to ensure that they cannot be used to justify promoting such hateful agendas in the classroom.

Based on the problematic “Guiding Values and Principles,” the ESMC promotes and romanticizes specific political ideologies with no counterbalancing perspective. Guidelines should be added, and the sample lessons revised, to ensure that ethnic studies courses focus on a thorough understanding about ethnic groups, social issues, and civic engagement, without political proselytizing. A cursory look at the bibliography reveals a preponderance of the proselytizing version of Ethnic Studies authors (Cuauhtin, Tintiangco-Cubales, Sleeter), combined with the glaring omission of the seminal texts of the balanced version of the subject (Takaki, Shaefer, Banks).

The experiences of Mizrahi Jews, Iranians, Kurds, Assyrian-Christians and other immigrant communities must be represented on an equal basis with Arab Americans in the ESMC. They should not be simply lumped together as, “Arab Americans and other Middle Easterners”. The current language unwittingly reflects a long history and ongoing reality of imperialist oppression and erasure of non-Arab and non-Muslim ethnic and religious groups in the Middle East.

I am a parent and Californian. 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.

Thank you,
Sheri Frumkin
Los Altos, California