

From: Ellinoora Lahtinen

Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2021 2:40 PM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] A demand to revise the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum to address major flaws that are harmful to Jewish people

Dear California Department of Education,

I am writing you today to urge you to revise the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) to address the following major flaws:

- The "Guiding Values and Principles" of the ESMC should be clarified and revised to encourage critical thinking, instead of harmful political agendas. The curriculum's values and principles directly reference and are based on specific pages from a book "Education at War". The relevant section of this book encourages teachers to "develop solidarity and create linkages" with anti-Zionism, BDS, and anti-Israel narratives. One of the ESMC's guiding values is connecting to "resistance movements that struggle for social justice on the global and local levels". This is language which can and will easily be used to justify promoting this hate and bias in the classroom, in violation of AB331.

- The lesson plan that was added at the last minute solely focuses on Arab Americans, and thereby it is discriminatory and lacking in transparency. The curriculum should be inclusive of all Middle Eastern communities in California, such as Jews, Iranians, Arabs, Kurds, Assyrian Christians, Coptic Christians, and others. Favoring one of these communities over all others is not educationally or morally justified. The ESMC should be revised to add an inclusive unit that is about Middle Eastern Americans. This unit goes through the same vetting process as the rest of the curriculum.

- Existing references to American Jews should be edited to explicitly mention the experiences of Mizrahi Jews, Jews of color, Jews from the Former Soviet Union, and other Jewish communities in California whose stories are less widely acknowledged. What's more, a section should be added to the ESMC covering various forms of hate, including antisemitism in all its forms across the political spectrum.

- The ESMC has numerous sections where it is essential to expand upon or reinforce the importance of exposing students to "multiple and often competing sources of information" and making sure that "diverse viewpoints are respected".

The inaccurate information of the proposed curriculum is harmful to Jewish people and erases the identity of many Jews. Please ensure that there is no room for hate or bias in classrooms, and revise the ESMC to address the mentioned flaws. In order to make the changes, I urge you to follow the specific recommendations made here:

<https://www.standwithus.com/esmc-analysis-and-revisions>

Sincerely,
Ellinoora Lahtinen