

Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum May 2019 Draft

(Download and use to provide specific recommendations)

Include the chapter of the model curriculum, the page number, and line number(s) to ensure that the California Department of Education and Instructional Quality Commission can reference the content of the document when reviewing your comments. Please email this document as a Word document to ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov. You may contact Kenneth McDonald, Education Programs Consultant, at kmcdonal@cde.ca.gov with any questions regarding this template or the public input process.

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
Write “General” if your comment isn’t about one specific chapter.	Lauren Post	<i>I fully support the idea of Ethnic Studies requirement. California is too diverse as a state to not have something like it, given the state’s history with white supremacy. However, it is disturbing to me that the state’s Jewish community is barely mentioned at all, and only in connection to damaging stereotypes to Arabs or in conjunction to wealth. It is unfortunate that these oversights have been made, but I think that if you take the time to listen to educators within the Jewish community, and especially listen to leaders from groups like 30 Years After and JIMENA, you can create a truly inclusive curriculum.</i>
Glossary		Page 2, lines 29-40 – This section features a definition which clearly promotes the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement against Israel. It claims the purpose of BDS is to “establish freedom for Palestinians living under apartheid conditions.” This section offers no alternative perspectives, and no context from its co-founder and leading activists which will openly state that BDS is meant to end Israel as a Jewish state for Jews.

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Chapter 2		<p>Page 234, lines 4956-4958 – This section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages teachers to highlight BDS and a pro-BDS group called Direct Action for Palestine but no voices critical of their perspectives (p. 234). • Promotes a false equivalence between Israel's efforts to stop terrorists from entering communities to murder innocent people, and U.S. policies on the border with Mexico.
Chapter 2		<p>Page 237, lines 5024-5032 – This section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use unclear language that implies “Israel-Palestine” is an entirely Arab country.
Chapter 2		<p>Page 242, lines 5157-5161 – This section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frames the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 War as fact, with no alternative perspectives. It also makes no mention of the forced expulsion of Mizrahi Jews in the aftermath of the war, and in general, completely elides the existence of Jews from these countries.
Chapter 2		<p>Page 256, lines 5477-5494, pages 264-270, lines 5692-5830 – These sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teachers to use an anti-Israel poem which insinuates Jews control the media and use it to manipulate the public – an age old and quintessential antisemitic slur.
General		<p>The Introduction of the proposed curriculum states that “[t]he implementation of Ethnic Studies presents an opportunity for teachers to...enable students to develop a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion, and aids in the eradication of bigotry, hate, and racism.” Despite this stated goal, the curriculum</p>

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		<p>does not feature a single lesson about the Jewish community or antisemitism, mentioning Jews only in passing. It is also rather unbelievable that in a moment where Jews are being named as explicit targets of white nationalist violence IN California there is no meaningful exploration of the Jewish community as a whole.</p> <p>By ignoring the historic Jewish presence in the Middle East and North Africa, the drafted curriculum also fails to affirm the heritage of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, who were forcibly expelled from their countries, saw their money, homes, and private possessions stolen from them, faced severe discrimination, and escaped to Israel and other places including California. California is home to several thriving Middle East, North African, Sephardi, and Persian Jewish communities. For example, the Persian Jewish community in Los Angeles comprises one of the largest communities of Persian Jews in the world. The sample curriculum excludes their histories and experiences entirely, which is unacceptable.</p>
General		<p>The biased sections and omissions listed above run counter to the stated purpose of the curriculum, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1(a): The State of California is committed to providing excellent educational opportunities to all its pupils; • Section 1(f): The state's educational standards should be guided by core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations; and • Section 1(g): The state is committed to its efforts to provide all pupils with excellent educational opportunities, without regard to race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, income, sexual orientation, or disability. <p>Additionally, California Education Code § 233.5(a) provides:</p>

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		<p>"Each teacher shall endeavor to impress upon the minds of the pupils the principles of morality, truth, justice, patriotism, and a true comprehension of the rights, duties, and dignity of American citizenship, and <i>the meaning of equality and human dignity, including the promotion of harmonious relations</i>, kindness toward domestic pets and the humane treatment of living creatures, to teach them to avoid idleness, profanity, and falsehood, and to instruct them in manners and morals and the principles of a free government." (Emphasis added).</p> <p>The rise of antisemitism within our culture, which has been accompanied by an increasing general threat to freedom, human dignity and harmonious relations, is evidenced by the recent attacks of Jews in synagogues in Pittsburgh and Poway, as well as against other American citizens in El Paso and Dayton. The curriculum's failure to address antisemitism as a form of bigotry thus falls short of the above directive.</p> <p>Furthermore, the California Education Code's Prohibition of Discrimination states, in relevant part, that "[n]o person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion... in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance, or enrolls pupils who receive state student financial aid."</p> <p>Similarly, the California Education Code's Prohibition Instruction includes a provision on Prejudice that states, in relevant part, that "[a] teacher shall not give instruction and a school district shall not sponsor any activity that promotes a discriminatory bias on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation..." This provision, like the Prohibition of Discrimination mentioned above, illustrates the problems inherent in the proposed curriculum, and are not an exhaustive list of the provisions of the</p>

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		<p>California Education Code with which the proposed curriculum appears to be in conflict.</p> <p>The model curriculum not only fails to address antisemitism as a form of bigotry but actually includes thinly veiled antisemitic rhetoric and promotes the discriminatory BDS movement. Additionally, the model curriculum simultaneously fails to provide balance with regard to Israel or any education at all about Jews. Therefore, it effectively discriminates against Jewish and Israeli students in violation of the education code. Additionally, by marginalizing Jewish and Israeli students, the model curriculum violates the three above-referenced declarations of the California state legislature in enacting the legislation.</p> <p>We note the critical LA Times' review of the curriculum, and hope that the values of inclusion prevail over hatred, division, and misinformation. In closing, we strongly urge you to review and revise the curriculum to remove bias and to educate students about American Jews as an ethnic group, including those who fled the Holocaust, oppression in the Middle East, and discrimination in the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, we call on you to create safeguards that will prevent similar bias and omissions in this and other California state curriculums going forward.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical issue.</p>