

August 15, 2019

Attn: Instructional Quality Commission
California Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear California Department of Education Instructional Quality Commission:

Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN) appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum ("Model Curriculum"). Our organization's mission is to empower low-income immigrants and refugees in Northern California and the Central Valley through community organizing, civic engagement, policy advocacy, and immigration legal services. We work with and serve community members from an array of ethnic backgrounds, including those who identify as Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim and South Asian (AMEMSA), and African immigrants. One component of our work is organizing youth from immigrant and refugee backgrounds where they learn about the histories of communities of color in this country.

We applaud the California Department of Education's effort to implement AB 2016 (Alejo) in a by convening an Ethnic Studies Advisory Committee and developing a draft of the model curriculum. For the past 50 years, students, faculty, families, and communities have fought extensively for ethnic studies to be a legitimate academic discipline. Research shows that taking an ethnic studies course can increase school attendance, grade-point average, and the amount of school credits a student earns.

We believe that California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum ("Model Curriculum") must be robust and reflect the diverse populations that make up California, including the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, where school districts can pull curricula of relevant communities into their classrooms. Unfortunately, we do not see that reflected in the current model curriculum. **We urge you to protect and improve the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.**

Below are recommendations to improve the Model Curriculum.

- Include curriculum on the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) in San Francisco and Berkeley, as they were the pioneers of the ethnic studies movement. This should include community activism by students and organizations from various communities of color that were part of this historic movement.
- Include curriculum including the Iu-Mien, Japanese, Korean, Lao, South Asian, and Vietnamese American communities.
- Deepen the curriculum's inclusion of Cambodian and Hmong American communities including the discrimination and resiliency these communities have faced.
- Include appropriate classes and homework in the Asian American curriculum so students can digest information and deepen their understanding and analysis of what they are learning.

- Include discussion of how systems (e.g. capitalism, white supremacy, etc.), and intersectional identities (e.g. race, gender, age, sexuality, class, etc.), impact society.
- Integrate appendices into the curriculum.
- Provide a uniform structure for each “lesson” in the curriculum, as the units are currently varied in how thorough they are.

These changes will be crucial to the success of the students from school districts that will turn to this model curriculum for guidance. We look forward to continuing this partnership as we seek to ensure that all students in California public schools are able to learn about their history and each other’s histories to obtain cultural awareness, self-determination, and community.

Sincerely,



Maricela Gutiérrez
Executive Director