

From: susan marks
Sent: Sunday, August 11, 2019 7:30 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Tony Thurmond Beth Am Jewish & Israel Advocacy
Subject: The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum is flawed and needs revision!

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I am distressed and disappointed by the proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. I support the idea of teaching an ethnic studies class, but urge you to make major revisions or a significantly rewrite this Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, consistent with the recommendations from the California Legislative Jewish Caucus letter, Stand With Us, Jimena, Amcha and others.

I am a retired California teacher, having taught Social Studies for twenty years at the middle school level. I've taught 6th, 7th and 8th grade curriculum and also Language Arts. The majority of my years were spent teaching 7th grade Social Studies where the curriculum was centered on World History during the Middle Ages. As effective educators understand, high quality curriculum should be ladder so that concepts are age appropriate and lead students to higher level and critical thinking skills. This should lead nicely to a high school level Ethnic Studies curriculum that encourages deeper thinking and the ability to recognize the relevance of ideas and concepts in today's world.

While I very much support the idea of an Ethnic Studies curriculum, I feel that this particular model is remiss at best and irresponsible at worst since it does not address the American Jewish experience, fails to discuss antisemitism and reinforces negative stereotypes about Jews. Since middle school curriculum introduces the idea of Jewish stereotypes, persecution, land utilization, etc., I would expect the "ladder" to continue as high school students are encouraged to become more critical thinkers. Will they learn that Jews experienced housing discrimination in California in more modern times? Will they learn about university quotas for Jews? Will they learn techniques for "digging deep" to determine accurate information about who funds what organization? I find the lack of inclusion astonishing and deeply disturbing as it leads young people to believe that these issues are no longer of consequence. Given that these issues continue to be extremely relevant in their world, it stands to reason that Jewish students will feel very marginalized, the result being counter-productive to the intent of the course. Each year my students were exposed to blatant antisemitism in words and attitudes of other students as well as insensitivity and/or lack of knowledge on the part of a few faculty or staff members. Yet, none of those things affected the entire school community more than arriving on campus in the morning to find message of hate and swastikas spray-painted on the building walls. This occurred with some frequency during my career. Surely, antisemitism continues to be a relevant issue and members of the Jewish faith should, most certainly, be included as part of this curriculum.

I am vehement in my request that you make major revisions or a significant rewrite of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum in order to demonstrate the importance of inclusion and to be consistent in continuing to develop understanding through ladder of curriculum.

Thank you,
Susan Marks

