

From: Beshara Kehdi
Sent: Thursday, April 9, 2020 7:03 PM
To: Superintendent
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Request to Meet Regarding the Arab American Studies Curriculum

Dear Superintendent Thurmond,

I write to you with a sense of urgency about the way the Arab American curriculum in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum has been disparaged, and to schedule a meeting with you to discuss your support for it.

My name is Beshara Kehdi and I am a PhD student in Cultural Studies at UC Davis. I've been a youth organizer and educator working with Arabic speaking immigrant and refugee youth and families for over 15 years, in bilingual literacy, arts and culture, and educational programs in and out of schools. I've seen the dire disparities in the Bay Area of how Arab (and specifically Yemeni, Palestinian, Syrian, and Iraqi) students have been treated in our schools, as well as in Oakland, Sacramento, San Diego, LA and in cities and regions across the state. Cultural incompetencies of educators, racist curricula, inadequate language support for families, and inequitable school discipline riddle our communities. I've also discussed with hundreds of educators about their need and desire for curricula that is representative of the diversity of these Arab national groups and students who have been racialized as enemies, foreigners, terrorists, misogynists, trouble makers, unintelligent, violent and in need of remediation. I've also surveyed the statewide History-Social Science Framework that was passed in 2016. It grossly and unapologetically mis-represents and demonizes Arabs through stereotypical and inaccurate portrayals. It also does not include Arab Americans whatsoever, even though our histories, experiences, and contributions in California extend over a century, and who number in the hundreds of thousands, if not more, in California. This is why the Arab American curriculum is necessary.

I want to invite you to meet with me and my colleagues, Arab American scholars and educators with the campaign for Arab American Studies and Ethnic Studies, so we can support you in advancing this curriculum, before the next Instructional Quality Committee meeting in May.

I am also adding further reading for you, on Arab American history in California, and will gladly send you more:

Curricular Justice: Arab American Studies and the Struggle for California's schools: <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/40791>

Yemeni Farm Workers and the Politics of Nationalism in the

UFW: <https://boomcalifornia.com/2020/02/18/yemeni-farm-workers-and-the-politics-of-arab-nationalism-in-the-ufw/>

Arabs in California: Finding Identity and Belonging as an Arab

American: <https://dornsife.usc.edu/news/stories/3163/california-arab-americans-seek-belonging/>

Looking forward to virtually meeting with you at your earliest convenience,

All best,
-beshara

--

Beshara Kehdi

Pronouns: he/him/his

PhD Student, Cultural Studies Graduate Group

University of California, Davis