

Request for Changes in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Submitted by Educators for Excellence in Ethnic Studies

This document details our recommendations regarding specific problems with the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and includes chapter, page, and line numbers from the August 2020 draft.

Align model and sample lessons with “Eight Outcomes of K-12 Ethnic Studies,” not “Guiding Values and Principles.”

Best practices in teaching dictate that lessons are developed with educational outcomes in mind, not values or principles. All of the sample lessons in the ESMC should align with “Eight Outcomes of K-12 Ethnic Studies,” not with the “Guiding Values and Principles” as they are now. These Outcomes are from Carlos E. Cortés, “High School Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement, State of California, Suggested Basic Curriculum Principles”¹ and are included in the ESMC, Chapter 1.

As an example of the contrast between the existing Outcomes and Guiding Values/Principles, the Outcomes call for “promoting self-empowerment for civic engagement,” and “working toward greater inclusivity.” The Guiding Values/Principles call for “connect(ing)...to past and contemporary resistance movements,” and aspiring to “post-imperial...transformative resistance.” The Outcomes are objective and appropriate for a rubric; the Guiding Values/Principles are subjective and inappropriate as evaluative criteria.

The Outcomes encourage critical analysis of multiple perspectives (“Ethnic studies should address those experiences...with both honesty and nuance, drawing upon multiple perspectives), while the Values promote a one sided political approach (“Ethnic studies courses will...challenge imperialist/colonial beliefs and practices”). Additionally, the Outcomes require evaluating the strengths and limitations of different approaches to affecting change, but the Guiding Values/Principles permit limited types of approaches and don’t evaluate the downsides to them. This is in conflict with the History Social Science Framework for CA Public Schools², which asserts that curriculum, resources and materials should “represent multiple, and sometimes opposing, points of view or perspectives.”

Dr. Denise Clark Pope, curriculum studies specialist at Stanford Graduate School of Education, states that “The pedagogically sound way to measure the quality of lesson plans is to base assessments on the desired outcomes for students.”

¹ In the ESMC, this section was adapted from Carlos E. Cortés, “High School Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement, State of California, Suggested Basic Curriculum Principles,” essay dated June 26, 2020.

² History-Social Science Framework - History-Social Science Framework (CA Dept of Education), 2016, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/hssframework.asp>.

Recommendations:

- Remove all elements requiring that units and lessons be aligned to the Guiding Values and Principles, including:
 - “Each unit and lesson plan should be founded on the key values and principles of ethnic studies as described in Chapter 1.” (Ch.3, p. 28, l. 730-31)
 - “These are the guiding values and principles each Ethnic Studies lesson should include.” (Ch 1.,p. 8-9, 181-82);
 - “The following sample lessons are aligned to the ethnic studies values, principles...” (App. B, l. 45).
- Remove the “Guiding Values and Principles” from Appendix B p.3, l. 48 – 64.
- Remove the Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment listed in individual lessons in Appendix B, lines: 136, 242, 382, 622, 736, 968, 1123, 1326, 1529, 1715, 1889, 2262, 2468, 2759, as they align the promotion of specific political ideology to the sample lessons.
- Keep the “outcomes” in all the references above.

Remove the political agenda from the ESMC.

Political agendas have no place in K-12 classrooms. Teaching a one-sided political agenda opposes the Common Core State Standards for ELA³, which state that “Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening, and they...evaluate other points of view critically and constructively.” In addition, for CA public school teachers, a one-sided political agenda violates the National Education Association Code of Ethics⁴ that states that teachers “Shall not unreasonably deny the student's access to varying points of view.”

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (C3 Framework)⁵, which is cited in the History Social Science Framework for CA Public Schools⁶, asserts that “students need the intellectual power to...separate evidence-based claims from parochial opinions.” When one-sided parochial political opinions are being taught as factual in the classroom, then this equates to political indoctrination. In fact, elements of the political ideology espoused in the ESMC may violate Assembly Bill 331 which stipulates that the ESMC “Not reflect or promote, directly or indirectly, any bias, bigotry, or discrimination against any person or group of persons on the basis of any category protected by Section 220.”

³ California Common Core State Standards English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

⁴ Nea, “Code of Ethics,” NEA, 2020, <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/code-ethics>.

⁵ National Council for the Social Studies. (2013). The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History. Silver Spring, MD. <http://www.socialstudies.org/c3>

⁶ History-Social Science Framework - History-Social Science Framework (CA Dept of Education), 2016, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/hssframework.asp>.

Examples of political ideology in the ESMC are numerous, beginning in the Guiding Values and Principles and continuing in the sample lessons. One prominent example is the sample lesson about the Third World Liberation Front (Appendix A). This lesson presents a narrow, positive view of the organization and avoids discussing the highly controversial nature of their mission which included: anti-capitalism, pro-militancy, support for communist governments in China, Cuba, Laos and North Korea, opposing self-determination for Jewish people in Israel, and berating non-violent US civil rights leaders as “docile.”

Recommendations:

- Remove Chapter 1, Page 9, Lines 173-199
- Remove Chapter 3, Pages 28-29, Lines 730-747
- Remove Appendix B, lines 47-64, 136, 242, 382, 622, 736, 968, 1123, 1326, 1529, 1715, 1889, 2262, 2468, 2759
- Rename the “Eight Outcomes of K-12 Ethnic Studies” as “Guiding Principles and Outcomes of K-12 Ethnic Studies.”

Provide course outlines that are balanced and unbiased, and that develop 21st century critical thinking skills.

Educators need lessons - sample course outlines and existing UC-approved course outlines - that we can teach right out of the box. These lessons must actively develop the collaboration, critical thinking, communication, and creativity that our students need in order to succeed in school, work, and life. This requires that they teach multiple perspectives and points of view. They cannot teach one-sided perspectives and dogma.

The California Department of Education supports this. As stated in the [Civic Learning Task Force Final Report \(CDE\)](#)⁷, teachers should “encourage informed, respectful discussion and debate among all students, and work to ensure participation by all students.” Students should “comprehend as well as critique,” “value evidence,” and “evaluate other points of view critically and constructively” ([Common Core State Standards for ELA](#))⁸.

However, compare this with the ESMC Guiding Values and Principles, which call for students to “critique empire building” and “challenge imperialist/colonialist beliefs,” and “imagine...new possibilities for post-imperial life that promote...transformative resistance.”

Objectives from the CCSS like “comprehend,” “evaluate,” and “examine” result in students critically thinking to form evidence-based conclusions. Objectives from the ESMC like “critique,” “challenge,” and “promote” presume a predetermined outcome and obviate the need for analysis.

⁷ “Revitalizing K-12 Civic Learning In California: A Blueprint For Action,” <https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/documents/cltffinalreport.pdf>.

⁸ California Common Core State Standards English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, 2013, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/finalelaccsstandards.pdf>

Recommendations:

- Remove the parenthetical examples which only show an extreme perspective of Black political thought: “Evolution of Black Political and Intellectual Thought (e.g., racial accommodationism, Black nationalism, and revolutionary intercommunalism).” (App. B I.714-15).
- Revise the focus on “eras” and instead compare and contrast the “approaches and accomplishments of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements.” (App. B, I. 723)
- Recognize the importance of non-violent resistance and civic engagement and do not denigrate those who work within the system to improve it. The Resources/Materials for Lesson 4: Social Change and #BlackLivesMatter⁹ (App. B p. 32, I. 704-06) describe non-violent change agents such as John Lewis and Martin Luther King as “passive” and “docile.” While it is legitimate to study both approaches to change, “more militant tactics” should not be presented to students as the preferred or only good solution.
- Add a balanced sample of refugees from a wider variety of political orientations. Refugee issues mentioned throughout Appendix B fit the Guiding Values’ political litmus test, but ignore the many ethnic groups fleeing from Marxist or Maoist persecution including a large number of Chinese-Americans and Cambodians, among others. It also ignores the large number of economic refugees, who emigrated to the US for job opportunities, given the strong US economy and economic problems in Latin American and various parts of Asia. More balanced examples should be added.
- Include the LAUSD Ethnic Studies Survey Course¹⁰ in the Appendix A A-G approved courses.

Ensure that the model and sample lessons are developmentally and social-emotionally appropriate for K-12 students.

Developmentally appropriate lessons for K-12 students take into account the progression in their need and readiness to be exposed to multiple viewpoints. The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (C3 Framework)¹¹, which is included in the History Social Science Framework for CA Public Schools¹², outlines the rationale for this, and specifies a progression of grade-level outcomes with which curricula and lessons should align (see Table 10: Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness Dimension 2, Participation and Deliberation).

⁹ Jamilah Pitts, “Bringing Black Lives Matter Into the Classroom: Part II,” Teaching Tolerance, 2017, <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2017/bringing-black-lives-matter-into-the-classroom-part-ii>.

¹⁰ “Ethnic Studies Survey Course,” LAUSD Instructional Materials, n.d., <https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/5106>.

¹¹ National Council for the Social Studies. (2013). The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History. Silver Spring, MD. <http://www.socialstudies.org/c3>

¹² History-Social Science Framework - History-Social Science Framework (CA Dept of Education), 2016, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/hssframework.asp>.

In addition, developmentally appropriate lessons take into account the social-emotional well-being of the students. Lessons that are imbalanced and divisive lead to a fragmented classroom community, not a closer knit one. It's likely to lead to bullying of those with different opinions rather than respectful dialogue. Examples of developmentally inappropriate content include the recommendation to study "Malcolm, Garvey, Huey" by Dead Prez (Appendix A, page 74, line 2045). The lyrics include:

"I study Malcolm Garvey Huey, Malcolm Garvey Huey
Monster Kody (*violent L.A. gang member who beat a robbery victim until he was disfigured*)
with a UZI, listening to Fela Kuti
I'm a goon with the machete, especially if it's deadly
Got the Santos for the Xe to protect me, so respect me
This is heavy legendary, revolutionary...
Bang bang, pig shooting, we should blame Rudy Julie...
Unless you're banging on the system, you're a gangsta wearing panties...

Police cannot stand me packing y'all like a manny

Call me Little Bobby Hutton (*Treasurer of the Black Panther Party who ambushed and wounded two Oakland police officers*), cause I'm first to push the button
Rappers don't be saying nothing to the system, we say fuck 'em"

Recommendations

- In the ESMC Chapter 1, add the following language from the attached "LAUSD's Elements of a Balanced Curriculum"¹³:
 - In K-12 education it is imperative that students are exposed to multiple perspectives, taught to think critically, and form their own opinions.
 - Curriculum, resources, and materials should include a balance of topics, authors, and concepts, including primary and secondary sources that represent multiple, and sometimes opposing, points of view or perspectives.
 - Students will actively seek to understand, analyze and articulate multiple points of view, perspectives and cultures.
 - The instruction, material, or discussion must be appropriate to the age and maturity level of the students, and be a fair and balanced academic presentation of various points of view consistent with accepted standards of professional responsibility, rather than advocacy, personal opinion, bias or partisanship.
- Evaluate all content and resources for age and developmental appropriateness before including them in the ESMC.

¹³ Elements of a Balanced Curriculum, LAUSD Multidisciplinary Ethnic Studies Advisory Team in 2017, <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Balance%202017.pdf>

Provide clear guidance about the role of educators in student civic engagement projects.

Civic engagement projects are a proven method for grounding student learning in real-world action and preparing students for lives as active and engaged citizens. The History Social Science Framework for CA Public Schools¹⁴ states that, “Whenever possible, opportunities should be available for participation and for reflection on the responsibilities of citizens in a free society.” Proven Practice #3 of the 6 Proven Practices of Civic Learning¹⁵ calls for teachers to “identify curricular objectives that align with the project,...determine specific learning objectives and work with students to ...meet those objectives.”

The ESMC calls for “ethnic studies courses to include a community engagement project that allows for students to use their knowledge and voice to affect social transformation in their community.” However, it’s essential that guidelines should be included specifically to address the possibility that a movement chosen by a teacher or student has faced criticism that students should consider, including from individuals, organizations, intellectuals, and leaders who are part of various ethnic minority groups. Per the History Social Science Framework, students “should learn to respect the rights of the minority even if this minority is only a single, dissenting voice and to recognize the dignity of every person.”

Recommendations:

Add guidelines for civic engagement projects to the ESMC similar to these from the LAUSD Ethnic Studies Guidance on Social Justice¹⁶:

- An ethnic studies course should provide students with depth of understanding in relation to ethnic and social issues, rather than promoting specific political activism, demonstration, protest or the like. Ethnic studies is a scientific inquiry of ethnic groups and their interrelations.¹⁷
- Students who are considering volunteering, social justice activities, community engagement, etc., should consult with their school teacher/advisor and parents/guardians to evaluate that the activities are lawful, peaceful, and nonviolent.

¹⁴ “History-Social Science Framework,” History-Social Science Framework - History-Social Science Framework (CA Dept of Education), 2016, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/hssframework.asp>.

¹⁵ Michael Hansen et al., “2018 Brown Center Report on American Education: An Inventory of State Civics Requirements,” Brookings (Brookings, July 5, 2018), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/2018-brown-center-report-on-american-education-an-inventory-of-state-civics-requirements/>.

¹⁶ Ethnic Studies Guidance on Social Justice, 2017, Los Angeles Unified School District, <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Social%20Justice%202017.pdf>

¹⁷ Yang, Philip. Ethnic Studies: Issues and Approaches. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000.

Remove terms that have multiple, conflicting definitions so there is no misinterpretation of their meaning.

Clear, unambiguous terminology and academic language are essential in order for educators to create and teach lessons in accordance with CCSS, CA State Standards, and best practices in education. In the ESMC, This terminology includes:

- “Truer democracy” and “true democracy.” The terms “truer democracy” and “true democracy” are mentioned as goals in Value 6 and Outcome 6. “True(r) democracy” is often used in Marxist circles to mean the elimination of private property, and can be a term that stands for communism (The Young Marx on Constituent Power and True Democracy” by Mikkel Flohr)¹⁸. Taken in context, Value 6 and Outcome 6 call for connecting students to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle to ensure communism.

In addition, this is in violation of the CA Education Code 51530 Article 4. Advocacy or Teaching of Communism¹⁹: “No teacher giving instruction...shall advocate or teach communism with the intent to indoctrinate or to inculcate in the mind of any pupil a preference for communism.”

If “true(r) democracy” is not meant to be a stand in for communism, then it should easily be replaced with words like “a more perfect union” or “a more just society” which can’t be misinterpreted as Marxist buzzwords.

- “Resistance.” The term “resistance” occurs in three of the seven Guiding Values and Principles and 104 times total in the ESMC. However, “resistance” is subjective. It can imply the nonviolent resistance advocated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and demonstrated by Rosa Parks. It can also include the self-proclaimed resistance of a terrorist group like Al Qaeda. Examples of violent resistance in the ESMC include:
 - The inclusion of a book edited by Rabab Abdulhadi, professor at SFSU’s College of Ethnic Studies, as a resource. Raba Abdulhadi has said, “We really idolize somebody like Leila Khalid (convicted hijacker and member of a terrorist group on the US and EU terror lists)...somebody who actually goes to a plane and hijacks it.” Rabab Abdulhadi recently invited Leila Khaled to speak at SFSU about “Gender, Justice, & *Resistance*: A conversation with Leila Khaled.” In this case, the resistance is violent and opposed to the civic engagement that the History Social Science Framework for CA Public Schools²⁰ endorses.
 - Mumia Abu Jamal, a Marxist advocate who murdered a police officer
 - Franz Fanon, the Marxist philosopher who argued that violence is a necessary tool of people’s political engagement, and who is mentioned six times in Appendix A.

¹⁸ Mikkel Flohr, “The Young Marx on Constituent Power and ‘True Democracy.’,” Roskilde University Research Portal, September 10, 2016, <https://forskning.ruc.dk/en/publications/the-young-marx-on-constituent-power-and-true-democracy>.

¹⁹ California Education Code §51530 Article 4 (1976), https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=EDC.

²⁰ History-Social Science Framework - History-Social Science Framework (CA Dept of Education), 2016, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/hssframework.asp>.

Recommendations:

- Clarify the terms “true democracy” and “truer democracy” throughout the ESMC, including:
 - Chapter 1, page 9, line 196
 - Chapter 1, page 12, line 282
 - Chapter 3, page. 29, line 744
 - Appendix B, page 3, line 61
- Clarify the term “resistance” throughout the ESMC so it reflects the civic engagement appropriate for a K-12 curriculum, similar to the LAUSD Ethnic Studies Guidance on Social Justice²¹, which calls for “depth of understanding in relation to ethnic and social issues, rather than promoting specific political activism, demonstration, protest or the like.”²² This includes:
 - Chapter 1, pages 9, lines 188, 195, 198
 - Chapter 1, page 12, lines 281
 - Chapter 3, page 29, lines 736, 743, 746
 - Appendix B, page 3, lines 53, 60, 63
- Remove the endorsement of violence by deleting the resources attributed to Rabab Abdulhadi (Appendix A, page 72, line 1993); Franz Fannon (Appendix A: p.64, l. 1718-19; p. 73, l. 2028-29; p.129, l.3544; p/185, l.5133; p. 224, l. 6239; p. 270, l. 7492); and Mumia Abu Jamal (Appendix A, p.64, l. 2043).

²¹ Ethnic Studies Guidance on Social Justice, 2017, Los Angeles Unified School District, <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Social%20Justice%202017.pdf>

²² Yang, Philip. Ethnic Studies: Issues and Approaches. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000.