

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.

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General	Rabbi Dev Noily	<p>I'm writing to share my broad and enthusiastic support for the Ethnic Studies model curriculum. I am a white Ashkenazi Jew, and I serve as Senior Rabbi of Kehilla Community Synagogue, a community in Piedmont, California with over 1,000 members.</p> <p>I grew up in California and I attended California public schools (LAUSD), K-12. I did my undergraduate degree at San Francisco State University. I believe whole-heartedly in the vision of Ethnic Studies, as it is so beautifully articulated in the model curriculum:</p> <p><i>At its core, the field of Ethnic Studies is the interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity with an emphasis on experiences of people of color in the United States. Further, it is the interdisciplinary, loving, and critical praxis of holistic humanity – as educational and racial justice. It is from communities of color and our intergenerational worldviews, memories, experiences, identities, narratives, and voices. It is the study of intersectional and ancestral roots, coloniality, hegemony, and a dignified world where many worlds fit, for present and future generations.</i></p> <p><i>The field critically grapples with the various power structures and forms of oppression, including, but not limited to, white supremacy, race and racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, islamophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia, that continue to impact the social, emotional, cultural, economic, and political experiences of Native People/s and people of color.</i></p> <p><i>--Introduction & Overview, pp. 1-2, lines 20-31.</i></p> <p>All of us need to see ourselves reflected in the stories, perspectives and images that make up the narratives that are taught in public schools. While this is a need shared by all students, it is most profound among students for whom it has been chronically absent, and who are impacted by the systemic and structural discrimination, oppression and bias that have historically plagued our society. The need for visibility is most profound among students whose experiences have historically been rendered invisible, or insignificant. It is most profound among students whose stories have gone untold, or whose stories have been told by outside observers—as a sidebar or a footnote—in ways that cannot capture the beauty, the resilience, the creativity, the complexity and the strength of their people.</p> <p>In California, we have so many legacies of injustice to address: the genocide of the California Indians, the structural racism affecting housing, employment, education and incarceration of African-American people, discrimination against Latinx people with or without papers, the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, the incarceration of Chinese immigrants</p>
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		<p>on Angel Island, to name a few. In the absence of acknowledgement and repair, these injustices have taken root in our body politic and continue to do harm every day. There is so much healing and repair that needs to be done for us to build a just and healthy home for all of us who live here.</p> <p>The Ethnic Studies model curriculum includes hundreds of pages of carefully developed lesson suggestions to help teachers and students explore and think critically about our history and our future. It adds to the traditionally dominant narratives, which continue to live in most textbooks and curricula. Not all of these lessons will speak to every teacher, or to every community, or to every student. But taken as a whole, they offer a radiant example of what is possible when people regard each other as fully human, and set about listening with respect and curiosity to the full range of other people’s experiences, struggles and hopes.</p> <p>I support the inclusion of Arab-Americans, including Palestinians, in the curriculum. I also support the inclusion of Islamophobia in the curriculum. I believe it is up to the affected communities to offer their own narratives and stories of their experiences. I may come from a different perspective about the history of Israel/Palestine, but that doesn’t prevent me from listening deeply to someone else’s point of view, and understanding the truth of their experience and the urgency of their need for liberation.</p> <p>I do not believe the curriculum is anti-Semitic. I also do not believe that lessons that explore human rights abuses or systemic discrimination by the government of Israel are inherently anti-Semitic. I think it is vital to make a distinction between criticism of Israeli government policies, on the one hand, and antisemitism, on the other-- they are not the same.</p> <p>I also would like to see the curriculum include more content about antisemitism and Jewish experience. I don’t believe antisemitism is embedded in the fabric of U.S. culture in the same way that racism is. Nor have white Jewish-Americans suffered the same kind of oppression, discrimination, and structural disempowerment as Black Americans, Native Americans and many other minorities addressed in the curriculum. But antisemitism can be found at the foundation of white nationalism, and from Charlottesville to Pittsburgh to Poway, we have seen an increase in the vulnerability of Jews to racist/ethnic violence. There has been systemic antisemitism in the world for so long that, even if the U.S. has been home to relatively few of its deadly variants thus far, it merits our attention and understanding.</p>
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		<p>Christian hegemony in the U.S. can manifest as Islamophobia, antisemitism, and intolerance of other minority religions, and is also a critical phenomenon to understand when addressing the various power structures and forms of oppression in American society.</p> <p>I believe these concerns can be easily addressed in the revisions of the curriculum to come. And I believe they can be addressed by including more material and without excluding material that is currently in the curriculum.</p>