



September 30, 2020

Instructional Quality Commission
c/o California Department of Education
Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division
1430 N Street, Suite 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Comments on the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (Second Field Review)

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of the California School Boards Association (CSBA), which represents nearly 1,000 school district and county boards of education statewide, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the 2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

California school district governing boards represent many of the most diverse student populations in the country. Serving the educational needs of these students requires the leadership in each of these districts and schools to be agile in implementing curriculum with which students can connect and that builds a foundation for future learning.

A key provision in the law that required the development of the curriculum states that the “model curriculum shall be written as a guide to allow school districts to adapt their courses to reflect the pupil demographics in their communities” (Education Code Sec. 51226.7 (b)). Given the unique cultural and ethnic makeup of the communities served by each LEA, it is important that the curriculum includes a breadth of sample courses that “reflect the pupil demographics” in each these communities.

We encourage the Instructional Quality Commission to consider expanding the number of sample lessons and topics associated with the curriculum. Expanding these offerings will make it easier for districts to find a lesson that best matches its unique student makeup, will promote the efficient identification of resources by schools and help promote and increase student access to an ethnic studies course throughout the state. A curated clearinghouse of sample lessons and resources would ensure the inclusion of lessons in many more disciplinary areas and themes. For example, the expansion would not only allow a school to locate a lesson on specific California Native American tribes, but also enable a wider selection of lessons within this area of focus.

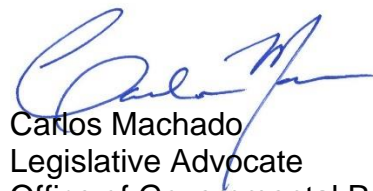
The clearinghouse would also create an opportunity to include a broader array of lessons on specific groups, such a collection that reflects the diversity of Jewish Americans and their experiences. Furthermore, a curated collection would facilitate the restoration of lessons in previous versions of the curriculum that were later excluded, including those related to the Asian American, Pacific Islander communities.

Schools and districts are facing unprecedented challenges, including inadequate funding, an ever-increasing number of unfunded state and federal mandates and requirements while striving to provide a safe learning environment for students, staff and the community during a pandemic. Although it does not include a requirement for schools, the statute does encourage each school district to “offer to all otherwise qualified pupils a course of study in ethnic studies” (EC 51226.7 (e)). Many districts are already offering a qualified ethnic studies course that meets the requirements of law to their students or are in the process of making a course available soon. However, some districts still face significant hurdles that make it difficult to offer a course. These include finding qualified staff to provide instruction in ethnic studies, adjusting school and student schedules to incorporate an additional semester or yearlong course and identifying a curriculum that reflects the unique student demographic of the district. We believe the recommendation above will help minimize these hurdles and help expand the opportunities for students to enjoy the benefits of a rich high school curriculum that includes Ethnic Studies.

For these reasons, CSBA looks forward to working with Commission and the State Board of Education to implement this important policy.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss these comments further, I can be reached at cmachado@csba.org or (916) 669-2552.

Sincerely,



Carlos Machado
Legislative Advocate
Office of Governmental Relations