

From: Shana Kamrava Veiseh
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 5:28 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Jewish Representation in the ESMC

Dear Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, members of the State Board of Education, and Superintendent Tony Thurmond:

I appreciate all the hard work that has gone into the development of an Ethnic Studies Model curriculum over the last two years. I fully support the development of an Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that centers on the narratives of the four foundational groups of Ethnic Studies—Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, and Native Americans—while also finding a way to meaningfully include the many, diverse communities that make up our state, including Jews.

As you know, many in the Jewish community had significant concerns with earlier drafts of the curriculum. It is heartening to see that the California Department of Education and the Instructional Quality Commission were receptive to our feedback, and the recommendations approved at the IQC meeting in November were great improvements to the curriculum. While minor improvements can and should still be made, I would be proud to introduce the current iteration of this curriculum into classrooms across California.

However, there are some changes that I would like to see made to ensure the curriculum remains acceptable to many in our community:

1. Retain the new lessons that reflect California's ethnic diversity, which were added to the curriculum in November—those about Korean, Sikh, Armenian, Arab, and Jewish Americans.
2. Ensure that the curriculum does not contain BDS or antisemitism. This content was previously and rightfully removed. Definitions of antisemitism, which have been added, should remain in the curriculum.
3. Remove praise of historical figures that engaged in antisemitic rhetoric or behavior.
4. Remove the word 'privileged' being associated with 'Jews'. If this is hard to understand how painful that terminology is, then please consider speaking to immigrants who sought refuge in the United States from religious persecution, attacks, jail, and concentration camps. Ignoring this history is dangerous and inviting it to repeat.

In the end, an Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that is done right will be a vital tool to help students build empathy and bridge divides. This greater understanding, coupled with increased representation, is key in the fight against hatred, bigotry, and white supremacy in our society at large.

Thank you for your hard work to get this curriculum to a place so many of us can be proud of. Let's get it across the finish line.

Shana Veiseh