

From: Kim Green

Sent: Saturday, August 3, 2019 12:35 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: Re: feedback on ethnic studies model curriculum/AB331

i have one more general critique (sorry - can't get template to save and send input, though if you can tell me how, i will be happy to transfer my comments to the template).

my critique is not about what your curriculum gets wrong about jews, per se (though it is much). i am, above all, concerned about the self-awareness (lack) enshrined in your approach. i am concerned that you are setting out to indoctrinate instead of create critical thinkers who, thanks to a more inclusive, more critical curriculum, but, more, *a newfound freedom to question the status quo if it privileges some voices over others*, become agents of positive change as they learn and grow.

here's why: in my experience as a longtime parent at high-poverty, equity-focused SFUSD schools, which are doubtless among the vanguard of CA schools introducing culturally relevant pedagogy and mandatory ethnic studies, i have witnessed one consistent problem: the educators charged with delivering such curriculum are not really educated in where this school of thought comes from, so they are not in a position to remain objective, maintain academic checks and balances, and encourage the sort of questioning we SHOULD be emphasizing in the academic milieu. they are young and impressionable themselves. they lack exposure to self-aware scholarship in ethnic studies.

obviously, they have every right to own and communicate their own lived experiences, and interpret the curricula they are given mostly as they see fit -- i agree that our society desperately needs their voices to heal and grow -- but without context, their words lack gravitas. without context, their philosophy is prone to fatal hypocrisy. without acknowledgement of those with whom they disagree a little or a lot, they are priests or imams or rabbis or sensei, not educators. without humility and the capacity to *admit what you do not, and indeed cannot, know as arbiter*, can this curriculum really succeed at meeting its stated goals?

in my experience as parent observer, my children's teachers have never heard of postmodernism. they don't know what blank slates are. they may or may not understand that the concepts they're teaching and espousing emanate from critical race theory, a soft theory in a very malleable social science. they don't know kimberlé crenshaw's name. they don't know that intersectionality was a term created to explain something commonsense in practice but germane in the law. intersectionality vs. intersectionalism? what's the diff? because of their relative youth, political fervor and/or philosophical biases, they aren't particularly concerned about viewpoint diversity in the academe, the role and limits of free expression in ensuring healthful pluralistic democracies, or the dangers of science or history denialism. ill equipped to manage disagreement or discussion around complex, contested subjects, they tend to silence students who question, instead of encourage them. they shame kids. they issue purity tests. they deny students' lived experiences and ideas that diverge from their own. they frequently use tactics they say they deplore (e.g., telling students what their "identity" is, based on what the teacher thinks the student "looks like").

all of this means that creators of "ethnic studies" curriculum -- however defined -- must take great care in ensuring they are as transparent as possible with regard to their rubric's weaknesses, ideological traps, biases, and tendencies toward dogma and orthodoxy...care that they, too, don't become indoctrinators and religious/ideological extremists, bent on forcing young minds to think a certain way

instead of to develop critical thinking skills so that they question question question our way to a better, more equitable world.

i have not witnessed this level of care in my children's san francisco public schools, and i am not witnessing it in this document. and THAT, above all, is my concern.

thanks,
kim