

**From:**

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 12, 2020 1:55 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Cc:** [emails redacted]

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Important: Requested Revisions to CA Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Dear CDE Instructional Quality Commission,

My name is Rachel Wallace, and I was born and raised in Los Angeles. I am proud to live in the State of California which prides itself in acceptance and tolerance towards its many minority populations. I would therefore like to thank the California Department of Education for working hard to improve the first draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). Initially, under the Asian Studies umbrella, ESMC included Arab Americans, yet did not include the majority of the diverse Middle Eastern populations in our own state's backyard, including Jews, Bahais, Coptic Christians, Iranians, Assyrians, and other minority groups from the Middle East, [who together, represent 60% of California's Middle Eastern population and have asked for inclusion.](#) This letter is not intended to address issues related to the Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions (BDS) movement and other anti-Israel/Antisemitic biases, to which I object, as my understanding is that these issues have already been addressed by the CA Department of Education.

In order for the ESMC to avoid an essentialist understanding of Arabs and the Middle East, and in order to be well balanced, each group should be fairly represented in the Ethnic Studies Curriculum. As part of this effort, I would like to see the next draft of ESMC include the lesson plan, ["Antisemitism and Middle Eastern-American Jews"](#) produced by the organization, JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa, as it will provide students with high-quality instruction on contemporary issues of antisemitism, bigotry, and the Middle Eastern-American Jewish experience. This lesson plan was written by a scholar of Middle Eastern education specifically to fit into California's ESMC.

As a state that prides itself on inclusivity and tolerance, I trust that you will treat this matter with the seriousness that it deserves, and adapt the Ethnic Studies curriculum to include JIMENA's curriculum and include these many Middle Eastern histories and voices. I trust that you will not neglect this vital matter, and not neglect these significant populations who have played important roles in our state.

While I am not Middle Eastern, I can empathize with these groups as a result of my own family's history of persecution and immigration. As diverse government officials with your own family immigration stories to this nation, I hope that you can, as well. For example, I hear the stories of Iranian Jews and Bahai who were persecuted in Iran simply because of who they are. I hear the stories of abuse of Coptic Christians in Egypt, and I hear the stories of Kurds who have fled traumatic violence to find refuge in our beautiful state. If we want future generations to grow up with lessons of acceptance, tolerance, minorities' importance to the US, and the potential of our nation, these Mid. Eastern histories, stories, and voices need to be included. Because of Middle Easterners' experiences fleeing their home countries, settling in America, and beginning

life anew here, these are communities that embody who we are as an American nation and people. I hope you will take the important step to listen to these Mid. Eastern communities and their allies, and adapt the ESMC and include JIMENA's curriculum.

Thank you for taking this matter seriously. I would be grateful for you to confirm your acknowledgement of this email.

Sincerely,

Rachel

Rachel Wallace  
Los Angeles