

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.

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
General	Miriam Real, PhD Lisa Kampner Hebrew Academy	<p>As an academically trained historian and as a high school social studies teacher for over a decade, I know the importance of presenting unbiased information in the writing and teaching of history. This is especially true of textbooks, the audience for which is young people who do not necessarily have all the tools of critical thinking required to unravel bias from the total picture. Curriculum guidelines should follow the same principles. I am, therefore, greatly distressed by the clear anti-Israel bias put forth in several sections of your Ethnic Studies Curriculum Guideline. I am not advocating that lesson plans not include any information critical of Israel, but rather that lesson plans be designed to put forward all sides of the situation, which, in this case, is a highly complex one. Students need to understand the full history of Israel and the history of the Palestinians before they can make rational judgments about either side.</p> <p>I am also distressed that your curriculum seemingly ignores the Jews as an ethnic minority. Surely the term “ethnic studies” should include ALL ethnicities in our society, not just a favored few.</p>

Public Input Template–2019 Health Education Framework

Page 2 of 5

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Glossary	Miriam Real, PhD Lisa Kampner Hebrew Academy	<p>Page 2, lines 29-40 – I am distressed by the language employed here which clearly mimics claims of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement against Israel. If you are going to introduce BDS as part of the curriculum, students need to be taught the full BDS message, which includes hatred of, and the ultimate destruction of, Israel.</p> <p>As noted above, I am also distressed by your implied definition of ethnicities, which “limits” the word to “people of color.” As you are no doubt aware, Jews, for example, come from all parts of the globe and display a wide variety of skin color. Jews from Ethiopia, for example, bear striking resemblance in skin color and features to African-Americans in the United States. Why, then, do Jews not appear to be a part of your curriculum except in passing?</p>
Chapter 2	Miriam Real, PhD Lisa Kampner Hebrew Academy	<p>Page 234, lines 4956-4958 – This section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages teachers to highlight BDS and a pro-BDS group called Direct Action for Palestine but no voices critical of their perspectives (p. 234). Please see my opening comments on the danger of a one-sided approach in the teaching of history. • Promotes a false equivalence between Israel's efforts to stop terrorists from entering communities to murder innocent people, and U.S. policies on the border with Mexico.
Chapter 2	Miriam Real, PhD Lisa Kampner Hebrew Academy	<p>Page 237, lines 5024-5032 – This section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use unclear language that implies “Israel-Palestine” as a whole is an Arab country.

Public Input Template–2019 Health Education Framework

Page 3 of 5

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Chapter 2	Miriam Real, PhD Lisa Kampner Hebrew Academy	<p>Page 242, lines 5157-5161 – This section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frames the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 War as fact, with no alternative perspectives. As I've noted earlier, this particular episode in world history is especially fraught with emotion and must be taught carefully so that ALL sides of the issue are fairly presented. Certainly the Palestinian perspective should be considered, by so, too, should the Israeli perspective, the perspective of the UN, and the perspective of Britain.
Chapter 2	Miriam Real, PhD Lisa Kampner Hebrew Academy	<p>Page 256, lines 5477-5494, pages 264-270, lines 5692-5830 – These sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage teachers to use an anti-Israel poem which insinuates Jews control the media and use it to manipulate the public - a common, and quintessential, antisemitic slur. Such literature does not belong in a classroom, unless is it carefully presented as the propaganda it is, and students are taught how to recognize bias. This does not seem to be the case in this lesson.
General	Miriam Real, PhD Lisa Kampner Hebrew Academy	<p>The Introduction of the proposed curriculum states that “[t]he implementation of Ethnic Studies presents an opportunity for teachers to...enable students to develop a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion, and aids in the eradication of bigotry, hate, and racism.” Despite this stated goal, the curriculum does not feature a single lesson about the Jewish community or antisemitism, mentioning Jews only in passing. With antisemitism rising and ignorance about the Jewish people still a significant problem in our society, the exclusion of Jews and antisemitism from this curriculum is deeply disappointing and educationally deficient.</p>

Public Input Template–2019 Health Education Framework

Page 4 of 5

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General	Miriam Real, PhD Lisa Kampner Hebrew Academy	<p>The biased sections and omissions listed above run counter to the stated purpose of the curriculum, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1(a): The State of California is committed to providing excellent educational opportunities to all its pupils; • Section 1(f): The state’s educational standards should be guided by core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations; and • Section 1(g): The state is committed to its efforts to provide all pupils with excellent educational opportunities, without regard to race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, income, sexual orientation, or disability. <p>Additionally, California Education Code § 233.5(a) provides:</p> <p>"Each teacher shall endeavor to impress upon the minds of the pupils the principles of morality, truth, justice, patriotism, and a true comprehension of the rights, duties, and dignity of American citizenship, and <i>the meaning of equality and human dignity, including the promotion of harmonious relations</i>, kindness toward domestic pets and the humane treatment of living creatures, to teach them to avoid idleness, profanity, and falsehood, and to instruct them in manners and morals and the principles of a free government." (Emphasis added).</p> <p>The rise of antisemitism within our culture, which has been accompanied by an increasing general threat to freedom, human dignity and harmonious relations, is evidenced by the recent attacks of Jews in synagogues in Pittsburgh and Poway, as well as against other American citizens in El Paso and Dayton. The curriculum’s failure to address antisemitism as a form of bigotry thus falls short of the above directive.</p>

Public Input Template–2019 Health Education Framework

Page 5 of 5

Furthermore, the California Education Code's [Prohibition of Discrimination](#) states, in relevant part, that "[n]o person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, **race or ethnicity, religion**... in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance, or enrolls pupils who receive state student financial aid."

Similarly, the California Education Code's Prohibition Instruction includes a provision on [Prejudice](#) that states, in relevant part, that "[a] teacher shall not give instruction and a school district shall not sponsor any activity that promotes a discriminatory bias on the basis of **race or ethnicity**, gender, **religion**, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation..." This provision, like the Prohibition of Discrimination mentioned above, illustrates the problems inherent in the proposed curriculum, and are not an exhaustive list of the provisions of the California Education Code with which the proposed curriculum appears to be in conflict.

The model curriculum not only fails to address antisemitism as a form of bigotry but actually includes thinly veiled antisemitic rhetoric and promotes the discriminatory BDS movement. Additionally, the model curriculum simultaneously fails to provide balance with regard to Israel or any education at all about Jews. Therefore, it effectively discriminates against Jewish and Israeli students in violation of the education code. Additionally, by marginalizing Jewish and Israeli students, the model curriculum violates the three above-referenced declarations of the California state legislature in enacting the legislation.

I call your attention to the critical [LA Times' review of the curriculum](#), and hope that the values of inclusion prevail over hatred, division, and misinformation. **In closing, I strongly urge you to review and revise the curriculum about American Jews as an ethnic group, including those who fled the Holocaust, oppression in the Middle East, and discrimination in the former Soviet Union. I also implore you to avoid bias and omissions in this and other California state curriculums going forward.**

Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical issue.