

**From:** Andrea May

**Sent:** Wednesday, September 30, 2020 11:14 AM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Additions to ESMC

**Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:**

I write to comment on the revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) released on July 31. Adding Ethnic Studies to California's high school curriculum will, among other things, foster respect between students and an appreciation for our nation's rich and diverse history.

While I welcome the removal of overt antisemitism and extreme and gratuitous anti-Israel bias from the revised ESMC draft and am grateful that the new draft recognizes antisemitism as a form of historical and continuing bigotry, the new ESMC could be further improved.

For example, the curriculum include a definition of antisemitism. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition and contemporary examples are well-regarded. As respected experts, ADL refers to it explicitly in the guide, Antisemitism Uncovered (<https://antisemitism.adl.org/>) and more broadly in their resources and lesson plans on antisemitism. Similarly, the U.S. State Department has used this definition since 2010, along with the European Union and others. The definition may be found at [www.state.gov/defining-anti-semitism](http://www.state.gov/defining-anti-semitism). Moreover, the ESMC recognize that the American Jewish community includes people of color and that many Jewish Americans trace their family roots to the Middle East and North Africa. For example, in a suggested lesson plan entitled "Irish and Jewish Americans: Redefining White and American.", the title and description give the impression that American Jews are uniformly of European descent and as such have all attained "white identity" and "racial privilege," to quote the lesson plan. It is an ironic conclusion as white supremacists explicitly reject the "whiteness" of any Jew. Indeed, their hate-filled worldview sees Jews as a critical player in the destruction of the "white race." Failing to acknowledge the ethnic diversity of the Jewish community will mislead students about the complexity of contemporary Jewish identity and the hatred targeting Jews.

I therefore urge you to call for:

- **A lesson plan on Jewish Americans** that recognizes the diversity of the community including Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Mizrahi Jews and Jews of color. Additionally, a lesson plan on Arab Americans should also refer to Jewish Americans of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) descent.
- **An accurate definition of antisemitism**, such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's, which the U.S. State Department adopted in 2010.
- **Inclusion of lessons about antisemitism**.
- **Transparency and an opportunity for public comment** in all phases of the development of a final ESMC.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

My best,  
Andrea