

From: Derrick Saenz-Payne
Sent: Wednesday, July 1, 2020 11:12 AM
To: CFIRD
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies Help and Support

Hello,

My name is Derrick Saenz-Payne. I am a social studies teacher at Ceres High School in Ceres, CA, near Modesto. As of the end of this academic school year, I have taught Ethnic Studies as an elective for juniors and seniors for two years. When I was asked to teach Ethnic Studies by my school administrators, I was provided little resources as this course was new to the district. After researching many textbooks, I selected *American Ethnicity: The Dynamics and Consequences of Discrimination*, by Adalberto Aguirre Jr. and Jonathan Turner. After teaching this material for two years, I feel that the textbook's content and format has the potential to be a framework used if/when Ethnic Studies becomes a required class in CA.

After reading about the controversies surrounding last year's curriculum rollout, the *American Ethnicity* textbook addresses most of the concerns discussed as the curriculum proposal was rolled out. Although Superintendent Thurman has recently narrowed the scope of the class to the four main groups affected by discrimination, the *American Ethnicity* textbook does a great job detailing a variety of ethnic groups in a uniform way. Every ethnic group detailed in the textbook is covered in a way that mirrors other ethnic groups, which ensures that each ethnic subpopulation gets equal representation within the text. For example, the section on White Americans is broken down into three subgroups: Italian Americans, Jewish Americans, and Irish Americans. When the text discusses each of these groups, the same format and topics are used to guide the discussion/material. At the start of each section covering an ethnic group, there is a dedicated subsection that describes the resources allocated to that specific group. Following the overview of resource shares for each ethnic group, the text then moves to discuss the identifiability and various stereotypes faced by that group; followed by the different types of discrimination faced by that ethnic subpopulation. In short, no matter which ethnic group is being discussed, all of the ethnic groups detailed in the text follow the same format with the same amount of depth. Based on the uniformity of the material across all ethnic groups, students are exposed to each ethnic group in similar depth in a comparative way and the material is easier to organize for

teachers because each ethnic subpopulation is covered the same way (making lesson planning easier).

In addition, there was a concern about bias in the curriculum. Another thing I like about the *American Ethnicity* textbook is that the material is based on numerical data, not subjective opinions. The textbook is full of charts and data that show all of the issues and discrepancies in numbers. After analyzing the data, students study these numbers and then dig into the history and policies that impact/influence said data. In my experiences with parents and even school district board members, basing the conversations and discussions on data has made the adoption of the class much more popular and acceptable.

Note: The textbook needs to be updated, as the most recent edition was published in 2011 so the data is a bit outdated. Also, the textbook was designed for a junior college course, so the material can be dense and complex for high schoolers. If the text could be updated to reflect more current data and adjusted to include more images and age-appropriate explanations, the textbook would be similar to the rigor of other high school social studies classes and provide Ethnic Studies teachers with a solid and equitable framework for the class.

On a separate note: I have some great testimony from students who took my class that I feel could help advocate the importance of the class. I would love to help promote Ethnic Studies as a required class. Please let me know how I can help.

It's a GREAT day to be a BULLDOG!

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