

August 15, 2019

California Department of Education (CDE)
Instructional Quality Commission (IQC)
and State Board of Education

Dear CDE, IQC, and State Board of Education,

In response to your call for public comment on the Draft 2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, I am submitting the following input: Helping students appreciate diversity and educating them about different forms of racism and hate is a deeply worthy goal. That is why I am profoundly disappointed that the Draft 2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum excludes the Jewish community, omits antisemitism as a form of bigotry, and openly promotes hateful boycotts against Israel. The following are specific examples of problems with the curriculum:

- A glossary for the curriculum includes a definition of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement against Israel. It claims the purpose of BDS is to, "establish freedom for Palestinians living under apartheid conditions". It then parrots more BDS talking points while offering no critical perspectives about this campaign of hate, which seeks to end Israel's existence.
- The sample lesson plans for the curriculum:
 - Encourage teachers to highlight BDS and a pro-BDS group called Direct Action for Palestine, but no voices critical of their perspectives (p. 234).
 - Promote 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 (p. 234).
 - Use unclear language that implies "Israel-Palestine" as a whole is an Arab country (p. 237).
 - Frame the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 War as fact, with no alternative perspectives (p. 242).

- Encourage teachers to use an anti-Israel poem which insinuates Jews control the media and use it to manipulate the public - a common antisemitic slur (p. 256, 264-269).
- The Introduction of the proposed curriculum states that, "The 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, mentioning Jews only in passing. With antisemitism rising and ignorance about the Jewish people still a major problem in our society, the exclusion of Jews from this curriculum is deeply disappointing.

I strongly urge you to remove antisemitic stereotypes, BDS, and all anti-Israel bias from the curriculum. Furthermore, I urge you to add lessons about American Jews as an ethnic group and antisemitism as a form of racism. This should include American Jews who fled the Holocaust, oppression in the Middle East, and discrimination in the Former Soviet Union, among others.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Persichetti