

From: Barbara Windham
Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 11:29 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: [email redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum concerns

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I am a Californian whose children went through the public school system, and whose grandchildren hopefully will too. I am very upset by California's new Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) draft. On the positive side, the new draft has removed some blatantly offensive language about Jewish people, and added a more inclusive identity theme in the Instructional Guidelines. However, the problematic guiding principles in Chapter 1, on which everything else is based, have not changed. They, and parts of the curriculum, still evangelize a narrow political ideology, force an "us-versus-them" division among the students, and counter the values set up by AB 2016.

Teaching Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) history was authorized in AB 2016, however evangelizing their extreme political philosophy was not. TWLF's political agenda includes: anti-capitalism, pro-militancy, support for communist-led governments in China, Cuba, Laos and North Korea, opposing self-determination for Jewish people in Israel, and berating non-violent US civil rights leaders as "docile". That is the political philosophy served up in the ESMC. Instead of indoctrinating students to this agenda, ESMC should provide insight to ethnic identities, struggles, and successes.

My friend's son took ethnic studies at Hamilton High School. It is part of the LA Unified School district which has been cited by the Legislature for its excellent ethnic studies classes. LAUSD explains in the introduction to their guiding principles that, "At the college and university level, ethnic studies and related courses are sometimes taught from a specific political point of view or frame of reference. In K-12 education it is imperative that students are exposed to multiple perspectives, taught to think critically and form their own opinions on these and other issues."

Unfortunately, ESMC is a college type course, and it should be revised to remove the one-sided political evangelizing. LAUSD uses [Elements of Balance](#) to guide Ethnic Studies course development, and so should California's Model Curriculum. ESMC's guiding values and principles should be revised to remove intentional or accidental Marxist/TWLF calls to vague, unspecified resistance movements. They should instead encourage social justice, foster greater intergroup understanding, and critical thinking. This coming together-type of Ethnic Studies is the kind of class that Asm. Jose Medina taught and has described when promoting his bill to make it a high school graduation requirement, not the us-versus-them political model.

It doesn't matter if, buried in the new eight outcomes in Chapter 1, ESMC says that multiple perspectives should be taught and people should come together and find common ground. Those are the right messages, but the Instructional Guidelines in chapter 3 say, "Throughout the course, each unit and lesson plan should be founded on the key values and the principles of ethnic studies as described in chapter one." So even good outcome descriptions, if they conflict with the principles, will not affect the lesson plan. The current guiding principles and values only push one political perspective and an us-versus-them agenda pitting people of color against people who are white.

Additionally, ESMC references to Middle Eastern communities should not favor one community over others. It is essential that Mizrahi Jews, Iranians, and Kurds be represented on an equal basis with Arab

Americans in the ESMC. They make up as large a portion of Californian's population and shouldn't be marginalized. Otherwise, the ESMC will unwittingly reproduce a long history and ongoing reality of imperialist oppression and erasure of non-Arab, non-Muslim ethnic and religious groups in the Middle East.

I believe Ethnic Studies can help address the awful problems of racism in the US, and build empathy among different ethnic groups, if it is done right. The ESMC should revise the guiding principles in chapter 1 to remove one-sided political bias, divisiveness, and ambiguity. The subsequent lessons should be revised so as to pick examples across a broad political spectrum, indicating the positives and negatives of all systems. References to Middle Eastern communities should not favor one community over another. The ESMC should be revised to accurately and equitably represent the cultural and racial diversity of California.

Thank you,

Barbara Windham