

August 11, 2020

Chair Jose Iniguez and Members of the Instructional Quality Commission

RE: Agenda Item #2: Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Dear Chair Jose Iniguez and Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:

We are writing as members of a statewide working group to Promote Authentic College, Career, and Civic Readiness Assessment Systems (PACCCRAS), to offer suggestions for consideration for the development of the Ethnic Studies Curriculum. PACCCRAS is a diverse group of thought leaders representing higher education, K-12 classroom teachers, administrators, researchers, policy advocates, and community and nonprofit leaders.

Ethnic Studies are imperative to the foundation of a state that recognizes and celebrates the diversity of its population. We commend the Instructional Quality Commission for its thoughtfulness in developing the Ethnic Studies curriculum so that all California students can learn about the histories, perspectives, and contributions of four major ethnic groups and the social and political obstacles they have overcome and still face. This is essential learning for all students today and for their futures in our increasingly diverse state.

We are at a pivotal moment in our nation's history, facing twin crises in race relations and the COVID-19 pandemic that expose the vestiges of past and present differences in societal conditions based on race and ethnicity. Ethnic Studies would be incomplete without civic learning for students to know how to leverage opportunities and outlets within a democracy to effect positive social and policy changes. Any model curriculum created must begin with discussing the necessary conditions for it to be successful. We believe an Ethnic Studies curriculum should be required for all students across the pK-12 spectrum to obtain age-appropriate understandings about race and ethnicity. And, an explicit civic learning and engagement component should be required within Ethnic Studies to bolster student agency and provide on-going opportunities for students to practice their knowledge and skills in engaging with our democratic system. Such knowledge acquisition and practice of good citizenship should be available throughout pK-12 and not limited to taking Ethnic Studies as an elective in high school.

Ethnic Studies is not limited to focusing on the "studying" of marginalized subgroups to draw attention to past and present inequalities. A civic/community engagement/action project should be the culminating requirement for students to apply their knowledge and voice to affect social transformation. Equal attention needs to be paid to preparing students to act on their rights and responsibilities as civic participants and to advocate and mobilize for positive social and policy changes. We support professional development for enabling teachers to learn about civic processes and policies and to facilitate student inquiry, investigation of current and controversial issues, engagement in civil dialogues and civic action. We need to support students to gain knowledge of themselves and their communities, but also practice **doing something** to positively change their community and the world, to foster and usher in a more truthful, equitable, and just society. (see [PACCCRAS's Civic Engagement Competency Framework](#) for sample aligned competencies)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input. We believe a student affirming Ethnic Studies curriculum with civic learning is foundational to engendering student empowerment, compassion, and solidarity to value diversity and promote positive social changes. However, a high-quality curriculum will have little impact if it remains on the margins of the education agenda, as optional. We offer our resources, perspectives and expertise to continue this conversation with the state about our proposed recommendations.

Sincerely,  
PACCCRAS Working Group

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