

CALIFORNIA REGIONS

CENTRAL PACIFIC

720 Market Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 981-3500
san-francisco@adl.org

SETH BRYSK
Regional Director
LINDA HORODAS
Chair, Regional Board
GILBERT R. SEROTA
Interim Chair, Civil Rights

LOS ANGELES

10495 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90025
(310) 446-8000
LA@adl.org

ARIELLA LOEWENSTEIN
Interim Regional Director
SCOTT J. HARRIS
Chair, Regional Board
BRENT SOKOL
ERIC KINGSLEY
Co-Chairs, Civil Rights

ORANGE COUNTY/LONG BEACH

1201 Dove Street, Suite 550
Newport Beach, CA 92660
(949) 679-3737
orange-county@adl.org
PETER LEVI
Regional Director
MICHAEL ROSEN
Chair, Regional Board
DAN TARMAN
Chair, Civil Rights

SAN DIEGO

4950 Murphy Canyon Road, Suite 250
San Diego, CA 92123
(858) 565-6896
san-diego@adl.org
TAMMY GILLIES
Regional Director
ELAINE FEUER-BARTON
Chair, Regional Board
ADAM ROSENTHAL
Chair, Civil Rights

SANTA BARBARA

1528 Chapala Street, Suite 301
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 564-6670
santa-barbara@adl.org
DAN MEISEL
Regional Director
MARINA STEPHENS
Chair, Regional Board
JASON EBIN
Chair, Civil Rights

NANCY J. APPEL

California Legislative Director

NATIONAL STAFF

STEVEN M. FREEMAN
Vice President, Civil Rights
KAREN LEVIT
Civil Rights National Counsel
LAUREN KRAPP
National Policy Counsel
KIMBERLEY PLOTNIK
Western Counsel

OFFICERS OF THE

NATIONAL COMMISSION
ESTA GORDON EPSTEIN
National Chair
JONATHAN GREENBLATT
CEO and National Director
KEN JACOBSON
Deputy National Director



August 11, 2020

By electronic delivery only

Members of the Instructional Quality Commission
California Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901
ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov

RE: Revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:

On behalf of ADL's (Anti-Defamation League) five California offices, I write to comment on the revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) released on July 31. ADL endorses the teaching of Ethnic Studies and was an early supporter of Assembly Bill 331 (Medina). 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.

Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of antisemitism and bigotry, ADL has since become a leading anti-hate organization. Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bigotry as we seek to create a more just and inclusive society. Our ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination or hate.

ADL welcomes the removal of overt antisemitism and extreme and gratuitous anti-Israel bias from the revised ESMC draft. In addition, we are grateful that the new draft recognizes antisemitism as a form of historical and continuing bigotry.

The new ESMC could be further improved, however. For example, we recommend 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 our guide *Antisemitism Uncovered* (<https://antisemitism.adl.org/>) and more broadly in our resources and lesson plans on antisemitism.¹ 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.

Moreover, we suggest that 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, we draw your attention to a suggested lesson plan entitled "Irish and Jewish Americans: Redefining White and American."² 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.

In general, the ESMC would benefit from an overarching statement similar to the Los Angeles Unified School District's "[Elements of a Balanced Curriculum](#)." As stated in its introduction:

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.

Such guidance is a useful tool in addressing this complex subject.

Finally, we are pleased to see that the ESMC includes ADL's educational programming in the Lesson Resources for educators.³ ADL Education Division professionals work tirelessly to develop lessons that "promote[] critical thinking and learning around historical and current events topics through the lens of diversity, bias and social justice."⁴ We are pleased that our materials can be a resource to California students and teachers.

As we wrote in August, a pedagogically sound Ethnic Studies course incorporating "core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations"⁵ will enrich California students' understanding of American history and current events. The revised ESMC is a significant step towards achieving that goal. We look forward to following the ESMC review process and providing additional comment, as warranted.

Sincerely,



Nancy J. Appel
California Legislative Director

cc:

State Superintendent Tony Thurmond
Dr. Stephanie Gregson
Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond
Shanine Coats
Senator Ben Allen
Assemblymember Jose Medina
Assemblymember Shirley Weber
Assemblymember Das Williams
Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez

¹ Specific lesson plans may be found via the following links or by searching these titles at www.adl.org: [Antisemitism Around the World](#), [Deadly Shooting At Tree of Life Synagogue](#), [Antisemitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate, Activist](#), [The Resilience Antisemitism: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#), [Challenging Antisemitism: Debunking Myths and Responding with Facts](#), [Discussing Antisemitism: A Guide for Reflection and Conversation](#), [Alt-Right and White Supremacy](#), [Swastikas and Other Hate Symbols](#).

² ESMC Appendix A – UC-Approved Course Outlines, lines 8159-69.

³ ESMC Appendix C – Lesson Resources, lines 119-24.

⁴ *Id.* at 121-23.

⁵ Education Code § 51226.7.