

From: Andrew Gordon-Kirsch

Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 9:46 PM

To: [emails redacted]

Cc: [emails redacted]; Ethnic Studies; Superintendent

Subject: [EXTERNAL] [Action Request] Vote "Yes" on Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum TOMORROW

Dear Oakland Board Members,

I urge you to put "Students First" by supporting the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum led by scholars of color from across California. Oakland is exactly the kind of city that should stand up for our underrepresented communities.

Ethnic Studies has always been about empowering students of color who are marginalized and minimized by our curriculum. We need to bring this conversation back to the focus of Students First, one of our Core OUSD Values. Our white students greatly benefit from having these critical conversations about race, so that all Oaklanders can build skills to navigate our society and build stronger communities and neighborhoods.

Arab American Studies is important to me because Arabs are too often deemed an "other"--both in greater US society and in my personal Jewish community. As someone who speaks Arabic and spent considerable time in the Arab world, I want to ensure that my neighbors and community members understand and appreciate the depth of the varied histories, the beauty of the language, the delights of the customs--to humanize a group that is otherwise demonized in popular media. Though Jews and Arabs are not mutually exclusive groups, we are often pitted against each other. And yet we are natural allies.

This controversy is a perfect example of why we need Ethnic Studies and why we must have these conversations to address racial tensions in our community, so that we can move toward healing, understanding, and solidarity across all of our cultures.

Please vote YES, thank you!

Andrew Gordon-Kirsch
Rockridge