

**The California Department of Education received 40 additional submissions of the comment below after the end of the third field review. Other identical comments may have been posted separately.**

**From:** Jeff Abramowitz [email redacted]

**Sent:** Friday, January 22, 2021 12:01 AM

**To:** Ethnic Studies; Superintendent; SBE

**Cc:** governor@governor.ca.gov; gavin.newsom@gov.ca.gov

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Add Antisemitism to Asian American Studies Section of Ethnic Studies Model Curri

Dear State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond, members of the St

The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum correctly recognizes in its guiding principles that addressing bigotry – including antisemitism -- is foundational to Ethnic Studies.

I appreciate that acknowledgement and that the California Department of Education and the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) are recommending that the “Antisemitism and Jewish Middle Eastern-Americans” lesson be included in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC).

In addition to honoring this IQC recommendation, I urge the State Board of Education (SBE) to do the following:

1) Remove bias from the ESMC and treat Asian communities with proportionality and balance as California\* and Federal laws and the State Board of Education’s Content Standards and ESMC Guidelines require.

Move “Antisemitism and Jewish Middle Eastern-Americans” (currently lesson 40) to the “Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies” section to pair it with the IQC-recommended lessons that focus on Islamophobia and xenophobia of South Asians (currently lessons 33, 34 and 35) (Appendix A). This aligns with the ESMC's recommended "thematic approach to ethnic studies" which stresses "the importance of identifying shared struggles." (Preface and Chapter 3)

The Asian Studies section does not mention the lived experiences of Jewish and other non-Arab Middle Eastern Americans despite their accounting for more than 60% of California’s Middle Eastern population. This section features 10 Asian ethnic groups that include Arabs and Muslims in America (from Asia and elsewhere) and offers multiple lessons that mention anti-Muslim discrimination.

Despite Judaism properly listed as a major South Asian religion (Lesson 33), this section also omits antisemitism -- reminiscent of the omissions that embroiled the ESMC’s first draft in controversy. Antisemitism continues to be the most prevalent religious-based hate crime in the United States and California according to FBI statistics -- comprising 68% of all religious-based hate crimes targeting the Jewish 2% of the population. Anti-Muslim hate crimes comprise 12% of the religious-based hate crimes total for 1% of the population.

2) Add links to the primary sources in the “Antisemitism and Jewish Middle Eastern-Americans” lesson’s definitions of antisemitism. SBE’s ESMC Guidelines require that the ESMC “include access to ...primary source documents.”

3) Include the seven-minute United States Holocaust Memorial Museum video, "Antisemitism Today" in the “Antisemitism and Jewish Middle Eastern-Americans” lesson. This video provides succinct and compelling information on contemporary antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of bigotry further enriching and reinforcing content in the Asian Studies section.

I offer my gratitude for your hard work bringing a robust Ethnic Studies curriculum that presents difficult content

with nuance, sensitivity, and empathy to California's classrooms.

Sincerely,

Jeff Abramowitz

cc Governor Gavin Newsom

\*California's Constitution and Education Code prohibit discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, ethnicity, and religion.

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Mr Jeff Abramowitz