

From: Joel Biatch

Sent: Saturday, August 8, 2020 3:17 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Senator.Skinner@senate.ca.gov; assemblymember.wicks@assembly.ca.gov;
assembly.wicks@assembly.ca.gov; gavin.newsom@gov.ca.gov

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear IQC Members,

Please see the attached document as my comment on the ESMC.

Already the revised ESMC is a far superior document to the prior version! Many, many thanks!

There remain several important changes for you to make so that the ESMC will become the excellent document it's capable of becoming.

Please consider the changes I suggest in my attached comments.

I am a Berkeley, California parent and I hold both multiple and single subject teaching credentials.

Thanks again for your time and consideration to this absolutely essential work you are doing for all of us! Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

All my best,

Joel A. Biatch

Model Curriculum Suggestions

The revised document is far superior to what it had been, though it could easily be further revised to achieve excellence. I am a retired multiple and single subject credentialed teacher who became a small business and estate planning lawyer. I am male, middle-eastern looking and don't fit in to any race category easily, and I am Jewish. The following are my ideas for improvement:

1. In the general description of the Model Curriculum the concept of ethnicism is missing, as is religious discrimination.

Ethnicism is prejudice based on ethnic origin. The absence of this concept is strange since the document refers to ethnic studies but is actually a document describing race studies. This creates ambiguity.

For example, if am of middle-eastern descent, am I an Asian American? Where do I fit in? And, if I am a light-skinned person of Moroccan descent, does that make me an African American?

If you could add ethnic origin as a separate issue from race then people like me, or people from Ireland who want to learn about Irish discrimination, for example, would be supported, as well as all other ethnicities.

An alternative would be to add middle-eastern as another race classification, but I assume that would be “too big” a leap for this curriculum.

2. When describing inclusion, please always include the concept of religious inclusion because non-Christian religions are frequently excluded. Consider, for example, the frequency with which school administrators refer to “Christmas Break” rather than December or Winter Break.

3. Implicitly and explicitly this curriculum focuses on kinds of discrimination, but ageism and able-bodyism seem to be absent, and discrimination based on class is mentioned in a way that is derogatory of owning classes, and encourages shaming.

4. Another missing concept is teaching about language use, and the importance of understanding and avoiding “triggers”. For example, using the word genocide with a Jewish person about any ethnic group often causes the Jewish person to feel “unseen” because many Jews identify genocide with the WWII Holocaust given that more than 1/3 of all Jews then living were killed for being of Jewish descent.

5. Lastly, using language that distinguishes the residents and citizens of a country from its government and government policies at any moment in time is an important way to teach alliance building and more nuanced critical thinking, but this is not discussed.