

Memo

To: State Superintendent of Instruction Tony Thurmond and IQC Members

From: Guadalupe Carrasco Cardona, Guillermo Gomez, Theresa Montaño, Melissa Moreno, Jorge Pacheco & Aimee Richel, The Latinx/Chicanx members of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee (Jan 2019-April 2019)

CC: Linda Darling Hammond, Chairs of the Latino Legislative Caucus

Date: November 13, 2020

Re: October Iteration of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

We believe that the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) has strengths, yet it has some serious shortcomings. It is appreciated that the California Department of Education (CDE) seems to finally agree to focus on the four racialized communities of color as indicated by the legislation. We are pleased that the CDE retained the Ethnic Studies Guiding Principles and Values, though it is disappointing that key concepts and terms have been consigned to footnotes. Also it is important that the CDE preserved many of the chapters and the language in Chapter 1, namely the *History of Ethnic Studies* and *Benefits of Ethnic Studies*. In addition, we are delighted that the CDE recognizes the importance of District flexibility in the implementation of Ethnic Studies. It is in the spirit of collaboration that we offer the critique of the latest iteration.

We are glad that much of the original language in this section remains intact, however we believe that the inclusion and greater emphasis placed on Social Science and History Framework is troubling. For example, adopting the definition of Ethnic Studies from the Social Studies-History Framework does not recognize the interdisciplinary nature of Ethnic Studies and reduces the importance of an Ethnic Studies stand-alone course. The addition of eight outcomes (a section offered to assist with k-12 implementation of Ethnic Studies) and the removal of critical Ethnic Studies terms and concepts have effectively changed the focus of ESMC moving it closer to a multicultural version of US History.

Also, the subtle directives and innuendos in the addendum on *Language* are highly problematic. Ethnic Studies educators are repeatedly reminded that Ethnic Studies “is for all students” and that it “is not intended to silence other voices”. These phrases imply that Ethnic Studies educators cannot center the perspective, questions, needs and aspirations of the four racialized communities of color in a passable and respectful manner. The containment of directives that Ethnic Studies widen its “universe of obligation” is also disconcerting. Yet, in this section, unlike any other section, students are “expected” to explore the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust. While we appreciate Jewish-American and Armenian Studies and agree that these disciplines need greater emphasis in the Social Science and History Framework, these disciplines are not and do not belong in Ethnic Studies, as clearly stated by Shirley Weber and the Ethnic Studies Council. Ethnic Studies is the anti-racist and decolonial lens of Asian American/Pacific Islander/Arab Americans, Black/African American, Chicanx/Latinx and Native American/American Indian Studies as established over the last fifty years.

Furthermore, it is a cultural assault that Arab-American Studies is not recognized by the ESMC in the Asian American Studies section as the field and discipline recognizes. The curriculum lesson should be rewritten from the perspective of Arab Americans as it was submitted by our Arab American Studies educators and resume its rightful place in the Asian American Studies section, not appendix. To do otherwise, is capitulation to political interests intent on erasing the Arab American experience from Ethnic Studies.

Overall, while the Model Curriculum calls for *“the guidance of classroom teachers, college/university ethnic studies faculty and experts, and representatives from local educational agencies,”* our offer to directly assist in the revision of the Model Curriculum has been ignored. The CDE has failed to reveal the names of any Chicano/a-Latino/a “experts” they are working on with the revision. The revisions made to the original draft of the ESMC are disappointing and perhaps even ineffective for teaching and learning. The deference to “inclusiveness” and “balance” is a response to those who are not experts in Ethnic Studies. This is not the time to dilute, sterilize, or submerge the discipline of Ethnic Studies. Infusing Ethnic Studies into the broader Eurocentric Social Science-History Framework effectively creates a multicultural American Studies course rather than an Ethnic Studies one. The creation of a multicultural US History course is *not* what was legally intended in AB 2016. The law requires the state to develop **“model curriculum in ethnic studies to ensure quality courses of study in ethnic studies”**. Fifty years is long enough to get it right. Please use your power to do the right thing; we need you now more than ever to provide and represent an authentic Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum in this time in history.