

**From:** MARYANN NELSON VANHOUTEN  
**Sent:** Friday, August 2, 2019 4:11 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies  
**Subject:** Public Comment on Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

August 2, 2019

To: Curriculum Development Leadership at the California Department of Education

From: Dr. MaryAnn Nelson (Former teacher, principal, assistant superintendent for curriculum, superintendent of schools, state education agency assistant commissioner, national coach)

Re: The model curriculum will likely detract greatly from the CDE reputation for curriculum excellence

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The model ethnic studies curriculum does not come close to meeting the guidelines stipulated by the California Legislature. There are little to no positive references to building civic engagement (other than perhaps fighting others' power through building takeovers, using violent means, group power methods rather than respectful dialogue), nor to civic responsibility (indeed, it references a Black movement's lawbreakers who were themselves violent and racist). A purpose seems to be to convey the message that our country is bad, that any ethnic group other than Caucasians are victims of white supremacist power, that in order to be a good citizen a student must follow the examples cited in this curriculum...a listing of people not generally recognized as inclusive leaders.

The curriculum does not align to CDE history standards nor the expected teacher professional teaching standards both of which I relied on heavily in my coaching of California principals over 3 years. CDE curriculum frameworks emphasize content and knowledge needed to graduate college ready...they are well written and stand as a national model. But this ethnic studies curriculum has no references for how teachers can build literacy skills, but many examples of how to build lack of understanding about history.

Please know I was responsible to supervise the MN academic standards for all content areas K-12. We similarly received an activist group draft filled with group speak terms straight out of a college course, focus on negative attitudes about others who may be well meaning, and attempts to proselytize students through attitudinal psychology. Public comment was very negative. Our Department of Education studied but rejected the document and started over.

Consider that when an activist group think is established, one gets what is expected: a document that will likely be ridiculed for its lack of fact and focus on teaching students self understanding, how ethnic group cultures developed, the value of learning from them to recognize how all diverse groups can work together to support our country's democratic framework, and the values that support civic engagement (self knowledge based on individual effort and study of history, caring about others and the golden rule, self control, integrity, honesty, to name a few).

The world's largest service organization (Rotary International) sponsors 35,000 individual clubs worldwide with 1.2 million member Rotarians. A major focus is to build international service based on respect for all cultures, understanding and learning from other cultures, by modeling truth, fairness, and concern for how our thinking and actions benefit all involved.

Unfortunately, the drafters of this ethnic studies curriculum have selected wording that makes clear that any negative feedback (like mine) might be termed “white supremecist” thinking. Worse, this curriculum reads like a far left manifesto written by angry activists about how white power has harmed all ethnic groups. The call for groups to fight groups is alarming. Frankly, this draft extols the virtues of convicted felons, and misses the very basis of a positive approach to ethnic studies. Students would miss the opportunity to learn about both the extreme political views of ethnic power groups in history that when not checked have lead to Balkanization and hate.

Please reject this curriculum, and consider another group process that reaffirms your current standards and professional teaching expectations that will build achievement for students by helping them to see value in each other and in the values essential for civic responsibility.

Thank you for inviting public feedback.

MaryAnn Nelson Van Houten, PhD  
National Coach and Facilitator