

**From:** Eve Hershcopf  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 11, 2020 9:32 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>  
**Cc:** [emails redacted]  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Instructional Quality Commission,

I'm a Jewish Californian, the parent of children of color who attended public school in the East Bay, and a concerned citizen who is working to ensure that our state provides an accurate, strong, and complete Ethnic Studies curriculum for our K-12 students. I'm disheartened to hear that elected officials have caved to tremendous pressure to relegate the Arab American lesson to the appendix of the ethnic studies curriculum, and include a grossly inaccurate definition of antisemitism. If there was ever a time that we should be protecting anti-racist education, and ensuring students learn about struggles of indigenous and racialized communities at school, including that of Arab Americans, it's now.

As I'm sure you've heard from many others, it is critical that the curriculum include an accurate definition of antisemitism, rather than one based on the agenda of pro-Israel interest groups. An accurate definition of antisemitism is discrimination against, violence towards, or stereotypes of Jews for being Jewish. Definitions that name criticism of Israel as antisemitic are intentionally inaccurate as they conflate a political entity, the "state" of Israel, with a very diverse ethnic/religious group, Jewish people, who live in countries around the world. These inaccurate definitions are opposed by many Jewish organizations, both within the United States and internationally, including Jewish Voice for Peace. These definitions violate our constitutional right to free speech because they are used to censor virtually all criticism of Israel and, in particular, advocacy for Palestinian human rights and equality. These definitions also downplay the main source of truly dangerous and harmful antisemitism in the United States – white nationalism.

The ESMC is structured around the core pillars developed by the founders of Ethnic Studies in 1969: American Indian studies, Africana/Black studies, Chicanx/Latinx studies, and Asian American studies. Following a decades-long tradition in higher education, the ESMC includes Arab American studies within Asian American studies. With the proposed changes to the ethnic studies curriculum, all children, but Arab and Muslim youth in particular, are left to fend for themselves in an increasingly racialized and polarized political climate. Including a robust Arab-American studies curriculum can provide a critical intervention to stereotypes, and equip Arab-American and Muslim young people with important history to help them appreciate their heritage, and information that can support them in facing Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism.

I'm submitting this public comment to request that you reject adopting these offensive revisions. Specifically, I urge you to:

- Include the Arab American lesson plan submitted to the California Department of Education by members of the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) advisory committee.
- Re-insert Arab American studies in its rightful place—within Asian American studies.
- Align all lesson plans to the guiding principles of ethnic studies, which are anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory.
- Reject definitions of antisemitism that equate criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

Thank you.  
Eve Hershcopf