

**The California Department of Education received more than 4,600 submissions that contained the text below. Other identical comments may have been posted separately.**

**From:** Mariano Svidler

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 11, 2020 10:33 AM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please do not remove Arab Americans from our states curriculum

Dear Ethnic Studies Open Comment,

Dear Ethnic Studies Open Comment,

I'm disheartened to hear that elected officials have caved to tremendous pressure to exclude Arab Americans from California's high school ethnic studies curriculum by relegating the Arab American lesson to the appendix, insisting on the inclusion of "various perspectives" on racism, and not consulting experts on the revisions to the overall curriculum.

If the biggest education system in the United States decides Arab-American Studies and ethnic studies are a "problem," we're going to face a dire precedent. I'm emailing you to ask that you please reject adopting these offensive revisions.

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—and not on TV or random YouTube autoplay sessions, it's now.

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.

TURATH (Teaching Understanding and Representing Arabs Throughout History) is a 2020 report researched and written by the teenage members of Arab Youth Organizing (AYO). According to AYO's findings, more than 66% of the students surveyed said they received most of their information on Arabs and/or Muslims from the internet or television; only 2.3% learned about Arabs and/or Muslims at school.

Leading Asian American scholars, including the National Association of Asian American studies, have issued statements defending the inclusion of Arab American studies in the CA ESMC.

Ethnic Studies has been linked to increases in positive personal, academic, and social outcomes for students. And in the post-9/11 era, exacerbated by Trump's Muslim ban, Arab American students are desperately in need of curriculum that reflects their histories and current realities.

Furthermore, the racial disparities in the impact of COVID-19, the xenophobic targeting of Asian Americans as “vectors” of disease, and the national uprising in response to the murder of George Floyd point to the need for anti-racist education: All students need comprehensive Ethnic Studies in their K-12 curriculum to build empathy, unity and solidarity with each other, strengthening our movements for justice.

In light of all of this information, I ask that you please reject adopting the offensive revisions (relegating the Arab American lesson to the appendix, insisting on the inclusion of “various perspectives” on racism, etc) to the curriculum.

Thank you,  
Mariano Svidler  
[email redacted]

Sincerely,  
Mariano Svidler