



ALIANZA

LET'S DREAM TOGETHER

www.alianzadream.org

August 7, 2019

RE: Comment on the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

On behalf of Alianza, I write in support of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

Established in 2012, Alianza is a collective of active college students, educators, and community activists from the Sacramento area personally committed to issues in immigration reform, especially those regarding DREAMers. We offer support to our community by creating awareness of issues and resources; delivering meaningful outreach to high school and college students, and educators; building systems of support for DREAMers; and providing our undocumented youth with resources and networking opportunities.

As a retired educator, Dean Emerita, Sacramento City College, I worked predominantly with first-generation working-class students of color, many living in economic poverty. In my work with underrepresented students I saw directly that culturally relevant pedagogy was and remains a compelling way to unlock the educational potential of historically marginalized students. However, culturally responsive pedagogy is more than just “good teaching.” It requires practitioners to advocate for social justice, maintain a socio-political consciousness and possess a knowledge and understanding of, the concepts of indigeneity, colonialism, cultural hegemony, and self-determination, as they have occurred throughout history and today.

I have born witness to the proliferation of anti-black, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ and other xenophobic comments since 2016. Now, more than ever, it is critical to increase race-conscious inquiry in our classrooms. Research has shown that both students of color and white students benefit academically and socially from taking ethnic studies courses.

Given California’s annual increase in population diversity, it is especially important that students build knowledge of the various racial and ethnic groups in our state. Incorporating ethnic studies courses with curricular activities enhances students’ understanding of structural racism, and cross-racial empathy. Students gain an expanded outlook on other cultures while learning respect and acceptance. Additionally, it provides students with the opportunity to learn about their respective



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cultures in the context of California's history. It also humanizes and engages marginalized students through powerful readings where they can see themselves.

Developing ethnic studies programs in all public high schools is an integral part of cultivating a classroom environment that is accepting of diverse cultures. It is vital for young people to learn about their history, but also important for them to feel like they can change their communities in positive ways. This model curriculum does not compromise academic rigor. Rather, it heightens through applied critical consciousness reflective action. It builds upon students' cultures and better enables students' to use their education to respond to needs in their communities inside and outside of the classroom. I urge you to adopt this model curriculum.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Rios Kravitz, MSLS, DPA