

From: Ellen Brotsky

Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 11:19 AM

To: Ethnic Studies; Superintendent

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on proposed revisions to the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

I write as a Jewish-American mother of two children who went through public schools in Berkeley, CA. I have been following the development of the Ethnic Studie Model Curriculum closely and am angry about the continuing changes that have been made to the curriculum.

I think of the Palestinian-American young people who won't be able to hear the stories and voices of their people because of their erasure from the curriculum. And of all Arab-American youth subject to anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia who see their experience of oppression relegated to an appendix in one lesson.

I object to the definitions of antisemitism proposed for inclusion in this latest revision which falsely label criticism of Israel as antisemitism. Including these definitions will have a chilling effect on the ability of Palestinian-American youth to advocate for their families and community in the classroom. It will subject educators in California to intimidation and harassment by Israel supporters when they teach honestly about the situation in Israel/Palestine or what the Palestinian people experience that brings them as immigrants to the United States.

Jewish youth are also harmed by these definitions of antisemitism which do not name that the current increase in antisemitism in the United States stems from rising white nationalism and not from criticism of Israeli policies or advocacy for Palestinian human rights,

It is not too late to reverse course and make these changes so that the curriculum remains true to its original mandate:

- 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.
- Remove much criticised and controversial definitions of antisemitism that equate criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

Sincerely,

Ellen Brotsky

Berkeley, CA

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