

From: Amy and Akemi Hamai/Haruyama
Sent: Tuesday, August 13, 2019 8:01 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: support for Ethnic Study curriculum

Dear California Instructional Quality Commission and State Board of Education,

I would like to voice my support for the Ethnic Studies Curriculum. The majority of students in California fit into one or more of the groups in the curriculum and it is imperative that they can view experiences or the experiences of their community in the classroom. For too many years our curriculum has been biased towards a dominant group of people. While that experience is valid it should not be the only narrative that students are exposed to and it is important that other perspectives are also examined. The US and particularly California has always been a diverse place but only one viewpoint has been told in many classrooms.

As an educator, I can see this benefiting many students who do not feel connected to the educational system. They do not see how school is relevant to their lives and often feel marginalized or even victimized by what they are taught. The reality is very different. If we want to keep kids of color in school and close the achievement gap we have to do something different. There is often a disconnect between students' communities and school and this curriculum could help empower these students and make school more relevant to what they know. It would not only validate their communities but connect them to other communities that they may have very little interaction with or have very little knowledge about.

As a person of color, woman, Buddhist and lesbian I've spent much of my life feeling "other". Nothing ever seemed to apply to me and I always felt there was something missing. As I grew older I realized what was missing was my side of the story. The experiences of my family and community were always different from what I was taught and my parents were very involved in making sure I got a broader education. My mom in particular worked on incorporating the experience of Asian Americans into the classroom and this changed how I viewed school, so much that I decided to become a teacher. I don't teach social studies but understand the importance of culturally relevant instruction and apply it in my science classes so all students can feel like they can be scientists and that they can do rigorous academic work. This is the larger goal and I think this curriculum is a step towards reaching this outcome.

Sincerely,
Akemi Hamai Teacher- Martin Luther King Middle School