

From: Pamela Ehrlich
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 5:17 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Request for a "nonpartisan" ESMC

Dear Superintendent Tony Thurmond and CDE Leaders,

As a former middle school educator and parent of a current high school student, I have been following the evolution of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum since 2019. Thankfully, the IQC has guided the ESMC developers to make meaningful changes based on a tidal wave of responses to the first two drafts.

However, more retro-fitting to the ESMC is in order. I am sympathetic to the intellectual passion of activist-scholars and their supporters who want to ensure that all students understand the injustices caused by marginalization of "others" on the basis of differences such as race, ethnic background, country of origin, class, religion, sexual preference, etc. Having an intellectual understanding of social, economic, and political realities through a Critical Race Theory lens can be both validating and/or enlightening for individuals who have experienced marginalization and/or privilege. However, the ESMC needs built-in imperatives for teachers to provide multiple historical and contemporary narratives. For instance, teaching about racial justice through the study of Malcolm X should be counterbalanced with a study of Martin Luther King Jr. given the profound influence they had on each other. However, MLK is not listed as a leader in the Sample Lesson Plan #4 in Appendix A.

I am supportive of the work of ACES, the [Alliance for a Constructive Ethnic Studies](#), which is advocating for specific ways to remodel the curriculum. ACES has sent the CDE detailed suggestions for changes to the ESMC including a crucial redesign of its Guiding Principles to ensure teachers implement a balanced curriculum. ACES' "constructive" approach to ethnic studies can cultivate students' open mindedness, critical thinking, and desire to look beyond pre-determined, ideological solutions. I am hopeful that the IQC, with your encouragement, will incorporate ACES' proposals.

Finally, I am asking the CA SBE and CDE leadership to underscore the value of "nonpartisanship" and empathy for all stakeholders in its direction of the IQC. Monday's holiday reminded me that Martin Luther King Jr. challenged us to be "molders of consensus" rather than merely searchers for it. Please exercise your leadership by demanding that teachers prioritize teaching students how to be empathetic, open-minded and critical thinkers rather than "partisans" trained in only one academic theory or interpretive model.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued service to education in California.

Best regards,

Pamela Ehrlich
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