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Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 11:01 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: [email redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns regarding the ESMC

The revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum is an improvement over the original edition presented last year, but it still has some significant deficiencies. These include:

1. Confusing and seemingly coded language in its “Guiding Values and Principles of Ethnic Studies.” AB 2016 articulated a clear set of general principles. These should be the guiding principles for the Model Curriculum. To the extent the Model Curriculum augments or extends these principles, it should do so in ways that encourage respect for all students and the “accurate information” the legislature requires.
2. Continued Orwellian distortions of reality. The major example of this is the inclusion of Arab-Americans as a subset of Asian-Americans, when the majority of Arabs live in North Africa.
3. Continued exclusion of significant populations from the curriculum and an absence of criteria for including new groups. Most prominent among groups not included (listed with their approximate California population) are:
 - Jewish-Americans (1,000,000 to 1,200,000)
 - Indo-Americans (600,000)
 - Iranian-Americans (500,000)
 - Armenian-Americans (260,000)
 - Puerto Ricans (190,000)

Each of these omitted ethnic groups has larger California populations than (for example) the Pacific Islander, Cambodian and Hmong groups that are included in the ESMC. There may be good reasons to include these smaller groups, but this raises the question: **Beyond the four original Ethnic Studies areas (African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x Studies, and Native American Studies) what criteria are used determine the ethnic groups to be included in the Ethnic Studies curriculum?** To minimize the role of politics in determining the content of the ESMC, these criteria should be clearly articulated and vetted.

4. FBI data for 2017 shows that Jews were the target in 58.1% of all religion-based hate crimes in the U.S.; Muslims were targeted much less frequently – 18.6% of the time. Thus, if one goal of Ethnic Studies is the creation of students and adults who abhor racism and hate crimes, one or more lessons on Jewish Americans and anti-Semitism is warranted. The absence of this obvious topic in spite of high and growing levels of anti-Semitism calls into question the objectivity and motives of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee.

Based on the above, I request that the Instructional Quality Commission make the following changes to the draft Model Curriculum:

1. Explicitly incorporate the general principles from AB 2016, and remove coded and obtuse language from the “Guiding Values and Principles of Ethnic Studies.”
2. Establish and publish explicit criteria for adding additional groups to the original four ethnic studies groups (Native Americans, African-Americans, Asian Americans and Latinx-Americans). Among these criteria should include the size of each group’s population within California.
3. Encourage open and complete exploration of crucial topics rather than one sided, us versus them depictions. For example, when discussing the slave trade, own up to the fact that black and Arab Africans were traders along with Europeans; when discussing imperialism, be honest about Japanese imperialism in the 1930s or Han Chinese imperialism today; when talking about ethnic oppression include topics such as the Armenian genocide and ethnic cleansing Darfur.
4. Create one or more lesson plans on hate crimes, with accurate reporting of the frequency by which various groups are targeted.

As a fourth generation Californian, my family and I have seen many changes in the state. In my view, one of the best changes has been the increasing diversity and richness of California’s population. Clearly it is this diversity and richness that has made California so successful. I also recognize that California is far from perfect and that large portions of our population suffer from racial, cultural and economic biases and discrimination. It is for these reasons that I fully endorse the movement to teach ethnic studies in our K12 schools, and encourage you to fix the flaws in Model Curriculum that will result in more division rather than less.

Jon Windham