

From: Harold Small

Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 11:34 AM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on ESMC second draft

By Email transmission only

Members of the Instructional Quality Commission

California Department of Education

1430 N Street

Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

Dear Gentlemen/Ladies,

Upon a review of second draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) released in or about July 2020, I found areas lacking and some inappropriately addressed. The following comments/recommendations are made:

1. The ESMC needs a lesson plan on Jewish Americans that recognizes the diversity of the community including Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Mizrahi Jews and Jews of color. Additionally, a lesson plan on Arab Americans should also refer to Jewish Americans of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) descent.
2. An accurate definition of antisemitism, such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's, which the U.S. State Department adopted in 2010.
3. Inclusion of lessons about antisemitism. This is needed more now than ever!
4. Transparency and an opportunity for public comment is needed in all phases of the development of a final ESMC.

The suggested lesson plan entitled "Irish and Jewish Americans: Redefining White and American" gives the impression through its title and description that American Jews are uniformly of European descent and as such have attained "white identity" and "racial privilege" (quoting from the lesson plan). An irony as white supremacists explicitly reject the "whiteness" of any Jew. Remember the holocaust? Failing to acknowledge the ethnic diversity of the Jewish community will mislead students about the complexity of contemporary Jewish identity and hatred targeting Jews.

In general, the ESMC would benefit from an overarching statement similar to the Los Angeles Unified School District's "Elements of a Balanced Curriculum." As stated in its introduction:

At the college and university level, ethnic studies and related courses are sometimes taught from a specific political point of view or frame of reference. In K-12 education it is imperative that students are exposed to multiple perspectives, taught to think critically and form their own opinions on these and other issues.

Such guidance is a useful tool in addressing this complex subject. A pedagogically sound Ethnic Studies course incorporating "core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations" will enrich California students' understanding of American history and current events.

I suggest that you work the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and other organizations that provide input similar to that expressed above, and obtain their recommendations, and then follow them.

Please keep me apprised of what is done following revisions to the ESMC. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Very truly yours,

Harold S. Small, J.D., CPA (inactive), AEP, HAAC