

**From:** Karen Roter Davis  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 9, 2020 9:06 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education:

While I appreciate some improvement to the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum in this most recent draft, I remain very concerned by what continues to be highly flawed content and approaches within it.

As a California resident and Jewish American parent whose children have already experienced hurtful incidents of anti-Semitism in their California public schools, several elements of this proposed curriculum are lacking and harmful. For example:

- **The curriculum does not contain an adequate, accurate definition or understanding of anti-Semitism** that addresses sinister stereotyping and double standards against Jews and Jewish institutions from all parts of the political spectrum.
  - Calling out and lumping together Irish and Jewish Americans as "gaining racial privilege" in a lesson plan completely ignores the continued and rising unparalleled anti-Semitic rhetoric and violence in the US (still the #1 religious hate crime in the US). Additionally this lesson erases the experiences of American Jewish immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa, as well as all Jews of color, in direct opposition to the "Eight Outcomes" goal of teaching "intersectionality" in the ESMC.
  - While I am glad the effect of World War II and the Holocaust are now referenced as part of the curriculum, I would respectfully ask that a wider view of Jewish American history be taken, e.g., "Another example is the American Jewish population, including those who immigrated to California from Europe after World War II and the Holocaust, from Arab states after facing escalating oppression and violence, from Iran after the Islamic Revolution, and from the former Soviet Union after a decades-long struggle to be granted the right to leave."
  - While I was relieved to see some reference to "the recent rise in anti-Semitic violence" as a topic for study in the ESMC, this line should be edited to say "the recent rise in anti-Semitic violence, **hatred, and rhetoric.**" Jewish students in California -- including my own children -- and Jews in general have also experienced a rise in antisemitic harassment, vandalism, discrimination, and rhetoric which may not fit within the category of "violence," but should still be discussed.
- **The curriculum continues to promote a BDS agenda, without requiring a balanced view of the subject, consistent with ESMC "Eight Outcomes" where "diverse viewpoints are respected."** Its sources and references on BDS are entirely from the vantage of BDS proponents. For example, the ESMC "Guiding Values and Principles" directly reference and are partly based on a book called "Education at War." The relevant section of the book effectively encourages teachers to "develop solidarity and create linkages" with anti-Zionism, BDS, and anti-Israel narratives, which would be deeply harmful to many Jewish students in the classroom.

- Additionally, in Appendix B, defining “interpersonal racism” as something only white people do would prevent a full understanding of interpersonal oppression and potentially decrease accountability for individuals from other communities who engage in various forms of interpersonal hate. **For example, individuals from many different backgrounds engage in anti-Semitism targeting Jews from many different backgrounds.** Language about racism by white people against people of color should certainly remain in this section, with edits to ensure that other forms of interpersonal hate are acknowledged as well.

I urge you to make these further major revisions to the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum to address these concerns. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,  
Karen R. Davis