

From: Samia Shoman

Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 9:25 AM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Superintendent Thurmond and Members of the State Board of Education,

As one of the original members of the CA Model Ethnic Studies Curriculum Committee, a current administrator and long time teacher responsible for the implementation of Ethnic Studies for all 9th graders in our district, and a parent of twin fourth graders in CA public school, I am extremely disappointed with where the current draft stands. While I understood that the original draft would undergo iterations and changes, I never imagined what would result is curriculum that centers a multicultural lens and the inclusion of groups that have historically or academically not been considered part of Ethnic Studies, while groups who have (i.e Arab Americans) are relegated to an appendix, versus being in its rightful place in the Asian American Studies chapter. Ethnic Studies curriculum should be anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory - this is what California students deserve, and what was fought for years ago during the student strikes at San Francisco State University.

The next iteration of the curriculum must return Arab American curriculum— including Palestine and developed by Arab American studies educators based on ethnic studies values and pedagogy—to its rightful place in the Asian American section of the ESMC. This curriculum CANNOT be what is currently included - lessons centered around The Great Gatsby and one Arab character's representation - this is not Ethnic Studies, nor does it espouse Ethnic Studies Pedagogy.

Even after tens of thousands of public comments, and consensus across the various Ethnic Studies disciplines demanding that Arab American Studies be re-inserted in its rightful place in Asian American Pacific Islander Studies, CDE insists it will not support Arab American Studies as part of AAPI Studies.

Teachers and professors across the state and country have come out to support Arab American inclusion in the Asian American section of the model curriculum. Additionally, in all of my personal interactions with members at the CDE, including Tony Thurmond, there has been no academic argument presented as to why Arab Americans are not part of Asian American studies.

There has been no criteria presented for why the current lessons are acceptable, versus other lessons that have been submitted. As a practicing educator in a public high school district, we use rubrics to assess students and teachers, it is common practice - yet, the CDE could not provide clear criteria around how lessons are being selected for inclusion, or in this case, exclusion.

Additionally, while it has been emphasized by the CDE that there has been no influence by outside groups on its decision making, it is hard to take that to heart when you see things like the IHRA definition of Zionism that equates criticism of the state of Israel with being anti-semitic, as one example. This is ridiculous and cannot be the definition that is adopted in the curriculum.

I hope that those of us on the front lines of implementing Ethnic Studies in the classroom will have our voices heard over special interest groups who have no relationship to the teaching profession

Sincerely,
Samia Shoman, Ed.D
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