

Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club

1/21/2021

Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent, CA Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Wellstone Democratic Club OPPOSITION to Current Revisions of CA ESMC

Dear Superintendent Thurmond,

On behalf of the Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club, I am writing in **opposition** to the **current version of the CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC)**, which does not live up to the values, principles and pedagogy of Ethnic Studies. Essential Ethnic Studies terminology, including the definition of race, has been eliminated, incorrectly defined, or moved to the footnotes. The decolonial, anti-racist, and liberatory focus of Ethnic Studies has been buried in an avalanche of vague and contradictory language. And Arab American Studies has been moved from its rightful place in Asian American/Pacific Islander Studies to an “interethnic bridge-building appendix.” We share the anger of our Arab siblings that their history and community has been relegated to an appendix.

Our Democratic Club and its members have long been in the forefront of the civil and human rights movements which have sought to eradicate systematic racism and remove barriers which have for far too long stood in the way of equality in our country. Many of us participated in the movements at local colleges and universities in the 60's which led to the creation of ethnic studies departments and curriculums.

We are very concerned that the California Department of Education has conceded to powerful interests who would suppress the voices and perspectives of teachers whose job is to share our knowledge about the true history of the Middle East, including the role of Israel in relation to Palestinians. We understand that there is a deliberate effort to equate all statements which could be construed as critical of Israel or Zionism or supportive of Palestinians as “Anti-Semitic” and to suppress such statements as “hate speech”.

As the largest Democratic Club in the East Bay with a large number of Jews and a history of opposition to Anti-Semitism we adamantly reject this false equation between criticism of Israel's policies, especially those which are discriminatory and oppressive, with anti-Semitism. We who are Jewish in our Club not only reject the false equation but share a pride in the Jewish history of standing with others, like Palestinians, who have also been the subject of oppression and bigotry.

We are very concerned that the Ethnic Studies educators who wrote the original ESMC have been sidelined, while politicians and lobbyists responsive to the wealthiest interests and political pressure have wielded the most influence in what revisions get made.

We are echoing and uplifting the demands of the Save Arab American Studies Coalition, and taking the lead from Ethnic Studies educators:

- Re-empower experts in the field of Ethnic Studies to decide on revisions to the ESMC that align with the principles, values, and pedagogy of Ethnic Studies.
- Put Arab American Studies—including Palestine—back where it belongs, within the Asian American Studies section of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.
- Approve an ESMC that is anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory—that centers the voices and experiences of communities of color and their struggles for liberation.

We call on the CA Department of Education to take immediate action to protect the integrity of Ethnic Studies. We want a curriculum that meets the needs of our youth and carries on the spirit of the original 1968 Third World Liberation Front and Black Student Union strikes that led to Ethnic Studies as a discipline. It is not too late to stand with us on the right side of history and support an ESMC that will educate, protect, and inspire all our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

David Weintraub

On Behalf of

The Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club

Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club
www.wellstoneclub.org
PO Box 9572, Berkeley, CA 94709