

Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum May 2019 Draft

(Download and use to provide specific recommendations)

Include the chapter of the model curriculum, the page number, and line number(s) to ensure that the California Department of Education and Instructional Quality Commission can reference the content of the document when reviewing your comments. Please email this document as a Word document to ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov. You may contact Kenneth McDonald, Education Programs Consultant, at kmcdonal@cde.ca.gov with any questions regarding this template or the public input process.

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
Glossary and Bibliography	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 2, lines 30-40: The definition of “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions” is incorrect. The aim of the “BDS” movement is the eradication of the State of Israel as a Jewish state. Moreover, Arabs are not “living under apartheid conditions”. Those with Israeli citizenship have full and equal rights as citizens of the Israeli nation-state. After withdrawal of British forces in 1948, territories occupied by Jordan were later conquered by Israel in a defensive war in 1967; sovereignty in those territories, as between Arabs and Israel, is disputed. Pending resolution of the dispute, Arabs living in those territories are granted whatever rights are available pursuant to the Oslo Accords signed in 1993 and subsequent agreements. It is unclear why “BDS” would be viewed as a necessary part of any Ethnic Studies curriculum, given that neither “Israel” nor “Jew” is an ethnicity. Israel is a state comprised of a variety of ethnicities and religions.

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Glossary and Bibliography	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 3, lines 67-68: The definition of “Colonialism” is incorrect. Colonialism is the practice of colonizing (hence, “colonialism”) a foreign territory with members of the conquering nation or peoples. The ultimate goal of colonialism has historically been the extraction of a foreign territory’s wealth and natural resources for the benefit of the conquering nation or peoples. That goal may be met, in whole or in part, by the domination and/or subjugation of the people native to the conquered territory through use of force/force of arms and superior weaponry, but such domination and/or subjugation is not a necessary component of colonialism.
Glossary and Bibliography	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 6, lines 137-139: The definition of “environmental racism” should not properly include “low-income” as a category of people subject to such discrimination since there is no such thing as “racism” against low-income people, who may be of any race (and the vast majority of whom, in the U.S., are “white”). Indeed, according to the Glossary’s own definition of “racism”, racism is “the belief in the superiority of one race over another”, and not “the belief in the superiority of one socioeconomic class over another”.
Glossary and Bibliography	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 10, lines 239-240: As noted below regarding Chapter 1, page 2, lines 27-31, I find it puzzling – and, frankly, troubling – that the Glossary (and, it would appear, the curriculum as a whole) makes space for “islamophobia” but utterly fails to mention, even in passing, judeophobia (and other religion-based hatreds), particularly since Jews are, and throughout history, have been the majority victims of religion-based hate crimes. Moreover, adherence to Islam or being of the Muslim faith is not an ethnic identity per se. There are ethnicities around the globe whose members are Muslim (including “white” ethnicities).

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Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
Glossary and Bibliography	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 10, lines 248-250: The definition of “liberation” as including “BDS” is simply false. See above comment re: definition of ““Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions”. “Social movements” are not “liberation” – they are social movements. I do not understand why “liberation” should have to be defined as anything beyond “the state of freedom”. The meaning of words should not change depending on context (see general comment below re: Glossary definitions), and a curriculum should not urge students to adopt definitions that stray from generally accepted meanings.
Glossary and Bibliography	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 12, lines 277-278: “Net worth” is a mathematical/accounting formula. There is a standard method of calculating “net worth” (assets minus liabilities). Thus, “net worth by race” would presumably be the average “net worth” of individuals of any particular race. While comparing net worth by race would arguably reveal disparities or inequalities between various races, defining “net worth by race” as already showing such disparities or inequalities is prejudging that comparison. Moreover, “net worth” is not synonymous with “wealth”.
Glossary and Bibliography	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 14, lines 333-335: The definition given for “social justice” – “The equitable distribution of resources” – is too limited and therefore inaccurate. The concept of social justice (as I understand it) is the pursuit of fair and just relations between the individual and society. However, like a concept of wealth distribution grounded in “fairness” (“the equitable distribution of resources”), the concept of “social justice” is wholly subjective: what one individual considers to be “fair” may be entirely at variance with what another individual considers to be “fair”. And, as the saying goes, life is not fair.

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Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
Chapter 1	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 2, lines 27-31: I find it puzzling (to put it mildly) that while the “definition of ethnic studies” sets forth specific examples of “various power structures and forms of oppression”, it fails to specify judeophobia a.k.a. antisemitism (Jew hatred) as one of the specified forms of oppression. As is well documented, throughout human history and, more specifically, in U.S. history, Jews have long been the target of hatred based on notions of ethnic, religious, racial and class supremacy. Jews are the most frequent target of religiously motivated hate crimes in the U.S. How is it possible that anyone purporting to create a curriculum could fail to specifically note Jewish oppression in a general introduction – particularly given the impact of such oppression on the social, emotional, cultural, economic, and political experiences of the Jewish people?
Chapter 1	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 2, lines 42-45: Some “Students of color in the United States” may be the descendants of people who have suffered “educational trauma, dehumanization, and enforced sociopolitical, cultural-historical, economic, and moral constraints via the education system” for centuries. However, it is at least equally likely that such students have been in the United States for significantly less time. The premise that all students of color in the United States have suffered such trauma etc. is an exceedingly broad, and presumptuous, brush. What about students of color who are socio-economically privileged? Or who are recent (one or two generations) immigrants?
Chapter 1	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	General comment: The overall impression I got of this chapter is that it is self-referential and self-justifying, including as to the purported value of an Ethnic Studies curriculum, by the very “Ethnic Studies proponents” it mentions in the third person. The prose is largely indecipherable to an outsider (such as myself) not schooled or versed in Ethnic Studies jargon, beliefs and premises and, as a result, comes off as essentially meaningless or intentionally confounding.

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Chapter 2	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 234, lines 4956-4958: The three topics set forth: (a) are not unique to Arab Americans (and not all Arab Americans ascribe to them); (b) are misleading (e.g., that there is some connection or relevance as between “Black Lives Matter” and the “Direct Action Front for Palestine”, or that “Palestine” has agreed or acknowledged borders, historical or otherwise); and (c) are susceptible to abuse, misinformation, disinformation, indoctrination and worse.
Chapter 2	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 235, line 4972: Ilhan Omar is not an Arab American. She is the daughter of an ethnic Somali and a Benadiri (mixture of coastal Somali clans).
Chapter 2	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 237, line 5030: There is no place called “Israel-Palestine”. This conflation of the State of Israel with the geographic descriptor “Palestine” is misleading and likely to cause confusion as to whether Israel is an Arab country (given that this appears under the “Arab American Studies Course Outline” section of the proposed curriculum). Moreover, any course should make clear the historic derivation of the term “Palestine” as a geographic descriptor, namely, that it was imposed by the Roman Empire on the indigenous inhabitants (who were largely subject to forced expulsion) as a means of wiping out all trace of Israelite/Jewish sovereignty over what had previously been known as Judea.
Chapter 2	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 239, lines 5084-5085/General comment: Using third party websites for educational purposes is generally a dangerous proposition, since such third parties may have agendas that may be (or are) at variance with the goals of public education and, hence, use of such external websites may inadvertently result in indoctrination. The Chapter 2 Sample Course Models appear to be rife with links to such external sources.

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Chapter 2	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 241, line 5138: See above comment re: Page 237, line 5030.
Chapter 2	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 242, lines 5160-5161: The term “1948 Palestine War” is indicative of bias and adoption of the Arab narrative regarding what Israelis call the “War of Independence”. That war is more appropriately (and neutrally) termed the “1947-1949 war in the wake of the end of the British Mandate in Palestine” or words to that effect.
Chapter 2	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 259, lines 5561-5562: Preliminarily, the term “Palestinians” is not limited to Palestinian Arabs and, in fact, prior to Israel’s independence, was generally used to refer to Palestinian Jews. Unfortunately, the Palestinian Arab (and, for that matter, pan-Arab) desire to “destroy Israel” and/or “drive the Jews into the sea” is well-documented, in audio/video and in writing, throughout the 20 th century (and into the 21 st), and cannot truly be called a “stereotype” since the members of the defined group (Palestinian Arabs) do, as a general matter (though perhaps not each member), ascribe to such beliefs. More to the point, though, it is entirely unclear why “Palestinians” would merit a separate category from “Arabs”, “Muslims”, “Arab Men” or “Arab Women”, since there is no distinct category listed for, e.g., “Syrians”, “Lebanese”, “Egyptians”, “Jordanians” or other geographic areas inhabited by Arabs.
Chapter 2	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Page 264, line 5692 through Page 270, line 5830: These two songs/poems are disconnected from the Busta Rhymes/Narcicyst dueling songs and it is unclear why they are included. More concerning is the songs’ references to “free” Palestine. What is the implication of that terminology? What is “Palestine” being “freed” from? What is the overall message being communicated to students vis-à-vis the Israeli-Arab conflict – particularly in the utter absence of any Israeli perspective? How does it relate, if at all, to Arab American ethnic identity?

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Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
Chapter 2	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	General comment: While I understand that this is a “sample” course model, I am struck by the discrepancy between the frequency of mentions of the terms “Arab”, “Muslim” and “Islam” in this sample chapter, particularly in relation to the terms “Israel”, “Israeli” or “Jew” (or, for that matter, “Christian”, “Coptic”, “Bahai”, “Circassian”, “Zoroastrian”, “Alawite”, etc. – each a religion found in the Arab world). My overall impression is that the proposed Ethnic Studies curriculum either plays up the oppression suffered by Arabs and Muslims, or downplays that suffered by other religious and ethnic groups (including at the hands of Arabs and Muslims!).
General	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	The entire endeavor of an Ethnic Studies curriculum is fraught. At best, it is of limited value and, at worst, serves to emphasize the divisions between people. While a greater understanding of the “other” is laudable, that understanding may be best achieved by students relating, in the first person, their own personal stories/histories, how they relate to their own ethnic backgrounds and what it means to them. Teaching a history grounded in ethnicity may have unintended consequences, including stereotyping of ethnic groups and failing to take into account other elements of the “whole person” that play a substantial role in ethnic identity, e.g., religion, diet, economic conditions, geography, etc. I therefore question the wisdom of any attempt to make ethnicity the basis of an independent course of study.
General	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Those definitions set forth in the Glossary which have established accepted meanings should not be included; students can simply look up those definitions in a dictionary. Creating new definitions of words that have established, accepted meanings can only lead to miscommunication between people (one person’s speech act would be received, interpreted and understood by another as having an entirely different meaning). That would be to the great detriment of all.

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General	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Public education seems to have strayed significantly from the “three Rs”. It is unclear to me how an ethnic studies curriculum is likely to help students of today find jobs/means of sustenance in the world of tomorrow. Moreover, it is unclear to me how benchmarks (“accountability”) would be established for educators and students to ensure that learning is, in fact, occurring in the classroom.
General	Ory Sandel Parent of public school student	Overall, I felt the various publicly-available pieces of this curriculum were poorly drafted (including basic grammatical errors).

California Department of Education, June 2019