

David A. Berkley
19 Kingsway Drive
Ladera Ranch, CA 92694
310.882.8389
david.berkley@gmail.com

September 29, 2020

Via Email Only

Members of the Instructional Quality Commission
California Department of Education
1430 N Street Sacramento, CA 95814-5901
ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov

RE: Revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:

As a parent of three young children in South Orange County (ages 2, 5, and 7), I write to offer this public comment on the revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) released on July 31 and amended in August 2020. In short, my concerns are as follows:

1. Expansion beyond the original four groups of ethnicities. To the extent the ESMC will include curriculum beyond the original four groups (African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans and Latinx) and add modules for both Pacific Islanders and Arab Americans (as indicated in the Commission's August 12 amendment), any final ESMC must also contain a discussion regarding Jewish Americans. Moreover, a lesson plan on Jewish Americans must also recognize 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. The final ESMC must include an accurate definition of "antisemitism" such as the definition used by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance - which the U.S. State Department adopted in 2010.¹
3. Inclusion of lessons about antisemitism. The final ESMC must actually include lesson plans which directly discuss antisemitism in America. Over the past few years,

¹ "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

(See <https://www.state.gov/defining-anti-semitism/>.)

antisemitism has exponentially grown throughout California and the United States and we must address this issue with our students.

4. Transparency and an opportunity for public comment in all phases of the development of a final ESMC. Before adopting a final version of the ESMC, the public should be given sufficient advance notice to provide comment and debate. The Commission's decision to amend the curriculum on August 12, the day before the last public hearing on the issue, was not acceptable.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Berkley", with a stylized, flowing script.

David A. Berkley