

Dear CDE and State Board of Education,

I am writing in response to your request for public comment on the Draft 2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

I am the parent of a recent graduate, as well as a current student of a California Public High School. Additionally my wife works as an educator in the public school system. After reading the proposed curriculum, I am writing to express my deep concern of this curriculum as it currently stands, especially in light of proposed legislation to make this course mandatory in high schools.

I am fully supportive of any effort to help students appreciate and celebrate diversity. Eradicating any kind of bigotry is of course a worthy goal. However, if this is truly the goal of this new course, I am not sure why a significant portion of the course is dedicated toward signalling out Israel to the exclusion of many other countries who are in conflict with minority or ethnic groups. Furthermore, while at the same time it clearly promotes a singular one-sided view of the Palestinian conflict, it completely omits antisemitism as a form of bigotry.

Specific examples directly from the current draft includes:

Definition of the BDS movement directly from the BDS propaganda with not critical thought or perspectives of the movement itself, especially in light of the very public and easily accessible hate speech that can be found by the BDS leaders themselves. I don't think the curriculum would have put a glossary definition of supremacist groups directly from the web sites of those organizations without perspectives critical of those organizations.

The sample lesson plans for the curriculum:

Encourage teachers to highlight BDS and a pro-BDS group called Direct Action for Palestine, but no voices critical of their perspectives (p. 234).

Promote a false equivalence between Israel's efforts to stop terrorists from entering communities to murder innocent people, and U.S. policies on the border with Mexico (p. 234). Last time I checked, there were no people crossing the Mexican border to blow up buses full of civilians.

Use unclear language that implies "Israel-Palestine" as a whole is an Arab country (p. 237).

Frame the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 War as fact, with no alternative perspectives (p. 242). Encourage teachers to use an anti-Israel poem which insinuates Jews control the media and use it to manipulate the public - a common antisemitic slur (p. 256, 264-269).

The Introduction of the proposed curriculum states that, "The implementation of Ethnic Studies presents an opportunity for teachers to... enable students to develop a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion, and aids in the eradication of bigotry, hate, and racism." Despite this stated goal, the curriculum does not feature a single lesson about the Jewish community, mentioning Jews only in passing. With antisemitism rising and ignorance about the Jewish

people still a major problem in our society, the exclusion of Jews from this curriculum is deeply disappointing.

I strongly urge you to remove antisemitic stereotypes, BDS, and all anti-Israel bias from the curriculum. Furthermore, I ask that you remove the apparent oversight of not including American Jews as an ethnic group and defining antisemitism as a form of racism. This should include American Jews who fled the Holocaust, oppression in the Middle East, and discrimination in the Former Soviet Union, among others.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Matthew Parks
High School Parent