
Alliance for Constructive Ethnic Studies

September 30, 2020

Dear Governor Newsom,

We are a grassroots alliance of parents, teachers, students, and immigrants. Our members are Black, Asian, Latinx, Caucasian. We span the spectrum of political affiliations. The immigrants among us come from all over the world, including many from Communist countries.

We support Ethnic Studies that builds inter-group understanding and empathy, inspires students with the variety of contributions by ethnic groups, encourages civic engagement, and honestly addresses racism and discrimination. A quality K-12 Ethnic Studies course promotes inquiry, not ideological dogma, and fosters community, not divisiveness.

We appreciate your voice in calling for the CDE to "substantially rewrite" the first draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). Unfortunately, the second draft simply removed most of the specifics but left the entire approach precisely the same. Specifically, the Guiding Values and Principles – the essence of the ESMC and what distinguish it from positive Ethnic Studies (ES) curricula around California – have remained the same.

Unlike impartial ES curricula such as that of the Los Angeles Unified School District, the ESMC imposes on students a one-sided extreme political ideology and a divisive us-versus-them framework. It exacerbates polarization, inculcates an anti-capitalist agenda, and opens the door to antisemitism and other hatred. It ignores, or dismisses as too passive, leaders who don't fit the specific ideological litmus test. Even seminal leaders like John Lewis and Martin Luther King Jr are considered too "docile" to be included. (Detailed analysis is attached.)

Please remove the political agenda from the "Guiding Values and Principles" and lessons:

1. Remove the inflammatory "Guiding Values," which promote radical ideological aims such as "transformative post Imperial resistance," and can be used to justify bringing hate and political dogma into the classroom.
2. Align all lessons *only* to the impartial Outcomes, and identify those Outcomes as "Guiding Principles and Outcomes of K-12 Ethnic Studies."
3. Add Elements of a Balanced Curriculum (attached), for guidelines against politicizing Ethnic Studies classes.
4. Exclude the BDS Movement and other one-sided political conversations. They do not belong in California Ethnic Studies and create unsafe classrooms for students.
5. Include approaches to social change from a wide range of political orientations, including methods that work within the U.S. system to improve it.

These actions will create curriculum better aligned with that envisioned by AB2016.

Best regards,
Mauricio F. Cevallos and Kong Meng Tan, MD

Alliance for Constructive Ethnic Studies

A diverse grassroots coalition working to ensure K-12 Ethnic Studies inspires mutual respect, antiracism, and balanced analysis, while fighting political proselytizing in the classroom.