



JPAC Position Statement Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum 2020

The California Department of Education (CDE) released the second version of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) on August 3rd, 2020. The second version of the ESMC is an improvement over the first draft but still requires additional work in order for it to be a curriculum that provides a safe and representative education for all California students.

Therefore, JPAC is calling for the following:

1. The addition of narratives that teach about the diversity of Jewish Americans through:
 1. A sample lesson on Jewish Americans in Appendix B that clarifies Jewish Americans are of all races and backgrounds and not just a European immigrant group, comparable only to Irish Americans. Jews of Color account for almost 15% of California's Jewish Americans.
 2. A lesson on Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) American Jews under the Asian American category in Appendix B.
 3. A lesson on Middle Eastern Americans that includes MENA Jewish Americans, Iranian (Persian) Americans (Jewish and non-Jewish Persian-Americans), and other large California ethnic communities alongside Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans under the Asian American category in Appendix B.
2. No antisemitic content, anti-Israel or anti-Zionist content should be allowed back into the ESMC.
3. Antisemitism must be included in discussions of forms of bias and hate.
4. The addition of safeguards against the teaching of antisemitic material and BDS through modification of the ESMC guidelines. Other safeguards around standards of teaching should be included as was done with the amendments to AB 331.

JPAC BACKGROUND

The Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California (JPAC) is the largest single-state coalition of Jewish organizations in the nation. We advocate in Sacramento on behalf of a diverse representation of the California Jewish community, which includes Jewish Federations and Jewish Community Relations Councils, Jewish Family Service agencies, and many other Jewish community organizations that advocate for and directly serve the California Jewish community and the people of California at large. Our member organizations collectively serve over 1,000,000 people each year.

JPAC HISTORY ON THE ESMC

Updated 9/2/2020

JPAC has worked on behalf of our member organizations with the California Department of Education (CDE) to reiterate our support for teaching Ethnic Studies in California's schools and to help ensure that the state's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum incorporates "core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations" for all of California's diverse communities. Our position has always been that a rigorous and pedagogically sound curriculum that meets the guidelines set by the CDE would be of great benefit to teachers and students across the state.

When the first draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum was released in July of 2019, there was immediate alarm among all JPAC member organizations as well as other Jewish organizations across the state due to derogatory and denigrating language about Jews and Israel.

Further, and equally concerning, JPAC called out the process that led to the creation of such a curriculum and the lack of transparency from the CDE and Instructional Quality Commission (IQC). The lack of transparency created confusion over the pedagogical direction of the curriculum in addition to resulting in such an unacceptable first draft, as noted by CDE officials, including Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, President of the California State Board of Education.

JPAC'S POSITION

JPAC's position is that we support an inclusive curriculum that encompasses the diversity of California's population, as the law intended. If the curriculum is expansive in its inclusion of ethnic groups and narratives beyond or within the traditional groups – African Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, and Latino/Chicano-Americans – then the Jewish American experience must be included.

JPAC's three red lines for the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum are:

1. No denigrating content on Jews, including clear antisemitic tropes.
2. No denigrating content on Israelis and Israel by promoting teaching positively about the BDS movement.
3. Including antisemitism as a form of hate or bias.

Over the past year, JPAC has connected with lawmakers and CDE officials to express our concerns while being clear that the Jewish community supports Ethnic Studies and an Ethnic Studies model curriculum, provided it does not cross JPAC's three red lines. Additionally, we have requested from the CDE clarity on process and a firm commitment to transparency.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF THE RELEASE OF THE ESMC v 2

When the CDE released the revised second draft on July 31, 2020, JPAC applauded the CDE for adhering to our red lines and removing denigrating content and acknowledging antisemitism as a form of hate. Additionally, because we were assured that the new draft focused only on the four traditional groups of ethnic studies as outlined above, we accepted this pedagogical direction to not include additional narratives and dropped our request for the inclusion of Jewish Americans.

On August 12, 2020, the night before the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) was set to meet, the CDE sent a highly unusual last-minute message to the IQC Listserv announcing three additional changes to the curriculum. At the last minute and with less than 24 hours' notice, the CDE broke protocol and confused the process by announcing the inclusion of Pacific Islanders

Updated 9/2/2020

and that they would be developing a sample lesson on Arab Americans under the Asian American category. These changes were added to the IQC website on the morning of the IQC meeting. This lack of transparency raises serious concerns for the Jewish community, and has resulted in a loss of our trust in the process and the word of CDE staff that may have been gained in the previous 10-12 months.

We are therefore calling for the following:

- That the CDE and IQC adhere to the highest standards of transparency in the process;
- All sections of the ESMC must be made available for 30 days of public comment.

Further, while the CDE removed direct references to and teaching about the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement they created new opportunities for that harmful content being put back into the ESMC. This is of specific concern since advocates for Arab Studies are consistently and publicly calling for content on Palestine to be put into the Arab Studies curriculum. Considering the August 12th announcement to add additional ethnic groups to the model curriculum lesson plans, JPAC is requesting the inclusion of Jewish Americans.

JPAC ACTION ITEMS

1. Organizing the Statewide advocacy efforts of the Jewish community.
2. Developing an advocacy campaign that allows our member organizations and their constituents have a voice.
3. Communicating our concerns to State leaders and elected officials.