



Chair, Soomin Chao  
Instructional Quality Commission  
California Department of Education  
1430 N Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

August 14, 2019

**RE: Protect and improve Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum**

Dear California Department of Education Instructional Quality Commission,

On behalf of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Coalition Helping to Achieve Gender and Racial Equity (CHARGE) led by the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, SEARAC, we write for two purposes -

1. To urge you to protect the movement and progress of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, and
2. To provide comments on the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, specifically on the Asian American and Pacific Islander sections to include a much more comprehensive curriculum of the diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in California.

AAPI CHARGE's vision is to strengthen a California wide AAPI youth and community centered equity agenda by building AAPI youth advocates, engage in community healing, and ensuring AAPI visibility and representation in social justice and racial equity. We are led by SEARAC, a national civil rights organization that empowers Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese American communities to create a socially just and equitable society.

We applaud the California Department of Education's effort to implement AB 2016 (Alejo) in a timely manner by convening a Ethnic Studies Advisory Committee and developing a draft of the model curriculum. **We urge you to protect and improve the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum despite uninformed opposition from some media and other specialized interest groups.** For the past 50 years, students, faculty, families, and communities have fought extensively for ethnic studies to be a legitimate academic discipline. Research shows that taking an ethnic studies course can increase school attendance, grade-point average, and the amount of school credits a student earns.<sup>1</sup>

We believe that California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum must be robust and reflect the diverse populations that make up California, including the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, where school districts can pull curricula of relevant communities into their classrooms. Unfortunately, we do not see that reflected in the current model curriculum.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/the-ongoing-battle-over-ethnic-studies/472422/>



We request that the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum include the following critical content -

- Include curriculum on the third world Liberation Front (twLF) in San Francisco and Berkeley, as they were the pioneers of the ethnic studies movement. We would not be discussing CA's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum today without the work they started decades ago.
  - Include historical Asian American community activism organizations, such as Asian American Political Alliance, Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action, Red Guards, Wei Min She/Asian Community Center, and Southeast Asia Resource Action Center.
  - We have also attached appropriate reading materials and factsheets to submit to the model curriculum.
- Asian American curricula -
  - Include curriculum covering the Iu-Mien, Japanese, Korean, Lao, South Asian, and Vietnamese American communities. It is unacceptable that there is no mention of these American communities in the curriculum.
  - There is very little curriculum on the Cambodian and Hmong American communities. We need curriculum that explore the immigrant and refugee experiences of these communities that discusses the discrimination and resiliency these communities have faced as Americans. We appreciate in the inclusion of how deportation impacts the Cambodian American community and the gender dynamics in the Hmong American community. We need curriculum that also explores the impact of communities arriving to the US as refugees.
  - The Asian American curriculum lacks appropriate class work and homework that would provide students different modalities to digest information and deepen their understanding and analysis of what they are learning.
  - Not only does ethnic studies require the learning of ethnic and racial groups, but they should also discuss how systems, such as capitalism, white supremacy, etc., and the multiplicity and intersectionality of our identities (i.e. race, gender, age, sexuality, class, etc.), impact society.
  - The appendices are not integrated into the curriculum. The curriculum needs to state how to use the appendices appropriately.
  - There is not a uniform structure of each "lesson" in the curriculum. Some units are developed, while others are less comprehensive and thorough.
- Pacific Islander curricula –
  - Include the Federated States of Micronesia as part of COFA migrants.
  - Have a consistent use of the term Oceania instead of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia or at minimum a discussion of the difference in terminology.
  - Use of the term Chamorro instead of Guamanian.
  - A list of cultural figures that demonstrates the full diversity of the Pacific Islander community across ability, ethnicity, gender, class, citizenship, and sexuality.
  - Curriculum that is informed by the scholarship, art, and lived experiences of Pacific Islanders.
  - Remove "War dancing for peace" from the curriculum



We urge the Instructional Quality Commission to protect the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, carefully review the curriculum, and make the appropriate changes and additions we have proposed above. These changes will be crucial to the success of the students from school districts that will turn to this model curriculum for guidance. We look forward to continuing this partnership as we seek to ensure that all students in California public schools are able to learn about their history and each other's histories to obtain cultural awareness, self-determination, and community.

For questions or more information, please contact Nkauj Iab Yang at [nkaujiab@searac.org](mailto:nkaujiab@searac.org).

Sincerely,

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