

Proposed Anti-Israel High School Curriculum in California Worries Pro-Israel Groups, Parents

Hostility toward Israel and its supporters across college campuses throughout the United States and beyond—well-documented for years—has been the focus of pro-Israel groups. Now the anti-Israel movement may be officially trickling down into the high school system of the largest state in America.

A new ethnic-studies curriculum under proposal by the California Department of Education is being widely condemned by pro-Israel and Jewish groups, California lawmakers and activists for its “blatant bias against Israel.”

“The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum is deeply troubling—not only for its shocking omission of any mention of Jewish-Americans or anti-Semitism or its blatant anti-Israel bias and praise of BDS [the boycott, divest and sanctions movement] but for its clear attempt to politically indoctrinate students to adopt the view that Israel and its Jewish supporters are part of ‘interlocking systems of oppression and privilege’ that must be fought with ‘direct action’ and ‘resistance,’” Tammi Rossman-Benjamin, co-founder and director of the California-based AMCHA Initiative, told *JNS*.

“We have concerns that include the curriculum’s omission both of Jews as an ethnic group and of anti-Semitism as a concept. The curriculum should reflect the true diversity of California’s population,” Jeremy Russell, director of marketing and communications at the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of San Francisco, told the news agency.

“We are also concerned by the curriculum’s inclusion of the

divisive BDS movement, which is inconsistent with the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Guidelines to 'create space for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality or citizenship, to learn different perspectives,'" he added.

Russell said that the JCRC, as part of a coalition headed by the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California, has "communicated these and other serious concerns to the Instructional Quality Commission of the Department of Education of California."

The proposed curriculum section on "Arab-American Studies Course Outline" includes studying national figures such as Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), the late Columbia University professor Edward Said, Women's March leader Linda Sarsour, the late radio personality Casey Kasem, actress Alia Shawkat, and the late White House correspondent Helen Thomas—all of whom are associated with anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric, and in the case of the congresswomen, a push to enact legislation punishing Israel.

According to the sample course models, students are also introduced to concepts like the *nakba*, defined from Arabic as "the catastrophe," which is used to describe the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel in May 1948 and the displacement of Arabs that occurred.

"It's hard to imagine that a few edits could fix what's wrong with this supposed model for teaching understanding and critical thinking," writes Karin Klein, who has worked at *The Los Angeles Times* since 1989, in an op-ed article in the paper.

"As a mother of kids who went through the public school system (and who would have refused to place them in a course that made them feel attacked for their minority identity), as a journalist who considers it crucial to listen to and consider

all sides of a debate and allow people to voice their views without fear of retribution and as a Jewish resident of California, this makes me question the competence, objectivity and intent of the committee that drew up the curriculum.”

Among the texts the to be studied in the proposed course, according to *YNET*, is poetry by anti-Israel British rapper Shadia Mansour, including the lie: “For every free political prisoner, an Israeli colony is expanded. For each greeting, a thousand houses were demolished.”

Sharon Ezra, an Israeli mother of three living in California, is extremely concerned, *YNET* reported. “It is so easy to persuade and mold the minds of young children. I think everyone should be concerned,” she was quoted as saying.

“If we don’t act now, a generation that will hate Zionism and Israel will grow up in California,” she adds. {eo}

This article originally appeared at United With Israel.