

California
Department of
Education

Jack O'Connell
State Superintendent of
Public Instruction
Phone: (916) 319-0800

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1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA
95814-5901

Gus Chavez, Co-founder
Defend The Honor Campaign
4674 Esther Street
San Diego, CA 92115

Dear Mr. Chavez:

Thank you for taking the time to write regarding the Ken Burns documentary Te War.

While I share your concern regarding the accurate representation of all groups in the history-social science curriculum, it is my understanding that Mr. Burns agreed to include additional content that reflects the experience of the Hispanic and Native American populations in World War II. Moreover, PBS has stated that these materials will be part of both the broadcast, the DVD, and the teaching materials that will be sold after the film's release.

However, as you noted in your letter, high school instructional materials are not part of the statewide adoption process. Furthermore, as a supplemental component, this particular item would not be part of the adoption process even if it were targeted at kindergarten through grade eight. While there is a statewide process for review of supplemental instructional materials for social content, this is a voluntary process for use by publishers and districts, as these reviews can also be conducted at the local level as part of the district content review at this time.

Moreover, if a district chooses to include this film as part of its locally selected curriculum, and then finds the Burns film and teaching materials insufficient, it could also select materials that specifically cover the Mexican-American contributions during World War II. However, that decision would be made by the local governing board, and it is not appropriate for the Superintendent of Public Instruction or the State Board of Education to preemptively state that the film should not be used in California classrooms. The notion that the state should ban books or films is a serious one, and there is no authority in the Education Code or the California Constitution for the state to step in and interfere with the ability of local education agencies to select materials that appropriately address the needs of their students.

If you have any further questions regarding this matter, please contact Kate Kerner, Special Assistant, Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, at (916) 319-0555 or by e-mail at kkerner@cde.ca.gov.

Again, thank you for contacting the CDE.

Sincerely

(Signed)

Jack O'Connell