



---

## Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region

February 17, 2016

Instructional Quality Commission  
1430 N Street, Suite #5111  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Treatment of Armenian Genocide in History-Social Science Framework**

Dear Commissioners:

We would like to express our gratitude to the Instructional Quality Commission and your consultants for responding to our request and taking measures to address some of the concerns related to the treatment of the Armenian Genocide in the History-Social Science Framework. We also urge you to consider incorporation of two additional changes to the framework as articulated below:

1. The addition of language to the Eleventh Grade U.S. History section regarding the unprecedented U.S. humanitarian response to the Genocide, largely through the efforts of the first U.S. Congressionally sanctioned humanitarian organization, the Near East Relief; and
2. The addition of language to the Tenth Grade World History section regarding the connection between the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust.

The Genocide Education Project (“GenEd”) is a California non-profit educational organization which has specialized for many years in developing and disseminating curriculum and lesson plans regarding genocide, including the LAUSD, among other school districts, as well as providing teacher training workshops within districts in our state and throughout the nation. They have extensive resources, including the expertise of some of the most preeminent scholars of the Armenian Genocide, and educators experienced in writing history and social science curriculum material. Accordingly, GenEd has our unqualified confidence as the best resource to advise educators regarding the teaching of the Armenian Genocide. It had recognized some glaring inaccuracies and omissions within the Tenth and Eleventh Grade chapters of the framework. The Commission was made aware of these, as articulated in [our letter dated October 6, 2015](#) and took corrective measures which addressed the most glaring issues.

Following the IQC’s November meeting, [GenEd submitted additional recommendations in a letter dated November 30, 2015](#) to provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of the first modern genocide, including the U.S. response to the Genocide, and the interconnections of the Genocide with the Holocaust, which we supported, as demonstrated by [our letter dated December 8, 2015](#). However, it appears that those recommendations were not received in time for

consideration prior to the completion of the draft released by the IQC in December. Once again, we write to express our strong support for the recommendations made to the Commission by the Genocide Education Project (“GenEd”) regarding the treatment of the Armenian Genocide within the History-Social Science framework.

### **Recommended changes to the Grade Eleven U.S. History Chapter**

The Commission should consider the following proposal by GenEd in making a determination:

“U.S. History does not happen in isolation from events around the globe. The scope and extent of the U.S. humanitarian response to the Armenian Genocide was huge, unprecedented, and has been virtually un-replicated since that time, making it an important part of U.S. History and an effective vehicle to convey key goals of the framework, for example, “...students should evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to address social and political problems... analyze historical and contemporary means of changing societies, promoting the common good... deepen their appreciation for civic virtues, etc.” We propose the addition of the following language to the Grade Eleven: United States History and Geography section, beginning on [Line 349 of Page 521]:

*Wilson’s grave concerns regarding the first modern era genocide perpetrated by the Turkish government of the Ottoman Empire against their Armenian subjects was reflected in one of his Fourteen Points, which proposed: “...the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development...”*

With the end of the war, Wilson was heralded as a hero in Europe when he traveled there to attend the Paris Peace Conference. Despite his significant role in designing the Versailles Treaty which ended the war, Wilson ultimately could not convince Congress to join the League of Nations.

*The events of World War I also solidified a new movement within civil society to advocate for international and provide humanitarian aid to people in other countries. The American Red Cross established its first international aid project in the wake of the Turkish massacres of 200,000 Armenians in the 1890’s, and Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, even travelled to Constantinople to try to persuade Ottoman authorities to stop the violence against Armenians.*

*WWI further transformed the scale of international humanitarian aid efforts carried out by Americans. This was exemplified by the creation of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, later incorporated by an act of Congress in 1919 and renamed Near East Relief. Through an unprecedented publicity campaign across the U.S., Near East Relief raised over \$116,000,000 — equivalent to nearly two billion dollars today — and provided food, clothing, medical treatment, and shelter to genocide survivors, including 132,000 children, who were raised and educated in orphanages across the region. The refrain, “Remember the starving Armenians,” became commonplace in American households at the time, demonstrating this new interest in using American economic strength to help others in faraway places.”*

This recommendation would provide students with an opportunity to learn about a shining example of our nation's generosity in the face of genocide, that was very well known at the time and in subsequent decades, but which has since eroded from our collective memory.

### **Recommended addition to the Grade Ten World History Chapter**

The Commission should consider the following proposal by GenEd:

“At the end of the section about WWII, the Holocaust, and the establishment of an international law against genocide, it's very instructive to draw the connection to the Armenian Genocide. In keeping with the framework's intention of encouraging analytical thinking about the intersection of personal interests, power, human rights, and civic engagement, we propose adding the following text on [page 471, line 957]:

*Teachers should guide students in an examination of the meaningful links between the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. Austrian-Jewish lawyer, Rafael Lemkin, invented the word “genocide” and led the campaign for its criminalization in response to the lack of accountability and reparation for the Armenian Genocide.*

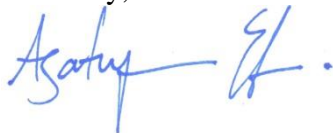
*Emboldened by this lack of accountability, Adolf Hitler said to his generals on the eve of their invasion of Poland, “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?” numerous German military officers who had been stationed in Turkey during WWI, were aware of the Ottoman regime's plan to destroy the Armenians, and some of them even issued orders for the deportation of Armenians. Without penalty, some later became leaders within the Nazi military apparatus that carried out the Holocaust.”*

The incorporation of GenEd's proposal would instruct students about the role which the Armenian Genocide played as a precursor to the Holocaust within the context of Twentieth Century history.

We appreciate the Commission's diligence in ensuring that the framework will provide guidance to our public school teachers such that they will teach about modern genocide in a comprehensive manner. There is a significant amount of scholarship which supports GenEd's proposals that can be readily provided to you. In addition, you may find useful factsheets, links to resources and videos on the subject matter by visiting [www.ancawr.org/CAGenocideEducation](http://www.ancawr.org/CAGenocideEducation). Please let us know if we can be of assistance in any way.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Elen Asatryan  
Executive Director  
Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region