



**Pathways to Teaching African American Studies: Preparation for  
Effective Teaching of the Advanced Placement Curriculum**

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## Abstract

For most of the nation AP African American Studies, offered through College Board, is the first time a standardized curriculum of Black History is being offered at the high school level, let alone as an interdisciplinary course of advanced study. In preparing to implement the AP curriculum, schools need to consider what structures are necessary for sustaining a Black Studies course. I examine teacher and school-based preparation and attempt to offer a framework for rolling out the new curriculum at any high school. Proper planning and implementation for AP African American Studies is crucial to ensure its survival and success. Using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) model, I recruit and utilize the lived experience and knowledge base of participant researchers who currently teach it. I center my research and analysis around five core considerations: teacher demographics and education; textbook alignment; pacing and planning; student demographics; and state legislation and standards. I should note that, based on the considerations outlined, each state, school district, and school will create curriculum plans that will look different, based on the communal demographics, political environment, and cultural context of that system. No two curriculum plans will be identical, and few will be similar. Participant researchers' insights revolved around themes of culturally relevant pedagogy, Black historical consciousness, and critical race consciousness. Participant researchers also looked at how these themes applied to their individual teaching practices. More broadly, this study should act as a model to

be replicated in Black history curriculum studies and educator professional development.

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## Introduction

After years of survey data from college educators, K12 teachers and students, the College Board began drafting a curriculum for a new course that would rock the nation. It began with a pilot as an Advanced Placement (AP) seminar course in the African Diaspora, introduced in 11 schools in the 2019-2020 school year (Waxman, 2020). The pilot AP Seminar course was then expanded into its own curriculum, AP African American Studies, being announced by the College Board in 2021. It was piloted during the 2022-2023 school year by 60 high schools across the nation (Najarro, 2022). The pilot was then expanded to 800 schools the following school year and fully released worldwide in the 2024-2025 school year (Yancey-Bragg, 2023).

The College Board curriculum for AP African American Studies has stirred mixed feelings of hope, anger, and political vitriol from both sides of the aisle. Points of contention include its use of sources, debates over which sources are being used, the required learning objectives, and its very existence as a course eligible for college credit. It is very easy for spectators to get swept up in the news. However, what is the current and future reality of educators tasked with offering and teaching the course? The historic and social importance of this feat cannot be overstated. For most of the nation, this is the first time a standardized curriculum in any field of African American Studies is being offered at the high school level, let alone as a course of advanced study. With so much riding on the success of the course, there are many factors that could lead to its failure. The educator

needs to consider the student demand for the course, vet teachers' ability to teach it, and make budgetary allotments for course materials like textbooks and research documents, just to name a few.

When attending the AP Summer Institute for the training of teaching AP African American Studies, I was very excited for the opportunity to make history and inspired by the fellow Black educators from across the country who were also embarking on this journey with me. It was a weeklong event that I will never forget. On the last day of training, I wondered how I was going to do teach this course. We got many suggestions from facilitators about being creative with our lesson plans, how to engage students, and how to pace the course. But once I examined the course framework, I wondered if the development committee had ever met a high school teenager. And what about classwork, homework, formative assessments, summative assessments; who is going to be responsible for grading all this work? How will I fit all of this new and exciting curriculum into my school year? What should I do about students who are in the class, but may be unprepared to handle it? How should I handle the political backlash from my state? What about from my district, or school community? When I asked the facilitators, "how should teachers prepare for the realities of teaching this course?" I was told that I am only accountable to my students, and that is who I needed to worry about. As someone who was only in their third year of teaching, and teaching a brand-new course, that answer was not helpful. I wish I had someone to give me the answers to questions surrounding the planning and implementation of the course.

In examining the needs of teachers, schools, and districts, while also reflecting on my own experience as a pilot teacher for the course, I developed five core considerations. These *core considerations* can be defined as factors that one must consider before implementing the course in their respective school system. The *core considerations* that were used in the study are teacher demographics and education; textbook alignment; pacing and planning; student demographics; and state standards and legislation. These core considerations are what I use to center the investigation of past research studies and categorize analysis of experiences of those involved in my study.

My research utilizes the Participatory Action Research (PAR) model to center teacher voices, experiences and expertise. Centering teachers' voices is crucial for building better pedagogical practices and better curriculum. Ilana Seidel Horn and Judith Warren Little use their research to demonstrate that teachers' work related conversations (primarily in professional learning communities) are a significant contributing factor in school improvement (Horn & Little, 2010). In analyzing the qualitative data collected from teacher led focus group discussions, I simultaneously collect data from classroom practice and analyses on literature and research in the education and African American Studies fields. In order to properly honor the participants' experiences as teacher leaders, time as professionals, and thoughts as researchers, in accordance with the PAR model; teachers directly involved in this study will be referred to as *participant researchers*. References made to teachers throughout the study, should be considered in a more general sense, outside of the study.

There are many strengths to implementing PAR and autoethnographic methods into education research, especially when the research results in a product or framework that can be utilized more broadly across different public education systems. The core strength at the heart of this project is to center teachers in curriculum building (Alsubaie, 2016). On the other hand, the most prominent limitation of this study is its size. The four teacher participants in this study is not a representative sample of the school district, let alone a sufficient sample size for the course. However, it is difficult finding teacher participants for any study, let alone one that demands any more than thirty minutes of their time (Young, 1979). With time and considerable interest, this study can and should be replicated throughout the nation, in a wide variety of different contexts.

In this study, I look specifically at teacher and school-based preparation for the course. I attempt to offer a framework for rolling out the new curriculum at any high school and will provide guidance for course integration into district and school level curriculum plans. Proper planning and implementation for AP African American Studies is crucial to ensure its survival and success. This research centers around answering the following questions: How can districts and schools effectively prepare to roll out and implement the AP African American Studies curriculum? What precautions and considerations do schools need to consider when implementing and sustaining an AP African American Studies course? The finished product will include an exemplar curriculum planning framework for districts and schools to use, with a guided analysis of the decisions made.

## Methodology

This study implements applied research practices to produce a curriculum planning framework that any state, district, or school can use and supplemental analysis for the decisions made. The curriculum planning framework is based on experiences of participant researchers who are currently teaching the course and consists of five core considerations. I worked with teaching professionals from a preselected school district in North Carolina to create an exemplar for a completed curriculum plan for the specified school district. It should be noted that, based on the core considerations that are outlined, each state, school district, and school will be able to create curriculum plans that will look different, based on the communal demographics, political environment, and cultural context of that system. No two curriculum plans will be identical, and few will be similar.

At its core, the PAR model is a way to include the objects of research in the research itself, through a constant feedback loop of dialogue and reflection (Koirala-Azad & Fuentes, 2025). In self-identifying their own issues in regard to lack of preparedness to teach the course, participant researchers are empowered to take ownership in finding a solution through analysis of academic literature and connection to their own practice. While I contend that PAR is not the only conduit for meaningful change in curriculum and education, it is a method that was particularly useful to me as the principal investigator and participant researcher. The PAR model requires a fair amount of trust and relationship building to maintain authentic and reliable results (Koirala-Azad & Fuentes, 2025; Livingstone et al., 2025; MacDonald, 2012). As a vested community member of the school

district and the AP African American Studies teaching community as whole, I was the perfect person to lead research on this subject, using this model. I started by positioning my own experience to develop core considerations, or categories of analysis, to present to the participant researchers. These core considerations were based on my experiences teaching the course, in addition to conversations I've had with other AP African American Studies teachers within and without the school district. The core considerations I included were teacher demographics and education; textbook alignment; pacing and planning; student demographics; and state standards and legislation.

In recruiting participant researchers for the study, I wanted to recruit a wide variety of teachers, different backgrounds, and areas of expertise, so that the focus group discussions (or FGDs) are a collaborative space for problem solving and forward planning. I evaluated the variety of participant researchers' backgrounds and demographics by utilizing a short demographic survey (See Appendix 1 for survey questions and data). The participant researchers recruited were still able to produce fruitful conversation and insight, even though they shared similar backgrounds and experiences.

During the first week, I offered the core considerations for feedback and confirmation from the participant researchers. Once the core considerations were confirmed, we discussed participant researchers' experiences in the required AP Summer Institute offered by College Board (APSI). The APSI is, traditionally, a training course that prepares new AP teachers for their specific content area and can assist veteran teachers in

brushing up on their practices. Because African American Studies was a new subject offered by College Board, all teachers were required to attend the APSI. Participant Researchers were asked to share what they enjoyed about their training and what they thought was missing for adequate preparation.

The bulk of my study utilizes reflective practices and discourse through weekly FGDs over the course of six weeks to develop data and recommendations for each core consideration. Each week I had participant researchers read one to three academic articles pertaining to a specific core consideration. The number of articles and the amount of pages was agreed upon by the group in the first meeting, in order to honor participant researchers' limited time (See Appendix 2 for reading data). While reading each week, participant researchers were asked to record their thoughts in Journals. Each participant researcher was provided a journal entry template for the week (see Appendix 3 for journal entry template). They were asked to center their analyses of each reading around four questions: how does this apply to AP African American Studies; how does this apply to the state of North Carolina; how does this apply to the school district; how does this apply to your classroom? These questions were chosen to ensure participant researchers' data was being collected over an assortment of scopes (national, state, city/neighborhood, individual), even if they were not being discussed in the FGDs. In the following weeks, the FGDs were used to fuse the ideas from leading sources with the experiential expertise of the participant researchers. FGDs revolved around prominent themes in the readings. I developed discussion questions based on key concepts and quotes from the reading, in

order to differentiate discussions from journal entry responses. These discussions also captured data on the participant researchers' methods and rationale, in addition to gaining insight into their experiences teaching the course; all of which was used to develop and assess preparedness to teach the course. In the FGDs, I made sure to note key findings and experiences from participant researchers and clarify what their specific recommendation for the district was.

Through my report, I mention certain measures of success, and how this framework will help schools reach those measures. If the ultimate goal is to ensure the longevity of AP African American Studies, the measurement of success in this case should be the amount of students who sign up for the course every year. Course grades and exam scores are important and do serve a purpose, in terms of evaluating mastery of content and teaching methods in addition to data collection for College Board. However, course grades and exam scores do not serve as accurate metrics for student demand and engagement in the course. Students can still be interested in taking an AP course, even if they believe they won't do well. Therefore, success should be a measurement of interest, not performance (*Impacts of AP*, n.d.; *New Analyses of AP Scores of 1 and 2*, n.d.). Broader factors that impact the success of the course (ie changes in education policy at the state or federal level) are beyond the scope of this study. Even though legislation does control what teachers can disseminate in the classroom, teachers do not have an immediate influence on legislation. This study focuses on how teachers and school units can navigate present legislative obstacles, not move or change them.



## Peer Analysis

Over the course of six weeks, participant researchers were asked to analyze scholarly articles and academic research, and place them within the context of the AP African American Studies course, the state of North Carolina, the school district in which they teach, and their own specific classrooms. The following subsections attempt to formulate a cohesive analysis of the literature based on their varying experiences and viewpoints. It should be noted that the considerations that are not included in the peer analysis were 1) pacing and planning; and 2) state legislation and standards. Pacing and planning is a dependent variable that is specific to each individual teacher's school context. State legislation and standards are addressed sufficiently in the findings and discussion section.

In the first week of the study, participant researchers were asked to read "Black Curriculum Orientations: A Preliminary Inquiry" by William H Watkins and "Teaching Black History for Social Change" by James A. Banks. Participant researchers concluded that "Black Curriculum Orientations" is directly connected to the course and exam description (this is a document that functions as the approved curriculum for the course, it is also known as the CED) as it can be used as a way to track the changes and the development of the CED over the years. While the changes to the CED are linked to politization of education and sanitation of Black history, the CED still exhibits elements of the liberal education, Black nationalist, and Afrocentric orientations. Overall within the state of North

Carolina and its curriculum pertaining to Black history, there is not much correlation with the Black curriculum orientations, as the state does not treat Black history as a priority, despite the rich history within the state. This creates a precarious environment for teachers, as they must take caution with what they teach, ensuring that they stay within the CED. If the state curriculum for Black history were to fit into any of the orientations, it would most likely be a combination of liberal education, functionalist, and accommodationist orientations. Participant researchers do not see any real alignment between Black curriculum orientations and their school district, however, they self-identify with one orientation or another. In addition, participant researchers stated the Black curriculum orientation was a useful framework to teach the evolution of Black history and Black education to their students.

In the article, “Teaching Black History for Social Change,” participant researchers immediately saw alignment between the article and some of the course concepts. They emphasize how the interdisciplinary nature of the CED, in addition to its use of primary sources, aligns with Banks’s idea that Black history should inspire critical thinking and activism in students. Holistically, this allows students to analyze historical developments and processes and see the connection to the present and themselves. Within the state of North Carolina, Banks’s ideas around self-evaluation of morals and values would clash with the state’s current political climate as evidenced by the Anti-CRT legislation and the Parents’ Bill of Rights. The observed school district is very diverse in the demographics of its students and its variation of course offerings. Participant researchers believe that the

school district has the unrealized potential to enforce the framework introduced by Banks to the entirety of the school district. However, they face challenges in the political diversity of its community members. This article truly resonated with participant researchers as they reflected on their own practices and how they use content to encourage students to be active and informed participants in society.

In the second week, participant researchers were asked to read three articles surround teacher demographics and education. In the article “Interpreting Black History: Toward Black History Framework for Teacher Education” by LaGarrett King, participant researchers highlighted how the CED bridges the gap between Black historical consciousness, diaspora literacy, and K12 education. King theorizes Black historical consciousness as an effort to understand, develop, and teach Black histories that recognize Black people’s humanity. Developing a Black historical consciousness requires educators to teach *through* Black history as opposed to teaching *about* Black history and its ultimate goal is to dismantle the white epistemic historical logic that currently dominates K12 education (King, 2019, 2020). In the same vein, diaspora literacy is the ability to understand the complexities of Blackness while simultaneously acknowledging that Blackness is global and has a profound influence on global history (King, 2019). Some participant researchers in this study highlighted how it is imperative that educators who are selected to teach the course need to have a Black historical consciousness because developing that knowledge base shapes students’ self-perception and what they are capable of. Although the CED does makes steps toward teaching critical analysis of Black

history beyond key figures and events, more work is required to decenter America and teach about the global impact of Blackness. Participant researchers agree with King, especially within the context of North Carolina and the state's role in Black history, teacher preparation programs need to incorporate more comprehensive studies of Black history. Participant researchers also suggested that school districts should partner with local universities to offer training and professional development to build a Black historical consciousness in their teacher workforce.

“Check Yo’Self Before You Wreck Yo’Self and Our Kids: Counterstories from Culturally Responsive White Teachers? . . . to Culturally Responsive White Teachers!” by Cheryl E. Matias highlights the importance of culturally responsive practices for White teachers who teach in diverse or predominately non-White environments. Participant researchers echoed this sentiment in highlighting that all teachers need to be committed to culturally responsive pedagogy to not only teach this course, but to effectively serve the diverse population of students within the district and incorporate the experiences of all students. The school district could even do more to offer professional development opportunities for self-reflection and the examination of whiteness in educational settings, as this would help teachers engage with critical responsive pedagogy. As it relates to the AP course, non-Black teachers need to be able deal with and address the difficult parts of teaching the curriculum. Participant researchers also talked about the intentionality behind the detailed nature of the CED, to keep from the ever-persistent whitewashing of

Black history. However, teachers still need to be weary of how they present topics and check their biases and white savior complex.

“Through Our Eyes: Perspectives and Reflections from Black Teachers” by Ashley Griffin and Hilary Tackie is a report that examines the common experiences of Black teachers in education. In the report, some of the teachers explained that they feel like experts in their field, but may be relegated to teaching children with poor behaviors. Participant researchers pointed out that the unique perspective of Black teachers about the Black experience is beneficial to the teaching of the content in the CED. Moreover, participant researchers highlighted the importance and celebrated the role of Black educators in their specific contexts: Black teachers are burdened with the extra tasks involved in acting as cultural brokers between students and other teachers, when they could use that knowledge more effectively in an academic context. While the school district does highlight equity and inclusion in their practices, do they specifically honor and celebrate their Black teachers? The school district can do better in supporting Black educators through mentorship programs and by ensuring that there are no systemic biases in hiring and leadership roles. The observed school district and North Carolina as a whole need to recruit, retain, and uplift Black teachers so that all students benefit from their perspectives and mentorship and make a concerted effort to seek out a diverse teacher workforce. Participant researchers used their own experience to highlight the disparity of Black teachers and the role Black educators play in the lives of all students.

In the third week, participant researchers read two articles: “Dismantling Curricular Statues: Critically Examining Anti-Black Racism in Representations of Ancient Africa in Canadian Textbooks” and “Context Matters in History Textbook Studies: A Call to Address the Sociopolitical Landscape of Textbook Production.” Both articles explore the representations of Africa in K12 textbooks and the sociopolitical context in which the textbooks are produced. Participant researchers noted how the article made them reflect on how historical narratives are shaped in textbooks and how that impacts students’ understanding of Africa’s past. They acknowledged that the AP African American Studies course doesn’t require a textbook in part because it may be difficult for teachers and districts to find approved textbooks that effectively disrupt hegemonic narratives of history. The CED provides a plethora of primary and secondary sources for students to not only examine, but to analyze and make their own interpretations — depending on the source and the teacher’s incorporation of the source. Because of this, the CED closes the gap between the textbook and the Ancient African histories that are missing from standard American/African American history textbooks. This connects to AP African American Studies, where students critically analyze how Africa’s history has been distorted and challenge these misconceptions. Teachers also play a role in this distortion and need to be intentional in presenting a fuller, more accurate picture of Africa’s influence on the world. Teachers can also lead students in critiquing the information they read in textbook so they can learn how to highlight biases.

In the fifth week, participant researchers examined the article “Cultivating a Critical Race Consciousness for African American School Success” by Dorinda J. Carter. Participant researchers were captivated by the fact that the course itself is a testament to cultivating racial consciousness, as it displays the multiple facets of African Americans - not just as a perpetually oppressed people. From this, students are able to see themselves as a people who are worthy of belonging and understanding that they are capable and valuable in any setting that they choose to partake in. The CED helps to bring about race consciousness of Black students and thus helps them to “develop defensive mechanisms for battling discrimination in school and the larger society” (Carter, 2008). The course covers topics about reliance, excellence, empowerment, etc. which helps a Black student to establish or add to their individual journey into their identities. This course also helps students who struggle with their Black identity, as it provides a place for them to explore heritage, history, and current beliefs about themselves and the Black identity with their peers. Teachers also detailed the importance of teachers navigating North Carolina’s political minefield of educational policy, while simultaneously ensuring students have space and opportunity to learn about themselves. They also linked the building of critical race consciousness to the underrepresentation of Black students in AP courses, and how their school district still has work to do to fully address this disparity.

## Findings and Discussion

Each of the following subsections is representative of the considerations needed to assess preparation for the course at a school and district level. Each subsection includes an explanation of the consideration, synopsis of FGDs surrounding the consideration, and general recommendations for the observed school district.

### Week One

Examining College Board's (APSI) is a crucial first step to assessing the needs of schools and teachers' preparedness to teach the course. APSIs typically focus on providing guidance for content and instruction for teachers getting ready or continuing to teach a specific AP subject. All the participant researchers, except for one, attended College Board's APSI, as it is a requirement to teach any AP subject in the observed school district. Of the teachers who attended the APSI, experiences varied based on the training modality. The participant researchers who attended the APSI in person appreciated the collaborative environment of these trainings. To make space for the emotional buy-in for many teachers who are getting ready to teach the course, especially Black teachers, participant researchers recommended setting rules of engagement and/or community guidelines to ensure that the collaborative environment is still healthy and productive.

These APSI trainings also stressed using Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) activities that weren't directly apart of the Course and Exam Description (CED), to help set the tone

for the classroom. Even though SEL activities are beyond the scope of the CED, participant researchers still stressed the importance of these strategies to build student rapport and encourage engagement (Hammond, 2014). Certain topics and discussions in the course could also be triggering to students. SEL activities that emphasize trauma-informed practices could be beneficial for these students as they prepare and continue to broach these topics. AP African American Studies introduces students to a unique type of human suffering, and students may lack the emotional tools to productively engage and digest the content (Hatchimonji et al., 2022). Participant researchers also noted that the CED has changed significantly over its few years of existence, in response to teacher feedback.

Participant researchers who attended the APSI online recounted that the training was led by a teacher from a different subject. Subsequently, the training did not correspond to the specific needs of the course, often implementing instructional strategies from AP United States History. This is highly problematic as conflation of United States history with Black history is a perpetuation of hegemonic historical frameworks and does not acknowledge the unique themes and modalities that are addressed in Black history (King, 2014, 2019, 2020; Watkins, 1993). This misstep is believed to be a result of a high demand for teacher training for the course, without enough consultants who are able and willing to lead these trainings. This issue should be resolved with the growth of the course, provided more teachers gain the experience needed to conduct a rewarding experience.

Participant researchers from both modalities expressed needing assistance with teaching the course skills. This is an important need to address, as the AP African American Studies course is designed to be an easily accessible course, intended to draw in students who have never taken an AP course before. One possible solution that participant researchers brought up in the FGD was having schools require a prerequisite for students to take the course. Although this would alleviate a fair amount of the burden to teach these skills and ensure delivery of content, this would counteract the success of the course and greatly diminish enrollment numbers for the course, defeating the intended goal of accessibility.

Student interest in the content and engagement in class are also large components that contribute to the accessibility of the course, and something all participant researchers struggle with. This was summarized by one of the participant researchers in the FGD: “They have to have an argument – they have to have an opinion. And what I’m finding out is that they don’t have an opinion, which is why they don’t care at the beginning.” This participant researcher quote summarizes the crux of the student engagement problem, encompassing students’ lack of interest, knowledge, and skills. Lack of student interest in the course may stem from students being placed in the course by counselors and not electing to be in it, according to participant feedback.

This should be rectified by district plans for course sequences and ensuring that school level personnel (administration, AP coordinators, counselors, etc.) are aware of the

level of commitment students are taking on in any AP course, particularly AP African American Studies. Students' involuntary placement in the course could also have disastrous effects for students who elected to be in the course, as this course could serve as an affinity group for schools who lack those space spaces for students (Mason et al., 2024). Lack of student knowledge and familiarity of the content is cited among participant researchers as a key factor for the deficiency of student engagement. For this reason, it is imperative that teachers tap into students' prior knowledge bases to assist in bridging gaps and making connections.

Black teachers are ideal to fill this need, as they often serve as cultural brokers and advocates (Griffin & Tackie, 2016) for Black students (acknowledging that Black students are the overrepresented population of students taking this course) (Garcia, 2023) in ordinary educational spaces, both in and out of the classroom. Black teachers' skillsets in cultural brokering draw from a knowledge base that is shared with their students, resulting in higher levels of engagement. In contrast to the other two student deficits, the lack of skills needed to demonstrate mastery is a top-down issue. Comparing the AP African American Studies exam to any of the other AP History/Social Studies exams, it is blatantly clear that what is being asked of students in AP African American Studies is more than what has been asked of them before. To demonstrate an acceptable level of mastery of the course, students must achieve passing marks in a multiple-choice section, a short answer section, and document-based essay question, in addition to a three week, in class, research project and oral defense (*AP® African American Studies Course and Exam*

*Description*, 2023). While the rigor is appreciated by participant researchers, they also expressed anxiety around adequately preparing students for the exam.

Participant researchers also cite the lack of equal resources for the course. While the CED for AP African American Studies does include essential knowledge points and required sources for teachers to deliver instruction, the online resource AP Classroom is nowhere near as well stocked as any of the other courses offered by the College Board. Other courses enjoy a litany of student videos, practice questions/activities, and a question bank for teachers to create their own summative assessments. It also includes analytical tools designed to help teachers improve their instruction. AP African American Studies students and teachers can enjoy none of these amenities, as teachers can currently only have the promise of next year to hold onto. With the standards of mastery raised and the tools for success scarce, there is little for the teacher to do for their students to help prepare them.

With all of this in mind, participant researchers recommend SEL-coded training for teachers, aimed to assist with academically appropriate cultural brokering, as well as strategies to help boost student engagement, and a toolbox of specific SEL activities to encourage student buy into the course. Participant researchers also emphasized student-based class discussion as central to teaching the course. Teacher observations could also be helpful in diagnosing specific areas and solutions for improvement.

## Teacher Demographics and Education

Teacher demographics and education are instrumental to school and district-wide preparedness for the course. One of the primary goals of AP African American Studies is to reverse the underrepresentation of Black students in AP courses (Garcia, 2023). The College Board also states that the course is meant to invite students “to develop analytical skills while examining African Americans’ wide-ranging experiences, contributions, and creativity, and the impact of the broader African diaspora on the world we live in” (*Advanced Placement Program Releases Official AP African American Studies Framework – Newsroom [Press Release], 2023*). These “analytical skills” that students are developing could be tied to culturally relevant pedagogy. Gloria Ladson-Billings structures culturally relevant pedagogy as a theoretical model that addresses student achievement and helps students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that institutions perpetuate (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Through this framework, Ladson-Billings links student achievement to cultural familiarity, which makes sense when examining student achievement gaps by race, alongside standard United States history curriculum. One can then hypothesize, with the expansion of the course Black students will not only be represented in Advanced Placement curriculum, but they will also begin to be proportionately represented in AP achievement numbers. Therefore, framing teacher demographics and education for the course through the lens of culturally relevant pedagogy can assist in bridging gaps in student achievement, cultural competency, in addition to critical thinking and critique (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Social studies education is finally meeting African American students by including holistic representation of Black Americans on a national scale. For the first time, students have prior knowledge about the subject matter they are expected to master. Because of this, teachers need to be able to meet students where they are content-wise, instead of Black students contorting to hegemonic curricula. Educators cannot expect to enter students' field of familiarity and expect the same results as previous AP courses; some work is required.

FGDs address if and how teacher demographics impact course participation and success. Results of the discussion concluded that demographics should be split into two categories: traditional and contextual. Traditional demographics include identities that are typically considered in education: gender, race, and age. Gender is considered more broadly in this context as there were no male teachers who taught the course in the district under investigation. We considered how education was a woman- dominated field, especially evidenced by the lack of male teachers eligible for this specific study.

In regard to race, studies find that teachers of color bring benefits to classrooms beyond content knowledge and pedagogy. Black teachers more frequently hold high expectations for all students and use connections with students to establish structured classroom discipline (Griffin & Tackie, 2016). Conversely, a key requirement for White teachers will be to employ culturally responsive teaching (Matias, 2013). It is important to note that the course has introduced a new avenue of insight into critical whiteness studies

and its intersection with teaching and education. With that being said, further investigation is needed. The participant researchers overwhelmingly agreed that race does impact teachers' experiences teaching the course. African American teachers enter the classroom with a deep understanding of what it means to be of African descent, although they are still wary of using the proverbial "we." Participant Researchers discuss a need to be aware of the kinds of words they use in a class with a mixed student populace, taking care in how they address and bring forth content in the presence of non-Black students. They still appreciate being able to draw upon connections from being a part of the community. Some Black teachers lean into the proverbial "we," citing experiences in traditional United States history classes in which student membership in sociological in-groups and out-groups (race based or otherwise) are not acknowledged in the classroom, leading to students who are members of these out-groups being left out of moments of connection between the teacher and other students (Griffin & Tackie, 2016).

Non-Black teachers observed that White students in the class do not get offended by cultural connections that are made amongst Black students, including shared cultural experiences, using the proverbial "we," and quips and banter shared amongst the in-group. As non-Black teachers, their experiences as leaders in the classroom revolve around empowering their Black students rather than taking on their traditional role of spearheading analysis and/or discussion. Participant researchers speak about how their lack of prior knowledge and experience with the course content authorizes Black students to fill in the gaps with their own experiences and prior knowledge. This particular

experience demonstrates how students are be empowered by the knowledge they acquire in the course and by accepting ownership of their learning process.

In education, teacher age is traditionally directly correlated to their experience in the classroom. This can be beneficial to teachers of the course, as some teachers can relate personally to historic events or sociological concepts conveyed in the course. Although the direct correlation between age and experience is prominent in education, it can become inversely related as it pertains to this AP course.

Contextual demographics consist of four subcategories: new to African American Studies and new to teaching (NANT), with new to teaching being defined in this study as a teacher's first 1-3 years of teaching; experienced in African American Studies and new to teaching (EANT); new to African American Studies and experienced in teaching (NAET); experienced in African American Studies and experienced in teaching (EAET). All of these four subcategories contribute something different to the classroom and the overall experience, as evidenced by the development of the CED.

Participant researchers were asked to identify a subcategory and explain how membership within this subcategory colors their teaching experience. Participant researchs who identified under EAET pulled from their undergraduate experiences in African American Studies and genuine interest in the subject area. They also believe that it was the introduction of AP African American Studies and their ability to teach it that kept

them in the classroom. This observation opens opportunities to research the implementation of the course as a tool for recruiting teachers of color. Participant researchers who identified as NAET cited experiences teaching adjacent history courses (i.e., United States history) where there is overlap with AP African American Studies. Still, they needed a lot of research to prepare for this course, as they lacked depth of knowledge in the content area.

Participant researchers recommend that districts, neighboring educational institutions, or community organizations can provide refresher courses for teachers to brush up on their knowledge. They explain that the history content is not difficult, but the interdisciplinary nature of the course is difficult to grasp and teach in such a short period of time (i.e., art, music, and poetry). This difficulty can also be attributed to the overwhelming response of history and social studies teachers who teach this course, as opposed to teachers in other subject areas. LaGarret King offers a possible solution to include Black studies in teacher preparation courses, as this knowledge can influence teachers' ability to construct culturally relevant curriculum and their experiences interacting with and relating to students (King, 2019).

Participant researchers used King's Black historical consciousness to frame the CED as a disruptor of hegemonic K12 curriculum. The group was then asked does the CED displace traditional historical frameworks with Black frameworks and paradigms in Black history; responses were mixed. Collectively, participant researchers agreed that Unit 1

focuses on Africa before the slave trade and successfully disrupts hegemonic frameworks by teaching about Africa's wealth, innovation, and complex social structures prior to and during European contact. Unit 2 does little to displace hegemonic frameworks, as participant researcher relay that it's more of a repetition of what students have already learned about slavery in past classes. However, this could serve as context for students may have had limited exposure to United States history. NAET teachers discuss how Unit 3 spends much more time on the post-slavery period than a traditional United States history class would. Unit 3 charts the development of Black culture and society, which has been underrepresented in history as a whole. However, EA teachers noted Unit 3 still does not provide full circumstantial context to the civil rights movement. EAET teachers noted that Unit 4 does change the way we look at organizations during the civil rights movement. However, it neglects to show the more radical side of these organizations and does not address their downfall in the War on Drugs. Participant researchers cut the end of Unit 4 as it leaned toward teaching *about* Black history and maintaining hegemonic frameworks and not teaching *through* Black history.

Skill Category 1	Skill Category 2	Skill Category 3
<i>Applying Disciplinary Knowledge</i>	<i>Source Analysis</i>	<i>Argumentation</i>
<i>Explain course concepts, developments, patterns, and processes (e.g., cultural, historical, political, social).</i>	<i>Evaluate written and visual sources and data (including historical documents, literary texts, music lyrics, works of art, material culture, maps, tables, charts, graphs, and surveys).</i>	<i>Develop an argument using a line of reasoning to connect claims and evidence.</i>
<p><b>1A</b> Identify and explain course concepts, developments, and processes.</p> <p><b>1B</b> Identify and explain the context of a specific event, development, or process.</p> <p><b>1C</b> Identify and explain patterns, connections, or other relationships (causation, changes, continuities, comparison).</p> <p><b>1D</b> Explain how course concepts, developments, and processes relate to the discipline of African American Studies.</p>	<p><b>2A</b> Identify and explain a source's claim(s), evidence, and reasoning.</p> <p><b>2B</b> Describe a source's perspective, purpose, context, and audience.</p> <p><b>2C</b> Explain the significance of a source's perspective, purpose, context, and audience.</p> <p><b>2D</b> Describe and draw conclusions from patterns, trends, and limitations in data, making connections to relevant course content.</p>	<p><b>3A</b> Formulate a defensible claim.</p> <p><b>3B</b> Support a claim or argument using specific and relevant evidence.</p> <p><b>3C</b> Strategically select sources—evaluating the credibility of the evidence they present—to effectively support a claim.</p> <p><b>3D</b> Select and consistently apply an appropriate citation style.</p> <p><b>3E</b> Use a line of reasoning to develop a well-supported argument.</p>

Figure 1: The AP African American Studies skills describe what students should be taught to do while exploring course topics and examining sources. The skills are embedded and spiraled throughout the course, providing recurring opportunities for students to develop and practice these skills and then transfer and apply the skills in the Individual Student Project and on the AP Exam. (AP<sup>®</sup> African American Studies Course and Exam Description, 2023)

When asked what content and/or skills are needed to assist in better instruction, participant researchers voiced the need for clearer guidance for the requirements for each skill category and individual skill, especially for the Source Analysis and Argumentation categories. More generally, participant researchers wished they had more time and resources to prepare, as they do not want to do wrong by their current students and the students that come after them.

## Textbook Alignment

The CED, as it currently stands, provides educators and students with required sources for each topic. This is atypical for the rest of the AP courses that are offered, as there is a litany of usable course materials and textbooks that educators and students can use. As Black history is a developing field of study in K12 education, there are simply not as many reliable resources available as for its older, more established counterparts. The only

public reason from the College Board (2023) for these required sources – all of which are primary sources -- is so that “students can evaluate experiences and evidence for themselves” (College Board, 2023). However, one can hypothesize that these required sources are embedded in the CED to ensure that any teacher, regardless of experience level, or familiarity with the subject matter, has a baseline of context and information to introduce to students. This practice can also be used to counteract any schools, districts, or states attempting to refute any African American Studies secondary or tertiary texts, including any textbooks or instructional material, as any school or teacher that deviates from the CED is no longer an authorized course and loses its “AP” designation (*AP Course Audit for School and District Administrators*, n.d.).

Upon examination of the CED, it is clear that African American history is the clear foundation of the course. Therefore, it could be useful to offer schools and teachers a textbook to utilize. As seen from the FGDs (see “Teacher Demographics and Education” section), many of the students enter the course with some prior knowledge of the subject matter, but very few come in with a functional understanding of history to demonstrate mastery in the course skills. And while students have the capacity to critique what they have learned previously about African American history/studies, they overall lack the necessary background knowledge to replace hegemonic narratives with holistic ones, which does little to reconstruct students’ warped sense of history (Joyce & Abdou, 2023). Textbooks become crucial in developing that functional understanding that all students can use in their reconstruction.

In FGDs, participant researchers affirm that the CED does a great job of providing sources that correspond to the essential knowledge standards. They also state that sometimes the provided sources can be too vague and open for interpretation. In developing a Black historical consciousness, textbooks can be used by educators and students as tools for historical background to set these sources in their proper context, leading to better interpretations. Participant researchers noted that the essential knowledge standards can also, occasionally, be presented in a vacuum which makes placing the content and events in chronology difficult to do. This is why the background knowledge that textbooks provide is needed. Teaching in a politically conservative state also raised concerns around textbooks being pulled from classrooms or banned altogether during political battles. Despite this concern, the participant researchers overall agreed that textbooks do more good than harm, as they can be used as a tool for scaffolding and differentiation for students who enter the course without a strong foundation in historical content or reasoning skills. Participant researchers also enjoy using the resources that accompany high school textbooks, although some teachers indicated needing more time and training in order to fully take advantage of the textbooks and their resources.

## Pacing and Planning Guides

Of the AP social studies courses that are offered, the exam for AP African American Studies is the most extensive exam/scoring process. The official AP score for the course

consists of an exam and an individual student research project that is accompanied by an oral defense of their research. The exam for AP African American Studies consists of two sections and takes a total of two hours and forty-five minutes. The first section makes up 60% of the final AP score and consists of 60 stimulus-based questions, for which students are given one hour and ten minutes to complete. In section 1B of the exam, students are allotted ten minutes to answer a validation question regarding one of the sources used on their individual research project. Responses to this section make up 1.5% of the final AP score. Section 2 is also broken up into two parts. In the first part, students will be given forty minutes to answer three short answer questions. Each short answer question consists of 3-4 prompts which require one-three sentences to respond fully to each prompt. One short answer question will be based on a text source, another will be based on a visual source, and the third question focuses on a broad theme from the course. In the second part of Section 2, students are expected to respond to a document-based essay question in which they will be given five documents surrounding African American Studies. Students will need to construct an argument and support it with evidence from the documents, in addition to other evidence they have learned, in the allotted forty-five minutes. Section 2 makes up 30% of students final AP score, with the short answer questions comprising 18% of their final score and the document-based question making up 12% of their final score.

For the individual student research project, students will be allotted a total of 675 minutes of instructional class time to research a topic of their choosing that is related to the course. Their research must consist of four credible sources that explore their topic and develop a five-minute presentation of their research and analysis. After their presentation, students must defend their research in a three-minute oral defense led by their teacher. The individual student project makes up 10% of their final AP score. The following chart compares the score requirements of the AP African American Studies to the other AP social studies courses.

Table 1: Matrix of AP Social Studies Exams

	<b>Multiple Choice section</b>	<b>Short Answer section</b>	<b>Document Based Question</b>	<b>Long Essay Question</b>	<b>Individual Student Project</b>
<i>AP African American Studies</i>	60 questions; 1 hr 10 min; 60% of score	3 questions; 40 min; 18% of score	1 question; 45 min; 12% of score	None	1, 8-minute presentation; 15, 45 minute class periods; 10% of score
<i>AP Comparative Government and Politics</i>	55 questions; 1 hr; 50% of score	3 questions; 50 min; 36% of score	None	1 question; 40 min; 14% of score	None
<i>AP European History</i>	55 questions; 55 min; 40% of score	3 questions; 40 min; 20% of score	1 question; 60 min; 25% of score	1 question; 40 min; 15% of score	None
<i>AP Human Geography</i>	60 questions; 60 min; 50% of score	3 questions; 75 minutes; 50% of score	None	None	None
<i>AP Macroeconomics</i>	60 questions; 70 min; 66.65% of score	3 questions; 60 min; 33.35% of score	None	None	None
<i>AP Microeconomics</i>	60 questions; 70 min; 66.65% of score	3 questions; 60 min; 33.35% of score	None	None	None
<i>AP Psychology</i>	70 questions; 90 min; 66.7% of score	2 questions; 70 min; 33.3% of score	None	None	None
<i>AP US Government</i>	55 questions; 80 min; 50% of score	4 questions; 100 min; 50% of score	None	None	None
<i>AP US History</i>	55 questions; 55 min; 40% of score	3 questions; 40 min; 20% of score	1 question; 60 min; 25% of score	1 question; 40 min; 15% of score	None
<i>AP World History</i>	55 questions; 55 min; 40% of score	3 questions; 40 min; 20% of score	1 question; 60 min; 25% of score	1 question; 40 min; 15% of score	None

As shown by the extensive nature of the AP exam, teachers will need to budget their class time wisely to ensure that students have sufficient mastery of skills, content, and familiarity with the required sources to succeed on the exam. Pacing of the course proves to be a unique issue, as no other AP course requires an individual student project, let alone a project that includes a question on the exam. Pacing and planning prove to be an instrumental component of preparation to teach the course. With all this seemingly working against the teacher, it should be noted that the CED does allow for some level of choice for both teachers and students, giving students an opportunity to set individual goals to complete the project before or after the exam.

It was the general consensus of the participant researchers that the planning and pacing schedule will be dictated by the type of learners you have, in addition to testing schedules, school start dates, and district and state constraints. The advice of the more senior participant researchers was not to worry about finishing the content in time, but instead teachers should focus on developing students' skills by teaching through the content. To optimize the time available during the school year and/or semester, teachers should utilize a flipped classroom model in which class time is devoted to building the necessary analysis and argumentation skills by using the required sources to re-enforce said skills. Then at home, teachers assign historical context and content assignments via an approved textbook and/or instructional materials (see "Textbook Alignment"). Using this teaching model will effectively introduce students to enough content to build a

functional knowledge base that they can use to work through the stimulus-based questions on the exam.

With this flipped classroom model and the rigor of the sources, going over the required sources takes up most of the class time. It becomes very difficult to go through all the source material in time for the exam, along with the added time constraint of the project; especially if a school offers the course on a block schedule during the second semester. Participant researchers voiced that teachers need assistance in determining which sources need less exposure and which sources are worth delving deeper into; this includes which sources to use, how much of them to use, and how to use them. The evident lack of source material discernment can be traced back to an overall lack of Black historical consciousness amongst our educator populace. If Black historical consciousness seeks to examine how people understand Black history (King, 2019), ensuring teachers attain an operative Black historical consciousness will alleviate the confusion in discerning between sources and will also assist in guiding maturation of students' critical race consciousness, as they work through the sources in class. The participant researchers advise that, to build a Black historical consciousness and assist with source discernment, colligate level partnerships and trainings would be effective and useful.

One critical question regarding pacing and planning that was raised by participant researchers concerned whether teachers should finish the individual student projects

before or after the exam. Participant researchers decided it was best to leave that decision up to individual teachers, as there are too many uncontrollable factors that go into this decision. With that, teachers should understand the risks and benefits of each choice, to make the most informed decision that is best for their classroom. If teachers decide to administer the individual student project before the exam, they will avoid student burnout; however, they will have less time to study or review for the exam. If teachers decide to administer the individual student project after the exam, they will guarantee more time to review with students before the exam; however, it becomes extremely difficult to regain students' attention after the exam has been taken. Participant researchers also noted that schools offering the course during the second semester on the block schedule may have to administer the individual student project after the exam to exercise effective use of time.

## Student Demographics

It would be nearly impossible to address all the possible combinations of demographics and intersections of identity that students exhibit when they enter this course. When considering the nature and the subject matter of AP African American Studies, participant researchers agreed that, in addition to other demographics and measures, it is important to center critical race consciousness as a key factor for student success in the course. Student success, in the context of this course, includes academic success in the form of grades and AP scores, but also includes social-emotional metrics as well.

The FGD first focused on what determining factors and demographics are crucial for consideration. Typically for education in general, we consider race and socioeconomic status. As race is probably the most important demographic for student success in the course, I address it in full later in this section. Participant researchers concluded that gender and sexual orientation are important demographics to consider in terms of inclusion in course concepts. Even though there is controversy in many states regarding the inclusion of the subjects in high school, they may still come up in classroom discussion. It is important for teachers to be prepared to handle these topics when they are brought up by students, especially in conversations about intersectionality and interlocking systems of oppression.

Aside from race, the biggest demographic to consider for student success is what participant researchers called academic maturity. Currently, some participant researchers use prerequisites to filter out students who may not be ready or suited to take the course. The idea behind a prerequisite of US history is so the history and concepts introduced in AP African American Studies are not completely foreign to students. The issue that participant researchers realized is that students still demonstrate trouble retaining information or making connections to US history. Academic maturity was defined by the group as students who enter the course with a basic understanding of academic skills such as note-taking, time management, executive function, reading, basic levels of written and visual

source analysis, essay writing, and can include emotional maturity, self-discipline, work ethic, etc.

The primary concern for participant researchers was recruiting students who were serious about taking the course. The most discussed solution was teacher recommendations. Teacher recommendations could be a viable solution in the state of North Carolina, as the course is offered as an elective and is completely optional for students, and therefore does not cause any major concerns for accessibility. The major concern with teacher recommendations is that teachers can sometimes not take the recommendations seriously, or not do them at all. A possible workaround for this is to have one-on-one conversations with colleagues in the social studies department and work together to pinpoint students who would make good candidates for the course. Another solution that was raised was to have current students talk to potential students directly in history classes.

As mentioned earlier in this section, race is one of the most important demographics to consider for the success of the course and student recruitment. Naturally, we want more students of color, specifically Black students to take this course, as the course was meant to bridge the gap of underrepresented Black students in AP classes (Garcia, 2023). Upon further discussion with the group, it was decided that the most comprehensive way to address race would be through the lens of critical race consciousness. Critical race consciousness can be defined as “a critical understanding of

the asymmetrical power relationships that exist between Blacks and Whites in America” (Carter, 2008). For Black students, possessing a critical race consciousness allows them to understand that the education system creates and enforces barriers to their life outcomes, as members of a racial caste system. This further allows them to adapt and overcome said system. A student’s consciousness is directly correlated with favorable membership within a racial group, as it allows them to process instances of discrimination that can and will occur(Carter, 2008). Critical race consciousness is important to student recruitment and success in the course, as it enables them to connect with the content, leading to better retention of skills and information, much in the same way White students can make connections in United States history courses. Being able to determine a student’s level of critical race consciousness can help in determining their candidacy for the course. It should be noted that critical race consciousness is someone’s understanding of the anti-Black racial caste system that exists in the United States and does not need to be directly tied to them being Black. Therefore, it can be used as a solid metric for this study, within the reasonable parameters of the hypodescent rule, which guides racial caste practices in the United States today.

The different levels of critical race consciousness are a governing factor that affect student familiarity, comfortability, and outcomes in the course (Carter, 2008). The first level of critical race consciousness is *emerging*. Students who exhibit emerging levels of critical race consciousness possess a below-basic understanding of racism and may view it as non-dimensional relic of the past. Students who typically exhibit emerging levels of

critical race consciousness include White students who have normalized whiteness as a default and students of color who don't have as many opportunities to socialize with other students and/or people of their racial group. In both cases, these students lack the critical part of race consciousness.

The second level of critical race consciousness is *developing*. Students who encapsulate developing levels of critical race consciousness understand that racism is still alive and well today, and can recognize specific experiences as racist, even if they lack the vocabulary to describe why and can only describe the feeling. These students can include White students who have close relationships with people outside their racial group, students who have frequent conversations at home about race and racism, and students of color who have been socialized within their racial group through their peers and family members. These students have a solid understanding of what it's like to be a part of their identity group and/or live within a racial caste system.

The third level of critical race consciousness is *sophisticated*. This level is difficult for teenagers to reach because it requires the ability to place the self within the broader context of historical processes. It requires strong ties to a racial group, a deep understanding of familial dynamics within their racial group, and a robust sense of their own individual identity. For example, students at this level would be able to relate their personal family dynamics to the Great Migration or connect specific cultural practices to African traditions and/or slavery, or even find a link between their involvement in a

community institution (like a church or fraternal organization) and a prevalent social dynamic they experience. Sophisticated critical race consciousness would require students to connect the historical and sociological contexts with their present condition. Very few students can do this at the high school level.

Regardless of the level of critical race consciousness, when it comes to the classroom and this course specifically, one essential way to build critical race consciousness for all students is through effective discussion. This is another reason why it is instrumental for AP African American Studies instruction to be discussion based (see “Teacher Demographics and Education” section).

## State Legislation and Standards

Having a comprehensive understanding of state standards and local legislation can serve as guardrails to understand what teachers can and cannot do in their classrooms. While some states aim to completely ban the instruction of the racial history of the United States, others are finding ways to ingrain such curricula throughout their K12 systems. North Carolina finds itself in an interesting cross section of this spectrum. It is well-known that the North Carolina state senate has passed legislation attempting to ban conversations of racism, sexism, and homophobia in classrooms, through their Anti-CRT law (*GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA SESSION 202*, 2021). What is North Carolina’s best kept secret for decades now is that it was one of the only states that had

approved state standards for high school history courses for many of the state's marginalized communities, including African American Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Latino American Studies. Exactly when or how the state managed to get these history courses approved remains a mystery. The standards are not openly housed on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's (NCDPI) website, nor do they offer professional development training for the teachers of these courses. Despite this, school districts across the state actively and openly teach African American history to their high school students. For the purposes of this study, participant researchers were asked to examine House Bill 234 and the NCDPI standards for standard level African American Studies to assess what measures need to be taken to protect teachers, students, and the course at both the standard and AP levels.

Upon examination of the legislation, participant researchers noted that the state standards for African American Studies were centered on the history more than anything. Teachers noted that, because of this, the standards serve as a solid base for the AP curriculum. They ultimately suggested that North Carolina teachers could enforce a prerequisite of standard level African American Studies, as this may help reinforce learning for students. However, analyzing the standards themselves reveals a hegemonic understanding of Black history that's individualistic and United States centered. The actual study of Black history is communal; movements, groups, and organizations (Alridge et al., 2023; Banks, 1972; Carter, 2008; King, 2014, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mueller & Beneke, 2023; Watkins, 1993). Participant researchers made the distinction between the

state standards and the CED by hypothesizing that White lawmakers created the state standards, while the CED was cultivated in collaboration with African American Studies scholars and educators (*AP<sup>®</sup> African American Studies Course and Exam Description*, 2023); and used King's work to support their hypothesis. In all, they concluded that the state standards relied heavily on the hegemonic United States history curriculum, which was already established in the state of North Carolina.

Participant researchers were then asked who is meant to materially benefit because of these laws and curricula; that is, if the North Carolina state standards for African American Studies are in fact a mirror of the United States history standards, who benefits from that? The answer was simple: White lawmakers in the state senate and any other stakeholders who have a vested interest in upholding a hegemonic viewpoint of history. Similarly, when one examines the Anti-CRT law, the law is still upholding the hegemony in way that misses the mark in education. The group pointed out that no reputable teacher is teaching the things that are assumed in the law. For example, Section 1, Subsection c, Part 2 of the law states that public school units should not promote that “An individual, solely by virtue of his or her race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive.” Before this, the law defined “promote” in Section 1, Subsection b as “compelling students, teachers, administrators, or other school employees to affirm or profess belief in the concepts described.” Participant researchers took issue with this for a multitude of reasons, the first being that teachers in the current classroom culture lack the power or ability to compel students to do much of anything. Participant researchers also

argued that the reality of following curricula or standards, whether they are sanctioned by the state or another non-government entity, means they do not have the time or resources to teach, or otherwise compel, students to follow these beliefs. If anything, the concepts that are outlined in the bill are not covered in the classroom or any other educational materials, but instead are what children are exposed to on a daily basis at home, by peers, or by mass media. It is with the experience and expertise of the participant researchers that I can plainly state that the Anti-CRT law is a deviation from the tradition of credible curriculum, instruction, and educational policy which further displays a clear disconnect between hegemonic goals of maintaining white supremacy and keeping its K12 student populace eligible and competitive for college.

## Conclusion

This research report is the amalgamation of analysis from myself, as the principal investigator and the other participant researchers involved in the study. Throughout the six weeks, something that was mentioned multiple times, across multiple sessions, that participant researchers have anxiety around doing well by their students and hoping that next year will be better. They would even be willing to forgo payment if it meant they could work together to plan for next school year. This study proved two things: one, that this type of work is needed in education and this study should be replicated in different school districts across the nation; two, that teachers are scholars. This study is proof that society need to trust that our teachers are asking the hard questions and doing the work.

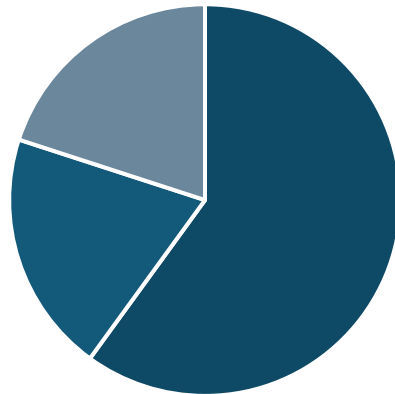
District and state legislatures need to find ways to support their teachers in perfecting their craft and treating them like the professionals they are. There is much to gain from teachers' insights provided in this study. In reflecting on the future of this subject of study, there are two takeaways: 1) the use of academic sources for teachers' development of practice and pedagogy, highlights an underutilized link between the academy and K12 education; 2) providing a collaborative space for all teachers to learn from each other suggests an opportunity to reimagine professional development for teachers at all levels. Using the PAR framework and working *with* teachers as opposed to taking an objective and observatory stance has allowed me to be moved by the stories and their experiences presented by the participant researchers.



# Appendix

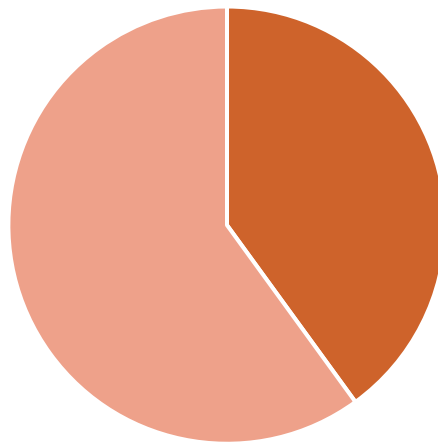
## Appendix 1: Demographic Survey Questions and Results

What race do you identify as (this information will be used in the analysis of reflection data collected and will not be used by or released to your employer)



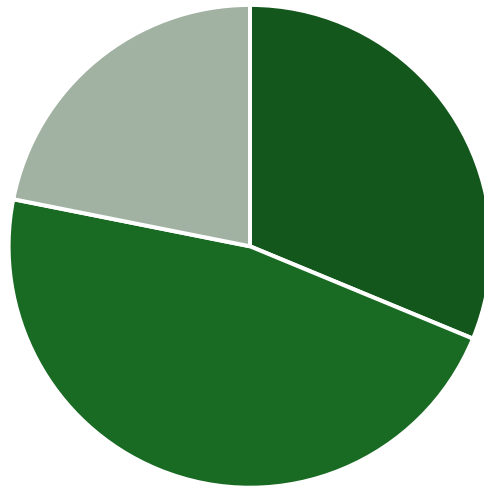
■ Black/African American ■ White ■ Other ■

Did you enter public education through the traditional university track, or through lateral entry?



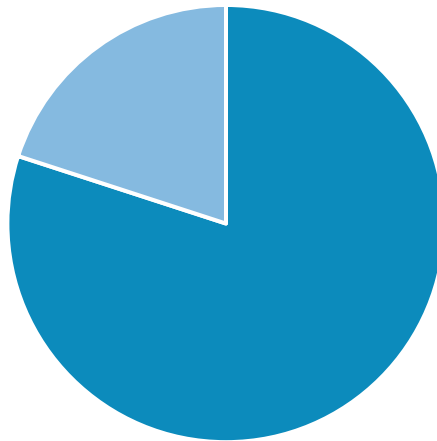
■ Traditional University Track ■ Lateral Entry

How many years have you taught in public education?



■ 5-9 years ■ 10-20 years ■ Over 20 years

How many years have you taught a version of African American Studies?



■ 1-5 years ■ 6-10 years

Responses to the following questions were omitted to protect the confidentiality of participant researchers. The questions should still be included in the demographic survey to tailor academic sources to specific group of participant researchers.

- Prior to this course, did you implement Black history curriculum into your content? If so, please explain how. If not, please explain why.
- Why did you join this study
- Does your background/experiences inform what and how you teach? Please explain.

## Appendix 2: Reading Data

- Week One: Introduction to Study
  - a. Banks, J. A. (1972). Teaching Black Studies for Social Change. *Journal of Afro-American Issues*.
  - b. Watkins, W. H. (1993). Black Curriculum Orientations: A Preliminary Inquiry. *Harvard Law Review*, 63(3), 321–338.
  - c. MacDonald, C. (2012). UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OPTION. *The Canadian Journal of Action Research*, 13(2), 34–50.  
<https://doi.org/10.33524/cjar.v13i2.37>
- Week 2: Teacher Education and Demographics
  - a. King, L. J. (2019). Interpreting Black History: Toward a Black History Framework for Teacher Education. *Urban Education*, 54(3), 368–396.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085918756716>
  - b. Griffin, A., & Tackie. (2016). *Through Our Eyes: Perspectives and Reflections From Black Teachers*. The Education Trust.

- c. Matias, C. E. (2013). *Check Yo’Self Before You Wreck Yo’Self and Our Kids: Counterstories from Culturally Responsive White Teachers? . . . To Culturally Responsive White Teachers!* 3(2).
  
- Week 3: Textbook Alignment
  - a. Joyce, S. J. A., & Abdou, E. D. (2023). Dismantling Curricular Statues: Critically Examining Anti-Black Racism in Representations of Ancient Africa in Canadian Textbooks. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue Canadienne de l’éducation*. <https://doi.org/10.53967/cje-rce.5793>
  
  - b. University of British Columbia, Canada, Clark, P., Llewellyn, K., University of Waterloo, Canada, Capó García, R., University of British Columbia, Canada, & Clifford, S. (2024). Context matters in history textbook studies: A call to address the socio-political landscape of textbook production. *Historical Encounters: A Journal of Historical Consciousness, Historical Cultures, and History Education*, 11(1), 136–150. <https://doi.org/10.52289/hej11.109>
  
- Week 5: Student Demographics
  - a. Carter, D. J. (2008). Cultivating a Critical Race Consciousness for African American School Success. *Educational Foundations*.
  
  - b. Howard, T. C., & Reynolds, R. (n.d.). *Examining Parent Involvement in Reversing the Underachievement of African American Students in Middle-Class Schools*.
  
- Week 6: State Standards and Legislation
  - a. Mueller, C. O., & Beneke, M. R. (2023). Whiteness and Ability: Discourses in Disability History Curriculum Legislation. *Educational Policy*, 37(7), 1823–1856. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08959048221127986>
  
  - b. Hues, H. (2011). “Mandela, the Terrorist:” Intended and Hidden Curriculum in South Africa. *Journal of Education Media, Memory, and Society*, 3(2), 74–95. <https://doi.org/doi:10.3167/jemms.2011.030205>

## Appendix 3: Journal Entry Template

Title of Article:

Does this apply specifically to the AP African American Studies CED?	Yes    No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:	
Does this apply to the state of North Carolina?	Yes    No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:	
Does this apply to Guilford County Schools?	Yes    No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:	
Does this apply to your classroom?	Yes    No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:	

Title of Article:

Does this apply specifically to the AP African American Studies CED?	Yes	No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:		
Does this apply to the state of North Carolina?	Yes	No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:		
Does this apply to Guilford County Schools?	Yes	No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:		
Does this apply to your classroom?	Yes	No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:		

Title of Article:

Does this apply specifically to the AP African American Studies CED?	Yes	No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:		
Does this apply to the state of North Carolina?	Yes	No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:		
Does this apply to Guilford County Schools?	Yes	No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:		
Does this apply to your classroom?	Yes	No
Please provide rationale in the space provided:		

## Appendix 4: Recommendations for Observed School District

- To address the varied experiences of teachers coming from the APSI each year, it is our recommendation that teachers meet in the beginning of the year to debrief and prepare for the year. This will allow new teachers to connect with experienced teachers of the course and ask more individual questions. Doing this also provides leadership opportunities to teachers who recently attended their renewal APSI session (to be completed every five years) or come back from exam reading to present their findings to teachers. These debriefs and presentations can be conducted through the already operational AP PLC structure, or through the mandatory Social Studies professional development sessions at the start of the new year.
- To address the varied demographics and experience levels of the teachers, it is our recommendation that the district maintain the AP PLC structure in order to ensure that teachers have opportunities to connect with one other and share insight that is used to inform instructional practices in the classroom.
- The district should continue to use *Freedom on My Mind* throughout the district, for their teacher resources and online platform. This textbook is the most comparable to the AMSCO textbook and complementary online platform that is typically offered for AP social studies courses. Individual school sites and/or teachers can decide to supplement instruction using the *From Slavery to Freedom* textbook, as this resource is the most aligned with the essential knowledge standards outlined in the CED.

- Participant researchers concluded that the school district’s pacing and planning needs to include a list of recommended sources to go over in class. The specific planning guide for this course would deviate from the district's typical scope and sequence for its other course offerings at the high school level, due in part to the nature of the requirements.
- Teachers should also use the critical race consciousness model to assess immigrant and first generation immigrant students, especially those who are of African descent. The historical and sociological context of how these students fit into the public school system is beyond the scope of this study. It is important to note however, that this is a growing demographic of students within the district, and more research will be needed to make an informed recommendation. In the meantime, it is recommended that teachers work with the student demographics within their individual school site to determine the best method for student recruitment and candidacy. Teachers can always consult the AP PLC if they need assistance in doing so.
- Due to the current political climate, participant researchers could not finalize a recommendation for the school district because of the unpredictable landscape we currently find ourselves in. The only advice the group could give is to have apparatuses and structures in place to check in with teachers on a frequent basis as they navigate federal mandates in addition to state statutes and district policies.

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