Moving Beyond the Margins: A Phenomenological Study of Elementary Social Studies Teachers Incorporating Historically Marginalized Perspectives

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Moving Beyond the Margins: A Phenomenological Study of Elementary Social Studies Teachers Incorporating Historically Marginalized Perspectives

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Schools, and subsequently teachers, have found themselves at the center of the nation’s most recent “culture war.” Vitriol over the honest teaching of social studies has been discussed in school board races, state legislatures, national media conversations, and presidential politics. Despite book bans, state laws, political rhetoric, pushback from families, inconsistent district support, and inadequate resources, there are teachers moving beyond these barriers to include multiple perspectives in their elementary social studies classrooms.

This study sought to understand the essence of what it means to be an elementary social studies teacher attempting to teach inclusive social studies and incorporate perspectives beyond the master narrative in predominantly white, suburban schools. Much of the literature focuses on middle or high school teachers expanding their curriculum. In contrast, this paper details the experiences of elementary teachers, the unique barriers they face, and their work to overcome those barriers to present their students with a rich, full telling of history.

Through purposeful and criterion sampling, I recruited and interviewed six educators working in four predominantly white, suburban, high-performing school districts in two states, who attempt to incorporate marginalized perspectives into the elementary social studies curriculum. All semi-structured interviews occurred individually, virtually, using the Zoom platform. Interview protocols were used consistently in each interview; however, follow-up
questions were asked for clarity on a case-by-case basis to allow for a deeper understanding of each educator’s experience.

The research approach was grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology, which captures the essence of the participants’ experience and allows the researcher to analyze, interpret, and make meaning of those experiences without suspension of their own personal beliefs or experiences.

A review of the findings demonstrate that district support is paramount to sustaining change for teachers moving towards more inclusive social studies classrooms; racial and historical literacy professional development is critical; and updated curriculum resources that already incorporate more perspectives and support the development of teachers’ background knowledge are necessary.
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Preface

“All my life, You have been faithful, and all my life, You have been so, so good. With every breath that I am able, I will sing of the goodness of God.” – “Goodness of God” by Cece Winans. I have sung this song more times than I can count over the last year, and all I can say is thank you.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Broader Problem Area

Elementary social studies allows children to see the world in their classrooms, make meaning, and develop belief systems about who we are as a nation. It has the power to develop curious, critical thinkers who can think of a world beyond the borders of their community, state, or nation and instead view ideas and their impact globally. In their 2023 statement regarding the potential of social studies, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) wrote,

Powerful and rigorous social studies teaching that is rooted in standards, supported by professional development that reflects best practices, and utilizes high-quality educational materials is crucial to realizing the NCSS vision: A world in which all students are educated and inspired for lifelong inquiry and informed civic action.

Unfortunately, beyond organizational statements and philosophical ideas of what social studies instruction could be in elementary classrooms, the reality is a much bleaker set of circumstances.

1.1.1 Marginalization of Elementary Social Studies

In elementary schools across the United States, social studies is an increasingly marginalized subject. Fitchett et al. (2014) suggest that a significant predictor of the number of minutes elementary teachers spent teaching social studies content was whether the state’s assessment structure included an elementary social studies test. States with testing had more
allotted minutes for social studies instruction than those without, according to data from the Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), and only 11 states test social studies content at the elementary level. Data from the most recent National Assessment of Educational Process (NAEP) administration in 2022 demonstrate that only 22% of eighth graders are at or above NAEP proficiency in civics and just 13% of eighth graders score at or above proficiency (The Nation's Report Card, n.d.). That more than 75% of eighth graders across the country are unable to demonstrate proficient knowledge or understanding in the subject areas of civics, and U.S. history is an alarming problem, and one of our own making.

1.1.2 Marginalization in Elementary Social Studies

In classrooms that teach social studies, many teachers do not teach accurate historical content that includes the perspectives of those who have been historically marginalized and excluded. This “discourse of invisibility” (Ladson-Billings, 2003) leaves many children with an inaccurate, inadequate, or incomplete understanding of our country and an inability to think critically about historical and current contexts and how to use that knowledge to solve future societal problems. In addition to having a lack of awareness of historical and current contexts, by limiting social studies instruction to canned, hero-style narratives that tell decontextualized stories of exceptional people, we not only glorify limited moments in history but limited people as well.

There are several key issues regarding representation in the social studies curriculum, but a primary concern is that stories are often told from a single perspective. In a 1994 interview with The Paris Review, author Chinua Achebe said of the danger of telling a single story:
There is that great proverb—that until the lions have their own historians, the history of
the hunt will always glorify the hunter. Once I realized that . . . I had to be that historian.
It's not one man's job. It's not one person's job. But it is something we have to do, so that
the story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail—the bravery, even, of the
lions. (Brooks, 1994, para. 11)

1.1.2.1 The Master Narrative

In her 1990 interview with Bill Moyers, Dr. Toni Morrison describes the master narrative
as an “ideological script that is being imposed by the people in authority on everybody else.” The
master narrative is often also referred to as the dominant narrative. Ehrenworth et al. (2021)
write that the dominant narrative “gives an account of events that shows a dominant group’s
perspective, often justifying that group’s dominance. It does not reflect the perspective of those
who are not in power.” Social studies curricula are full of master narratives that distort,
stereotype, and/or exclude the perspectives of historically marginalized groups up to and through
introductory college courses (Brandle, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Black Americans, Latinx
Americans, Asian Americans, American Indians, LGBTQ+ persons, and women are all groups
that can find themselves at the periphery of the social studies curriculum if they are included at
all (Bolgatz, 2005; Brandle, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Vasquez Helig et al., 2012).

The effects of curricula that only portray the victimization of marginalized groups or
exclude and/or misrepresent their historical contributions perpetuate “a deficit-based narrative,”
furthering their subjugation (National Council for the Social Studies, 2019). By limiting whose
stories are told and heroized in social studies classes, we can foster blind patriotism in children
who then have the inability to question the ideology that has been presented. Sociologist Michael
Merry (2009) argues that “loyal patriotism may result in a myopic understanding of history, an
unhealthy attitude of superiority relative to other cultures, and a coerced sense of attachment to one's homeland” (p. 378). Further, we strip already marginalized groups of their agency and moments of power throughout history by sterilizing the stories of activists like Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to limit contextual understanding of collective action and make them more palatable for the dominant narrative (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Additionally, students can become disengaged and uninterested in social studies (Wade, 2002) and experience negative feelings as a result of having their identities mis- or unrepresented (Choi et al., 2011).

1.2 National Social-Political Context

In May 2020, amid COVID-19 lockdowns, the world witnessed the murder of George Floyd at the hands of officers of the Minneapolis Police Department. At the same time, news of Breonna Taylor’s March 2020 murder in Louisville, KY, by police began to spread. As a response, the United States experienced what some at the time called a “racial reckoning.” Corporations began issuing statements of solidarity and speaking out against systemic racism. Institutions began hiring DEI executives to examine their practices. Black Lives Matter protests rose up all over the country. By June 2020, individuals began questioning their own lack of knowledge about racial injustice, books like So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo, How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi, and White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo were best-sellers (The New York Times, 2020), and monuments to the confederacy were being removed.

In her book, White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide, Carol Anderson (2017) painstakingly details moments throughout the history of progress and advancement for Black Americans that were met with white rage, resentment, and, eventually, a political and
legislative response that would eliminate or invalidate those gains. This moment in history is no different. Any “racial reckoning” that occurred during the summer of 2020 was followed by a white rage that impeded and reversed social progress across marginalized groups. In 2020, calls to teach an accurate telling of our country’s history were met with a calculated, disingenuous campaign against Critical Race Theory (CRT) fueled by outrage from conservatives (Waxman, 2021). This backlash led 36 states to attempt to pass legislation restricting education on topics like race, bias, and/or gender identity (Stout & Wilburn, 2021).

On January 6, 2021, supporters of then-President Donald Trump led a violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol building in hopes of disrupting the 2020 election certification and demanding that Donald Trump be declared the winner (Kuznia, 2021). “Parental rights” far-right groups like Moms for Liberty and Parents Defending America were founded. They began the push to ban books, question curricula, control topics for classroom discussions, and take over school boards around the country (Mathis, 2023). In June 2022, the Supreme Court overturned the decision of Roe v. Wade, making access to reproductive healthcare more difficult for women and their providers. During the 2022-2023 school year, book bans removed 1,557 titles from school libraries (Chavez, 2023), and in June 2023, the Supreme Court struck down affirmative action (by race) in college admissions. While some parts of this backlash are not directed toward the classroom, they all indirectly affect the climate in which social studies teachers prepare their units of study.

Education, at its core, is a political act (Freire & Ramos, 1970). This national debate about whose stories are told in America’s history and social studies classrooms is not new; it is the latest attack in a history of resistance to inclusive curricula and schools (Waxman, 2021). What this debate fails to acknowledge is that “all instruction is culturally responsive. The
question is: to which culture is it currently oriented?” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 198). By not adequately representing the perspectives of all the groups that helped shape America and, thus, American history, we narrow the idea of what our country was and what it can be. As Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman recited so beautifully during the 2021 inauguration, just two weeks after the January 6th insurrection, “It’s because being American is more than a pride we inherit. It’s the past we step into and how we repair it. We’ve seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it” (lines 52–54).

1.3 Organizational Context

It is within this larger national context of political attack on honest social studies instruction, and continued marginalization of the content area, that I write this paper as a Black woman whose practice is currently centered on my role as an elementary school principal and elementary social studies coordinator in a predominantly white, affluent, high-performing school district with over 2,200 elementary-aged students and over 5,500 students across the district. At first glance, the accolades, awards, and test scores paint a picture of a high-functioning organization that serves all its students, staff, faculty, and stakeholders well. What I have learned is that while this is true for most, it is certainly not the case for all, and it seems that the perpetuation of the belief in meritocracy serves as the desired outcome.

Politically, the district's municipality is reliably a Democratic, suburban stronghold. Reviewing federal election data from the municipality over the last six years demonstrates Democratic candidates consistently receive double the votes of the Republican candidates. The elementary grade levels are more racially and ethnically diverse than our secondary levels.
1.3.1 Commitment to DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Efforts

During the 2019-2020 school year, the school board commissioned a task force to make recommendations to the district on the best ways to move forward and assist with creating a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) plan. The task force spent the 2020-2021 school year meeting remotely each month, reviewing many data points (e.g., academic, discipline, anecdotal), and ultimately developed five goals with over 30 detailed action steps. One of the goals was centered on developing a culturally responsive curriculum and approach to instruction. The first action step under this goal was that the district should implement curricula representative of diverse persons' identities, histories, narratives, and perspectives inside and outside the district. As a result of the work of a DEI task force convened at the request of the school board, the district also adopted the following equity statement:

The . . . School District is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and welcoming school environment that recognizes and celebrates the diverse identities of all members of our school community, including students, their families, faculty, and staff. All students, regardless of background, identity, or ability, will be supported to reach their full potential and pursue their unique talents. The district will provide resources in a just and equitable manner and remove barriers to allow students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

As it stands currently, there has been a leadership shift with new district-level administrators. There is a DEI task force re-engaging with the recommendations of the original task force.
1.3.2 Ongoing Litigation

Currently, the school district is battling a lawsuit from a family about the reading of a children’s book that featured a transgender character (Wise & Wadas, 2022). The lawsuit initially had three families as the complainants and alleges that the school district violated their “civil and constitutional rights ‘to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control.’” The school board and district have moved forward with the DEI initiative despite the lawsuit and continue to advocate for educators in the district to share books that reflect a range of communities.

1.3.3 “Kasserian Ingera” . . . And How Are the Children?

When reviewing PSSA Math data from the last five years, there is a gap in the performance of white and Black students by almost 40 points, and students with IEPs (i.e., individualized educational plans for students receiving special education services) outperform Black students on the same state assessment. There is a disproportionate underrepresentation of Black students in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and gifted identification. At the same time, there is a disproportionate overrepresentation of Black students identified for special education and referred for office discipline.

In addition to the academic data, when reviewing the district’s 2023 publicly released Student Outcomes Report, the Renaissance Fundamentals PASS data, a universal social-emotional screener, showed that even the youngest Black children in the district do not feel a sense of belonging, scoring in the low-moderate range for feelings about school.
Students in our high school’s Black Student Union have shared personal experiences that include repeated microaggressions, a lack of faculty preparedness to address racial issues as they arise throughout the school day or in texts that they read, a desire to go beyond the oppression of Black Americans in history class, and a general sense that others believe the Black students do not belong. One student even said, “they know I don’t belong here.” Anecdotally, the district is not faring well for Black employees or students who are members of other marginalized communities. There are themes of a lack of belonging, the pressures of perfectionism, and a struggle to determine which concerns are worth externalizing to those in positions of power.

1.3.4 Toward Educational Equity

The National Equity Project partly defines educational equity as “removing the predictability of success or failures that currently correlates with any social or cultural factor,” including racial and economic (National Equity Project, 2024). The disparities between the academic performance of Black students and their counterparts, coupled with the social and emotional learning (SEL) and anecdotal data, highlight that even in an award-winning suburban school, conditions that create racial disparities exist and remain unchallenged. Dr. Hinnant-Crawford et al. (2023) highlight that “what we are viewing is not impact of race but a measure of the impact of racism. When race predicts variation of outcomes or processes in a system . . . read that as evidence of racism” (p. 116). After four years, most of the DEI task force recommendations remain unstarted, just as many DEI initiatives birthed at the same time have flatlined around the country. My colleague, Ms. Michelle King, often refers to hollow commitments or programs that allow organizations to say they “did” equity work as “check-quity” (personal communication, September 14, 2023). Ahmed (2012) describes this tick-box
approach as “when institutions can ‘show’ that they are following procedures but are not really ‘behind’ them” (p. 113).

The district will begin the process of updating and implementing a new elementary social studies curriculum within the next three years. This presents an opportunity to not only update the curriculum and curricular resources but also to frame a philosophy and set of beliefs about what elementary social studies instruction should be across the district. A chance to shift the hegemony and perceptions of internalized dominance and oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) that can be developed in elementary classrooms. By developing a deeper understanding of this problem of practice, I will be better positioned to develop structures and programming that support social studies classrooms and curricula that accurately reflect the stories and contributions of all Americans, allowing all our elementary students to develop a curiosity and an understanding of not just the world around them but the people who make up that world. This shift in instruction will represent one small but significant contribution to a sustained movement toward educational equity within the district. While there are larger, more impactful levers for change that fall outside the scope of my formal leadership responsibilities, this change would help create a district where many perspectives are honored—in both classrooms and conference rooms—through whose stories we tell, whose voices we amplify, and whose experiences we validate. The dynamics of power would shift as we honor and build with and at the margins so that the strategies and goals of the organization would center those most marginalized and, in turn, benefit all students and employees, and make “DEI work” “part of how the institution thinks and feels” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 112).
1.4 Guiding Questions

For this curriculum shift to be successful, teachers will need support. Similarly to the work of Agcaoili and Oshihara (2014), in my work with schools, I have recognized that teachers are limited by the constraints of the assigned curriculum, their own content knowledge, personal biases, or are fearful of political pressures and therefore tend not to deviate from the sanctioned curriculum because it feels safe. Following a district-wide professional development session led by Dr. Ali Michael in February 2022, teachers in this district were given a needs assessment for professional development concerning DEI issues. Through survey results, anecdotal data, and focus groups, the teachers expressed some of the following concerns: they fear backlash from the community, do not feel adequately prepared to tackle difficult conversations, and feel the content is too unknown to begin to address, particularly since it involves deviating from or supplementing the curriculum. To understand more deeply this problem in this place of practice, I used the following questions to guide my review of the literature:

1. What are current representation problems within the K-5 social studies curriculum?
2. What are identified as the best pedagogical practices for teaching social studies in grades K-5? More specifically, what practices are recommended for including perspectives of those who have been historically marginalized?
3. What are best practices in professional development for teachers who are attempting to incorporate the perspectives of those who have been historically marginalized within the scope and sequence of the current district's social studies curriculum?
4. What barriers do teachers identify when incorporating historically marginalized perspectives into the K-5 social studies curriculum?
2.0 Review of Relevant Scholarship and Professional Knowledge

2.1 Current Representation Problems within the K-5 Social Studies Curriculum

Absent or inaccurate representation of historically marginalized perspectives is a problem that scholars have been writing and researching about for almost 100 years (Anderson, 1988; Banks, 1969; Brandle, 2020; Brown & Brown, 2010; DuBois, 1935; Reddick, 1934). This problem of practice is a continuation of a longstanding problem that then and now is concerned about the (mis)representation of Black Americans in the K-12 curriculum, its effects on Black students particularly, the representation of other historically underrepresented groups in the school textbooks, and the portrayal of racism as the acts of extreme individuals from the past with no contemporary or systemic connection. Both textbooks and standards are rife with problems including:

- offering curricula that tell one-dimensional, hero narratives about individuals that reinforce the idea of American exceptionalism (Bolgatz, 2005; Brown & Brown, 2010; Journell, 2011);
- sharing partial, misrepresented, or false stories (Brown & Brown, 2010; Brandle, 2020) that avoid controversy and conflict (Brown & Brown, 2010; Crowley & Smith, 2015; Wade, 2002);
- presenting oppression of marginalized groups as historical rather than a contemporary, ongoing issue that has evolved (Brandle, 2020; Crowley & Smith, 2015);
often ignoring the political contributions of those groups outside of their fight against oppression (Brandle, 2020) as a means to demonstrate the way American democracy corrects itself (Journell, 2011); and

ultimately centering the (white) American perspective as the dominant, if not only, narrative presented in social studies classrooms (Brown & Brown, 2010; Choi et al., 2011; Vasquez Helig et al., 2012).

State standards can mandate learning goals that present a distorted view of racial progress which favors meritocracy and narratives of individual exceptionalism (Vasquez Helig et al., 2012) while limiting perspectives that do not fit that narrative (Journell, 2011). Race is presented as an essentialized construct (Brown & Brown, 2010) where groups of people are stereotyped and distilled into a caricature.

In addition to the aforementioned representation problems, the elementary social studies curriculum follows an antiquated, outdated model known as the “Expanding Horizons” model. This is currently the framework for elementary social studies curricula in many states across the country. It places the student in the center of the curriculum and over time spirals outward to focus on themes by grade level in an order similar to the following: family, community, state, regions of the United States, and American History. The major flaws in this model is that it perpetuates historical inaccuracies, lacks coherence, and wrongly assumes that knowledge develops in a gradual, organized process presenting limited information to children who are capable of learning more (Egan, 2005; Wade, 2002). Throughout the literature, there is consistent evidence that the curriculum in elementary social studies classrooms presents a narrow view of history (Bolgatz, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Wade, 2002) and while curricula,
textbooks, and other resources continue to fall short, there are some pedagogical practices that could support the inclusion of more voices in our social studies classrooms.

2.2 Best Pedagogical Practices for Incorporating Perspectives of Those who have been Historically Marginalized in the Elementary Social Studies Curriculum

How we teach social studies is almost as important as the content we teach. Social studies instruction has traditionally been lecture-driven and memorization-focused (Choi et al., 2011). The literature identified several pedagogical shifts that would aid teachers in incorporating multiple perspectives into their existing curriculum and increasing student engagement.

2.2.1 Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

By incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices and resources that use the strengths of students’ cultures and their lived experiences, teachers can improve educational outcomes and increase student engagement in the topics being taught (Brandle, 2020; Choi et al., 2011; Gay & Howard, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Ladson-Billings (2014) outlines the three domains of successful teachers that demonstrate culturally relevant pedagogy:

1. Academic Success – intellectual growth students experience as a result of classroom instruction and learning experiences.

2. Cultural Competence – the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture.
3. Sociopolitical Consciousness – the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems. (p. 75)

Dr. Ladson-Billings (2014) goes on to explain that culturally responsive educators should understand that culture is fluid and, as such, there is diversity within cultural experiences; no group is monolithic. Being a culturally responsive educator means going beyond the mere inclusion of multiple perspectives and giving students a deep understanding and appreciation for these perspectives.

2.2.2 Teaching Children to Think like Historians

Increasing children’s opportunity to develop and rehearse the skills of historians – such as document sourcing, contextualizing documents, and “reading the silences” (i.e., teaching students to ask questions of documents and sources to determine what has been left out) (Journell, 2011; Wineburg, 2010) – allows children to begin to learn to think historically and critically.

2.2.3 Planning for Counternarratives

Deliberately planning to disrupt dominant narratives by interweaving the stories and perspectives of those communities that have been historically excluded is an important skill for teachers to develop, as most textbooks and curricular resources are the source of inaccuracies (Demoiny, 2018; Journell, 2011). Researchers have found that inquiry-based pedagogical strategies allow teachers to incorporate more perspectives into the classroom through the
supplementation of curricular resources and textbooks. By incorporating primary sources and document-based questions (DBQs) that enhance units of study, teachers are able to offer counternarratives alongside the social studies curriculum while increasing student engagement (Demoiny, 2018).

Because textbooks present a limited telling of history, often rejecting narratives that would share the knowledge of those most marginalized, intentional pairing of children’s books with curricular resources provides an opportunity for counternarratives to be told alongside the dominant ones (Bolgatz, 2005; Demoiny & Ferraras-Stone, 2018). The deliberate use of high-quality, carefully chosen picture books in social studies classrooms can increase student engagement and add depth and details that deepen student understanding of a concept or time period, while expanding children’s ability to think critically about issues of power, inequities, and relationships (Demoiny & Ferraras-Stone, 2018). The illustrations in picture books provide a powerful and enhanced opportunity to make meaning and extend knowledge development. Picture books can also serve as a tool teachers can use to develop their own content knowledge further while providing a seemingly safe medium to begin discussions that would otherwise make them feel nervous or uncomfortable (Demoiny & Ferraras-Stone, 2018).

2.3 Barriers Teachers Encounter when Incorporating Historically Marginalized Perspectives into the K-5 Social Studies Curriculum

Teachers face both internal and external barriers when attempting to incorporate multiple perspectives into the social studies curriculum. These barriers influence what and how they teach in the social studies classroom.
2.3.1 Teachers’ Racial Identity

Because including historically excluded voices in elementary social studies classrooms inherently involves having difficult conversations about race and power, it is important for teachers to have self-awareness. In a year-long study with six teachers in an inquiry group, Dr. Ali Michael (2015) worked to help those teachers shift their practice by using a combination of theory and reflection. Michael (2015) found that in order to create classrooms where students and faculty could be their whole selves, teachers had to have a positive racial identity, which is to understand what it means to be white in a society that favors whiteness above other races. However, researchers find that often white teachers do not realize that they have a racial identity, do not often see themselves as racial, and tend to individualize or personalize issues of racism, failing to see race structurally (Crowley & Smith, 2015; Michael, 2015; Picower, 2009).

2.3.2 Teachers’ Personal Beliefs and Fears

Teachers' fears and personal beliefs impact their instructional decisions. In a study of a group of 27 pre-service teachers in a social studies methods course, the teachers expressed hesitation in discussing issues of race out of fear of creating controversy within their school community (Crowley & Smith, 2015) as well as creating emotional distress for their students. They consider the issues too sensitive, complex, or controversial for young learners (Bolgatz, 2005; Crowley & Smith, 2015) and believe that students are not able to manage the breadth of these difficult discussions or understand abstract ideas (Bolgatz, 2005).
2.3.3 Professional Readiness

Teachers lack the background and content knowledge to make the necessary curricular adjustments to include multiple perspectives (Bolgatz, 2005; Journell, 2011). They also lack the pedagogical knowledge to employ techniques that will develop students’ historical inquiry and thinking skills referenced above (Journell, 2011).

2.3.4 External Barriers

Teachers also face political resistance to including multiple perspectives in the social studies curriculum that has arisen in opposition as long as the subject has been broached (Brown & Brown, 2010; Swan et al., 2022; Vasquez Helig et al., 2012). Teachers also express concern about the personal and professional consequences of incorporating multiple perspectives in their classrooms with the passage of laws like Florida’s “Parental Rights in Education” bill, colloquially known as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill (Block, 2022).

There are several barriers for teachers when attempting to incorporate multiple perspectives, but the research has also identified key practices in professional development to help address those barriers.
In order to prepare teachers to shift both their instructional practice and curriculum, professional development experiences should further develop three key areas: (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogy, and (c) racial identity awareness. Facilitators of professional development can further develop teachers' content knowledge by presenting them with counternarratives using textbooks and practitioner articles (Demoiny, 2018). Additionally, by explicitly modeling effective teaching practices during professional development, facilitators are able to deliver necessary content knowledge to include multiple perspectives while demonstrating the pedagogical practices teachers need to be exposed to as well (Crowley & Smith, 2015; Demoiny, 2018). It is important to note that before teachers can begin to teach using culturally relevant methods, they must process the meaning of their own racial identities. Failure to do so may result in teaching practices that are harmful (Crowley & Smith, 2015). Because teachers’ hegemonic understandings are either unchallenged or have resisted challenge for much of their lives, it is important to facilitate ongoing professional development that will help dismantle their preconceived racial understandings (Picower, 2009). Professional development experiences should provide time for teachers to talk about and reflect on their own experiences and what they have learned while deepening their understanding of their own racial identities (Demoiny, 2018; Michael, 2015).

King and Chandler (2016) developed the Racial Pedagogical Content Knowledge (RPCK) framework to give teachers a starting place to begin to incorporate more racialized content in their classrooms and move beyond the “non-racist” framework in current social
studies curricula. The RPCK framework attempts to synthesize Shulman's (1986) idea about pedagogical content knowledge and Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) ideas about how race operates in education from a Critical Race Theory perspective. This allows for subject matter to be understood more completely, beyond the dominant narrative, by looking through a racial perspective as well. Figure 1 serves as a visual conceptualization of the way the RPCK framework works together to develop a deeper understanding of historical content (Barrow & Norman, 2022).

The visualization of the RPCK framework allows the components of the best practices identified in the literature come together in a practical way for professional development facilitators to support teachers’ understanding, growth, and comfort in incorporating marginalized perspectives.
2.4.1 Multicultural Education to Culturally Responsive Education

I observed parallel conversations in the literature in which the focus of research is centered on multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism in the 1990s to 2010s which shifted more towards creating more culturally relevant, anti-racist classrooms and spaces from the late 1990s to current. These critical pedagogies have evolved over time. As the shortcomings of practitioners who began to implement some of these theorized pedagogies in their places of practice became evident, the research began to shift. Ladson-Billings (1998) describes the failures of the implementation of multicultural education as being turned into surface-level celebrations rather than engaging students in critical thinking about the comparison between the United States’ stated ideals and its lived realities that researchers like Gay and Howard (2000) and Banks (1969) called for. Concerned the same may happen with Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education, she writes, “but, students of color, their families, and communities cannot afford the luxury of CRT scholars’ ruminations . . . where the ideas are laudable but the practice leaves much to be desired” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 22). Figure 2 distinguishes the differences between multicultural education, social justice education, and culturally responsive education. Hammond (2020) suggests that educators not use multicultural education and social justice education as a continuum but rather as scaffolds in supporting students in doing more rigorous, critical work.
Figure 2. Hammond’s (2020) Distinctions of Equity

The evolution of the literature demonstrates the frustration of researchers with the lackluster implementation of practitioners. Knowing this, my problem of practice has a renewed sense of urgency.

2.4.2 Conclusion

Reflecting on the review of literature, following the curriculum representation issues section, there was a divergence from the focus on increasing marginalized perspectives to racial
perspectives, which seems to leave behind the marginalization of women and LGBTQ+ persons. Singleton (2014) suggests that because issues of race are most salient in the United States, by first isolating race explicitly, we not only deepen educators' knowledge and skills about race but also about how to acknowledge and address other “diversity-related” issues as they arise. For my problem of practice, I will move forward with the knowledge that I will have to draw attention to non-racialized marginalized groups specifically.

2.5 Inquiry Questions

As the literature highlighted, much work must be done to support teachers in shifting their pedagogy to include multiple perspectives in the social studies curriculum. Despite the barriers outlined in the literature as well as highlighted in the local and national contexts, there are elementary teachers working to create social studies classrooms and curricula that include multiple perspectives, engaging pedagogy, and application of critical thinking skills. Heafner and Norwood (2018) build on the work of Grant and Gradewell (2009) and describe this type of teaching as ambitious teaching where teachers recognize the importance of social studies to better their students’ lives, hold higher expectations for their students than others, and create the necessary space for themselves and their students to engage with social studies content. (p. 188)

I seek to understand the essence of what it means to be an elementary social studies teacher shifting to more culturally responsive and inclusive social studies and incorporate perspectives beyond the master narrative in predominantly white, suburban schools. The following questions guided my scholarly inquiry:
1. How do external barriers (e.g., national/local politics, parents’ response) affect teachers' desire, ability, and commitment to move beyond the master narrative in elementary social studies classrooms?

2. How do internal barriers (e.g., personal beliefs, content knowledge) affect teachers' desire, ability, and commitment to move beyond the master narrative in elementary social studies classrooms?

3. What structures or systems (or lack of structures or systems) within school districts support or hinder the inclusion of multiple perspectives in the elementary social studies curriculum?

4. How do teachers incorporate multiple perspectives into the elementary social studies curriculum in spite of these barriers?

By interviewing teachers who are currently attempting to incorporate multiple perspectives into their social studies curriculum, I developed a deeper understanding of the barriers they face, as well as the ways in which they work around or in spite of those barriers, to develop units of study that are culturally affirming and responsive as well as more historically accurate in this current political context.
3.0 Methods

The best-suited methodology to capture the essence of educators’ experiences was through the use of hermeneutic phenomenology. Creswell (1998) outlines a phenomenological study as a study that “describes the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon (or topic or concept) for several individuals” (p. 236). Hermeneutic phenomenology, created by Martin Heidegger as an extension of Husserl’s phenomenology, captures the essence of the participants’ experience and allows the researcher to analyze, interpret, and make meaning of those experiences without suspension of their own personal beliefs or experiences (Kafle, 2011; Peoples, 2020). When compared to a case study or ethnography, phenomenology offers the researcher the opportunity to move beyond the constraints of a single experience (case study) while not solely focusing on a culture or cultural group (ethnography). Through hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, I gained further insight into the lived experience of elementary teachers creating social studies classrooms that teach inclusive histories.

3.1 Participants

Using my personal and professional network, I selected six educators working in four predominantly white, suburban, high-performing school districts in two states, who attempt to incorporate marginalized perspectives into their elementary social studies curriculum. Four of the educators were known to me, and two were recommended by colleagues. I focused on predominantly white school districts because they most closely mirror my place of practice and
offer a unique opportunity to research experiences where the teachers work to incorporate stories that differ from most of the children in their classrooms. Additionally, as the national pushback referenced earlier is centered in predominantly white, suburban districts where the proportion of children of color is low and the context of power is high, these social studies classrooms offer opportunities to have difficult but important truths brought forward in a space where they might not otherwise be given voice.

I initially recruited this educator sample using both criterion and snowball sampling. I began by using previously listed criteria to identify educators already known to me (Mertens, 2020). A flyer (see Appendix A) recruiting educators was also shared with the superintendents of twelve districts in the western Pennsylvania region and the social media account of the University of Pittsburgh’s Office of Child Development. Twelve elementary teachers expressed interest in participating in the study. All interested teachers were then sent a pre-interview survey (see Appendix B) to determine if they further met the criteria for participation in the study. From there, I used purposeful sampling (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022) to ensure that the participants selected were already engaging in the desired teaching practices and not just interested in beginning to shift their social studies instructional practice.

I received a grant from the Pittsburgh Education Leaders Academy (PELA) that allowed me to give each participant a $100 Visa gift card for their time engaged in the interviews. Due to the inherent politicization of this topic, I use pseudonyms in place of participant names and schools/districts of practice for their privacy and protection. Because participants can be unsure about what to expect in virtual research settings (James & Busher, 2009), in preparation for the interview, I briefly met with each participant to establish rapport, verify participation, review the consent script (see Appendix C), and answer any questions they had.
3.2 Data Collection

All semi-structured interviews occurred individually and virtually, using the Zoom platform. Interview protocols were used consistently in each interview; however, follow-up questions were asked for clarity on a case-by-case basis to allow for a deeper understanding of each educator’s experience. I considered conducting interviews in person; however, Zoom technology allowed for recording the interview while providing transcription. Transcripts were verified by the researcher as well as through a transcription service provided by Rev.com. All interviews lasted between 50 to 75 minutes and were conducted within a three-week time frame to ensure the social-political contexts remained relatively similar. I maintained a journal throughout the study to capture my notes and reflections as the researcher.

3.3 Data Analysis

Because hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with identifying the essence of a phenomenon as a whole, when analyzing data, using the hermeneutic cycle to capture the researcher’s process of understanding is crucial to ensuring that the component parts of a phenomenon return to inform one’s comprehension of the phenomenon itself (Peoples, 2020). Revision of understanding through journaling or other writing as new information is presented through reading and/or interpretation is an important part of data analysis in phenomenological research. Figure 3 serves as a visual representation of the hermeneutic cycle (Kafle, 2011).
In addition to using the hermeneutic cycle to capture the revisions in my own understanding, I followed the process outlined by Creswell (1998). Below are the specific steps of phenomenological data analysis described in the text:

1. The researcher first reads all descriptions in their entirety.
2. The author then extracts significant statements from each description.
3. These statements are formulated into meanings, and these meanings are clustered into themes.
4. The researcher integrates these themes into a narrative description. (p. 32)

All interview recordings were permanently deleted after data analysis.

3.3.1 Theoretical Framework

In addition to hermeneutic phenomenology, Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education was used as a secondary theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding the data during analysis. According to Esposito and Evans-Winners (2022), critical theorists seek to understand
the relationship between power and science. They enter the research process with the understanding that (a) society privileges members of the dominant group; (b) social identities such as race and gender are social constructions; and (c) social structures impede on people’s daily lives, thus influencing individuals’ and groups’ behaviors and opportunities (p. 63).

In their seminal work titled “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education,” Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) explore the connections between Dr. Derrick Bell’s Critical Race Theory in legal scholarship and how the reader should begin to use CRT as a way to understand the persistent racial inequities in education. Later, Ladson-Billings (1998) outlines the central tenets of CRT as follows:

1. Racism is baked into American society.

2. CRT employs storytelling to integrate experiential knowledge and add “contextual contours.”

3. It offers a critique of liberalism’s inability to bring about or advocate for broad, sweeping changes.

4. CRT argues that white people have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation.

These two theories work together to center the experiences of educators who are incorporating multiple perspectives while examining the ways in which whiteness is made normal through the social studies curriculum as well as an analytical tool to examine the “systematic omissions, distortions, and lies” (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p. 9) within the curriculum.
3.4 Researcher’s Reflexivity

Phenomenology is an interpretive process as much as it is a descriptive one in which the researcher makes meaning of the participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018); it is both essential and necessary that I acknowledge my role in the research. I am a Black woman who is a mom, educator, school leader, social studies coordinator, and advocate, and deeply committed to building systems that integrate practices that support, develop, and further equity and belonging in our schools. All of these layers inform my questions, understanding, interpretations, and research approach.

In her book, *Improvement Science in Education: A Primer*, Dr. Hinnant-Crawford (2020) describes a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle as a process of continuous improvement since the model is a cyclical process of developing a theory, testing said theory, and revising the theory as data is received. Initially, I planned to launch a PDSA Cycle that tested the change idea that when teachers are provided with professional development that deepens their racial literacy, content, and pedagogical knowledge, they will feel more equipped and confident in making enhancements and adaptations to our current social studies curriculum.

Due to district-level administrative retirements, the support I had originally received for this research study from the district's previous Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent ended with their departure. After proposing another study that was amended to adjust for the concerns stated in the original denial, I was eventually told that I would be unable to use the district in this study. I then contacted two districts with similar demographics but was denied at one district. While I received some support by offering a space and sharing the invitation to participate at another, I was also told they could not be seen as “endorsing” the study. In consultation with my committee, we felt it was best to shift the focus to identifying the barriers
educators face and the ways in which they overcome those barriers when attempting to reposition the elementary social studies curriculum from a master narrative to one that incorporates historically marginalized perspectives.
4.0 Results

This study aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of elementary social studies teachers evolving their practice to move beyond the dominant, master narratives inherited and include the perspectives of those historically marginalized.

4.1 Review of Methods

The results described in this chapter follow the data analysis of the six, semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom over a three-week period from late December 2023 through early January 2024. While I mostly followed the process outlined earlier in this paper based on the work by Creswell (1998), after the step of clustering significant statements into themes, to ensure validity and reliability, I cross-analyzed the themes by participant and then again by research question. Following that process, I began writing the themes into narrative descriptions. Listed below are a review of the research questions:

1. How do external barriers (e.g., national/local politics, parents’ response) affect teachers' desire, ability, and commitment to move beyond the master narrative in elementary social studies classrooms?

2. How do internal barriers (e.g., personal beliefs, content knowledge) affect teachers' desire, ability, and commitment to move beyond the master narrative in elementary social studies classrooms?
3. What structures or systems (or lack of structures or systems) within school districts support or hinder the inclusion of multiple perspectives in the elementary social studies curriculum?

4. How do teachers incorporate multiple perspectives into the elementary social studies curriculum in spite of these barriers?

### 4.2 Participant Demographics

Table 1 lists participant demographic data from pre-interview surveys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total years teaching</th>
<th>Total years teaching social studies</th>
<th>Grade level currently teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4th Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1st Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1st Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5th Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4th Grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the interviews, five out of six teachers either mentioned living in the district where they currently work, having attended the district where they currently work as a student, or both. This is significant because it demonstrates a heightened level of political and institutional knowledge within the community and district. The data are listed in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Currently lives in the district</th>
<th>Graduated from the district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1 Participant District Demographic Information

Table 3 represents district-level data for the racial/ethnic demographic of students enrolled in each participant’s district as well as the enrollment percentage of English Language Learners and students qualifying as economically disadvantaged for the 2022-2023 school year. Participant 1 teaches in the state of Maryland. All other participants in this study teach in Pennsylvania.
Table 3. District Demographics by Participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Percent enrollment by race and/or ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent enrollment by student group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native Asian Black Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander Hispanic White 2 or More Races English language learner Economically disadvantaged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>0.3 3.9 21.7 0.2 18.9 48.7 6.3 8.1 27.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>0.1 6.2 2.2 0 3.8 82.7 5.2 2.4 15.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>0.1 12.5 1.2 0 2.3 80.1 3.8 2.6 11.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>0.1 6.2 2.2 0 3.8 82.7 5.2 2.4 15.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>0.1 6.2 2.2 0 3.8 82.7 5.2 2.4 15.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>0.1 2.6 2.9 0 2.6 87 4.8 2.1 30.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data captured from: https://futurereadypa.org/ and https://www.usnews.com/education/k12
4.2.2 Participant District and Community Context

Given the impact of the political climate in which these teachers all engage in moving beyond the master narrative and incorporating multiple perspectives in the elementary social studies classroom, I included some political context for each participant to understand the phenomena of what it means to be an elementary social studies teacher in this current political climate.

4.2.2.1 Participant 1

Participant 1’s district has set an explicit vision for social studies instruction that includes incorporating multiple perspectives, rewriting their curriculum to include those perspectives, and giving teachers “backmatter” that includes resources that further develop their content knowledge on the subject matter they will be teaching. Because of her district’s level of commitment, Participant 1’s answers often did not demonstrate the barriers the other participants experienced. Participant 1 describes her community as “purple,” with the results of the 2020 Presidential election as Biden/Harris 55.8% to Trump/Pence 41.3%.

4.2.2.2 Participants 2, 4, and 5

Participants 2, 4, and 5, work in the same district. Their district demonstrated a more inconsistent approach to including multiple perspectives in the curriculum, an approach that Participant 2 called “lip service.” This approach includes giving all faculty an “inclusivity calendar” (see Appendix D) that includes important holidays, events, and special months, setting an equity statement, and having a district-level DEI committee. Their district has not purchased
updated elementary social studies resources in over 15 years and has not provided specific guidance to their teachers on incorporating the inclusivity calendar. Their community is more of a Democratic stronghold, with the results of the 2020 Presidential election being Biden/Harris 67% to Trump/Pence 31.6%.

4.2.2.3 Participants 3 and 6

Participants 3 and 6 work in two different districts. However, both of their districts have done little to increase the perspectives taught in elementary social studies classrooms. In fact, these participants both shared that there are ways in which their districts work against increasing the perspectives. Participant 3’s district has given all teachers a six-point checklist (see Appendix E) and a list of approved holidays they can incorporate (see Appendix F). Participant 6’s district social studies resource is from around 2005 (George W. Bush is the last listed President) and hosts an annual family multicultural night. They both describe their communities as conservative, reluctant to change, and wish their district was less responsive to family/community pushback. The 2020 Presidential election results for the communities that make up Participant 3’s district were Biden/Harris 52.8% and Trump/Pence 45.8%, and Participant 6’s district were Trump/Pence 55.2% to Biden/Harris 43.4%.

4.2.3 “All Politics is Local”

While the national political context is important, the saying “all politics is local” also rings true for the participants. Table 4 shows the leanings of their school boards that I have gathered from anecdotal data and personal knowledge.
### Table 4. School Board Political Leanings by Participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>School board political party affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Democratic leaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants 2, 4, and 5</td>
<td>All democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Majority republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Majority republican</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.3 Findings

In this section, I will discuss the narrative descriptions of essential themes outlined in Table 5, which describe the participant’s experiences derived from each interview's most common and significant statements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1 External barriers themes</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal district administrative support</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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4.3.1 Themes from Research Question One: External Barriers Participants Face When Incorporating Multiple Perspectives

4.3.1.1 Minimal District Administrative Support

Five out of six participants expressed minimal or inconsistent administrative support at the district level. All participants expressed that having district administrative support was essential to their ability to feel “backed up” in their journey to teach multiple perspectives. Participant 2 said the “lip service is certainly there [from the district], but like, it doesn't feel like there's any modicum of like, ‘here's what we expect.’” The importance of clear expectations of what the district expects from teachers came through for Participants 4 and 5 as well, with Participant 4 saying that “somebody from upper admin needs to just make a stance, like what it means to be a school that's advocating for inclusion and diversity.”

Conversely, as previously highlighted, Participant 1’s district has a directive with district-level resources to support her and other teachers. Having a directive and resources impacts her confidence: “I am just incredibly lucky to work in a county that supports teaching real history, right? Like, that's huge. I mean, that allows me then to take the approach I have is that I have this awesome curriculum, and administration I'm backed up by and feel supported by.”

4.3.1.2 Pushback from Families and Communities

Five out of six participants expressed concerns about pushback from families/community members as an external barrier to incorporating multiple perspectives. Participants 3 and 6 both desire more firm administrative support from the district when facing opposition from family and community members. Participant 6 shared, “I don't go super in-depth out of fear of community
Participant 3 feels “scared a lot of times in social studies that somebody is gonna take my words and say that I said something or did something.” Participants 2, 4, and 6 noted that the topics being covered in the media impact “what kind of microscope teachers are under” (Participant 4). Participant 6 said, “I feel like a lot of times we cave to what parents want and not what is best. And I feel like if we were a little bit more steadfast and being like, ‘this is going to make you uncomfortable’ . . . I think a lot of the times . . . if there's one complaint, we do whatever we need to fix it, whether or not it is necessarily the right thing to do.”

Community pushback, both conservative and liberal, can also lead to internal changes. Participant 3 shared that the six-point checklist used to decide the appropriateness of supplemental materials was created based on conservative parent pushback. Alternatively, pushback from liberal families in Participant 5’s district led to the end of a district-wide practice of Colonial Days as part of the 5th grade social studies curriculum.

In contrast, Participant 1 shared, “I'm just thankful that I'm not afraid to teach. I've gotten so much more comfortable this year because I know I'm supported . . . I feel like even if I were to get an angry email, I wouldn't be worried about that.”

4.3.1.3 Conflicts with Colleagues

Four out of six participants reported conflicts with colleagues as an external barrier to including multiple perspectives. The conflicts were, at times, direct confrontations. For example, Participant 3 questioned her second grade team’s resource for Christmas Around the World, pointing out that Kwanzaa was not equivalent to Christmas and did not derive in Africa.

At other times, the conflicts were more indirect, as Participant 1 reported: “I had some people with pretty biased opinions who said some things often in the lunchroom, and just like, I didn't feel comfortable around them. Like I knew we weren't gonna have a productive
conversation . . . they wanted to shy away from some of the lessons.”

Occasionally, these conflicts were situations observed by the participants. Participant 4 shared, “Last year, one of our team members had . . . a full-time aide in her room who is on the polar opposite side of where you and I actually stand. And so when we did like our holidays around the world, she adapted her lessons from myself and our other colleague as to not ruffle any feathers. So then I feel like, oh, what you and I talk about without her is really great, and then what you're doing didn't really match.”

4.3.2 Themes from Research Question Two: Internal Barriers Participants Face When Incorporating Multiple Perspectives

4.3.2.1 Evolution of their Racial/Historical Literacy

Six out of six participants discussed their own personal racial and historical literacy evolution as a barrier to incorporating multiple perspectives, and they reflected on the unlearning they had to grapple with. Four out of six described college or graduate school as a catalyst for this shift, and three out of six participants mentioned prominent issues of racial injustice, including the murders of Trayvon Martin and George Floyd, forcing them to reckon with previously held beliefs. For five participants, much of this unlearning occurred through reading books and learning independently. Three out of the six participants reported that people they follow on social media provide resources to further their thinking.

Vocabulary shifts in updated curricular resources prompted moments of learning for Participants 1 and 5: “In the blue book (previous curricular resource), it had said ‘Native Americans’ . . . then we switched to the red book that we currently have . . . they changed it to ‘American Indians’ in that book. To me, I grew up in a very rural, very, you know, lower-
middle-class area . . . that was one of the first times I was just recognizing different changes in identifying different groups.”

4.3.2.2 Inability to Make a Mistake

Feelings that they must be infallible arose as a theme for internal barriers to incorporating multiple perspectives for five participants. This theme connects to the community pushback theme because the teachers worry that if they make a mistake, they will receive pushback and consequences beyond the pushback. Participant 2 reports, “I have a reputation and, but for better or worse, and, you know, there are families who elect to not have me be their child's teacher.” Participants 3, 4, 5, and 6 expressed worries about sharing their personal opinions to avoid the perception of “being preachy” (Participant 5). Participants 4 and 5 also reported concerns over “getting it right.” Participant 4’s concerns stem from not feeling confident in her voice as a young, white teacher who does not have adequate resources: “I think another challenge is personally, like, feeling confident in what little old white 26-year-old me has to say . . . just feeling confident in what's important to share, what's accurate, where am I getting that information? Um, how do I know?” Participant 5’s concerns are rooted in a lack of confidence in the outside resources he is using to bring in multiple perspectives: “My biggest challenge is making sure that I don't screw it up, or that I don't misrepresent something. And that's one of the biggest conversations we have at [school]. Like, what is vetted?”
4.3.3 Themes from Research Question Three: District Structures and Systems Participants Identified as Supportive or Hindering

4.3.3.1 Need a Vision/Directive

Five out of six participants shared that their districts need a directive, vision, or mandate to move in the direction of including multiple perspectives. The desire for a mandate is connected to access to increased resources, support when families push back, and placement of accountability.

4.3.3.2 Resources

With a district-led change initiative, resources often follow so that faculty can best meet the objective or desired outcomes of the change. Participant 4 discussed having a “directive rather than an inclusion calendar, someone in leadership needs to say these are the expectations, just like the way we shifted math, you get further training, like this is the content you need . . . it is really interesting what the directive and what the district-sanctioned curriculum gives people.” When asked a follow-up question about what growth in her school district would look like, Participant 2 noted: “I think a curriculum, because, for better or worse, the teachers in my district are aligned [to the manuals] on their curriculums . . . the district needs to put some rubber to the road.”

4.3.3.3 Withstanding Pushback

When discussing pushback she has received from families about using the district-approved resource, *Scholastic News*, Participant 3 said, “it's really just an exercise in nonfiction reading . . . but there have been times where it has been suggested that it's too liberal. Again,
that's a curriculum material. So if you use that, you would be supported in your usage if someone pushed back, when they push back.”

4.3.3.4 District Level Accountability

A district directive begins to force teachers to make the shift to include multiple perspectives. Participant 2 shared that her district is “supportive if people are doing them, but they're not helping anyone who isn't already on that journey themselves. They're not pushing anyone or nudging even anyone to do anything differently than they have.”

In contrast, Participant 1 spoke about the confidence the directive in her district gives her as a teacher: “I also feel like I'm not afraid to get an angry email either 'cause I'm like, I can just be like, look, this is how it is in [school district] . . . you know, it's not like it's my choice . . . even though I obviously it aligns with my beliefs too . . . I'm clearly being backed up by, this isn't me just coming up with topics. Like yeah, this is backed up by the [district].”

4.3.3.5 Need Vetted Curricular Resources

Five out of six participants shared that their districts could support the inclusion of multiple perspectives by purchasing updated curricular resources for social studies. Participant 6 said, “I think the one thing that I wish we could improve upon is that I definitely think that an updated resource would definitely be helpful.” For those five participants, the most recent curriculum adoption was over 12 years ago. Searching for outside materials and resources is something five out of the six participants reported doing. Participant 5 shares the impact of not having curricular resources: “I wish the district would have the ability to help us make sure that we're using vetted or appropriate texts. Yes, I can go and look for stuff, and just through practice and trial and error. I feel like I'm pretty good at finding appropriate things, but I don't know for
sure. And, you know, I don't know every perspective.”

In contrast, Participant 1 transitioned positions from a private school to her public school district four years ago as a literacy teacher and moved into a social studies position two years ago. She explains the importance of having curricular resources: “It's harder when you yourself don't have, I had the basic facts right in my head just from what I know myself. But, I didn't have enough resources provided to me. That's been, I think, the big shift that I've seen these last two years is how many resources I have available to me to teach from this perspective, which is a perspective I'd want to teach in any way. Like it all aligns exactly with how I would hope my children are hearing history, you know? So, that's been a big shift. Just the amount of resources we have. And teacher resources too, not even just for students, but like teacher background videos and, websites we can go to for help. And some outside resources as well.”

Participant 2 shared the importance of the resource having support for teachers as well, comparing it to how science manuals include background knowledge support for teachers. She said, “the social studies curriculum I just think is kind of boring, curriculum's really old too, if you're gonna teach about, like in our science curriculum, right? We're gonna, we're teaching about air weather, there's a lot of front matter [background information] for teachers about these topics.”

4.3.3.6 Increased Teacher Training and Professional Development

Professional development and training emerged as a theme for creating supportive district structures and systems for all participants. There were subthemes of professional development around developing racial literacy as well as deepening content knowledge around including multiple perspectives.
4.3.3.7 Professional Development for Racial Literacy

Participant 2 shared: “I think baseline – teachers need some, like diversity training . . . people need to like take a beat to examine themselves.” Five out of six participants said they talk with their principal or building-level administrator about including multiple perspectives, running ideas past them for approval, or seeking guidance on family communication. Participant 4 shared the importance of including building-level administrators in these trainings: “PD [professional development] for administrators to make sure they aren’t stumbling over words when they have to have a difficult conversation, not all administrators are on level playing fields; administrators need to feel comfortable challenging and disrupting.” Participant 4 went on to discuss that training for faculty and administrators should be “immersive” and require active participation: “going to put the scenario in front of you and I want you to stumble your way through, and it's fine. Like these things, they're not natural to you right now, but if you don't have any practice with it, it's never going to get easier.”

4.3.3.8 Professional Development for Content Knowledge

Participant 2 expressed, “I feel like people are scared of these kinds of topics. So I feel like if there's going to be a curriculum that's going to be meaningfully addressing inclusive stuff that helping teachers feel okay with that and feel more knowledgeable . . . get more comfortable with the topics. Christmas around the world is not diversity, people will be like, ‘Oh, it's the Grinch, it isn't Christmas’ or ‘Oh, it's a reindeer, it isn't Christmas.’ I mean, they aren't talking about the birth of Christ, but those things are Christmas.” Participant 3 shared, “background knowledge is a really important thing; teachers have to be educated in order to understand and make those decisions.”

Participant 1 shared that her district gives her resources within the curriculum to help
develop a deeper understanding of content, “if I do need that background knowledge, it's my second year teaching it now. So I'm much more familiar, and it's a little bit easier to teach just from what I know. But, I do watch those videos they provide that give us that background knowledge.”

4.3.4 Themes from Research Question Four: Ways Participants Incorporate Multiple Perspectives

4.3.4.1 Curriculum as Framework

Five out of six participants reported using the district-provided curriculum as a framework or starting point for the planning process. They reported reviewing the resources they have been given and then searching for supplemental resources that incorporate other perspectives figuring out how to plug those in. The supplemental resources can be guest speakers (e.g., families), children’s books, artifacts, resources from Teachers Pay Teachers, or websites like Teaching Tolerance (now called Learning for Justice). Participant 4 described her planning process: “Thinking more broadly, with the curriculum that I've been given, just kind of planning, looking at what the goals of the lesson are. I look at the resources that the curriculum has provided. Then I look for opportunities to address those goals with additional resources.” Similarly, Participant 5 said of his planning process, “go unit by unit and try to every year add a little bit more, here is what the program has, how can I give more information to kids about the actual culture or group, how they lived, allow them to know as much about the groups as possible.”
4.3.4.2 Shift in Pedagogy

All teachers have made shifts in their pedagogical practices to incorporate multiple perspectives. All three primary teachers (Participants 2, 3, and 4) mentioned children’s literature and “open-ended discovery” (Participant 3) as a way to provide more perspectives in the classroom. In comparison, the intermediate teachers used discussion-based techniques (Participants 1, 5, and 6), primary source documents, and artifacts (Participants 1 and 5) to enhance their curriculum and add perspectives.

4.3.4.3 Upfront Engagement with Families

Four out of six teachers reported that they use upfront engagement with families as a strategy to include multiple perspectives and avoid pre-emptive pushback. Participant 2 shared that she tries to build good relationships with families from the beginning by inviting them in and displaying diverse picture books all over her room during family nights: “I try to have relationships with families so that they, you know, have an assumption of good intentions when it comes to what I'm doing. I try to invite families in . . . I also try to be as upfront as I can . . . for the meet and greet, I have covered my room with read-alouds. So I line them all along the chalkboard, and then on all the tables and the back surface and everything, it's just all books.”

Participant 4 shares how she sets the narrative for families: “Selfishly, if kids bring something up, that's my ticket to go all in. Because then if it's, if there's emails from parents or whatever it always, or, or vice versa, sometimes I'll get ahead of it and I'll send parents an email. Like, ‘a student raised a question today as follows. This was some of the discussion we had’ explaining how great it was. ‘I encourage you to talk more about it at home over dinner tonight or whatever.’ And I've never gotten any pushback when I've done that.”

Because Participant 1’s district curriculum includes multiple perspectives, she emails
with language directly from the resource: “I sent an email, and I used wording directly from our district about what I'm gonna say to kids, that these are hard conversations, but it's important that we have them to ensure that we are seeking justice for all. And these are direct words from my curriculum. So I felt super comfortable . . . I linked the curriculum like it's available on our [district] website for parents, but it's hard to navigate. So I straight linked it and I feel like I was able to say, here's what we're gonna talk about.”

4.3.4.4 Children’s Questions and Interests

All participants shared that they use the children’s questions and interests to help guide their planning. Participant 5 shared, “I try to tell the stories of the history and try to have conversations about the history rather than just teaching the history. And I think with that dialogue back and forth with the kids, their questions, I mean, it sounds cheesy to say, but their questions really do guide a lot of my research or a lot of my reading because, you know, they, they seem to enjoy it. So you know, we kind of feed off of each other.” Participant 6 observes what students are reading and pointed out how “a lot of kids are more interested in history. I see the books they're reading, whether it's like the ‘I've Survived’ series and it's talking about all the history . . . I try to bring up, you know, specific events, and kids are always interested . . . They ask me questions. And I like to have that kind of approach.” Participant 1 noted that in her classroom, Black children are generally more knowledgeable and prepared to engage with the lessons: “I'm a white woman, you know, like, I recognize that, that I also have my bias . . . just the privilege that I have. And so, and the privilege that a lot of these kids have . . . it's interesting to see how, for these white kids, they're like, ‘what, what?’ Like, and then you've got my Black kids who are like, ‘yeah, yeah.’ This isn't like brand-new information. Like this isn't . . . so it's, it is interesting to see certain kids who have been able to not have to look at this for, to this point in
their lives, right?”

4.4 Conclusion

The six participants in this study gave me rich conversations and many ideas for consideration. Chapter 5 will discuss my interpretations and recommendations.
5.0 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This paper began as a way to fulfill the requirements for a doctoral program, yes. Still, this problem of practice was identified because in the district of practice, as in many districts around the country, there is a marginalization of social studies instruction at the elementary level as well as a marginalization of the stories of certain groups within social studies. In addition to the marginalization, there is such apparent and intentional vitriol to the idea that known histories can change and evolve to include perspectives of lived experiences not previously included in the dominant narrative. And yet, the teachers who participated in this study have decided to create culturally responsive social studies classrooms in spite of all those barriers. I want to express my deep gratitude to the teachers who participated in this study, not only for sharing their experiences and stories but for continuing to push forward in the face of mounting adversities.

When I began this program at Pitt in the summer of 2021, the “White Rage” and pushback to DEI efforts and inclusive storytelling in elementary schools were just hitting their stride. Still, as mentioned earlier, the opposition has not waned, which means we cannot either. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the essence of what it means to be an elementary social studies teacher including the perspectives of those whose stories are often left at the margins, distorted, misrepresented, or altogether omitted during a time when there is such open, national opposition to doing so. The research questions that guided this study were:
1. How do external barriers (e.g., national/local politics, parents’ response) affect teachers' desire, ability, and commitment to move beyond the master narrative in elementary social studies classrooms?

2. How do internal barriers (e.g., personal beliefs, content knowledge) affect teachers' desire, ability, and commitment to move beyond the master narrative in elementary social studies classrooms?

3. What structures or systems (or lack of structures or systems) within school districts support or hinder the inclusion of multiple perspectives in the elementary social studies curriculum?

4. How do teachers incorporate multiple perspectives into the elementary social studies curriculum in spite of these barriers?

5.2 Interpretation of Findings

While all of the themes seem to intertwine around the ways in which school districts can support teachers already teaching or those preparing to make the shift to teaching multiple perspectives, I distilled the themes outlined in the previous chapter into three main findings that encapsulate the essential concepts as seen in Table 6.
Table 6. Summary of Key Findings

<table>
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<th>Research questions</th>
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<td>District support is paramount to sustaining change.</td>
<td>1 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and historical literacy professional development is critical.</td>
<td>2 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need curriculum that children deserve and supports teachers.</td>
<td>3 and 4</td>
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Following the title of each key finding will be a story that illuminates the need for that finding. These stories are personal, those I have experienced with my children during their time in the predominantly white, affluent school district. A critical component of Critical Race Theory is to “communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, as a first step in understanding the complexities of racism and beginning a process of judicial redress” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 14). Using experiential knowledge to illuminate the essential findings makes their conditions real for the reader.

5.2.1 Key Finding 1: District Support is Paramount to Sustaining Change

In May 2019, during a Kindergarten Orientation event, I asked my son’s then-principal how the school celebrated and incorporated months like Black History Month (BHM). She assured me that the school celebrates and acknowledges all cultures in the classroom and through schoolwide events. As the middle of February approached, I noticed my son bringing home Groundhog’s Day, Valentine’s Day, and President’s Day themed worksheets, but nothing about Black History Month. When I emailed to ask his teacher when she planned to begin
teaching about BHM, she replied, “Kindergartens [sic] don't see a difference unless they are taught that there are” as the reason she was not teaching anything specific about Black History Month. Although my son’s principal believed each classroom celebrated heritage months and cultural recognitions, because there was not a clear directive, it allowed the teacher’s own biases to impact whose culture was acknowledged and celebrated.

Although my third research question focused on school district support, I did not anticipate the degree to which the teachers look to the district and, in some ways, defer to the district for support. The impact of district commitment, support, and vision is evident in each participant interview. It can be a hindrance, but it also can be a source of confidence—an impact that I underestimated. Throughout the interviews and data analysis, I observed a divergence in participants’ responses based on the district’s level of commitment to elementary social studies classrooms, representing multiple perspectives in their curricula. The teachers' definition of support was centered on five main ideas: (a) clear vision/directive (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6); (b) administrative support (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6); (c) managing family pushback (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6); (d) professional development (all participants); and (e) curricular resources (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6). As mentioned in the previous chapter, many of these themes did not arise for Participant 1 because her school district had these supportive measures in place, which indicates that when a district provides support, as defined by the participants, teachers feel prepared to include multiple perspectives in the elementary social studies classroom. The next two key findings sections will discuss professional development and curricular resources.

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5.2.1.1 Clear Vision and Directive

Five out of six participants expressed that having a clear vision and directive is important. It allows teachers to know exactly what is expected of them, resources (e.g., curriculum, training) are often connected to district priorities, and a directive also sets the tone for the community to know the direction of instruction and allows teachers to feel supported in that they are not “going rogue.” Participant 1 expressed, “I'm clearly being backed up by, this isn't me just coming up with topics. Like yeah, this is backed up by [district].”

In the face of mounting political resistance, having a directive or mandate to include multiple perspectives allows teachers to feel safe from community or family pushback when moving away from the master narrative (Brown & Brown, 2010; Swan et al., 2022; Vasquez Helig, et al., 2012).

Harm can be done when there is no consistency around the vision or how teachers are expected to include multiple perspectives. Five out of six participants referenced cultural heritage and history months as a way their district permits or encourages them to incorporate multiple perspectives. Still, none of those participants have received any training or resources as to how they should incorporate these salient topics. Each year, social media and news stories share the cringe-worthy, often described as “well-meaning” Black History Month displays (Perez, 2019; Pescaro & Rosenfeld, 2022; Pierre, 2024), but intent does not negate the impact. School districts bear responsibility for the lack of support and clarity in vision because the expectation to cover content without resources, training, or directives as to how means that the teachers are left to their own, often undereducated devices, and it leaves the teachers in a place of uncertainty.
5.2.1.2 Administrative Support

All six participants in the study referenced their principal or another administrator as a thought partner or someone to share ideas with before launching them in front of students or emailing families with information. These crucial conversations allow teachers to feel confident in their content and in giving the administrator a “heads up,” the feeling of security in the event something goes awry. Participant 1 shared, “we have an awesome principal and vice principal at [school]. And so I just feel like I'm sort of in like the most, the ideal situation and that I feel supported from all sides of leadership.”

Training and professional development for administrators who are leading these conversations between families and faculty is also essential so that the teachers can feel confident that they will be supported by someone who is knowledgeable and can manage family pushback. Because they all have varied levels of racial and historical literacy, when it comes time to advocate for something or participate in a conversation about it, administrators must be able to do so in a manner that conveys understanding and respect for the topic. Participant 4 shared, “If that's how you're sounding with me, I'm mortified you're the person that's advocating for me. So I think being given the opportunity where, like, I'm going to put the scenario in front of you, and I want you to stumble your way through and it's fine. Like these things, they're not natural to you right now, but if you don't have any practice with it, it's never going to get easier.”

5.2.1.3 Managing Family Pushback

Worries or concerns about family pushback arose as an external barrier for five out of six participants. The data suggest that having a mandate or directive from the district allows teachers to confidently refer to that as a way to shift any pushback they receive from families back to the district. Participant 5 mentioned that pushback can come from families across political
spectrums. He described one family who pushed back on teachers that did not include multiple perspectives: “as they came through third grade and fourth grade, they went after a couple of teachers at (school) based on other things that the social studies program is doing. But when I had their child, no one questioned me. No one said anything to me . . . and I hope it's because when their child was in my class, their child heard multiple perspectives.” To alleviate this pressure, clear expectations from the district would allow all teachers to know it is their responsibility to teach history honestly.

5.2.2 Recommendations for District Leaders, School Leaders, and Practitioners for Key Finding 1

The findings suggest that district leaders should develop holistic plans that start with the vision of elementary social studies instruction in their district when beginning the curriculum revision cycle. The Knoster (1991) Model for Managing Complex Change, featured in Figure 4, is a powerful model for district leadership consideration at the beginning phases of any new initiative (Travers, 2021). It formulates all the critical elements to managing change and the results if one of the elements is missing.
Each of these elements is critical to ensuring the success of any curriculum change. The first step in that process is clearly defining the vision for why the change is necessary and taking place. The next element highlighted is ensuring all team members have the skills necessary to do the work being asked of them.

5.2.3 Key Finding 2: Racial and Historical Literacy Professional Development is Critical

When he was in third grade, my son’s teacher assigned them to write about their favorite tradition. Excited to share about a tradition few in his class celebrated, he wrote about Kwanzaa. As he was writing, a student began to make fun of the seven principles, saying words that sounded like gibberish in their place. When my son reported to his teacher that this boy was being racist, she corrected my son for using the word racist, saying it is hurtful to call another student that. This continued for a second day, and the teacher told my son he could move his seat
away from the boy. When my husband and I requested a meeting to discuss this (lack of) response with the teacher, she included the school principal and a union representative in the meeting for her protection. Racial and historical literacy professional development is essential, especially for white teachers, because as they begin to include multiple perspectives in their classrooms, some students are more prepared to engage than others, and they themselves have to develop a depth of knowledge to understand and acknowledge the nuances in these delicate situations and to know how to respond to and manage these conflicts as they arise. Additionally, as teachers develop their racial literacy, it allows them not to center themselves in situations that arise.

Every participant discussed the importance of professional development supporting their ability to include multiple perspectives. Much of the learning around racial literacy and content development that they have done has been on their own. Participants 1, 2, and 5 spoke of professional development opportunities in their previous districts as moments that helped shift their thinking and address internal barriers they were facing.

Incorporating multiple perspectives in the elementary social studies classroom in a way that does not harm children, particularly those who are members of historically marginalized groups, requires racially literate teachers. Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz (2021) describes racially literate teachers as those who “develop curricula that are centered on fostering open-mindedness, commitment to inquiry and reflection, and exploration of ideas connected to the concepts of democracy and equity in schooling” (p. 2). Ongoing professional development that deepens faculty and staff members' understanding of their racial literacy (Demoiny, 2018; Michael, 2015; Picower, 2009) should be offered before teachers are expected to begin shifting instruction with children. As Participant 2 shared, “I think baseline – teachers need some, like diversity training.”
people need to like take a beat to examine themselves.” Not doing so before beginning to shift instruction with children could lead to harm.

Training and professional development centered on developing the racial identity of administrators, faculty, and staff, as well as deepening their content knowledge, will be paramount. The literature has demonstrated that using frameworks like Crowley and Smith’s (2015) Racial Pedagogical Content Knowledge to develop professional development series will allow teachers to examine themselves in an effort to increase their awareness as they encounter the new content necessary to shift instruction.

5.2.4 Recommendations for District Leaders, School Leaders, and Practitioners for Key Finding 2

The findings demonstrate developing racially literate teachers with a deep understanding of their content should be in each school district's goals. Professional development can be used as a tool to leverage experiences that will further this goal. For district leaders, engaging current internal professional development leaders to gauge their own racial literacy and begin training with this group of leaders and administrators could be valuable before expanding training out to faculty and staff to expand the capacity of the people who are developing comfort in participating in these difficult conversations and begin to “build the bench.” For school leaders or educators, beginning with the “you-work” is always an essential first step. Attending outside trainings, creating book clubs, and expanding personal historical literacy is an initial step before advocating for the district to engage in this work.

In April 2022, the Pennsylvania legislature amended Chapter 49 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code to require all school districts in the commonwealth to offer professional
development programs that integrate the “Culturally-Relevant and Sustaining Education” competencies no later than the 2023-24 academic year (Appendix G). In addition to integrating these competencies in professional development programs, Chapter 49 requires that this framework be integrated into educator preparation programs and induction programs for new faculty. In this framework, there are nine competencies with four to seven standards for professional educators under each competency. The competencies are as follows:

1. Reflect on one’s cultural lens.
2. Identify, deepen understanding of, and take steps to address bias in the system.
3. Design and facilitate culturally relevant learning that brings real-world experiences into educational spaces.
4. Provide all learners with equitable and differentiated opportunities to learn and succeed.
5. Promote asset-based perspectives about differences.
6. Collaborate with families and communities through authentic engagement practices.
7. Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways that demonstrate respect for learners, educators, educational leaders, and families.
8. Establish high expectations for each learner and treat them as capable and deserving of achieving success.
9. Educate oneself about microaggressions and their impact on diverse learners, educators, and families and actively disrupt the practice by naming and challenging its use.
This legislation provides a unique opportunity for universities, districts, and local intermediate units to align in content and provide a comprehensive professional development program that meets the promise of this unique and little-known legislation. Without collaboration from these other institutions that presumably have better-prepared faculty to lead professional development around this topic, school districts may be left to their own devices with administrators leading professional development who are un- or under-prepared to do so.

5.2.5 Key Finding 3: We Need Curriculum that Children Deserve and Supports Teachers

While in fourth grade, my son’s teacher emailed me to seek guidance about teaching a dated story that contained the word “negro.” The story was part of the district-provided ELA resources, but the teacher was uneasy with the language. After reading the story, I agreed with her discomfort and asked if she would like my feedback on how to move forward. She said yes, and we met to discuss ways to rework the lessons based on the essential questions for the unit. I provided her with several counternarratives that could be used to make the essential question more expansive, and together, we created learning targets that deepened the children’s understanding of the essential question and included more than one definition of heroism. Children deserve curricular resources that accurately reflect their rich histories, expose them to the cultures of others, and help them think critically about our past and prepare for their future. Teachers need curricular resources that help expand their content knowledge and give them a framework to create the social studies classrooms our children deserve.

Updated, curricular resources were something that five out of six participants identified as a support their district could provide. Participant 2 shared how her district could be supportive by purchasing an “updated social studies curriculum; we are due for a review, recommendation,
and update, I've just been trying to expand it on my own.” Resources that include multiple perspectives can catalyze change in teacher practice by forcing teachers to expand their content and pedagogical knowledge, and to eliminate unnecessary time spent planning and searching for resources to enhance and increase the perspectives taught. Creating a curriculum that is specifically designed to accurately teach social studies plays an essential role in expanding whose stories are shared in our classrooms. Ladson-Billings (1998) reminds us that “Critical Race Theory sees the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a white supremacist master script” (p. 18). To disrupt master narratives and move towards social studies classrooms that are culturally responsive, districts must support teachers by changing the curriculum they have access to.

Dr. Ladson-Billings (1998) referenced the shortcomings of well-intentioned educators attempting to be more culturally responsive but, in actuality, only settling on a level of multiculturalism that uses cultures as props and non-performatives (Ahmed, 2012). The limits of multiculturalism are a function of the dated curriculum not being designed with a critical lens in mind. As the participants in this study demonstrated, teachers who are attempting to include multiple perspectives are doing the best work they can. However, it can stop short of culturally responsive pedagogy, as outlined by Ladson-Billings (2014), because the teachers are concerned about going too deep or critical without district support. Participant 6 shared: “I don't think I've been going super in-depth that I maybe would like to or would want to do out of fear for the community.” By providing updated curriculum and resources that account for depth and criticality, Participant 1’s district eliminated this barrier.
5.2.6 Recommendations for District Leaders, School Leaders, and Practitioners for Key Finding 3

The interview data indicate that school districts should start with the vision of teaching inclusive, culturally responsive social studies and then begin implementing training and professional development to prepare educators for this shift. School district leaders should identify resources to replace or enhance the district’s current curriculum and prepare school leaders to support teachers with this curriculum change. If districts cannot purchase new curricular resources, they should begin by conducting a curriculum review, use it as a framework, and create curriculum maps that inject counter-narratives as a way of disrupting the master narrative. These curriculum maps should include specific resources for teachers to use during instruction as well as develop their own background knowledge of relevant content.

For school leaders, identify and connect teachers teaching inclusive history in your building and become a thought partner for them. Talk about resources, unknown perspectives, and shifts in pedagogy. Demonstrate that inclusive, honest social studies is a priority by observing social studies classes, giving feedback, and providing professional development for teachers.

For teachers, use district-provided curricular resources as a starting point and identify places to insert counternarratives and perspectives not represented. Leverage holidays and cultural/heritage/history months as an opportunity to affirm multiple identities. Find colleagues to collaborate with, advocate for changes in your district, and continue to grow and deepen your racial and historical literacy.
5.3 Limitations

As with any study, limitations exist within this one. Most notably, because of the small pool of participants (i.e., six), the degree to which the findings of this study are generalizable is unknown. However, given that this study spans four school districts and two states, there could be thematic generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Additionally, because the study focused on high-performing, suburban school districts with predominantly white student populations, and only 5.1% of teachers in this context are people of color (Pew Research Center, 2021), the only participants were white teachers. The absence of racial diversity in study participants means there is a lack of understanding of the lived experiences of teachers of color in predominantly white school districts.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Utilizing a case study methodology for Participant 1’s district and others who have updated their curriculum could benefit future research by seeking to inquire how these districts support their teachers, engage teachers who reluctantly teach multiple perspectives, and identify the process of rewriting the curriculum across the district. This could be a unique tool to assist other districts looking for a framework to follow.

Because of the context, future research could study the phenomenology of educators who are members of marginalized groups teaching inclusive social studies to predominantly white students or students who are members of a dominant group. Identifying what support these
teachers may need because of the saliency of their identities would be a significant contribution to the literature.

5.5 Onward and Upward

“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.” – Audre Lorde

As described in length throughout this paper, teaching honest history is not without its barriers, and shifting the system to support it will not be either. Revisiting the obstacles outlined in the broader problem area section, I share my plan for moving toward my aim for all elementary social studies teachers in my district to incorporate the perspectives of historically marginalized groups in all units of study by June 2026.

5.5.1 Addressing the Marginalization of Elementary Social Studies

The seven elementary schools’ master schedules in the district have a varying allotment of minutes designated for social studies. To address the marginalization of social studies instruction, during the summer of 2024, I will take stock of the minutes allotted for social studies by school and across grades to establish a standard expectation across the district.

The importance of setting the vision and establishing a direction for the elementary social studies classrooms has been described in this paper. Creating a descriptive vision statement and then providing resources for teachers to meet the promise of that statement will also be an essential component of a successful shift in the district.
5.5.2 Addressing the Marginalization in Elementary Social Studies

As demonstrated in this study, curricular resources will be vital in helping teachers shift their instruction. During the 2024-2025 school year, as I begin searching for elementary social studies programmatic resources that could support the inclusion of multiple perspectives, I will first reach out to colleagues in a school district in Maryland who have created a tool/rubric for evaluating programs and their cultural responsiveness based on the NYU scorecard that does the same for ELA programs. Since it is unlikely to find a K-5 resource that encompasses multiple perspectives, I will re-establish the elementary social studies curriculum team to begin the work of curriculum development. During this time, I will also outline an action plan for future work, which would include a curriculum implementation plan when updated resources are purchased.

5.5.3 Working Within the Organizational Context . . .

With uncertain support from the Superintendent, anchoring the social studies shift in the culturally responsive curriculum and instruction goal of the board-sanctioned DEI committee will be a way to converge the interests and meet both goals.

In his book *Accelerate (XLR8)*, John Kotter (2014) develops the idea of “strategy accelerator networks” as a method of accelerating change within an organization. Similarly, this phenomenon is described by Bryk et al. (2015) as “networked improvement communities.” Within these networks, deeply committed members of an organization, regardless of hierarchy, are driving change, building knowledge, and charting a path toward a goal. With this idea in mind, as I am reconvening the elementary social studies committee, I will select members who demonstrate commitment to racial equity and increasing multiple perspectives in social studies
and provide racial and historical literacy training so they are prepared to identify and work toward a new curriculum, setting a vision, and creating an action plan.

5.5.4 . . . While Moving Beyond the National Social-Political Context

The upcoming 2024 Presidential election will have an impact on the national socio-political context in which this work is anticipated to occur. Should a Republican win the 2024 election, the Heritage Foundation, often described as a conservative think tank, has created a “playbook” for their first 180 days in office. Project 2025 (Dans & Groves, 2023) outlines “the best effort of the conservative movement in 2023—and the next conservative President’s last opportunity to save our republic” (p. 17). In this book, Chapter 11 focuses on the Department of Education and calls for, among many other things, the diminished involvement of the federal government in education while “rejecting gender ideology and Critical Race Theory” (Burke, 2023, p. 322). The inclusion of multiple perspectives into classrooms is referred to as injecting “racist, anti-American, ahistorical propaganda into America’s classrooms” (Dans & Groves, 2023, p. 8). Should this playbook be put into action, it would hinder and perhaps reverse any progress that has been made into expanding whose stories are told in our classrooms.

5.6 Conclusion

Throughout this study, I sought to amplify the lived experiences of teachers who incorporate multiple perspectives in the elementary social studies classroom, to give voice to their lived realities and identify ways district and school leaders could best support them and
their work. In her article “Teaching the Past to Improve the Future,” Coshandra Dillard (2022) writes of the moment:

An honest retelling of United States history includes events and experiences of all people who shaped it. To challenge the traditional narrative—one steeped in white supremacy and American exceptionalism—is to challenge power. Hence, the agitation we’re witnessing around what teachers teach and how. (para. 10)

Despite that agitation and pushback, I hope that teachers, administrators, and school districts will continue the push toward the more inclusive social studies classrooms that our children deserve.
While epilogues are typically found at the end of works of fiction and thought of as a means of adding to the end of a story often projecting into the future, I thought it appropriate to include one here. When Dr. Robertson, my advisor and dissertation chair, asked me to expand on the first draft of my conclusion, I thought it was an impossible task, one that I was too exhausted to even consider – to dream of what could be in the district I write about. As I reflected though, I was reminded of Dr. Toni Morrison’s words from a 1975 address at Portland State University:

the function, the very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being . . . None of that is necessary. There will always be one more thing. (p. 1)

She goes on to say, “Educating the conqueror is not our business . . . But if it were, the best way to do it is to not explain anything to him, but to make ourselves strong” (p. 12). This quote resonates so deeply because the racial battle fatigue (Smith et al., 2011) I have experienced in the last four years is real and heavy. Too often, those most marginalized are asked to “fix” what is broken within our systems, asked to bear the responsibility of repairing that which they did not break. And yet, I will continue to advocate and push for real change that impacts the children in our care because I believe, in some way, one of the ways we can make ourselves strong is by sharing and telling our stories in spite of those who are willing to deny their existence.
Appendix A Participant Flyer

REQUEST FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Seeking Elementary Social Studies Teachers!

Study Details:
The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of elementary social studies teachers in suburban schools working to make the curriculum more culturally responsive.

Participants in this study will complete a one-hour Zoom interview, one on one with a researcher.

Participants in this study will receive a $100 Visa gift card.

For more information, please email: jva6@pitt.edu

University of Pittsburgh

Appendix Figure 1 Participant Flyer
### Appendix B Pre-Interview Survey

### Appendix Table 1 Pre-Interview Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Time Allotted:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consent Script</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome, and thank you for your participation, personal introduction, and the purpose of the study. Define the following terms: inclusive social studies, multiple perspectives, culturally responsive SS</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you describe your approach to teaching social studies?</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does that compare to what social studies instruction is like throughout the rest of your school?</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When did you begin to shift your instruction to teach multiple perspectives, and what factors led you to change in practice?</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe your planning process for including multiple perspectives. How do you identify places in the curriculum to shift?</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell me about the challenges you face incorporating multiple perspectives in your social studies curriculum and any ways you attempt to address these challenges?</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell me what supports you in your work to include multiple perspectives in social studies? This can include people, resources, types of media, etc.</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can or does your school district do that supports your inclusion of multiple perspectives in the curriculum? What do they do or don’t do that impedes your inclusion of multiple perspectives?</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you describe your favorite lesson/unit incorporating multiple perspectives into your elementary social studies classroom?</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have these lessons and units of study had an impact on your students?</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) If so, can you give examples of the impact?</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) If not, what makes you continue shifting your instruction to be more inclusive?</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything else you’d like to share?</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C Consent Script

Purpose:
The purpose of this research study is to better understand the experiences of elementary social studies teachers in suburban schools working to make the curriculum more culturally responsive.

Procedure:
As part of this research study, I will ask six to eight elementary school social studies teachers in suburban schools to participate in one-hour, one-on-one, virtual Zoom interviews. Interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes only.

Risks and Benefits:
Aside from the opportunity to share your experiences, there are no immediate risks associated with this study. Participants will receive a $100 Visa gift card as a token of appreciation for participating in the study.

Confidentiality and Rights:
All information shared during the interview process will be kept confidential. However, with any data, there is a risk of a breach of confidentiality. All necessary measures to keep data as secure as possible. Following the conclusion of the study, all recorded interview sessions will be permanently deleted.

Participants will be given an ID number, and all data will be tied to the unique identifier.

Overall results and themes from the interviews will be combined for analysis and implications, and while the final dissertation may be publicly available, no identifiable data will be shared.

Participation in this project is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. To withdraw, please contact Jocelyn Artinger at jva6@pitt.edu.

Voluntary Consent:
The above information has been explained to me, and all of my current questions have been answered. I understand that although I am conveying my professional experiences, I am being interviewed in my personal capacity and not serving as a representative of any school district. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions, and voice concerns or complaints about any aspect of this research during the course of this study. Future questions, concerns, or complaints will be answered by a qualified individual or by the investigator listed below on this document at the phone numbers provided. I understand that I may always request that a listed investigator address my questions, concerns, or complaints. I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to
discuss problems, concerns, and questions, obtain information, offer input, or discuss situations that occurred during my participation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jocelyn Artinger at jva6@pitt.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to talk to someone other than the research team, please call the University of Pittsburgh Human Subjects Protection Advocate toll-free at 866-212-2668.

Would you like to participate?

Do I have your permission to audio-record this interview?
Appendix D Inclusivity Calendar

Inclusivity Calendar

We will continue to update and refine this document as needed.

### August

#### Specific Dates
- **August 9**: International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, observed to raise awareness to protect the social, economic, and political rights of the indigenous communities.
- **August 12**: International Youth Day is dedicated to the role young women and men play in bringing change in tackling global issues and achieving sustainable development. It also serves as an opportunity to raise awareness of challenges and problems facing the world’s youth.
- **August 23**: International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition is intended to inscribe the tragedy of the slave trade in the memory of all peoples.
- **August 26**: Women’s Equality Day, commemorates the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1920, granting all American women the right to vote.

#### Religious Holidays
- **August 15**: Feast of the Assumption (Christian)
- **August 19**: Obon (Buddhist)
- **August 30**: Raksha Bandhan (Hindu)

Appendix Figure 2 Inclusivity Calendar August
Appendix Figure 3 Inclusivity Calendar September

September

Month Long Recognitions
Hispanic Heritage Month - Hispanic Heritage Month begins on September 15, the anniversary of independence for 5 Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Lasting until October 15, it celebrates the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

Specific Dates
- September 4: Labor Day, a federal holiday that honors the American labor movement and the contributions that workers have made to society.
- September 11: Grandparents’ Day, established to honor grandparents for the love and support they provide to their grandchildren, with a presidential proclamation signed by President Jimmy Carter in 1978.

Religious Holidays
- September 6: Arba’een (Islam)
- September 6: Krishna Janmashtami/Jayanti (Hindu)
- September 8: Feast of the Nativity (Orthodox Christian)
- September 11-18: Paryushan (Jain)
- September 15: Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown (Jewish)
- September 24: Yom Kippur begins at sundown (Jewish)
- September 27: Birth of the Prophet Muhammad (Sunnî) (Islam)
- September 29-October 6: Sukkot (Jewish)

Appendix Figure 4 Inclusivity Calendar October

October

Month Long Recognitions
Hispanic Heritage Month - Hispanic Heritage Month begins on September 15, the anniversary of independence for 5 Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Lasting until October 15, it celebrates the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

Filipino American Heritage Month - This celebrates the heritage and culture, as well as honors the contributions of Filipino Americans.

German American Heritage Month - This celebrates the heritage and culture, as well as honors the contributions of German Americans.

Global Diversity Awareness Month - A month to celebrate and increase awareness about the diversity of cultures and ethnicities and the positive impact diversity can have on society.

Italian American Heritage Month - This celebrates the heritage and culture, as well as honors the contributions of Italian Americans.

LGBTQIA+ History Month - It is dedicated to recognizing important moments and individuals in the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
National Disability Employment Awareness Month - This observance was launched in 1945 when Congress declared the first week in October as “National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week.” In 1998, the week was extended to a month and renamed. The annual event draws attention to employment barriers that still need to be addressed.

Polish American Heritage Month - This celebrates the heritage and culture, as well as honors the contributions of Polish Americans.

Specific Dates
- October 9: Columbus Day, is a holiday that commemorates the landing of Christopher Columbus in the Americas in 1492.
- October 10: World Mental Health Day, first celebrated in 1993, is meant to increase public awareness about the importance of mental health, mental health services, and mental health workers worldwide.
- October 10: National Indigenous Peoples Day, recognizes that Native people are the first inhabitants of the Americas, including the lands that later became the United States of America. And it urges Americans to rethink history.
- October 24: United Nations Day marks the anniversary of the UN Charter. With the ratification of this founding document by the majority of its signatories, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United Nations officially came into being.

Religious Holidays
- October 3: Birth of the Prophet Muhammad (Shia) (Islam)
- October 6-8: Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah (Jewish)
- October 15-24: Navaratri (Hindu)
- October 16: Birth of the Báb (Bahá’í)
- October 17: Birth of Bahá’u’lláh (Bahá’í)
- October 24: Dussehra (Hindu)
- October 28-November 27: Kathin (Theravada Buddhist)

November

Month Long Recognitions
National Family Caregivers Month - Proclaimed in 2012 by Former President Barack Obama, it honors the more than 40 million caregivers across the country who support aging parents, ill spouses, or other loved ones with disabilities who remain at home.

National Native American Heritage Month - This celebrates the heritage and culture, as well as honors the contributions of Native Americans.

Specific Dates
- November 7: US Election Day is the annual day set by law for the general elections of federal public officials.
- November 10: Veterans Day, a U.S. federal holiday honoring military veterans. The date is also celebrated as Armistice Day, or Remembrance Day, in other parts of the world and commemorates the ending of World War I in 1918.
- November 16: International Day for Tolerance pays tribute to the values of peace, non-violence and equality on the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.
- November 19: International Men’s Day emphasizes the important issues affecting males, including health issues that affect males, improving the relations between genders, highlighting the importance of male role models, and promoting gender equality. This holiday is celebrated in over 70 countries.
- November 20: Transgender Day of Remembrance memorializes those who have been murdered as a result of transphobia and draws attention to the continued violence endured by transgender people.
- November 25: Thanksgiving Day is an annual national holiday in the United States and Canada celebrating the harvest and other blessings of the past year.
• November 25: Native American Heritage Day, designated by President George W. Bush in 2008, to pay tribute to Native Americans for their many contributions to the United States. Since then more than half of the states continue to celebrate this day.

Religious Holidays

• November 1: All Saints Day (Christian)
• November 4: Parkash Utsav of Sri Guru (Sikh, Hindu)
• November 12: Diwali (Hindu)
• November 12: Bandi-Chhor Divas (Sikh)
• November 24: Guru Tegh Bahadur’s Martyrdom Day (Sikh)
• November 27: Guru Nanak Dev Ji Gurpurab (Sikh)

Appendix Figure 5 Inclusivity Calendar November (cont.)

December

Specific Dates

• December 1: World AIDS Day, commemorates those who have died of AIDS and acknowledges the need for a continued commitment to all those affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
• December 3: International Day of Persons with Disabilities, designed to raise awareness in regards to persons with disabilities in order to improve their lives and provide them with equal opportunity.
• December 15: Bill of Rights Day celebrates America’s Constitution and the framework of society that ascribes rights and freedoms to society.
• December 26 - January 1: Kwanzaa, an African-American cultural celebration started by Maulana Karenga in 1966 to celebrate universal African-American culture and connect to their African roots and heritage.

Religious Holidays

• December 7:15: Hanukkah (Jewish)
• December 8: Bodhi Day (Buddhist)
• December 8: Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Roman Catholic)
• December 21: Winter Solstice (Traditions across the world)
• December 24: Christmas Eve (Christian)
• December 25: Christmas (Christian)
• December 26-January 1: Kwanzaa (Interfaith/African-American)

Appendix Figure 6 Inclusivity Calendar December
Appendix Figure 7 Inclusivity Calendar January

January

Month Long Recognitions
Poverty In America Awareness Month - This month of observation draws attention to the poverty epidemic and to warn of its long-lasting effects on individuals, local communities, and our larger society.

Specific Dates
- **January 1**: New Year's Day, the first day of the year according to the modern Gregorian calendar, is celebrated within most Western countries.
- **January 4**: World Braille Day, observed to raise awareness of the importance of braille as a means of communication in the full realization of the human rights for blind and partially sighted people. Celebrated on Louis Braille's birthday, the inventor of braille.
- **January 15**: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, a federal holiday in the United States marking the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., observed on the third Monday of January.
- **January 27**: UN Holocaust Memorial Day is held on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau to honor the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and millions of other victims of Nazism and to develop educational programs to help prevent future genocides.

Religious Holidays
- **January 6**: Feast of the Epiphany (Christian)
- **January 7**: Eastern Orthodox Christmas (Orthodox Christian)
- **January 13**: Lohri (Sikh)
- **January 15**: Sankranti (Hindu)
- **January 15**: Makar Sankranti (Hindu)
- **January 17**: Guru Gobind Singh Ji Birthday (Sikh)
- **January 25**: Mahayana New Year (Buddhist)
February

Month Long Recognitions
Black History Month - This month celebrates the heritage and culture, as well as honors contributions, of people of the African diaspora.

Specific Dates
- February 1: National Freedom Day, celebrates the signing of the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery in 1865.
- February 19: Presidents Day, a federally recognized celebration in the United States of George Washington's birthday, as well as every president proceeding Washington.
- February 20: World Day of Social Justice, celebrated to raise a voice against social injustice, which includes efforts to tackle issues such as poverty, exclusion, gender inequality, unemployment, and human rights.

Religious Holidays
- February 10: Lunar New Year (Interfaith/National)
- February 10: Lunar New Year (Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist)
- February 14: Ash Wednesday/Lent Begins (Christian)
- February 24: Birthday of 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (Islam)
- February 24: Magha Puja (Buddhist)

Appendix Figure 8 Inclusivity Calendar February
March

Month Long Recognitions
Irish American Heritage Month - This celebrates the heritage and culture, as well as honors contributions, of Irish Americans.

National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month - This was established to increase awareness and understanding of issues affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month - It was established to raise public awareness of the autoimmune disease that affects the brain and spinal cord and assist those with multiple sclerosis in making informed decisions about their health care.

Women's History Month - Started in 1987, Women's History Month recognizes all women for their valuable contributions to history and society.

Specific Dates
- March 8: International Women's Day, first observed in 1911 in Germany, it has become a major global celebration honoring women's economic, political and social achievements.
- March 21: World Down Syndrome Day is a global awareness day which has been officially observed by the United Nations since 2012. The date was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication (trisomy) of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome.
- March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, observed annually in the wake of the 1960 killing of 69 people at a demonstration against apartheid pass laws in Soph Africa. The United Nations proclaimed the day in 1966 and called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.
- March 21: International Nowruz Day - Nowruz marks the first day of spring and is celebrated on the day of the astronomical vernal equinox, which usually occurs on 21 March. It is celebrated as the beginning of the new year by more than 300 million people all around the world and has been celebrated for over 3,000 years in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and other regions.
- March 25: International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is a United Nations international observation that offers the opportunity to honor and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system. First observed in 2007, the international day also aims to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice today.
- March 31: International Transgender Day of Visibility, celebrated to bring awareness to transgender people and their identities and recognize those who helped fight for rights for transgender people.

Religious Holidays
- March 8: Maha Shivaratri (Hindu)
- March 10-April 9: Ramadan (Islam)
- March 18: Eastern Orthodox Beginning of Lent (Orthodox Christian)
- March 20-21: Nowruz (Interfaith/National/Baha'i/Zoroastrianism)
- March 23: Purim begins at sundown (Jewish)
- March 26: Palm Sunday (Christian)
- March 24: Memorial of Jesus' Death (Jehovah's Witness)
- March 25: Holi (Hindu/Sikh/Buddhist/Jain)
- March 25-27: Hola Mohalla (Sikh)
- March 29: Good Friday (Christian)
- March 31: Easter (Christian)

Appendix Figure 9 Inclusivity Calendar March
April

Month Long Recognitions

Autism Acceptance Month - This was established to raise awareness about the developmental disorder that affects an individual's normal development of social and communication skills.

Celebrate Diversity Month - It started in 2004 to recognize and honor the diversity surrounding us all. By celebrating differences and similarities during this month, organizers hope that people will get a deeper understanding of each other.

Month of the Military Child - This honors the sacrifices made by military families worldwide, with an emphasis on the experience of the dependent children of military members serving at home and overseas.

National Arab American Heritage Month - This celebrates the heritage and culture, as well as honors the contributions of Arab Americans.

National Volunteer Month - It was started in 1991 to encourage volunteerism at a young age. By volunteering, people can help save lives and create better environments for all to live within. Thanking volunteers, such as volunteer fire and ambulance departments, is also an aspect of the celebration.

Specific Dates

- April 2: World Autism Awareness Day, created to raise awareness of the developmental disorder around the globe.
- April 14: Day of Silence spreads awareness about the effects of bullying and harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students.
- April 22: Earth Day promotes world peace and sustainability of the planet. Events are held globally to show support for the environmental protection of the Earth.

Religious Holidays

- April 2: 23rd Night of Ramadan (Islam)
- April 6: 27th Night of Ramadan (Islam)
- April 10: Eid al-Fitr (Islam)
- April 13: Vaisakhi (Sikh)
- April 17: Rama Navami (Hindu)
- April 20: First Day of Ridván (Baha’i)
- April 22-30: Passover (Pesach) (Jewish)
- April 28: Ninth Day of Ridván (Baha’i)

May

Month Long Recognitions

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month - This commemorates the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and marks the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. The majority of the workers who laid the tracks on the project were Chinese immigrants.

Haitian Heritage Month - Celebrated as an expansion of Haitian Flag Day, this recognizes the heritage and culture, as well as honors contributions of Haitian Americans.

Appendix Figure 10 Inclusivity Calendar April

Appendix Figure 11 Inclusivity Calendar May
Jewish American Heritage Month - Held in May due to the highly successful celebration of the 350th Anniversary of American Jewish History 2004, this month recognizes the diverse contributions of the Jewish people to American culture.

Mental Health Awareness Month (or Mental Health Month) - This aims to raise awareness and educate the public about mental illnesses and reduce the stigma that surrounds mental illnesses.

Older Americans Month - This was established in 1963 to honor the legacies and contributions of older Americans and to support them as they enter their next stage of life.

Better Hearing and Speech Hearing Month - This annual event provides an opportunity to raise awareness about hearing and speech problems, and to encourage people to think about their own hearing and get their hearing checked.

Specific Dates

- May 14: Mother’s Day is a celebration honoring the mother of the family or individual, as well as motherhood, maternal bonds, and the influence of mothers in society.
- May 15: International Day of Families is annually observed by the United Nations across the world to highlight the important affairs central to the welfare of families, such as health, education, gender equality, rights for children, and social inclusion among others.
- May 21: World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, a day set aside by the United Nations as an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to learn to live together in harmony.
- May 27: Memorial Day is a federal holiday in the United States to honor and mourn the U.S. military personnel who have died in the course of carrying out their duties.

Religious Holidays

- May 1: Twelfth Day of Ridván (Baha’i)
- May 2: National Day of Prayer (Interfaith-US)
- May 3: Eastern Orthodox Good Friday (Orthodox Christian)
- May 5: Eastern Orthodox Easter (Orthodox Christian)
- May 5: Vesak (Theravada Buddhism)
- May 5: Pascha (Orthodox Christian)
- May 6: Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) (Jewish)
- May 9: Ascension Day (Christian)
- May 23: Declaration of the Báb (Baha’i)
- May 23: Vesak (Buddha Day) (Buddhist)
- May 28: Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh (Baha’i)

Appendix Figure 11 Inclusivity Calendar May (cont.)
Month Long Recognitions
Caribbean American Heritage Month - This celebrates the heritage and culture, as well as honors the contributions of Caribbean Americans.

Immigrant Heritage Month - Established in June 2014, giving people across the United States an opportunity to annually explore their heritage and celebrate the shared diversity that forms the unique story of America. It celebrates immigrants across the United States and their contributions to their local communities and economy.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender+ (LGBTQ+) Pride Month - Established to recognize the impact that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals have had on the world. LGBT groups celebrate this special time with pride parades, picnics, parties, memorials for those lost to hate crimes and HIV/AIDS, and other group gatherings. The last Sunday in June is Gay Pride Day.

Specific Dates
• June 14: Flag Day in the United States, observed to celebrate the history and symbolism of the American flag.
• June 15: Native American Citizenship Day, commemorating the day in 1994 when the U.S. Congress passed legislation recognizing the citizenship of Native Americans.
• June 19: Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, is observed as a public holiday in 14 U.S. states. This celebration honors the day in 1865 when slaves in Texas and Louisiana finally heard they were free, two months after the Civil War. June 19, therefore, became the day of emancipation for thousands of African-Americans.
• June 18: Father’s Day is a celebration honoring the father of the family or individual, as well as fatherhood, paternal bonds, and the influence of fathers in society.
• June 20: World Refugee Day is an international day designated by the United Nations to honor refugees around the globe and celebrate the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution.

Religious Holidays
• June 4: Vesak (Mahayana) (Buddhist)
• June 11-13: Shavuot (Jewish)
• June 13: Eastern Orthodox Ascension Day (Orthodox Christian)
• June 16: Holy Day of Arafah (Islam)
• June 17: Eid al-Adha (Islam)
• June 20: Summer Solstice (Traditions across the world)
• June 25: Eid al-Ghadeer (Islam)

Appendix Figure 12 Inclusivity Calendar June
July

Month Long Recognitions
French American Heritage Month - This celebrates the heritage and culture, as well as honors the contributions of French Americans.

Specific Dates
- July 3: National CROWN Day, is the commemoration of the inaugural signing of the first CROWN Act legislation in the United States in 2019 to “Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair.”
- July 4: Independence Day is a federal holiday in the United States commemorating the Declaration of Independence of the United States, on July 4, 1776.
- July 14: International Nonbinary People’s Day is aimed at raising awareness and organizing around the issues faced by nonbinary people around the world while celebrating their contributions.
- July 18: Nelson Mandela International Day was established on July 18th, 2009 in recognition of Nelson Mandela’s birthday via a unanimous decision of the UN General Assembly.
- July 30: The International Day of Friendship was proclaimed in 2011 by the UN General Assembly with the idea that friendship between peoples, countries, cultures, and individuals can inspire peace efforts and build bridges between communities.

Religious Holidays
- July 7: 1st of Muharram (Islamic New Year) (Islam)
- July 9: Martyrdom of the Báb (Baha’i)
- July 16: 10th Day of Muharram (Ashura) (Islam)
- July 21: Asla (Dharma Day) (Buddhist)

Appendix Figure 13 Inclusivity Calendar July
Appendix E Supplemental Materials Teacher Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review Criteria</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the material aligned to academic standards and course objectives that I am teaching in this course?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Can I explain and justify the value and necessity of the use of this material in achieving the lesson objectives and standards in alignment with these established criteria?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Is the material developmentally appropriate in terms of readability, content, interest, and perspectives?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Does the content provide objective viewpoints? Is the content unbiased?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If no, how will other viewpoints be addressed - to be discussed with your administrator.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Have I selected materials from varied sources throughout the school year providing students with balanced opinions, mindsets, and approaches?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is the material from a source that would be respected in the field of education and vetted for its quality and accuracy?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Have you reviewed this material (text, video, etc) in its entirety, to the extent possible, with professional due diligence?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have determined that this material does not conflict with District policy or violate any student rights. (See Board Policy and Compliance Notifications)

Appendix Figure 14 Review Criteria
Appendix F Approved Holidays

Social Studies at the Guided Reading Table

2nd Grade

Appendix Figure 15a Approved Holidays
LABOR DAY

1st Monday in September

READ ALOUD BOOKS

Brave Girl by Michelle Markel

GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: Cesar Chavez by Jennifer Strand (EPIC Level K)
Average Group: Labor Day by Meredith Dash (EPIC Level L)
Advanced Group: Labor Day by Rachel Grack (EPIC Level M)

Doireas Huerta: Labor Activist by Kate Moening (EPIC Level M)

VIDEOS

PBS Learning Media Video - Labor Day - PBS Kids -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KY_L8--kNBO

MISC.

Appendix Figure 15b Approved Holidays
SEPTEMBER 11
National Day of Service and Remembrance (Patriots Day)
Celebrating Community Helpers

READ ALOUD BOOKS

*Branches of Hope: The 9/11 Survivor Tree* by Ann Magee on EPIC

GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: *Heroes of September 11th* by Terry Miller Shannon (RAZ Kids Level J)

   *Police Officers* by Julie Murray (EPIC Level J)

   *Community Helpers: Firefighters* by Chris Bowman (EPIC Level K)

   *Firefighters* by Katie Knight (RAZ Level J)

Average Group: *Heroes of September 11th* by Terry Miller Shannon (RAZ Kids Level J)

   *Community Helpers: Police Officers* by Christina Leaf (EPIC Level L)

   *Firefighters* by Katie Knight (RAZ Level J)

Advanced Group: *What Do They Do? Police Officers* by Gaetano Capici (EPIC Level M)

Appendix Figure 15c Approved Holidays
Constitution Day
September 17

Read Aloud Books

We the Kids by David Catrow

Guided Reading Books/Assignments

Novice Group:

Average Group: The Creature Constitution by Torran Anderson (RAZ Kids Level J)

The United States Constitution by Mari Schuh (EPIC Level J)

Advanced Group: The US Constitution by Marcia Amidon Lusted (EPIC Level L)

Appendix Figure 15d Approved Holidays
Appendix Figure 15e Approved Holidays

**Constitution Day** by Molly Aloian (EPIC Level M)

*The Creature Constitution* by Torran Anderson (RAZ Kics Levels M and P)

*The US Constitution and You* by Shelly Buchanan (EPIC Level N)

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**VETERANS DAY**

November 11

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**READ ALOUD BOOKS**

*Veterans: Heroes in our Neighborhoods* by Valerie Pfundstein

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**GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS**

Appendix Figure 15e Approved Holidays
Novice Group: Veterans Day by Meredith Dash (EPIC Level L)

Average Group: Celebrating Holidays: Veterans Day by Rachel Grack (EPIC Level M)

Advanced Group: Remembering Our Heroes Veterans Day by Kelly Rodgers (EPIC Level N)

VIDEOS

Veterans Day - How it started and how we honor it - Kid History - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CP40EFzPR5c

MISC.

Veteran’s Day Poppy Activity
Veteran’s Day Letter Template
Veteran’s Day Coloring Pages

LUNAR NEW YEAR

January-February (depending on Lunar calendar)

READ ALOUD BOOKS

Appendix Figure 15f Approved Holidays
Sem and the Lucky Money by Karen Chinn

GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: It's Chinese New Year by Richard Sebra (EPIC Level J)
Average Group: Chelsea's Chinese New Year by Lisa Bullard (EPIC Level M)
Advanced Group: Holidays Around the World: Chinese New Year by Carolyn Otto (EPIC (Level P))

VIDEOS

Fortune Tales: The Story of Lunar New Year on YouTube

MISC.

Tell Me Why the Moon Changes Shape by Kathryn Beaton on EPIC (Level M)
Gung Hey Fat Choy! RAZ Kids article
Chinese New Year/Dragon Costume Text Evidence Reading Passages

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY
3rd Monday in January

Appendix Figure 15g Approved Holidays
READ ALOUD BOOKS

I am Martin Luther King, Jr. by Brad Meltzer

Martin's Big Words by Doreen Rappaport

GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: Dr. King’s Memorial by Kira Freed (RAZ Level H)

Average Group: Dr. King’s Memorial by Kira Freed (RAZ Level K; F & P Level J)

Martin Luther King, Jr. by Renee Mitchell (RAZ Level M; F & P Level L)

MLK, Jr. Civil Rights Leader by Grace Hansen (EPIC Level L)

Advanced Group: Dr. King’s Memorial by Kira Freed (RAZ Level N; F & P Level L)

Martin Luther King, Jr. by Renee Mitchell (RAZ Level P; F & P Level M)

VIDEOS

Martin Luther King, Jr. on Brainpop Jr.

Social Studies: Civil Rights video on EPIC

MISC.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Mini Booklet and activity pages

Martin Luther King, Jr./The Everybody Club Text Evidence Reading Passages

Appendix Figure 15h Approved Holidays
AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

February

READ ALOUD BOOKS

*Henry’s Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine

GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: *Ruby Bridges* by Kira Freed (RAZ Level I)

Average Group: *National Geographic Readers: George Washington Carver* by Kitson Jazynka (EPIC Level K)

Advanced Group: *The Life of Ruby Bridges* by Elizabeth Raum (EPIC Level M)

*Amazing Young People: Ruby Bridges* by Martha London (EPIC Level N)

*National Geographic Readers: Frederick Douglass* by Barbara Kramer (EPIC Level N)

VIDEOS

*Influential Women: Ruby Bridges* video on EPIC

*Ruby Bridges* video on Brainpop Jr.

Black American World Changers videos on EPIC

*George Washington Carver* on EPIC and on Brainpop Jr.

MISC.

Appendix Figure 15i Approved Holidays
LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY

February 17

READ ALOUD BOOKS

_I am Abraham Lincoln_ by Brad Metzner

GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: _Lincoln Loved to Learn_ by Karen Mockler (RAZ Level I)

Average Group: _National Geographic Readers: Abraham Lincoln_ by Caroline Crosson Gilpin

(EPIC Level J)

_Abraham Lincoln_ by Rachel Grack (EPIC Level J)

Advanced Group: _Abraham Lincoln_ by Josh Gregory (EPIC Level N)

VIDEOS

_Abraham Lincoln_ on Brainpop Jr.

_Looking at Lincoln_ by Maira Kalman on EPIC

_Abraham Lincoln: Everybody Loves Abraham Lincoln_ on EPIC

Appendix Figure 15j Approved Holidays
MISC.
Abraham Lincoln/The Time Machine Text Evidence Reading Passages

PRESIDENT’S DAY
3rd Monday in February

READ ALOUD BOOKS

*Presidents’ Day* by Anne Rockwell

*If I Ran for President* by Catherine Stier on Storyline Online

GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: *George Washington* by Jennifer Strand (EPIC Level J)

*President’s Day* by Meredith Dash (EPIC Level L)

Average Group: *Celebrating Holidays: President’s Day* by Rachel Grack (EPIC Level M)

*President’s Day* by John Perritano (RAZ Level L; F & P Level K)

Advanced Group: *President’s Day* by Lyn Peppas (EPIC Level M)

VIDEOS

*US Presidential Election Course: The 3 Rules to Become President* on EPIC

*Thomas Jefferson: Life Liberty and the Pursuit of Everything* on EPIC

Appendix Figure 15k Approved Holidays
WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

March

READ ALOUD BOOKS

She Persisted by Chelsea Clinton

Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges

GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: Mary Anning by Jeff Bane (EPIC Level J)

Average Group: Michelle Obama: Former First Lady & Role Model by Grace Hansen (EPIC Level K)

Advanced Group: Serena Williams: Tennis Star by Kate Moening (EPIC Level M)

Ann Bancroft: Explorer by Kate Moening (EPIC Level M)

Appendix Figure 15l Approved Holidays
VIDEOS

*Counting Stars: The Story of Katherine Johnson* on EPIC

Influential Women videos on EPIC

MISC.

Betsy Ross Reading Comprehension Page

Ruby Bridges character trait activities (2 pages)

EARTH DAY

April 22

READ ALOUD BOOKS

*I am Earth* by Rebecca and James McDonald


GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: *Earth Day* by Molly Aloian (EPIC Level J)

Average Group: *Earth Day is Every Day* by Lisa Bullard (EPIC Level K)

Appendix Figure 15m Approved Holidays
**Introducing Planet Earth** by Celeste Frascr (RAZ Level L; F & P Level K)

Advanced Group: *Celebrating Holidays: Earth Day* by Rachel Grack (EPIC Level M)

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**VIDEOS**

*Please Take Care of the Water* video on EPIC

*Reduce, Reuse, Recycle* video on Brainpop Jr.

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**MISC.**

Earth Day/A Helping Hand Text Evidence Reading Passages

Earth Day Comprehension and Activity Page

Earth Day Promises Activity

Earth Day Coloring Pages

---

**CINCO DE MAYO**

May 5

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**READ ALOUD BOOKS**

*Cinco de Mouse-O* on EPIC

*Marco's Cinco de Mayo* by Lisa Bullard (on EPIC)

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Appendix Figure 15n Approved Holidays
GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: *It's Cinco de Mayo!* by Richard Sebra (EPIC Level J)

  *It's Cinco de Mayo, Carlos!* By Maribeth Boelts (RAZ Level J)

  *Carlos's Family Celebration* by Lorena F. Di Bello (RAZ Level K; F & P Level J)

Average Group: *Cinco de Mayo* by M.C. Hall (EPIC Level M)

Advanced Group: *Cinco de Mayo* by Kate Torpio (EPIC Level N)

  *Cinco de Mayo* by Ann Henrichs (EPIC Level L*)

VIDEOS

*Cinco de Mayo for Kids-Homeschool Pop* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8JJ_kHAI6U

MISC.

MEMORIAL DAY
Last Monday in May

READ ALOUD BOOKS

Appendix Figure 15o Approved Holidays
GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group:

Average Group: Memorial Day by Ann Weil (RAZ Kids Level N; F&P Level L)

Advanced Group: Celebrating Holidays: Memorial Day by Rachel Grack (EPIC Level M)

VIDEOS

MISC.

Memorial Day/Memorial Day Parade Text Evidence Reading Passages

Memorial Day Coloring Page

FLAG DAY

June 14

Appendix Figure 15p Approved Holidays
READ ALOUD BOOKS

Why are There Stripes on the American Flag? by Martha E. H. Rustad

GUIDED READING BOOKS/ ASSIGNMENTS

Novice Group: My Flag by Ellen Mitten (EPIC)

US Symbols: The US Flag by Susan Rose Simms (EPIC Level K)

Average Group: Flag Day by Robert Walker (EPIC Level L*)

Advanced Group: Flag Day by Robert Walker (EPIC Level L*)

VIDEOS

MISC.

The American Flag/The Art Contest Text Evidence Reading Passages

Appendix Figure 15q Approved Holidays
Appendix G  Culturally-Relevant and Sustaining Education Program Framework

Guidelines

Introduction

On April 23, 2022, the final form amendments to Chapter 49 (relating to Certification of Professional Personnel) of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code became effective upon publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.¹


Chapter 49 requires instruction in CR-SE to be integrated in educator preparation, induction, and continuing professional development programs as follows:²

- Continuing professional development programs must integrate the CR-SE competencies no later than the 2023-24 academic year.
- Educator preparation and induction programs must integrate CR-SE competencies no later than the 2024-25 academic year.

22 Pa. Code § 49.1 defines several terms and their definitions are provided in the glossary.

## COMPETENCIES: CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND SUSTAINING EDUCATION (CR-SE)

### COMPETENCY 1
Reflect on One’s Cultural Lens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Educators:</th>
<th>Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard</strong></td>
<td><strong>Competency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE1.A</td>
<td>Reflect on their own life experiences and membership to various identity groups (race, skin color, ethnicity, gender identity, age, nationality, language, class, economic status, ability, level of education, sexual orientation, and religion).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE1.B</td>
<td>Understand that they, like everyone, can unwittingly adopt societal biases that can shape the nature of their interactions with groups and individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE1.C</td>
<td>Engage in critical and difficult conversations with others to deepen their awareness of their own conscious/unconscious biases, stereotypes, and prejudices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE1.D</td>
<td>Reflect on how they meet the needs of each learner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### COMPETENCY 2
Identify, Deepen Understanding of, and Take Steps to Address Bias in the System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Educators:</th>
<th>Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard</strong></td>
<td><strong>Competency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE2.A</td>
<td>Know and acknowledge that biases exist in the educational system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE2.B</td>
<td>Understand the importance of social markers, such as race, skin color, ethnicity, gender identity, age, nationality, language, class, economic status, ability, sexual orientation, and religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE2.C</td>
<td>Identify literature and professional learning opportunities for themselves to understand more about the manifestations of racism and other biases at institutional and structural levels that can result in disadvantaging some groups of learners, educators, educational leaders, and families while privileging others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE2.D</td>
<td>Identify and make efforts to remove bias in their teaching materials, assignments, curriculum, and resource allocation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE2.E</td>
<td>Recognize schools’ history of inequities and institutional biases and their consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE2.F</td>
<td>Disrupt harmful institutional practices, policies, and norms by advocating and engaging in efforts to rewrite policies, change practices, and raise awareness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### COMPETENCY 3
**Design and Facilitate Culturally Relevant Learning that Brings Real World Experiences into Educational Spaces**

**Professional Educators:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRSE3.A</td>
<td>Respect the real-world experiences of learners, educators, educational leaders, families, and caregivers and the diverse funds of knowledge they bring into educational spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE3.B</td>
<td>Integrate multiple perspectives into learning experiences and interactions that capitalize on learners’ real-world experiences, identities, and heritage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE3.C</td>
<td>Recognize that learners are connected to local and global communities and events that influence and impact their learning and their relationship to and understanding of their social worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE3.D</td>
<td>Challenge their own beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors regarding the knowledge and backgrounds of dominant and non-dominant social groups, thinking critically about the nuances of culture, identity, and other social markers, and how they manifest themselves in curricula and other educational materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE3.E</td>
<td>Design learning experiences and spaces for learners to identify and question economic, political, and social power structures in the school, community, nation, and world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE3.F</td>
<td>Provide rigorous learning experiences and relevant projects in culturally supportive spaces that integrate advocacy skills, deep listening and thinking, collaboration, resource gathering, and strategic actions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### COMPETENCY 4
**Provide All Learners with Equitable and Differentiated Opportunities to Learn and Succeed**

**Professional Educators:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Competency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRSE4.A</td>
<td>Make fair and equitable instructional and assessment decisions to ensure all learners have equitable access to educational resources, experiences, and opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE4.B</td>
<td>Create an equitable learning environment by challenging and debunking stereotypes and biases about the intelligence, academic ability, and behavior of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other historically marginalized learners, educators, educational leaders, families, and caregivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE4.C</td>
<td>Utilize differentiated methods of communication to articulate clear expectations aligned with the ability of each learner, which allows them to demonstrate knowledge through differentiated modalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE4.D</td>
<td>Provide multiple pathways and opportunities for students to achieve academic and social success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### COMPETENCY 5
Promote Asset-based Perspectives about Differences

**Professional Educators:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRSE5.A</td>
<td>Recognize diversity as an asset to the entire learning community and treat it as such.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE5.B</td>
<td>Show respect for every BIPOC learner, educator, educational leader, and family across cultural, racial, and linguistic differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE5.C</td>
<td>Assess how learners from different backgrounds experience the environment and encourage them to reflect on their own experiences with bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE5.D</td>
<td>Exhibit sensitivity to the ways in which BIPOC learners, educators, educational leaders, families, and guardians experience social and academic spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE5.E</td>
<td>Assist learners in valuing their own and others' cultures and help them develop a sense of responsibility for recognizing, responding to, and addressing bias, discrimination, injustice, and bullying.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### COMPETENCY 6
Collaborate with Families and Communities through Authentic Engagement Practices

**Professional Educators:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRSE6.A</td>
<td>Believe that every family, regardless of their race, skin color, ethnicity, gender identity, age, nationality, language, class, economic status, ability, level of education, sexual orientation, and religion wants the best for their children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE6.B</td>
<td>View the cultural aspects of the community as an extension of their teaching spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE6.C</td>
<td>Value every family as an asset and resource.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE6.D</td>
<td>Understand the nuances of diverse families and the wide range of factors that shape how families interact with educators and schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE6.E</td>
<td>Identify systems, structures, practices, and policies that exclude and marginalize BIPOC and multilingual families, families living in poverty, and families with varying sexual orientations and gender identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE6.F</td>
<td>View family and community engagement as a priority.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### COMPETENCY 7
Communicate in Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Ways that Demonstrate Respect for Learners, Educators, Educational Leaders, and Families

**Professional Educators:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRSE7.A</td>
<td>Understand and honor the ways in which culture influences verbal and nonverbal communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE7.B</td>
<td>Employ diverse channels to communicate with families in their first language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE7.C</td>
<td>Honor and respect the home language of learners and their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE7.D</td>
<td>Exhibit an awareness of the multi-dialectical nature of language in American society and the social constructs of different dialects, including learners’ natural ways of talking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE7.E</td>
<td>Believe that all learners have a choice and a right to practice the language(s) of their culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### COMPETENCY 8
Establish High Expectations for Each Learner and Treat Them as Capable and Deserving of Achieving Success

**Professional Educators:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRSE8.A</td>
<td>Understand the importance of having high expectations for all learners, including BIPOC students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE8.B</td>
<td>Communicate expectations and a clear framework for all learners (specifically individuals from diverse backgrounds), which clarify and articulate the standards to which they are being held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE8.C</td>
<td>Foster positive learning spaces that nurture creativity, build high self-esteem, support agency, and lead to self-actualization for all learners (including those from disadvantaged and historically marginalized backgrounds).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE8.D</td>
<td>Recognize and respect that learners have agency and are capable of contributing to their own learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE8.E</td>
<td>Establish authentic relationships with learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE8.F</td>
<td>Recognize the integral role families play in their students’ education and work closely with families and learners to set mutually agreed-upon goals and devise a plan for accountability that is supported by all individuals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## COMPETENCY 9

Educate Oneself About Microaggressions and their Impact on Diverse Learners, Educators, and Families, and Actively Disrupt the Practice by Naming and Challenging its Use

### Professional Educators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRSE9.A</td>
<td>Believe and acknowledge that microaggressions are real and take steps to educate themselves about the subtle and obvious ways in which they are used to harm and invalidate the existence of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE9.B</td>
<td>Take responsibility for informing themselves about the various types of microaggressions and the specific communities and subgroups harmed by these practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE9.C</td>
<td>Inform themselves about the long-term impact of unchecked microaggressions on the mental and emotional health of BIFO and other marginalized learners, educators, educational leaders, and families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE9.D</td>
<td>Understand the relationship between impact and intent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE9.E</td>
<td>Create learning communities and spaces that are inclusive and free of destructive and harmful microaggressions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRSE9.F</td>
<td>Actively counter deficit-based and invalidating behavior in themselves and others by engaging in affirming practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX A
GLOSSARY

Cultural Awareness: Cultural awareness is defined as understanding, consideration and integration of individuals’ culture, language, heritage, and experiences. (Source: 22 Pa. Code § 49.1.)

Culturally-Relevant and Sustaining Education (CR-SE): Education that ensures equity for all students and seeks to eliminate systemic institutional racial and cultural barriers that inhibit the success of all students in this Commonwealth—particularly those who have been historically underrepresented. CR-SE encompasses skills for educators including, but not limited to, approaches to mental wellness, trauma-informed approaches to instruction, technological and virtual engagement, cultural awareness, and emerging factors that inhibit equitable access for all students in this Commonwealth. (Source: 22 Pa. Code § 49.1.)

Diverse Learner: A student who because of limited English language proficiency or disabilities may have academic needs that require varied instructional strategies to help the student learn. (Source: 22 Pa. Code § 49.1.)

Equity: Equity in education is defined as every student having access to the resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, family background and/or family income. (Source: Equity, Inclusion and Belonging in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Department of Education.)

Historically Underrepresented Groups: Groups that are documented to have been represented across time in the educator population in proportions below their representation in the general population. These include, but are not limited to, people of color and the economically disadvantaged. (Source: 22 Pa. Code § 49.1.)

Marginalized: Relegated to a marginal position within a society or group; excluded from or outside the mainstream of society, a group, or a school of thought. (Source: Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster. Marginalized, Marginal)

Microaggression: A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority). (Source: Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, Microaggression)

Reflexivity: The act of being directed or turned back on itself; marked by or capable of reflection. (Source: Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, Reflexive)

Trauma-informed approaches to instruction: Pedagogy that recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma and integrates knowledge about trauma for the purpose of promoting resiliency among students. (Source: 22 Pa. Code § 49.1.)

November 2022
APPENDIX B
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Pennsylvania Department of Education recognizes the following organizations and individuals in the development of these competencies:

- Pennsylvania State Board of Education for leading the process to update the Chapter 49 regulations
- Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators for identifying and recommending members to PDE’s Culturally- Relevant and Sustaining Education (CR-SE) Working Group
- Culturally- Relevant and Sustaining Education Working Group Members: Dr. Reuben Selase Asempapa (Pennsylvania State University Harrisburg); Dr. Juliet Curci (Temple University); Dr. LeighAnn S. Forbes (Gannon University); Jill McNeish (Mount Union School District); Dr. Constance Nichols (Grove City College); Dr. James Preston (Slippery Rock University); Dr. Kathleen Reeves (Temple University); Dr. Amy Rogers (Lycoming College); Dr. Laura Roy (La Salle University); Dr. Ronald W. Whitaker II (Cabrini University)
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- Colleagues at the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network in Harrisburg who supported PDE in the facilitation of the working groups and listening sessions


Stout, C., & Wilburn, T. (2021, June 9). CRT Map: Efforts to restrict teaching racism and bias have multiplied across the U.S. Chalkbeat.  


