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Virginia Commission Supported by IDRA Finds Black History is Incomplete in State Curriculum

Recommendations Informed by IDRA's Framework for Culturally Responsive Education

(San Antonio • September 2, 2020) This week, the Virginia Commission on African American History Education **released** its **final report**, developed with support from IDRA over the last year, to revise curriculum standards and teacher training so the state's history courses better reflect the contributions of Black people.

"The recommendations made by the Commission will result in curriculum and professional development changes that allow Virginia students to thoroughly examine and directly combat systemic racism in the Commonwealth's history. This work was well supported by IDRA," **said Secretary of Education Atif Qarni**. "The Commission's work was comprehensive, and ought to be replicated in states throughout our nation. Black history is American history, and Virginia is not the only state that hasn't always gotten it right. I encourage

every state to thoroughly examine their standards of learning and professional development as they relate to African American history.”

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam established the 39-member Commission in August 2019 and asked the IDRA EAC-South to assist the Secretary of Education and Virginia Department of Education in facilitating the Commission’s meetings in collaboration with the commissioners. The **IDRA EAC-South** is the federally-funded equity assistance center serving schools in the U.S. South to protect students’ civil rights regardless of race, sex, national origin or religion.



I-r: Celina Moreno, J.D., IDRA President & CEO; Atif Qarni, Virginia Secretary of Education; Holly Coy, Virginia Deputy Secretary of Education; Dr. Paula Johnson, IDRA EAC-South Director; Dr. Derrick Alridge, University of Virginia Center on Race and Public Education in the South and co-chair of the commission; Morgan Craven, J.D., IDRA National Director of Policy & Community Engagement; Michelle Vega, IDRA Chief Technology Strategist. October 2019

“Black students deserve to see themselves reflected in what they learn in school, and all Virginia students deserve to learn about the rich contributions of Black Americans over the last more than 400 years,” said **Dr. Paula Johnson, IDRA EAC-South Director**. “Social studies courses too often minimize racial injustice instead of investigating the connections between social, political, cultural and economic forces that shaped the histories and current-day realities of African Americans. I commend the members of the Commission on their efforts to provide authentic opportunities for students and teachers of all races to engage in deeper explorations of that history in Virginia and the United States.”

The IDRA EAC-South was responsible for providing research to inform the Commission's recommendations on culturally responsive pedagogical practices.

IDRA supplied a new framework based on current research in culturally responsive education to inform the commission’s work. The frame comprises key leverage points: (1) culturally responsive schools, (2) culturally responsive leadership, (3) culturally responsive educators, and (4) culturally responsive pedagogy.



“This moment we find ourselves in requires that we move with urgency to eradicate all forms of systemic racism from our public schools,” said **Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. James Lane**. “These recommendations support efforts already underway at the Department of Education to advance anti-racism in our schools, increase the cultural proficiency of Virginia’s educators, and deepen the cultural inclusivity in our standards of learning curriculum.”

IDRA provides training and customized technical assistance that supports educators in offering **African American Studies** and **Mexican American Studies** courses in public schools. IDRA also has an online community of practice website for educators and community members to share lesson plans, resources, events and ideas for ethnic studies courses.

Dr. Paula Johnson is a member of the San Antonio African American Studies Course Curriculum Advisory Team under the leadership of SBOE trustees Aicha Davis and Marisa Pérez. IDRA **testified** before the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) in support of the course curriculum that **Texas approved** this spring.

Media contact: Christie L. Goodman, APR, IDRA Director of Communications,
christie.goodman@idra.org.



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5815 Callaghan Road, Suite 101
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IDRA works hand-in-hand with hundreds of thousands of educators and families each year in communities and classrooms around the country. All our work rests on an unwavering commitment to creating self-renewing schools that value and promote the success of students of all backgrounds.