

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**Source of Report:** LD 1664, PL 2022, Chapter 247, directing the Department of Education to Integrate African American Studies into American History Education

**Topic:** Collection and Development of Resource Materials and Best Practices for Teaching African American Studies and Maine African American Studies

### **Context**

LD 1664 directs the Department of Education (DOE) to include the instruction of African American Studies and the history of genocide with the parameters of essential instruction and graduation requirements established under section 6209. Section 1 of the directive is specific to the inclusion of Maine Native American studies, Maine African American studies, and the history of genocide, including the Holocaust in the review of content standards and performance indicators of the learning results conducted in accordance with section 6209, subsection 4. Section 2 outlines specific Department responsibilities regarding the development of resources, the creation of an advisory group that must include:

- scholars of African American history and culture;
- representatives from African American civil rights organizations in the State, African American history and cultural organizations and the Gerald E. Talbot Collection at the University of Southern Maine;
- the Maine State Archivist; and members of the public with personal experience that would inform the collection of information and preparation of materials under this section;
- at least one member from the advisory group in any group or committee convened to review the parameters for essential instruction and graduation requirements for social studies pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 6209, subsection 4.,

Section 2 continues to direct the Department to develop a best practice module to support the integration of these studies into the instruction of American history and Maine history. Section 2 further directs the Department of Education to develop a process that supports local school administrative units in their internal curriculum audits and requires a report on the progress of the implementation of LD 1664 to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

### **Actions**

In 2021, as part of the Department's ongoing support of the field the Maine Department of Education's Social Studies Specialist posted resources and materials to support the teaching of African American and Maine African American History and Culture to the DOE website. This included resources to support schools in conducting internal audits of their own curriculum to ensure an equitable representation of African American voices and an accurate historical account of African American history and culture.

Role	Name	School or Organization
Representatives of African American Civil Rights Organizations	Pam Cummings	The Abyssinian Meeting House
	Meadow Dibble	Atlantic Black Box Project
Representative of the Gerald E. Talbot Collection at USM	Lance L. O. Gibbs	USM/Talbot Collections
Maine State Archivist	Kate McBrien	Maine State Archives
Curriculum Designer	Kern Philgence	Central Maine Community College
Scholar of African American History and Culture	Bob Greene	Historian/Author
	Kate McMahan	Smithsonian
	Patricia Wall	Historian/Author
Maine Educators	James Ford	Lewiston School District
	Shane Gower	Maranacook HS
	Shanna Goodall	Orono High School

The members are as follows:  
 In December of 2021, the Maine Department of Education invited the members of the advisory group to include the groups specified in the statute, as well as social studies educators representing a range of grade levels and geographical regions of Maine.

#### VOLUNTEER ADVISORY GROUP:

- The Social Studies Specialist would convene and lead the "volunteer advisory group to collect information and prepare materials for the teaching of African American studies and Maine African American studies," as required by statute.
- During the 2022-2023 school year, the MOOSE (Maine Online Opportunities for Sustained Education) project would create a pk-12 learning progression of model lessons for teaching African American and Maine African American History and Culture.
- The revision of the Maine Learning Results for social studies would begin in 2023 as scheduled, and, statute dictates, would include African American studies, Maine African American studies, and the history of genocide, including the Holocaust.

In November of 2021, the Department met to analyze LD 1664 and determined the following implementation plan for this legislation.

	Jamie Karaffa	Bruce Whittier MS
	Allison Ladner	Caribou High School
	Stacey McCluskey	Solon Elementary School
	Crystal Polk	Strong Elem School
	Rosa Slack	Portland HS
	Geoff Wingard	Bangor HS
	Jershua Benn	Central Aroostook Jr/Sr
	Stephanie Nichols	Narragansett Elementary School
	Melanie Brown	Ellsworth MS

**Voluntary Advisory Group Meetings**

1. The first advisory group meeting happened via zoom on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, from 4-5pm. During this meeting, advisory group members introduced themselves, selected dates for future meetings, discussed the scope of work based on the statute, and created a plan to review the existing DOE resources. As indicated in Section 2 of the Resolve, the Department of Education would be responsible for resource development while the Advisory Group would inform the collection of information and preparation of the materials created by the Department. At the conclusion of the January meeting, the remaining meeting dates were selected, a shared folder was created to have a common place for meeting agendas, meeting notes, and documents. Advisory Group members were asked to review the following Maine DOE webpages before the next meeting: African American and Ethnic Studies resource page; Maine DOE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion page; Teaching with Culturally Responsive Practices professional learning webinar page. Advisory Group members were asked to consider the following prompts when providing feedback on these web pages:
  - What do you like?
    - Anything that should be highlighted differently?
    - Is there a way to for it be organized in a different way?
  - What needs some editing/changes?
    - Individual resources?
    - Big ideas/structures?
  - What is missing?
    - Are there resources that should be added?
    - Are there bigger ideas/structures that need to be added/thought about?

2. The second advisory group meeting took place via zoom on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. During the meeting members discussed feedback about the resources on the website and discussed how to use/organize the resources for educators in support of LD 1664. During this meeting, the Advisory Group determined the following outcomes for the teaching of African American studies and Maine African American studies:

- Lay out a professional learning series (like the four-part series from PBS included at the Self, Student, and Staff Reflection and Engagement page) that includes videos and resources to support educator learning as well as suggested curriculum resources and tools.
- Create a central hub of resources that use a set of symbols that indicate if each resource meets certain criteria (like elementary focused or contains lesson plans). Then have a separate page for each of the criteria so that an educator could look over everything at scan for what they might need or go to the separate page that focused on their grade level or their need for lesson plans.
- Create a book list for students at different grade levels that focused on resources beyond primary resources.

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, the Social Studies Specialist left the Maine DOE for a position outside of State Government. The Director of Innovative Teaching and Learning was asked to facilitate the remaining advisory group meetings and prepare the report.

3. The third advisory group meeting took place, via zoom, on March 22, 2022. The group discussed the following questions:

- How do we frame these topics in an appropriate way for educators?
- How should this work be chunked to be more user-friendly?
  - For example, into time periods or themes?
    - Themes could include resistance, agency, self-emancipation, activism
- Are we aiming to contextualize what happened in relation to Maine history?
  - Students often hear the same name/stories which often limits their learning.

4. The fourth advisory group meeting took place via zoom on April 12, 2022. Members shared what they hoped the group would accomplish before their final meeting and made the following plan for how they would accomplish those goals.

- Create an educator survey to discover what curriculum, resources, etc. are currently being used in Maine schools.
- Organize existing resources in a more user-friendly way.
- Create a guidance document to accompany resources - how to integrate into any subject, developmental appropriateness, etc.

5. The fifth advisory group meeting took place via zoom on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022. During this meeting the group broke into three small groups to work on the action items listed above.

6. The sixth, and final, advisory group meeting took place via zoom on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. During the first half of this meeting, the group broke into their three groups to continue work on

the action items. For the second half of the meeting, the group offered recommendations for the Maine DOE to consider when continuing this work. The following are Advisory Group's recommendations:

- Membership to any future advisory groups needs to be more open and have a process to add people even once the group is convened. Additionally, future advisory groups should be compensated and understand their role from the outset.
- The Legislature should allocate funding to pay someone to create a curriculum and resources that school can use for this topic.
- Maine DOE should create a framework for educators on how and where to start when incorporating African American and Maine African American History and Culture.
- In addition to providing the resources, Maine DOE should also provide guidance around what resources are appropriate for whom and what age/grade level.
- Maine DOE should provide on-going support for educators in:
  - Pedagogical resources
  - A community of practice where educators can share best practices
  - Professional learning and guidance for administration/ other educational leaders/ school boards about importance and resources that are available
- Amplify Maine's Black history part of this bill - Maine's history must be integrated with Maine's black history and the study should be grounded in the erasure of a people, what Genocide does, and is doing right now.
- Send out a survey (created in subcommittee of this group) to all educators to discover what curriculum, materials, and resources are currently being used in Maine schools.

#### **EXEMPLAR MODULES:**

As part of the Department of Education's support for the field in interdisciplinary education, the MOOSE project is developing project-based learning modules specifically centered on the History and Culture of Maine African Americans for PreK-12 students. This work is being led by a Black Maine educator, Rohan Henry, who is contracted as a Distinguished Educator from his home school district for the 2022-2023 school year. This Leader's team of Maine educators was constructed from a pool of applicants who were asked to fill out additional questions on their application related to their experience with and interest in equity and inclusion work. These questions were crafted with the input of the Team Leader and included:

- Which History & Culture cohort(s) are you interested in participating in and why? What do you hope to gain? What do you hope to contribute?
- Please share a few anecdotal observations about your lived and/or formal experiences around equity and inclusion work.
- Give an example of a teaching situation where you had to navigate your reflective response and/or reflexive response in order to advance equity and inclusion work.  
*Reflective = introspective/learning response; Reflexive = strategy-finding/action-oriented response*

Based on their applications and space available, all interested educators were accepted as Instructional Designers for this initial round of module creation. Twelve educators serve as

Instructional Designers for the History and Culture of Maine African Americans MOOSE modules in the following grade spans: two Pk-2, two 3-5, four 6-8, and four 9-12.

These Instructional Designers are charged with bringing their pedagogical expertise and openness to learning and growing during this process. A group of volunteer community members will bring their knowledge and lived experiences as members of the Maine African American community to the group to help to advise and guide the Instructional Designers. These community members will sign on for a period of time that allows them to provide feedback and support to the Instructional Designers as invested members of the team. As contracted members, they will be paid a stipend equal to the Instructional Designers for their contributions and expertise.

The team will also be assisted by Collaborative Advisors who will provide varying levels of support to the team and will participate based on their knowledge and expertise within the content area. This option allows individuals to engage at a level that matches their availability and allows the team to access a broader range of voices for specific topics that have been identified as areas of need. These Collaborative Advisors will be contracted and paid in relation to the number of hours of contributed to the team at the end of the contracted period. The advisors are a mix of people who can speak from their lived experiences and those who can speak from a depth of knowledge.

Finally, the team will have the ability to seek out Maine African-Americans and other individuals engaged in work with Maine African-Americans to be Narrative Storytellers who contribute their personal experience to the development of the learning modules. These participants will be paid for their contribution via video and/or audio story which will be developed into an open-educational resource for the MOOSE platform and could be used by multiple modules.

Team development is proceeding with the training and development of the Instructional Designers and with the gathering of the community members. Time is being spent to ensure truly meaningful connections among the participants and provide the best opportunity for modules that are rich and deep with history and culture as well as providing strong quality online education and overall pedagogy.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:** Establish a Standing Advisory Group appointed by the Commissioner and staffed by the Department, and informed by the initial advisory group, to ensure this work proceeds in a way that values, celebrates, and honors the history and contributions of Black Mainers. The Standing Advisory Group will be responsible for an annual report on the efficacy of the developed materials, the data collected from any survey tool, and any recommendations for future improvements. The Advisory Group shall have an identified term of service, shall allow flexibility of membership, and flexibility in convening methods in order to include voices from the Maine Black community. The Advisory Group shall also develop a process for incorporating additional members. The Advisory Group shall include membership from the following groups, with priority given to Black Mainers:

- One member from an organization representing an African American Civil Rights Organization;
- One member representing the Black Mainer community;
- One member representing the Gerald E. Talbot Collection at the University of Southern Maine;
- One member representing the Maine State Archives;
- Two members representing high school social studies education;
- Two members representing middle school education
- Two members representing elementary education;
- One member representing curriculum design and coordination

**Recommendation 2:** Allocate funding to the Department of Education dedicated to the creation of open-source materials and resources that schools can use. These materials would include a framework for educators that outlines best practices for incorporating African American and Maine African American History and Culture and include guidance on resources with age-appropriate sub-groupings. In addition, the materials and resources will include a focus on the erasure of a people as well as historical and current occurrences of genocide.

**Recommendation 3:** The Department of Education will collaborate with the field to amplify the resources and materials that integrate Maine’s Black history and to develop on-going support for educators in:

- Instructional resources;
- A community of practice where educators can share best practices; and
- Professional learning and guidance for education leaders about the importance of the topic and the resources that are available.

**Recommendation 4:** The Department of Education will distribute the subcommittee survey to all educators to collect data on existing curriculum, materials, and resources.

**Contact:**

Beth Lambert  
 Director of Innovative Teaching and Learning  
 beth.lambert@maine.gov  
 207-592-4398

Courtney Belolan  
 Director of Policy & Government Affairs  
[Courtney.belolan@maine.gov](mailto:Courtney.belolan@maine.gov)  
 207-215-7396