



Front-End Evaluation Report for Texas Ethnic Studies: Phase 1

September 2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Smithsonian (SI) and Affiliate museum educators, local social studies supervisors, and curriculum specialists at three sites in Texas have joined in a collaborative educational initiative designed to develop and disseminate instructional materials highlighting Asian Pacific American (APA) and Latino history, art, and culture for Texas's high school Ethnic Studies courses. These programs have received Federal support from the Asian Pacific American Initiatives Pool (APAIP), administered by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, and the Latino Initiatives Pool (LIP), administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center.

The project's goals are to create replicable and adaptable models to integrate museum-based APA and Latino instructional materials into these courses and to better understand their usefulness in teaching. To that end Audience Focus conducted phase one of a two-phase evaluation study. The evaluation focus areas for Phase 1 were:

- What are benefits for students taking ethnic studies courses? What are barriers related to teaching ethnic studies courses?
- What is the current situation re: ethnic studies courses in participants' districts?
- What do educators want from professional development in general and for the Smithsonian workshop specifically?

The methodology for the Phase 1 study consisted of a pre-focus group online survey administered July 1 – August 3, 2019 and a series of face-to-face and telephone focus group conversations conducted at each of the three Affiliate sites between July 17 and August 2, 2019. The sample size consisted of 28 online survey respondents and 18 focus group participants across the three locations.

Summary of Results

Benefits to Students: Three main areas of benefits to students from taking ethnic studies were identified by study participants as:

1. New awareness & understanding – Students gain a wider point of view;
2. See oneself reflected in curriculum resulting in students' engaging more in school and, in turn, often involves families in different and meaningful ways;
3. Fosters tolerance & empathy among students.

Barriers to Effective Ethnic Studies: Educators identified four barriers that hampered effective implementation of ethnic studies courses:

- Teacher lack of experience teaching about cultures with which they are unfamiliar or lack of will or interest in learning how to teach these topics;
- Public misunderstanding & fear of cultures other than their own;
- District lack of support & institutional entropy;
- Student lack of awareness or desire to learn.

Educators do not see English language proficiency as a barrier to teaching effective ethnic studies courses. It is expected that teachers will scaffold and use a variety of strategies for students with all types of needs.

There were varying degrees of emphasis placed on the importance of language translation resources for ethnic studies. Most requested Spanish translations and there were small number of requests from other languages.

Current Situation:

Courses Offered or not

- As expected, after three years of implementation, the Austin ISD ethnic studies high school course is well established and popular with students and teachers.
- Coppell ISD [Irving area] uses the option provided in the TEKS for “special topics” courses to focus on specific ethnicities. Irving ISD also offers ethnic studies courses through the special topics option.
- Edgewood ISD [San Antonio area] plans to offer an ethnic studies course during this school year (2019-20) and this course was developed and pushed through by the social studies instructional coaches, as there was little interest higher up in the district administration.

Since there are no state standards related to ethnic studies in Texas, curriculum writers and teachers are essentially on their own, which can be a double-edged sword. There is the freedom to create what they want AND it takes a lot of time to create from the ground up.

Resources: Participants reported using a variety of resources, very few of which referenced print sources. However, educators acknowledge that classroom teachers usually prefer to use printed resources for a variety of reasons.

The most common reasons study participants gave for liking and using a digital resources were:

- Opens students to a wider world;
- Provides out-of-the-ordinary primary sources & visuals;
- Ease of use including flexible or responsive search function;
- Curated collections organized around topic, theme, and culture;
- Exemplars and/or lessons & activities that can be used directly and used as inspiration;
- Ability to link personal sites or collections directly to teachers and/or classrooms.

Barriers to using digital resources for the typical classroom teacher are related to time and know-how.

Frameworks: There was no consistency across districts as to the use of curriculum frameworks or models for writing lessons. Texas state standards are uneven in quality and specificity, allowing for a wide range of interpretation. Since there are more social studies standards than for other subjects, educators have to bundle or cluster standards to make it possible to cover everything.

Technology

- Internet access is available in over half of the schools but this changes slightly when the results are cross-tabulated by location.
- Internet content can be displayed for whole class to see in all locations but while some districts have 1-to-1 availability where there is a laptop or computer available for each student, many districts still do not have this level of saturation.
- Technology use in the classroom can be challenging for teachers as it requires a high degree of teacher preparation and planning, as well as easy access to the hardware/equipment.
- Some districts use a cloud-based service that helps teachers organize digital content. In addition to being sure that the Learning Lab was compatible with district platforms, the resource must also be safe and protect the identity of students.

Fieldtrips: As is the case with many schools across the nation, school field trip attendance is often dependent on special funding through grant programs initiated through the district or by the museums. Educators who have not taken students on field trips hoped to do so in the future but the challenges of time to organize and lack of funding are considerable.

Preferences for Professional Development

Characteristics Most Valued in Professional Development

Educators rated four statements as important in professional development:

1. I learn something unexpected or new;
2. I get to directly work with or try out concepts and strategies – e.g., active participation;
3. I get to work with other curriculum developers in my area;
4. I reinforce or deepen existing knowledge.

Educators expanded on the most valued professional development experiences with the following characteristics rising to the top:

- Have exemplars or models to review
- Time to explore resources (e.g., Learning Lab)
- Time to apply what is learned to specific needs in the curriculum
- Opportunity to see how workshop ideas can be quickly turned around for use by teachers
- Workshop purpose is clear and activities align with the purpose

What does not work in professional development workshops is as follows:

- Lack of active inquiry or application
- Too much sit-and-get format
- Lack of clear focus
- Inefficient use of time

Educators expect the following in the SI professional development workshop:

- The purpose or structure of the session to be clear - including who is invited to the workshop;
- To find new resources, especially for topics or cultures for which there are fewer resources;
- That presenters will have an understanding of and respect for the K-12 environment.

Educators want help in applying workshop learning:

- A one-page quick reference guide to the Learning Lab site to give to teachers;
- Information in advance of the workshop as to what they needed to bring, such as laptops and ethnic studies curricular they are working on;
- Exemplars or models that are easily adaptable for their teachers;
- Meaningful collaboration with peers to exchange ideas.

Two main categories of responses relative to what does not work revolved around lack of active inquiry or application (too much set-and-get format) and a lack of focus and inefficient use of time.

Implications & Recommendations

Use of Benefits to Strengthen SI Project & Support Districts Efforts: In order to strengthen support for ethnic studies courses within districts and, at the same time promote the Smithsonian's Learning Lab resource consider developing a visually attractive one-page summary of benefits to students from ethnic studies course with some selected quotes from the study on one side and the one-page quick start guide to the Learning Lab on the other side.

Use Current Situation Findings to Tailor Workshops to Specific Locations: The front-end study can be a good model for designing any educator workshop. The three locations are quite different from each other and there is much variation within each location. This presents a challenge for workshop presenters requiring creativity and ingenuity in planning ways to scaffold the experience to meet participants where they are. If a one-size-fits-all approach is used there is a risk that more experienced people will be bored and/or educators new to the task will be lost or overwhelmed.

Clarify District Technology Use Policies to Insure Ease of Use by Educators: While only a few educators raised the point that there might be some technical gateways that could hamper use of the Learning Lab by teachers, it is still an issue worth checking.

Needs and Preferences for Professional Development:

Frameworks and Templates: There are not common frameworks or lesson plan templates at these locations or even within districts but it is clear that educators wanted the SI to provide a lesson plan template for the workshop.

Exemplars and Models: Educators requested exemplars or models to review in order to have a better idea of what the SI wants from them.

Advance Organizer and Preparation for the Workshop: Educators asked for an advance organizer as to what was going to happen and what they would be expected to do at or bring to the workshop.

How Time is Organized in the Workshop: Educators requested that the workshop have a clear purpose and good time management.

✓ Time for Ice Breakers & Introductions

Sometimes these activities are time wasters but an ice breaker or introductions directly related to what is done in the workshop can be highly effective.

Consider developing creative ways participants can find out about and warm up to each other. If we want educators to be creative in developing curriculum and using resources, then the workshop presenters need to model that behavior from the start and throughout the session.

✓ Time for Collaboration

Peer-to-peer activities can quickly devolve into wasted time if not clear, specific, relevant, and applicable. It may be that curriculum coordinators are not as isolated as classroom teachers and, therefore, do not need as much social interaction with peers. Consider having conversations with the lead curriculum coordinators at the different locations to see if their team wants or needs this kind of interaction.

✓ Time to explore resources (e.g., Learning Lab & Affiliate Site) and apply what is learned to specific needs in the curriculum

While a tour of the Affiliate site is planned and will be of personal interest to educators, consider finding a way to connect the use of the site with the Learning Lab resource. Rather than giving participants a quick walk through of the space, have them choose specific areas that relate directly to the lesson plan or task they were asked to bring so they can integrate both the museum exhibition and the Learning Lab resource into the curriculum they chose to work on.

The emphasis of the workshop should be tightly focused on application, providing examples and models, and giving time for participants to at least get a good start on a curriculum writing task they need to complete in the near future.

Tailor the Experience for the Real World of K-12 Educators

Sometimes outside non-K-12 presenters, usually unintentionally, give the impression that they either don't understand the K-12 environment or don't respect it. If possible, involve one or two curriculum supervisors in each location in the planning of the workshops. At the least, they could be given a preview of the agenda and invited to make some suggestions for refinements.

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September 2019

Introduction

The Smithsonian (SI) and Affiliate museum educators, local social studies supervisors, and curriculum specialists at three sites in Texas have joined in a collaborative educational initiative designed to develop and disseminate instructional materials highlighting Asian Pacific American (APA) and Latino history, art, and culture for Texas's high school Ethnic Studies courses.

These programs have received Federal support from the Asian Pacific American Initiatives Pool (APAIP), administered by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center and the Latino Initiatives Pool (LIP), administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center.

The three Affiliate sites for this project are:

1. Irving- Irving Arts Center (LIP)
2. UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures (APAIP), San Antonio
3. City of Austin Parks & Recreation (APAIP & LIP)
 - Asian American Resource Center
 - Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center
 - George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center

The project's goals are to create replicable and adaptable models to integrate museum-based APA and Latino instructional materials into these courses and to better understand their usefulness in teaching.

To that end Audience Focus has been asked to design a two-phase front-end evaluation study:

Phase I: Exploratory study to inform the project team as they develop the professional development workshops;

The evaluation focus areas for Phase 1 were:

- What are benefits for students taking ethnic studies courses? What are barriers related to teaching ethnic studies courses?
- What is the current situation re: ethnic studies courses in participants' districts?
- What do educators want from professional development in general and for the Smithsonian workshop specifically?

Phase II: Reflection study on the short-term effectiveness of the first workshop to inform future workshops for this project. Evaluation focus questions will be determined Fall 2019.

Methodology & Description of Sample

The methodology for the Phase 1 study consisted of a pre-focus group online survey administered July 1 – August 3, 2019 (Protocol in Appendix A) and a series of face-to-face and telephone focus group conversations conducted at each of the three Affiliate sites between July 17 and August 2, 2019. Most participants were able to complete the pre-focus group online survey before our conversations with a few people completing it afterwards.

Pre-Focus Group Online Survey Description of Sample

Table 1: Number of online survey respondents by location

	TOTAL	Austin	Irving	San Antonio
Complete	24	8	8	8
Partial	4	1	1	2
Totals	28	9	9	10

Table 2: Number of online survey respondents by professional role

Curriculum developer, coach, supervisor (no teaching duties)	21
Combination teaching and curriculum development / coach	4
Social studies teacher only	1

Table 3: Number of online survey respondents' time in position by location

	TOTAL	Austin	Irving	San Antonio
Less than 1 year	9	7	0	1
1 -3 years	5	0	4	1
4-7 years	7	1	3	3
7+ years	5	0	1	4

Focus Group Description of Sample

A total of 18 educators participated in two face-to-face focus groups and three phone conferences. (Focus group protocol in Appendix B)

San Antonio: Face-to-Face Focus Group - July 30, 2019 (4 people)

Edgewood Independent School District

- Social Studies Teacher (85%) & Curriculum Developer (15%)

North East Independent School District

- Geography & Humanities Teacher (50%) & Instructional Coach (50%)

Harlandale Independent School District

- Social Studies Coordinator

Brooks Academy of Science & Engineering

- Social Studies teacher & Department Head

Austin: Telephone conversations: July 18, August 1, & August 2, 2019 (7 people)

Austin Independent School District

- Assistant Director of Humanities Team (Former Social Studies Supervisor)
- Humanities Team Members (5 instructional coaches)

Leander Independent School District

- Social Studies Coordinator

Irving: Face-to-Face Focus Group - July 17, 2019 (7 people)

Coppell Independent School District

- Director of Social Studies

Irving Independent School District

- PK-12 Instructional Coordinator, Social Studies
- Digital Learning Coach, Social Studies

Hurst-Euless-Bedford Independent School District

- Social Studies Coordinator K-12
- Social Studies Facilitator

Region 10 Education Service Center

- Social Studies Supervisor

Irving Arts Center

- Director of Exhibitions and Education Programs

Results & Discussion

Benefits & Barriers

Online survey respondents and focus group participants were asked to describe the ways in which students benefit from taking ethnic studies courses. They were also asked to consider barriers to teaching ethnic studies.

Benefits

Survey and focus group participants identified three main areas of benefits to ethnic studies. Most of the comments related to the ways in which students gain a new awareness and a wider point of view. A slightly less but still higher cluster of comments discussed how students see themselves, find their voice, and engage in school more deeply. A smaller segment of the comments described how students get to practice tolerance and empathy skills. A selection of quotes from the online survey and focus group are organized by those three categories of responses. The full set of respondent quotes can be found in Appendix C.

New Awareness/Understanding – Wider Point of View

I think it gives students an important lens on history, honoring the histories of non-dominant cultures. It helps promote social justice and cultural proficiency. Students benefit by becoming more culturally proficient, more self-aware and aware of others, better advocates, and critical thinkers. Online Survey

Any opportunity to analyze the world around them is beneficial, but analyzing through different perspectives helps with critical thinking in a deeper way. Online Survey

Students on predominantly white campuses enjoy learning about other cultures, other histories. They appreciate seeing the dominant narrative challenged and do a social-cultural critique. It helps them learn to question. We've had instances where students are uncomfortable in the classes but unable to un-enroll. They have to be there the whole year. Teachers say these students tend to push the class in a good way. While everyone might not agree they learn how to respectfully disagree. They learn how to think. Austin Focus Group

One high school teacher told me about one of their problem-based activities where they focus in on cultural identity and heroes of the past and present. She said her students were able to examine things that currently exist, such as at the Austin state capital there is a Tejano monument to recognize and honor their role in TX history. Her students said things like 'I didn't realize this before.' and 'They are just like us. They do amazing things. I don't know why they are treated the way they are.' and 'Why isn't this a required course?' They had never learned about this before in any other class. The kids who do take this class become firm advocates for the course. The program has grown because students have encouraged others to take the class. Austin Focus Group

Students of color finally have a name for the way they've been treated. They didn't really know why. They can name the kind of discrimination they face and know it's a real thing that exists, not just their imagination. And they know that other people have experienced it. Austin Focus Group

Even in diverse populations, people are going to have different opinions. It's about seeking to understand, not about changing opinions. Austin Focus Group

They leave the course feeling empowered. They talk with their parents about things they've learned. I think it improves students' sense of self. It improves family and community relationships. To get middle school students to talk to their parents about anything is close to a miracle. Austin Focus Group

See Self Reflected in Curriculum – Students & Families Engage More in School

They learn a more comprehensive version of history and literature. Additionally, I find that many students don't see themselves and their backgrounds reflected in traditional history and lit courses. Online Survey

Ethnic Studies offers students the chance to challenge the traditional historical narrative they learn in school. The class teaches critical reading and writing skills as students learn more about other groups and their contributions to our society. Students see themselves reflected in the curriculum and they learn about the stories of others, fostering a greater appreciation for both what unites us and what makes us different. The stronger connection to school based on seeing themselves in the curriculum as well as the culturally relevant pedagogy

Main Categories of Benefits to Students from Ethnic Studies

1. New Awareness & Understanding – Wider Point of View
2. See Self Reflected in Curriculum – Engage More in School
3. Fosters Tolerance & Empathy

that Ethnic Studies teachers apply results in better grades and higher attendance rates. Online Survey

Being in a suburban district, mostly white and upper class (Leander ISD) I was concerned about how to sell this class. I looked at the research out of Stanford, about the impact this can have on students of color, particularly on their grade point average, their connection to campus, and their attendance. That's an area of weakness for us in our district, to get students of color to have a connection to the campus. Generally attendance and GPAs are lower in students of color so we wanted to do something about that. Austin Focus Group

When I taught world geography I had a lot of immigrant parents. For the first time they were involved in their child's schooling. For example, one parent brought their family Koran to show to the class. It was touching and sad at same time. At the end of day she (the mother) hugged me and said, 'This is the first time I thought someone wanted to know about our religion and culture.' I have had that a lot from other parents. For the kids in the classroom, seeing themselves reflected is a benefit. Irving Focus Group

Fosters Tolerance & Empathy

It provides students with a greater appreciation of various human experiences and not just their own particular cultural perspective. Online Survey

Barriers

When educators considered the barriers related to ethnic studies courses there were five categories of responses. From most to least frequently referenced, these barriers are: 1) Teacher's lack of experience or will to teach courses; 2) Public misunderstanding and fear; 3) District lack of support & institutional entropy; 4) Resource accessibility/time and a few comments related to; 5) Student lack of awareness or desire to learn. Quotes from survey and focus group participants below are sorted according to these categories.

Barriers to Effective Ethnic Studies

1. Teacher Lack of Experience & Will
2. Public Misunderstanding & Fear
3. District Lack of Support & Institutional Entropy
4. Student Lack of Awareness or Desire to Learn

Teacher Lack of Experience & Will

How beneficial ethnic studies is to middle or high school students depends. The benefit is only as good as the teacher. If you aren't of that culture, it can be a struggle, even teachers who are of the culture find it can be challenging. The hard part is to find the right balance. San Antonio Focus Group

Turnover among teachers is always a challenge. We have lots of turnover in my district. And maybe an experienced teacher becomes a 'new' teacher when s/he is changing subject matter. San Antonio Focus Group

At my campus, the most experienced teacher was under 2 years of experience. We've had a complete turnover for a variety of reasons, some moved up, others moved on. When I coached them I didn't have the opportunity to help them dive deep into lesson content. Mainly I spent my time just talking them off the cliff, helping them deal with the day-to-day logistics. If we are lucky, maybe we get 10-15 minutes to talk about new ideas, strategies, or technology. I'm lucky that our district has some strong curriculum already written. That's what

these new teachers used in the crutch. My goal is to have them go to the next level. San Antonio Focus Group

Teachers who lack cultural proficiency Teachers and students unaware of their own biases. Online Survey

Public Misunderstanding & Fear

I have some young teachers who call for coaching on how to handle the parents when teaching these topics. I tell them to stick to the TEKS because it's the protective umbrella - we are teaching exactly what the state has mandated. Our area is very conservative and the district doesn't like us to get off the path much, but as long as we can say we are following the TEKS then we are protected. Irving Focus Group

For curriculum and teaching in general, we have to be careful about anything that might be controversial. We don't want to get on the news. We are hyper-sensitive to front page news. Anything that is in writing and sent home to parents can be misconstrued. Therefore, our curriculum is rather prescriptive. Not because we know it all but we are protecting the teachers. If you teach this you won't be in trouble, it comes back to me. We have to be able to answer: 'Can we defend this' and 'Do the TEKS back it up?' We don't want to leave a teacher out there hanging. That's part of our job in training them. Irving Focus Group

District Lack of Support & Institutional Entropy

I'm a little nervous about the ethnic studies course. It was a very political decision. Teachers didn't get to pick what goes in TEKS – the state board comes in with scissors (cut) or markers (add) and they aren't always knowledgeable or accurate. Irving Focus Group

Students are very limited in their opportunities to take these ethnic studies courses due to the current required social studies curriculum. Online Survey

Resource Accessibility/Time Barrier

Teachers lacking the needed resources and pedagogical framework to make curriculum a viable one. Online Survey

The database of available digital resources is very broad (spreads hands). That's wonderful but it can be daunting. Too much of a good thing is still too much. Most young/new teachers are not so interested in writing their own lessons. They tend to be looking at us (instructional coaches) and saying, "Just tell me what you want me to do." Irving Focus Group

Student Lack of Awareness or Desire to Learn

Breaking down the pre-made assumptions that students come in to class with. Online Survey

Degree to which students with limited English language proficiency presents a barrier

The online survey asked educators to reflect on the degree to which students with no or limited English language skills affected ethnic studies courses. Educators were adamant that lack of English language proficiency was never a problem with any students. They expected teachers to scaffold and use a variety of strategies with students of varied needs.

Rating Scale	Count
Not at all important	3
Somewhat important	10
Important	6
Very important	4
Total	23

Table 4: Importance of language translation resources

Respondents placed varying degrees of emphasis on the importance of language translation resources for ethnic studies as Table 1 indicates.

When asked what languages most needed translation, opinions were divided across locations. As Table 2 illustrates, all three locations noted that Spanish translated materials were most needed. But there was no strong pattern for other languages.

	Austin	Irving	San Antonio
Spanish	6	7	6
Arabic	2	1	
French		2	
Chinese		1	
Vietnamese		1	1
"languages from Africa"		1	
Pashto			1
TOTAL	8	13	8

Table 5: Languages needed for translation by location

The following selection of quotes from the online survey reveal that educators see limited and varied language proficiency as something to be accommodated, like other accommodations made for the successful implementation of the course. (See full set of quotes in Appendix C.)

No barrier

Students with limited English proficiency do not present any barrier to successful implementation. Differentiation based on student needs is necessary no matter the content area or special population. Online Survey

ELL student's struggles are in reaching those higher-level connections to the content because they are processing material and trying to translate it to their native language. Online Survey

Current Situation

In order to design the most effective professional development experience, this study sought to better understand something about the current situation educators in these districts worked with. We gathered data on current ethnic studies courses offered in the districts represented in the focus groups, as well as the print and digital resources most helpful to teachers and curriculum writers. Educators told us about the frameworks or templates they used to create curriculum. The survey gathered data on the degree of access to technology in their schools.

Current Ethnic Studies Courses

Focus group participants were asked to talk about the ethnic studies courses offered (or not) in their district. As expected, after three years of implementation, the Austin ISD ethnic studies high school course is well established and popular with students and teachers. Their approach is to weave a variety of cultures and ethnicities in and through larger themes of identity. Coppell ISD [Irving area] uses the option provided in the TEKS for "special topics" courses to focus on specific ethnicities. Irving ISD also offers ethnic studies courses through the special topics option. In the past, interest in the course has lagged but they are seeing some increase in interest. Since there are no state standards related to ethnic studies, teachers are on their own, which can be a double-edged sword. There is the freedom to create what they want and it takes a lot

of time to create from the ground up. Edgewood ISD [San Antonio area] plans to offer an ethnic studies course during this school year (2019-20) and this course was developed and pushed through by the social studies instructional coaches, as there was little interest higher up in the district administration. While Austin ISD's approach is to explore multiple cultures through the lens of identity, many of the other districts tend to focus on Mexican American culture.

Courses Offered

When I taught elementary level [in Austin ISD] my team developed an identities unit. We use a project-based or service learning approach that is interdisciplinary. We wanted to integrate critical literacy and social justice topics. We weren't charged with making it happen by anyone. It's just something we pushed as a team. We had been a team for 4 years so we worked well together. We kept making improvements to the unit to make it better. We've shared it with a bunch of people but I don't know if it's been implemented anywhere else. We aren't following any district-wide plans. Now in my new position as curriculum writer I'm inclined personally to push that idea of a similar course at the elementary level. Austin Focus Group

Three years ago we launched an ethnic studies curriculum [in Austin ISD], the first in state of Texas. It is available on all of our high school campuses [16 high schools]. All but 2 of the campuses have "made" the course, meaning that students actually enroll in the course, and many schools offer 5-6 sections of the course. We've been featured in a number of places, on TV, radio, and newspapers, locally and nationally. We are fortunate in Austin to not face challenges as other districts and states face in terms of political and parental resistance. Austin Focus Group

The Austin district shared their Ethnic Studies curriculum with us. We developed a course that will be offered at one high school this year in Leander ISD but have not had one before. Our course looks a bit different than theirs [Austin's]. As far as I know we might be one of first suburban districts to have a course like this [Although Austin ISD was first district to offer ethnic studies in Texas but it is considered an urban district]. Austin Focus Group

In Coppell ISD we had special topics courses such as, Latin American studies and African American studies. For a while the courses were well attended, then enrollment dropped off and now seeing a resurgence in student interest. Irving Focus Group

The interest in ethnic studies has picked up, especially in Irving ISD high schools. Since there are no standards for special topics courses in social studies, the teachers sort of fly by their own guidance. There are pros and cons to that. Irving Focus Group

At Edgewood ISD we are just starting with a Mexican American studies course. We [Instructional coaches] are the ones pushing this – not the district. San Antonio Focus Group

Courses NOT Offered or Units Integrated Into Other Courses

Currently we don't have an ethnic studies course in the Hurst Euliss Bedford ISD. We are on a trimester schedule rather than a semester schedule, so the schedule is tight. Our district is heavy on International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement. Irving Focus Group

We have to compete for time to get social studies in front of the kids [in Hurst Euliss Bedford ISD]. The more access we have to resources that way, such as places kids can visit when they are little, the better. Irving Focus Group

My district [Harlandale ISD] doesn't offer anything specific. We had a Mexican American studies course in high school for 2 years now. It was sort of piece-mealed together. Since there is not an adopted textbook we use an adaptation of lots of things. San Antonio Focus Group

In the NE ISD there are 7 components to the AP humanities course. One is a focus on ethnic studies in high school. In middle school it's a more generic cultural studies. San Antonio Focus Group

Adding a Mexican American studies course [at Brooks Academy] is something we are interested in. Right now there are no stand-alone ethnic studies courses. There are some ethnic or culturally-focused lessons within other courses. San Antonio Focus Group

Resources

This study sought data about the kinds of resources, both district-supplied and self-supplied, that curriculum developers and teachers found most useful. The online survey asked educators to indicate if district-supplied or self-supplied resources were most valuable to them in the teaching of ethnic studies courses or units. As Table 3 indicates, the response varied by location and only two of the eight people from Austin who

	Austin	Irving	San Antonio
School/district-supplied texts and resources	0	2	6
Other/self-supplied texts or resources	2	5	3

responded to the survey answered this question, rendering that data unusable.

Table 6: Counts of most useful resources by district and self-supplied

Very few comments referenced print sources. A San Antonio area educator referenced a general use of college level textbooks. One Austin area educator noted two self-supplied print resources she used in writing curriculum.

We use a variety of texts that represent different ethnic groups. [A Different Mirror](#) and [A Different Mirror for Young People](#) are two that we use often. Online Survey – Austin area

Digital Resources

As might be expected these educators are making strong use of digital or online resources. The Irving area online survey respondents mentioned three digital subscription services that are

Most Common Reasons for Liking/Using a Digital Resource

- Opens students to a wider world
- Provide different/unusual primary sources & visuals
- Ease of Use /Good Search Function
- Curated collection
- Exemplars and/or Lessons & Activities
- Ability to link personal sites or collections to teachers/classrooms

provided by the district: [ABC-CLIO](#), [History Alive](#), and [CultureGrams](#), described below. One San Antonio area focus group participant mentioned a district-provided online resource - [Discovery Education](#).

Educators in all three locations noted a wide range of free digital resources in both the online survey and focus group discussions. Some of these sites could be used directly by students while others were sources for lessons and activities for use by the teacher. What educators most liked about these sites was that they provided students with a sense of the wider world,

District Supplied (fee-based) Resources/Subscriptions

[ABC-CLIO](#)
[History Alive](#)
[CultureGrams](#)
[Discovery Education](#).

there were complete lesson plans, the primary source collections were curated, the

search functions were flexible and appropriate for their needs, and there were opportunities to create personal sites or collections so curriculum coordinators could link directly for teachers.

Self-Accessed (free) Resources

[Google classrooms](#)

[Fords Theatre](#)

[Stanford History Education Group](#)

[Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History](#)

[DBQ project](#) [Document Based Questions]

[Teaching Texas](#) and [Texas Law Related Education](#)

[Digital Public Library of America](#) (DPLA)

[National Archives Educator Resources](#), [Library of Congress](#)

[LBJ library](#)

[Texas Archive of the Moving Image](#) (TAMY)

[National Constitutional Center](#)

Barriers to using digital primary resources for the typical classroom teacher are related to time and know-how. Most teachers do not have time to make sense of un-curated digital collections and/or they don't have the experience to curate their own truly useful online collections. One Austin focus group participant notes that Austin ISD uses [Canvas](#), a service for educational institutions that is:

“open, intuitive, and born in the cloud, Canvas streamlines all

the digital tools and content that teachers and students love, for a simpler and more connected learning experience.”

Consequently only digital resources that are compatible with Canvas can be integrated for any district using this platform. The question then arises if the Smithsonian Learning Lab is compatible with Canvas and if there are other similar platform compatibility barriers that might prevent use by a school district. One focus group participant suggested that the Smithsonian's tech person connect with district tech people to be sure the platforms are compatible.

During the focus group conversations a list of wants and needs related to digital resources emerged and some of these related to the Smithsonian's Learning Lab site. Specifically this included a need for curated collections and exemplars, more user-friendly searchable options, detailed lesson plans with options for special needs students, and better access to hard-to-find resources.

Frameworks/Curriculum Models

Focus group participants were asked to describe any existing frameworks they used to create curriculum for social studies in general and ethnic studies in particular. These discussions revealed that there was much variation in the ways these educators found and used existing frameworks, as well as the role of Texas state standards in the use of frameworks. Educators discussed how the state standards are uneven in quality and specificity, allowing for a wide range of interpretation. There are more social studies standards than for other subjects, requiring educators to bundle and cluster standards to make it possible to cover everything.

Many San Antonio focus group participants from different districts mentioned that they used the [TEKS Resource System](#) a fee-based service from the state education agency that provides scope & sequence for the core subjects. Districts are not required to use the service and the scope and sequence is for social studies in general, not ethnic studies. The Resource System is not allowed to provide lesson plans with the scope and sequence but they do offer activities, which many educators said were quite similar to lessons so it was more of a semantics issue.

Some districts prefer to create their own scope and sequence or use other frameworks that do not require a fee, such as [Understanding By Design](#) or the [Common Core National Standards](#). The formal use of [Common Core is actually illegal in Texas](#) but they are so similar to Texas state standards that the curriculum coordinators and instructional coaches felt confident they could easily translate to the state standards.

TEKS Issues

State Standards and curriculum development in Texas is a very complex question. The State provides TEKS (standards) but they are open to individual/district interpretation about how and when something is taught. Some TEKS are very specific and clear and others very open and up to the individual to interpret. So it becomes the district's responsibility to interpret the TEKS for the teachers. Some districts do it more effectively than others. The state gives us an umbrella and we try to figure out what that means through curriculum and day-to-day instruction. San Antonio Focus Group

The Social Studies state standards presents a particularly challenging task. As a contrast example, 8th grade science has 7 readiness standards and social studies has 27 standards. So you have to bundle them for teachers in order to create a coherent and reasonable framework. San Antonio Focus Group

TEKS Resource System

The TEKS Resource System does a fairly decent job of creating scope and sequence but I do my own tweaking when curriculum writing. There is never a curriculum resource or lesson that I can just print it off and roll out of bed and use it. They always need tweaking and refining, mostly because of the students we have. Some are more challenging for a variety of reasons and teachers have to scaffold more. A lot of school districts are moving towards the TEKS Resource System, even big districts. San Antonio Focus Group

The TEKS Resource System doesn't have ethnic studies resources. It has core areas, such as world geography and world history but not anything specific to ethnic studies. While Scott and Renee [at TEKS Resource System for Social Studies] can provide scope and sequence, they are not allowed by law to create any lessons. They do have some 'activities' in the guise of performance assessments but not a lot in the social studies area but don't call them lessons. A lot of rural districts that don't have a person like me [District Social Studies Coordinator] use the TEKS Resource System. San Antonio Focus Group

Other Framework Resources

We use the [Understanding By Design](#) approach where you begin with the end in mind. We look at the standards and think about how students benefit. Then determine what are overarching themes and guiding questions. Austin Focus Group

In Ethnic Studies we've allowed, within the scope and sequence, space for teachers to incorporate specific issues or ethnicities in their courses. All schools are teaching the same

theme or topic but in different ways. This creates more meaningful content. Austin Focus Group

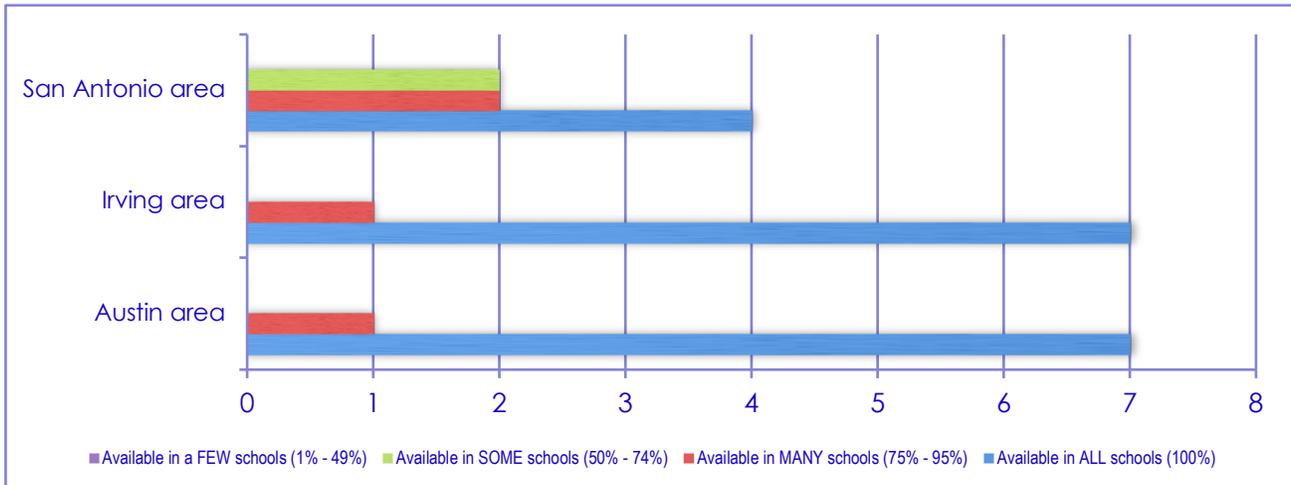


Figure 1: Availability of Internet access in classrooms/schools by location

NOTE: All data for questions about technology availability are reported in counts as the sample size is too small to calculate percentages.

Technology/Internet Access in Schools

Online respondents were asked several questions about technology and internet access in their districts. Knowing this information will be helpful to workshop leaders as they create experiences relevant for participants.

When analyzed together Internet access is available in over half of the schools (15 of 24 responses) but this changes slightly when the results are cross-tabulated by location (See figure 1). The San Antonio area respondents, which had representatives from a

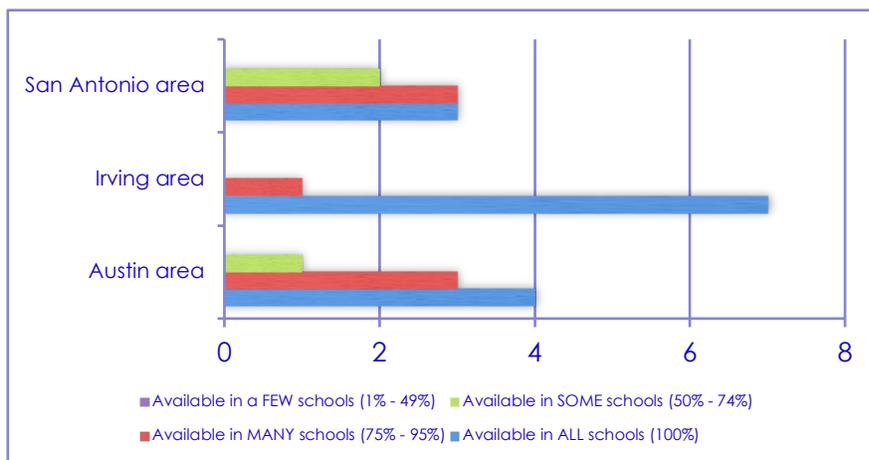


Figure 2: Availability of ability to display Internet content to the whole class by location

range of smaller school districts, has more variation in availability of classroom Internet.

Similarly when the locations are analyzed together on the question of degree to which Internet content can be displayed for whole class to see (such as Smart Board or LCD projector), over half of the schools (15 of 24 responses) indicated it was available in all

schools. When analyzed by location, the pattern shifts slightly. Again, the San Antonio area and Austin area respondents reported more variability in the ability to show Internet content to the whole class. (See figure 2)

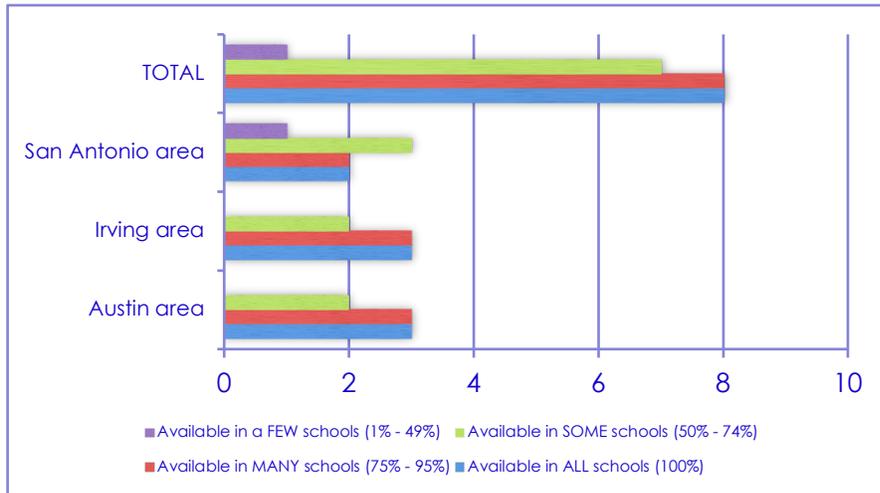


Figure 3: Availability of ability for individual or small group of students to access Internet content by location

The whole-group analysis for the degree to which Internet content can be displayed for individual or small-group student viewing showed a fairly even distribution across the top three choices. The pattern is similar when analyzed by location. While some districts have 1-to-1 availability where there is a laptop or computer available for

each student, many districts or schools still do not have this level of saturation.

Focus group participants noted that technology use in the classroom can be challenging for teachers for a variety of reasons. Convincing teachers to project on a screen to the whole class is often difficult because it requires a high degree of preparation and planning and access to the hardware/equipment can be challenging as other departments often check it out or keep it in their classrooms. All of this is part of what causes teachers to prefer print/paper resources.

Technology Access Challenges

We are not 1-to-1 in our district, meaning not every kid has a device. Convincing teachers that it's OK to just project on the screen for the whole class is sometimes a challenge. Printing ink is a hot commodity – a challenge – if something is not printed in color it's not worth it but it's too expensive to print a copy for each kid. San Antonio Focus Group

Sometimes the access to devices is a hiccup. If I'm going to project for the whole class I have to have it all planned ahead of time. It has to run smoothly or Middle School kids get distracted. San Antonio Focus Group

Use of Primary Resources & Field Trips

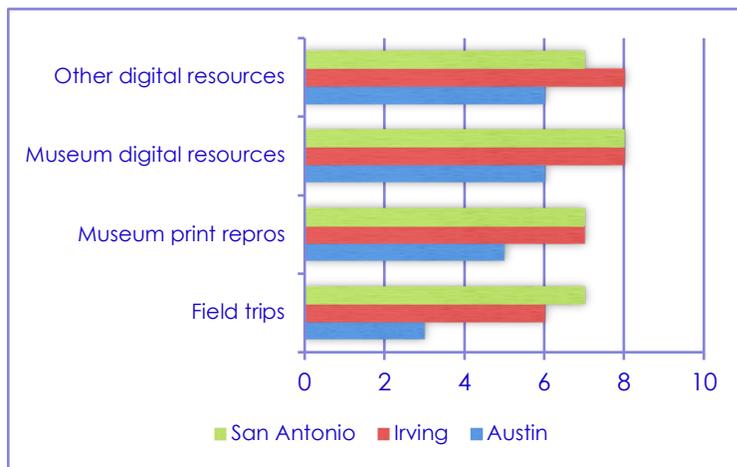


Figure 4: Used of primary resources and field trips by location

Online survey respondents were asked to indicate their experiences using a range of primary resources and field trips. The patterns in the data were fairly consistent across all locations and choices given the small sample size.

Focus group participants were asked to comment on the role that local museums or arts centers play in helping them and classroom teachers be more effective. Educators provided multiple examples of

ways that local cultural organizations have enhanced student learning. In particular, The Blanton Museum and the Bullock Museum of Texas History in the Austin area were frequently mentioned. As is the case with many schools across the nation, school field trip attendance is often dependent on special funding through grant programs initiated through the district or by the museums. Educators who have not taken students on field trips hoped to do so in the future but the challenges of time to organize and lack of funding are considerable.

Preferences for Effective Professional Development

A range of measures sought information about educators' preferences in professional development experiences. In the online survey, respondents rated the value of a list of characteristics relative to professional development. Learning something new and getting to directly apply that learning were considered the most important aspects of professional development. The opportunity to work with other curriculum developers was rated high by just over half of the educators but lower by the other half and sharing lessons learned was rated the least important aspect of professional development. (See figure 5) The open-ended survey responses and focus group discussions provided some insight into why there is a divide on the issue of collaborating and sharing with peers. For many of these educators the time spent in workshops introducing each other and sharing feels like wasted time.

Local Resources/Field Trips Mentioned

Austin

[Missions](#)

[The Blanton](#)

[Bullock State History Museum](#)

[George Carver Museum](#)

[Umlauf Museum and Sculpture Garden](#)

San Antonio

[Fredericksburg museums Holocaust](#)

[Memorial Museum of San Antonio](#)

Irving

(No specific references to field trip sites)

Most Valued Professional Development Experiences/Characteristics

- Have exemplars or models
- Time to explore resources
- Time to apply what is learned to specific needs in the curriculum
- Can see how workshop ideas can be quickly turned around for use by teachers
- Workshop purpose is clear and activities align with the purpose
- Collaboration with peers
- Respect for and knowledge of K-12 environment

What Does Not Work in Professional Development Workshops

- Lack of active inquiry or application
- Too much sit-and-get format
- Lack of clear focus
- Inefficient use of time

Specific ideas that survey respondents most valued in professional development workshops were having exemplars and models, opportunities to explore resources, and time to apply models and resources to specific lessons or tasks that they need to complete. Unsurprisingly the curriculum writers/instructional coaches

are focused on being able to quickly turn around their workshop experiences into practical and useful strategies for teachers. (See figure 6)

Focus group participants were asked to envision the perfectly targeted professional development workshop for ethnic studies curriculum writers. The analysis of these discussions resulted in some categories of comments. The two largest categories of responses were sorted into "Expectations" and "Application." The expectations category included an expectation that the purpose or structure of the session would be clear including who would be invited to the workshop, the desire to find new resources, and a few miscellaneous suggestions for ways to approach the workshop. Some of the focus group participants understood that they were not allowed to attend the workshop if they did not attend the focus group conversation. A few respondents expected (or hoped) that whoever is brought in to lead the workshop have an understanding of and respect for the K-12 environment.

Although the category of Application could arguably be coded as an expectation, the issue was significantly strong to warrant a category of its own. This finding reflects the rating of preferences in the online survey. Educators cited the importance of having some sort of quick reference guide to the Learning Lab site that they could take back to their teachers. They also asked for information in advance of the workshop as to what they needed to bring, such as laptops and ethnic studies curricula they are working on. Smaller categories of responses included having exemplars or models, reflections of prior use of the Smithsonian's Learning Lab, and sharing ideas in collaboration with peers,

Two main categories of responses relative to what does not work revolved around lack of active inquiry or application (too much sit-and-get format) and a lack of focus and inefficient use of time.

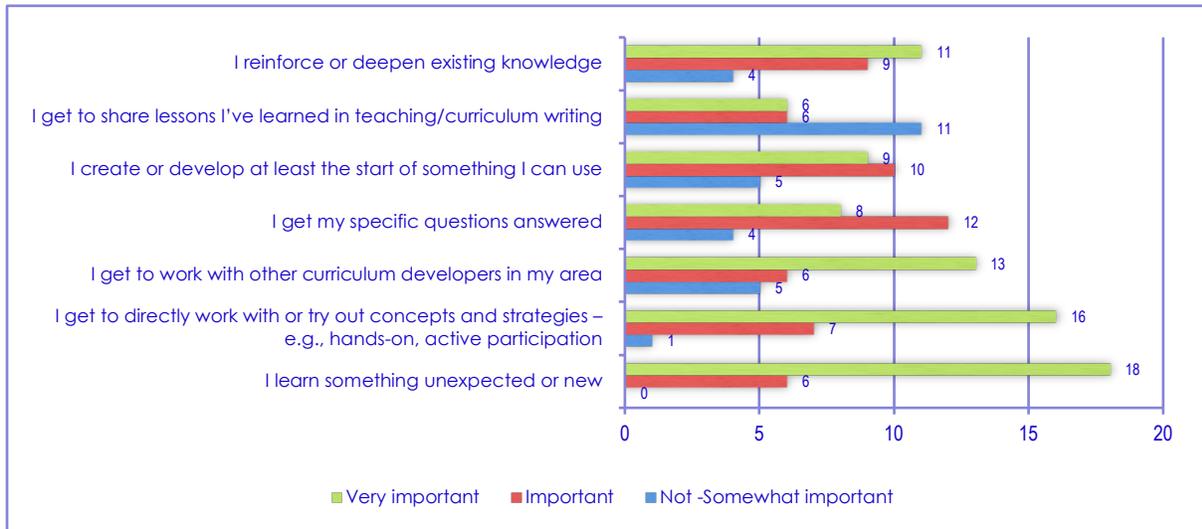


Figure 5: Value of characteristics in professional development workshops

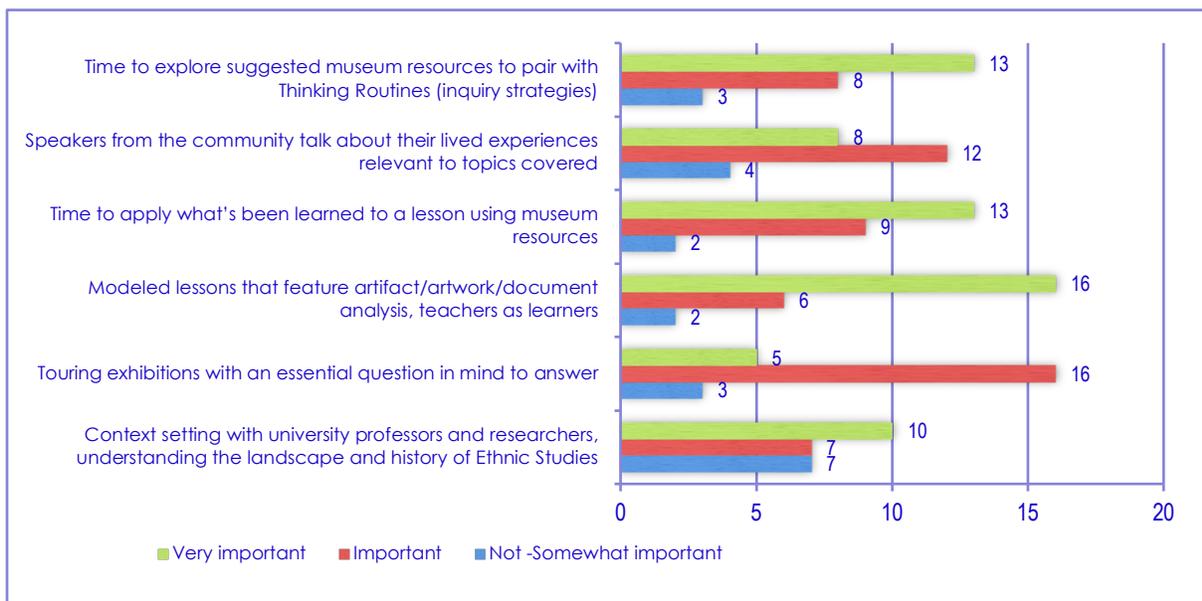


Figure 6: Degree to which specific activities are considered useful

Expectations

Purpose, Structure, Schedule, Participants

We need to focus on Hispanic studies. Irving Focus Group

If the idea is teachers are free to go out and add to the site, you want to make sure you are focusing on the right things. If we apply it in a certain way, that's fine. If we just show teachers how to use the site without some sort of structure for them, then implementation will be an issue. Irving Focus Group

The thinking routine – don't remember the name of it - it's something like notice, wonder, think – maybe it's from [Project Zero](#)? [See, Think, Wonder] Using that structure to help teachers guide students is useful. Austin Focus Group

I want time to explore the site and time to work through stuff with the Smithsonian staff and Melanie be available to ask questions and help. San Antonio Focus Group

I think you will be expected to write a lesson plan that day using the digital resource. That's OK but do you have a lesson plan template? I think it's best for the Smithsonian to use their own template. For example, the Law Related Education site uses their own template and that's OK with us. We need some continuity. I don't know if there is a lesson plan template on the Smithsonian site. I'm on the Learning Lab site right now but I don't see lesson plans. You go pull the resources you like to create your lessons. Doesn't look like there is a place to plug in your lesson plan. Irving Focus Group

Find Resources & Assistance to Do Better

Every time we say 'ethnic studies' what pops in my head is cultures. We have a curriculum strand by that name – 'cultures' so I can see ethnic studies integrated in every course in K-12. Do we do a good job of it? No, we can and need to do better. But this project (Smithsonian Learning Lab project) can help us pry it open a bit. We are here for the potential of resources in already existing courses. Irving Focus Group

I would like to be able to use a strong resource that is accurate, as a starting point. Accuracy is an issue with online resources. Irving Focus Group

Resources for areas where there are fewer resources in our area such as Asian-American studies, Native-American studies, and Arab-American studies. Online Survey

Suggestions

Maybe this shouldn't be just a one and done workshop – maybe this is the intro workshop then need a follow up. Irving Focus Group.

We also do professional development with [Facing History](#). They do a 3-day workshop at the beginning of the summer for all teachers in the program and you meet with the Facing History teachers throughout the year and can have phone conferences. So they continue to help rather than a one-shot contact. Austin Focus Group

Application

I want to have something to take back with me – maybe created some curated collections. Austin Focus Group

Teachers want resources they can use. Austin Focus Group

We want time to apply it to what we are doing. If teachers come, having time for them to get their hands dirty and being able to share. Austin Focus Group

In a good professional development I want you to show me what you have, show me how to use it and let me have time to play in the sandbox – to create or start to create something on my own or with a small group. It's the theory to practice loop. Austin Focus Group

We need quick, no-prep lessons, so teachers don't have to search for anything. It's all in their hands. Irving Focus Group

I think we are all thinking of turning around anything we do at the workshop to give to our teachers. So if you do a training with us we are thinking about turning it around. Irving Focus Group

I want to leave with something created or partly created to apply to a specific lesson so I could turn it around to teachers. Show them how it can work for them. This is super useful for getting primary sources into the lessons. Something tangible to take away from it. Austin Focus Group

I'd like to bring back something like a one-pager reference sheet that we could share with our teachers – about the digital resource at Smithsonian – like a quick start guide. Teachers don't have time to read much more. Irving Focus Group

Would be helpful if we can preview ahead of time what is there on the site. I want to talk with my team about which unit or section we want to work on during the workshop. So would be good to have some advance warning to think about and bring stuff to include. I want it to be something I'm going to teach soon – to test it out. –maybe something I can teach in the winter or spring. San Antonio Focus Group

Exemplars

It takes a long time to create a good and complete lesson plan so I'm not sure it's reasonable to expect we can finish one in a few hours (at the fall workshop) so rather than write a lesson plan maybe it's about creating a few collections on the Learning Lab site. Irving Focus Group

Just telling a teacher to make their own collection and assign it to their students, well, you won't get many hits on that. It needs to be rather 'done' for the teachers. Irving Focus Group

In the Smithsonian site during the workshop I would want to start some curated collections my teachers could use. San Antonio Focus Group

Collaboration

Also provide some time to show-out and talk about what they've done. Work time is valuable but sometimes it's not used well. It devolves into conversation and just looking at images. Sometimes they leave without getting much done. They say it's great, what they did, but if you want some sort of accountability check, have people share out at least an idea they are developing and then a place to post out – so others can see how teachers actually use it. Austin Focus Group

Understanding/respect for K-12 Environment

Although I am currently pursuing a doctorate myself, I often find that university professors and researchers lack a true understanding of how K-12 education works. I hope these experts will not show disdain for K-12 colleagues. Online Survey

What doesn't work

Too Much "Sit-and-Get" - Lack of Active Inquiry/Application

We are sitting and listening for too long. It would be helpful to have some physical activity involved in the PD. Online Survey

Sit-and-get formats are boring and while most adults would say they prefer it, they will always get more out of a hands-on experience. Online Survey

Not enough time to reflect on learning, to apply to our own practice or align with other district programs/initiatives. Online Survey

Being shown/read PowerPoint presentations and not having time to think how to use the information. Online Survey

Lack of Focus/Organization

Disorganization, no focused goals for participants. Online Survey

Unclear learning goals. Not keeping to time. Online Survey

The presenter clearly knows their content area, but does not effectively facilitate a workshop.

Too much time spent on sharing names and ice breakers when everyone forgets each other's name anyways. Online Survey

Introductions around the room – time waster. Online Survey

Also, ice breaker activities are not necessary. Online Survey

Conclusions & Recommendations

Results Summary

Benefits to Students

Three main areas of benefits to students from taking ethnic studies were identified by study participants as:

4. New awareness & understanding – Students gain a wider point of view;
5. See oneself reflected in curriculum resulting in students' engaging more in school and, in turn, often involves families in different and meaningful ways;
6. Fosters tolerance & empathy among students.

Barriers to Effective Ethnic Studies

Educators identified four barriers that hampered effective implementation of ethnic studies courses:

1. Teacher lack of experience teaching about cultures with which they are unfamiliar or lack of will or interest in learning how to teach these topics;
2. Public misunderstanding & fear of cultures other than their own;
3. District lack of support & institutional entropy;
4. Student lack of awareness or desire to learn.

Participants were asked to reflect on the degree to which students with no or limited English language skills affected ethnic studies courses. Educators were adamant that lack of English language proficiency was never a problem with any students. They expected teachers to scaffold and use a variety of strategies with students with all types of needs.

Respondents placed varying degrees of emphasis on the importance of language translation resources for ethnic studies. When asked what languages most needed translation, opinions were divided across locations. All three locations noted that Spanish translated materials were most needed but there was no strong pattern for other languages.

Current Situation

In order to design the most effective professional development experience, this study sought to better understand something about the current situation with which these educators had to contend.

Courses Offered or not

- As expected, after three years of implementation, the Austin ISD ethnic studies high school course is well established and popular with students and teachers. Their approach is to weave a variety of cultures and ethnicities in and through larger themes of identity.
- Coppell ISD [Irving area] uses the option provided in the TEKS for “special topics” courses to focus on specific ethnicities. Irving ISD also offers ethnic studies courses through the special topics option. In the past, interest in the course has lagged but they are seeing some increase in interest.

- Edgewood ISD [San Antonio area] plans to offer an ethnic studies course during this school year (2019-20) and this course was developed and pushed through by the social studies instructional coaches, as there was little interest higher up in the district administration.

Since there are no state standards related to ethnic studies in Texas, curriculum writers and teachers are essentially on their own, which can be a double-edged sword. There is the freedom to create what they want AND it takes a lot of time to create from the ground up. While Austin ISD's approach is to explore multiple cultures through the lens of identity, many of the other districts tend to focus on Mexican American culture or on single cultures.

Resources

Participants reported using a variety of resources, very few of which referenced print sources. Digital resources are widely used by these educators. A few of these were subscription fee-based resources provided by the district but most were free. Some of these sites could be used directly by students while others were sources for lessons and activities for use by the teacher. However, educators acknowledge that classroom teachers usually prefer to use printed resources for a variety of reasons. Since copier ink is a valuable commodity in schools this stops many from printing off Internet sites.

The most common reasons study participants gave for liking and using a digital resource were:

- Opens students to a wider world;
- Provides out-of-the-ordinary primary sources & visuals;
- Ease of use including flexible or responsive search function;
- Curated collections organized around topic, theme, and culture;
- Exemplars and/or lessons & activities that can be used directly and used as inspiration;
- Ability to link personal sites or collections directly to teachers and/or classrooms.

Barriers to using digital resources for the typical classroom teacher are related to time and know-how. Most teachers do not have time to make sense of un-curated digital collections and/or they don't have the experience to curate their own truly useful online collections.

Frameworks

Focus group participants were asked to describe any existing frameworks they used to create curriculum for social studies in general and for ethnic studies in particular. There was much variation in the ways educators found and used existing frameworks, as well as the role of Texas state standards in the use of frameworks. Educators discussed how the state standards are uneven in quality and specificity, allowing for a wide range of interpretation. Since there are more social studies standards than for other subjects, educators have to bundle or cluster standards to make it possible to cover everything.

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the service and the scope and sequence is for social studies in general, not ethnic studies. The TEKS Resource System is not allowed to provide lesson plans with the scope and sequence but they do offer “activities,” which many educators said were quite similar to lessons.

Some districts prefer to create their own scope and sequence or use other frameworks that do not require a fee, such as [Understanding By Design](#) or the [Common Core National Standards](#). Note that the formal use of [Common Core is actually illegal in Texas](#) but they are so similar to Texas state standards that the curriculum coordinators and instructional coaches felt confident they could easily translate to the state standards.

Technology

Internet access is available in over half of the schools but this changes slightly when the results are cross-tabulated by location. San Antonio area respondents, which had representatives from a range of smaller school districts, has more variation in availability of classroom Internet.

Over half of the schools (15 of 24 responses) indicated Internet content can be displayed for whole class to see was available in all schools. When analyzed by location, the pattern shifts slightly. Again, the San Antonio area and Austin area respondents reported more variability in the ability to show Internet content to the whole class. While some districts have 1-to-1 availability where there is a laptop or computer available for each student, many districts or schools still do not have this level of saturation.

Technology use in the classroom can be challenging for teachers for a variety of reasons. Convincing teachers to project on a screen to the whole class is often difficult because it requires a high degree of preparation and planning, as well as easy access to the hardware/equipment.

Some districts use a cloud-based service that helps teachers organize digital content. It was suggested that the Smithsonian make sure the Learning Lab is compatible with these services. In addition, educators emphasized that any digital site they expect to be used by students is safe and their identity is protected.

Fieldtrips

Educators provided multiple examples of ways that local cultural organizations have enhanced student learning, particularly for the Austin area participants. For example, the Blanton Museum and the Bullock Museum of Texas History in the Austin area were frequently mentioned. As is the case with many schools across the nation, school field trip attendance is often dependent on special funding through grant programs initiated through the district or by the museums. Educators who have not taken students on field trips hoped to do so in the future but the challenges of time to organize and lack of funding are considerable.

Preferences for Professional Development

Characteristics Most Valued in Professional Development

When asked to rate a list of characteristics in professional development workshops, the top four (of seven) most highly rated characteristics were:

1. I learn something unexpected or new
2. I get to directly work with or try out concepts and strategies – e.g., hands-on, active participation
3. I get to work with other curriculum developers in my area
4. I reinforce or deepen existing knowledge

In discussions, educators expanded on the most valued professional development experiences with the following characteristics rising to the top (and supporting the survey rated items above):

- Have exemplars or models to review
- Time to explore resources (e.g., Learning Lab)
- Time to apply what is learned to specific needs in the curriculum
- Opportunity to see how workshop ideas can be quickly turned around for use by teachers
- Workshop purpose is clear and activities align with the purpose

Educators described what does not work in professional development workshops with the most frequently mentioned as follows:

- Lack of active inquiry or application
- Too much sit-and-get format
- Lack of clear focus
- Inefficient use of time

Further conversation revealed a pattern in the ways educators envisioned the “perfect” professional development workshop, further confirming the findings from the previously presented measures. The two largest categories of responses were sorted into “Expectations” and “Application.”

The Expectations category included the expectation that:

- The purpose or structure of the session would be clear - including who would be invited to the workshop;
- The desire to find new resources, especially for topics or cultures for which there are fewer resources;
- That whoever is brought in to lead the workshop have an understanding of and respect for the K-12 environment.

The application category included:

- Some sort of quick reference guide to the Learning Lab site that they could take back to their teachers;
- Information in advance of the workshop as to what they needed to bring, such as laptops and ethnic studies curricular they are working on;
- Exemplars or models that are easily adaptable for their teachers;
- Meaningful collaboration with peers to exchange ideas.

Two main categories of responses relative to what does not work revolved around lack of active inquiry or application (too much set-and-get format) and a lack of focus and inefficient use of time.

Implications & Recommendations

This study yielded a number of useful findings that can and, in many cases, already have had an influence on how the professional development sessions can be tailored to each location. Consider the following discussion as suggested designed to inspire workshop presenters.

Use of Benefits to Strengthen SI Project & Support Districts Efforts

The description of benefits to students from ethnic studies while not surprising, can be used to support educators' efforts to strengthen support for these courses and, at the same time promote the Smithsonian's Learning Lab resource. For example, the SI staff could develop a visually attractive one-page summary of benefits to students from ethnic studies course with some selected quotes from the study on one side and the one-page quick start guide to the Learning Lab on the other side. In previous studies we have found that teachers appreciate this type of support as they can use it to show administrators and parents. It will also help address the barrier cited by study participants of public misunderstanding a fear.

Use Current Situation Findings to Tailor Workshops to Specific Locations

When the SI staff read through the preliminary report they noted multiple findings that informed decisions about the workshops. From a larger perspective they recognized the need to have some type of needs assessment study for any SI professional development workshops in the future. That the three locations are quite different from each other was obvious to the SI staff before this study. What the study revealed was even more variation within each location.

For example, the participants in the Irving location come from several school districts, each with different populations and concerns. One district is concerned about public and parental resistance to any ethnic studies course that is not tightly mapped to the social studies standards – even though there are no specific ethnic studies standards in Texas. The curriculum supervisor's advice to teachers was "don't show up on the evening news." Some districts are, for the most part, racially homogenous, while others have large non-English speaking populations from all over the world.

Austin ISD has three years of working out the kinks in their ethnic studies course for high schools but because of administration reorganization, the social studies curriculum writing staff is quite new to the job. These educators were enthusiastic and not concerned about public/parental resistance. To some degree the district, while not being obstructive is not always proactive on their behalf. Leander ISD, a much smaller district adjacent to Austin, is just starting an ethnic studies course this school year.

San Antonio and the surrounding districts do not have a stand-alone ethnic studies course in high schools. They have been including special topics units within other courses, such as World History. They did not appear to be

concerned about public resistance, rather, it seemed they were more stretched for time and resources.

What this presents for the workshop presenters is a big challenge as they will need to think of ways to scaffold the experience to meet participants where they are. For example, this finding suggests that separating participants, for some part of the workshop, into break-out groups based on their experience or their district's track record with ethnic studies. If a one-size-fits-all approach is used there is a risk that more experienced people will be bored and/or educators new to the task will be lost or overwhelmed.

Clarify District Technology Use Policies to Insure Ease of Use by Educators

While only a few educators raised the point that there might be some technical gateways that could hamper use of the Learning Lab by teachers, it is still an issue worth checking.

Needs and Preferences for Professional Development

Frameworks and Templates

There were no strong patterns in what frameworks or lesson plan templates that respondents used but it is clear that educators wanted the SI to provide a lesson plan template. It might be helpful to pull up some of the templates referred to in the study and that those templates available at the workshop. Then participants could select the template that is most familiar to them or the one they like the best.

Exemplars and Models

A strong theme in the data was the need for exemplars or models for educators to review. This gives them a sense of what you are looking for. Ideally it would be helpful for workshop participants to be able to access personal sites or collections on the Learning Lab that staff developed around some themes and topics of interest to participants.

Advance Organizer and Preparation for the Workshop

Educators asked for an advance organizer as to what was going to happen and what they would be expected to do at the workshop. They also wanted to be reminded to bring an ethnic studies curriculum project they wanted to start, continue to work on, or refine to the workshop. The SI staff have already implemented this request from study participants.

How Time is Organized in the Workshop

Educators in general and these curriculum developers, in particular, have more responsibilities than time and staff to complete the tasks. It is not surprising, then, that there was as strong pattern in the data around how time is spent in the workshop. They, no doubt, have spent a fair bit of time in workshops that are not well organized, relevant, or applicable. There was a strong pattern of comments about the need for good organization of time.

- ✓ Time for Ice Breakers & Introductions

There was some strong opposition against collaboration, sharing, and ice-breakers from a few study participants. These educators felt the activities were time wasters and they are right – when collaborative and warm-up experiences are not tightly aligned to the purpose of the workshop and instructions are clear. If an ice breaker is directly related to what they are going to do in the workshop and is something that will add to their experience, then it can be highly effective.

Knowing who is at the workshop is helpful both for presenters and participants but this process all too often eats up valuable time with little benefit. Consider developing a creative and out of the ordinary way participants can find out about each other. If we want educators to be creative in developing curriculum and using resources, then the workshop presenters need to model that behavior from the start and throughout the session. For example, there is always a bit of time at the beginning of a workshop that is spent waiting for late arrivals. There could be a response wall that people could work on as they are waiting for the workshop to start. For a day-long workshop at a recent Visitor Studies Association we put a map on the wall and asked participants as they came in to place dots on the map indicating where they lived. As participants completed the tasks they naturally talked with others, exchanging pleasantries. While this specific task would not be pertinent to the purpose of the ethnic studies workshops, the idea might inspire staff to create one that is more pertinent. Perhaps people could indicate on a map the country or culture they are most interested in teaching about but feel the least prepared. If the map is larger enough and the dots or sticky notes are bright enough, the results can be seen across the room. Meanwhile make table tents with participants' name and district in BIG letters on both sides of the tent so it can be read from a distance. During the welcome there could be a brief discussion about the ways people responded to the map task and a brief recap of the school districts represented.

Another approach might be to tell participants they have exactly 30 seconds (or 15 seconds is plenty) to give their name, district, role, and one thing that inspires them about ethnic studies courses. Create a kind of light-hearted game environment with a bell and a digital timer, ringing the bell when 30 seconds is up and moving to the next person. Perhaps give participants about 1 minute or preparation time.

✓ Time for Collaboration

Previous studies of educator professional development suggest that classroom teachers value peer-to-peer time for sharing and working through tasks. However, as some study participants noted, this can quickly devolve into wasted time if the tasks given are not clear, specific, relevant, and applicable. It may be, however, that the curriculum coordinators are not as isolated as classroom teachers and, therefore, do not need as much social interaction with peers. It would be helpful to have conversations with the lead curriculum coordinators at the different locations to see if their team wants or needs this kind of interaction.

- ✓ Time to explore resources (e.g., Learning Lab & Affiliate Site) and apply what is learned to specific needs in the curriculum

Educators want time to explore the resources provided by the Learning Lab and asked for a one-page quick-start guide to the interface that they could pass on to teachers. While a tour of the Affiliate site is planned and will be of personal interest to educators, consider finding a way to connect the use of the site with the Learning Lab resource. Rather than giving participants a quick walk through of the space, have them choose specific areas that relate directly to the lesson plan or task they were asked to bring (See Advance Organizer above), have table and chairs available in the gallery and have educators work in that space as they seek to integrate both the museum exhibition and the Learning Lab resource into the curriculum they chose to work on.

The emphasis of the workshop should be tightly focused on application, providing examples and models, and giving time for participants to at least get a good start on a curriculum writing task they need to complete in the near future. Not only is this valuable for the educators but it provides a clear place to measure the effectiveness of the workshops in helping teachers apply their learning.

Tailor the Experience for the Real World of K-12 Educators

There were a few comments that requested presenters be both respectful of and knowledgeable about the environment that these educators work in. These people noted that sometimes presenters who have not had direct experience in K-12 public education seem judgmental about the institution or present ideas that are unrealistic given the pressures and requirements they have to navigate. In my experience this disconnect is usually unintended by the presenter, but they don't know what they don't know anything about. It would be ideal to involve one or two curriculum supervisors in each location in the planning of the workshops. At the least, they could be given a preview of the agenda and invited to make some suggestions for refinements.

References

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Appendix A: Pre-Focus Group Online Survey Protocol
Smithsonian Summer 2019 Ethnic Studies Pre-Focus Group Survey

Demographics

- 1) What is your location? (The location where you will attend the fall workshop.)
 - Austin area
 - San Antonio area
 - Irving/Dallas area
 - Other - Write In:

- 2) Please check the one category that best describes your current position (as of today):
 - Curriculum developer AND K-12 Teacher
 - Curriculum developer / supervisor ONLY (no direct teaching of K-12 students)
 - Social studies teacher ONLY (not involved in writing curriculum)
 - School administrator (not directly involved in writing curriculum or teaching K-12 students)
 - Smithsonian Affiliate: gallery, museum, and/or municipal department (e.g., Parks & Rec), university
 - Other - Write In:

- 3) How long have you been in your current position?
 - Less than one year
 - 1 -3 years
 - 4-7 years
 - 7+ years

Benefits, Barriers, & Resources

4) When teaching ethnic studies and/or writing ethnic studies curricula, what are the resources that are most valuable/useful?

Note: If you are not currently teaching but have taught ethnic studies in the past please answer this question, otherwise skip it.

- School/district-supplied texts and resources
- Other/self-supplied texts or resources

5) Describe one of these district-supplied resources and why you value it.

6) Describe one of you most valued/used self-supplied resources. Where did you find it and how?

7) If you have prior experience with ethnic studies teaching and/or curriculum writing, think back to when you first started, what advice would you give people new to the process?

8) How can or do students BENEFIT from taking ethnic studies courses?

9) What do you see as one or two significant BARRIERS to students benefiting in the ways you articulated above?

10) If you did not mention it above, to what degree do students with limited English language proficiency present a barrier to successful implementation of your ethnic studies course?

11) How important is it that curricula material be translated in one or more languages?

- Not at all important
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Very important

12) What language(s) most need translation?

Logistics

13) Classroom access to internet:

- NOT available in any classrooms (0%)
- Available in a few classrooms (1% - 49%)
- Available in some classrooms (50% - 74%)
- Available in many classrooms (75% - 95%)
- Available in all schools/all classrooms (100%)

14) Internet content can be displayed for whole class to see (such as Smart Board or LCD projector):

- NOT available in any classrooms (0%)
- Available in a few classrooms (1% - 49%)
- Available in some classrooms (50% - 74%)
- Available in many classrooms (75% - 95%)
- Available in all schools/all classrooms (100%)

15) Internet content can be displayed for individual or small-group student viewing:

- NOT available in any classrooms (0%)
- Available in a few classrooms (1% - 49%)
- Available in some classrooms (50% - 74%)
- Available in many classrooms (75% - 95%)
- Available in all schools/all classrooms (100%)

Integrating Visual Arts

16) What's your experience using primary documents, art, and/or museum resources in your classroom and/or curriculum development. (Select all that apply)

- Have taken or planned student field trips to museums/exhibits
- Have used printed reproductions provided by museums/galleries
- Have used digital, web-based images and/or resources provided by museums/galleries
- Have used primary documents and/or art reproductions (printed or digital) from resources other than museums/galleries
- Have not used any art or museum resources in teaching or curriculum development

17) Rate the value of these characteristics or activities when participating in professional development sessions:

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very Important
I get to directly work with or try out concepts and strategies – e.g., hands-on, active participation				
I get my specific questions answered				
I create or develop at least the start of something I can use				
I get to work with other curriculum developers in my area				
I get to share lessons I've learned in teaching/curriculum writing				
I learn something unexpected or new				
I reinforce or deepen existing knowledge				

18) Here are some specific ideas for the fall 2019 workshop. Please rate based on the degree to which you feel these activities will be useful to you.

	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very Useful
Context setting with university professors and researchers, understanding the landscape and history of Ethnic Studies				
Touring exhibitions with an essential question in mind to answer				
Modeled lessons that feature artifact/artwork/document analysis, teachers as learners				
Time to apply what's been learned to a lesson using museum resources				
Speakers from the community talk about their lived experiences relevant to topics covered				
Time to explore suggested museum resources to pair with Thinking Routines (inquiry strategies)				

19) What is something you find NOT useful or frustrating about most PD workshops you've attended? (Can be structure, format, content, activities, anything.)

20) What else do you want to tell us that will help in the development of the fall 2019 ethnic studies workshop in your area?

Thank You!

Appendix B: Focus Group Protocol

SI Ethnic Studies Focus Group Protocol

The following are the conversation topics we intend to cover during the onsite focus groups and small group phone conversations:

1. **(Why? Student Focus)** What are the **Benefits/Impacts** of ethnic studies for students? How do you know this?
2. **(Resources/Museum)** What role can your local **museums/arts center** play in helping you do your job better?
3. **(Pedagogical)** Are there existing frameworks re teaching ethnic studies / social studies that you use or are recommend by your district? What liked? What doesn't work?
4. **Professional Development Workshop Preferences** – if you could envision the perfectly targeted PD workshop for Ethnic Studies, what would it look like? (Base conversation on pre-survey data of voting list of activities.)

Appendix C: Full Set of Respondent Quotes

Benefits to Students of Ethnic Studies

New Awareness/Understanding – Wider Point of View

Students benefit from taking ethnic studies courses by learning about a world outside their world. This expands their understanding of the world. Online Survey

I think it gives students an important lens on history, honoring the histories of non-dominant cultures. It helps promote social justice and cultural proficiency. Students benefit by becoming more culturally proficient, more self-aware and aware of others, better advocates, and critical thinkers. Online Survey

Learning about other cultures can broaden students' world-view and make them more open to different opinions. Online Survey

Students from the dominant group can gain a general understanding and learn to respect all cultures and ethnic groups. Online Survey

Exposes students to a broader spectrum of cultures so they are more aware of the world they live in and can some day become global citizens. Online Survey

Any opportunity to analyze the world around them is beneficial, but analyzing through different perspectives helps with critical thinking in a deeper way. Online Survey

On the flip side, non-students of color will also benefit by learning a different perspective of the American narrative that isn't always taught. Online Survey

Students benefit from taking ethnic studies courses by gaining a more robust historical picture that includes traditionally marginalized groups. Online Survey

Students on predominantly white campuses enjoy learning about other cultures, other histories. They appreciate seeing the dominant narrative challenged and do a social-cultural critique. It helps them learn to question. We've had instances where students are uncomfortable in the classes but unable to un-enroll. They have to be there the whole year. Teachers say these students tend to push the class in a good way. While everyone might not agree they learn how to respectfully disagree. They learn how to think. Austin Focus Group

In my 1st or 2nd year teaching we had a huge surge of refugees. When we got to our culture unit, we had our TEKS – these are just surface level, such as, these are the major religions, etc. all surface level, we don't go into depth. In the middle of the unit we were doing independent work on the Muslim Call to Prayer. The students started talking about it and one of the refugee students, a Muslim, explained that she just used her phone app to reminder about the Call to Prayer. She didn't need to pull out a rug. It opened up a huge and very good discussion that I didn't have any background on. San Antonio Focus Group

In the 6th grade curriculum in the Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD, one of the first units is 'What is Culture?' Many white kids say, 'I don't have any culture, I was born here.' We spend time on cultural universals that no matter where you come from we all have similar things, they may look/taste different but we all have it. Irving Focus Group

One teacher high school teacher told me about one of their problem-based activities where they focus in on cultural identity and heroes of the past and present. She said her students were able to examine things that currently exist, such as at the Austin state capital there is a Tejano monument to recognize and honor their role in TX history. Her students said things like 'I didn't realize this before.' and 'They are just like us. They do amazing things. I don't know

why they are treated the way they are.' and 'Why isn't this a required course?' They had never learned about this before in any other class. The kids who do take this class become firm advocates for the course. The program has grown because students have encouraged others to take the class. Austin Focus Group

Students of color finally have a name for the way they've been treated. They didn't really know why. They can name the kind of discrimination they face and know it's a real thing that exist, not just their imagination. And they know that other people have experienced it. Austin Focus Group

Even in diverse populations, people are going to have different opinions. It's about seeking to understand, not about changing opinions. Austin Focus Group

They leave the course feeling empowered. They talk with their parents about things they've learned. I think it improves students' sense of self. It improves family and community relationships. To get middle school students to talk to their parents about anything is close to a miracle. Austin Focus Group

See Self Reflected – Engage in School

They learn a more comprehensive version of history and literature. Additionally, I find that many students don't see themselves and their backgrounds reflected in traditional history and lit courses. Online Survey

Ethnic studies allow students of color to move from the margins and become active participants in the process. Online Survey

It is important for students of color to see themselves in the history - to build agency and advocacy. Online Survey

Ethnic Studies offers students the chance to challenge the traditional historical narrative they learn in school. The class teaches critical reading and writing skills as students learn more about other groups and their contributions to our society. Students see themselves reflected in the curriculum and they learn about the stories of others, fostering a greater appreciation for both what unites us and what makes us different. The stronger connection to school based on seeing themselves in the curriculum as well as the culturally relevant pedagogy that Ethnic Studies teachers apply results in better grades and higher attendance rates.

Being in a suburban district, mostly white and upper class (Leander ISD) I was concerned about how to sell this class. I looked at the research out of Stanford, about the impact this can have on students of color, particularly on their grade point average, their connection to campus, and their attendance. That's an area of weakness for us in our district, to get students of color to have a connection to the campus. Generally attendance and GPAs are lower in students of color so we wanted to do something about that. Austin Focus Group

At the middle school level what we found is anytime we create lessons with different voices, where kids can see themselves, kids are much more engaged. Their interest is higher when they can see themselves somehow. Austin Focus Group

When I taught world geography I had a lot of immigrant parents. For the first time they were involved in their child's schooling. For example, one parent brought their family Koran to show to the class. It was touching and sad at same time. At the end of day she (the mother) hugged me and said, 'This is the first time I thought someone wanted to know about our religion and culture.' I have had that a lot from other parents. For the kids in the classroom, seeing themselves reflected is a benefit. Irving Focus Group

In the National Social Studies standards and in Texas, the winner tells the story, so a lot of our students don't see themselves reflected in school content. They only see the dominant

narrative. Their voice and culture isn't valued or heard. In Ethnic Studies students see themselves in the coursework. Austin Focus Group

Fosters Tolerance & Empathy

It provides students with a greater appreciation of various human experiences and not just their own particular cultural perspective. Online Survey

Students can benefit directly by learning credible information versus myths and stereotypes, opening them up to be more tolerant and accepting of others unlike themselves. Online Survey

Students can develop tolerance, empathy, and a greater understanding of our differences through an ethnic studies course. Online Survey

At beginning of the school year we had a literacy unit, 'I am Texas' where we explored issues of immigration and what defines being a Texan and an American. We did this because we wanted to build a bridge between bilingual students and non-bilingual Hispanic students on campus. We wanted to teach them that language is not something that separates people. Our campus was receiving a lot of students under refugee status, most from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq. We wanted students to understand what it means to be a refugee, what it means to migrate to a new country. That unit was instrumental in having us develop community among the students. It made an impact in how kids spoke and related to each other. We could see that they started to understand that deep down we are all the same, that we have the same thoughts and fears. It doesn't matter where we come from. That was a huge impact. We did this at the beginning of the year. That theme came back up, when something would happen, a kid would say something mean, we would use those questions to get them to think about this. Even with 4th graders. Austin Focus Group

In 4th grade last year, a little girl, a refugee from Afghanistan, spoke little English. Through our ethnic studies lessons the other girls in the class became concerned about her and wanted to learn how to communicate with her. They came to me privately and asked 'I know she wants to play because all kids want to play, but we don't know how to ask her.' Before our cultural identity lessons I would have heard students say something like, 'Well she doesn't speak English so just ignore her.' They displayed empathy, as in, 'I know she's a person who enjoys what I do.' It ended up that they made a cute partnership and mimed to each other. The girl ended up teaching them her language and they taught her English. They had a good time together. Without that understanding that she was a person too (from our cultural identity lessons), it wouldn't have happened. If you've never seen a 10 year old girl who never jumped rope before being taught how to do it through miming – it was really cute. Austin Focus Group

Any exposure to other groups and cultures helps to widen student's point of view. They begin to realize that it's not all about how they experience things. San Antonio Focus Group

I was at a Title 1 High School and by the time I got the students, they didn't think they could come up with answers for themselves. I worked hard to foster critical thinking, to let them grapple with open-ended questions. I see Ethnic Studies serving a very important role in that way. Austin Focus Group

Teacher Lack of Experience & Will

How beneficial ethnic studies is to middle or high school students depends. The benefit is only as good as the teacher. If you aren't of that culture, it can be a struggle, even teachers who are of the culture find it can be challenging. The hard part is to find the right balance. San Antonio Focus Group

Turn over among teachers is always a challenge. We have lots of turnover in my district. And maybe an experienced teacher becomes a 'new' teacher when s/he is changing subject matter. San Antonio Focus Group

We have a lot of teachers with alternative certification and they struggle with the basics of teaching and classroom management. Expecting more from them is not realistic. San Antonio Focus Group

At my campus, the most experienced teacher was under 2 years of experience. We've had a complete turnover for a variety of reasons, some moved up, others moved on. When I coached them I didn't have the opportunity to help them dive deep into lesson content. Mainly I spent my time just talking them off the cliff, helping them deal with the day-to-day logistics. If we are lucky, maybe we get 10-15 minutes to talk about new ideas, strategies, or technology. I'm lucky that our district has some strong curriculum already written. That's what these new teachers used in the crutch. My goal is to have them go to the next level. San Antonio Focus Group

Lack of teacher knowledge to be able to offer the course as a stand-alone class. Austin ISD is fortunate to have a school board that supports Ethnic Studies. Online Survey

Teachers who lack cultural proficiency Teachers and students unaware of their own biases. Online Survey

Time to do discourse is an issue, and teachers trusting their expertise in having conversations about topics with which they may not have experience. Online Survey

Limited experience with diverse ethnicities. Online Survey

One barrier would be a teacher that is not prepared. Another barrier would be school districts not fully supporting the courses.

A barrier to students benefiting deeply from ethnic studies is that great care has to be taken in order to cultivate a safe space to dive into deep conversations around race and ethnicity. Online Survey

Public Misunderstanding & Fear

Whenever I got to the religion unit that I taught in a non-diverse district there were always one or two parents who expressed concern about teaching religions. I think a lot was a misunderstanding of what it meant to teach about religion? We aren't talking doctrine but how does religion influence culture. You can't understand what is going on in the world without that understanding. Irving Focus Group

This is my 36th year in school for me and my skin has gotten a little thicker but I know the conversations are going to happen every year. I know it's misunderstanding and fear of the unknown. We have alternative assignments for those kids whose parents just won't understand. Irving Focus Group

We have a lot of small areas where people don't leave their areas so they have a narrow viewpoint. Irving Focus Group

Some issues haven't come from ethnic studies courses so much but I have had issues in the past with my world geography course. We looked at the Arab-Israeli conflict in my school with large Jewish population. It wasn't a matter of anti-Semitic messaging as it was a resource to help students think critically – some of our resources had alternative viewpoints – some from Palestinian view. Some parents became angry. Our schools are not required to use district curriculum. That teacher used a resource not in one of our district resources. Our curriculum supervisor created a lesson to provide more balance, except what the parents wanted was not more balance. They wanted their viewpoint to be the only viewpoint. Austin Focus Group

I have a friend who is an English teacher in private school. She is East Indian. She believes in ideas of social justice and teaches through the concept of windows and mirrors – how sometimes what we read or pay attention to are mirrors of our own thinking, reflections of our own background. Windows are about seeing other perspectives, seeking a wider viewpoint. Some of the parents got upset when students read a 3-page short story about what it meant to be East Indian in US. Parents complained that their child couldn't possibly connect to the reading because it didn't reflect them and that the teacher needed to include the white, upper class, viewpoint. But she still teaches course using that concept. She just tries to educate parents too. Austin Focus Group

I have some young teachers who call for coaching on how to handle the parents when teaching these topics. I tell them to stick to the TEKS because it's the protective umbrella - we are teaching exactly what the state has mandated. Our area is very conservative and the district doesn't like us to get off the path much, but as long as we can say we are following the TEKS then we are protected. Irving Focus Group

For curriculum and teaching in general, we have to be careful about anything that might be controversial. We don't want to get on the news. We are hyper-sensitive to front page news. Anything that is in writing and sent home to parents can it be misconstrued. Therefore, our curriculum is rather prescriptive. Not because we know it all but we are protecting the teachers. If you teach this you won't be in trouble, it comes back to me. We have to be able to answer: 'Can we defend this' and 'Do the TEKS back it up?' We don't want to leave a teacher out there hanging. That's part of our job in training them. Irving Focus Group

A lack of having a growth mindset and an indifference to learning about others. Online Survey
Inexperience and learned prejudice. Online Survey

Cultural Bias and a lack of understanding of how these cultures influence the lives of everyone everyday. Online Survey

Teachers that are resistant many due to how they may be perceived by parents, i.e., politicizing the curriculum. Online Survey

District Lack of Support & Institutional Entropy

I'm a little nervous about the ethnic studies course. It was a very political decision. Teachers didn't get to pick what goes in TEKS – the state board comes in with scissors (cut) or markers (add) and they aren't always knowledgeable or accurate. Irving Focus Group

The Mexican American studies course has specific TEKS so you are better protected. When I was in Irving – there wasn't as much parental complaint as in other surrounding districts. It's different in my current district. I don't know if we will ever have an ethnic studies course or, if we do, I don't think we will have enough enrollment to make the course in high school because of focus on International Baccalaureate and Advance Placement credits. Maybe more ethnic studies can be taught at the elementary level. Irving Focus Group

Mostly adults making decisions not to expose students to this perspective - either in the courses they teach or when scheduling students. Online Survey

Lack of district support of ethnic study classes. Online Survey

The pressure of standardized testing and the slowness of institutional change. Online Survey

Students are very limited in their opportunities to take these ethnic studies courses due to the current required social studies curriculum. Online Survey

Not every school provides these classes. Online Survey

It is an elective course and students may not have room in their schedules. This can be especially true for students who have failed courses and are re-taking courses. Online Survey

Resource Accessibility/Time Barrier

Teachers lacking the needed resources and pedagogical framework to make curriculum a viable one. Online Survey

If we have time we can do that translation but most teachers don't have the time or expertise. Irving Focus Group

I know 15,000 strategies so I could put things together (when I have time) but a new teacher couldn't do that. Irving Focus Group

Sometimes when I encounter lessons by other people on the web, well, maybe they are the result summer curriculum writing workshops by teachers and sometimes the result is not such high quality. Irving Focus Group

The database of available digital resources is very broad (spreads hands). That's wonderful but it can be daunting. Too much of a good thing is still too much. Most young/new teachers are not so interested in writing their own lessons. They tend to be looking at us (instructional coaches) and saying, "Just tell me what you want me to do." Irving Focus Group

Locating resources that can be widely distributed to classrooms is often difficult or time-consuming. Online Survey

Student Lack of Awareness or Desire to Learn

Students feeling isolated or trapped in their current situation or space who have a hard time imagining something different or opening their mind to people outside of themselves. Online Survey

Breaking down the pre-made assumptions that students come in to class with. Online Survey

Effect of Non-Native English Speakers on Ethnic Studies

No barrier

It does not hinder the process any more or less than other courses. Online Survey

Readings are difficult and can be hard for students to access. Teachers have to be able to employ a variety of strategies to make texts accessible. Online Survey

Students are never a barrier! Students with limited English proficiency will need extra scaffolds but are a great asset to the ethnic studies classroom. Online Survey

Students with limited English proficiency do not present any barrier to successful implementation. Differentiation based on student needs is necessary no matter the content area or special population. Online Survey

If the material is too reading heavy, it makes it difficult for EL students to grasp the full extent of the content. As long as the resources provide options for access that allow for EL accommodations, it shouldn't be an issue. Online Survey

I do not see LEP students as a barrier. Indeed, my previous position was in a district with a large LEP population. Enrollments in ethnic studies were higher as students wished to learn more about their culture group. Online Survey

Teaching EL students effectively is always a concern, but not a barrier to successful implementation. Online Survey

ELL students are not barriers. They are actually assets. They bring with them a different language and customs-traditions from which other students can learn and become more rounded

individuals. While presentation of the curriculum can be more challenging when there are ELL students teachers can find ways to differentiate the curriculum. Online Survey

Why would they be a barrier? I find that question really insulting. In my job, the students I tend to work with directly are EL students and they are typically highly motivated. They just need scaffolding in order to participate fully in the class. Online Survey

ELL student's struggles are in reaching those higher level connections to the content because they are processing material and trying to translate it to their native language. Online Survey

I only believe this is a barrier if you allow it to be. Online Survey

The teacher/facilitator could be a barrier if they do not create an environment conducive to teaching and learning ethnic studies. Online Survey

Students learning English as an additional language would only face barriers if the teacher is not scaffolding and differentiating. Online Survey

Other / General

Like with many courses, making sure that the curriculum is guaranteed and viable for all students. Lessons and resources need to be easily understood for all types of students, especially our ELL populations. Online Survey

Reading levels cause low comprehension. Online Survey

Language barrier is always a problem no matter the course of study. Online Survey

Not every school provides these classes. Online Survey

A moderate amount. Online Survey

Current Situation

Courses Offered

We've made our ethnic studies class [Austin ISD] an honors credit class so we can attract honors students. The students are successful because the teacher plans for success, through critical thinking activities. Students who are not typical honors students begin to know they can do advanced work. Austin Focus Group

Yes, we have had an ethnic studies curriculum course in Austin ISD high schools for the past 3 years as an elective with both a semester and a year-long option. The curriculum was co-created by a professor from the University of Texas and some of our classroom teachers. Each year Jessica Joliffe [curriculum coordinator] brings in teachers during the summer to continue to create lessons and activities for the curriculum. She includes new teachers in the writing to help integrate them in the program. Austin Focus Group

When I taught elementary level [in Austin ISD] my team developed an identities unit. We use a project-based or service learning approach that is interdisciplinary. We wanted to integrate critical literacy and social justice topics. We weren't charged with making it happen by anyone. It's just something we pushed as a team. We had been a team for 4 years so we worked well together. We kept making improvements to the unit to make it better. We've shared it with a bunch of people but I don't know if it's been implemented anywhere else. We aren't following any district-wide plans. Now in my new position as curriculum writer I'm inclined personally to push that idea of a similar course at the elementary level. Austin Focus Group

The Austin ISD ethnic studies curriculum cuts across cultures. It's a course that deals with issues around identity and race. Identity is the lens through which we look at Latinos, African Americans, gender issues, immigration and migrants. Austin Focus Group

Three years ago we launched an ethnic studies curriculum [in Austin ISD], the first in state of Texas. It is available on all of our high school campuses [16 high schools]. All but 2 of the campuses have "made" the course, meaning that students actually enroll in the course, and many schools offer 5-6 sections of the course. We've been featured in a number of places, on TV, radio, and newspapers, locally and nationally. We are fortunate in Austin to not face challenges as other districts and states face in terms of political and parental resistance. Austin Focus Group

The Austin district shared their Ethnic Studies curriculum with us. We developed a course that will be offered at one high school this year in Leander ISD but have not had one before. Our course looks a bit different than theirs [Austin's]. As far as I know we might be one of first suburban districts to have a course like this [Although Austin ISD was first district to offer ethnic studies in Texas but it is considered an urban district]. Austin Focus Group

In Coppell ISD we had special topics courses such as, Latin American studies and African American studies. For a while the courses were well attended, then enrollment dropped off and now seeing a resurgence in student interest. Irving Focus Group

The interest in ethnic studies has picked up, especially in Irving ISD high schools. Since there are no standards for special topics courses in social studies, the teachers sort of fly by their own guidance. There are pros and cons to that. Irving Focus Group

At Edgewood ISD we are just starting with a Mexican American studies course. We [Instructional coaches] are the ones pushing this – not the district. San Antonio Focus Group

Courses NOT Offered or Units Integrated Into Other Courses

We don't have a course in [Leander ISD]. There is some "lite" integration across the district in other courses. We developed a course that will be offered at one high school this year. Austin Focus Group

Currently we don't have an ethnic studies course in the Hurst Euliss Bedford ISD. We are on a trimester schedule rather than a semester schedule, so the schedule is tight. Our district is heavy on International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement. Irving Focus Group

We have to compete for time to get social studies in front of the kids [in Hurst Euliss Bedford ISD]. The more access we have to resources that way, such as places kids can visit when they are little, the better. Irving Focus Group

My district [Harlandale ISD] doesn't offer anything specific. We had a Mexican American studies course in high school for 2 years now. It was sort of piece-mealed together. Since there is not an adopted textbook we use an adaptation of lots of things. San Antonio Focus Group

In the NE ISD there are 7 components to the AP humanities course. One is a focus on ethnic studies in high school. In middle school it's a more generic cultural studies. San Antonio Focus Group

At Harlandale ISD we currently only offer a high school course in Mexican American studies. San Antonio Focus Group

Adding a Mexican American studies course [at Brooks Academy] is something we are interested in. Right now there are no stand-alone ethnic courses. There are some ethnic or culturally-focused lessons within other courses. San Antonio Focus Group

Resources

District-Provided (Fee Based) Digital Resources/Subscriptions

[ABC-CLIO](#) [Online subscription service district pays for] - great resource to pull from as they have databases on the African American experience, American Indian experience, and Latin American experience. Online Survey (Irving Area)

[History Alive](#) because it takes into consideration students learning styles and offers a variety of ways to address a concept. [Online subscription service district pays for] Online Survey (Irving Area)

[CultureGrams](#) and other online sources help with fact-based information, less with primary sources. [Online subscription service district pays for] Online Survey (Irving Area)

Our district has a subscription to the online resource, [Discovery Education](#). It has images of Mesopotamia and show videos of archaeologists walking around now. The resources are organized for us. You can click a filter term, like 6th grade or Egypt. San Antonio Focus Group

Self-Sourced Digital Resources (No Fee)

Most of my teachers like using [Google classrooms](#). Some of the resources are better than others of course. (Online Survey)

My students are from a Title 1 school and they hadn't left more than a 5-mile radius from where they live. The online resources give them a wider view of the world. In middle school my kids loved the [Fords Theatre](#) (online resource). It had an interactive component and we took a day off and let them explore the digital interactive online on their own. That was so beneficial. They had fun, were interested, and they wanted me to post links so they could pull it up at home to show their parents and that just doesn't happen much with middle school students. The site is set up like clues and there is a lot of questioning that makes students curious. San Antonio Focus Group

I use the [Stanford History Education Group](#) site. It's organized chronologically and by groups – so you have options like 5-6 lessons on the Great Depression and it's primary source based. San Antonio Focus Group

The [Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History](#) offers professional development courses for teachers. They also have a good digital collection with fully curated lessons that include primary resources. San Antonio Focus Group

We use a lot from the [DBQ project](#) [Document Based Questions] from Brown University. It is a good curated collection. San Antonio Focus Group

Law related education is phenomenal in what they offer in curriculum and lessons. It's gone through many revisions and testing. I think you have the ability to make a personal site within their site. Irving Focus Group [Not clear which site they refer to. There are many sources related to a law related education search. Two are indicated here as possibilities: [Teaching Texas](#) and [Texas Law Related Education](#)]

On the [Digital Public Library of America](#) (DPLA) there is a ridiculous number of pieces - millions – but they have some pre-curated collections. You can click on WWI and maybe ten pieces, including documents and images, and then as a teacher I can use three. Irving Focus Group

We link a lot of digital resources into our curriculum documents, for example, the [National Archives Educator Resources](#), [Library of Congress](#) teacher site, Digital Public Library (DPLA) [see URL link above], some of presidential libraries, which are run by the National Archives, particularly the [LBJ library](#) because it is local here. Austin Focus Group

I like the [Texas Archive of the Moving Image](#) (TAMY) lessons. Austin Focus Group.

We use so many different kinds of digital resources such as the presidential libraries, National Archives, Library of Congress, and the [National Constitutional Center](#). Austin Focus Group

Digital Resources Current Barriers

At Austin ISD I think we are using a version of Canvas. So in order to bring in anything it needs to be in the public domain. I think a lot of teachers don't know how to do that. I'm keen that teachers use a variety of resources and would like them exposed to a wider range of images. Average teachers don't have the capacity to go find those things. There is a lot out there. As a former art teacher and now a curriculum coach, I got requests from teachers that they wanted more interesting images as well as videos of performing arts, dance, drama, and music. Austin Focus Group

I know the Smithsonian is trying to work with digital packages. We do have a learning management system and can easily integrate the Smithsonian's project into the system. Google is easy for us to integrate. If a project is using another platform there may be technical issues that have to be addressed. We need any system to be safe for students and their identity is protected. We require a single sign-on. If tech people talk with tech people they understand this. So it would be important for the Smithsonian's tech person to talk with our tech person to clear up any platform problems. Austin Focus Group

Digital Resources Wanted/Needed

Need for Curated Collections & Exemplars

I think (all the digital resources available) can be overwhelming for teachers. There is so much out there so curated archives are more helpful. Such as; 'Here are some collections that you might find helpful. What are some resources that are good at illustrating things in our course?' Otherwise we fall down that dark rabbit hole and nothing comes together. San Antonio Focus Group

Curated collections online are wonderful. San Antonio Focus Group

I have a lot of young teachers and they not as confident. When it comes to lesson planning they are focusing on staying above water. They get overwhelmed easily. I agree a curated collection is the best. San Antonio Focus Group

Money could be well spent for someone to do some coordination of resources for the ethnic studies courses, to pull together some exemplars, not the whole course. Such as: Here are 5 different ways you can use these resources. Irving Focus Group

More user-friendly – searchable options

I came back to this [Smithsonian] project because the potential will be great but it's not intuitive and we need to figure out how to help teachers use it more easily. Irving Focus Group

I want to be able to search more than one way, such as by topic and state standards. I realize that would be hard/impossible to do that for each state. Maybe we could search by Common Core standards. Irving Focus Group

What they showed us in an earlier demonstration of the Learning Lab was a lot of visual resources including objects and primary documents. I think it's helpful when you have text or documents and visual objects – something you can put together. For example, if I want to teach about slavery in the south having documents and other visual resources, like objects or art, is great. So we need a searchable database in the Learning Lab. Irving Focus Group

Detailed lessons with options for special needs

Those lessons that are set up with details with a few options are best for a new teacher particularly. I think teachers appreciate that, such as, 'here are some strategies and here are some resources.' Otherwise it can be scary for teachers to make sense of it all. Irving Focus Group

Teachers also need some differentiation for special types of students. For example, 'What would I do with a special needs kids?' Irving Focus Group

Access to Hard to find resources

If you tried to create a course on Middle Eastern cultural history, well, you won't find anything good on the web. If the Smithsonian can provide those kinds of hard-to-find resources, that would be great. Irving Focus Group

Frameworks

TEKS Issues

State Standards and curriculum development in Texas is a very complex question. The State provides TEKS (standards) but they are open to individual/district interpretation about how and when something is taught. Some TEKS are very specific and clear and others very open and up to the individual to interpret. So it becomes the district's responsibility to interpret the TEKS for the teachers. Some districts do it more effectively than others. The state gives us an umbrella and we try to figure out what that means through curriculum and day-to-day instruction. San Antonio Focus Group

The Social Studies state standards presents a particularly challenging task. As a contrast example, 8th grade science has 7 readiness standards and social studies has 27 standards. So you have to bundle them for teachers in order to create a coherent and reasonable framework. San Antonio Focus Group

TEKS Resource System

There is a resource available, the [TEKS Resource System](#) but districts have to pay for it and not all do. That's an option if you don't have framework from the district office. The Resource System provides scope and sequence but not lessons. They do have 'activities' but are not allowed to call them 'lessons.' San Antonio Focus Group

So the TEKS Resource System does a fairly decent job of creating scope and sequence but I do my own tweaking when curriculum writing. There is never a curriculum resource or lesson that I can just print it off and roll out of bed and use it. They always need tweaking and refining, mostly because of the students we have. Some are more challenging for a variety of reasons and teachers have to scaffold more. A lot of school districts are moving towards the TEKS Resource System, even big districts. San Antonio Focus Group

I also cherry-pick through the TEKS Resource System, but it is a good framework. It provides a pretty good scope and sequence. Some of lessons are really great. San Antonio Focus Group

The TEKS Resource System doesn't have ethnic studies resources. It has core areas, such as world geography and world history but not anything specific to ethnic studies. While Scott and Renee [at TEKS Resource System for Social Studies] can provide scope and sequence, they are not allowed by law to create any lessons. They do have some 'activities' in the guise of performance assessments but not a lot in the social studies area but don't call them lessons. A lot of rural districts that don't have a person like me [District Social Studies Coordinator] use the TEKS Resource System. San Antonio Focus Group

Other Framework Resources

We use the [Understanding By Design](#) approach where you begin with the end in mind. We look at the standards and think about how students benefit. Then determine what are overarching themes and guiding questions. Austin Focus Group

We provide a scope and sequence for our teachers, as in, 'this is what the year looks like.' Then we deconstruct the state standards and provide a few lessons as examples. We don't do day-to-day lesson plans. Austin Focus Group

In Ethnic Studies we've allowed, within the scope and sequence, space for teachers to incorporate specific issues or ethnicities in their courses. All schools are teaching the same theme or topic but in different ways. This creates more meaningful content. Austin Focus Group

Technology

Technology Access Challenges

We are not 1-to-1 in our district, meaning not every kid has a device. Convincing teachers that it's OK to just project on the screen for the whole class is sometimes a challenge. Printing ink is a hot commodity – a challenge – if something is not printed in color it's not worth it but it's too expensive to print a copy for each kid. San Antonio Focus Group

Sometimes the access to devices is a hiccup. If I'm going to project for the whole class I have to have it all planned ahead of time. It has to run smoothly or Middle School kids get distracted. San Antonio Focus Group

If you do have a cart with iPads and computers at your school then usually another department, most often that's the English/Language Arts department, has checked it out for the entire year (lots of laughing and nodding yes in the group) or it's a case that possession is 9/10ths of the law. San Antonio Focus Group

What our teachers use now mostly are hard copy/print materials. I think teachers would be willing to work through some sort of online module. We have 1-to-1 capability at my high school. Austin Focus Group

Local Cultural Resources

Offsite field-trip Experience/Suggestions

When I taught 7th grade I asked my principal: 'If I do all the work will you let me take the entire 7th grade?' We went to the [Missions](#) and it was great but a lot of work. San Antonio Focus Group

For ethnic studies courses we find the funding for field trips. All high school students in the ethnic studies courses do a program with our local art museum, [The Blanton](#) on the University of Texas campus. Their curriculum is called social justice. It was co-written by educators there and our curriculum team. They've continuously revised it each year. Ideally students will do three field trips and library visit. There are pre-lessons the teacher can do. It focuses on identity, recognizing what identity means, what does it include? Not every teacher is able to take them all 3 times. But that social justice program is one that the Blanton Museum reaches out to school districts and they have some money for buses for Title 1 schools and they pay the student's entry fee. We've had a lot more classes beyond ethnic studies classes participate in this program. Teachers who have gone said it was amazing to use art as a centerpiece for having these kinds of discussions. Some art they've seen has been thought provoking. They show different art depending on the grade level and what they have on view at the time. There was a very controversial piece last year, something about the Klan

members. I think it's called [The City by Vincent Valdez](#). High school kids worked with that work of art, not middle school or elementary level. They have an amazing statue where they talk about why people move. They try to humanize those people. Those teachers have been so excited about the program and encourage other teachers to go. The program has grown. Austin Focus Group

For 4th grade Texas history is big piece of their social studies curriculum. Every 4th grader goes to [Bullock State History Museum](#). We've usually gone when they have a special native American presentation geared towards the 4th grade curriculum, about tribes that lived and are still living around the area. They have people from the tribes come in to present. Austin Focus Group

Most field trips happen in elementary or smaller schools. A lot of elementary teachers will take students to the state history museum in Austin [The Bullock]. What is missing are the diverse museums in this area [Leander ISD]. Austin Focus Group

The [George Carver Museum](#) is a great resource. Austin Focus Group

The [Umlauf Museum and Sculpture Garden](#) is a great field trip site. Austin Focus Group

Also our performing arts institutions tend to have a social justice lens in their school programs. Many artists want that community piece. We are lucky in Austin that we have a lot of great institutions. Austin Focus Group

Offsite field-trip Experience Only as Part of Grant/Special Program

I've only taken students off site through special programs. Like the Bullock Museum of State History. The museum organizes it. It was a special program, Federally funded program, separate from the district but in the district, that said these are the things kids have to do. They had the grant money to make it happen. San Antonio Focus Group

That's my experience too. When we took kids to [Fredericksburg museums](#) it was through special funding. I was able to take kids to [Holocaust Memorial Museum of San Antonio](#) in the same way – through a special program with funding. At the district level I push for every 4th grader to do some sort of personal connection, to get kids out into the resources we have here. I help fund buses if needed. San Antonio Focus Group

Outreach – No Field Trip

We use digital resources but we also have access to outreach resources. We have a museum in Georgetown and we've used their resources. They offer traveling trunks and offer field trips to their site of course. Some of our teachers take advantage of those things. They also have people coming out to the classrooms. It's not in the curriculum but we put in the documents as a resource for teachers. Austin Focus Group

Challenges or Not Taken Field Trips

Middle and high schools tend to have complicated demands on their schedules that makes it hard to take field trips. For the Title 1 schools I made sure their students got out into the community to experience all the arts. Austin Focus Group

We have great partnerships with a lot of our museums but in general it is a challenge to get students out, particularly in high school. Since schools might have a lot of students they have to bring at one time many museums can't accommodate those numbers. And the logistics of trying to schedule something – Whew! But all of our area museums are willing to host us. Austin Focus Group

With the reorganization that just happened in our district I'm hoping there will still be the funding for students to get out and experience culture richness our city offers. Austin Focus Group

I haven't taken kids off site to museum yet but is my goal, hopefully this next year. San Antonio Focus Group

I still remember as a student going to the missions and eating my sack lunch. I was sad that I couldn't get that organized this past year for my students but working to set that up this year. Logistically it's so hard. San Antonio Focus Group

Expectations for Professional Development

Purpose, Structure, Schedule, Participants

What is our focus for the day? Irving Focus Group

In the October workshop, is it for you guys to present the resources or for us to or for us to use the resource? Irving Focus Group

So is the real purpose to get us to understand more about the resource? So it's a train-the-trainer model? That might work?

I thought we were going to tour the museum and then in the afternoon view the digital site. Irving Focus Group

What I understand from Laura is the October workshop is almost a trial run. It will just be my team – humanities curriculum writers/coaches. I've offered to invite up to 12 ethnic studies teachers. I think that would be more useful – having them come with things they want to work on is always a good plan. Austin Focus Group

We need to focus on Hispanic studies. Irving Focus Group

I understand that we should bring our laptop and will be given a tutorial on how to use the learning lab – will be sent info before on how to log in and get into the system. Irving Focus Group

If the idea is teachers are free to go out and add to the site, you want to make sure you are focusing on the right things. If we apply it in a certain way, that's fine. If we just show teachers how to use the site without some sort of structure for them, then implementation will be an issue. Irving Focus Group

The thinking routine – don't remember the name of it - it's something like notice, wonder, think – maybe it's from [Project Zero](#)? [See, Think, Wonder] Using that structure to help teachers guide students is useful. Austin Focus Group

I want time to explore the site and time to work through stuff with the Smithsonian staff and Melanie be available to ask questions and help. San Antonio Focus Group

Interactive is important, getting up and moving is important, community building is important in the beginning of the workshop, a variety of activities is important. Online Survey

I think you will be expected to write a lesson plan that day using the digital resource. That's OK but do you have a lesson plan template? I think it's best for the Smithsonian to use their own template. For example, the Law Related Education site uses their own template and that's OK with us. We need some continuity. I don't know if there is a lesson plan template on the Smithsonian site. I'm on the Learning Lab site right now but I don't see lesson plans. You go pull the resources you like to create your lessons. Doesn't look like there is a place to plug in your lesson plan. Irving Focus Group

Ways to implement/improve writing. Online Survey

Find Resources & Assistance to Do Better

I am excited to learn about community resources that will help in the development of ethnic studies curriculum resources. Online Survey

Every time we say 'ethnic studies' what pops in my head is cultures. We have a curriculum strand by that name – 'cultures' so I can see ethnic studies integrated in every course in K-12. Do we do a good job of it? No, we can and need to do better. But this project (Smithsonian Learning Lab project] can help us pry it open a bit. We are here for the potential of resources in already existing courses. Irving Focus Group

I would like to be able to use a strong resource that is accurate, as a starting point. Accuracy is an issue with online resources. Irving Focus Group

Resources for areas where there are fewer resources in our area such as Asian-American studies, Native-American studies, and Arab-American studies. Online Survey

Suggestions

Maybe this shouldn't be just a one and done workshop – maybe this is the intro workshop then need a follow up. Irving Focus Group.

We also do professional development with [Facing History](#). They do a 3-day workshop at the beginning of the summer for all teachers in the program and you meet with the Facing History teachers throughout the year and can have phone conferences. So they continue to help rather than a one-shot contact. Austin Focus Group

Application

I want to have something to take back with me – maybe created some curated collections. Austin Focus Group

Teachers want resources they can use. Austin Focus Group

We want time to apply it to what we are doing. If teachers come, having time for them to get their hands dirty and being able to share. Austin Focus Group

In a good professional development I want you to show me what you have, show me how to use it and let me have time to play in the sandbox – to create or start to create something on my own or with a small group. It's the theory to practice loop. Austin Focus Group

We need quick, no-prep lessons, so teachers don't have to search for anything. It's all in their hands. Irving Focus Group

I think we are all thinking of turning around anything we do at the workshop to give to our teachers. So if you do a training with us we are thinking about turning it around. Irving Focus Group

We need to know how to work it but how to help our teachers make it easy. Irving Focus Group

I feel that teachers would appreciate support that they could turn around immediately and use. Online Survey

Give teachers work time, processing time. Online Survey

Also, make sure that theoretical frameworks used in professional development, if applicable, are fully explained. Online Survey

I want to leave with something created or partly created to apply to a specific lesson so I could turn it around to teachers. Show them how it can work for them. This is super useful for getting primary sources into the lessons. Something tangible to take away from it. Austin Focus Group

I have little information about what the fall workshop will be. I imagine there is an opportunity to connect resources with things we are already building ourselves and to try to make some connections with the Austin area museums. Maybe it can be an opportunity for the museums to see what our needs are. It will just be me from my district [Leander ISD]. They wouldn't let me bring one of my teachers. Austin Focus Group

I'd like to bring back something like a one-pager reference sheet that we could share with our teachers – about the digital resource at Smithsonian – like a quick start guide. Teachers don't have time to read much more. Irving Focus Group

Would be helpful if we can preview ahead of time what is there on the site. I want to talk with my team about which unit or section we want to work on during the workshop. So would be good to have some advance warning to think about and bring stuff to include. I want it to be something I'm going to teach soon – to test it out. –maybe something I can teach in the winter or spring. San Antonio Focus Group

Maybe have participants have two separate access points to the same collection, such as, teacher facing and student facing. The teacher facing side gives examples on how to use a collection in a lesson. The student facing side is the collection itself. Maybe provide some time to look at those and the difference between them. Especially if the audience [for the workshop] is curriculum developers they are probably creating teacher-facing ones but they will see both. Austin Focus Group

It would be nice if it aligned with the district's Creative Learning Initiative so that teachers see how the creative learning strategies can support student engagement with artwork, artifacts, etc. Online Survey

Exemplars

It takes a long time to create a good and complete lesson plan so I'm not sure it's reasonable to expect we can finish one in a few hours (at the fall workshop) so rather than write a lesson plan maybe it's about creating a few collections on the Learning Lab site. Irving Focus Group

If you had a lesson plan where you could look at significant contributions by someone or some group relative to ethnic studies. If the lesson plan is generic enough we could build it into our framework. Irving Focus Group

Just telling a teacher to make their own collection and assign it to their students, well, you won't get many hits on that. It needs to be rather 'done' for the teachers. Irving Focus Group

Maybe by the end of the day we as a group create an exemplar collection that we can show the teachers. Irving Focus Group

It's helpful for me if I can also see how it's being used. Maybe like a short video example of how a teacher is using it in the classroom. Putting a visual to it helps me to see how I could turn it around and use it. How does the Smithsonian envision how it can be used in the classroom? So not just talking about it but seeing it used. Austin Focus Group

In the Smithsonian site during the workshop I would want to start some curated collections my teachers could use. San Antonio Focus Group

Give teachers examples of what lessons and resources to work with. Online Survey

SI Learning Lab – Prior Experience

I do recall one thing they showed us [on the SI Learning Lab last year] that was cool was different types of activities, like the sorting activity, was useful for social studies and possibly language arts. Because you can categorize, kids can literally categorize and sort the sources. I tried including it in one of the sets I created. Austin Focus Group

I think I found the Smithsonian Learning Lab in the development of our ethnic studies course but didn't know much about it so didn't use it. Austin Focus Group

I'm looking right now at how to assign a collection to your students [on the Learning Lab site]. It seems you can make it public or private. You can put in your roster of students so they can go in your learning lab based on an assignment. For example it looks like I can tell them to go in and use these resources to do a particular activity. So it's like an independent study activity? Irving Focus Group

Collaboration

Also provide some time to show-out and talk about what they've done. Work time is valuable but sometimes it's not used well. It devolves into conversation and just looking at images. Sometimes they leave without getting much done. They say it's great, what they did, but if you want some sort of accountability check, have people share out at least an idea they are developing and then a place to post out – so others can see how teachers actually use it. Austin Focus Group

Maybe we could divide the digital database by groups and work on it and share with the others. Irving Focus Group

Collaboration time with educators or instructional coaches within their field. Online Survey

Understanding/respect for K-12 Environment

Although I am currently pursuing a doctorate myself, I often find that university professors and researchers lack a true understanding of how K-12 education works. I hope these experts will not show disdain for K-12 colleagues. Online Survey

If professors are participating please make sure that they respect teachers and value the work done in K-12. Online Survey

What doesn't work

Too Much "Sit-and-Get" - Lack of Active Inquiry/Application

Too much time spent on the rationale or research base instead of more time to delve into the actual strategies, activities, etc. Online Survey

Mostly workshops that are just sit-and-get [don't work]. The workshops need to be purposeful and participants need to be able to walk out of it with something they can implement. Online Survey

Too much lecture or talking at me. Online Survey

We are sitting and listening for too long. It would be helpful to have some physical activity involved in the PD. Online Survey

Sit-and-get formats are boring and while most adults would say they prefer it, they will always get more out of a hands on experience. Online Survey

Not enough time to reflect on learning, to apply to our own practice or align with other district programs/initiatives. Online Survey

Being shown/read PowerPoint presentations and not having time to think how to use the information. Online Survey

Too much sitting can be uncomfortable.. Online Survey

Sit and get format. Lecture format with no or limited time to process information. Formats that limit or do not allow for engagement with material. Online Survey

Not having time to process/apply the lessons/content we are being presented. Online Survey

Sit-and-get format. No time for processing and applying. Online Survey

Just lecture and no processing or application. Online Survey

I would prefer to not have a lot of highly theoretical lecture. I would MUCH rather be given pre-reading if there are concepts we need to learn about ahead of time. Online Survey

An instructor-led professional development where I do not get to apply the concepts, lessons, or materials to my work. Online Survey

Lack of Focus/Organization

Disorganization, no focused goals for participants. Online Survey

Lack of focus and down time. Online Survey

Spending too long on one thing or strategy can be frustrating. Online Survey

Unclear learning goals. Not keeping to time. Online Survey

Wasted time. Online Survey

The presenter clearly knows their content area, but does not effectively facilitate a workshop.

Too much time spent on sharing names and ice breakers when everyone forgets each other's name anyways. Online Survey

Introductions around the room – time waster. Online Survey

Also, ice breaker activities are not necessary. Online Survey