

Uncovering the Stories of the Past: Investigating Students' Exposure to Black History Curriculum in Schools

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Background

School curriculum remains a controversial discussion among educational stakeholders - from standardized testing to cultural studies, people weigh in on what should be taught and read. Students' educational outcomes and state standards often determine the curriculum implemented. Many researchers have examined the effectiveness of state curriculum and assessed how certain demographics perform accordingly. Research shows that students of color, on average, perform lower than their white counterparts and have had limited success under common core standards. With such results, more people have questioned the strategies used to improve student performance and the relevancy of subjects covered. The conversation on cultural relevancy should be followed with a look into black history curriculums in schools and why some students are omitted from learning it.

Research Question

How are students' impacted by limited exposure to black history in schools?

Hypotheses

H0 - Black students are not impacted by limited exposure to black history curriculum in schools.

H1 - Black students are impacted by limited exposure to black history curriculum in schools.

Race	Black (100%)
Age	16-20 (62%)
Gender	Female (60%)
Education	9th-12th (60%)
Household status	Single parent (45%)
Household Income	\$10,001-\$25,000 (29%)

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the landscape of schools in Pittsburgh regarding Black history curriculum and to investigate the impact of this potential limited exposure on black high school students.



Results

Interestingly, nearly half of our respondents are public school attendees in schools that are mostly all black. Respondents denoted that black history is typically taught only once a year. Most respondents also noted that they are only exposed to black history during the official month of celebration, and not consistently throughout the year in a formal course. Most people believe black history is not taught in schools due to its controversial nature and also because they are taught by mostly white teachers who do not know the content themselves or feel uncomfortable teaching black students about their history. Surprisingly, many youth stated that their communities are also important places to learn their history.

Discussion/ Conclusion

With any study, there are limitations. Some were small population sample, limited scope of questions, unable to gain school and teacher perspectives, which would've brought important clarity to this issue. We also did not have any data on the schools the students attended or their personal academic records. As of now, students impact is unclear. However, it could be suggested that schools are not prioritizing black history given its controversial nature, lack of teacher confidence, and prepare students for STEM related fields.

Survey Questions	Respondents	Total	Percentage
How often do they teach black history at your school?	9 (Once a year)	21	43%
If you don't learn black history in school, where else can it be taught?	10 (Community)	21	48%
If black people knew more about their history, do you believe they would feel more black pride?	15 (Yes)	21	71%
Do you believe the race of your teacher influences what you are taught?	16 (Yes)	21	76%
What is the racial composition of your school?	6 (80 -100% Black)	21	29%