# Superintendent’s Memo #229-20

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**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA   
Department of Education**

DATE: August 28, 2020

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: New African American History Elective Course Update

On August 24, 2019, Governor Ralph Northam announced that the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) would work with [Virtual Virginia](https://www.virtualvirginia.org/), [WHRO Public Media](https://whro.org/), and committees of history and social science public school educators, university historians, and college professors to develop a new African American history course for high school students.  This course was created in addition to the work being done by the [Commission on African-American History Education in Virginia](https://www.education.virginia.gov/initiatives/aahec/) to embed African-American history into the *History and Social Science Standards of Learning* across all courses.

The VDOE notified school divisions of the opportunity to deliver this new elective in 2020-2021 and offered special training for the course through a teacher application process beginning in the fall of 2020. The participants will receive yearlong blended professional development that utilizes the five online modules created in partnership with educators from across the Commonwealth, WHRO and the VDOE History and Social Science program.  In addition, the training will focus on building content capacity, gaining a deeper knowledge of African-American history, strengthening culturally responsive practices, and the use of anti-biased/anti-racists education practices offered through Virginia’s higher education community. Educators will collaborate in the development of resources and materials for future use for this course.

For more information about the new African American History elective course, please contact Christonya Brown, History and Social Science Coordinator, Office of Humanities, by email at [Christonya.Brown@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Christonya.Brown@doe.virginia.gov)  or by telephone at (804) 225-2893

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