

**PILOT REPORT**

**IMPLEMENTING EDUCATING FOR AMERICAN DEMOCRACY  
IN EDUCATOR PREPARATION**

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## INTRODUCTION TO AACTE’S PARTNERSHIP WITH EAD

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), in its efforts to [Revolutionize Education](#), has leaned into implementation of [Educating for American Democracy](#) (EAD) to address the crisis of civics facing our nation. This engagement builds on past efforts the association has taken to recommit the field of education to ensuring our young people are informed and engaged citizens.

Educating for American Democracy (EAD) is an unprecedented effort that convened a diverse and cross-ideological group of scholars and educators to create a *Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy*— guidance and an inquiry framework that states, local school districts, and educators can use to transform teaching of history and civics to meet the needs of a diverse 21st century K–12 student body. AACTE and other organizations have championed the goal to put these resources in the hands of 1 million teachers, 100,000 schools, and 60 million students.

Simply elevating the EAD Roadmap and corresponding Pedagogy Guide will not be sufficient to ensuring a democratically engaged citizenry. Historical tensions and the polarization of current topics deemed essential to a well-rounded, inclusive civic education has created hesitance for teachers, especially those just entering the classroom, to engage students in civic inquiry. Thus, AACTE and EAD propose incorporating these frameworks across all subject areas and grade levels as we know civic inquiry should be introduced early and often.

## PILOT STRUCTURE & OBJECTIVES

AACTE and EAD engaged members in a pilot professional development January 25-27, 2022. The pilot was the first of a set of initiatives AACTE is committed to scaling with EAD and other stakeholders to preserve democracy and increase civic engagement through education.

Participants in this pilot included faculty and deans from the following AACTE member institutions:

- Austin Peay State University
- Bowling Green State University
- California State University San Bernardino
- Drew University
- Indiana University
- James Madison University
- University of La Verne
- Nevada State College

- Radford University
- SUNY Albany State
- Texas Women’s University
- Touro College
- University of Wisconsin White Water
- University of Arkansas
- University of Nebraska Lincoln
- University of Northern Colorado
- University of Washington
- University of Wisconsin - LaCross
- University of Vermont
- William Paterson University

The learning objectives for the participants of this pilot were identified through focus groups conducted in Fall 2021. These focus groups assessed AACTE members' immediate concerns regarding civic engagement and the state of our democracy, and what teacher educators feel compelled to do about it.

Participant Learning Objective	Session(s)
Introduction Educating for American Democracy mission, goals, and resources and their alignment with AACTE member institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPP Dean’s Panel: Initiatives for a Democratic Society, the Roles of EPP’s</li> </ul>
Introduction to strategies for approaching the teaching of civics and history through an equity lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EAD Inclusion and Students with Disabilities</li> <li>• EAD Inclusion and English Language Learners Approaching</li> <li>• Hard Histories Dealing with Race</li> </ul>
Introduction to strategies for approaching the teaching of civics and history across disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrating Civics Across Disciplines: EAD with English Language Arts</li> <li>• Integrating Civics Across Disciplines: Social and emotional learning</li> </ul>

Introduction to Strategies for leveraging out of school partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engaging Policy Leaders to Help Inform EAD Civics Lessons</li> </ul>
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**AACTE and EAD’s learning objectives** were to:

1. Expand our understanding of AACTE member wants and needs regarding preparing educators to be effective civics and history teachers regardless of discipline.
2. Gauge relevance and usefulness of EAD resources addressing the predetermined topics from focus groups.
3. Identify obstacles or “FRICTIONS” to implementing specific resources/strategies at the classroom level for themselves as faculty and their pre-service candidates in K-12 classrooms.
4. Identify obstacles or “FRICTIONS” to scaling the mission and resources/strategies of EAD across their colleges of education and institutions as a part of the larger goal to preserve American democracy through education.

To achieve this, AACTE solicited feedback through facilitated breakout groups, daily surveys, and moderated conversations for each session. The pilot participants were asked to identify the significant frictions to implementing EAD resources/strategies and civic inquiry principles into their classrooms, programs, and colleges. The *Friction Framework* was taught to pilot participants by the co-author of the book introducing this framework, Dr. Loran Nordgren, from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. The research behind this framework can be applied to any firm (for or nonprofit) introducing a new product to assess what would prevent their customers from using a product AFTER they have collected information to prove it would benefit the customer. In our case, the customer is the AACTE member institution, the new product is Professional Development on EAD resources curated and structured for the EPP audience, and we have substantial evidence to show that these resources and the mission they promote are essential to our members’ mission and values. The feedback is therefore broken down into the four types of friction, and these questions were posed to pilot participants in the following way:

1. **Inertia:** Does this idea represent a major change for teacher candidates or the field?
2. **Effort:** What is the cost (time, money, social capital, etc.) to implement this in my class, program, or college?
3. **Emotion:** What negative feelings might the idea produce for candidates? For my colleagues? For the profession and its stakeholders?
4. **Reactance:** Do candidates, current practitioners, or my college of ed peers feel pressured to implement this?

## BEST PRACTICES FOR EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

This section summarizes our collective speakers' expertise and is broken into the "BEST PRACTICE" themes that emerged: Centering Equity, Breaking Down Silos, and Partnering with Policy Makers. Under each "Best Practice," we provide examples of the corresponding frictions raised by our members, and when applicable, we have identified the type of friction and whether that friction applies specifically to a session topic from the pilot or to the best practice in general.

### ***BEST PRACTICE 1: Center Equity***

When Colleges of Education incorporate Educating for American Democracy resources or similar curriculum that promotes civic inquiry and engagement, they should ensure all faculty are prepared to train candidates to integrate that content inclusively for the full spectrum of intersectional identities their future students will have.

### **MAJOR FRICTIONS**

1. Teachers avoid equity topics and teaching methods they are unfamiliar with, of which there are many. Teacher candidates learn content and methods within siloes due to the structure of COE's and therefore, often lack confidence and skills to address these topics or use methods in the classroom even when they have a strong interest in doing so.

Friction Examples:

- *It is general practice to have limited exposure to courses on teaching other diverse learners (Inertia, General).*
- *Research on how students with disabilities learn rarely addresses inquiry methods, so therefore there may be a lack of pressure & urgency to incorporate inquiry in special education. (Reactance, SPED)*
- *others get to decide who and what is taught, by state. It's not always up to the teacher (Inertia, General)*
- *Finding support within the university; because resources are not present to include English learners, no less in a discipline (Effort, ELL)*

2. The default is to approach these topics with a deficit lens. When it comes to teaching outside what is the default "norm" in education (i.e., white, native-english speaking, general education), we define success by those norms, which is detrimental to all learners, not just those who fall outside it.

Friction Examples:

- *The way success is defined (learning English) is in direct opposition to multilingualism; standardized tests (Reactance, ELL)*
  - *We are raised in a system of white supremacy & patriarchy that isn't acknowledged in the same way post-civil rights. This leads to a "performative" culture of teaching non-white, non-native English-speaking students. (Emotion, General)*
3. The political climate adds to teachers' hesitancy, especially new teachers with less job security, to incorporate any histories that may be deemed "divisive." We cannot ignore the fact that a climate that does not respect the professional expertise of educators and instead demonizes teachers for teaching truth is part of the reason we have moved from a teaching staffing "shortage" to a teacher staffing "crisis. Not only are students not receiving comprehensive education, but they may not have a subject matter expert as their teacher at all.

Friction Examples:

- *DEI work at colleges of education is top-down and if we require reorganization of our programming to incorporate teaching hard histories of marginalization in civics there could be pushback (Emotion, General)*
- *Depending on the state, in today's political climate, the cost could be a teacher's job. In many districts, it could be dealing with hate from parents. (Effort, Race/Diversity)*

4. Teachers are being asked to do more than what they are prepared to do. With a teaching staffing "crisis" and the current expectations of practitioners to learn skills not within their core curriculum through PD as practitioners, teachers are entering the classroom without capacity for that professional development, therefore avoiding teaching students and content they are unfamiliar with.

Friction Examples:

- *Teacher candidates do not have faith that engaging students in inquiry will pay off vs classroom management time and structure (Emotion, SPED and ELL)*
- *In many communities there is an overwhelmingly white population (historically due to redlining) that makes it hard for faculty to engage with multilingual learners (Effort, ELL)*

### Key Takeaways

1. Approaching teaching civics and history with full inclusion of diverse histories, and in service of all learners, is everyone's responsibility in Educator Preparation.

2. There are a multitude of resources and strategies for teaching honesty and equitably, however the pressure for faculty to do so is often performative. Ensuring equitable civics and history preparation needs to come from the top-down and tied to performance metrics.
3. The intersectionality of diverse learners and their histories matches up with our civics and history teaching standards, we just need to be better about intentional representation.
4. Faculty need to feel safe to take on equity work in the Colleges of Ed. There will be no forward movement past performative metrics if faculty aren't given space and frameworks to have difficult conversations, learn from each other, and about themselves, specifically their roles in inadvertently perpetuating white, english speaking, hetero-normative curriculum.
5. Faculty need to model integrity, strategy, and emotional bravery for teaching civics and history through an equitable lens so their candidates can take those soft skills with them when they face frictions in their K-12 classrooms. This is especially important for those EPP's in states with proposed or enacted censorship legislation on "divisive" topics.

### ***BEST PRACTICE 2: Breaking Down Silos***

When Colleges of Education incorporate Educating for American Democracy resources or similar curriculum that promotes civic inquiry and engagement, they should ensure faculty across disciplines are trained to do so; and are prepared to invest in collaboration and restructuring as necessary.

### **MAJOR FRICTIONS**

1. Colleges of Education are not incentivized to support a comprehensive, cross-discipline adoption of resources for civic inquiry such as EAD. Faculty and candidates are not equipped with the structure, resources, or incentives to apply civic-inquiry resources if they aren't being certified in social studies.

Friction Examples:

- *Single-certification tracks in EPP's that aligns to the reality of state regulations (i.e. edTPA) (inertia)*
- *Time to redesign COE would be substantial to (effort)*
- *Teacher candidates may struggle with shifting from teacher centered to student centered, a mindshift that would need to apply across disciplines (inertia)*

2. College of Education Faculty who are not experts in Social Studies feel ill-equipped to take on civic inquiry in their disciplines.

Friction Examples:

- *Professors often feel “called out” as a professional when they attempt to teach content outside their area of expertise (emotion)*
  - *Act of self-silo by individual/political identity creates spaces of “not belonging” (emotion)*
3. There is a chilling effect across Colleges of Education regarding what and how we incorporate history and civics. Whether educators are looking to represent the histories of LGBTQ+ students in social-emotional learning or BIPOC students in ELA, if the topic has been deemed “divisive” within culture or policy, educators defer to the safer option to avoid.

Friction Examples:

- *Being “called out” by politics, law, etc and are punished for teaching history, especially for integrating “divisive” topics (emotion)*
- *Requires a shift from personally responsible citizenship to transformative citizenship (effort)*

### **Key Takeaways**

1. Leaders in Colleges of Education must make the decision to recommit to civic education and then provide opportunities for faculty to learn alongside one another in that effort.
2. Fostering a safe space for difficult conversations about representative content across disciplines is essential for effective collaboration.
3. A shift to transformative, community citizenship should be adopted and modeled for students at Institutions of Higher Education
4. Centering the preservation of democracy in Colleges of Ed requires restructuring to achieve the goal that all candidates, regardless of discipline or certification track, are leaving EPP’s ready to implement civic inquiry & honest, representative history in their classrooms.

### ***BEST PRACTICE 3: Empowering Conditions***

Colleges of education must lead in advocating for resources, policies, and conditions that best promote the civic mission of schooling that Educating for American Democracy puts forth. The

lack of uniform undergraduate pre-service requirements in civics, law, history, government, and political science means that teachers assigned to civics classes may be ill-equipped to help students master the knowledge and skills that are essential for informed and engaged citizenship. Moreover, the teaching profession as a whole, and social studies teachers in particular, are not reflective of the racial and ethnic diversity of students.

## MAJOR FRICTIONS

1. There is a lack of resources to implement and a lack of emphasis on preparing candidates to tangibly impact the civic mission of schooling. Presently, for every \$50 of federal investments in the STEM disciplines, there is an equivalent 5 cent investment in civics and history. This has deep implications on the tangible resources spent on professional development, hiring diverse faculty with civic expertise, and procuring quality materials; the reality also provides an intangible signal of the type of preparation and professionals who are valued in the field. Rather than challenging this differential emphasis, many pre-service programs may—intentionally or unintentionally—double down on these realities, leading to chronic under-investment in the types of forward-looking approaches EAD represents.

Friction Examples:

- *Lack of resources for civics and history at universities and school districts.*
- *Lack of a requirement for candidates to engage in undergraduate courses in U.S. Government and U.S. History.*

2. Emerging educators are facing deep backlash in communities that stem from increasing polarization in teaching divisive issues that could deter candidates—particularly, diverse candidates—from entering the field. A number of states have passed laws either limiting or outright banning the teaching of divisive issues. These policy realities could create an environment of hostility that deters diverse candidates from entering the field.

Friction Examples:

- *Inability of diverse candidates seeing themselves reflected in the social studies field*
- *Lack of social studies certification examinations to include more rigorous civics and U.S. history content to ensure that each prospective teacher has fundamental knowledge of the subjects*
- *Students going to the field and not able to implement what they've learned.*

3. Changes in practice called for by Educating for American Democracy represent significant shifts in how candidates would have experienced civics and history education and how in-service professionals view their practice.

Friction Examples:

- *There is an overall inertia towards what has been experienced and practiced both in pre-service programs and in-service teaching.*

- *Lecture-based instruction being the dominant mode of instruction in social studies and other disciplines.*

## **Key Takeaways**

1. Deans and faculty can play a central role in advocating for the passage of the bi-partisan, bi-cameral, Civics Secures Democracy Act which includes \$150 million annually for five years to assist such institutions in developing and implementing programs to train elementary and secondary school teachers in methods for instructing and engaging students in American civics and history. Priority for funds is given to applications proposing to address the specific needs of teachers working with traditionally underserved students, including rural and inner-city urban students and English learners. Thirty-five percent of these funds are designated for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Institutions of Higher Education.
2. Deans and faculty can lead in advocating for federal, state, and local policies that center the civic mission of schooling in pre- and in-service teacher professional development. Examples of actions include:
  - Required undergraduate courses in political science and history, along with coursework in civics pedagogy that aligns with Educating for American Democracy.
  - Funding a fellowship program to incentivize people of color to join the teaching profession in civics and history.
  - Providing ongoing professional development opportunities for inservice teachers to learn about civics and historical content and pedagogies.
3. Deans and faculty can incorporate teaching and modeling of practices that center democratic education to candidates including simulations, showcases, partnering with policy leaders with opposing viewpoints to speak on key topics in classes, facilitating authentic writing tasks with real world policy implications, and conducting interviews of elected officials.
4. Deans and faculty can incorporate the following skills across courses: fostering viewpoint diversity; centering equity; emphasizing a growth mindset approach to reflection; empowering student leadership in classrooms, schools, and programs; and key cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities such as media literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication across coursework.

## **Conclusion**

It is AACTE's intention to equip teacher educators and their candidates with tools to recommit ensuring our young people are informed, authentic, and engaged citizens through the Educating

for American Democracy (EAD) Roadmap and Pedagogy Guide. The three-day EAD pilot revealed that there are significant frictions currently at play that could hinder outcomes for educator candidates. For the roadmap and pedagogy guide to be employed successfully, EPPs must consider the environmental, political, emotional, and financial barriers that would prevent a comprehensive, equitable, cross-disciplinary implementation approach. Therefore, simply elevating the EAD Roadmap and corresponding Pedagogy Guide within schools of education will not be enough to support faculty and candidates with this shared critical mission to sustain democratic inquiry within our system of education. As we move forward in our partnership with EAD, AACTE will continue developing high quality professional development that deeply engages members and EAD champions to incorporate the roadmap and pedagogy guide in their practice.

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