

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Dawnavyn James, doctoral student, graduate assistant, and graduate fellow at the Center for K–12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education at the University of Buffalo, spent seven years in the elementary classroom as a teacher, three of those in kindergarten, her favorite grade to teach! Her research focuses on early childhood/elementary Black history instruction and curriculum development, using picture books to learn about and teach Black histories, and what we can learn from Black women educators of the past. She also consults with school districts nationwide and supports elementary educators with Black history instruction.

Q. Why did you become an educator?

A. I knew I could change the way we engage with Black history in the elementary classroom. I wanted to explore ways Black history could be taught within all content areas, not just introduced during Black History Month. I also wanted to be the Black educator I did not have but know elementary-aged children need. Being a teacher has influenced how I view the world and inspired me to expose pre-service teachers to what education can look like in their classrooms and how they can build communities that benefit students and inspire them to be their best selves.

Q. What teaching success or career achievement are you most proud of?

A. I am most proud of my book *Beyond February: Teaching Black History Any Day, Every Day, and All Year Long* because the heart of the book comes from



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my classrooms. It is currently being used in elementary schools and college classrooms across the country.

Q. When and why did you join NCSS?

A. I joined NCSS a year ago because I saw how a lot of resources were useful in my research and because I had the opportunity to co-edit a special issue of *Social Studies and the Young Learner*.

Q. How has being a part of a professional association like NCSS enriched your career?

A. Being a part of NCSS has helped me connect and collaborate with educators who are interested in the richness of Black history education and the power of picture books in early childhood and elementary social studies instruction. I know that through the networks I've built within NCSS, my work is honored and supported. ■

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