A CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING TOOL

Cinnamon Olivia Wilson
B.S., Howard University, Washington, D.C., 1999

PROJECT

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

EDUCATION
(Curriculum and Instruction)

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SUMMER
2008
A CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING TOOL

A Project

by

Cinnamon Olivia Wilson

Approved by:

Mimi Coughlin

Committee Chair

Date: July 17, 2008
Student: Cinnamon Olivia Wilson

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this project is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for this project.

Robert Pritchard, Graduate Coordinator

Department of Teacher Education

August 11, 2006 Date
Abstract

of

A CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING TOOL

by

Cinnamon Olivia Wilson

African American males make up less than 10% of the public school enrollments, yet they are failing at alarming rates. If educators are not equipped with the resources to promote success amongst African American male students, the achievement gap will increase.

In this project, a book list was created in order to aid teachers in building a culturally inclusive classroom library targeting African American male elementary school students. For information purposes, teachers and pre-service student teachers were surveyed regarding their knowledge of the culture of African American males and their perceptions teaching African American male students. The results indicated a need for teachers to gain insight into the importance of culturally relevant teaching as well as a need for resources to guide them.

African American cultural pedagogy is essential in teaching African American males. Classroom literature that is positive and relevant to African American males...
can aid students in achieving academically by giving them a sense of belonging to the classroom setting, as well as teaching them about positive role models that share a common culture. Encouraging literature that deals with their experiences and problems as well as giving examples of how to resolve those problems will grant them with knowledge and skills useful in real life situations.

Mimi Coughlin, Committee Chair
Date July 17, 2008
DEDICATION

FOR MY MOTHER

WHO UNDERSTOOD THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

Constance Davetta Groves

1946-1999

FOR MY SONS JARED AND JAMIRI WHO BOTH INSPIRE ME TO

CONTINUE MY PASSION FOR CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Dedication | vi |
| List of Figures | ix |

## Chapter

1. **INTRODUCTION**
   - Statement of the Problem | 1
   - Significance of the Project | 3
   - Limitations | 3
   - Definition of Relevant Terms | 4

2. **LITERATURE REVIEW**
   - Teachers of African American Male Students | 6
   - Teacher Perceptions of African American Males | 9
   - Teachers in Urban Schools | 11
   - African American Males’ Perceptions of Public Schools | 19
   - Promoting Academic Success in African American Males | 22
   - Summary | 32

3. **METHODOLOGY** | 33
   - Research Subjects | 33
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Book List</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the research “A Culturally Relevant Teaching Tool” was to assist teachers in lowering the achievement gap as well as providing educators with a tool that will aid literacy and academic achievement. Pre-service teachers in a second semester credentialing program at a university in Northern California, completed a questionnaire regarding their perceptions of teaching African American male students, and incorporating culturally relevant literature into the curriculum. A similar questionnaire was completed by Sacramento teachers employed in an urban school.

The research findings indicated that many teachers and pre-service teachers are unaware of African American culture, and cannot provide students with enough examples of positive African American male role models. Teachers can fulfill the needs of African American male students by building classroom libraries with books about Martin Luther King Jr., W. E. B Dubois, Frederick Douglass, and many other prominent African American men. Also, books with characters that African American males can identify with will spark an interest in reading, and improve reading skills by providing stories that are familiar to their own lives.

Statement of the Problem

African American male students represent a minority population in public schools yet they represent a group that is failing in disproportionate numbers. In the 2000-2001 school year, African American males made up 8.6% of the national public-school enrollments. Despite representing less than 10% of the public school
enrollments, African American boys comprised 22% of those expelled from school and 23% of those suspended (Smith, 2004). Black males are highest among students who choose to leave school; suspended; expelled, or kicked out of school; score poorly on tests; have high GPAs and high rates on referral and placement in special education; and are underrepresented in gifted education. If an African American child is placed in Special Education services, 80% of the time the child will be male. Sixty-three percent of African American fourth grade student are performing below grade level in reading, while over 80% of inmates entered prison illiterate. States project prison growth based on fourth grade reading levels. One of every three African American males is involved with a penal institution while only 1 of 10 African American male high-school graduates is enrolled in college (Kunjufu, 2002; NCES, 2005).

Teachers have a powerful role in countering these statistics. It is the teacher who has the continuous contact with the child, and the relationship between the child and the teachers determines the child’s attitude toward school (Joseph, 1996). If teachers are not proactive in promoting success amongst African American male students, the failing statistics are likely to continue or worsen.

If African American males can benefit academically it is imperative that teachers gain an insight into the cultural background of these children (Joseph, 1996). There should be available information through in-service and pre-service teacher education programs that allow examples of ways to positively connect and teach
African American males; doing whatever is necessary to make certain academic success.

Significance of the Project

The significance of the project is to aid educators in promoting literacy amongst African American male students. A book list will be passed to teachers throughout Sacramento City School District in an attempt to aid teachers in building a culturally relevant classroom library targeting African American male elementary school students.

Limitations

The first limitation of the study is that the sample of teachers and pre-service teachers were relatively small. Only 12 out of 30 teachers completed the survey. Teachers were told to return their surveys back to their school principal to be collected by the researcher at the end of the week. Passing their surveys back to their supervisor may have altered the truthfulness of their answers, or may even have prevented others from turning the surveys in. The pre-service teachers' survey was given to them by their credentialing program professor. This may have resulted in students answering the questions in a manner in which they may have felt would be approved by their professor.

A limitation of the book list is that it only targets African American boys in elementary school. African American males in middle school and high school are also in need of culturally relevant literature.
Books about the stories of prominent African American males were limited for elementary school children. Most of the books about the lives of African American men were of a higher reading level.

Definition of Relevant Terms

*Academic Achievement*: Accomplishing high intellectual and educational success.

*Cooperative Groups*: Students working and brainstorming together in order to meet an academic goal.

*Cultural Pedagogy*: A teaching technique that is designed to relate to one’s inherited learning styles and beliefs, and way of life.

*Home language*: the verbal communication students most often use while at home.

*Intellectually Inferior*: Academically substandard

*Peer Tutoring*: Students learning from and teaching other students from the same age group and grade level

*Pre-service teachers*: Students that are in a program preparing to become teachers.

*Stereotype Anxiety*: Individuals fear of performing in ways that might corroborate a stereotype from the group or culture they identify with.

*Urban Schools*: Public schools located in the center of highly populated cities.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to improve literacy and academic achievement among African American male students', an acknowledgement of their present educational experience is valuable in knowing how to make positive changes in education. In this chapter, imperative questions are discussed which include: What are teachers' perceptions of teaching African American males, and are teachers' knowledgeable of effective cultural relevant teaching? How do African American males feel about school and are they the blame for their own academic failure? In what ways have schools achieved success among African American males using cultural relevant teaching strategies?

In the first section, I will examine teachers of African American males' perceptions of teaching in urban populations, and the struggles faced while teaching. I will discuss the teaching focus for African American male students and the resources used, if any, to implement African American cultural pedagogy into standard curriculum.

In the second section, the focus will be African American males' students' experience in school. Their perceptions of school are examined, as well as their behavior and interaction with educators.

In the final section, African American cultural pedagogy will be discussed. Areas in which culturally relevant teaching strategies have been used to successfully promote African American academic achievement will be examined as well as resources used to aid instruction.
Teachers of African American Male Students

Race and Culture

"While the number of children of color in our public schools is rapidly rising, the number of teachers of color continues to decline. More than ever, white teachers will be teaching African-American children" (Delpit, 1990, p. 4).

According to the 1989 US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, most minority students will find that 92% of their teachers throughout their educational experience were white. These teachers will most likely be female, middle class and from suburban areas (Zeichner, 2006).

Agee argues that teachers bring in their own cultural pedagogy when teaching (Agee, 2000). If this argument is valid, African American males are being instructed and assessed in a White cultural environment that uses a White cultural pedagogy.

African American male students are more likely to attend schools in urban areas. As a result, not only will African American students find that they have cultural differences but social class will also play a major role in conflicting with teachers and their awareness of African American students.

Teacher Qualifications

In urban areas, teachers are more likely than suburban areas to be under qualified and non-credentialed (Anyon, 1981; Kunjufu, 2002). Teachers are more likely not to meet the standards of "highly qualified" set forth by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which requires that all teachers of core academic subjects in the classroom be highly qualified. This is determined by the essential criteria: (a) attaining
a bachelor's degree or better in the subject taught; (b) obtaining full state teacher certification; and (c) demonstrating knowledge in the subjects taught.

In 2005, The Washington Post stated that in Maryland a third of public school classes are taught by teachers that are considered not highly qualified. The distribution of those teachers were that schools with the highest population of poor children received 53% of the under qualified teachers, compared to students with the lowest percentage of poor children receiving only 22% of the under qualified teachers. The data shows that in Maryland, a poor child has a greater than half chance of receiving a teacher that the state considers under qualified (Chenoweth, 2005). Children from poor and minority neighborhoods are being shortchanged when it comes to getting top teachers, at least as measured by how their teachers perform on certification tests (Davis & Doig, 2004).

A report in the Sacramento Bee by Education Trust-West (Rosehall, 2005) revealed that teachers in California school districts earn less money if they work in schools serving the poorest students. When compared by race the report states teachers earn on average $3,014 less per year when they work in schools with the largest numbers of African American and Latino students. The figure in Sacramento City Unified is $5,660 fewer dollars. These statistics may be due to inexperienced and under qualified teachers being at the bottom of the pay scale. Inexperienced teachers are teaching in the most schools in need, while more qualified teachers typically advance to higher-income, higher-achieving schools.
Less experienced teachers or teachers lacking in the knowledge of quality instruction and student engagement also lack the skills that allow them to hold high expectations for all students to succeed academically. These students may feel the need for more emphasis on behavior management and discipline than teaching critical thinking skills and using teaching strategies that will enhance a higher level of thinking (Anyon 1981; Kunjufu 2002). Focusing on behavior management loses quality instruction time and does nothing to close the achievement gap, which should be the main focus when teaching an African American population.

In an attempt to solve the problem of limited experienced teachers, districts across the country require that teachers attend workshops that often target multicultural education. The problem that occurs is schools do not hold teachers accountable for using what they have learned and the effort is usually lost. This is a reflection of societal attitudes towards multicultural education and the feeling of its non-importance. Until teachers are held accountable, the achievement gap will continuously widen (Gardner, 2007). Many schools across the nation see multicultural awareness as events in which students’ sample various cultural dishes and enjoy cultural music and dancing. Validating a student for one day is a nonverbal way of saying you are only important one day of the school year and does not give insight in useful cultural teaching strategies. The rest of the school year children of color are expected to assimilate into white cultural ways of thinking, expressing, testing, and learning. Students who resist assimilation will often be found in the principals’ office or in a special education classroom.
Teacher Perceptions of African American Males

Teacher perceptions have a great impact on expectations of students. Ronald Ferguson (2003), a Harvard educator, examined the way teachers' perceptions, expectations and behaviors interact with students' beliefs, behaviors, and work habits in ways that help perpetuate the Black-White test score gap. According to Ferguson, the Black-White test score gap is constant during African American males early school years. Unfortunately, schools seldom reduce these disparities and the gap widens as students pass through the public school system. He defines racial bias as expecting different outcomes from students depending on their race. For example, teachers that expect White children to perform better on tests in comparison to African American children based on their racial differences are bias. This type of bias may disadvantage African American male students by being called on less frequently, and receiving limited assistance from their classroom teacher. White children on the other hand may be encouraged to speak more often in class, offered more assistance, and held to higher standards than African American males. This sends a message to African American students that they are not as smart as White children are and may eventually cause them to lose interest in school as a result assisting in widening the Black-White test score gap.

Children detect differences in the way they are treated compared to others at a very young age. Teachers who communicate less enthusiasm in teaching African American males compared to others in the classroom contribute to relationships that affect academic achievement. Negative messages are sent that leads the student to
think that they are not liked, viewed as incapable of performing at higher levels, and not worthy of receiving positive attention. As a result, the relationship between teacher and student will fail and students will act out in ways that will allow them to receive negative attention, leading to time away from the classroom such as detention, suspension and special education classes. A theory that focuses on the affects of racial bias that African American males may exhibit is stereotype anxiety; when stereotypes concerns ability individuals fear performing in ways that might corroborate the stereotype. One affect of the anxiety is interfering with performance. African American males may perform worse academically when they are conscious of their teacher’s attitude towards their race and at some point may believe that they are academically inferior and incapable of reaching higher standards (Steele, 1992). It is much easier for the student to meet the stereotype or perform only to the expectations of the teacher than it is to exceed the teacher’s expectations.

Teachers who are knowledgeable of teaching African American children are also comfortable with using diverse cultural pedagogy as a classroom resource. African American culture is incorporated into the classroom and used along with other standard curriculum

In a study by Bakari (2003), 415 pre-service teachers’ attitudes were assessed towards teaching African American students. The results indicated that there is little effort on the part of pre-service teachers to use culturally relevant teaching strategies as a classroom resource. African American teachers were more willing than White teachers to use African American cultural pedagogy as a strategy. These findings may
be a result of African American teachers’ knowledge of African American culture and
the opposite affect for White teachers. White teachers may feel as though they do not
have much knowledge of African American culture and therefore would not know
how to teach using diverse classroom resources.

Incorporating African American culture into everyday curriculum through
literature and other resources would give African American male students a sense of
self worth and feelings of belonging to the classroom. Therefore it is imperative that
teachers not choose to ignore the racial makeup of their classroom by showing little or
no effort of embracing African American culture and incorporating it into the
curriculum.

Teachers in Urban Schools

According to the U.S Department of Education, in 2002-2003 the average
Black or Hispanic student attended a school in which almost 50% of the student
population was poor compared to only 10% for the average White student (NBS,
2003). As discussed earlier, most African American males attend public school in
urban, low-income areas. It is imperative that teachers working with students in low
income areas not have perceptions of students being incapable of being academically
challenged due to their environment outside of school. Teachers with negative
perceptions of poor children will have a hard time holding students at academically
high levels. Students will be taught very little critical thinking skills, and academic
challenges that will diminish their opportunities of obtaining skills leading them to
leadership positions once they enter the workforce.
In a study at Indiana University and Southern Illinois University in 1971 (Long, 1974), 591 students enrolled in an introductory education course pursuing teaching careers were asked by questionnaire their perceptions towards students living in poverty. The majority or future teachers perceived poor students as being far less motivated, deficient in academic achievement, less ambitious, and having lower levels of self-esteem compared to financially advantaged students. Pre-service teachers in the same study also reported being satisfied with the education program in which they were enrolled, but dissatisfaction with their preparation they were receiving working with the environmentally disadvantaged (Long, 1974).

In a more recent study by Costigan (2005), teachers enrolled in a New York City teacher preparation program (which offers financial incentives for a commitment of two years of work in an urban public school were surveyed regarding teaching in an urban school. These teachers were interviewed over a three year period with the purpose of targeting the reason teacher turnover rates are so high in poor urban schools with many teachers leaving to teach in wealthier suburban schools are leave teaching altogether. The results indicated that the decisions to leave were a result of 50% student discipline problems, 29% lack of student motivation, and 20% unsafe environment. Of the 75 students, 19.4% were looking for another job in teaching and 80.6% were looking for something other than teaching. In the first year of teaching, many pre-service teachers in the program expressed feelings of frustration with the school curriculum due to high stake testing.
Eleanor Rodriguez, the author of *What is it about Me Can't You Teach* (2006) argues in her book that living below the poverty line without the resources that promotes learning at home, does not promise a life of academic failure. Students who come from a poor family are not “poor children” their parents might be disadvantaged and poor but it does not mean that they have to live poor as adults. A quality education can determine what kind of life a child lives.

The literature reflects high levels of frustration and lack of support amongst teachers of African American males. Lack of support and ineffective behavior management techniques was a major concern of teachers. As a result, attending an urban school increases students’ chances of having a teacher who is burned out due to a lack of helpful resources.

With culturally relevant teaching and adequate resources, such as a book list relevant to African American males, teachers can effectively teach a population of African American male students. As student engagement increases, behavior issues will decrease allowing more time for student learning and lowers the level of frustration experienced by teachers.

Districts play a vital role in ensuring that teachers are qualified to teach all students equitably. Administrators must hold teachers accountable in using cultural relevant teaching and incorporate this strategy into teacher evaluations. Administrators’ responsibility is to ensure teachers are knowledgeable of cultural pedagogy and given the proper resources to guide this standard of teaching.
California Standards for the Teaching Profession, adopted in 1997, include a standard for planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students. This includes drawing on and valuing students' backgrounds, prior knowledge and interests. Teachers are to establish challenging learning goals for all students based on student experience, language, development, and home and school expectations as well as, modify and adjust instructional plans according to student engagement and achievement (CDE, 2007).

A book list for African American students will provide educators with a tool for satisfying the standard by drawing on and valuing student's background, prior knowledge and interests.

With increasing support from districts and administrators in fulfilling the California Teaching Standards an increase in student engagement and most importantly higher test scores can be achieved. In the next section, I examine African American males experience in public schools.

African American Male Students in Public Schools

Most African Americans existence in America began at the time of slavery. During slavery, Blacks in the south were prohibited by law from receiving an education. It was feared by white slave owners that educating slaves would make it harder to keep Africans enslaved. Although some African Americans such as Frederick Douglass secretly learned to read and write, efforts to educate Black children in the south was met with harsh punishments therefore the majority remained
illiterate. Pre-civil war education even in the northern states was predominantly offered to white male children.

After the emancipation proclamation ended slavery, it gave hope to the privilege of education for Blacks. Northern missionaries and organizations such as the Freedman’s Bureau opened schools in the south and freed slaves rejoiced in the opportunity to be educated. “Before the war, most of the southern states made it illegal to teach a slave to read and write. Now African Americans embraced education like nothing else—lining up in droves, old and young, to go to school” (PBS American Experience, 2003).

For African Americans, education was a tool against the racism that kept them illiterate for centuries. Public school systems soon emerged throughout the south. Not only were African American children striving to receive an education many adults were going to school as well. Most schools in the south with the exception of Louisiana and South Carolina were segregated by race.

After the Freedman’s Bureau ended in 1870 southern states took over the public school system for Blacks and Whites. As white supremacy emerged and strengthened in the south, obtaining an education became more difficult due to the burning of schools and violence targeting teachers and students. Even with the intimidation and breakdown of schools in which Black children attended the desire for education continued. By 1880, the literacy rate grew from 5% to 30% among Blacks in the south (Teachers Domain, 2004). During this time period African American students were most likely taught by African American teachers. As discussed in the
previous section, Agee (2000) argues that teachers bring their own cultural styles into the classroom. If this theory is true, African American male students were receiving culturally relevant teaching before the integration of schools.

In 1896, Plessy versus Ferguson ruled that "separate but equal" public institutions, including schools, were constitutional. With this ruling came a legal system of Jim Crow laws, and unequal schools for Blacks. "Separate but equal" meant being at the mercy of state funding. Resources for Black public schools were depended on by the racist government system that set forth the Jim Crow laws. As a result, Black schools received far less financial support as White schools (Virginia Historical Society, 2004). Therefore, Black schools received fewer books, worse buildings, and lower wages for teachers. Black schools were usually taught by a single teacher that taught all ages, grades and subjects in classrooms that were usually overcrowded.

In 1954, Brown versus Board of Education made segregated public education illegal when the U.S Supreme Court declared the de jure segregation of schools was unconstitutional because it was inherently unequal. This victory mandated schools throughout the nation to integrate. (Brown versus Board of Education, 1954) This meant better school environment, textbooks and school resources for all children regardless of color. With this victory, educational resources increased while African American teachers teaching African American children decreased. If Agee's (2000) argument regarding teachers bringing their own cultural styles into the classroom, with
the decrease of African American teachers, a change in the way African American students were being taught would have changed as well.

More than 50 years after Brown versus the Board of Education public school in America are falling back into the segregation. In 1988, 43.5% of Black students went to predominantly White schools. A recent report by Harvard University’s Civil Rights project reported that in 2001 the percentage dropped to 30.2%. In the 1990s, the Supreme Court authorizations to return to neighborhood schools are consistently lowering the numbers of integrated schools (Hardy, 2004). Students living in urban areas are no longer being bussed out to areas in an attempt to desegregate schools. A poor African American male living in an inner city neighborhood will likely attend a school in the same neighborhood lacking resources needed to give an equal education of a White male peer living in a suburban neighborhood.

Charter schools are increasing throughout school district in the United States. In the 2004-2005 school year, 17% of students attending segregated schools in the state of Michigan attended Charter schools (Landauer-Menchik, 2006). In California, charter schools intent is to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, pupils and community to maintain schools that operate independently from the existing school district structure (CA Education Code section 47601). Many charter schools such as CLAS in Los Angeles Unified school district are excelling academically with the same population of African American students that are failing in regular public schools. CLAS, which will be discussed further in the next section, is one of few schools in
California with a main focus of teaching African American cultural pedagogy in an attempt to increase academic achievement.

The fourth grade syndrome reflects research that indicates by the time African American males reach 4th grade they actively disconnect from classroom participation. They lack motivation during classroom activities, and seldom raise their hand to respond to questions presented by their teacher (Kunjufu, 1985). The research shows that between the times African American males enter Kindergarten and reach fourth grade are critical years. This is the time is when teachers should be most aware of what motivates and keeps African American males engaged. If teachers are not able to reach students by the primary years they will fall behind risking being tracked into remedial classes and being retained. Janice Hale’s book *Learning While Black* (2001) compared the progress of African American male children first entering Head Start to students that had been there for two years. Her findings indicated that children just entering school performed better academically than those that had been there for two years regardless of social economic status. According to Kunjufu (2003), this indicates that there is nothing wrong with the children but something wrong with what happens to them in school. If a student is consistently treated negatively for years, it should be expected that the student would shut down and resist school before the fourth year. Once a student starts to resist school they fall further behind academically and will fall even further with each year.
African American males in public school education are more likely to be labeled with behavior problems and as less intelligent even while they are still very young (Hilliard, 1992). Joseph (1996) argued that there is a correlation between academic failure and academic self-esteem. Tracking failing students into lower level classes negatively affects academic self-esteem and eventually they start to view themselves as intellectually inferior. As a result, they are likelier to drop out of school, and engage in delinquent behavior.

African American Males’ Perceptions of Public Schools

If you can show me how I can cling to that which is real to me, while teaching me a way into the larger society, then and only then will I drop my defenses and my hostility, and I will sing your praises and help you to make the desert bear fruit.

Ralph Ellison (1963)

African American males’ perception of school and teachers play a major role in their academic success. If students perceive school as a negative experience, they will resist teachers and take little interest in teachers’ efforts to motivate them in achieving academically. African American males often adopt behaviors that make them complicit in their own failure. It is not just that they are more likely to be punished; it is also they are more likely to act out in the classroom and to avoid challenging themselves academically. David Gardner (2007) discusses how the affects of outside experiences influence the achievement gap between White and Black students. Poor students come to school with few enriching experiences that are valued
by the larger education community. When the larger community does not value their experiences, it is also devaluing the students' culture and personal make-up.

According to Gardner, the response from the student will be anger, resentment, and lost of trust. Students will then see school as an obstacle, driving down motivation and confidence. Valuing students' background experiences, culture, and accepting what they bring into the classroom through culturally relevant teaching will empower students' self esteem and motivate academic achievement.

In a study by Honora (2003), high school African American students were interviewed regarding their perception of school. More male than female African American students reported that they distrusted teachers and called attention to the social hierarchies existing in the classroom. African American male students reported teachers as having displayed differential treatment towards students depending on their gender or achievement level. The same study found that African American male students found teachers were not supportive and inaccessible when dealing with personal issues. Low achieving African American males felt that school was a social outlet and a place to hang out with friends. The results were indications of both high achieving and low achieving males but the difference was high achieving males were motivated towards obtaining academic achievement despite the feelings about the teachers not being supportive.

African American students at the high school level are highly influenced by peers (Kunjufu, 1988). If peers have the same negative feelings towards teachers, it
will be difficult to establish a relationship between teacher and student because of fear of losing the respect of peers.

In a study by Axelman (2006) African American male students felt that most of their negative experiences in high school were due to encounters with staff and administration. They felt as though they were unfairly targeted and labeled “troublemakers” or “gang bangers” because of the way they culturally express themselves such as wearing braids in their hair. Students reported that they did not feel any safer with the school policies of uniforms and zero tolerance.

African American males perceive most schooling activities as feminine and irrelevant to their masculine identity and development (Davis & Jordan, 1994). Authors such as Billison (1992) argued that African American males adopt a nonchalant attitude in school he calls the “cool pose.” He defines it as a ritualized approach to masculinity that allows them to compete and survive in an environment of social oppression, and racism, including that found within U.S schools. African American males learn early to project a façade of emotionlessness, and fearlessness in order to counter the inner pain of damaged pride, low self-esteem, and the result of being from a subjugated group (Griffin, 2000). This affects academics in school by convincing themselves as well as giving an impression to the teacher that they will resist any efforts to be academically challenged in the classroom.

African American males distrust for educators is a barrier for their own academic achievement. It is educators’ role to develop effective cultural teaching strategies that are useful in breaking down barriers in order to promote academic
achievement. In the next section African American male learning styles are discussed as well as examples of success in schools across the nation in teaching African American males.

Promoting Academic Success in African American Males

In order to close the achievement gap there will have to be a collective effort by teachers, parents, community, students, and educational leaders. This will be accomplished by using a systematic approach, and an effective plan to educate African American males in a way that will actually create positive results. When attitudes across the nation change about educating children in a multicultural society, only then will we have the ability to close the achievement gap (Gardner, 2007). This will have to be a collective response and change by all persons invested in educating children.

Learning Styles

Boykin (1978) found that African American children are exposed to high levels of activation: noises from the television, stereos, and a steady flow of people in and out of the home. Consequently, they learn verbal concepts better through instructional movement rather than through passive learning, which is typical of American public schools. Styles of teaching that accommodate African American males are activity-based approaches such as plays, drama, and games could be used as well as dance and poetry or rap (Joseph, 1996). Movement in the classroom works much better with African American males than the typical sitting in a seat for numerous hours listening to a lesson taught through direct instruction.
African American males tend to be socially dependent on their peers. Subject matter that is not being easily transferred from the teacher to the student may be transferred from other peers. Utilizing cooperative groups or peer tutoring is a great way to ensure that students are able to talk about and relate subject matter that was first introduced by the teacher (Kunjufu, 2003).

The effects of peer tutoring on reading scores were studied in a Midwestern urban middle school with an African Americans population of 69%. Seventy-one 6th graders in general reading classes were targeted for the study. Novels were selected by the teacher that focused on students’ interest level and reading level. Students worked with peers three times per week for 45 minutes each working on vocabulary and reading activities. The results of the study indicated that peer tutoring raised test scores quicker than with teacher led instruction.

African American Role Models

In schools with a high diverse population, African American male role models are limited. According to the National Education Association, males make up less than a quarter of all teachers in U.S public schools. African American male teachers make up 2.4% out of 3 million K-12 public school teachers. Even though there are not many African American male teachers to play as role models. Teachers can make up for this need by asking other African American males in the community to come and visit the class. People such as police officers, politicians, writers, lawyers, doctors and other figures in the city that have positions in which an education is valued (Kunjufu, 2002). Low-income African American male students usually see the role models in their
community being drug dealers or rappers. Neither requires a good education or appreciation for school, and both occupations can be highly dangerous.

Mentors play a key role in the lives of Black students (Graham 2004). Providing mentors in students’ lives as early as kindergarten is necessary to develop a positive self-esteem, especially if they do not have positive men at home to look up to. Organizations and fraternities such as 100 Black men, National Urban League, and local Black fraternities are often available to mentor students. A teacher or mentor of the same race may serve as an effective role model boosting students’ confidence and enthusiasm for learning because students may trust and respect someone who they share characteristics with more and quicker, than someone who does not (Dee, 2004).

Nationwide the percentage of African American male teachers is a low 2.4% (NEA, 2003). The Call Me Mister program in South Carolina for seven year has focused on not only serving as mentor but recruiting and training African American males to teach in elementary schools. Graduates of the program have expressed the feelings of being a father figure, counselor, and someone that young Black males have grown to trust (Holsendolph, 2007), consequently, being motivators for academic success.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Research shows that African American males show lower levels of identification with academics compared to other students. While many cultures base much of their global self-esteem on academics in school, many African American males base their global self-esteem on family and home (Hare, 1987).
Disidentification with academics can be changed by encouraging African American males to re-identify with academics. One such way is by ensuring that multicultural curriculum teaching the contributions of African American males, are taught throughout the school year within the primary school curriculum. Schools that celebrate "multicultural day" encouraging students to make a cultural dish and post posters along with brief discussions on specific African American (usually Martin Luther King Jr.) do little to assist African American males in school identification because it highlights the separateness and differences of people of color. It tells the African American male student that his history is important once a year. The rest of the year will focus on the accomplishments of typically European male history (Osbourne, 1999).

Dr. Sharoky Hollie, Executive Director of the Center For Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (2006), gives seminars to school districts across the state of California enlightening educators on African American language (sometimes referred to as Ebonics) and the strategy of building on students language used at home and teaching them how to transfer it to standard English also referred to as "academic language. Dr. Hollie clarifies the difference between African American language and African American slang by distinguishing language as a characteristic linguistic feature. Slang is characterized as being a language of the time sometimes being used by persons of the same age group crossing into several different cultures. African American language history is rooted in the Niger-Congo or West African deep linguistic structure or grammatical system. An example is the use of phonological
sound system use of intonation in West African languages carried into English by African slaves and used still today in African American language. In addition, in West African language the “th” sound is not pronounced so it has been replaced with the “d” sound. Other languages such as French do not pronounce “th” and replace it with “z”, but the stigma of African American language has been viewed as pronunciations being due to ignorance and not the passing down of language from generation to generation.

When French people replace English words like “the” as starting with the letter “z” it’s associated with a positive “romantic” language, not as ignorant. Also, in several languages including African American, the level of tone can tend to be louder than Standard English. Often when students are expressing themselves according to their own cultural norms they can be viewed as being loud and disruptive causing confusion for students since it is culturally how they have learned to be self-expressive.

Dr. Hollie’s organization trusts that validating and affirming African American students’ home language, as well as understanding it to be a language, can sustain Mainstream Academic English mastery by building on the language they use at home to teach academic language. At Dr. Hollie’s seminars, situational language is discussed as a strategy to teach African American students when home language and academic language (Standard English) is appropriate to use. For example, students will understand in a school setting or job interview academic language is appropriate to use, however, if talking to friends or in a home setting “home language,” or African American language is appropriate. This strategy encourages students to accept and to
appreciate the value of code-switching linguistically and behaviorally without losing their identities.

Based on this African American language belief K-8 charter school in Los Angeles Unified School District, The Culture Language Academy of Success, co-founded by Dr. Hollie in 2002 with others that believed that an instructional program could support students’ development of cultural and linguistic knowledge and awareness of themselves, their community, the nation, and the world as an entrée’ to standards-based, academically rigorous, and intellectually stimulating curriculum.

CLAS has a 100% African American population and has successfully developed African American male students that hold themselves at high academic standards. This success can be mostly related to culturally responsive teaching. CLAS founders have developed teaching strategies used for their African American strategies that all their teachers are required to use. As a result the 2007 API at CLAS was 775 and is increasing with each year. The score for the whole Los Angeles Unified School District in 2007 was 664. These numbers prove success at this particular charter school and may serve as a model school in teaching African American students. (See Appendix C.)

According to Whiting (2006), African American males need to see themselves from an early age as scholars. He describes characteristics of a scholar identity as and having a sense of self in school settings:
• **Self Efficacy**

Self-Efficacy is related to a student's self-esteem and having a "can do" attitude about school. Characteristics of self efficacy have been viewed by scholars of gifted minorities as Black males having high resilience, high self-confidence, high self control, a strong sense of self-responsibility, and a clear understanding of the task at hand and the belief that they can accomplish all the subtasks of the intended goal.

• **Willing to make sacrifices**

Black males must sacrifice some of their social life in order to meet self-defined and valued goals.

• **Internal Locust of Control**

The belief that outcomes are controlled by one's ability and/or effort. For example, good study habits equal good grades

• **Future Oriented**

Setting realistic goals for the future that must be achieved with higher education.

• **Self-Awareness**

Do not let weaknesses distract them from putting forth effort in school. (Asking for tutoring or extra help if necessary, or studying longer)

• **Need for Achievement**

African American males understand that high academic achievement will take them further in life than being social or popular. School and learning comes first, guiding most of their decisions.
• **Academic Self Confidence**

Black males with self confidence believe they are strong, excellent students. They do not feel inferior or inadequate in academic settings and challenging classes.

• **Racial Identity**

Having racial pride and are comfortable being Black in and out of a Black environment. Black males with racial identity do not equate academic achievement with "acting white".

• **Masculinity**

Black males recognize that they can be studios and smart without losing their manhood.

Just as African American males have self-efficacy in sports, and entertainment. They can learn to view themselves with high esteem academically. Even though parents set the foundation for self-efficacy, first educators can help by establishing opportunities that promotes a high sense of self. Mentors play a key role in the lives of Black students (Graham, 2004). Providing mentors in students' lives as early as kindergarten is necessary to develop a positive self-esteem, especially if they do not have positive men at home to look up to. Organizations and fraternities such as 100 Black men, National Urban League, and local Black fraternities are often available to mentor students. A teacher or mentor of the same race may serve as an effective role model boosting students' confidence and enthusiasm for learning because students may trust a and respect someone who they share characteristics with more and quicker, than someone who does not (Dee, 2004).
Nationwide the percentage of African American male teachers is a low 2.4% (National Education Association, 2003). The Call Me Mister program in South Carolina for seven years has focused on not only serving as mentor but also recruiting and training African American males to teach in elementary schools. Graduates of the program have expressed the feelings of being a father figure, counselor, and someone that young Black males have grown to trust (Holsendolph, 2007). Consequently, being motivators for academic success.

Academic oriented school events such as career and college fairs that target African American males are essential in giving them insight in what kind of future they can hold with an education. Academics should be kept in the forefront of Black males minds (Whiting, 2006). The curriculum taught to African American children should also include people that look like them. Reading about people such as Frederick Douglass (abolitionist), Thurgood Marshall (Supreme Court Judge), Charles Drew (invented the first blood bank); Langston Hughes (Harlem renaissance poet) and many more scholars will create stories in the minds of young Black males with the aim of supporting a sense of pride in self.

Communities are only as good as the people that live in it. Whiting (2006) suggests that educators create programs in which African American males learn responsibility through leadership in the community. Older Black males can tutor younger Black children while also serving as mentors. Volunteering such as working in shelters, senior citizen homes, or as youth coaches will give African American males a sense of worthiness and commitment to their community. Teaching young
Black males the importance of helping the community as well as the positive aspects is beneficial to everyone.

In 2005, Baltimore community advocates were concerned about the high number of African American males and the suspension rates for what they felt were minor infractions. With the help of community organizations such as the Open Society Institute, and Baltimore district effective ways to prevent school suspensions were integrated into the school environment. Student participated in school an organized sports and game activities funded by community organizations. As a result, students learned team sportsmanship, and how to resolve conflicts peacefully in and out of the classroom. Students that were known “troublemakers” were given junior leadership roles to teach them responsibility and so that other students can look up to them as role models (Maxwell, 2007).

Another effective program started in Baltimore schools is the Meet-Me-Halfway program alternative suspension program. Students are required to participate in an in-school suspension program in which they mentoring, tutoring and services that promote education (Maxwell, 2007). Students are not labeled as being deviant or a hazard to the school environment but are viewed as students in need of academic and emotional interventions. In 2004, Baltimore, Maryland’s school district had a 16.1% suspension rate, higher than the state’s two largest school districts. In 2006 the rate of suspension dropped 11.3% (Maryland Dept. of Education, 2006), almost a 4% drop after programs were implemented to improve the rate of suspensions.
Summary

The literature review supports the need for African American cultural pedagogy as well as the need for resources that will allow educators to gain knowledge of African American culture. The literature also indicates a cultural barrier between African American urban male students and White middle class female teachers. African American males are often negatively stereotyped which diminishes their chances of receiving the support needed to succeed academically. Many African American boys are no longer interested in school by the time they have reached the 4th grade, and with each successive year, develop distrust for administrators and teachers. Primary teachers may be the most influential African American attitudes towards school. Unfortunately, the research communicates a resistance among adding African American pedagogy into the classroom curriculum. With adequate professional development and useful resources such as the booklist, our education system can provide an equitable education to all children.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project was to provide educators with an effective culturally relevant teaching tool for African American males. The literature review supports the notion that in order for African American males to drop their defenses and reach a level of academic motivation educators must make changes teaching strategies (Kunjufu 2003, Landson-Billings 1984, Whiting 2006).

In order to meet the needs of educators I developed a book list targeting African American males in elementary school. The book list consists of literature about African American role models, history and culture, and experiences relevant to African American males’ lives.

For information purposes a sample of teachers and pre-service teachers were given a question regarding their perceptions and strategies for teaching African American males.

Research Subjects

Pre-service Teachers

Twenty-one pre-service teachers enrolled in a Northern California university teacher education program were surveyed. The surveys were emailed to my advisor who in which took them to her class of pre-service teachers, which consisted of 19 female respondents and one male. One of the 21 subjects did not respond to the gender question. The racial make-up of the pre-service teachers surveyed was 13 Whites, two Latinos, and five Asians, one without a response and none that were African
American. Surveys were passed out at the beginning of class by their teacher. Pre-service teachers completed the questionnaire and returned them to the teacher. Within three days, I picked up the surveys from my advisor. All respondents completed surveys on a voluntary basis. All participants chose to complete surveys and turn them in for research purposes.

Teachers

Seeking a better understanding of teachers’ perceptions of African American males, I felt it necessary to find a school with a high population of African American students. In an attempt to find the biggest African American population in Sacramento City School District, I researched via internet the demographics of each elementary school. Jedediah Smith held the highest population of African American children in the district with 57.1% African American students enrolled out of 361 K-6 students. The reading scores of the African American student population were 16% on grade level and 38% on grade level in math. The African American API base score was 580. Large populations of the students live in the low-income housing projects right across the street from the school.

I contacted the school by phone and spoke with the office assistant informing her of my thesis and the desire to survey the teachers at the school. I then left a message for the principal and received a call back within 24 hours. The principal was supportive of my research, and offered to put each survey in teachers’ boxes. Seven days later, I returned to collect the surveys from the office manager. I found that 12 teachers completed the surveys. The participants that completed the survey consisted
of eight White, three Asian, one African American and 0 Latino teachers. Ninety-two percent of the teachers reported being middle class or above growing up and 100% of the teachers reported being middle class or above at the time of the survey.

To research this question pre-service teachers and elementary school teachers' were asked a series of survey questions relating to their experience and perceptions of teaching African American male students. Quantitative data was also collected from the participants regarding their race, socioeconomic status, and knowledge of African American history. Data was collected from pre-service teachers and an elementary school in Sacramento, California. The data analysis, presented in this chapter gives an overview of teacher and teacher perceptions' of teaching African American male students.

The first set of questions consisted of quantitative analysis of participants, which included questions regarding their social economic status growing up and socioeconomic status today. Other demographic information included information fill in questions regarding race and gender. Most participants completed this section but one pre-service teacher did not respond. The survey was comprised of 10 qualitative survey questions. The quantitative questions were on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being strongly disagree, 5 being neutral, and 10 being strongly agree. The last fill in question asked teachers to name three African American males that have contributed to the advancement of Americans. Teachers and pre-service teachers were given the same survey questions with the exception of the last fill in question in which all participants were asked to name three African American males that have contributed to the
advancement of Americans. Pre-service teachers were given a choice of naming anyone they chose. Teachers were asked not to use Martin Luther King Jr. as a choice. I chose to eliminate Martin Luther King Jr. in hopes that this would give me a better understanding of my respondents' knowledge regarding how much they knew about the background of the majority population they were teaching.

Participants' were also given an opportunity to add comments on the back of the survey regarding the subject of teacher perceptions of teaching African American male students.

Data was analyzed using a mean score from participants for each quantitative question.

Book List

The book list was derived from books I have become acquainted with through finding appropriate books for my sons, building my own classroom library for my fifth grade class, and research. The Sacramento Public Library became my most valuable research tool as I browsed books on the shelves. I searched for books with African American male characters telling stories with similar experiences and backgrounds of African American boys. I searched on the internet using Amazon.com looking for similar books and was able to use customer ratings as an information guide in knowing how others felt about the chosen books. I separated each book by appropriate reading level as well as categories such as books about prominent African American men, African American culture and history and Fiction so that teachers would have an easier time picking books for their own classroom library.
The Results of Teacher and Student Teacher Survey

Seventy-eight percent of the pre-service teachers surveyed reported growing up middle class or above. Eighty percent of the pre-service teachers reported being comfortable teaching African American males in low income, inner city schools. They felt that they were receiving adequate training through Sacramento State University’s teacher credentialing program that would equip them in teaching in an inner city school. Even though the majority of students reported feeling as though their credentialing program were training them appropriately to teach in inner city schools, they were still unsure if they were prepared to teach African American male students.

Pre-service teachers were given an opportunity to name three African American males that contributed to the advancement of Americans. Martin Luther King Jr. was a response for 90% of the participants. The African American males (other than Martin Luther King Jr.) that contributed to the advancement of Americans with the most responses was Thurgood Marshall chosen by 10 pre-service participants, Colin Powell chosen by eight participants, and Malcolm X chosen by seven participants. Other responses included Frederick Douglass, Earl Warren, Morgan Freeman, Bill Cosby, Tutu, Jackie Robinson, Nelson Mandela, and E. B White.

Most participants responded with three names. A response was not given from an upper class White female, and two out of three names were given from a lower class Filipino person (gender unknown).
**Teacher Surveys**

The majority of the teachers surveyed were comfortable teaching African American male students. The mean score was neutral or unsure in feeling that their credentialing program prepared them to teach African American students in low-income areas. Teachers indicated that they felt prepared to teach African American students but expected behavior management to be the greatest challenge when teaching in a school with a high population of African Americans.

Teacher participants were asked not to use Martin Luther King Jr. as a choice when responding to the fill in question. All responded except one middle class Asian female teacher and a middle class White female teacher. Nelson Mandela was filled in as a response from one person even though he is not African American. One participant gave two out of three answers. The famous African American males' names given most frequently were Booker T. Washington and Jesse Jackson. Other responses included Tiger Woods, Bill Cosby, W. E. B. DuBois, Malcolm X, Wesley Snipes, Barack Obama, Thurgood Marshall, Jackie Robinson, Clarence Thomas, Denzel Washington, Frederick Douglass, George Washington Carver, Langston Hughes, Colin Powell, Ronald E. McNair, and Carter G. Woodson.

Two teachers left comments. A middle class White female responded as follows:

> I think the last question was a double-edged sword. Politics (mostly at the end of the year-trimester) dictate we can not suspend afro-amer males. Therefore, many of our discipline problems are black males because if we follow thru and
punish e are being racist. Oxymoron isn’t it? I also believe that the lack of strong black male role models is a huge deficit to the children. Because of this, many black children don’t know how to behave.

An upper middle class White female responded:

Daily incorporation of teaching about race seems ridiculous. Teaching my students to read is more important! And is the most important thing I teach on a daily basis is to read and math (3rd graders) I was not prepared to deal with the lack of parental support in the care and education of my students.
Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research finding indicates that teachers and pre-service teachings are in need of African American pedagogy training as well as training in the importance of culturally relevant teaching. Students reading books or passages that relates to their own culture are able to make connections (Open Court strategy) as well as strengthen reading skills. It also gives insight to other students from different backgrounds about African American culture. The only African American teacher surveyed was one of the 2 out of 12 teachers that strongly agreed with incorporating African American culture into her daily curriculum. Also, many teachers and student teachers surveyed were struggling to name three names of prominent African American males that were beneficial to American society. Many of the educators surveyed could only think of less than three names and a couple responses were not African American such as Nelson Mandela, E. B White (author of Charlotte’s Webb), and Earl Warren (the 14th Chief Justice of the United States).
This book list targets young African American boys in elementary school. Many of these books such as *Bud Not Buddy*, *Stevie*, *Handbook for Boys*, and many more reveal the same concerns, issues, interests and African American language common to African American boys.

The present research indicates a gap in literacy therefore I would encourage teachers to build a library which includes a selection of books that are relevant to African American culture and sparks an interest in African American boys.

**BOOKS ABOUT PROMINENT AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN**

The following books are about prominent African American men who have contributed to the advancement of America. As discussed in Chapter 2, Whiting argues that African American boys need to see themselves as scholars from a young age. One of the models of Self Efficacy is Racial Identity. Reading books about prominent African American men and their struggles provides boys with role models and a sense of racial identity. The following books supply students with positive images of African American men who are in many ways like themselves.

*A Picture Book of Jackie Robinson*, by David Adler (Grades 1-2)
The life of Jackie Robinson and the struggle of being the first to integrate major league baseball

*George Washington Carver “The Peanut Scientist”*, by Patricia McKissack and Frederick McKissack (Grades 4-5)
Describes the Life and Accomplishments of the Scientists and inventor

*A Picture Book of Frederick Douglass*, by David Adler (Grades 1-2)
The life of Frederick Douglas, and abolitionists and ex-slave

*Langston Hughes*, by Alice Walker (Grades 4-6)
Illustrated biography of Langston Hughes Life It focuses on Hughes childhood and influences in his life which assisted him in becoming one the most famous poet of the Harlem Renaissance
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurgood Marshall, by David Adler (Grades 2-3)</td>
<td>A Picture Book of Thurgood Marshall David Adler</td>
<td></td>
<td>The life of the first African American man to serve on the United States Supreme Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story of Booker T Washington, by Patricia McKissack (Grades 4-6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The life of a great African American educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm X, by Arnold Adoff (Grades 5-6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The life of the African American activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Picture Book of Jesse Owens, by David Adler (Grades 2-3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The story of an African American Olympic track star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satchel Paige, by Patricia McKissack (Grades 5-6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An African American baseball hero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Picture Book of Martin Luther King Jr., by David Adler (Grades 1-2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The childhood of Martin Luther King Jr. and his experiences with racism in the segregated south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTURE AND HISTORY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about African American culture and history helps students to become aware of the struggle of people that paved the way for them. Learning about the system of Slavery, Emancipation Proclamation, Civil Rights Movement and Segregation to Integration shares the struggle of individuals who fought to make life simpler for today’s generation. In an effort to promote success in African American boys, Whiting argues there must be a “can do” attitude. Seeing struggles and achievements of people with common backgrounds assist in acquiring self-esteem and achieving the “can do” attitude.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Jo Louis Won the Title, by Belinda Rochelle (Grades 2-3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grandpa tells a young girl named “Joe Louis” about the famous boxer and how she was named after the legend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A School for Pompey, by Walker Michael Rosen (Grades 1-3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The story of an ex-slave that opens a school for Black children in Ohio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Brown: One Man Against Slavery, by Gwen Everett (Grades 4-6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An abolitionist who helped start the Civil War and the raid on Harpers Ferry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Just Like Martin**, by Ossie Davis (Grades 4-5)
A story of a young teenage boy growing up in Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement.

**Many Thousand Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom**, by Leo and Diane Dillon (Intermediate)
Historical stories during the time slavery including the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner and Sojourner Truth.

**The Harlem Renaissance**, by Jim Haskins (Grades 4-6)
Life in Harlem during the Great Depression. This book highlights historical places, events and people in Harlem.

**Ja Rule Hip Hop Superstars**, by John Bankston (Grades 5-6)
The life of rapper Ja Rule and his struggle to stop illegal hustling to a life of success in music.

**York's Adventures with Lewis and Clark an African American Part in the Great Expedition**, by Rhoda Blumberg (Grades 4-6)
The life of an African American explorer who traveled with Lewis and Clark

**Papa's Mark**, by Gwendolyn Battle-Lavert (Grades 5-6)
Story about the 15th Amendment and a boy's father able to vote but dealing with the roadblock of illiteracy. The boy teaches his father to read so that he can for the first time in his life vote.

**FICTION**

As discussed in Chapter 2, CLAS is a school in Los Angeles Unified achieving great success among African American students. The founders of CLAS believe prior experiences, cultural knowledge and relevance are essential in achieving success. The cultural language and experience of each student are validated and as a result, classroom libraries at CLAS are packed with literature relevant to the African American experience. The following book list includes fictional books with visuals of African American people as characters, speaking African American language, and providing knowledge familiar to African American culture such as a day at the barbershop and inner city life.

**Primary**

**Whistle for Willie**, by Ezra Jack Keats (Grades K-2)
A boy's desire to call his dog by whistling.
A Snowy Day, by Ezra Jack Keats (Grades K-2)
A young boy wakes up to find a snowy day.

On the Day I was Born, by Deborah Newton Chocolate (Grades K-2)
A father tells his son the story of the day he was born.

Harlem, by Walter Dean Myers (Grades 2-3)
A tour of Harlem through the eyes of an African American boy.

Hair For Mama, by Kelly Tinkham (Grades K-2)
A boy coping with his mother's cancer decides to save his newly cut hair for his mother's use after chemotherapy.

Fishing with Granddaddy B, by Tony Pennington
A day a first grader gets to spend quality time with his grandfather

Jamal's Busy Day, by Wade Hudson (Grades 2-3)
Story of Jamal, a middle class African American boy, and his busy day at school working with numbers, solving disputes on the playground and artwork. He compares his experience at school to his parents' jobs as an accountant and architect.

Salt in His Shoes Michael Jordan in Pursuit of a Dream, by Roslyn M Jordan and Kadir Nelson (Grades 2-3)
Basketball player Michael Jordan's childhood highlights of struggling to win on the basketball court against some of the taller neighborhood boys. Written by Jordan's mom and sister

Bippity Bop Barbershop, by E. B Lewis (Grades K-2)
A boy's first haircut with his dad at an African American barbershop.

Little Bill Series, by Bill Cosby (Grades K-2)
The adventures of a preschool aged child

Stevie, by John Steptoe (Grades K-2)
Story of a boy sharing his home with another boy named "Stevie" At first he was not happy about sharing toys, mom and home but misses him when he leaves.

Just the Two of Us, by Will Smith (Grades K-2)
Will's Smith song lyrics are written into a children's book depicting a bond between father and son.
Richard Wright and the Library Card, by William Miller (Grades 2-3)
The experience of a young man with a passion for reading finding a way to borrow books from the library in the segregated south when it was against the law for African Americans to hold a library card.

Intermediate

Bud Not Buddy, by Christopher Paul Curtis (Grades 4-6)
The adventures of a 10 year old orphan whom decides to flee a foster home in order to find his biological father. Takes place during the Great Depression Era.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham, by Christopher Paul Curtis (Grades 4-6)
Adventures of a boy and his weird family traveling from Michigan to Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement.

Jimmy Lee Did It, by Pat Cummings (Grades 4-5)
Mystery book about who is breaking and stealing items in the home.

June Bug In Trouble, by Alice Mead (Grades 4-6)
The life and adventures of a fifth grade African American boy living in an urban ghetto dealing with life issues such as building a relationship with his incarcerated father and finding out his good friend is planning to join a gang. A realistic fiction account of life in the urban ghetto.

Ziggy and the Black Dinosaurs Series, by Sharon M. Draper (Grades 4-6)
A series of books about a boy named Ziggy and his friends who form a club called The Black Dinosaurs. The series includes historical stories about the Underground Railroad told by elders in the community. Ziggy and the Black Dinosaurs continuously find themselves in trouble and the adventure is in finding their way out.

Double Trouble Static Shock Series, by Tracy West (Grades 4-6)
African American boy with super powers keeps the bad guys in an inner city hood in line.

The Stories Julian Tells, by Ann Cameron (Grades 4-5)
Adventures of a boy with an excellent imagination who can tell believable stories about almost everything.
Creativity, by John Steptoe (Grades 4-5)
Book about a friendship between a Puerto Rican boy and an African American boy. Tells about Puerto Rican culture and how many Puerto Ricans have African heritage. The kids at school are amazed that Hector looks African American but speaks Spanish and is from Puerto Rico.

Handbook for Boys: A Novel, by Walter Dean Myers (Grades 5-6)
After getting in trouble with the law Jimmy does community service in the barbershop where he meets a community of African American men and learns about their lives as well as being a "man".

Figure 1. Book List.
APPENDIX A

Student Teacher Survey
Student Teacher Survey

I. I feel my teacher preparation program prepared me to teach African American students in low-income areas.

II. I am comfortable teaching in low income, inner city schools.

III. I am knowledgeable of African American culture and plan to incorporate it into my daily curriculum when I start teaching.

IV. My first choice of teaching will be in an inner city, low-income school.

V. My student teaching experience includes training in an inner city, low-income school.

VI. I feel comfortable teaching African American male students.

VII. My teacher preparation program frequently includes resources such as books and other materials that will assist me in teaching in an inner city school.

VIII. I feel African American males are most likely to need special education services to succeed academically.

IX. I feel prepared to teach African American males.

X. I expect behavior management to be the greatest challenge when teaching in a school with a high population of African American students.

Fill in question: Can you name three African American males that have contributed to the advancement of Americans? ______ _______ _______
APPENDIX B

Teacher Survey Questions
Teacher Survey Questions

I. I feel my teacher preparation program prepared me to teach African American students in low-income areas.

II. I am comfortable teaching in low income, inner city schools.

III. I am knowledgeable of African American culture and plan to incorporate it into my daily curriculum when I start teaching.

IV. My first choice of teaching will be in an inner city, low-income school.

V. My student teaching experience included training in an inner city, low-income school.

VI. I feel comfortable teaching African American male students.

VII. I frequently receive information and in-service training that effectively assist me in teaching in an inner city school.

VIII. I feel African American males are most likely to need special education services to succeed academically.

IX. I feel prepared to teach African American males.

X. I expect behavior management to be the greatest challenge when teaching in a school with a high population of African American students.

Can you name three African American males that have contributed to the advancement of Americans (Please do not use Martin Luther King Jr. as an answer) ______ ______ ______

Please add any comments about this survey below (optional):
APPENDIX C

CLAS Teaching and Learning Implementation Guide
• The teacher incorporates Culturally Responsive Pedagogy into daily classroom instruction. For example, the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of students must be used in order to make learning encounters more relevant and effective.

• All students at CLAS are expected to respond to instruction in productive comfort zones. For example, students are not required to learn in a school environment that is poorly cleaned, have major behavior problems, and uncaring teachers.

• The teacher creates an accepting, affirmative, risk-free classroom environment in which the culture and language of each student is validated, valued and respected.

• The students are relaxed, comfortable, eager to learn and willing to take risks.

• The teacher infused culturally relevant literature and instructional materials into daily instruction. (At CLAS, literature read in the classroom is from the experiences of African American people. For example, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis (1995) about an African American family visiting Birmingham, Alabama during the civil rights movement.)
• The students engage with the instructional materials and the classroom environment in productive ways.

• The teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding of issues of language variation in SELs (Standard English Learners) and ELs (English Learners) and incorporates appropriate strategies to support academic English mastery (African American language is viewed as an EL language).

• The students are engaged in activities that show understanding and awareness of the linguistic structures of standard and academic language forms as differentiated from their home language.

• The teacher employs strategies throughout the curriculum including “contrastive analysis”, “personal thesaurus”, and a “culturally relevant classroom library,” that facilitate the students’ mastery of standard American and Academic English in oral and written forms.

• The students are actively engage in activities that facilitate mastery of standard/academic English in oral and written forms, including literature-based activities.

• The teacher promotes increased confidence, problem solving behaviors, and the development in students of habits of mind that empower them to achieve their full potential. (Self-esteem is a major part of academic
achievement. Students learn to believe in their academic ability and teachers are there for support and guidance.)

- The classroom is student-centered so that the students have opportunities to question, collaborate, explore and make structured decisions. (Cooperative learning is a way in which students meet this standard. They work together and more importantly are motivated to work together in order to complete task that tap into their higher order thinking skills.)

- The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the learning styles and strengths of culturally diverse students and builds upon students' strengths to make connections to learning and promote academic growth.

- The students are visibly engaged in rigorous activities, which tap into their personal learning styles and are making use of Higher Order Thinking Skills.

- The Classroom Environment is culturally relevant and responsive to the students and includes cultural artifacts, regalia, picture of achievers, culturally relevant books, etc. (Students frequently see African American culture in the classroom as well as the curriculum.)

- The students make positive connections to high achievers in their culture and learn to see themselves as scholars. (Continuous references are made of great African American people so that students know that they also are capable of greatness.)
REFERENCES


