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Field Guide #8:
Understanding the Most Critical Needs of Today's African American Students (and Children from Other Communities of Color)

School Re-orientation for Post-COVID Learning:
What to Know, Do, and Expect
as In-Person Instruction Resumes

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Field Guide #8: Understanding the Most Critical Needs of Today's African American Students (and Children from Other Communities of Color)

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Introduction
to
Field Guide #8

Dr. Ron **Williams**
Superintendent
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Field Guide Overview
Description and purpose:

Today, we find ourselves amid a contentious time in which reassuring "alternative facts" have become acceptable substitutes for the uncomfortable truth, and where history get revised to accommodate a political viewpoint. Enslaved people were "workers." Kidnapping Africans for the purpose of enslavement now simply goes by the euphemism of "forced immigration," scarcely unlike voluntary migration. White nationalists marching with Confederate flags and displaying Nazi salutes include "many good people." Confederate generals are an admirable "…part of a Great American Heritage." US military bases named after generals who took up arms against the United States of America should not be changed. Their pharaonic statues should remain in place and protected.

Misinformation fulfilling a political agenda replaces accurate news reporting. Anti-racism seminars promoting equity and social justice are identified as the causes of racism rather than a viable solution (operating under the pretense that racism did not exist prior to these recent discussions). Critical Race Theory, a forty-year-old way of analyzing the role of American racism in shaping public policy, is suddenly attacked for "dividing Americans by race," implying that structural and institutional racism supported by law and reinforced by the courts had not already alienated us from one another. (See *Florida Banned Critical Race Theory, But Can't Define What It Is* at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=In6NVLANvLc)*.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the historical social, political, and educational disparities were brought to the forefront for a more careful examination. While none has been rectified, beginning the conversation about how problems of the past can still be addressed through a concerted effort is where all Americans take the most important first steps together. For our immediate focus, improving the educational outcomes for African American students and students from other communities of color is the ultimate goal. The questions we will address within this Field Guide are:

- What have we learned most recently about how educators can meet the needs of African American students and students of color given our historical background?

- How did we grow from what we have learned during the pandemic and how can it be applied?

- What sponsored our progress?

- What obstacles did we encounter in addressing their social-emotional and educational needs, and how do we overcome them?

- How do we get African American students and all other students on a positive trajectory for a more promising academic future and successful life?

Learning objectives:
The professional learning objectives embedded in this Field Guide are designed to help educators do the following:

- Review some of the historical explanations that can help us understand the current status of African Americans and African American education in the United States.

- Examine what classroom practitioners can do to meet the academic needs of African American students more effectively.

- Be able to lead (or contribute to) a schoolwide conversation on understanding the needs of African American students, and help colleagues understand what factors make them unique, as well as the needs they have in common with all other students.

- Become familiar with some "best practices" that often resonate with African American students and their families in order to produce more positive academic results for them.

- Understand what parents and caregivers can do at home to support their child's well-being in ways that contribute to his/her academic achievement.

Lately, there have been fierce political attacks on teaching students about the brutal history of enslavement and its long-term repercussions. To date, over 16 states have barred the teaching of "Critical Race Theory" (although it was not being taught in K-12 schools) and contents from the excellent historical compendium, "The 1619 Project." The concern has been that both (along with professional training on equity and social justice) underscore institutional and structural racism as features woven into our legal and political systems during the making of our "American Story." Moreover, discussions that make some (white) students uneasy are to be prohibited, ignoring the fact that 400 years of experiencing the painful effects of racism far exceeds any contemporary classroom discomfort. Education must be grounded in reality, even the cringeworthy.

In his novel, *Requiem for a Nun*, Nobel Prize-winning author William Faulkner, writes, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." The dark shadows of our controversial past creep into our lives and classrooms every day whether we recognize them as such or not. This Field Guide stands alone in addressing the unpleasant historical experience of racism in America and how the tentacles from a difficult past continue to reach into the present lives of African Americans including today's students. We will enter this brave space together in the hope of ending this journey much closer to understanding one of the most critical needs of our students -- the need to be understood as person and an African American.

Components:

The Understanding the Most Critical Needs of Today's African American Students (and Children from Other Communities of Color) Field Guide has been developed around the following essential components:

A. The verbatim "Voices" -- excerpts from interviews with students, parents, and administrators. The focus is on their personal experiences during the pandemic, and how we addressed the needs of students of color.

B. Lessons learned – analyzing our experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on what worked with African American students, what did not work well, and how we can apply those lessons learned for a more promising future for our students.

C. Each of the above professional learning experiences will be accompanied by

- Questions and written responses to be completed independently or in small groups (with an opportunity to share responses with colleagues).

- "Reflections and Applications" that are designed to provide educators with opportunities for reflection on the contents of this Field Guide, and to devise multiple strategies by which the content can be applied to their school, school district, educational program, and/or daily work.

D. Videotaped excerpts from the "Advancing Equity in an Era of Crisis" webinar conducted by distinguished California educational leaders.

E. Recommendations of additional print and video resources related to African American students and students from other communities of color, recognizing our important role in supporting them academically as well as personally and social-emotionally.

F. A survey tool to evaluate Field Guide #8.

The Why

There is a story about a man who was fishing on the local river, when he suddenly hears a small boy drowning and screaming for help. He quickly rows his boat to the boy and pulls him to safety. A few minutes later, the fisherman sees another boy floating down the river, pleading for rescue. The man immediately rows his boat over to the second boy and pulls him aboard. Then suddenly he looks up the river and sees thirty to forty more drowning boys. The fisherman takes the two rescued boys to the shore and hurriedly exits his boat and rushes towards his car. Another gentleman who had witnessed the entire sequence of events asked the fisherman, "Why aren't you saving all of those other boys?" The fisherman replied, "I need to go upstream and find out what is the cause of all of these little boys falling into the river."

Similarly, there are many African American students and children from other communities of color who are struggling to cope with today's challenges posed by both life itself in a post-COVID world and education. It is our hope that all students can achieve academic and personal success, but it is important for educators and parents to "go upstream" and honestly investigate the causes behind the vast number of children who our systems have failed.

While most efforts to "rescue" our students of color have come by way of assorted state and federal programs focusing on the students, the greater dilemma has often been driven by an unpleasant history of deliberate educational neglect for generations followed by ineffective educational delivery. Should educators entertain special considerations for African American students? If we want to understand our students, we must first become knowledgeable in the antecedents that shed light on how current conditions and behaviors came to be. Second, only then can we identify educational proposals that can lead to a more promising future, given the disturbing past. (It would be folly to assume that the needs of Southeast Asian immigrants were identical to sixth-generation Ohio residents). There is a considerable amount of historical baggage that gets converted into social-emotional baggage impacting the lives and impeding the education of African Americans.

It is frequently said that "people would do better, if they knew better." A central purpose of this Field Guide is sharing with educators and administrators some of the uncomfortable historical truths that every American should know, (not just African American students), because those events continue to affect the lives and the minds of African American students in today's classrooms. Teachers, administrators, and staff members who work with African American youngsters daily should know why black students often feel, behave, and think the way they do, which may not always align with the dominant culture. To teach students effectively, it is critical that educators "reach" students by also including their perspectives rather than insisting that all learning must begin and end from other points of view.

A "partially told" history

The contemporary state of African American life and education did not revolve in a vacuum. Instead, it stretched over the course of 400 years where significant events shaped the lives of black Americans who struggled, first for survival, and later for equality. During those centuries, the "war on Black learning" became a consistent subtext to a more blatant war on Black people. A glimpse into some of the untold chapters of African American history helps us grasp the (1) lengthy struggle for

humane treatment, (2) the quest for full citizenship, and (3) the fierce white resistance to both. Along the way, the educational needs of black children seldom received attention.

Black Americans are intentionally invisible in current texts except for brief mention of their role during enslavement, and then African Americans resurface for the civil rights movement of the 1960s. However, let us summarize a few other significant milestones impacting the liberation and education of African Americans over the past 400-plus years, since it is impossible to intelligently digest a complexed present with no conception of its complicated past.

In most school curricula, the rich African history from which the world benefited suffered a carefully calculated omission. The known facts were at odds with old and newer textbooks, in which black people typically come onto the scene with North American enslavement. However, libraries and museums throughout the world have housed evidence that there were African civilizations, where discoveries and achievements in science, medicine, art, and architecture not only abounded, but also preceded any such similar accomplishments by Europeans at the time. The ancient African states were considerably further advanced than any European nation, including Mali, Songhai, Ghana, Timbuktu, Jenne, Walata, Gao, and Kanem-Bornu. They were the centers of surgery, astronomy, culture, international trade, and higher learning from 3000 BC to the 16th century A.D., when Egypt was known as Upper and Lower Nubia, as well as "Kemet," meaning the "black land." (See Why We're Overdue to know the *Brilliance of Africa's Civilizations* at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhqaQ6mR82s)*

During those millennia, African and European mathematicians, monarchs, philosophers, doctors, judges, priests, and astronomers received their education in many African-based centers of progress and knowledge. The "Mystery Schools" (Kemetic and North African) were the locations where Pythagoras (560BC - 480BC), Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates receive their training, which paved the way for Greek philosophy and law.

Although "Cleopatra" and similar movies portrayed Egyptians as pale-skinned Europeans, original Egyptian art, statues, sculptures, and figurines depicted precisely the opposite, which is why European anthropologists were frequently prone to describe advanced African cultures, including the Egyptians, using the oxymoronic term "Black Caucasoids."

It is important for contemporary educators to appreciate that the descendants of enslaved Black Americans came from a highly developed continent whose people had already cultivated a rich sophisticated history and not the "savages" of American folklore. To support the notion of black inferiority, these clearly verifiable facts were suppressed and omitted to justify the 17th 18th and 19th century enslavement of Africans. Here is the short version of our history.

- In 1619, the first Africans stood on the shore of North America after being forcibly taken from their homeland. With torture as the penalty, for centuries they were prohibited from communicating in their native languages, practicing their own religions, and from engaging in any traditional customs. For the next 250 years, professed Christians trafficked in this domestic human trade, ripping families apart and unconscionably tearing millions of children from their parents strictly for profit. State laws gave slave unions no legal protection and husbands could be sold and separated from their wives, and children taken from their mothers for financial benefit.

- As racial enslavement sank its deep roots into American life, law, and culture, the notion of white supremacy made the continuation of enslavement possible and supported its protection with a network of innumerable laws. Enslavers created "Slave Codes," "Black Codes," and hundreds of individual state laws to cement the notion of white superiority.

  Pseudo-science, distorted interpretations of biblical passages, and American literature were used to reinforce the concept of racial superiority and inferiority based solely on skin colors. The American Ethnological Society and the Anthropological Society of Washington (both founded in the 19th century) served as vehicles for promoting "scientific" theories of racial inferiority. "Hierarchies of Race" charts were produced and disseminated by Europeans and Americans with the white race at the zenith and the black race at the base. Any research evidence suggesting or proving evidence of equality of the races was denied publication and its advocate/authors were often professionally banished. Writing or presenting research verifying that "all men are created equal" could be a career-ending move.

  In 1998, the American Anthropological Society released a statement by the executive board distancing the organization from its past contributions to shoddy and demonstrably false science published to represent racism as fact-based. In the intervening centuries, viciously fictitious "science" was used to justify enslavement and to demonize an entire race of people. Skin color became a metaphor to rationalize racism.

- In the 17th and 18th century America, race became defined by law, not by any sound principles of anthropology or science. The primary purposes of racial delineations were (1) social stratification and racial subjugation, (2) to designate as many people as possible as "black" guaranteeing higher numbers of enslaved people for economic reasons, and (3) to bolster the notion of white supremacy as the guiding principle for interracial interactions in colonial America.

Prior to this time, religion had both defined and separated most people globally often leading to the longest and most brutal wars (e.g., the Crusades), where religious practices were central until the "race card" was manufactured.

- In 1776, the colonies won their independence from Great Britain, and extolled the God-given virtues of freedom declaring that "… all men are created equal," seemingly unaware of the glaring hypocrisy as enslavers. They bought, sold, and denied the freedom of black men, women, and children through a system of "hereditary slavery." Written into the new US Constitution were protections for the "property" (enslaved human beings) of slaveholders. Throughout prior human history, when slaves were taken/captured, their assimilation into the conquering group was a customary transition made over time. Specific rules were crafted to protect slaves, rather than their enslavers.

- Until the Civil War began in 1860, "slaveowners" dominated the US presidency, the US Supreme Court, and U.S. Senate. (Ten of the first twelve US presidents enslaved other human beings). Laws controlled every aspect of an enslaved individual's life inside the "Peculiar Institution" including prohibitions from resisting the licentious overtures of enslavers. There was a devious "adultification" of young black girls rendering them fair game for sexual exploitation, where little distinction was made between woman and child.

- In 1791, the largest and most successful slave rebellion in the Western Hemisphere began in Haiti creating unremitting panic in the nearby Deep South, which responded with a wave of repressive laws and increased brutality. Blacks participating in a slave revolt ("insurrection") would automatically receive the death penalty. Blacks seeking liberty was to be considered a criminal act, while whites battling for liberty was a noble cause and praiseworthy.

- In 1793, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act, which made it a federal crime to assist an enslaved person before, during, or after escaping to freedom. It essentially enlisted every white male in every state as a "slave catcher," and any black person (free or recent escapees) became subject to being sold back into enslavement or into enslavement for the first time. In most states, Blacks could not testify against whites nor for themselves in a court of law.

- Throughout enslavement, the colonies passed laws prohibiting African Americans from reading or writing. Teaching enslaved Blacks how to read or write was punishable by fines and imprisonment. Severe physical punishments were meted out to African Americans demonstrating the ability to read or write or being suspected of literacy skills. Possessing contraband materials (newspapers, flyers, books, paper, or writing utensils) could lead to government-sanctioned whipping and mutilation for Blacks, and stiff fines or bodily harm for whites.

- Contrary to what is found in textbooks, resistance and insurrections by enslaved people were common, prompting the guarantees of militia support being written into the U.S. Constitution soothing the fears of Southerners who had become dreadfully fearful of "slave revolts." Unlike the "Gone with the Wind" nostalgic myth of antebellum racial harmony, whites lived in constant fear of revengeful insurrections, while Blacks lived in fear of the unending white brutality (torture, whippings, mutilations, etc.) in America.

- In 1831, Nat Turner's bloody revolt confirmed the deepest suspicions of southern enslavers, who were the numerical minority by considerable margins in many southern regions. Gradually more repressive restrictions followed each rumored or real slave revolt. (Although many Americans saw the fight for freedom from "British tyranny" patriotic, conversations about black freedom were punishable by hanging.)

- Southerners created armed militias ("slave patrols") to protect whites from insurrections by watching over large swaths of land, providing surveillance, pursuing fugitives, enforcing the slave codes, policing black behavior, and punishing African Americans who were beyond the boundaries of their designated plantation (a.k.a., forced labor camp). It was not uncommon for free Blacks to be re-enslaved for rewards. Among the hallmarks of American enslavement were (1) mutual fear, (2) mental, physical, and sexual abuse, and (3) daily engagement in cognitive dissonance that allowed enslavers to remain oblivious to the contradiction that their everyday lives clearly ran counter to the religious and moral values they verbally championed including the freedom from tyranny and oppression.

- In 1857, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in the case of African American Dred Scott, an enslaved black man. Chief Justice Roger Taney in the majority opinion wrote that Blacks were so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was legally bound to respect, and that Blacks had been justly and lawfully reduced to slavery for their own benefit. That sentiment not only mirrored the law of the land, but it also summarized the anti-black sentiment that would dominate the US for the next 100 years.

- At the onset of the Civil War, the total dollar value of all enslaved people in the US exceeded the value of all American banks, railroads, and factories combined. The South was not alone in his economic dependence on enslavement. The transatlantic shipping industry, financial markets, insurance companies, textile manufacturers, etc., relied heavily on the output of raw goods produced by enslaved people in the South, rendering the North complicit. Throughout the Civil War, Confederate troops frequently executed black Union soldiers rather than capture them.

- The highest price often paid for enslaved people was not to buy strong men, but for biracial women, who were not purchased for their ability to engage in traditional labor. By 1860, only 6.6% of enslavers held 10-99 African American people captive, and only 0.1% of American enslavers (approximately 3,000) held 100 people or more. Simultaneously, over 75% of Southerners, enslaved no one at all although they were compelled to fight on the side of the Confederacy.

- On New Year's Day of 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free." One of the most often cited fears of freeing blacks was the guarantee that blacks would extract revenge on their white enslavers for the violence they had suffered. However, there were no such reprisals other than the fictional account later depicted in the popular film "A Birth of a Nation" in which the Ku Klux Klan is presented as saviors of the white South.

- Following the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, there were efforts to establish "Negro schools" in the South. However, many of those plans came to an abrupt halt with the Andrew Johnson administration following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Johnson and his allies were aided in controlling Blacks with the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacy terrorist groups.

- Employment of black "Freedmen" was restricted to the fields and the kitchens in a manner not dissimilar from their previous roles in servitude. If newly freed Blacks could not show proof of gainful employment, they could be charged with vacancy, arrested, and their labor auction off to the highest bidder, re-engaging them into a system of enslavement that was merely "Slavery by Another Name".

- In the post-Civil War era, with the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, slavery was officially abolished in 1866. White resistance to black freedom became a prominent feature in the attempt to preserve the "Southern way of life" (strict adherence to white supremacy). That southern defiance remained so adamant that the state of Mississippi did not formally ratify the 13th Amendment until February 7, 2013.

- African American colleges were established in the South (Wilberforce University in 1856; Atlanta University in 1865; Fisk University in 1866; Howard University in 1867; and Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in 1868). All were established as academically oriented institutions except the "Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute," a vocational school at the time. By 1880, there were approximately 45 historically black colleges and universities in the US.

- In 1868, the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution codified citizenship to formerly enslaved Black Americans. Pres. Andrew Johnson actively opposed the Amendment. Although the 2nd Amendment gave citizens the right to own guns, Black Codes were enacted to ensure that freed blacks could not defend themselves, their families or their communities. Unfortunately, such "legal" means of keeping African Americans defenseless were not new. In the pre-Revolution South gun control legislation was passed in many southern states preventing Blacks from owning or possessing firearms.

- Sharecropping replaced enslavement, but it required workers to purchase farm tools, supplies, and all family foodstuffs from the landowner, who charged the sharecroppers staggering interest rates, which kept them consigned to an ever-widening cavern of "debt slavery." Challenges to a landowner's falsified or irregular accounting practices could result in a beating, eviction, or lynching.

- As Black Americans were elected to state and federal offices, one of the most notable accomplishments of the new government was the establishment of state-funded public schools for black and white children.

- During Reconstruction (1865-77), overt and covert suppression (1) restricted the newly attained black freedom, and (2) returned African Americans to various forms of quasi-enslavement following the removal of Union troops that had occupied the South providing some degree of protection for the formerly enslaved. By law, Blacks were constrained to lives of poverty and often barred from, trade jobs, competing with white businesses, purchasing or owning any valuable personal or real property.

- 1873 saw the landmark Slaughter-House Supreme Court decision which gutted the "Privileges or Immunities Clause" of the 14th Amendment, declaring that the Constitution protected only the federal legal rights of individuals, but not rights within the individual states. This decision was a victory for white resistance and rendered "State's Rights" code for white supremacy rule throughout the South for the next century.

- In 1898, the Plessy v. Ferguson case before the Supreme Court declared that "separate but equal" accommodations in all aspects of civic and social life were legal within the United States, paving the way for the racial apartheid "Jim Crow" laws in publicly funded, but racially segregated schools that were never equal in quality. Second-class citizenship was made legal. (See example of a "separate but equal" water fountain below).

- The 1910 Flexner Report called for reducing the number of medical colleges in the US, decreasing the accessible colleges for prospective black doctors from seven in 1906 to just two in 1944.

- In 1912, the election of Woodrow Wilson accompanied a resurgence in the campaign for a permanent racial caste system that also denied educational opportunities to black Americans. Instead of establishing additional academically oriented schools, the Wilson administration advocated for exclusively "hand trade" institutions (manual labor training) for African Americans.

- The "Great Migration" (between 1916 and 1970) saw approximately six million African Americans migrate from the agricultural belt of the South to urban areas in the Northern cities where better-paying manufacturing jobs could be had along with life under less oppressive conditions. However, most labor unions excluded Blacks, while others barred Blacks from higher paying positions (known as "White jobs for a white man's wage.")

- The 1917 "Negro Education" report, published with the support of the Wilson administration, argued for vocational-only (nonacademic) educational programs for black Americans, and viciously criticized the proponents of academic institutions of higher education for Blacks. The final document included numerous photographs depicting Blacks laying bricks, milking cows, cooking food, harvesting crops, sewing clothes, caring for animals, plowing fields, tending gardens, etc., each mimicking the traditional antebellum roles during enslavement. Sadly, many notable individuals supported restricting Blacks from academic curricula including the noted educator, John Dewey.

- As of 1932, there were 117 historically black institutions of higher education advancing black scholarship in the US. Most American colleges and universities prohibited or severely limited black enrollment no matter how gifted the student.

- In 1941, Pres. Franklin Roosevelt called on Americans to fight overseas in World War II to preserve our "Four Freedoms" -- freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear, which African Americans did not enjoy yet at home. The lives of most African Americans were still governed by Jim Crow laws, residential segregation, and prejudicial hiring. Black students were still largely limited to attending de jure or de facto segregated education.

- 1954 saw the landmark case, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, in which the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that segregation in US public schools was unconstitutional. A major claim of white America had been that segregation caused no harm to Blacks or whites. However, the "Doll studies"" conducted by Dr. Kenneth B. Clark and his wife, Mamie Clark demonstrated that American racism had a deleterious impact both black and white children. When shown a black and white doll and asked to identify the "good doll" or the "nice doll," black and white children selected the white doll. When asked which was the "bad doll" or the "ugly doll," both groups of children chose the black doll. It was clear that segregation with its accompanying stamp of black inferiority damaged the minds of all children. (See picture below of black child assessing a black and white doll).

The earlier claims that "separate but equal" harmed no one was proven to be completely false by the Clarks whose experiment demonstrated that segregation communicated a strong message of black inferiority. While this ruling opened the door to public school desegregation, it set off a deadly white resistance campaign against school integration. (See *Landmark Cases: Brown v Board Doll Test* at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7sX1cn5aO4)

- In August 1955, a 14-year-old black boy from Chicago named Emmett Till violated a southern racial code by whistling at a white woman in Mississippi. For this offense, he was kidnapped and brutally murdered. The white men who confessed to the killing were acquitted by an all-white jury, a common outcome in "South justice" at the time. At Till's funeral, his mother insisted on an open-casket service where photographs of his mutilated body were circulated world-wide causing severe international embarrassment to an American government in the midst of "spreading democracy around the world." Sadly, many white Americans were not shamed by the murder, but mortified by the international exposure of unpunished white terrorism. Till's murder lit the fuse for the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

- In response to the black Americans insisting on their Civil Rights, Confederate monuments were erected throughout the Southern states (and elsewhere in the United States) as symbols of white supremacy and unity.

- In 1957, Pres. Dwight Eisenhower grudgingly dispatched 1000 members of the US Army's 101st Airborne Division to ensure the integration of the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

- In 1960, black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College held the nation's first sit-in at the lunch counter of a Woolworth department store in Greensboro, NC, spurring a string of sit-ins throughout the South demanding racial equality in public places and an end to "separate but equal" practices. In many states, African Americans were even barred from using public libraries although their tax dollars helped to pay for operating the same libraries.

- In 1961, riots and protests by white students erupted as the University of Georgia's first black students arrived on campus to (do nothing more than) learn. The students were promptly suspended until court orders allowed them to return.

- In 1962, more white riots erupted at the University of Mississippi when James Meredith enrolled as the school's first black student. Federal troops and U.S. marshals were reluctantly sent in by President Kennedy to ensure Meredith's enrollment and safety.

- In 1963, President Kennedy sent troops to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa to support the admission of two black students. That same year, Alabama Gov. George Wallace physically blocked black students from entering the University of Alabama and became a national symbol of resistance to many southern and northern whites, and later a presidential candidate. (In 1956, Autherine Lucy had been the first African American to enroll at the University of Alabama. After angry white riots engulfed the campus, she was expelled for "her own safety.")
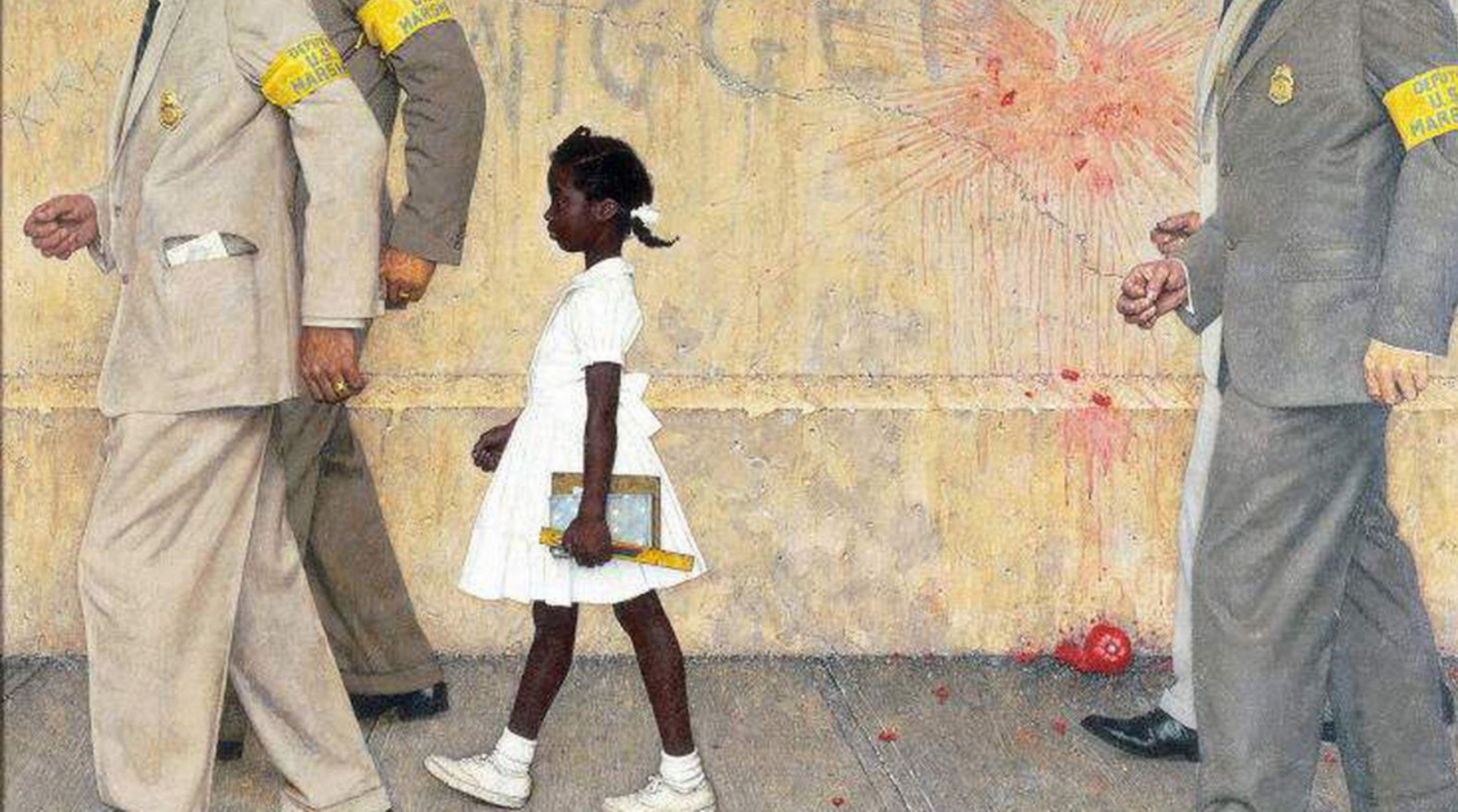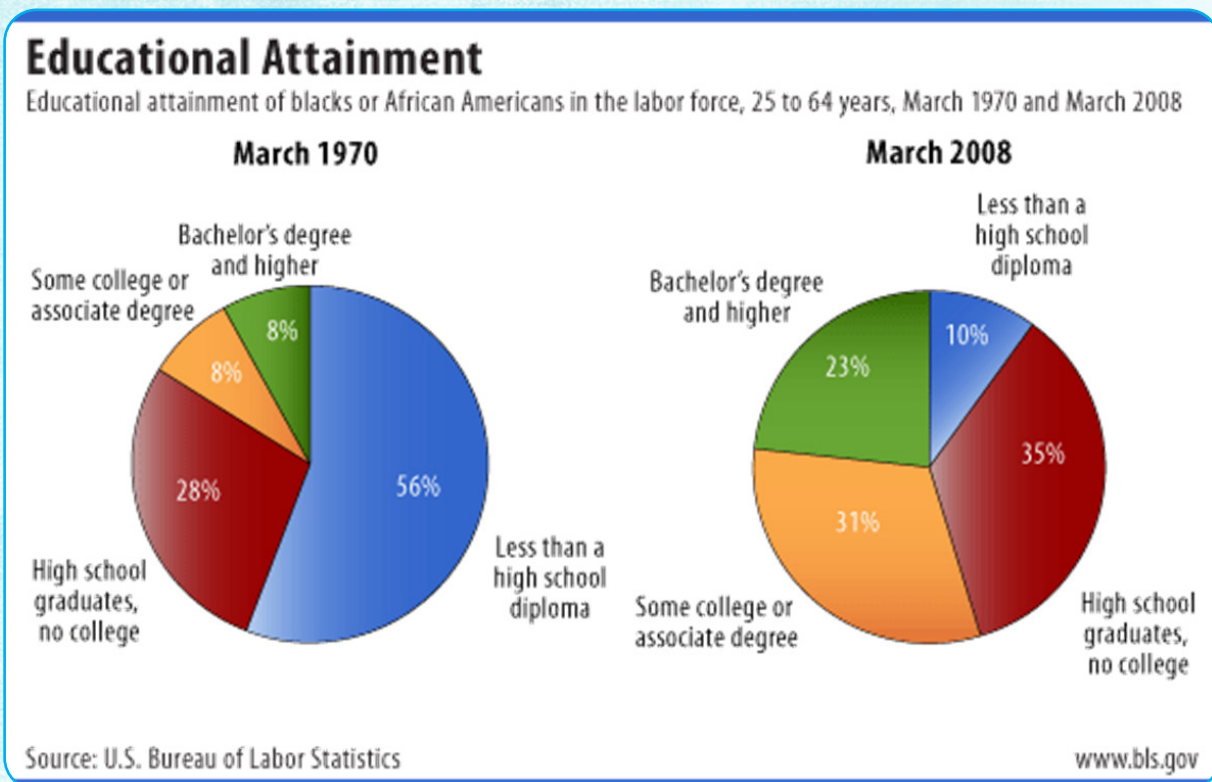
Above is a picture of Norman Rockwell's famous 1963 painting, The Problem We All Live With, a black child being escorted to a white New Orleans school by federal marshals, which was a compelling snapshot of the times.

- In 1963, four black girls were killed by a bomb while worshiping in a Birmingham, Alabama church. (The third church bombing in 11 days). These terrorist bombings resulted from the federally ordered integration of Alabama's public school system. Although most white Americans did not condone church bombings, they did not step forward as visible allies working to stop them.

- Throughout the South, whites-only schools were established and paid for by taxpayers (including African Americans who were barred from enrollment.)

- In 1968, the Gun Control Act of 1968 was passed to "reduce crime," although its underlying motive was to keep black militant groups (primarily the Black Panthers) from arming themselves and protecting their communities from police brutality. Many saw this as another means of reducing the ability to defend black America.

- It wasn't until 1974 that eight southern states, finally submitted plans to desegregate their state universities some 20 years after the Brown v. Board of Education decision.

- In 1982, the Reagan administration launched a failed attempt to allow tax-exempt status to segregated private schools, in its defense of Bob Jones University, a segregated conservative Christian school.

- On Sept. 11, 2001, nineteen Islamic militants associated with al Qaeda hijacked four airplanes and conducted suicide attacks against targets in the United States killing over 3,000 people. Combatting terrorism defined the George Bush Administrations

of 2000-2008. Having been the perennial victims of white terrorism, most black Americans were less frightened by potential al Qaeda violence than by the unending terror by white extremist groups. The unrelenting terror experienced by African Americans for well over a century was a widely known central feature of racism.

- In 2008, African American Barack Obama was elected as US president with only 43% of the white vote nationally and 28% of the southern white vote. Obama cautiously advocated for federal programs that addressed the educational needs of African American students.

- In 2012, Pres. Obama signed an executive order that created a White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans to enhance educational achievement for black students. When given fewer obstacles, African American educational success increases (see Educational Attainment chart below)

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment of blacks or African Americans in the labor force, 25 to 64 years, March 1970 and March 2008

March 1970

Bachelor's degree and higher — 8%
Some college or associate degree — 8%
High school graduates, no college — 28%
Less than a high school diploma — 56%

March 2008

Less than a high school diploma — 10%
Bachelor's degree and higher — 23%
High school graduates, no college — 35%
Some college or associate degree — 31%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics   www.bls.gov

- The crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s resulted in severe crackdowns against drug users in the inner-city, leading to the arrests of African Americans in the hundreds of thousands and stiff jail terms. The first wave of the opioid crisis began in the 1990s followed by a second wave that started in 2010 accompanied by thousands of overdose deaths of primarily young white men and women. There were over 10 million people misusing opioid prescriptions and 2 million users of methamphetamine annually. However, opioid abusers received sympathy and treatment rather than jail terms. African Americans found these two drug crises to be among the common double standards when looking at crimes committed predominantly by Blacks versus whites.

- The BlackLivesMatter movement began in 2013 following the acquittal of neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman for the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, a black 17-year-old. Many whites considered the BLM movement "radical" for insisting on just

punishment for those responsible for killing unarmed African Americans. For centuries, ruthless killings of innocent African Americans had consistently sent a strong message that a black life was insignificant to the dominant culture. However, people of all colors around the world marched in support of black lives.

- In 2016, reality TV star Donald Trump is elected president and began what some referred to as the "Second Reconstruction," unflinchingly catering to the harsh sentiments of white nationalists.

- In 2020, despite "dog whistles" and both the covert and overt appeals to white supremacy, Donald Trump is defeated in his re-election bid, and Joe Biden is elected President of the US. Having served as a vice president for Barack Obama, Biden is seen as someone who offers hope for the future of African American education.

While the above chronology of in African American history offers a short summation of selected events, it omits the appalling waves of black lynching that swept the country and haunted the lives of black Americans for three centuries. From the 1860s to the 1950s, lynching was among the most frequently deployed tactics in the American terrorists' toolbox. It was used to "control" African American populations by intimidation, although for decades, the US congress stood firmly against passing anti-lynching legislation in deference to white supremacists.

Thriving black businesses and hardworking black communities like the "Black Wall Street" in Tulsa, OK, were bombed, destroyed, and/or burned to the ground by envious whites angered by irrefutable and tangible evidence that white superiority was a misguided myth, as industrious blacks began pursuing the "American dream" promised to all US citizens. (See Black Wall Street – Full Documentary at _https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJbF9SGB3Y_)

Making matters worse for white supremacy, Jack Johnson, an African American, won boxing's heavyweight championship of the world in 1908. For decades, whites had revered white champions as the most important powerful testimony to white superiority over darker men. Johnson convincingly put that illusion of white supremacy to bed during each of his almost effortless victories over a series of clearly outmatched "Great White Hopes." Their unstated pugilistic mission was to give tangible confirmation of white superiority, although the Johnson victories communicated the opposite message. After each victory, rioting white mobs set upon black individuals and communities throughout the country with a vengeance. It was not until the assignation Martin Luther King in 1968, that any American race riots exceeded the level of damage and destruction as those following Jack Johnson's championship fights. Johnson held the title until 1915, when he deliberately lost a fight to avoid criminal charges fabricated against him by the federal government.

Mobs of white rioters burned and looted African American homes and communities during the "Red Summer of 1919," massacring black residents, which was regrettably not uncommon throughout the country. Of major concern to white Southerners, were African American soldiers returning after fighting overseas during World War I. In Europe, they were treated equally as Americans, but when they returned home, they were seen as black men who "had forgotten their place" in the social hierarchy. Black soldiers wearing their uniforms were disrespected, brutally beaten, and lynched. Blacks lived in constant fear that a perceived minor infraction of an unwritten American apartheid

rule (or suspicions thereof) was ample excuse to release a marauding white mob, resulting in deaths and/or the collective punishment of an entire black community. Living under such conditions for decades has taxed the African American psyche in ways not unlike the symptoms Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD).

Although the reprehensible social-historical information above cannot be found in American textbooks for understandable reasons, learning about these events provides background knowledge in understanding today's race relations. There has been a long and complicated struggle for the rights guaranteed in the Constitution, including the legitimate right to an adequate education.

As we seek to identify and meet the needs of American students, it must be acknowledged that their needs may be different, because their life experiences and their histories are significantly different from others. Today's black students are barely one generation away from the civil rights movement of the tumultuous 1960s. A "one-size-fits-all" approach to understanding the needs of distinctly different student populations will likely fall short and can lead to disastrous educational practices. The modest societal efforts thus far to overcome the ill effects of prejudice, discrimination, and racism have not been enough. Enlisting the support of educators is crucial. As Sir Winston Churchill stated, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it!" Ignorance is certainly not blissful. Instead, it is dangerous to a nation eager to make racial progress.

Despite of these facts and events, most African Americans remain optimistic about future of education, and the promise it holds for African American boys and girls. However, that optimism must be tempered by historical realities informing us that the quest for educational excellence should never be taken for granted but must begin with a full accounting of our past.

The What

In his book, *Talking to Strangers*, best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell describes a phenomenon that impacts a great many contemporary interactions that were previously better recognized for their mundane nature. Fender-benders now lead to "road rage" culminating in a fight, stabbing, or shooting. On the news, all too often, we see coverage of routine traffic stops, and other inconsequential encounters, ending sadly in the deaths of African American men, women, and teenagers. Political debates on Cable News become shouting matches with no visible listeners. Gladwell explains that we have trouble "talking to strangers" characterized as people who do not look like us, talk like us, think like us, and have had different life experiences than ours, making them strangers. Inflexible attitudes about our differences assigns others to permanent stranger status, undeserving of our compassion or our attempts to understand their perspectives, and unworthy of our humanity.

How often do teachers get the feeling that they are talking to strangers in their classrooms? Do students (particularly African American and other students of color) find classroom experiences challenging because they are obliged to listen to strangers who present ideas and perspectives that seem foreign and strange juxtaposed to their own?

African American students and other students of color share with their white *counterparts* myriad common characteristics and aspirations as future citizens with scores of academic needs that one

would deem "comparable" or "identical." Yet, for authentic interactions to transpire in the future, one must acknowledge that there are unique aspects of the African American experience that shape the contemporary needs of African American students. Our centuries of contrasting racial stories have made it mandatory to dissect and understand the past in order to comprehend how it continues to impact the present. This will allow us to address the most critical needs of contemporary African American education.

Yes, we are different, and it is essential that we examine those differences until they no longer make a difference. However, we cannot ignore an antagonistic past that still reverberates into contemporary cross-racial interactions.

Over several generations, the academic and psychological consequences of long-term institutional inequities (economic, social, and educational) have yet to be confronted which is why they cannot be resolved. Their collective impact plays itself out in our classrooms daily. Many students of color find the approved curriculum contradicting the realities of the past and present black experience. While black students are often required to recite the Pledge of Allegiance daily, from their own outside-of-school experiences and conversations, they are well aware that "liberty and justice for all" does not reflect the personal reality they confront daily. African Americans of all ages recognize that we live with people whose assumptions, perspectives, worldview, backgrounds, and word usage are sometimes drastically different from our own making us "strangers in our own land," where cross-racial communications warrant the assistance of a translator to avoid disastrous results.

A black Yale University graduate student is interrogated by campus police officers after a white student observes her sleeping in her own dorm's common area and calls the police. They question black student about her suspected intrusion and the "offense" of "Napping while black" in what has become an all-too familiar episode of everyday black life. African American students navigate the experience of "Shopping while black," as they are surreptitiously followed and watched by security guards, while their white classmates shop peacefully and undisturbed. Black youngsters learn that "Driving while black," the sardonic descriptor for police stopping and mistreating black motorists for minor infractions (or no infraction at all) that culminate in the black driver's death. There is an abundance of other daily events that fall under the umbrella of racial profiling, taking an enormous psychological and emotional toll on students of color (and their families). Minor interactions with law enforcement can lead to death or life-changing incidents.

The daily micro-aggressions, invalidations, inequities, macro/micro-omissions (communicated consistently with or without conscious thought or intent), overt aggression sparked by an individual's skin color, language background, economic status, or ethnicity cannot continue to be ignored under the naïve assumptions that discounting the existence of prejudice, discrimination or racism will end in them retreating quietly. That has not occurred for centuries, which suggests this strategy will not be effective anytime soon. Instead, educators must plan to engage students and colleagues in crucial conversations that may be accompanied by difficult dialogues as we acknowledge that (1) there are historical conflicts we have never recognized or resolved, (2) we have a moral responsibility to confront our history and undo the damage, and (3) we will all benefit from the process and the outcomes of reconciliation.

Until society in general, and educational institutions in particular, examine, dissect, confront, and resolve these racial matters in sufficient depth, black students will continue to experience varying levels of fear, estrangement, and disengagement in schools led by "strangers."

Confronting unchallenged myths

Key to the process of bringing Americans together is tackling our shared historical myths. One of which is grounded in the rhetorical question, "Why can't Blacks make it on their own like we did? We white people are where we are today, because our parents, grandparents and forefathers worked hard and didn't depend on any government handouts. Minorities are always waiting for handouts, when they should learn to work hard like our people did." (See video *"When Affirmative Action Was for White people: Its Twisted Origins* at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBMEUilkoss*)

Historical records provide an abundance of evidence that white Americans have a long history of receiving massive assistance, favoritism, and handouts while still believing "we made it on our own." Generous federal gift programs concentrated intergenerational wealth in the hands of many whites, and transgenerational poverty in the hands of others. A representative list might include the following policies that allowed the transfer of property and wealth (intra-family transfers of financial assets) that was not earned by any merit but excluded Americans of color.

- The 1790 Naturalization Act decreed that only "free whites" could become naturalized US citizens (allowing them to own and sell property, vote, serve on juries, hold office, etc.) blatantly excluding people of color. Over 10 million Europeans immigrated to the US between 1790 and 1868 and received automatic citizenship based on skin color alone.

- Through the 1830 Indian Removal Act, over 60,000 Native Americans inhabiting the southeast US were forcibly removed to new "Indian Territory" in Oklahoma by way of more than 70 removal treaties.

- Over 25 million acres of land taken from 5 Native American tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole), was given to whites (who never worked for it; they qualified for it by being white alone.)

- In the early 1920s, following the discovery of oil beneath their resettled land in OK, the Native American Osage people were momentarily the richest group per capita in the world. However, they also started turning up dead quickly, as hundreds of Osage murders began. Osage tribal members were poisoned, bombed, and murdered for their new-found wealth during the "Reign of Terror," a four-year period that the FBI suspected was perpetrated by the appointed white "guardians" of the Osage tribal members. The "benevolent" guardians had been responsible for managing the money and property for the Osage Indians, whose deaths were nearly all covered up and or never investigated. The guardians became the beneficiaries.

- The 1862 Homestead Act took 270 million acres of Native American land in the West and transferred it into private property for white settlers.

*To settlers, immigrants, and homesteaders, the West was
open land. To Native American, it was home for millennia.*

- Pres. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "New Deal" of 1933 included the Fair Labor Standards Act establishing minimum wages at $12 per week in the South. To pass this legislation, Southern congressmen and senators agreed to support the much-needed economic reform, but only if it excluded those industries in which African Americans dominated including agriculture, domestic services, and deliveries. For African Americans, the New Deal was the same old deal where Black citizens were shortchanged financially.

- The 1935 Social Security Act what a "… a financial safety net for millions of American workers," guaranteeing that employees would continue to receive income after retirement. However, under pressure from white Southerners who were worried that federal retirement benefits "…would discourage black workers from taking low-paying jobs in the fields and kitchens," the act excluded agricultural and domestic laborers. ("Coincidentally," 60% of black American workers were employed in these two areas and received no federal retirement benefits until 1954.)

While "meritocracy" has been identified as the driving force determining failure and success in America, a "white privilege" factor is seldom mentioned although most whites acknowledge its existence. (See *Whitewashed: Unmasking the World of Whiteness* at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdaF_h06YX4*)

Culture is what groups create over time, and culture cannot avoid carrying with it the past. American culture grew accustomed to injustice, duplicity, and other practices contrary to morality, law, and the US Constitution (to say nothing of Christianity). "Southern culture" became widely accepted as being synonymous with white supremacy.

Schoolchildren are taught about our long-standing national commitment to "liberty and justice for all," but it contrasts starkly with (1) racial enslavement, (2) "separate but equal" accommodations that were separate but never equal in the slightest, (3) the promise that hard work in a free America leads to one's success, although achieving success for African Americans more often led to the collective punishment of entire black communities (e.g., the ruthless destruction of Black Wall Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma), and (4) contemporary events underscoring the deadly consequences that can follow mundane daily activities for African Americans (George Floyd -check-cashing, Breanna Taylor - sleeping in bed, Tamir Rice - playing in a public park, and others). The message from the dominant society proclaims that all people are "created equally" and should be treated so, but the reality of the black experience offers a glaring rebuttal.

A history of enslavement, segregation, denial of economic progress coupled with the lack of access to basic resources including physical security, healthcare, adequate nutrition, educational opportunities, and adequate housing, etc., collectively set the stage for what we see in many communities today. There was no deficit of ability in those affected, but a deficit in morality by those who created and maintained those systems of denial through legally enforced measures and generations of unrelenting racial exclusion.

Today, overt and covert experiences of racism are de rigueur, and African Americans must be mindful that an innocuous commercial transaction in a store might lead to suspicions, if one uses a credit card or large denomination bills, both of which are occasionally examined multiple times if tendered by African Americans. Remaining vigilant every minute of the day prepared to endure such treatment is exhausting. Many of our daily experiences occur with a historical context as a backdrop. The Negro Act of 1740, the black codes, and similar legislation gave all white Americans widespread authority to question, police, and "correct" (punish) any behavior of both free and enslaved African Americans who were always under suspicion. Unfortunately, taking liberties to judge and punish African Americans has not ended. Living under these conditions is emotionally, psychologically and physically draining.

Research by linguist William Labov found that African American children are often criticized for (a) passivity, (b) limited oral participation, and (c) disengagement by teachers. However, it is not uncommon for African American parents to teach these behaviors as survival skills keeping black children safe in a sometimes-hostile world. Children can develop a sense of helplessness knowing that advocating for themselves after being treated unfairly can lead to still greater problems for themselves and their families, making a bad situation considerably worse. There is a dichotomy between behavioral expectations in the general community and those reserved for the classroom, causing students to be confused about which one takes precedence in school.

There are often highly capable African American students who exhibit all the characteristics of reluctant learners. Teachers should investigate why they are hesitant to try or to excel. (Some are saddled with the burden of trying to succeed in school without being accused of "acting white.") Unfortunately, the sparse portrayals of successful African Americans in media and in school curricula suggest that pursuing academic excellence is a "non-black behavior." Many examples of black excellence in science, medicine, and engineering have purposely remained "Hidden Figures" promoting an erroneous conclusion about black intelligence.

A defense mechanism is a term used in psychology to describe unconscious (and conscious) psychological responses that a person engages in to protect himself/herself from feeling anxious or threatened, or to avoid one's loss of self-esteem, and other experiences of emotional discomfort. These culturally adaptive reactions have allowed African Americans to survive and to protect themselves emotionally from the daily insults, slights, threats of overt aggressive behavior, and micro aggressions, which can occur with appalling frequency. African Americans have learned how to navigate the social world, cautiously and protectively. Stepping outside of the realm of "expected black behaviors" can prove dangerous or fatal.

White parents encourage their offspring to stand up for themselves, challenge excessive authority, resist invasions of privacy, and speak out against injustices. Black parents instead sit their children down for "the talk," a lecture on survival whereby black children are taught to do the opposite lest they invite harsh consequences. White teenagers encounter police officers and sometimes test their authority, although similar behaviors can lead to arrest or worse for black youths. Living under these disparate social conditions adds unnecessary stress to black life which gets added to the already difficult challenges of daily living, along with the most recent pandemic. (See *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack with Peggy McIntosh* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRnoddGTMTY)

It is quite common to hear educators declare in magnanimous tones, "I treat every student the same," which, when put into practice, takes egalitarianism to such an extreme that the strategy will not meet the important individual needs of students. African American youngsters have unique needs that have resulted from a unique history in America. Treating all students fairly is a goal unquestionably worth striving for but knowing how to meet the unique needs of African American students promotes excellent teaching and high-quality learning.

The How

Recognizing this long historical record of skewing opportunities in America away from African Americans, how do we recalibrate the educational system to place all American students on an equal footing going forward? How do we convince our students of color that everyone today will be participating in a fair and just system in which all students who try their hardest will receive equal rewards?

While these questions will be difficult to answer with certainty any time in the foreseeable future, we can offer a few suggestions on how to establish support systems around our students of color that can yield more promising academic outcomes for each of them.

- ***Early brain development:*** The current research from cognitive science informs us that early brain development in many ways determines later learning outcomes. While formal education typically begins with kindergarten, brain development from 0 to 3 plays an important role in preparing a child for school. To increase the child's probability of school success, the early years need to be layered in interactive language experiences, and a wealth of opportunities to engage children in processing number concepts preparing prepare them for mathematical thinking. Universal pre-K is one of those promising solutions for all children, particularly African American. "Project Follow-Through" conducted by Stanford Research Institute found that children in Head Start programs (1) developed the essential kindergarten readiness skills laying a strong foundation for school success, (2) did not start school cognitively behind their more affluent classmates, (3) were more prone to complete high school, (4) received better grades than children who were not in Head Start, and (5) were more likely to go on to college.

- Introduce the true richness of ***African history*** beginning in the elementary grades to dispel the myth of white superiority. Children should learn that people of all colors and cultures have indeed made important contributions to human advancement (see Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization: Volume 1, Exploding the Myths). In grades 7 to 12, all American students should receive an honest accounting of the uniquely American form of enslavement and its enduring consequences, which will aid their understanding of the present. (See *Great Kings and Queens of Africa* at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUAheV852Qk*)

- ***Culturally relevant pedagogy and content:*** Content acquisition is one of the broad goals of formal education. To enhance learning for students of color, it is vital that schools focus on culturally relevant content allowing students to see themselves and successful people who look like them regularly in the curriculum. California enjoys a rich diversity of people, and they should all be reflected in state-approved instructional materials. Culturally relevant teaching strategies benefit all students, not just those who have finally been brought into the fold.

Student engagement hinges on teachers looking for more opportunities to hear the voices of the students inside the classroom. Their experiences and perspectives may contrast with those presented by the dominant culture and in textbooks in ways that add to the content. Allowing

students to solve real-world problems tackling community-relevant issues (with less focus on abstract problems) enhances student engagement when they can connect the content to their lives.

Look for opportunities to infuse African American success stories into the curriculum in ways that counterbalance the countless negative stereotypes and social messages communicated about people of color in the media and the film industry. There are daily challenges facing African American students that have more to do with the treatment they receive rather than the content they are attempting to acquire.

The academic power of developing a robust vocabulary: Language expert Stephen Stahl said that words are used to think, and the more words a student knows, the finer his/her understanding of the world will be. A significant component of the "Achievement Gap" is a vocabulary gap that produces a subsequent knowledge gap.

Upon entering kindergarten, students typically have developed a functional vocabulary of 4,000 to 8,000 words. By the time they graduate high school, they will have been exposed to a proximately 87,000 words, although the average graduate has mastered 40,000 of them. Forty thousand leaves a 36,000-word difference or 2,769 words that must be mastered each year between kindergarten and 12th grade. That is 16 new words per school day. The mastery of 87,000 words translates mathematically into learning 34 new words per day. These figures inform us that students need a wealth of language experiences to reach these vocabulary targets.

However, the research of Hart and Risley tells us that vocabulary is profoundly influenced by SES. By age 4, the average accumulated experience with words for children from

- professional families is approximately 45M words
- working-class families is approximately 26M words, and
- children from welfare families have heard approximately 13M words.

This presents us with an approximately 30-million-word gap between the children from affluent families compared to those from impoverished homes.

Words are indeed used to think, not just to communicate. A child's limited vocabulary restricts his/her ability to understand (oral) lectures and to complete written assignments. With these figures in mind, educators and parents should plan for the following:

1. African American parents should make it a point to engage preschool children in as many meaningful oral and symbolic language experiences (listening, speaking, reading, drawing, and writing) as possible. (Talk, talk, talk! And encourage them to talk as much as possible to develop their language production skills).

2. Educators should plan on delivering an extra dosage of rich language experiences (not dittos or handouts) when children of property arrive at school in order to expand their vocabulary and boost their academic language. This effort should include students

(a) for whom English is their second language,

(b) who hear and use African American Vernacular English (AAVE) at home, and

(c) who do not experience high quality language usage at home where they are also exposed to a large variety of descriptive words.

3. For any content area, plan the following:

(a) Give students something to do (hands-on learning).

(b) Give them something to think about.

(c) Give them something to talk about.

(d) Whenever possible, have young students first draw what they will later write about (using the pictures/symbols in the "mind's eye").

(e) After students do, think, talk about, and draw the target concept (after they "experience" it), then we can say that they "know" it.

Children who develop and practice language within highly segregated communities often struggle with the misalignment of the home/local word pronunciation versus the standard pronunciation of English words they will experience in school. This language misalignment can become a barrier to academic success in school.

In school, words are used to process in-coming new information, to understand and evaluate other's ideas, and to understand still other new words and concepts. Vocabulary usage strategies need to be implemented to help students transition from experiencing school as a formidable challenge to engaging with school content smoothly and successfully.

California demographics suggest that we cannot afford achievement gaps in any student population, recognizing that students of color will become the numerical majority in the workplace of the future. Researchers concluded that "the persistence of the educational achievement gap imposes on the United States the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession" (McKinsey & Company 2009). That ominous recession is avoidable.

- *Address Technology Inequities:* While many of the needs of African American students were not being met prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it shed new light on a relentless technology divide. In light of new coronavirus variants surfacing in the future, remote learning remains a distinct future possibility for educational delivery again. Schools must take inventory of the technology available to each student at home to avoid exacerbating the known tech inequities. Technological changes have raised the educational requirements of access and equity for underserved communities and schools. Schools can close the gap.

- *After-school support:* The Covid-19 pandemic contributed significantly to the annual learning loss, but also to the achievement gap. Students of color need access to afterschool and evening academic support. Schools must make certain that the 2021 learning loss does not have permanent consequences. Tutorial help after school and in the evenings with homework and assignments can contribute to more positive outcomes.

- *Outside-of-School Health Services:* Students of color (and their families) should have the same access as others do to the wide range of support programs most Californians enjoy including dental health, medical health, and mental/emotional health services. Students struggling with health issues often have difficulty attending, focusing, and learning in school. Health issues frequently lead to academic failure.

- *Recognizing Black diversity:* Educators should understand that there is diversity in the African American experience. All black students do not hail from the same background (SES, regional, academically successful parents, etc.) although they may share many of the unnecessary social obstacles brought on by race. There are myriad nonacademic reasons why some African American students succeed while others find success elusive.

- *The impact of Poverty:* While poverty has declined for white, Hispanic, and Asian families in recent years, that has not been the case for African Americans, who fell even further behind economically during the 2020 – 2021 pandemic. Black poverty is frequently accompanied by food insecurity, job instability, instability in housing, subpar mental and physical health, inconsistent medical insurance, emotional despair, living for multiple generations in segregated and underserved neighborhoods with large concentrations of other impoverished families, and poor educational opportunities, which might otherwise free individual from this cycle of poverty.

In 2015, approximately 38% of African American children (four times greater than that of white or Asian children) lived below the poverty line through no fault of their own. Poverty can sap one's psychological and emotional energy. (One mother said, "It sucks to be poor. It sucks the energy, the emotions, and the hope right out of you!")

Black children are more than twice as likely as white children to attend high-poverty schools

Shares of white and black eighth-graders attending high-poverty schools, 2017

White	31.3%
Black	72.4%
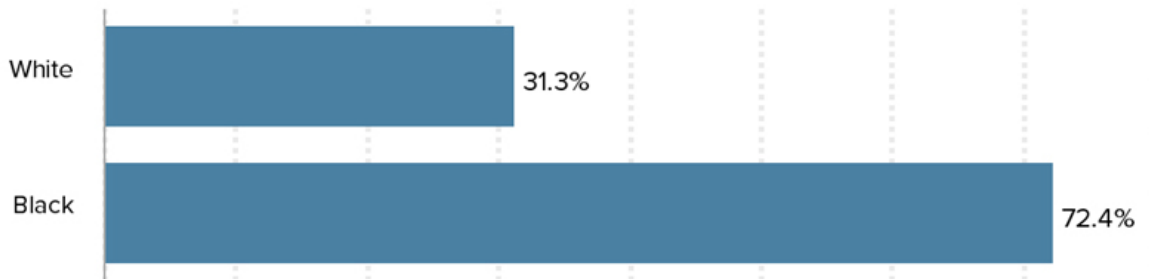
Note: High-poverty schools are schools in which 51–100% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Source: Author's analysis of microdata from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Economic Policy Institute

It is not uncommon for children of poverty to start school two years behind their classmates (regardless of race or ethnicity). The dual challenges of poverty and racism continue to impact African American parents and children today (W.K. Kellogg Foundation 2014). Exposure to consistent violence in some urban environments along with neglect, inconsistent and unloving childcare, unreliable relationships with emotionally unavailable adults can compromise the physical growth of a child (psychogenic dwarfism) as well as his/her cognitive development. For children living in impoverished environments, education is underscored by disproportionate numbers of needless challenges. We should cultivate in all educators an appreciation for the fact that disparate outcomes based on race and class did not occur over the decades by chance, but instead by deliberate design to the detriment of specific groups.

- *Grading:* When students of color appear disengaged, don't be deluded into thinking that a poor grade will motivate them. The teacher should find out from the student what motivates him/her and incorporate those incentives into classroom learning. A poor grade is no solution for disinterest, apathy, or disengagement. It can enhance them all. Instead, these are signs that another instructional approach may be warranted or that a more effective teaching strategy might resonate with the students.

  Giving students choices of how they may complete their assignments or how they will be assessed respects their unique strengths and gives students agency. They gravitate towards having multiple options for demonstrating content knowledge or skills mastery (producing their own video or art, delivering a classroom demonstration, creating a posterboard, etc.) rather than teacher-assigned projects only. Often, grades do not reflect individual differences in effort, growth, or mastery. Rather than giving students grades, offer each of them a considerable amount of narrative feedback complete with encouragement, corrections, and suggestions for improvement.

Shift the onus of learning from the student to the person in control of the classroom -- the teacher. In one South African language, there is a single word for learning-teaching, rather than two. From the Western perspective, one can claim to have taught a lesson that resulted in no student learning. ("I taught it, but my students did not learn it, so they all failed.") However, the South African single-word experience dictates that if information was not learned, then it has not been taught effectively or properly because it was never transferred to the learner. Until the learner "gets it," the teaching is incomplete, but the student is not at fault. In the Western world, we blame the student for what may more accurately reflect a poor teaching strategy.

- *Mentors of Color:* Invite African American mentors and other leaders of color to visit your classroom to share with students their challenges, accomplishments, and their personal journey towards success. The former US Surgeon General, Joycelyn Elders, said "You can't be what you don't see. I didn't think about being a doctor. I didn't even think about being a clerk in the store. I'd ever seen a black clerk in a clothing store." Within every local community, numerous potential mentors would welcome the opportunity to speak to students in their local school.

- *Create an Inclusive Workplace:* Plan to hire and retain more educators of color. Provide training for all educators on culturally responsive pedagogy. Use culturally relevant content that actively engages the minds of more students of color in the classroom, rather than just those students whose lives and perspectives are amply represented in the traditional curricular materials. Family members and community leaders can be subject area resources ("Funds of Knowledge").

   Today's schools would benefit by having more teachers, counselors, and school psychologists from the various communities of color who can relate to African Americans and other students of color on campus. (See *Tim Wise Lecture – "Colorblind"* at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmTHY_QnEdk&t=979s).

- *Professional Development for Educators:* It is vitally important that administrators, teachers, and staff members receive professional learning on the following:
   - Overt and implicit bias. (Even well-intentioned teachers are not exempt from biases, which often reflect those of the dominant culture).
   - Combating the ACES (adverse childhood experiences) that can interfere with growth, development, and classroom learning
   - The natural responses of the human brain to stress and threat.

   The adage, "Seeing is believing," is driven by what psychologists refer to as "confirmation bias." We look for validations of what we already believe. Once we have convinced ourselves that we are indeed observing what we believe in, we confirm it as a reality. More accurately, the real truth is that "believing is seeing." Our perceptions can be easily manipulated by the beliefs we hold dear. Over 80% of our teachers are white, and the majority of students are students of color. What teachers often see in African American students and other students of color is frequently determined by what the teacher believes about them.

- **_Partner with State and Local Organizations:_** School district administrators should work with local and state governments to identify and mitigate the root causes of multi-layered institutional obstacles that continue to impede academic success for students of color. Too often education tries to reverse the impact that historical and structural racism has had on students (e.g., the achievement gap) rather than working with policymakers to eliminate the long-standing systemic causes for the well-documented inequities that produce disparities.

Implications for "Best Practices" to meet the needs of African American students

Below are recommendations for educators, administrators, school districts, and policy makers that may help to equalize educational opportunities for students of color.

- Provide African Americans and other students of color greater access to community services that support their well-being needs.

- Toxic stress can cause the destruction of neurons in the brain that limit executive functions. Students should be given more opportunities during school hours for "brain breaks" and mindfulness exercises.

- Solutions to the learning gap include the elimination of (1) race and class prejudices, (2) classroom manifestations of unconscious bias, (3) the attitudinal remnants of historical racism.

- Conduct needs assessment each semester to inventory the available technology at home for students. One element of the survey should include the instructional options of participating in remote learning, in-person instruction, or hybrid learning. While many children were harmed socially and academically by the pandemic, others found the novel remote learning arrangement to be more compatible with their (introverted) personality and family needs (assisting with younger siblings) as well as offering them more physical and emotional safety.

- Conduct a "School climate" survey quarterly. Create and maintain a robust and supportive campus environment where students of color feel welcome. Today's school environment should be respectful of our differences and should be seen as settings where social justice represents the prevailing philosophy.

- Teach to the students in front of you, rather than the students you either wish you were teaching or the students you prepared to teach during your preservice training.

- Adopt an asset-based approach to instruction, and abandon the more common deficit-based strategies, which presume that African American students come to school with very few gifts or talents that can be the foundations for academic achievement. (Unfortunately, research from education and the social sciences have focused primarily on "fixing" large group deficits rather than reducing the outside-of-school historical factors that have stymied educational progress for students of color).

- Tackle the issue of race and other difficult conversations head-on in the classroom. Remember that simply because a topic is complex, that does not mean it should be avoided at all costs. These candid discussions can be eye-opening experiences providing unparalleled opportunities for meaningful analysis, reflections, and personal growth for both students and many sincere teachers.

- Help every child build and nurture a robust and supportive network of friends, classmates, neighbors, teachers, coaches, school staff members who can each play a significant role in (1) developing a sense of safety, (2) reducing stress, (3) supporting each child's personal growth, and (4) supporting his/her personal, academic, and long-term career aspirations.

- Recognize that all students must be treated fairly, but not necessarily identically. (Treating one's wife the same as his children can be hazardous, although treating each of them fairly, with their differences in mind, is a goal worthy of pursuit, and considerably safer for husbands.)

- Celebrations and other socially interactive events should occur on school campuses. Acknowledge the contributions made by all people from around the world to the fields of science, medicine, culture, political history, etc., so children from any community of color feels a need to deny his/her culture and attaches personal identity to the white achievements consistently appearing in the curriculum.

- Occasionally, ask selected students of color in your classroom, "How am I doing?" "What should I be doing to make this class more engaging and more academically valuable to you?" Doing so will give each teacher an "informal report card" informing the teacher how he/she can make classroom instruction more meaningful to the target audience -- the students. Keep a suggestion box in your classroom for students to advise you on ways to enhance their learning and increase their involvement.
- The pandemic taught us that parents are not only important partners in education, but also some of the most committed partners teachers will ever find. Parents should be regularly encouraged to help their children gain greater academic success and provided with information on precisely how to as well. When sharing grades with parents, also include positive information (good news) about their child's effort, progress, perseverance, and other characteristics that make for successful learners, beyond just test scores and grades.

- African American parents should plan on giving their children consistent and constructive guidance, daily positive affirmations, and the tools to cope with the social and emotional challenges brought on by the pandemic, living in under resourced environments, as well as our troubled American history with race.

"Lifting our Voices"

It is our job as educators, administrators, and parents to help African American children identify their strengths and assets in order to maximize their academic achievement. Although obstacles abound, the support we can give our students of color is boundless.
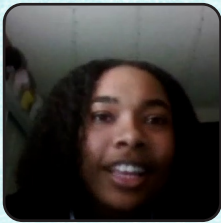

Introduction
to the
Voices Videos

Ken **Wesson**
Nueroscientist

Click to Play
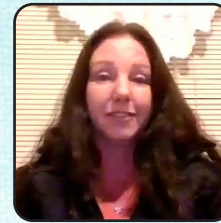
Interviewees

Adirah
Student

Dr. McNally
Principal

Darren
Student

Katti
Parent

Kevan **Loyd**
Principal

What to look for in each of the interviews:

What are the lingering effects of race felt by students in today's classrooms?

Video #1 - Meeting Students' Needs
> **Click to Play** - *https://bit.ly/MeetingStudentsNeeds*

- Why is it important for African American students to see people of color represented in the curriculum?

- When teachers make content learning and group projects enjoyable, what impact can that approach have on students, and particularly students of color?

- How can special outreach programs for African Americans link students more closely to their educational future?

- What message is communicated to students when teachers do not respond to student needs within a reasonable amount of time?

Video #2 - The Principal's Expanded Support Role
> **Click to Play** - *https://bit.ly/PrincipalsSupport*

- When a principal takes time to engage with students personally, how can this practice enhance a student's desire to perform at a higher academic level?

- How can a principal play a positive role in the lives of his/her students?

Video #3 - Awards and Recognitions
   Click to Play - *https://bit.ly/Recognitionvideo*

- By scheduling special awards events for students, why can their attention to school matters improve as well as their academic achievement?

- Why is it important for teachers and administrators share with parents, positive information about their child beyond just grades?

- How might a "Principal's Award" carry more weight with African American students than other school awards?

- What are the upsides and the downsides of awards ceremonies for African American students?

Video #4 - Meeting AA Students' Emotional Needs
   Click to Play - *https://bit.ly/AAstudentsneeds*

- Why should schools make an emphasis on Social-Emotional Learning a daily or weekly focus for students of color?

- Why are interpersonal relationships critical to success in school for students in general and African American students in particular?
- It was stated that African American students carry a particular "emotional baggage" that can interfere with learning. What did the comment mean?

Video #5 - Preparing Students for Life Beyond High School
   Click to Play - *https://bit.ly/preparingstudentsbeyond*

- Why is it beneficial for schools to involve African American students in mentorship programs?

- It was suggested that schools/school districts create a task force on how to better meet the needs of African American students. What might such an effort conclude?

- What should the be goals of a young "Gentlemen's club" for African American

- College fairs and visits to college campuses can be eye-opening events for students. What is the expected outcome of these experiences?

Professional Learning: Participant Responses

a. What, in your opinion, are the most critical needs of African American students in your educational setting?

b. How can your school district best meet those unique needs of African American students?

c. How does our history in America continue to influence the education of African American students?

d. Daily, children of color experience the social world outside of the classroom, which often communicates negative messages about them, and people like them. How should you handle those difficult conversations with students in your classroom?

e. If you could create a "wish list" of specific initiatives/programs that target the needs of African American students, what would you recommend?

f. Which of these needs do you think is most important for African American students in your school: academic, social-emotional, psychological, health-medical, or technology? Why?

g. What events or activities does your school engage in to take advantage of the rich diversity of students in general, and African Americans in particular?

h. Many African American students were impacted by a "learning loss" as a result of the pandemic, which made their learning curve steeper. What can schools do to address this specific concern? What are you doing to make sure the learning loss is not permanent?

i. How do you incorporate culturally competent "best practices" in your classrooms to enhance content acquisition for African American students?

j. Parents often complain that teachers only communicate disciplinary and behavioral problems with their child. In what ways do you give parents updates on the positive behavior of African American students in your classroom?

Reflections and Applications

a. Culture carries with it the past. How do you think the views of society impact African American students and other students from communities of color?

b. What are some of the needs of African American children that you feel are different from other students?

c. During the pandemic, were there any predictable new challenges facing African American students?

d. How does your school focus on the assets of African Americans rather than any assumed deficits?

e. Relationships are critical to educational success. What are the best ways that a school can help African American students develop better relationships with teachers and peers?

f. What do you think schools should communicate to parents about African American students beyond just their grades?

g. What is your school doing to assure that your African American students are prepared for college?

h. A competent teacher of any color is beneficial in in a classroom. How might teachers of color be an added asset for the third students (of all colors)?

LESSONS LEARNED

Tyrone C. **Howard, Ph.D.**

Professor, Pritzker Family Endowed Chair in Education to Strengthen Children & Families, Director, UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children & Families Director, UCLA Black Male Institute, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies University of California, Los Angeles.

Click to Play

Segment #1: *Timestamp: 1:14 to 3:02*
Conflating mental health with mental illness

Synchronous Professional Learning: Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

Asynchronous Professional Learning: Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- Why has a focus on mental well-being become so important during the last two years?

- Why might it be commonplace for people to conflate mental illness with receiving help for one's mental health?

- Why is there a stigma associated with seeking mental health services? How might that affect students in need of help?

- How do our antiquated notions of genetics interfere in addressing mental health needs of individual family members?

- What types of mental health services should African American students have regular access to?

- What are some of the dangers of suppressing the acknowledgement of a need for mental health assistance?

- In what ways can asking for help with mental health issues be seen as a strength in the African American community?

Segment #2: *Timestamp: 3:03 to 5:40*
Modeling positive behaviors

Synchronous Professional Learning: Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

Asynchronous Professional Learning: Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- Why is it important for adults to model a positive attitude about seeking mental help?

- How can adults at home or on a school campus best model a positive perspective on addressing mental health matters?

- What are some of the programs, practices, or coping strategies that parents and educators can recommend for students in your community?

- Recently, we have been reminded about the importance of "putting your own facemask on before helping others." How does that apply to mental well-being?

- What efforts should educators make to become more familiar with the mental health resources available in their school community? Does your school provide information to families on the local mental health services available?

- Why should parents have periodic conversations with her children about coping with stress?

- Why should educators address mental health in the classroom first, and academic development second?

Conclusion:

The classical conditioning experiments of Ivan Pavlov demonstrated that when the mammalian brain consistently encounters the same stimulus, a mammal will eventually react to the stimulus unconsciously with no volition. The response becomes part of how the organism perceives the environment and acts to cope within it. In analyzing the best strategies for coping in a sometimes-hostile environment, African Americans and other people of color have cultivated defense mechanisms for survival, some of which are more effective and healthier than others.

When working with students of color, it is critically important for educators (including African American teachers) to remain keenly aware that the "teaching notes" found in teachers' manuals may not have been written with the needs of students of color in mind. In colleges of education where preservice training for teachers takes place, coursework on (1) addressing historical racism, (2) the impact of racism and segregation, (3) the lingering effects of slavery, planned poverty, and "Jim Crow" laws, (4) living under an ongoing veiled threat of violence or terrorism, (5) the daily and invalidations of the black experience and perspective, (6) the daily micro-aggressions experienced by people of color, and (7) using curricular materials that often dismiss the existence of African Americans should be part of the credentialing process. Collectively, they all can take a cumulative psychological-emotional toll on students of color in the classroom. Unfortunately, most students of color do not feel that schools validate their perceptions and therefore, does not feel inclusive. A silver lining of the pandemic was that it gave educators, researchers, and policymakers time to pause and reassess the current educational effectiveness for all students.

As US Attorney General Robert Kennedy said on April 5, 1968, barely two months before he was killed, "When you teach a man to hate and fear his brother, when you teach that he is a lesser man

because of his color or his beliefs or the policies he pursues, when you teach that those who differ from you threaten your freedom or your job or your family, then you also learn to confront others not as fellow citizens but as enemies - to be met not with cooperation but with conquest, to be subjugated and mastered." They are eternally strangers.

We cannot move beyond our historical past where the dark clouds can be lifted allowing us to see a brighter day until we (1) acknowledge the troubled past, (2) seek to understand the motives that brought it about, (3) teach that history honestly and accurately as painful as doing so may be, and (4) commit ourselves never to repeat it. Knowledge precedes reconciliation. Reconciliation alone cannot pave the way for a promising future that African Americans have been hoping for since 1619. Implementing the recommendations in this Field Guide, hopefully, will move us closer to making no American a stranger to another American regardless of color in the future.

Resources:

- ***5 Ways to Show You Care for Your Black Students.*** EducationWeek. July 2020.
  https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-5-ways-to-show-you-care-for-your-black-students/2020/07

- ***Approaching Marginalized Populations from an Asset Rather Than a Deficit Model of Education. User Generated Education.***
  https://usergeneratededucation.wordpress.com/2016/05/08/approaching-marginalized-populations-from-an-asset-rather-than-a-deficit-model/

- ***COVID-19 and learning loss - disparities growing students need help.***
  McKinsey & Company. December 2020.
  https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-learning-loss-disparities-grow-and-students-need-help#

- ***Florida Banned Critical Race Theory, But Can't Define What It Is***
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=In6NVLANvLc

- ***Is It Time to Re-Examine Grading?*** The JSTOR Daily. September 2020.
  https://daily.jstor.org/is-it-time-to-reexamine-grading/?utm_term=Read%20More&utm_campaign=jstordaily_09032020&utm_content=email&utm_source=Act-On+Software&utm_medium=email

- ***Landmark Cases: Brown v Board Doll Test*** at
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7sX1cn5aO4

- ***On Slaveholders Sexual Abuse of Slaves: Selections from 19th- & 20th Century Slave Narratives. National Humanities Center Resources Toolbox.***
  http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/text6/mastersslavesexualabuse.pdf

- ***The Racist Origins of the Second Amendment***
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5X3JzQgOTxA

- ***Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack with Peggy McIntosh***
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRnoddGTMTY

- ***Understanding White Privilege.*** National Association of School Psychologists.
  https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity-and-social-justice/social-justice/sp4sj-podcast-and-google-hangout-series/understanding-white-privilege

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  https://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2583

- Black Wall Street – Full Documentary at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJbF9SGB3Y*

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- Grann, D. (2017). *Killers of the Flower Moon: the Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI.*
  Random House, LLC. New York, NY.

- Hannah-Jones, N. (2021. *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story.*
  The New York Times Company. New York, NY.

- Katznelson, I. (2006). *When Affirmative-Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality.* W.W. Norton & Company. New York, NY.

- Stahl, S.A. (1991). *Beyond the instrumentalist hypothesis: Some relationships between word meanings and comprehension.* P. Schwanenflugel (ed.), The psychology of word meanings pp. 157-178. Hillsdale, N.H.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Tim Wise Lecture – *"Colorblind"*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmTHY_QnEdk&t=979s

- *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* with Peggy McIntosh
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRnoddGTMTY

- *When Affirmative Action Was for White people: Its Twisted Origins*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBMEUilkoss

- *Whitewashed: Unmasking the World of Whiteness*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdaF_h06YX4

- *Why We're Overdue to know the Brilliance of Africa's Civilizations*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhqaQ6mR82s

Evaluation-Survey

https://bit.ly/fieldguide8survey

CAAASA presents:

Lifting Our Voices:

Presenter:
Dr. Tyrone Howard

Professor
UCLA Graduate School of Education
and Information Studies

Field Guide #8:
Understanding the Most Critical Needs of Today's African American Students (and Children from Other Communities of Color)

School Re-orientation for Post-COVID Learning:

What to Know, Do, and Expect
as In-Person Instruction Resumes

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