Educating African-American Children

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Brown dedicates this fastback to her husband, Thomas, and son, Preston.

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by

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Introduction

It is inappropriate to view all children as the same, even when they look very similar. Vast differences exist in and among all racial and ethnic groups at all social levels. Thus it can be very dangerous to read studies or other literature on culture and diversity and apply it as if all people in a given group are the same.

Used cautiously, such cultural information can promote understanding and insight for educators. It can give them new ways of thinking about and working with some children in America's classrooms. However, educators should reflect on such information thoughtfully. They should understand that median and modal characteristics of a cultural group may not describe accurately any individual in that group.

Our nation must ensure that every child has the opportunity to develop and learn to the fullest extent possible. Most of us believe that the schools will provide the knowledge and skills that youths need to meet these opportunities. Unfortunately, for certain members of the society, America is missing the mark. The overall grade-level achievement of African-American children
is abysmally low. As a group, African-American children are not experiencing success in school.

While reading test scores for African-American children tested in grades four, eight, and 12 have been improving since 1971, the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress report indicates that only 10% to 18% of African-American children in these grades scored at the "proficient" or "advanced" level (White 1999, p. 9). The "proficient" level of reading achievement "represents solid academic performance for each grade assessed" (p. 2). Stated another way, in 1998 more than four out of five African-American children read at the "basic" level, which, according to the NAEP, means they had acquired only "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade" (White 1999).

All children are capable of learning. But in schools all over the United States, African-American children are not learning. Too often, minorities are penalized in the education system because of teachers' misconceptions. They more often are tracked at early ages into slower learning groups, are retained more often, and are placed into special classes more often (Children's Defense Fund 1990; Knapp and Shields 1990; Executive Committee of Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders 1989). Once placed into special classes or tracked into slower learning groups, it is almost impossible for students to break out of this cycle as they progress through the grades (Knapp and Shields 1990).

At times educators do not offer instruction that is congruent to the experiences, interests, and abilities of
children, especially African-American children. In effect, they apply the "deficit theory" in their teaching practices: assuming that minority children come to school with no strengths but with many weaknesses, which must be overcome if they are to become successful learners. As such, the level of expectations set by these teachers and administrators is low, and standards of excellence may be nonexistent. Obviously, these children are capable of learning much more than their teachers think they can (Delpit 1999; Knapp and Shields 1990).

Minority children come to school with many strengths, such as the ability to communicate with adults and peers, both those who share their background and those who do not. These children are able to switch between language codes, namely, Standard English and the language spoken in their homes and other cultural environments. Schools must take what children already know and can do and then let it serve as scaffolding for new learning. Schools must "stop punishing Black and Brown and poor children who can learn as well as any children if we expect it and provide them fair educational opportunity" (Children’s Defense Fund 1999, p. xx). This is echoed by Delpit (1999) in her statement that teachers must "believe in the children’s brilliance . . . that they can write, dramatize, that they can read." She said, "If something isn’t working, don’t blame the children. Find some other alternatives."

In its position statement, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp and Copple 1997) posits that developmentally appropriate practices emanate from the knowledge that early childhood
professionals have about how children develop and learn. With this knowledge, professionals are able to make informed decisions regarding the education of their young learners. According to the NAEYC, there are three basic kinds of information educators need to know about children to ensure that they receive developmentally appropriate instruction:

1. What is known about child development and learning.
2. What is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group.

Social and cultural contexts affect the education and well-being of a child to such an extent that these contexts must be considered equal in importance to knowledge about how children develop and learn and knowledge of individual needs.

At the end of the 20th century, African Americans constituted America’s largest ethnic minority group. According to the 1990 census, the nearly 30 million African Americans account for 13% of the nation’s population. Unfortunately, unless drastic changes are made to recruit and retain African-American teachers, there will be fewer and fewer African-American teachers and more and more African-American students (Cooper 1988; Children’s Defense Fund 1990; Lewis 1996). This implies that many, if not most, of the children’s future teachers will fail to share the cultures of their students.
In the new century, children will become increasingly diverse while their teachers will tend to be female and white (Lewis 1996). This can pose a huge problem because the culture of the teachers will not be congruent to that of many of their learners. It probably is not true that the teachers will lack the desire or motivation to teach all of the children in the classroom; rather, they will fail to have the requisite understanding of the culture and the knowledge of its effect on how children develop and learn. Consequently, the instruction will not be developmentally appropriate for all of the learners.

Teachers must understand and appreciate the different experiences, learning styles, behaviors, and communication patterns of the African-American culture (Delpit 1999). They must understand that “children demonstrate different modes of knowing and learning and different ways of representing what they know” (Bredekamp and Copple 1997, p. 15). Teachers must understand that they are who they are and have the belief system that they do because of the cultural contexts of their own life experiences (Banks 1996). Teachers must become introspective and understand their cultural biases and predisposition toward students who are from cultural backgrounds different than theirs (Kunjufu 1984).

Teachers must become more than just “acquainted” with the culture and learning styles of the children in their classrooms. While they need not know every nuance of the culture of the children whom they teach, they should have a working knowledge of the cultural contexts in which the children live. The more they are immersed in the children’s culture, the better. For example when
teachers visit their children’s homes, they acquire real appreciation of the conditions under which the children live. Many times these are real “eye openers” that help teachers understand their children’s circumstances, thus translating into improved and personalized instruction for the children.

To provide developmentally appropriate instruction, teachers must learn about the culture of the children entrusted into their care. Then they must use that knowledge to inform their practice. Even if there is only one African-American child present in the classroom, the teacher must be certain to acknowledge this fact by educating that one child appropriately.

In what follows, I will attempt to provide information that could make providing appropriate instruction to African-American children less intimidating. I will explore four aspects of the African-American culture that can provide insight into promising practices for working successfully with African-American children. Then I will provide my own thoughts and recommendations, based on my research and experience gained from more than 30 years of service in public school teaching and administration and in higher education teaching and administration.

Some of what follows may appear stereotypic. But it only becomes so when it is misunderstood and applied inappropriately. For example, all African-American children would not benefit from a bodily kinesthetic or musical approach to assist them in learning basic skills. To assume that this would be the most appropriate method to use to teach any African-American child
would be stereotypic; unless the same assumptions would be made for all children regardless of their race or ethnicity. But for many African-American children, what fun, what motivation this would be if the teachers' repertoire of teaching strategies included the use of music and movement more than once a day in pre-K and beyond.
Some Characteristics of the African-American Culture

Culture is "a way of perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving . . . Culture provides the blueprint that determines the way an individual thinks, feels and behaves in society" (Gollnick and Chinn 1990, p. 6). Banks and Banks argue that "People within a culture usually interpret the meanings of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways" (1989, p. 7).

In order to determine the most effective teaching strategies to use with their African-American children, teachers need to know those cultural contexts that often are shared among this minority group and that can affect how the children learn. Then schools can incorporate into the program those aspects of the culture and life experiences that are similar to those in the home environment. In other words, children should be able to "roam around in the known." By doing so, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that schools consider important and essential can be bridged to what the children already know. Then the opportunity for their academic success is improved.
There is always the risk of oversimplifying very complex cultural information. Stereotypes occur too easily. Teachers must understand that what is suggested here reflects modal characteristics of the group and should not be applied to any one child in that teacher's classroom. Differences exist in all racial groups, including among African Americans. It is very important that class and geographic location be taken into account when considering the diversity that exists among African Americans. Nonetheless, this information can be used to understand and educate many more African-American children successfully.

Four characteristics appear to be prevalent within the African-American culture. These cultural characteristics can influence how children learn and should be considered by their teachers.

*African-American culture appears to promote and support a field-sensitive learning style.*

One aspect of learning style is the concept of field-independent and field-sensitive (field-dependent) learning behaviors (Banks 1988; Gollnick and Chinn 1990; Kohr et al. 1988; Ramirez and Castaneda 1974). Children who tend to process information using field-independent behaviors are more analytic, use inductive reasoning effectively, can see the relationship of the part to the whole, prefer to work independently, make abstractions, are very competitive, and are strong in mathematics and science.

Children who use field-sensitive behaviors to process information are more holistic in their approach to their
surroundings. These individuals would tend to see the forest, not individual trees. Characteristically, these field-sensitive learners are group-oriented, humanistic, and sociable.

It is important to note that basic intelligence is not viewed as a factor in a person's propensity toward one or the other cognitive learning style. The style seems to be determined by culture.

African-American children tend to be more field-sensitive than white children (Gollnick and Chinn 1990). However, classrooms generally are characterized by a field-independent orientation. The behavior of teachers is determined largely by the teachers' own learning style. Consequently, teachers need to be aware of their cognitive style and endeavor to function "bi-cognitively." By doing so, the teacher can organize the learning program to accommodate both field-sensitive and field-independent learning styles (Gollnick and Chinn 1990).

Instruction that encourages field sensitivity includes group projects, close work with the teacher, and material in tune with the ethnic and social backgrounds of students. Field independent instruction will focus on independent activities, minimal participation of the teacher, curriculum materials, charts and diagrams, and student work that emphasizes individual achievement. (Gollnick and Chinn 1990, p. 287)

The goal for teachers is to develop bi-cognitive learners, children who are able to use either cognitive style to assimilate and accommodate new information (Gollnick and Chinn 1990; Hale-Benson 1986).
The social orientation of African-American children appears to be determined by their culture.

According to Shade and Edwards (1987), research indicates that African-American achievers tend to be more extroverted and Euro-American achievers are more likely to be introverted. African-Americans also tend to be more in tune with or attentive to people, rather than things. For example, Delpit (1999) noted that an African-American child might say, “I did your homework, Ms. Smith,” or “I couldn’t be bad in her class.” The culture appears to give the children the understanding that people, not inanimate objects, are important. In addition, while they learn that it is important to attend to verbal communications, African Americans place equal importance on paralinguistic communications. Children become adept at learning to “read” body language and other nonverbal messages.

Most tests in mainstream America focus on the abstract. It would appear that African-American culture develops the social dimension; consequently, the children tend to have a proclivity for a high degree of social intelligence. However, the culture of most schools favors attention to the physical environment, not the social environment (Shade and Edwards 1987).

Since African-American children are more in tune with “feelings, acceptance, and emotional closeness,” the social interaction within the classroom is of manifest importance (Shade and Edwards 1987, p. 98). The teaching strategy that appears most successful with these children emphasizes cooperative learning, as opposed to individualistic, competitive learning that occurs in
most classrooms (Delpit 1999; Gollnick and Chinn 1990). The best teachers would be those with a “sunshine” personality who display high interpersonal skills and genuineness. “These individuals prize their students, view the world from the student’s frame of reference, and seek to be real and genuine human beings” (Shade and Edwards 1987, p. 98).

Orality is highly valued in the culture of African Americans.

According to Gordon and Thomas, “orality” refers to the “capacity to receive, generate, and express feelings, signals, descriptors, ideas and concepts through language. As both a cognitive and a sensory phenomenon, listening is also an important aspect of orality, especially discriminative and selective listening for understanding and comprehension” (1990, p. 71).

Orality tends to be a strength of the African-American culture. In the African-American culture, children perform in front of people early in their lives. For example, Delpit (1999) indicated that little children, almost as soon as they can walk, get up on the stage in church programs and say one or two words. This propensity toward orality begins early. These behaviors also might promote the extroverted characteristics that we see in many of the children.

The preference for the oral mode of communication by African-American students should be used as a strength to increase their facility in writing and reading as a means of communicating effectively (Gordon and Thomas 1990).
A related aspect of African-American orality is that many stories are cyclical. Teachers need to be aware that African-American children's stories may be episodic, with shifting scenes that relate a series of events (Delpit 1999; Hale-Benson 1986). Unfortunately, many teachers expect a more linear approach to the sharing of events and happenings. In other words, the teacher might be inclined to say, "Now that's enough, please sit down," before the child completes the idea. But the teacher needs to be aware that this kind of sharing is driven by the culture and that the expression of these ideas should be encouraged and used as a gateway to the acquisition of other language skills.

African-American culture appears to promote and sustain a "motoric precocity" and a need of stimulus variation for the children.

Wade Boykin (1990), characterizes African-American children as having a higher "psychological and behavioral 'verve'" resulting from a very active, stimulating home environment. Consequently, African-American children are apt to require more activity in the classroom and more stimulation and variability in instructional materials and teaching methods. This research indicates that children should be engaged in activities that are varied in intensity, filled with spontaneity, and delivered with enthusiasm.

This suggests that some African-American children might profit from instructional techniques that emphasize active movement. Young children are naturally active. They revel in what they can do with their bodies.
They enjoy pulling, pushing, running, starting, stopping, jumping, and swinging. But seldom does the preschool, kindergarten, or first-grade teacher capitalize on the child’s natural inclination to move vigorously and use it as a primary tool or teaching strategy for developing or reinforcing academic concepts, such as reading or mathematics. Active movement can be a means of developing and reinforcing cognitive concepts in children (Brown 1976; Cratty 1972, 1973, 1985; Humphrey 1966, 1987; Humphrey and Sullivan 1970).

All healthy children enjoy vigorous physical activity, but some children seem to require more activity than others do. Being active while learning may better meet the learning style of African-American youngsters. The children might need to get on the floor and roll three times, rather than having to count three items on a work sheet while sitting at a table. Active movement can provide concrete, personalized means for learning academic concepts. The use of one’s own body when learning abstract concepts, such as those found in mathematics, is certainly a personalized approach to learning. Teachers would be well advised to include activities that promote active movement as a means of developing academic concepts in African-American children.
23 Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Based on research findings and my own knowledge and personal experiences, the following are recommendations for teachers to help them provide developmentally appropriate education to African-American children:

1. The teacher should be a living example of what is moral, just, fair, ethical, kind, caring, real, and true. The teacher must be a role model, not only "talking the talk," but also "walking the walk."

2. The teacher should create a classroom climate that is conducive to learning. Instruction should be grounded in a knowledge of each child's individual and cultural context, along with the age expectations of the group. High standards should be set for all of the children.

3. The teacher must expect every child in the classroom to learn. Knowledge of risk factors for academic or behavior problems should not evoke a feeling of pity for the child, with the concomitant effect of not expecting the child to perform. While it is important to employ a genuine caring and empathic attitude, being sorry for
the child could result in lower expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies.

4. The teacher must establish a classroom climate that is warm, inviting, and nonthreatening. The teacher could greet the children at the door and talk to them during informal class periods, such as during center time, recess, lunch, or after school.

5. The teacher should model behaviors that demonstrate that everyone is an important and very special individual in the classroom. On days when any child is absent, it must be conveyed that the individual is truly missed. Susan Kovalik (1994) and Jeanne Gibbs (1995) describe models to create and sustain the family or community of learners disposition among and between the children and teacher.

6. The teacher should praise the children for a job well done. Positive self-esteem is directly related to high African-American student achievement. Many African-American children are highly motivated by teacher praise and attention from the teacher. However, the teacher should be certain that the praise is deserved.

7. The teacher should have a working knowledge of the diverse cultures of the children in the classroom. To accomplish this task:

- The teacher should talk with African-American colleagues about neighborhood and community happenings and attend some of them.
- The teacher should visit local churches.
- The teacher should attend sports events.
• The teacher should read such magazines as *Ebony*, which reveal the African-American life and experiences.
• The teacher should invite parents, grandparents, or other extended family members into the classroom as helpers, or these persons might share a cooking recipe or articles that would be of interest to the children.
• African-Americans professionals — such as doctors, dentists, bankers, mail carriers, artists, writers, and police officers — should be invited to share information about their occupations.

8. Teachers should use small, heterogeneous, and individual grouping patterns for instruction. Cooperative learning groups also should be used. For young children, dyads, such as a reading buddy, are the best size group. Teachers should talk less, so that they can learn the valuable lessons that only their children can teach them. By engaging in better listening behaviors, teachers will be more in tune with the abilities, needs, and interests of the children and can make informed decisions and appropriate verbal and nonverbal responses. Since there will be more opportunity for the teacher and individual children to listen and respond to each other, the resulting information can be used by the teacher to plan future instruction for the learners. Through cooperative work in small groups, time on task can be increased and the learning more easily monitored by the teacher.

9. The teacher should emphasize oral language, the cornerstone of beginning reading. Personalized, contextual-
ized learning opportunities using real-life experiences should be provided. When the oral-aural learning mode is emphasized, the teacher can monitor the students’ use of orality, assist them in organizing their thoughts, and help them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. However, teachers also should model reading and writing as equally important ways of approaching learning tasks. This teacher behavior will help the children to make the necessary connections between speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The teacher should use a vast array of teaching strategies to develop and reinforce important skills, knowledge, and dispositions. For example, call and response is one effective strategy that is an integral part of the African-American culture. Not only is this music genre found in children’s music, it also is found in church and pop music. Consider Cab Calloway’s ditty, “Howdy, Howdy, Howdy, Ho!” to which the audience responds a resounding, “Howdy, Howdy, Howdy, Ho!” In the classroom, the teacher asks a question or poses a statement, and the children respond in unison at a very rapid pace. This is an effective strategy for drilling on spelling words and recitation of number facts.

10. Teachers must accept the language children use when they enter school. It should be noted that the degree to which “Black English” is spoken in the children’s homes and neighborhoods is one of the differences that exist within the African-American culture. Socioeconomic class and location are major determinants. Whether the primary oral language students use is a
dialect, standard English, or something in between, the language that African-American children speak should be accepted. Teachers must not stereotype the children by equating their language to low intelligence or to a lack of school competence. However, it must be remembered that the ultimate goal is standard English for school and in the workplace. This fact must be omnipresent and serve to guide the teacher’s instruction.

11. Teachers should know the key concepts of each subject and be able to integrate the curriculum into a seamless whole. Thematic units, learning centers, and projects are standard in the early childhood program.

Teachers should use a comprehensive approach to beginning reading instruction. One such program, the balanced literacy approach, is based on Reading Recovery. This program is explained by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell in their book, Guided Reading. Because of its emphasis on oral language across the curriculum, it has merit for consideration to be used with African-American beginning readers. The literacy framework of the program is congruent to the principles of how African-American children can be expected to learn and are listed below.

- All children can learn to read and write. The teacher who expects all children to be able to learn provides many opportunities for literate behavior. Every day, every child in the classroom encounters materials that he or she can read and that are of interest.
- Children learn about written language in an environment that is print rich. The classroom organization
makes it clear that print can be used in a variety of ways. Print is functional and informative, reflecting the rich diversity of language and literacy.

- Learning is a social process. Children learn by interacting with each other as partners and in small groups. The teacher observes and interacts with children, and children have space and convenient areas to work together in a small group or with a partner.

- Learning is a constructive process. Children learn to read and write through active engagement in authentic literacy. They learn to talk by talking, read by reading, and write by writing.

- An organized environment supports the learning process. Materials are readily at hand, and children know how to use them. The environment is truly supportive and moves children toward independence.

- Powerful demonstrations are an important part of the learning process. By observing their teacher and their peers, individual students develop resources on which they can draw.

- Children learn best when they are responsible for their own learning. The classroom is organized for independence. The goal is for students to become self-managed learners who can take over the process for themselves (Fountas and Pinnell 1996, pp. 43-44).

According to Fountas and Pinnell, the literacy framework has “eight major clusters of activity, all relying on
oral language as a base and all focusing on building bridges between oral and written language” (1996, p. 41). These eight elements are:

- **Reading Aloud.** The teacher reads aloud to the whole class or small groups. A carefully selected body of children’s literature is used; the collection contains a variety of genres and represents our diverse society. Favorite texts, selected for special features, are reread many times.

- **Shared Reading.** Using an enlarged text that all children can see, the teacher involves children in reading together following a pointer. The process includes: a) rereading big books, poems, songs; b) rereading retellings; c) rereading alternative texts; d) rereading the products of interactive writing.

- **Guided Reading.** The teacher works with a small group who has similar reading processes. The teacher selects and introduces new books and supports children reading the whole text to themselves, making teaching points during and after the reading.

- **Independent Reading.** Children read on their own or with partners from a wide range of materials. Some reading is from a special collection to reflect their reading level.

- **Shared Writing.** Teacher and children work together to compose messages and stories; the teacher supports the process by serving as scribe.

- **Interactive Writing.** As in shared writing, teacher and children compose messages and stories that are written using a “shared pen” technique that involves children in the writing.
• **Guided Writing or Writing Workshop.** Children engage in writing a variety of texts. Teacher guides the process and provides instruction through mini-lessons and conferences.

• **Independent Writing.** Children write their own pieces, including stories, informational pieces, retellings, labeling, speech balloons, lists, etc. (Fountas and Pinnell 1996, pp. 22-23).

12. During the *independent reading* phase of the balanced reading program, teachers must ensure that books in the collection from which children choose include African-American children and families, their experiences and heritage. These books should be in gradient levels so that they can be read independently by the children (Brown and Oates 2001).

13. Teachers must provide the children with many opportunities for firsthand learning experiences. The children should be encouraged to talk, write, and read about these experiences. The "Meaningful Content" and "Enriched Environment" components from Susan Kovalik's *ITI: The Model Integrated Thematic Instruction* (1994) should be emphasized here. Teachers need to provide a plethora of "being there" experiences. These personalized, contextualized, authentic experiences should be filled with a rich oral-aural interchange between and among the teacher and children. Real "being there" experiences and a carefully prepared classroom learning environment can be viewed, talked about, listened to, written about, graphically represented, and read over and over again.
14. The teacher should play music from the culture of the children as much as possible. For example, during transitions or at rest time, music can be selected that corresponds to the purpose of the teacher — soothing ballad or energizing rap. Music can be played during independent writing and at art or center times. It also can be played just for appreciative listening.

15. The teacher should use music as a vehicle for teaching across the curriculum in such subjects as reading and mathematics. Because music is such a dynamic part of the African-American culture, it is a natural extension into other areas of the curriculum. The words of songs, nursery rhymes, and chants are chock-full of rhythm, rhyme, and cadence that can be written down and used as reading materials. For example in the simple nursery rhyme, *Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack jumped over the candlestick*, the following concepts might be taught:

- Beginning consonant /j/
- Beginning consonants /n/ and /b/
- The name of a person begins with a capital letter.
- The spatial concept word, “over”
- Rhyming words

Through music, children can learn important math concepts. For example, counting 1 to 10 can be taught through the song, “This Old Man.” Rhyme, rhythm, and repetition are integral components of the song and serve to make counting more easily learned and more likely to be placed into long-term memory. Movements add to the possibilities. Music also can be played to teach
patterns in mathematics. For example, a full note gets four beats and a half-note gets two beats.

16. Teachers should use active movement for physical fitness purposes, and it should be used across the curriculum as a means of developing and reinforcing selected academic concepts. Active movement is characterized by children being actively involved in the gross motor activities of locomotion; such as hopping, jumping, skipping; stability, such as bending, twisting, swaying, reaching; and manipulation, such as catching and throwing movements. Then, using the body as a tool, such subjects as mathematics can be learned by the children. For example, to learn about two, children can hop, bend, or sway; or they may throw or catch an imaginary ball two times.

17. Teachers should use another form of active movement — creative dramatics. Artistic qualities notwithstanding, this medium can be used across the curriculum to teach selected academic concepts. For example, to demonstrate their understanding of details, students can act out stories they have read, such as Bill Martin’s Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?

18. Teachers should be seekers of knowledge about their children. They should assess the children using authentic techniques, such as anecdotal records, time sampling, structured interviews and rating scales, running records, and portfolios. These assessments should be used to inform the teacher about what the child knows and can do and to provide direction for future
instruction. The teacher also should use the results of the assessments to inform parents about the progress the child is making toward individual and schoolwide program goals. This will encourage parental support of the child.

19. Teachers must enlist parents as their partners. Parents are their children's first and most lasting teachers — and they are interested in their children's education. The first contact should be on a positive note. The teacher should help them feel welcome by communicating with them in positive, nonthreatening ways and should encourage them to be a part of the school lives of their children.

20. Teachers should help parents appreciate and learn the value of reading to their children and providing a time and place for literacy activities to take place in their homes.

21. Teachers should let parents know that any time they go out with their children, they are on a "field trip" together. Parents should be encouraged to talk and listen to their children and to point out things along the way, whether it is a trip to the grocery store, the filling station, or some other place.

22. Teachers should invite parents to become a part of their classroom. Parents love to see their children in little skits and singing programs. These need not be great or elaborate productions that take time. These micro-programs can take place right in the classroom and should be natural extensions of a project or other learn-
ing activity. Parents could be the audience for a small group of children or the entire class.

23. Teachers should invite parents to bring or send materials for art or science projects. They can help with a cooking activity or make simple props for a play. If the parents see that the teacher really has the best interest of the child at heart, they will show greater interest in the classroom and school. The teacher needs to be certain that parents know they are welcome and needs to convey ways that parents can help that are within the means and time constraints of the parents.
Conclusion

African-American children are not making the grade. As standards and tests become pervasive in all of the nation’s schools, special challenges abound for African-American children and their parents, teachers, and administrators.

The numbers of African-American students will continue to increase; however, the numbers of African-American teachers will fail to rise proportionately. Consequently, more teachers from unlike cultures will teach the children. It is paramount that all teachers understand the strengths of the African-American culture and use this knowledge to provide developmentally appropriate education.

While teachers must be careful of the generalizations they make about an individual or group of children, knowing the modal cultural characteristics of the group should be helpful. Not only must teachers understand as much as they can about the African-American culture, they also must continually seek out programs, methods, and activities that hold promise for use with the children. They must be careful not to blame the children or their parents if the desired learning results do
not occur. Instead, they must search diligently for answers to ascertain what holds the key to unlock the mind and heart of each individual child because they know all children can learn.

Delpit said, “Teachers must know and respect children and their communities. They need to use knowledge to develop teaching strategies. They need to know themselves and believe in themselves. They must believe they can teach all children” (1999). And Cox believes that “Teachers need to give children strong roots and beautiful wings so they can soar” (1999).

In short, teachers need to provide developmentally appropriate education to African-American children. It is the teacher’s responsibility to teach every child, just as it is every child’s inherent right to learn.
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DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER

FDK MEMBER ROLL NUMBER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
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ORDERS MUST INCLUDE
PROCESSING CHARGE

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<th>Total Merchandise</th>
<th>Processing Charge</th>
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<td>Up to $50</td>
<td>$5</td>
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<tr>
<td>$50.01 to $100</td>
<td>$10</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than $100</td>
<td>$10 plus 5% of total</td>
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