

African American Boys Checklist
(AABC)

By Darlene Sampson, Ph.D; LCSW

Instructions:

- (1) Review the Foundational Aspects of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Pages 2-4)
- (2) Review the Domains/Suggested Interventions (Pages 5-11)
 - Academic
 - Verve
 - Verbal
 - Behavior
- (3) Check boxes that apply to Culturally Responsive Behaviors that may be utilized for specific students and teachers
- (4) Discuss plan of Action
- (5) Evaluate for implementation
- (6) Infuse for 30-60 days with fidelity
- (7) Gather data on implementation
- (8) Re-view
- (9) Monitor ongoing

*This checklist may be utilized prior to Student Intervention Teams (SIT), utilized at a scheduled SIT meeting, or utilized as a tool to begin the process of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.

*Consultation provided as needed by Dr. Sampson (4-19-10)



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Racial disproportionality, as it relates to African American boys, has existed for many years. The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), has acknowledged the issues of disproportionality, and has informed States that reduction of disproportionality, as it relates to particularly African American and Latino boys, is a priority.

Why the focus on African American boys? Here are some startling statistics we must consider:

- African American boys are disproportionately represented in almost every category of academic failure (Dallmann-Jones, 2002; Martin, Martin Gibson & Wilkins, 2007).
- African American boys are underrepresented in advanced and honors courses.
- African American boys are three times more likely to be referred for special education supports and programming.
- African American boys are disproportionately suspended and expelled from school (Garbarino, 1999; Strayhorn, 2008).
- African American boys also show significant challenges in achievement test taking skills and course participation.
- African American boys graduate at a rate of 48% nationwide, as compared to 74% of Caucasian males (Legler, 2004).
- African Americans between the ages of 3-21 received 14.9% of the services under IDEA, yet African Americans only comprise 16.6% of the total United States School Population (US Department of Commerce 1972-2000).

This checklist provides a research-based academic tool based in the literature that Special Education Teams, Student Intervention Teams, Data Teams, and Administrators can utilize to assist in thoughtfully and consciously addressing the issues of disproportionality in schools relating to African American boys. This instrument is meant to assist administrators and teachers in increasing the scrutiny as it relates to the academic, social, and emotional needs of African American boys. The ultimate goal is to raise awareness, challenge practices that contribute to disproportionality, and honor the resiliency and academic potential of African American boys. In developing a critical lens, we move toward culturally responsive activities and behaviors that promote academic achievement. There is no “one size fits all” approach; however, there is specific research which anchors this checklist. This checklist is not designed to drive data. It is designed to raise consciousness, to educate, and to assist in planning. Although the focus of this tool is African American males; many of the concepts are transferable to African American children in general. Challenging disproportionality is a complex process that must be tackled consistently and on many levels.

Ideally, utilization of this tool is preferable to any referral process for interventions, services, supports, special programming, or change of placement. However, this checklist may be utilized as a part of an ongoing process of scrutiny and service delivery to African American boys.

Before we begin, here are some foundational concepts that must be employed:

Self

- ✓ Teachers must consciously examine the bias, language, and perceptions they bring to school about African American boys (See Self-reflection checklist attached).
- ✓ Teachers must recognize deviance vs. difference and the need for differentiated instruction vs. special education support.

- ✓ Teachers must realize the practices and behaviors that contribute to the disconnect between African American boys and teachers.
- ✓ Teachers must recognize the potential of African American boys, and consider the underlying historical issues that impact their learning and connection to school.
- ✓ Teachers must give themselves permission not to easily or readily understand the concepts presented. It takes time to self-reflect, practice, and grasp culturally responsive classroom practices and behaviors.
- ✓ Teachers must ask the consumers (the students) “how am I doing as your teacher” on an ongoing basis.
- ✓ Teachers must utilize tools to self-reflect on their practice and individual challenges; such as, the African American Children’s Checklist, and/or the Self-Audit of your Culturally Competent Classroom) attached.
- ✓ Teachers must realize the psychological harm and diminished future potential that occurs when African American boys are disconnected, mislabeled, and disrespected at school.

Academically

- ✓ Schools must infuse culturally responsive curricula on an ongoing basis that draws on the ethnic reality of African American boys, and correlates the past with the future.
- ✓ Schools must be able to scrutinize culturally responsive curriculum for strengths and challenges.
- ✓ Schools must be able to utilize scaffolding in a wholistic manner; providing a marriage between culture and home experiences, to support the intellectual, and academic growth of the African American boy.
- ✓ Schools must understand the need for the African American boy to be reflected in curriculum and classroom discourse, in order to maintain interest and inclusion.
- ✓ Teachers must understand that cooperative learning and group activities are preferable to African American boys, as opposed to competitive individualized instruction.
- ✓ Schools must develop a culture to counter the “Acting White” Syndrome (high performance resulting in ridicule from peers due to academic achievement) ensuring that high expectations are apparent for all and culturally normed in schools.
- ✓ Teachers must realize that the observations, tests, and decision-making inherent in determining the need for SPED often does not reflect the culture, knowledge, and potential of the African American male; and are based in Eurocentric paradigms which set up African American boys for failure.

Behaviorally

- ✓ Schools must be able to demonstrate a climate of caring that supports and validates the world of the African American boy.
- ✓ Teachers must be trained on and understand the cultural codes of African American boys- being careful not to misinterpret behavior and cues.
- ✓ Schools must understand the culture and history of the African American male to ensure empathy and bias-free interaction.
- ✓ Teachers must realize that all behavior being demonstrated has a root cause.

Systematically

- ✓ Schools must develop a list of culturally responsive activities, behaviors, and resources to support teachers in this culturally responsive journey.
- ✓ Schools must monitor culturally responsive practices ongoing for implementation and fidelity.
- ✓ Schools must be safe places where African American males do not have to posture or act out in order to maintain safety.
- ✓ Schools must demonstrate high regard for African American parents, and institute sustained culturally responsive parental involvement strategies.

- ✓ Schools must evaluate everything that may impact over-representation of African American males; such as, pre-referral interventions, parental involvement, movement, curriculum, culturally responsive instruction, and lack of professional development-ongoing.
- ✓ Educational systems must recognize that treating all children the same is not gender or racial neutral, and can undermine and discount the ethnic realities that race has on the African American male.
- ✓ Schools must challenge hegemony (only one way, one history, one language).

Resources

- Brown, M. (2007). Educating all students: Creating culturally responsive teachers, classroom, and schools. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 43 (1) 57-62.
- Cartledge, G., & Lo, Y. (2006). *Teaching Urban Learners: Culturally responsive strategies for developing academic and behavioral competence*. Illinois: Research Press
- Heyman, R. (2003). *How to say it to boys: Communicating with boys to help them become the best men they can be*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Hoover, J. (2009). *Differentiating learning differences from disabilities: Meeting diverse needs through multi-tiered response to intervention*. New Jersey: Pearson
- Howard, T. (2001). Telling their side of the story: African American Student's Perceptions of culturally relevant teaching. *Urban Review*, 33 (2).
- Kunjufu, J. (2005). *Keeping Black boys out of special education*. Illinois: African American images.
- McNair, J. (2006). *The estrangement of black male youth: From a teacher's perspective*. Raleigh: Lulu
- Obiakor, F. (2007). *Multicultural Special Education: Culturally responsive teaching*. New Jersey: Pearson.
- Schmidt-Ruggiano, P., & Wen, M. (2006). *50 Literacy strategies for culturally responsive teaching, K-8*. California: Corwin
- Wagner, d., & Heyward, V. (1999). Measures of body composition in blacks and whites: A comparative review. *American Society for Clinical Nutrition*, 71, 1392-1402.
- Ware, F. (2006). Warm demander pedagogy: Culturally responsive teaching that supports a culture of achievement for African American students. *Urban Education*, 41(4), 427-456.

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African American Boys Check List
(Teacher)

Academics	
Cultural Responsive Considerations	Culturally Responsive Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Were you aware that there are three critical grades for African American boys that can assist in determining the future course of academic engagement? They are K, 4, & 9th grades. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review your data for the critical grades to determine if/when significant declines have been noted in African American boy's achievement/connectedness to school. ○ Examine each grade level's pedagogical practices for bias and culturally responsive pedagogical practices.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you know that that many African American boys are right brain learners, but are consistently asked to perform left brain academics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilization of oral lesson plans, interactive television, video games, public speaking, current events, poetry, pictures, music, art, technology, rap, and hands-on activities promote right brain learners in mastering activities and in staying focused in class.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have you considered "digging out" knowledge as opposed to "filling up" with knowledge which is preferable for African American boys? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This consists of asking questions about lessons that relate to the African American boys' experiences (What you think about this lesson, how would you manage this subject, what do you think is important, show me how....etc). ○ Connect old history to new history (i.e., this is how it use to be....how is it now in life, in your family, in your community, etc)? ○ After oral lessons are implemented...ask students to write about it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have you instituted daily success activities that you know African American boys can manage and will succeed at (particularly in the presence of peers)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Success activities are: daily tasks. handing out papers, daily leadership activities, storytelling, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are you aware that cooperative learning is the hallmark of African American culture, instills a sense of commonality/community, and assists academic achievement (Wilson-Jones & Caston (2004)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create an academic environment where students work in groups carefully considering skill level, behavior, commonalities, and racial preferences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have you utilized older group same race mentors (i.e., elementary with high school or middle students) as a possible intervention? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Institute community shadowing days in which students visit their community (i.e., a nursing home with African American elders, a visit to the homeless shelter, or connections with other positive African Americans children 4-5 years older for mentoring activities). ○ Develop culturally responsive field trips in which many or some of the speakers are African American males, secure same race/gender speakers on careers, life, etc., to visit the classroom.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you consistently use handouts and talk from a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use your student's names when beginning a story or an example to assist African

book?	<p>American boys in grasping knowledge and story plots' and in "living through" academics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Frequently as a routine include additional instructional time as an ongoing strategy to improve academic achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are you boring in your presentation or highly verbal, stylized, or colorfully engaging? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engage students in lessons and encourage their creative thinking -which is particularly culturally responsive. ○ Movement about the classroom between rows and carefully talking to African American boys assists them in staying on task. ○ Research shows that "Entertainment Pedagogy" (lively presentations and infusion of emotion) is preferred by African American boys when delivering lessons.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you know that African American boys prefer affective lessons infused with real world experiences, and current events that impact their ethnic identity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include affective and social skills lessons including life discussions and information that is applicable to the lives of African American boys.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you know that academic time must be coupled with transition time for African American boys? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consistently implement transition time before, during and after academic work; providing timed minutes to increase camaraderie and the ability to infuse language, movement, and commonality before returning to academic work.

Possible Interventions

- Utilize visual schedules
- Post classroom rules
- Assign seating (taking into account skill/behavior)
- Provide food /technology time as incentives
- Limit overstimulation/bring down when up
- Institute same race academic study circles carefully assigning students by behavior/skills
- Attempt multi-skill level and multi-cultural academic circles to increase diversity...don't force if students resist
- Develop family/community/history-rich academic assignments using core academics
- Increase teacher movement in the classroom by walking through rows/configurations after instructions are given
- Provide hands-on prompts (a gentle pat on the shoulder)
- Provide only one-two instructions at a time-then check for understanding
- Have students repeat instructions
- Use call-n-response activities...."when you say _____," students respond verbally _____"

-Time academic work...."you have five minutes to complete your work....5,4,3,2,...quiet!"

Verve (Movement)

Cultural Responsive Considerations	Culturally Responsive Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you know that most African American boys have high verve which is often mis-interpreted as hyperactive? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track data on same race peers to minimize movement misperceptions. ○ Adjust your classroom to include movement, group activities, hands on activities, etc. ○ Develop 15-20 minutes on/5 minutes off academic/transition time to vary instruction and support on-task behavior. ○ Understand that the hyperactive label can be subjective when taking into account the verve of African American boys. ○ Practice "stop-n-think" activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you know that "stylized movement" is a hallmark of African American boys (the walk with the head tilted, one foot dragging, coupled with verbal posturing) is not threatening but a sign of racial pride-not aggression (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Demonstrate that you value/embrace the verve of the African American boy.... (i.e., "you have high self-esteem, or "Tevin....I like the way you walk.")
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is your classroom overly structured and rigid...or is it conducive to movement and feels like home? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Circular or rowed configurations are best, with room for teachers to move easily between rows and tables. ○ Provide immediate eye contact to African American boys when/if they demonstrate high verve. ○ Create a "chill symbol," which is similar to a "mother/father's look" that indicates you need to "bring it down."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have you recognized the need for African American boys to socialize and move about the classroom before academic lessons? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incorporate daily "movement rituals" like morning circle or transition time, free time, tech time, or open mic time. ○ Develop a daily classroom schedule that incorporates appropriate socialization rituals (before/after academics).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you know that African American males (on average) have higher body mass than other males? (Wagner, & Heyward, 1999). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow large spaces in which to move and converse. ○ Institute transition time by utilizing a drum, rap music, or other

culturally appropriate music or symbols/pictures, which indicates it is time to come together.

Culturally Responsive Strategies

*Many are sensory strategies

- Have students carry heavy books or notebooks to the office or another classroom
- Allow hair brushing
- Allow water sipping
- Allow timed journal writing or artwork
- Allow earphones/MP3 players (when appropriate)
- Provide fidgeting objects
- Play calm music
- Allow student to work on the floor
- Provide rubber bands on wrists for on-task reminders
- Place Velcro underneath the desk for students to rub when needing additional stimulation
- Provide a wobble seat for student desks
- Allow students to place head on desk to de-stimulate for 5 minutes
- Couple academic Culturally Responsive Pedagogy with physical strategies-eventually eliminating the need for physical strategies

Behavior

Cultural Responsive Considerations

Culturally Responsive Behaviors

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are you aware that African American boys respond best to directives, coupled with a teacher relationship & high expectations, which is described in the literature as Warm Demander Pedagogy (Ware, 2006)? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Warm Demander style: High expectations, with high caring, and no bull (gentlemen, take a seat, let's get started....."I like your style....you can do even better." |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you know that discipline is not circular...(lots of choices and discussion) it is most effective when directive and linear (however, not authoritative/angry)? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use frequent affirmations and prompts for positive behavior. ○ Utilize start....."I know you will have a great day;" as opposed to "Let's not have another day like yesterday!" ○ Consistent discipline is respected...inconsistent or non-existent limits promote disrespect for you, the teacher. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have you considered that any behavioral issues may be indicative of academic challenges as opposed to emotional concerns? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Watch for cues when students act out when asked to perform academically...they may be anxious about their skill level as opposed to acting out behaviorally. |

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide several levels of work to assess skill. ○ Complete a strengths checklist prior to any intervention/deficit list.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are you afraid to “step to” African American boys to address behavior? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Greet students by name with a smile on a daily basis. ○ Develop a “take it slo bro” buddy for positive peer support.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you demonstrate caring during instruction or disillusionment with the teaching profession? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use behavioral contracting, a culturally responsive FBA/BIP, and/or student self-monitoring tools to defuse anger and increase responsibility. ○ Monitor/confront expectations for yourself ongoing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are you aware that many African American students prefer same race groupings...this is simply racial identity development and should not be perceived as negative? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow natural pairings that occur during class time with consistent opportunities to work with others...however, don't force other racial groupings if students prefer same race groupings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you confront with empathy and respect, or do you “front off” or put down in the presence of peers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ African American students ask in many non-verbal ways “if you care”... examine their request for attention via non-traditional behaviors; such as, not completing assignments, talking back, or work refusal. ○ To demonstrate ongoing respect when setting limits, state...“Denzel, please speak with me briefly”in a quiet tone...not in front of peers, or use a “bring it down” card or gesture, or establish standards on the wall you simply point to minimizing arguments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you know about the “day in the life of an African American boy?” Do you know what African American boys consistently face at school, at home, in the community, or in life? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Talk to parents, other teachers, community members, and most importantly, the child about how they perceive their world. ○ Develop a list of the student’s hobbies/activities, names of siblings, and other pertinent information you can refer to.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you consistently use humor in your pedagogy (teaching style) and a pleasant tone of voice? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appropriately tease, smile, and show amusement at the high verbal skills/behaviors of the African American male.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have African American boys received supports, services, or special considerations prior to referral to discipline or SPED? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Augmented/fragmented lessons, parental interventions and home to school communications, review of appropriate teacher-student

	<p>match, change of physical environment, work matched to potential, referral to supportive services, culturally responsive lessons, a structured plan of action with cultural considerations, a culturally responsive classroom audit (attached), and data attached to observations prior to referral.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Functional Behavior Assessment/Behavior Support Plans: Any Functional Behavior Assessment must be completed through a culturally responsive lens, accounting for differences outlined in this checklist, and taking into account that behavior can be interpreted in multiple ways.
<p style="text-align: center;">Culturally Responsive Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Implement point sheet with incentives (make sure at least two items are easily obtainable) -Divide up students with challenging behavior physically in classrooms -Provide quiet space and calm down time -Place challenging students at the end of the line/or allow them to leave class early -Develop proactive social skills utilizing community members/churches or African American male organizations -Ask community elders to sit in the classroom -Connect with in-house therapeutic resources to include social skills in the classroom - Develop classroom rules in conjunction with African American boys' input -Develop social justice days in which African American boys discuss the issues specific to them...developing ideas and solution-focused discourse -Post a visual discipline plan..allow students to draw it/name it -Reframe leadership, utilize directives.. “young man, remove your headphones please,” ...let’s get started -Utilize this -then -that instructions - Utilize positives before negatives (5-1) -Do not allow African American males to put themselves (or others) down -Confront/reframe stereotypes -Don’t ignore bullying behavior 	
<p>Verbal</p>	
<p>Cultural Responsive Considerations</p>	<p>Culturally Responsive Behaviors</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have you acknowledged the specific language and vernacular of the African American boy as a skill set, or do you view the language style as a deficit? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilize the verbal skill to promote leadership opportunities in the classroom and school. ○ Acknowledge language skills and the “swagger” of African

	<p>American boys as a skill set that can be incorporated appropriately in the classroom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reframe posturing as “high leadership and high verbal skills.” ○ Recognize that inappropriate language or profanity is not acceptable no matter how colorful...confront it! ○ Don’t argue with the African American boy about inappropriate language...simply state choices/consequences. ○ Do not allow the “N Word” or other disparaging terms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are you aware that language patterns are different at home and in the community, and students must have the opportunity to speak their language, yet code-switch (switching from cultural style to Eurocentric expectations) as necessary? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reframe cultural language in the classroom...do not denounce or denigrate it...channel it. ○ Incorporate some of the verbal skills of African American students (coupled with relationship). ○ Assist African American boys in developing and leading a lesson. ○ Allow culturally familiar language, while infusing other diverse language patterns—thoughtfully considering that language is different, and no one way of relating is better than the other. ○ Assist African American boys in maintaining culturally integrity by verbally reframing language in the classroom (“this is how we will talk during academic time”... “this is how you may speak during non-academic time).”

Culturally Responsive Strategies

- Allow students to provide instruction for the day
- Allow storytelling, rapping, music, web design, poetry, and art
- Pair visual and verbal cues
- Role play language differences to expand vocabulary (their language and yours)
- Set parameters for “outside language” and “inside” (school) language
- Use visuals that depict culturally-rich language/ followed by Standard English...provide incentives for appropriate use of language
- Use journals to connect/transfer oral skills to written language
- Initiate a symbol (hand signal, picture, etc.) that indicates students may interrupt