

"Connecting the Culturally Disconnected: Unlocking the Literacy Needs of African American Male Readers"

Presented by:

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Introduction



- **50% of young black males** drop out of school due to socioeconomic conditions, low-performance on standardized tests, and low self-esteem (Tatum, 2005).
- Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate a direct correlation between low levels of reading achievement and socioeconomic status. Impoverished students in grades 4, 8, and 12 are underperforming in reading when compared to students who are middle class or affluent. This is particularly salient when **black males are considered**.
- **Many black male high school students or graduates are reading on the same grade level or below as white middle school students.** More so, these males attend low-achieving schools or are in intensive reading courses staffed with teachers that are not highly qualified (unable to address these students' literacy needs) or who may have low expectations about these students' ability to meet high academic standards in reading, writing, or math (Tatum, 2005).

Overview



- **This presentation will provide a framework for providing reading instruction to Black Adolescent Male Readers. Furthermore, it will provide strategies for teachers to use that will help these readers think critically and socially as they come of age and define their places in society.**
- **In addition, participants will engage in hands-on activities that will help them to become more culturally responsive to the literacy needs of Black Adolescent Male Readers and to help foster those academic and social identities that will allow them to become literate citizens of society.**



Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- A. Understand why we need to give special attention to the literacy of black males.
- B. Use strategies for increasing the standardized test scores of black males.
- C. Implement strategies using content area texts (textbooks) to address “the cultural disconnect” black males experience.
- D. Select text materials that empower black males.
- E. Understand what it means to be a “culturally responsive” teacher.
- F. Implement research-based reading strategies that work with black male students.

“Teacher Inquiry”

Understanding the Adolescent Shift and Black Males...



“Does the world care if I exist?

Or am I just America’s problem?

Don’t they know I am dying like no other?

No, they fear me, they can’t hear me...

You expect me to just watch you eat

**While you mistreat me in the schools and in the
streets.**

**You can’t even teach me how to read-Mr. and Mrs.
Teacher**

Then you flunk me, and blame it on me.

**Some of it’s my fault, probably some is my momma’s
fault as well**

But you’re at fault too...”

Excerpted from Alfred Tatum’s poem “Feelings of Invisibility”

Understanding the Adolescent Shift and Black Males...

REFLECTIONS...



Using the excerpt from the poem as a guide, discuss these questions with the person sitting next to you...

Is there a divide between how black males live and the rest of American society? How early in life do you think black males conclude that the world is indifferent to their existence?

VIDEO CLIP- *Boyz N The Hood*, by John Singleton

How does the clip from the movie reflect the title of Tatum's poem "Feelings of Invisibility"?

Boys and Reading



Embracing **Gender Awareness** and **Masculinity** to hook boys into reading...What the research says about these two ideas:

- Use male-oriented texts with male readers
- Use texts that are apt to engage boys emotionally with the characters that deal with issues boys care about and that honor their identity.
- Expose boys to nonfiction that involves something new.
- Use texts that legitimize the male experience and support boys' views of themselves (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998).

Moving Towards understanding how reading failure is connected to boys' socioeconomic conditions. "The intersections between socioeconomic resources, geographical location, ethnicity, and "race" are critical here, as they demonstrate the groups of boys who are potentially more at risk of school failure."

Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998



Literacy Development and Black Males... A Culturally Responsive Approach

- The 4 C's for teaching Black Males (according to A. Tatum, 2005):
 - Compassion
 - Competence
 - Commitment
 - Cultural Responsiveness

CAN YOU HELP BLACK ADOLESCENT MALES
CONNECT TEXT TO SELF IN THE FACE OF
NATIONAL LEGISLATION?



The 4 C's

- **Carousel Activity:**
 - With your group, list strategies that a teacher could use to model culturally responsive pedagogy?
 - (Listen for the timer so that you and your group will know when it is time to rotate to the next poster)

A Principal's Viewpoint!

Culturally Responsive Teachers:	Always	Sometimes	Never
Know their students and the subject matter they teach.			
Place Learning In a Meaningful Context.			
Help students understand more about themselves and more about the world.			
Use literature that is culturally relevant and that speaks to their students' experiences.			
Help students understand society's perception of who they are while helping students t define who they want to become.			
Establish trusting relationships and feelings of kinship.			
Understand the lived experiences of their students and how their students respond to these experiences.			
Connect, as best as they can, students' in –school lives with their out-of-school lives.			
Understand their role as being broader than just helping students do well on tests.			
Understand cultural specific behaviors.			
Plan instruction and assessment with a rich audit of who the students are.			
Focus instruction on helping students develop strategies and hope for overcoming academic and societal barriers			

The Culture of Florida Virtual School: A Comprehensive Framework



- Bringing out-of-school literacies in the classroom for students.
- Going beyond Skill and Strategy Instruction.
- Strengthening Concepts of Reading
- Teaching Students Responsibility
- Setting high expectations and supporting these expectations in a nurturing environment.

A Shakespeare Connection to Hip-Hop...

- A Lesson Demonstration from the perspective of an online teacher...




“Much Ado about Nothing”

A Shakespeare Connection to Hip-Hop...

- With the person sitting next to you, discuss strategies and skills implemented by the online teacher to meet the needs of the student?
 - What out-of-school literacies were brought into the lesson?
 - How was the material used to connect to the student's life experiences?
 - How did the teacher get the student to think critically about himself and his place in the world?





*Establish a broader definition of literacy
instruction that guides the selection of text.*

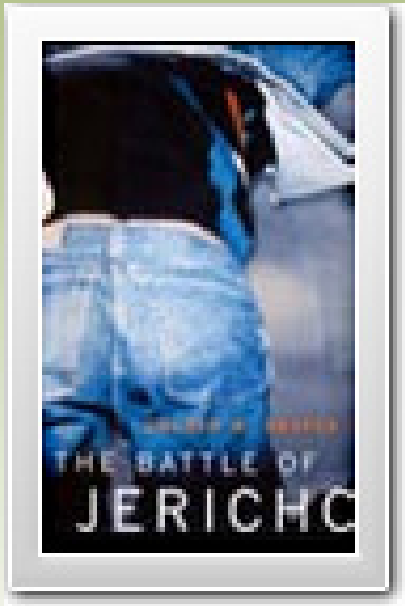
Literacy must focus on skill and strategy knowledge, content knowledge, and identity development.

“It is imperative that these young men have the requisite skills to read text independently. It is also imperative that they become “smarter” as a result of their reading, and it is essential that literacy instruction helps these young form an identity that allows them to resist some of the negative community forces that are part of their day-to-day realities”

(McGowan, 2005)

Making Literature a Reality: Establishing a Broader definition of Literacy...

- Connecting **High Interest Reading** with **High Interest Films**



The Battle of Jericho

By: Sharon Draper



A Sample Lesson Approach for strategy and skill instruction, building content knowledge, and helping to create social identities in African American Adolescent Males.

“Let’s Get Buzzy”!

Meeting the Literacy Needs of Black Adolescent Males...



- Establish a broader definition of literacy instruction that guides the selection of text.
- **Identify a core of “must-read” texts for African American adolescent males.**
- Discuss texts in culturally responsive ways.
- **Identify texts that balance the out-of-school literacy overload.**
- **Examine your disposition toward using texts with African American Adolescent Males.**

(Tatum, 2005)

Discussing the Lesson and a broader definition of literacy...



What's the Buzz all About?

- After reading the excerpt from *The Battle of Jericho* and viewing the movie clip from “Stomp the Yard” how does this lesson broaden the definition of literacy, and how can you adapt this lesson to meet the needs of the Black Adolescent Males in your classroom and beyond?

Identify a core of “Must-Read” Texts for Black Adolescent Males...

Historical Identities:

Frederick Douglass

Richard Wright

James Baldwin

Ralph Ellison

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Langston Hughes

Instructional Methodologies and Strategies:

Teacher Read Alouds

Reader Response

Student Read-Alouds

Guided Reading (as outlined by Irene Fountas
and Gay Su Pinnell)

Modern Day Identities:

Reading their worlds with
Young Adult Literature

Walter Dean Myers

Sharon Draper

Jacqueline Woodson

Christopher Paul Curtis

Nikki Grimes

Instructional Methodologies
and Strategies:

Independent reading/SSR

Literature Circles

Guided Reading

Discuss text in culturally responsive ways...

“Students benefit when they can extend the ideas contained in texts into their own lives”
(Tatum, 2005).

Activity:

Luther Vs. Tupac



Discuss text in culturally responsive ways...



- After listening to Luther's song "Dance with my Father" and reading Tupac's bio from his official website, how do their relationships with their fathers differ?
- Compare and contrast your relationship with your father to that of either Tupac's or Luther's...or both.



Identify texts that balance the out-of-school literacy overload.

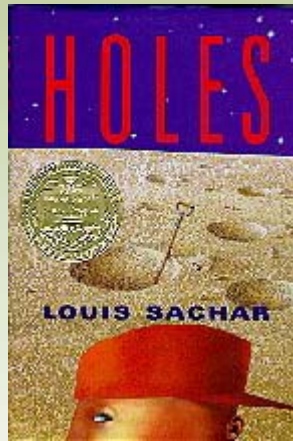
“Expose black males to text that leads to academic, cultural, economic and social uplift, not just to text that is geared towards standardized test preparation. Had it not been for my teachers in my freshman year of college introducing me to successful black authors, businessmen, and artists, I would not have been able to identify with my heritage”

(Eric F. Hinson, School Board Member, Gadsden County Public Schools)

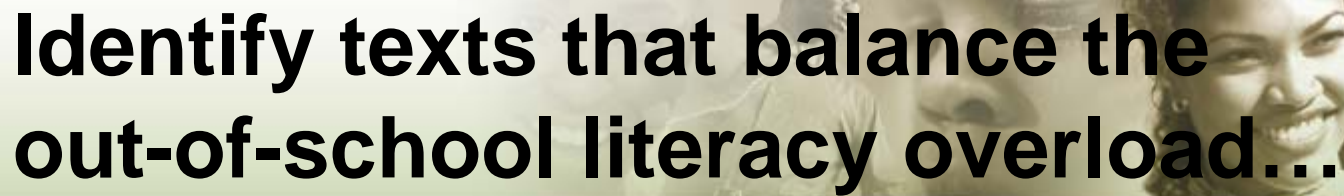
Identify texts that balance the out-of-school literacy overload...

“ZERO and Me”

Identifying with characters in literature...



Holes by Louis Sachar



**Identify texts that balance the
out-of-school literacy overload...**

“Zero” in the online Classroom...

**A Classroom’s Teacher’s prospective and the
support she receives from her Literacy
Leader!**

Claudine Townley

&

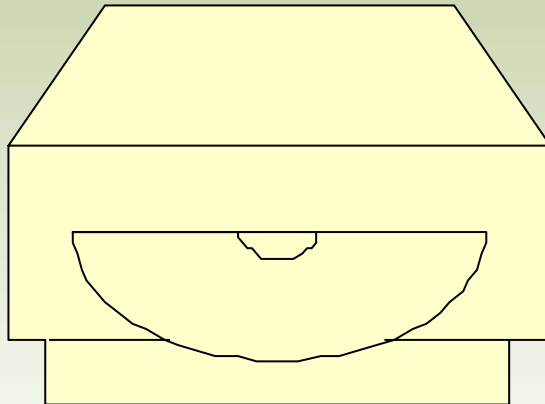
Vicki Jensen

**Teachers Examining their dispositions
toward using texts with African American
Adolescent Males...a shift in pedagogy**

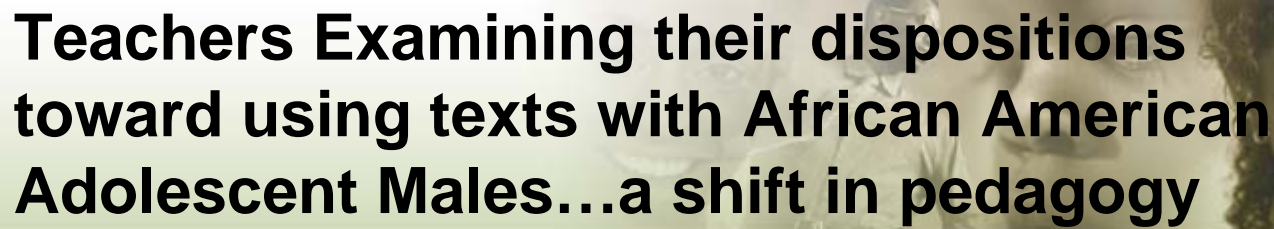
Video Clips...

“Mona Lisa Smiles”

“Dead Poet’s Society”



Teachers Examining their dispositions toward using texts with African American Adolescent Males...a shift in pedagogy



- How did the two teachers in these films change the traditional approach of instruction to help students make meaning of the content themselves?
- Changing your Pedagogy:
 - Discuss these questions with the person sitting next to you:
 - How can I get the black males in my classroom to read the texts recommended in this book when they are struggling with decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension.
 - How does my literacy instruction affect the young men in my class whose out-of-school literacies overpower their in-school-literacies?

Teachers Examining their dispositions toward using texts with African American Adolescent Males... a shift in pedagogy

FLVS hosts an online African American Read-In...



Excerpts from the recorded event...

Unlocking the doors for the disconnected...




“But seriously, because you both fail to understand what is happening to you. You cannot see or hear or smell the truth of what you see-and you, looking for destiny! It’s classic! And the boy, this automation, he was made of the very mud of the region and he sees far less than you. Poor stumblers, neither of you can see the other.”

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Resources



- Ellison, R. 1947. *Invisible Man*. New York: Random House.
- Gilbert, R., and Gilbert, P. 1998. *Masculinity Goes to School*. New York, Routledge.
- Lyons, C., and Pinnell, G.S. 2001. *Systems for Change in Literacy Education: A Guide to Professional Development*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Tatum, A. W. 2005. *Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males: Closing the Achievement Gap*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.



Parking Lot!

Questions, Answers & Kudos...

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