

**Title of Submission:** AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF CULTURE AND SCHOOLING: LOOKING AT AN AFRICAN-CENTERED ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL

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**Abstract:**

Many educators believe that unless we make a determined effort to include cultural relevance in the public school curriculum, public education will continue to fail African American students. In fact, the importance of the quality of one's experience in education and community settings is repeatedly being pointed to as critical determinants to gaining the foundation for higher intellectual pursuits. However, according to many authors who have addressed this issue, the experiences of minority students gained in traditional settings are often disjointed from their greater life experiences. There are several variables responsible for this problem: the effects of ethnicity and culture; student noninvolvement and non-identification with the educational process; and the effects of oppression.

Facing this problem, many school districts across the country are looking at African-centered curriculums as a way of improving the academic achievement and, thus, the life chances of African American students. Some educators argued that a program that uses black teachers, an African-centered curriculum, and the African rites of passages, will make students more interested in learning, help to narrow the academic gap, and stem the rising drop-out rate among black students (Detroit School Board, 1990). What is the theoretical basis for this type of schooling? According to Henry (1994),

Black children's self-understanding are not usually the domain of schools and rarely the aims of most educators. Indeed as Grant and Sleeter (1986) have written, "the typical teacher (especially if he/she is White) would rarely refer to race, or include the perspectives or contributions of people of color" (p.102).

My teachers selected lesson from an educational menu that rendered me invisible. African-centered education attempts to combat this problem. This paper will discuss the impact of this type of education on one group of students and teachers.

References

Henry, A. (October, 1994). *The Empty Shelf and Other Curricular Challenges of Teaching for Children of African Descent: Implications for Teacher Practice*. Urban Education, vol 29, no1, pp.298-319.