

Why is it important to narrow the achievement gap?

- Not closing the gap will translate into social inequalities later in life, including
 - Lower Future Earnings
 - Higher Unemployment Rates
 - Higher Incarceration Rates
- These social inequalities are not only bad for the race, but for the nation as a whole



Myths about African American Students

African -American children...

- Do poorly on achievement test
- Are underachievers
- Cannot behave
- Have parents uninterested in their education
- Cannot attend college

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Proficiency Gap Group 2: African-American Students



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Improving Mathematics Education for African American Students

Challenges of African American Students

- Less access to highly qualified teachers and higher level mathematics courses
- Lack of resources (schools, nutrition, books, etc.)
- Higher instances of poverty (30% of African American students compared to 10% of Caucasian)
- Low self-esteem and negative attitude towards school result in lower achievement
- Not wanting to “act white” to fit in with peers
- Lack of parental involvement
- Lower teacher expectations and misunderstandings of behavior
- Burden of stereotypes: Fear that ones behavior might contribute to a negative stereotype
- Absence of positive role models
- Females outperform males
- High rates of special education misplacement

Strategies for Addressing the Achievement Gap

- Have high expectations and believe that all students can achieve — **AVOID ASSUMPTIONS!!!**
- Scaffold instruction from where students are currently
- Identify and build on their pre-existing regulatory skills
- Have opportunities for collaboration
- Small group instruction
- Build strong and meaningful student-teacher relationships
- Allow opportunities to engage in rigorous and complex problems
- Use achievement data to develop lesson plans (formative assessments)
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Involve family and community in students’ learning
- Include active engagement in lesson plans
- Teach skills within the context of meaningful applications.
- Vary assessment methods

What Teachers Should Know

- Teach and expect respect before trying to teach academics
- Socioeconomic factors have a significant impact on academic achievement
- African American students have a need for inspiration
- Not all African American students’ experiences are identical
- Almost all African Americans can speak African American Vernacular English and do so regularly.
- Educators must examine their own image of African Americans and make an effort to get to know the students and their culture.
- As a group, African Americans have been told that they are inferior and are incapable of high academic achievement
- The culture has a tendency for energetic and lively stimuli and a dislike for a solitary, routinized orientation toward life.