

Foreword

The Multicultural Education Framework is designed to provide a process for Albuquerque Public Schools to support schools and teachers in ensuring that our diverse and multicultural student population is able to achieve content standards. It is intended to reflect our district's commitment to embrace diversity and multiculturalism as a means to closing the achievement gap, promoting overall student success, and ensuring that all students achieve proficiency in content standards. Cross-cultural competence is essential for all students and adults to operate successfully in a diverse and ever-changing world.

The Multicultural Education Framework addresses all students from diverse and multicultural populations. This particular document focuses primarily on the needs of African American students. Currently, Albuquerque Public Schools has an over-representation of African American students in Special Education identified as Emotionally Disturbed. See attached study data.

To assist schools with avoiding overrepresentation of African American students as Emotionally Disturbed we developed a manual that consists of the following:

- "Position Paper"
- A PowerPoint to assist with staff training as needed.
- Selected articles/documents that provide information relevant to the teaching and learning of African American students.

APS principals and teachers recognize that multiculturalism and an appreciation for diversity is an important and critical aspect of what we are expected to demonstrate on a daily basis. Relevant competencies are as follows:

Teacher Competency VII: The teacher recognizes student diversity and creates an atmosphere conducive to the promotion of positive student involvement and self concept.

Principal Competency V: The principal embraces and encourages the acceptance of diversity.

Below are some "Guiding Questions" that can assist principals, teachers, and staff in engaging and supporting all students.

Guiding Questions – Engaging and Supporting all Learners

- Does the teacher strive to learn about the personalities, social and cultural backgrounds, and lifestyles of his/her students? If so, how? Talking with counselors, support staff, students themselves, parents, community members?
- Does the teacher know enough about the students to know which students can relate to instructional materials based on culture, gender, socio-economic status, etc.? If so, how?

- Does the teacher know the students and school cultures well enough to be able to add examples and illustrations that will connect to the student's lives? If so, how?
- Does the teacher show respect for all students? If so, how? Speak to them courteously, acknowledging their opinions and values, even if they are different from the teacher's or other student's opinion.
- Does the teacher believe that all students can learn and achieve in his/her classroom? If so, how? Does she/he speak to the potential of students and enables all students to achieve academically?
- Does the teacher strive to create lessons and experiences for students that help them learn autonomy, choice, and how to deal with others? If so, how?
- And finally, what is being implemented by the school principals to support this learning and work by teachers.

Albuquerque Public Schools

Position Paper

Over-Representation of African American Students in Special Education Identified as Emotionally Disturbed

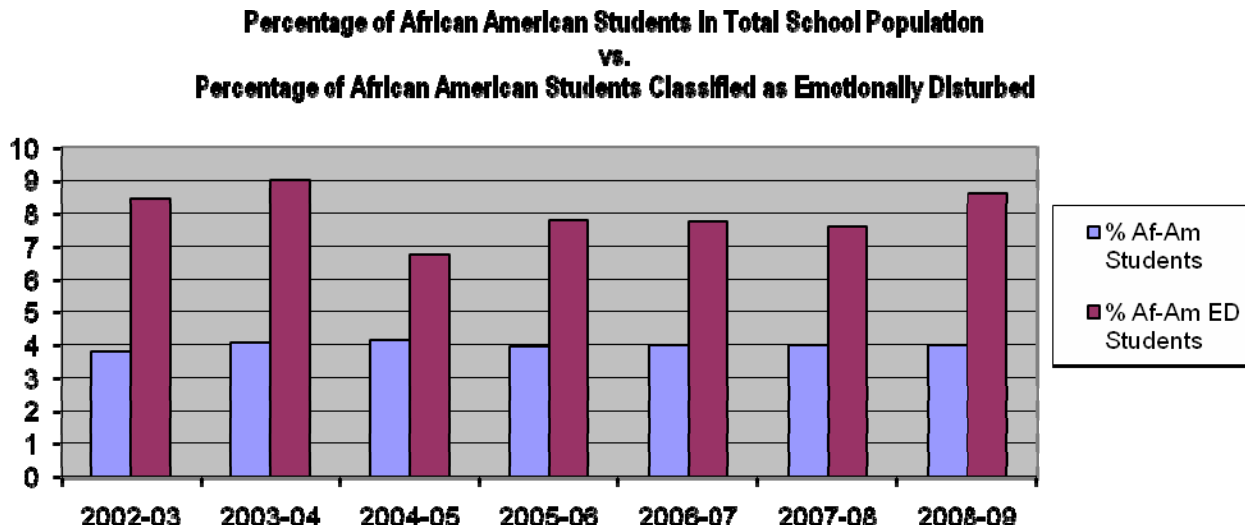
History

In 2002 the office New Mexico Public Education Department indicated to the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) that the district was over-identifying African American students as emotionally disturbed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The over-identification resulted in a disproportionate number of African American students receiving special education services.

In January, 2004 the Special Education Department initiated a task force to study and develop a plan to address the issue. Leaders from the African American community and individuals from the Special Education and Language and Cultural Equity Departments were part of the task force. These original stakeholders have been involved in the creation of this document.

Data

The following graph indicates the difference between the percentage of African American students in the total population and the percentage of students identified as emotionally disturbed who are African American



40th day

While the incidence rate of emotionally disturbed students who are African American is almost double the incidence rate of African Americans within the total student population, the New Mexico Public Education Department has determined that APS does not meet their criteria

of “over-representation.” Since the 2005-06 school year, APS has met the required targets for compliance.

Research

To the lay person, any difference between incidence in the total student population and the incidence in a special education population may appear to be “over-representation” or “under-representation.” The regulatory agency in charge of monitoring these data at the national level, the Office of Special Education Programs, has delegated the definition of cut off percentages for over-representation to the state education agencies. Not only do those definitions vary between states, but they also vary from year to year.

APS was not unique in its initial over-representation of African American students in special education (under the eligibility category of emotionally disturbed). Nationally, the incidence of American Indian and Hispanic students in the category of learning disabilities exceeds their incidence in the overall student population. Additionally, many so-called minority groups are under-represented in programs designed for gifted students. Currently (2008-09) APS is operating its special education programs with proportionate representation, according to the New Mexico Public Education Department.

It would be important for school districts to ascertain if their identification process takes the students cultural influence into account prior to a referral for special education eligibility. The criteria used in determining eligibility for special education services as a student with emotional problems must also take into account cultural differences and not categorize a student as emotionally disturbed who is exhibiting behavior that is an acceptable one in this or her own culture.

Specific to the African American culture and the over-identification issue for APS, some understanding of what is considered to be the norm for African American individuals in terms of language and social behavior is paramount. Teachers must be cognizant of these norms and how they differ from the mainstream culture’s norms. The district’s teachers have made efforts to consider cultural and language issues for Hispanic, Native American and non-English speaking students when referring students to their school’s Student Assistance Team. Many of the same principals will apply to the current issue.

Simply stated, teachers must become more willing to recognize the social acceptability of African American language and cultural patterns. Healthy identity development and self esteem are critical for African American students. Teachers who validate the cultural capital and talents that all students bring to school increase the efficacy of their teaching.

Teachers may find many of the following behaviors as disruptive and a cause for concern resulting in a referral to the Student Assistance Team. In keeping with their cultural and ethnic background, African American students may exhibit some of these behaviors. Teachers must consider the cultural and ethnic background of every student and determine if behaviors and learning styles are attributable to the student’s background. Questions about specific behavior should be directed to the parents, a community member or a representative from the Department of Language and Cultural Equity.

Communication styles:

Behavior	Example	Teacher Perception	Strategy
<p>High degree of expressiveness when communicating</p>	<p>Use of hands and a loud tone of voice.</p> <p>Once a point is made African Americans feel they are free to jump in and make their point. They do not wait for an individual to give a “sign” that they are finished talking before jumping in.</p>	<p>Loud, overly boisterous</p>	<p>Respect the call and response aspects of the cultural norms of African Americans.</p> <p>Remind the student of the classroom rules for asking a question.</p> <p>Ask the student to tally how many times he/she speaks out of turn to track their behavior and provide an incentive for progress.</p>
<p>“High keyed” as opposed to “low keyed” in their expression</p> <p>Language is very spontaneous and competitive</p>	<p>Speaking out of turn and yelling out the answers or comments.</p>	<p>Loud, over acting</p>	<p>Respect the call and response aspects of the cultural norms of African Americans.</p> <p>Remind the student of the classroom rules for asking a question or using their “inside” voice.</p>

Behavior	Example	Teacher Perception	Strategy
Animated interpersonal	Playing around, class clown behavior, or multitasking while working on assignments	Confrontational	Redirect the student's behavior and attempt to engage him/her in the class.
Arguments are used to debate a difference of opinion	Questioning authority in a loud or direct tone of voice	Argumentative, defying authority	Ask student in a calm yet authoritative tone for student to calm down and state his/her opinion in a lower tone.
View silence or the lack of participation in an argument by an individual as not listening or unconcerned	Yelling to get a response	Paranoid, moody	Positively acknowledge student's behavior in a firm manner and tone of voice
High level of spirituality	Use of religious phrases in their language	Intimidating	Respect the spiritual significance of African American culture and its infusion in everyday life. No need to address but affirm its role in the student's family and community.
Tend to view boasting as humorous and not meant to be taken seriously	Joking with others about their appearance, language, and possessions	Boastful, egotistical	Ask the student to reflect on their actions and take on the role of being picked on even in a humorous manner to elicit their thoughts and self correction
Loud or angry words or posturing	Using derogatory phrases and profanity	Aggressive, confrontational	Do not argue back or touch and ask the student to use appropriate language

Male and female interactions:

Behavior	Example	Teacher Perception	Strategy
Males and females may seem aggressive or sexually assertive verbally or non verbally	Squeezing body parts or prolonged close embrace	Sexually harassing	Discuss the behavior with the student and conduct a role play depicting appropriate behavior based on specific cultural norms
Language used to express sexual interest may be very explicit	Ex: "Hey baby, what's up? You are sure looking tight in those jeans." Or similar provocation comments	Sexually harassing	Discuss the behavior with the student and conduct a role play depicting appropriate behavior based on specific cultural norms

Classroom implications: If we do not recognize African American communication style and African American culture as valid and continue to use mainstream norms to judge the language and behavior of African American students, they will continue to "fail". Cultural variations must be accepted, and teaching strategies must consider those variations as strengths not weaknesses or something to be changed. Typically when an African American child, as with a child from other any other cultural background, attempts to change their patterns of behavior or performance they find the process very difficult and are only marginally successful.

Consideration must be granted African Americans when they behave in accordance with their cultural norms, even if it is not in accordance with mainstream norms. This is a precept that is true for any child from any ethnic group. However, it is also important that teachers help African American students understand how their behavior may be perceived by others and, perhaps, modify that behavior.

The following teacher characteristics improve the efficacy in teaching African American students. These teachers:

- Have a high standard for all students
- Use multiple determinants of students' success
- Build on the assets that students bring to school
- Provide developmentally appropriate education
- Use an active, constructivist approach to learning using thematic units and creative arts
- Use an interdisciplinary curriculum
- Incorporate social and conflict resolution skills in the classroom

Resources

Adult Perspectives on Behavior and Emotional Problems of African American Children: Fairchild, Halford H.: Journal of African American Psychology

African American and White Styles in Conflict; Kochman, Thomas

*African American Males in School and Society; Polite, Vernon & Davis, James Earl
Addressing Over-Representation of African American Students in Special Education – The
Prereferral Intervention Process; NABSE publication*

Changing School Culture to Accommodate Student Diversity, L. F. and Manning, J.

*Difference in the Communication of Affect: Members of the Same Race Versus Members of a
Different Race; Fairchild, Halford H.; Journal of African American Psychology*

Educating African American Males: Voices from the Field; Fashola, Olatokubo S., et.al.

*Social Identity, Peer Relations and Academic Competence of African American Adolescents;
Clark, M.L.*

Through Ebony Eyes; Thompson, Gail L.

**Student Assistance Team Decision Matrix
For African American and Other Culturally Diverse Students Referred for
Emotional and/or Behavioral Issues**

Consider conducting an interview with the student's parent(s) and/or a community leader from the same cultural background as the student to determine whether the behavior of concern is out of the ordinary or is consistent with the norm for his/her community.*	Yes	No
Is this student having difficulty establishing or maintaining relationships with individuals of his own ethnic group?	Yes	No
Have intervention strategies included discussion between this student and those he is having problems with regarding communication and behavior styles and the perceptions of those styles (i.e. mediation and understanding of different styles of behavior and communication)?	Yes	No
Have classroom intervention strategies included differentiated instruction utilizing the student's cultural and ethnic background as a resource?	Yes	No
Has the student's success or failure been measured using differentiated strategies that take into account the student's cultural and ethnic background?	Yes	No

Documentation of the above should be included in the student's SAT materials.

If any item is marked "NO", the teacher is instructed to incorporate or utilize the listed strategy and provide the Student Assistance Team with the results at a later date determined by the team.

*Contact the Language and Cultural Equity Department for resources www.LCequity.com