Hip Hop Culture, Culturally-Responsive Teaching and the Engagement of African-American Male Students: The Case of an Urban Middle School

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HIP HOP CULTURE, CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND THE ENGAGEMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS: THE CASE OF AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

By

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The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the dissertation has been approved in accordance with university requirements.
This body of work is seeking to help teachers recognize their charge of supporting African-American males in schools. Teacher perceptions, are important and the more trained teachers are the better equipped they will be to support and cultivate the talents of African-American males and for all students in urban schools. To all of the African-American males in schools who feel they do not have a voice and for teachers in urban schools who work tirelessly to support them this dissertation is dedicated to you.
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Last, but definitely not least I would also like to thank my rock, my mother, Kim Mitchell for her love and support throughout this process and in life. She was and still is my stark cheerleader always encouraging me, sending me encouraging text messages and picking up the phone to cheer me on and let me know that I am loved. My mother birthed me into this world at the age of 19 and has always been supportive and loving as I worked to complete my dissertation and in life.
As an African-American boy who was retained in kindergarten, I entered the first grade questioning my intelligence and fearful that I would not make it out of elementary school. I was tested in the 3rd grade and after scoring above proficient on the state standardized assessment I was moved to advanced courses. I was now relieved and believed that I could excel in school. Then, during the last week of the 5th grade, my teacher decided to have a heart to heart conversation with the class and she said:

Class….I enjoyed being your teacher in this advanced class here at the school. I would like to let you know that you will have a good life ahead of you. For my White students, you will go on to do great things to become doctors, lawyers, attorneys, and teachers. And for my Black students you will go on to become housekeepers, mechanics, cooks, and other jobs that are necessary for society to function. There is nothing wrong with that, everyone was born a certain race and Whites are meant to lead society and Blacks are meant to serve us, and that’s ok. (June 1988)

This occurrence of course deflated my perspective on my outlook of my future. It wasn’t until the 11th grade that another teacher shared her perspective of my future. She said,

“If you continue to work hard Tony you will be able to get a good job one day as a clerk for the government, you will have your own cubicle and your own phone…doesn’t that sound exciting? I believe in you, keep up the good work” (March 1994).

I was shocked beyond belief, here I am, an African-American male in an urban high school, with two gold teeth, gold chains around my neck, but an honors student holding a 3.3. cumulative g.p.a. I wasn’t sure what my future held for me, but I was clear that all of this hard work would culminate into a desk-job as a clerk. In my mind I assumed my teacher had to be correct. She is smart and very well respected by both races and ages of teachers at the school. She is the department chair and has worked at the school for almost two decades. She taught a number of urban learners and saw us graduate, and therefore she understands our potential, but the more I thought the more this troubled me. These thoughts continued with me as I began college and into my subsequent graduate programs.
This dissertation is the culmination of years of academic work and internal dialogue. The completion of this research is significant to me for a number of reasons. This work lays the foundation for me when I prepare to present at conferences and lead professional development efforts on the importance of understanding and engaging African-American males in urban schools. For me, this work is far more than the completion of a rigorous academic program. I feel my life and part of its major purpose is to support, lead and serve as a turnaround agent for struggling urban schools. In specific, to provide a voice, direction, tough love and support for all students and particularly African-American males to understand their worth, value, and strive to do their very best.
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ABSTRACT

The education of African-American males has been challenging for decades as their academic outcomes continue to lag behind despite advances made by large school reform efforts. In recent years urban schools are focusing more attention on what we know about how students learn, promising practices for education reform, and how teachers can sharpen their skills to teach more effectively (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Marzano, 2000). The purpose of this action research is to describe and understand the intersection of Hip Hop culture, teacher perceptions of African-American male students and the influence of culturally-relevant professional development on increasing student engagement. My interests include obtaining a better understanding of: (1) teachers’ attitudes towards cultural influences of Hip Hop and (2) the influence of culturally-responsive teaching strategies through a targeted professional development intervention and its impact on the classroom engagement of African-American males in middle school.

This action research investigated the instructional practices of teachers of African-American males in Washington, D.C. This study employed a survey as well as targeted professional development, to capture the intersections of African American male classroom engagement, Hip Hop culture, and culturally-responsive instructional practices. Teachers of African-American males were purposefully sampled to describe their perspective of their urban teaching experiences and participated in focused professional development sessions. This action research utilized an inquiry-based process to collect rich data. It is rooted in the humanistic tradition and which provides a thorough understanding of participants (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The design of the study was an attempt to make meaning of their experiences and how teachers interpret Hip Hop culture’s influence in the lives of their students. Awareness of Hip Hop culture will inform cultural responsive instructional planning and innovation in schools.
The study also includes a thorough review of the literature about the nature, patterns, and meaning of the educational experiences of African American males. Data obtained from the surveys, classroom observations, and the literature review were analyzed and compared to discern salient themes. The findings of the study contributes to the literature by documenting the challenges young African American males experience in urban schools and in society by testing potential supports for teachers to help them overcome those challenges. Specifically, the findings describe teacher’s perception of (1) factors that influence African American male classroom engagement (2) personal confidence and motivation in teaching (3) perception of Hip Hop culture (4) instructional practices.

Hip Hop culture has had an adversarial relationship with American schools. This challenging relationship exists because American schools are constructed around traditional white middle class norms and values (Schofield, 2001). Hip Hop culture has not been thoroughly embraced in schools as a lever to engage learners. This discourse of American education provides that U.S. schools are structured on mainstream norms, while Hip Hop culture was birthed in rebellion against the idea of normalcy thus challenging to the system (Allen, 1996; Cheng, 2005).

Teaching and learning has taken shape in education discourse as the community of practice works to find solutions to the academic achievement and graduation crises. Miller (2003) supports this claim by stating the conversation about successful urban schools should include how to move urban youth forward and to encourage them to graduate from high school with the skills that are globally competitive. Many urban youth have adopted Hip Hop culture as a method to construct meaning in their lives. This cultural influence presents a very distinct challenge to the ways teachers engage African-American males in schools, design curricular units, understand the nuances of Hip Hop culture, and are reflective in their practice. The findings from this action research and the targeted professional development supported the researcher in developing an understanding of this group’s success as well as inform education policy and practice with implications for teaching and
learning in urban schools, particularly as it relates to African-American male students. The conclusion of this action research provides recommendations for teachers, building administrators, and researchers who seek to understand the motivation of African American male students and to design professional development offerings that will increase teacher effectiveness.

**Strengths and Limitations**

Understanding the strengths and limitations of this study is important because it helps to understand the effects of professional development on the participants with rich detail and depth. Nuances and complexities can clearly be unpacked to better understand the results. Specifically, the strengths of this study include:

1. The principal researcher was an African-American male
2. Teachers were all African-American
3. All teachers have previous teaching experience
4. All teachers have similar views about the importance of educating African-American males

Understanding these strengths is important because it provides a more thorough understanding of the lives of African-American males that is often not captured in depth in scholarly works. This understanding is imperative to support teachers in understanding Hip Hop culture as an influence on African-American male school motivation. This research is my contribution to the field of urban education and more specifically to the professional development community of practice that supports African-American male school engagement. Researchers who share the same racial identification as that of the participants possess an “ingroup” advantage to understanding some of the nuances and other factors that influence an individual’s own racial group (Beaupré & Hess, 2006).
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

“Every 11 seconds of every school day a high school student drops out of school; every 32 seconds a baby is born into poverty……..A majority of children in all racial and income groups cannot read or do math at grade level in 4th, 8th, or 12th grade and over 80 percent of Black and Hispanic children, who with other minority children will constitute a majority of our population in 2023, are behind in these grade levels-if they have not already dropped out of school” - Marian Wright Edelman, The Children's Defense Fund (2010)

Throughout the nation there are pervasive recurrent themes of school failure among African-American males. Records show patterns of low credit attainment for grade matriculation, failing grades, and truancy (Hooks, 2003; Kunjufu, 1994; Yes We Can, 2010). Even more striking is that these patterns exist across all economic levels for African-American male youth. The issue is much more complex than the mounting literature of 1980s and 1990s which focused on socio-economic reasons as the primary reason for African-American male success rates.

However in recent years, Hip Hop culture and cultural responsive practices in classrooms have received increased attention by scholars arguing the positive and negative impacts of culture on African-American male school achievement. Some argue that Hip Hop culture is the catalyst for low academic achievement levels of African American males (Irizarry, 2009; Kitwana, 2002). While others argue Hip Hop culture serves as a coping mechanism and provides a sense of self-awareness for youth (Aldridge, 2003; Polite & Davis, 1999; Prier and Beachum, 2008). Culturally-responsive teaching is among the promising practices that mediate common school practices that are often are ineffective for African-American males and cultural factors, culturally-responsive teaching practices provide an effective framework to address these tensions. More specifically, cultural-responsive teaching (CRT) strategies aim to address diverse student needs by offering the curriculum in a
relatable way. CRT teachers use real-world concepts to teach academic content. Teachers also employ culturally relevant social scenarios to promote learning by making connections to the curriculum (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

**Disparities**

Focusing on African-American youth and specifically males for intervention is important for several reasons. African-American males suffer from a range of disparities from lower levels of life expectancy, academic achievement in schools, and income than other races and genders (Fashola, 2005; Hoffman, Llagas, & Snyder, 2003; Noguera, 1997; Wilson & Wilson; 1992). A series of interlocking circumstances may explain the low levels of life success for African-American males (Boyd-Franklin, 2001; Hill, 1999; Kunjufu, 1990). Many of these negative outcomes begin in the formative schooling years of African-American males where human development is the most critical. Different pressures in American culture interplay with the schooling success of African-American males.

For instance, the media creates and perpetuates negative stereotypes of African-American males that further complicate the life experiences of young urban African-American males (Cheng, 2005; Irizarry, 2009; Rose, 1994). These images permeate the consciousness of other groups in America, hence fomenting inequity in society and schools that serve African-American males. African-American males can be seen in urban communities hanging out on street corners, playing basketball or football in the middle of the street, or rapping on a street corner. The media have called this group “urban youth,” “ballers,” “thugs,” “drug dealers,” “riddas,” “soldiers,” “playa” or “goon.” These images have masked the complexity of the African-American male existence and solutions to the formidable barriers that impede their progress in school. Moreover, minority students in urban cities are often challenged with inferior schools, crime ridden-neighborhoods, and a number of other low socio-economic conditions (Kunjufu; 1990; Polite & Davis, 1999).
The Emergence of Hip Hop Culture

A response to these multiple layers of strife in the lives of African-American males, birth a resistance movement in the 1970’s known as Hip Hop culture (Aldridge, 2005; Cheng, 2005; Kitwana, 2002). As the Civil Rights Era ended, a new postindustrial economy emerged in cities, as factories closed many opportunities for working-class African-Americans were severely reduced (Aldridge, D.P. 2005; Wilson, 1996; Wilson 1987). Young African-Americans in inner-cities who lacked college degrees felt powerless, to cope with what appeared to be a bleak future. This era significantly impacted most working-class African-Americans who experienced the brunt of an economic slowdown, even more severely for African American males who had the lowest levels of employment and education success (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). This situation added complexities across gender groups which caused African-Americans males to feel they were without a voice. The Hip Hop movement empowered youth in urban cities to express themselves through music, consciousness, and language (Cheng; 2005). For African-American males Hip Hop culture plays a significant role in shaping lives by influencing their language, clothes, beliefs, and values (Aldridge, 2003; Polite & Davis, 1999).

Understanding the significance of Hip Hop culture both informs our understanding and practices in urban schools. If we understand the influence Hip Hop culture plays in the lives of youth in urban areas and harness it to positively affect schooling experiences, teachers may be able to be more effective, productive, and supportive when working with African-American males. The effect could likely include increased school engagement and improve educational outcomes for this group. Hip Hop culture often has its initial influence during the teenage years (Nelson, 1998; Perkins, 1996).

This study focused on a single charter middle school. Specifically, this study examined teacher’s perceptions of Hip Hop culture, offers a targeted professional development experience and
examines the impact of that experience on teachers’ engagement with African American males. This school was selected because of the socio-economic diversity of the male students. The school also has diversity amongst teachers related to race, gender, education credentials, and years of experience.

Five teachers were selected based upon their interest in the study. Teachers responded to a survey that served as the baseline, participated in two professional development sessions, and were observed twice and participate in a group feedback session. The professional development sessions focused on culturally-responsive teaching strategies with a particular emphasis on Hip Hop culture, “boy-friendly” instructional techniques, and student engagement methods.

The action research questions that served as a guide to this study include:

1. Does culturally-responsive and Hip Hop focused professional development change teachers’ perception of the influence of culture on teaching and learning?
2. Does the targeted professional development improve teachers’ engagement of African-American male students?

The purpose of this study was to understand how teachers understand Hip Hop culture, culturally-responsive teaching practices, and how professional development may change their perceptions and increases their engagement of African-American male students. This study sought to understand the importance of providing targeted culturally-responsive teaching strategies may have on equipping teachers to more adequately respond to the academic needs of African-American males. The more engaged African-American males are in the learning process the more likely they are to have lower levels of disciplinary infractions, increased academic achievement levels and grade matriculation (Sadler 2000; Townsend, 2000).

**Significance of Middle Grades**

To address issues that impact student engagement, persistence, matriculation and graduation rates in secondary schools it is important to understand the middles. Understanding the psyche of
students as they transition from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school is important to address issues of student engagement. The middle school transition to high school often harbors feelings of anxiousness, eagerness, and distress (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000; Morgan & Hertzog, 2001; Zeedyk, et. al., 2003). Additionally, as students transition from middle school to high school, research shows the first slip in grades often occur in the ninth grade (Balfanz, 2009). *What makes middle schools work: A report on best practices in New York State middle schools* (2007) shows evidence of a study of 10 high performing middle schools in New York to determine what factors contribute to the success of middle school students. The report found five key characteristics that make an impact on school success, (1) trusting and respectful relationships (2) focus on student’s social and emotional well-being (3) establish collaborative environment among teachers and school leaders (4) share and use data from a variety of school sources to make informed decisions and (5) shared visions and goals among teachers and administrators. Although researchers have focused on middle school issues, limited research focuses on the transition of middle school students to high school (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

**Significance of this Action Research Study**

To understand the interplay of the multiple variables in urban schools that educate African-American males, some guiding questions may help to understand their schooling experiences and what guides instructional practices. Elementary schools provide the foundation for learning and determine early engagement in the schooling process (Davis, 2003; Feagan, 1993). Although, middle schools are often the turning point for many youth as they make decision about the value of education and their perceived abilities. They either transition to high school with moderate to high ideals about their future or confused and unsure about their academic ability to be successful (Connell et.al, 1995; Wang & Goldschmidt, 2003). Studying the middle grades is important because it provides the ability to better understand the perceptions of teachers and how those perceptions
influence instructional practices and African-American male engagement. Hence, the role of schooling, teachers of African-American males, targeted professional development and socio-cultural factors are influences of analysis.

Implications of the Study

This study focused on deliberate and purposeful professional development sessions for a sample of middle school teachers. The expected outcome of this study was that teachers who would possess an increased understanding of Hip Hop culture and culturally responsive teaching practices could have led to a positive influence on their ability to engage African-American males in class.

Terminology

This study used a specific set of terminology to describe the common terms that are associated with adolescent African-American males, urban schools and professional development. These terms are not mutually exclusive, and therefore only describe common terms that emerge in the literature. Each of the terms and their respective operational definitions are described below:

**African-American** - an individual who has lineage to the United States and partial or total ancestry from Africa.

**Cool Pose** - an adopted stylized speech, dress attire, and social behavior that set some urban African-American males aside from other groups in the United States.

**Culturally-responsive teaching strategies** - an instructional model and practices that make connections between students’ home and school lives, build on prior experiences, utilize small group instruction, and view teachers as facilitators of knowledge acquisition.

**Disconnectedness** - a learner who shows a lack of interest in school material, instructional practice, and/or teacher and peer relationships.

**Expectations** - belief about (or mental picture of) the future.

**Graduation rate** - the percentage of a cohort of students who graduate during a specific time.
**High School** - a public, charter, private, or parochial school with grades 9-12.

**Hip Hop Culture** - an urban youth culture associated with R&B and Rap music and the practices of young (ages 16-24) African-American residents in urban cities and their influences abroad. The definition includes the entire urban culture which includes, but is not limited to: music, manner of dress, collective identity, language, graffiti, etc.

**Masculinity** - a gender role is a set of behavioral norms associated with a given gendered status (also called a gendered identity) in a given social group or system.

**Middle School** - a public, charter, private, or parochial school with grades 6-8.

**Professional Development** - skills and knowledge obtained through structured sessions.

**School Achievement** - the completion of an academic program (i.e. high school completion, community college, or university completion).

**School engagement** - an learner who is responsive to their teacher’s instructional practices, interactive with other school peers, and takes responsibility for their learning.

**Self-Esteem** - a personal sense of pride in oneself.

**Teacher effectiveness** - a teacher’s ability to connect with their learners through coursework and instructional practices. Student outcomes measures this ability to transfer knowledge.

**Urban** - the Census Bureau defines urban as comprising all territory, population, and housing units in urbanized areas and in places of 2,500 or more clusters or 50,000 people. (https://ask.census.gov/cgibin/askcensus.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faqid=623)
CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND BACKGROUND

The education of African-American students has been in a state of crisis since the end of the Civil War when educating African-Americans became legal (King, 2005). The motivation for studying African-American males as a subgroup is based upon their stark statistics which show high levels of risk. African-American males are disproportionately represented in special education, vocational classes, less rigorous academic tracks, suspensions and expulsions, and remedial courses (Herrera, 1998; Orfield, 2004; Polite & Davis, 1999; Schwartz, 2010; Skiba, et.al.; 1997; Townsend, 2000).

It can be argued that low levels of student interest and challenging assignments cause African-American males to become disconnected from instruction. Often in response to this disengagement, schools respond with school-based punishments. The impact of these punishments cause African-American males to fall behind in credit attainment, develop decreased levels of self-esteem, and have a stigma that is associated with being frequently disciplined and therefore cause African-American males to act out (DeRidder, 1991; Polite 1995; Sadler, 2000). By leveraging a sense of “connectiveness” that the Hip Hop culture provides, coupled with culturally responsive classroom techniques African American male students can “reconnect” in new ways and decrease the downward performance trends over time. This action research study will seek to provide teachers with cultural responsive teaching strategies targeted at engaging African-American males in new ways in school.

Outcomes

High school graduation data provides a telling picture of the education crisis affecting African-American males. Statistics show a number of states are graduating less than half of its African-American male population: 37% for Florida, 43% for Georgia, 46% for North Carolina,
41% for the District of Columbia, 39% for Louisiana, and 46% for Mississippi of its African-American male population from the 2007-2008 cohort (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). Further, evidence shows that, New York, South Dakota, and Wisconsin graduated fewer than 33% of their African-American males within four years (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). Even more compelling; Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, South Carolina, Alabama, Indiana, Nebraska, and New Mexico graduated African-American males at a rate that is lower than the national average for this group.

Research on African-American male non-high school completers suggests that without a high school diploma this group often begins to have lower self-esteem and low expectations for goals in their life. Subsequently, their aspirations are often thwarted by their perceptions of structural limitations and the denial of opportunities in American society (Brown, 2007; Murrell, 2007; Walker & Sutherland, 1993). For example, some believe that they cannot start a business, get accepted to college, earn more than other racial groups, or apply for jobs in diverse fields because they have not earned a high school diploma. There are a few cited examples of African-Americans who have not earned a high school diploma but have built successful careers. African-American males who have a multi-million dollar net worth and who lack a high school diploma include Jay-Z (Shawn Carter), 50 Cent (Curtis Jackson), George Forman, and Sidney Poitier (Forbes, 2010). Although, these individuals have achieved success without a high school diploma they are outliers in terms of the number of African-American males who are able to achieve economic sufficiency and later economic wealth without a high school diploma. Improving the self-concept of African-American males is important to bolster their motivation to work hard in school.

On a national scale, the African-American male high school graduation rate is 47% (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). Further, when discipline data is analyzed the data findings show that African-American males only consist of 8.6% of public school enrollments, however they
represent 50% of students suspended and expelled from school (Aud, Fox, and KewalRamani, 2010; Smith, 2005). These figures suggest a need for both targeted professional development for teachers, increased supports and intervention strategies for African-American males. These rates not only question in-school practices, but also the disparate implementation of policies.

The unequal implementation of discipline policies excludes African-American male students from the school setting, which further causes them to fall further behind their peer groups. Often, students who are suspended or expelled are denied the opportunity to continue their schoolwork (Townsend, 2000). This behavior further causes a decline in credit attainment, grade matriculation, and falling behind their graduating cohort. Research finds that “discipline practices are not as unbiased or objective as once thought and are in fact often culturally loaded” (Applied Research Center, 2000; Cotton, 1996; Noguera, 1997a; Noguera, 1997b). In schools, African-American males are bombarded with negative experiences, which later stunt their development. Such stunted growth impacts their ability to provide adequate support for themselves and/or family, and subsequently adds additional layers of complexity to the development of their identity (Fashola, 2005; Ferguson, 2001; Hooks, 2004).

Some authors suggest negative experiences of African-American males are due to ineffective teachers, and educators’ negative view of the cognitive ability of this group (Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007; Hale, 1982; Gay, 2000). While these challenges exist, more effective tools and strategies to engage these learners should be incorporated to increase teacher effectiveness, such as infusing the beneficial aspects of the Hip Hop culture into classroom practices. Hip Hop culture can increase students’ self-awareness and self-esteem (Hooks, 2004; Perkins, 1996). These positive effects can increase learner motivation and engagement in school curricula.
Teacher Expectations of African American Males

To address African-American male engagement in schools it is important to understand the relationship of African-American males and their teachers. There is a direct correlation between the low expectations of teachers of African-American males and the African-American male’s self-esteem (Cushman, 2006; Delprit, 1995; Grantham, 1994; Tatum, 1997). Based on the impact of these expectations African-American males often become uninterested and often uninvolved in activities that promote academic achievement. A body of research attempts to explain causalities of African-American male school disengagement. Kunjufu (1986) states that many African-American males begin to lose their zeal for education in the 3rd and 4th grades causing them to have long term problems in school. Early negative experiences begin the cycle of school disengagement and the actions of teachers are pivotal in that process. Kunjufu (2006) suggests that low expectations, low self-concepts, and early negative school experiences begin to thwart his interest in education. To attempt to explain levels of school disconnectedness several ethnographic studies have documented school factors that impact student disengagement. Other factors that attribute to African-American male disengagement include: (1) tracking; (2) differential treatment (3) labeling (4) teacher expectations (5) disparate disciplinary programs; and (6) inaccurate and inconsistent information sharing (Miron, 1996; Dei, 1997).

Dei (1997) found that school resistance is directly connected to African-American students feeling ostracized from the majority race in schools. School failure has broader societal implications particularly for low-income and under-educated African-Americans. The effects could include decreased earning potential, inclination to criminal activity for economic survival, and impacts on other quality of life indicators.

In public schools, negative experiences also occur as African-American males are more likely to be labeled as a behavior problem and less intelligent beginning in their adolescent years (Cartledge
and Lo, 2006; Hillard, 1991; Smitherman, 1977). Often researchers have found that African-American boys are viewed as physically aggressive and confrontational in language. Further, African-American males are also viewed in schools as the catalyst for destructive behavior, and they are subsequently punished with severity in schools for minor infractions (Akom, 2001; Sadler, 2000; Skiba, et al., 2002; Townsend, 2000). In comparison, White boys are viewed as vocal, articulate, and proven leaders (Ford, Grantham, & Bailey, 1999).

Such competing views of males in schools may suggest a bifurcated system of inequity. If schools are to be responsive to the contextual problems in the larger society, addressing the underachievement of African-American males is a good starting point. It can be argued that such behaviors may illuminate internal struggles of African-American males around the issues of self-esteem, emotional traumas, and coping issues. Popular culture and specifically Hip Hop culture provides an outlet for the tensions between school and home life in urban cities. For many, popular culture is argued to be a terrain of exchange between mass culture and a people’s culture.

It has been argued that popular culture is a compromised equilibrium (Gramsci, 1971). Those who look at popular culture from this perspective see it as a terrain of ideological struggle expressed through music, film, mass media artifacts, language, customs, and values. For the critical educator, then, popular culture provides a logical connection between lived experiences and the school culture for youth in urban cities (Morrell, 2002). If Hip Hop culture is viewed as a positive mechanism in developing youth identity, then why is this culture in direct conflict with schools?

Given this grim picture, it is critical that schools focus reform efforts that equip teachers in developing a repertoire of instructional tools to improve the quality of teaching in urban classrooms. African-American males need 21st century skills to be globally competitive. By providing diverse professional development offerings in urban schools teachers may be able to engage African-American males in schools. This engagement is likely to have a positive influence on school
matriculation and graduation rates. Implementing diverse strategies both meets the needs of diverse student groups and further engages them in classes.

There is an important duality in urban education and these factors have a detrimental impact on student academic success. Schools are built on middle class white norms, yet we have an overgrowing diverse population that requires school leaders and teachers to rethink the way we deliver instruction. Hip Hop culture is among the influences that have impacted the worldview for African-American males. This cultural phenomenon has influenced youth from diverse backgrounds. If understood as cultural knowledge framework teachers could use Hip Hop culture as a lens to engage African-American males through culturally responsive teaching strategies. This study will seek to understand how teachers understand Hip Hop culture, their teaching practices, and how these intersections can be used to impact student engagement.
CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand African-American male school dynamics, a review of pertinent literature on the following themes: socio-cultural factors, Hip Hop culture, masculinity, school influences, teachers, and proposed solutions for addressing the educational needs of African-American males will inform the status of this research. A review of the research provides an understanding of school related factors that influence African-American male school engagement. Understanding how to effectively engage African-American males in schools provides insights on how to create a strategic, purposeful, and explicit strategy to address grade matriculation, high school graduation, and decrease student negative behaviors. This action research does not provide an exhaustive analysis of all factors influencing African-American male achievement, however it does provide an analysis of the emergent themes that many scholars have found that contribute to African-American male success (Aldridge, 2003; Hooks, 2003; Polite & Davis, 1999).

This research is situated in current findings of low educational attainment levels of African-American males, the influence of the Hip Hop cultural movement, and their overall development (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Bush, 2000; Duncan, 1999). Public attention has focused on African-American males and for quite some time due in part by the negative media images that create perceptions about African-American males in urban communities as counterproductive to common societal norms. Further, in the last twenty years the academic achievement rates of African-Americans have heralded newspaper and journal headlines and prompted a sense of urgency in urban education (Cheng, 2005; Guy, 2004; Irizarry, 2009; Jhally, et. al., 1999).

This section is organized into twelve distinct areas of focus: (1) an overview of Hip Hop culture is presented with a discussion of its historical origins, specific characteristics, and messages (2) a discussion of Hip Hop culture as a popular culture and a description of the influences this
An Overview of Hip Hop Culture

It is important to understand the origins of Hip Hop culture and its influence in the lives of African-American youth in urban cities. Hip Hop culture began in the city of Bronx in New York by African-American and Latino youth in the 1970's (Cheng; 2005; Kitwana, 2002). While White youth typically embraced rock & roll, minority youth in urban cities believed at this time there was not a genre that spoke to their lived experiences; hence the birth of Hip Hop takes center stage. Hip Hop cultural is multidimensional, Morrell (2007) suggests there are sub-categories of music that emerged from this new genre, they include, Hip Hop cultural nationalist rap, Islamic nationalist rap, and gansta rap.

To understand the components of Hip Hop culture Figure 1 provides a conceptualization of the three major areas that define Hip Hop culture: (1) clothes and language (2) values, beliefs, and attitudes and (3) music.
Understanding the different sub-groups within Hip Hop is important in its critical analysis. Hip Hop like many other forms of music has both positive and negative messages. Gangsta rap and more recently mainstream R&B bolster messages of consumerism, sexism, homophobia, violence, sexual promiscuity, and anti-schooling messages (Kitwana, 2002; Rose, 1994; Guy, 2004). Perkins (1996) states that some aspects of Hip Hop music are dualistic;

“it provides a forward looking message to address existing catastrophic social problems facing African-Americans. Yet, it also provides anti-social messages: misogyny, homophobia, vainglorious trippings, inter-ethnic malevolence, and a moral relativism that repudiates any responsibilities for one’s own actions” (Perkins, W.E., 1996, p. 160).

Some Hip Hop scholars argue that Rap gained popularity because it is an art form that requires limited resources and informal training to perform. With negative images of African-American youth, and mounting urban pressures, children in urban cities discovered an art form that served as a vehicle for self-expression (Kitwana, 2002; Perkins, 1996). This movement was fueled by the

Throughout the 1920s to the 1960s, African American youth culture was “shaped by a national culture that was transmitted from traditional institutions such as family, church, and school” (Kitwana, 2002, p.7). Kitwana (2002) argues the worldview of the Hip Hop generation is shaped by achieving wealth, by any means necessary and this drive supersedes all other aspects of the life for many urban African-Americans. This in effect challenges the promise of American education, that hard work and perseverance will eventually yield increased social and economic mobility.

Kitwana (2002) offers several significant events that shape the worldview for the Hip Hop generation, yet there are three that have the most significant impact:

- 1970s and beyond- globalization and mega-corporation mergers which cause rappers access to global media to transmit a national urban African-American youth agenda.
- 1980s and 1990s young African-American males faced increasing rates of unemployment, and often urban African American youth turned to the underground economy for support. The 1980s crack cocaine epidemic launched a new way of earning money from illegitimate means.
- The experience of persistent overt and subtle racism in critical areas (Kitwana, 2002, pp.9-21)

As the Hip Hop movement continued to gain momentum over the last three decades, African-American males appear to have found solace in this movement. This movement has been both liberating and supportive by providing a vehicle for self-expression and development (Mahiri & Conner, 2003; Hooks, 2004). Hip Hop evolved into a commercialized cultural force beyond its
initial four elements (graffiti, break dancing, dj-jing, and rap music) to include verbal language, attitude, style, and fashion (Hooks, 1994; Kitwana, 2002; Morrell, 2002; Nelson, 1998).

Young African-Americans express their views of the world, by “attempting to create a sense of order out of mayhem and disorder of contemporary urban life” (Perkins, W.E., 1996, p.159). Others argue that Hip Hop culture carries a negative stigma of violence, consumerism, sexism, and anti-social behaviors (Nelson, 1998; Hooks, 1994; Kitwana, 2002). To understand African-American male levels of school engagement it is important to frame the discussion about the importance of Hip Hop culture in their lives and teacher understandings of this cultural influence.

**Hip Hop Culture as Popular Culture**

The twenty-first century has introduced a popular Hip Hop culture offering teenagers and young adults a vivid lens to view the world. Often researchers utilize the words popular culture and Hip Hop culture interchangeable, they suggest the Hip Hop nation is the popular identifier of youth. It is argued that Hip Hop can be viewed as, not only a movement, but as a culture. Williams (1998) suggest that there are three components to consider if a group has developed or a culture has emerged from a group, they include:

- “The ideal component of culture is a state or process of human perfection in terms of absolute or universal values.

- The documentary component of culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work in which human thought and experience are recorded.

- The social component of culture is a description of a particular way of life that expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behavior.” (p.48)

For the critical educator, popular Hip Hop culture provides a logical connection between lived experiences and the school culture for urban youth (Morrell, 2002). If Hip Hop culture is viewed as a positive mechanism for youth to develop their identity, then why is this culture in direct conflict with schools? Hip Hop culture is generally described as (1) music (2) language/clothes and (3) values and perceptions. Freire (1970) argues that raising the critical consciousness of people who
have been oppressed is the first step in helping them to obtain critical literacy. How then can this
critical literacy be examined and understood by schools? Rap echoes a voice of resistance for urban
youth and it is proliferated through artists whose aim is to bring an accurate yet critical depiction of
the urban situation to a Hip Hop generation.

It can be argued that popular music offers some of the most provocative texts in pop culture pedagogy. These works illustrate that for youth, Rap music and Hip Hop culture has a stark position in society. For instance, in 2012 Hip Hop music sold 249 million digital tracks, Pop music 304
million, and Rock 324 million (“The Nielsen Company,” 2013). These rates show Hip Hop music is
among the top three music genres in terms of overall market share. Hip Hop artists often appeal to
youth because they portray a concomitant style of language, dress, and behavior (Allen, 1996; Mahiri,
2000). Such portrayals cause many urban youth to impersonate and attempt to replicate the styles of
language, dress, and behaviors. Such replications are visible in schools and communities.

“Rap has clearly emerged as a powerful discourse that is able to effectively critique other
discourses including counter-hegemonic action in their social worlds” (Mahiri, 2000). Rap offers
youth the ability to deconstruct, challenge, and offer a counter narrative to the norms of American society. Therefore, an important aspect of this study is supporting teachers to understand the
multifaceted influence Hip Hop culture plays in the lives of many African-American male students.
Either oppositional or adversarial this voice challenges the status quo and leadership structure found in institutions of power. Contemporary youth do not merely consume Hip Hop culture, they
respond to the messages they produce and construct meanings of their own that often challenge the
norms and mores of social institutions (Aldrige, 2005; Cheng, 2005; Mahiri, 2000). Schools have
well-defined rules of engagement, and are in direct conflict and push against the influences of Hip Hop culture. Hip Hop culture has a large followship due in part to his messages, influences, and accessibility. For instance, Trainor (2002) study of online fan clubs argued that the Internet has
fundamentally altered key categories of meaning of popular culture. Issues of authorship, ownership, and access are all reconstituted by new ways of thinking about popular culture and popular literacies about power, place, and play (Mahiri, 2000; Trainor, 2002).

Many of the literacies that are developed by youth occur through new technology infused mediums. Such an infusion cause schools to be viewed as antiquated. Whether embraced fully or refuted totally, the Internet and Hip Hop culture has reconstituted how literacy is developed and knowledge is exchanged. To this extent how will schools and social institutions innovate with the ongoing influences of Hip Hop culture?

Students often mirror many of the anti-achievement messages from popular artists. Hip Hop artists are multi-racial and message many of the same anti-school sentiments. White Hip Hop artist Tom Green in his song, “Teachers Suck” has a number of negative ideas about schools and teachers:

“I like to drink, and I like to smoke,
my teachers suck because they all a joke.
They just folks that couldn't get a job,
cause they were either too stupid or just a knob.
The sh@! they teach it ain't even sh@!, I never used algebra one bit,
I never learned a thing in class I need, huh, except maybe how to score some weed.
Or go to the dance, and get laid, never taught me how I'm gettin' paid.
If it was a@!hole 101 I'm making the grade I got a future so bright I gotta wear shades.”
(Green, 2005, Track 5)

Some mainstream Hip Hop artists message that schools are irrelevant and do not offer the skills needed to succeed in life. They also suggest that diligence, hard work and sacrifice do not provide the same direct or residual effects for everyone. Therefore, they posit that since America
was established on a system of inequity to survive urban youth should “do what they have to do.” In turn, schools posture a retaliatory response because this culture boasts a deviance from the mainstream. With the tension between Hip Hop culture and schools, Mahiri (2000) provides a remedy for schools to address the intersection of popular culture and schools:

If schooling is to survive these pop culture ways of knowing and being, it too must transform. I am not advocating incorporating pop culture into schools. Pop culture works in young people’s lives is context specific within the context of school. Rather I am suggesting that teachers continue to become aware of the motives and the terms of why and how such engagement connects to students’ personal identifications, and their needs to construct personal power. Teachers should explore how work in schools can make similar connections to students’ lives, through these connects change domains of knowledge, critical societal issues, and cognitive and technical skills needed to master the universe of the new century. (p. 382)

**Is Hip-Hop Culture the Culprit?**

There is stark debate about popular culture’s role in creating anti-achievement sentiments among youth. Rose (1994) suggests the public must find a scapegoat for outcomes in urban communities; therefore, rappers and their fans are targeted as the source. This argument is multifaceted, whether rap music is viewed as the culprit in urban communities or not, it is obvious that it has an influence. Yet, for many politicians this culture has become a lightning rod for public discourse concerning crime and the erosion of the African-American community. Rose (1994) calls for focusing on the more difficult work in urban communities, which is to transform unjust institutions that shape the lives of poor people. Hip Hop culture and rap music have become the cultural emblem for African American urban youth, of which a relatively small percentage participate in street crimes. Public opinion, leaders, and policymakers criminalize Hip Hop culture and therefore creates an imaginary African-American monster (Rose, 1994).

In this fearful assumption, Hip Hop style (or whatever style young African-American men create and adopt) becomes a code for criminal behavior, and censoring the music begins to look more and more like fighting street crime (Dance, 2002; Rose, 1994). This broad societal view is
mirrored in schools when educators view the expressions of African-American males as deviant and violent rather than an expression of deeper issues and causes.

**Identity Development of African-American Males**

Hip Hop culture creates and African-American males sustain a collective identity. This culture boasts conformity to Hip Hop cultural norms, individuality in the way these norms are expressed, and resistance to particular middle-class norms, values and beliefs (Kitwana, 2002; Rose, 1994; Guy, 2004). This cultural voice enables African-American students to respond to the challenges they must face due to society’s negative conception of their racial group (Dufur, S., & Korinek, L.; 2010; Phinney, Lochner, and Murphy, 1990). This battle against societal perceptions can create negative outcomes for African-American males in schools (Bailey & Moore, 2004; Moore, 2000; Moore & Herndon, 2003).

If African-American males are lounging in the hall during class time, asleep in class, day dreaming, drawing or exhibiting other behaviors which suggest a lack of school engagement, teachers discipline them without appropriately examining the interlocking factors influencing this behavior. Student apathy as described by Wilson & Banks (1992) suggests some African-American male students are not motivated due to the inadequacies of educational systems, insufficient resources, decreased achievement opportunities, and the low expectations of teachers. As African-American males demonstrate lower levels of achievement in schools, it appears that teachers develop an immediate reactionary response to these behaviors.

However, developing interventions and probing to understand the root causes for student disengagement is a more appropriate response. Gay (2000) suggests that student grades should not be utilized as a punitive sorting system or other ranking tool in schools. Instead schools should view grades and standardized assessments as symptoms and not as causes to explain why African American boys do not make adequate progress. Often grades, and discipline data are collapsed
together to make decisions by administrators and teachers about the academic future of African-American males. Although, more than these two factors should be analyzed to determine student skill levels and the academic futures of African-American males.

Limited research offers plausible explanations about the intersection of Hip Hop cultural understanding, teacher development, and African-American male school engagement. If schools are to be responsive to the larger contextual challenges in urban communities, addressing the underachievement of African-American males is an important goal for urban education reform.

**African-American Males and Masculinity: A Struggle for Identity**

In schools, African-American males can be found standing in the hall, holding their pants up with one hand, speaking with a deeper voice tone and pitch deeper than their natural voice, making sexual advances toward girls as they walk by and other hypermasculine expressions. These actions are not only temporal, they have historical roots that can inform the understanding of African-American boys in schools. Historically, African-American male identity has been a paradox of strength and emasculation.

Over the years, in diverse ways, African-American men have responded to their shared experience of cultural alienation by adopting “certain patriarchal values such as physical strength, sexual prowess and being in control as a means of survival against the repressive and violent system of subordination to which they were subjected” (Mercer, 1994, p. 137). African-American males come to schools with the understanding of these negative societal messages. The way in which teachers interact with African-American male students and affirm positive images is important to engage these students in classwork.

In contemporary culture, African-American men are more often than not viewed as beasts, rapists, gangsters, lazy, and criminal - literally as bodies out of control – rather than they are seen as fathers, scholars, statesmen, and leaders. It is perhaps this split between the mind and the body that
marks one of the greatest threats of self-destruction facing African-Americans (Brown, 1999). With the constant struggle to find legitimacy in schools African-American males find themselves in situations where they make choices that have negative repercussions. This plays out in schools in divergent ways as African-American boys attempt to assert control, power, and influence. These actions can include sarcasm and “talking back to teachers,” adversarial dialogue with peers and physical aggression.

Guy (2004) suggests African-American males have patterned ways of “behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, and speaking that reflect an opposition and defiance to mainstream middle-class White standards.” Wiegman (1993) astutely notes that the African-American male is “stranded between the competing, at times, with over-determining logics of race and gender. On the one hand, as an African-American male within a racist social and political hierarchy, he has neither power nor privilege; yet, on the other hand, as a male within a still patriarchal power structure, he has both” (Henry, 2004). John Ogbu (1987) argues that certain cultural influences can lower the aspiration of African-American males while simultaneously infusing self-destructive behaviors. Further, he contends that community-based “folk theory” continues to exacerbate this problem by stating that based on the history of discrimination in America that hard work and dedication will not reap the same rewards as their counterparts.

Many African-American boys matriculate through schools with “hard work does not equal the same rewards” belief (Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 1987; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). This plays out in classrooms in diverse ways where teachers work to engage them in coursework. Whether directly stated or subconsciously messaged from his community this belief hinders African-American males’ interest in education. Layered with the influences of Hip Hop that may also affirm that hard work does not equal the same socio-economic mobility afforded to Whites, hence the levels of disengagement increase (Dufur, & Korinek, 2010; Stainback & Stainback, 1988). Professional
development provided by this proposed study will help teachers to both understand these predispositions and apply culturally responsive teaching strategies to utilize these cultural understandings to serve as a bridge to coursework.

In schools, African-American males experience internal conflicts with power struggles from messages of Hip Hop culture and society. Such divergent messages cause African-American males to seek a strategy to compensate for a perceived loss of power, potency, or manhood, Katz & Earp (1999) calls this posture the “tough guise, “the pose or mask of “hard” masculinity. This “tough guise” image is displayed on television, video, and film, and has been aligned with African-American male identity. This “tough guise” also includes materialism, fatalistic attitudes, physical strength and acquisition of respect through violence or the implicit threat of violence. This type of African-American male masculinity has been popularized by the large-scale commodification of Hip-Hop culture.

African-American male masculinity has been compared to Latino male masculinity which is also known as maschismo. Critics reference this ascribed behavior as hyper-masculinity. This particular type of black masculinity is defined by an urban aesthetic, a nihilistic attitude, and an aggressive posturing which has made its way into the cultural mainstream in the last two decades (Henry, 2004).

There are numerous contributing factors, however this image of African-American male masculinity has developed largely as a result of the commodification of the Hip Hop culture and the widespread presence of rap music and the “videomercials” (Henry, 2004). Many urban African-American males embrace the popularity of the urban “gangsta” and his embodiment in the “gangsta” rap of artists such as Dr. Dre, Ice Cube, Snoop Doggy Dogg, and Tupac Shakur (Henry, 2004).
Researchers suggest African-American males experience identity-crisis which is developed and supported by Hip Hop and Rap culture (Corbin & Pruitt, 1997; Martinez, 1997). This multi-million dollar industry boasts consumerism, sexism, and deviance. Guy (2004) states:

“Media representations of African-Americanness portray African-American identity and African-American culture as out of control and needing to be eradicated from the cosmopolitan urban environment. The images of thugs and gangstas on many Rap CD covers suggest not only the rebellious African-American male but also the out-of-control and dangerous African-American male. Such images become models for African-American youth to emulate and for White youth to impersonate” (p. ix)

The literature suggests that African-American males are mislabeled in schools because of their expressiveness, dress style, swaggering walk, and outlook on schooling (Harris, 1995; Majors & Billson, 1992). For example, African-American males have adopted a stylized speech, dress attire, and social behavior that set them aside from other groups in the United States; also known as “cool pose” (Kunjufu, 1986; Majors, 1986). The interplay of these various expressions of “manliness” is in stark contrast with the beliefs, attitudes, and mores of White society (Ferguson, 2001). Rice (1999) asserts that young people use clothing to express their identity and to connect with their peer groups. This expression suggests their conformity, individuality, or resistance to particular norms, beliefs, and values in society. Minority students are challenged because they must face society’s negative conception of their racial group (Phinney, Lochner, and Murphy, 1990). This stigma coupled with teenage coming of age creates an even more convoluted maturation period for African-American males.

For many African-American males “cool pose” serves as a “coping mechanism” to deal with the challenges that they have experienced in society (Hooks, 2003; Majors & Billson, 1993). For African-American males, this defensive posture is displayed through language, facial expressions, gestures, and speech. Youth are attempting to display a sense of control and masculinity over situations and institutions of which they feel they do not have true control and power over. Miller (1997) describes this posture as “fronting” wherein African-American males walk a certain way or
emanate a defiant persona as a means of gaining and maintaining respect. For many African-American males, it is the intersection of societal and personal responsibility that adds to their frustration, underachievement, and school failures (Hooks, 2003; Mincey, 1994; Polite & Davis, 1999). Researchers such as Smitherman (1977) and others argue that African-American children, particularly males, often behave in ways that are perceived as hostile and insubordinate by adults.

**Societal Influences**

Culturally-responsive practices engage African-American males by making connections to in-school and out-of-school factors that influence levels of engagement. The messages that African-American males receive in society complicates their self-perception and confidence in their abilities. The literature suggests that adolescents perceive themselves and their sense of belonging and support as important factors in their educational attainment (Feagan & Bartsch, 1993; Lerner, 1993). The African-American male’s self-concept is complicated with the competing messages that society portrays. In society young African-American males in urban cities are viewed as unruly, disrespectful, physically inept, and hypocritical. As it relates to schooling, African American males are considered problematic, stressful, and unpredictable than African-American females (Connell, et.al, 1995).

In a longitudinal study of 443 urban African-American seventh, eighth, and ninth graders (218 males, and 225 females) researchers analyzed behavioral, psychological, and contextual factors and their relationship to academic persistence to completing high school (Connell et.al, 1995). Researchers found that students who avoided risk behavior in middle school demonstrated increased persistence in high school three years later. The authors found that African-American males from middle-class homes show less educational risk behavior, but they reported that they did not feel support from adults. Further, this study found that African-American males who are from
disadvantaged neighborhoods, but who had higher concentrations of middle-class neighbors had a higher probability of remaining in high school (Connell et.al, 1995).

Student apathy as described by Wilson & Banks (1992) suggests that the lack of motivation of African-American males is due to the inadequacies of educational systems, insufficient resources, decreased achievement opportunities, and the low expectation of teachers of African-American males. As African-American males demonstrate lower levels of achievement in schools, it appears that reactionary practices are a conventional response to this group. Gay (2000) suggests that instead, student grades and standardized assessments scores should be viewed as symptoms and not as causes which explain why African American boys do not make adequate progress. Many of the causes and early warning signs for African-American achievement begin in elementary school and persist during the middle grades. Understanding African-American male school engagement and academic levels in the middle grades is important to better understand possible teacher-specific in-class interventions.

**Middle Grades**

Middle grades are often known as the in-between stage where young people are “looking for who they are.” It is often characterized by increased emotions and sporadic behaviors that are exhibited in schools. Students in the middle grades are in the human development stage theory and are labeled the latency stage which is marked by suppressed sexual desires and increased aggression. This stage, ages 6 through 12, is also characterized by an increased comfort in being surrounded by the same sex peer group (Gullotta, Adams, & Markstrom, 2000; Shonkoff, & Phillips, 2001). Emotionally, middle grade children begin to identify with intricate feelings such as indignity, pride, humiliation, and remorse (Balfanz, 2009; Erikson, 1950; Freud, 1910). Children at this age have increased levels of energy and if channeled by adults can help to develop increased self-awareness, adaption to their environment, and the development of more responsible behaviors (Balfanz,

Often students in the middle grades begin to show lower levels of motivation to perform in school and concerns about their self-concept surface during this time in their lives (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999). This is important to understand for several reasons. Professional development programs are designed on the basic premise of increasing teacher effectiveness, therefore it is important to understand what factors increase student engagement in curriculum. Increasing students’ self-esteem, motivating them to complete class assignments and homework must be a strong component of professional development to increase classroom engagement.

Furrer & Skinner (2003) argue that declines in academic achievement in the middle grades are linked to the strength of teacher and student relationships. The significance of this finding is related to this action research because culturally-responsive teaching strategies support the importance of building strong student-teacher relationships to engage children in school. Further, by providing teachers with a toolkit of how to develop and sustain strong teacher-student relationships among African-American males is important to engage these learners to achieve at higher levels.

**Strategies to Improve Academic Outcomes for African-American Males**

Scholars of African-American education offer several models to improve the academic achievement levels of African-American students. They argue that teachers who successfully educate African-Americans utilize one or more effective practices to improve academic outcomes (Thompson, 2004). The professional development of teachers is one method utilized to bolster the academic achievement levels of African-American males by increasing the skill level of teachers. The better equipped teachers are to utilize a repertoire of instructional strategies the increased changes teachers are able to make course content connections for African-American males. This study
provided teachers with intentional and deliberate culturally responsive instructional strategies targeting diverse ways of engaging African-American males in coursework.

Culturally-responsive instructional practices build upon student’s previous experiences to make linkages to course material, extends the social justice awareness and adds richness to classroom experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Understanding gender specific instructional strategies also add to teachers’ ability to engage African-American males in schools. According to Hale (2001) African-American boys are typically more kinetic and research has shown they have higher levels of testosterone than White boys, therefore Hale (2001) suggests that learning environments conducive to African-American student engagement and success should rarely use “ditto sheets, workbooks, textbooks, and skill and drill exercises.

Instead, a conducive environment for these children would include hands-on activities, projects, interrelated learning experiences, field trips, speakers, and classroom visits” (p. 178). This study provided teachers with these “boy-friendly” instructional strategies to engage African-American males in class with expected outcome of increasing student achievement over time. In addition to strategies that engage boys in schools, it is also important to understand how African-American boys are viewed in comparison to White boys. Understanding this difference is important in designing professional development sessions aimed at improving teachers’ self-awareness of culturally-responsive strategies to support African-American males is important. Polite (1995) suggests that culminating events in the lives of African American males have significant negative outcomes in their schooling and overall life’s events.

Some African-American males view schools as antagonistic, anti-social, and a strictly monitored environment. To combat this view some African-American male students appear to be confrontational to the codes and that appear to be meaningless (Skiba, et.al., 1997). Therefore this study sought to provide professional development sessions for teachers that will enriching
classroom experiences, engage African-American males in positive interactions with teachers, provide closer connections to the coursework, and increase African-American males’ levels of confidence in their academic ability.

Burris, Heubert & Levin (2006) suggest that a high standards curriculum with mixed ability grouping increases student engagement levels and academic performance. A longitudinal study found that all students increased their performance irrespective of race and socio-economic status (Burris, Heubert & Levin, 2006). However, it is known that promising academic programs for African-American males all share several characteristics: (a) male role models (b) focus on identity creation and self-esteem (c) develop academic values and social skills (d) involve parents and communities (e) a “rites of passage” transitioning boys to manhood (f) provide a safe haven from elements of city life (Cassidy & Ascher, 1992; Prager, 2011). Studying programs that serve African-American males through interventions is important to develop comprehensive strategies to engage these students in school and to understand what factors lead to their success. Unfortunately, most of these programs are often not studied empirically and are reported only through local news stories (Tyson, 2003).

Irvine and York (1995) found that African-American children have different learning styles as compared to Whites. These authors suggest, that African-American children:

- Respond to things in terms of the whole instead of isolated parts
- Are against deductive and inductive reasoning and prefer inferential reasoning
- Focus on people rather than things
- Focuses on approximation of time, space, and numbers and not accuracy or precision
- Demonstrate more proficiency in non-verbal rather than verbal skills
- Prefer kinesthetic learning environments
- Prefers afternoon learning rather than learning in the morning
Professional Development

Effective teaching is central to the discussion about the most significant impact on student achievement levels (Aaronson et al., 2007; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006; Rivkin et al., 2005). What does it mean to be a good teacher, and how should we prepare teachers are at the core of this discourse. The evidence is mixed and researchers do not agree on the best method to provide effective professional development for teachers (Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; Garet et.al, 2001; Guskey, 2003). However, there is often broad agreement that teachers should be involved in the design and implementation of their professional development. When teachers are involved in the decision-making process of professional development, the activities, outcomes, and subsequent implementation typically demonstrate higher degrees of success (Guskey, 2003).

In effect, as teachers are vested and take ownership in their development they are more likely to be engaged, reflective, and apply those learnings in the classroom. In professional development experiences teachers often seek strategies that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART). In selecting content for professional development teachers report an interest in professional development experiences that include subject-specific material, instructional strategies, increase learners, and understanding learners (Garet et.al, 2001; King & Newman, 2001; Loucks-Horsley, 1999)

Formal professional development that occurs through thoughtfully designed content and delivery is important to improving the effectiveness of the teaching corp. Additionally, professional development can also occur in informal settings and provide improved skill development. Examples include, teachers exchanging ideas in each other’s classroom, share academic resources and strategies, and seek advice and collaboratively lesson plan. Burbank & Kauchak (2003) suggests more effective professional development occurs when teachers are able to be collaborative and
reflective in the professional development process. Collaboration and feedback enables teachers to both increase their skill and confidence in their ability to deliver instruction to diverse learners (Hargreaves, 2001; Sparks & Hirsh, 1999)

Although professional development occurs within schools, these experiences are shaped by policymakers. Districts and charter leaders are able to influence professional development through policies, requirements, resources, incentives, initiatives and expectations (Knapp, 2003, p. 117). These influences can have a positive impact because it can ensure that teachers receive the same pedagogical support and school wide initiatives are met. However, these broad influences also can impact the iterative development of professional development that targets specific teachers’ needs.

Some researchers argue that professional development should not solely focus on diversity; instead the focus should be on how reflection on cultural diversity of his/her students should inform curriculum and teaching strategies (Hale, 1982; Nieto, 2008). Professional development is often successful when it is scoped, sequenced, and supported with student learning as the ultimate outcome (Guskey, 2002; Burbank & Kauchak, 2003)

**Culturally-Responsive Teaching**

Culturally-responsive teaching strategies engage students by utilizing their strengths to make connections (e.g. making connections between students’ home life and school, cross-cultural comprehension, make connections between self and the world, visualize texts in context). Students’ prior experiences, cultural knowledge, and student performance styles are used as an additive to support classroom learning (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Advocates of culturally-responsive teaching contend that culture is the cornerstone of the learning process and that understanding culture and applying those understandings to the learning environment is important to effective learning of diverse learners. Culturally-responsive teaching strategies focus on the importance of culture in shaping the worldview of teachers, how they view the profession, and their active role as a
change agent in society (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002). Culturally-responsive teachers are prepared to understand the sociocultural influences that affect student-teacher interactions and learning (Rogoff, 2003). The quality and strength of the relationship between African-American male students and teachers is important to foster key opportunities for teaching and learning. Researchers suggest the most important influence on student achievement is the actions of teachers (R.J., Marzano; J.S., Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).

Culturally-responsive teaching pedagogy embodies eight principles, they include: (1) communicating high expectations (2) engaging in active teaching methods (3) including students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (4) providing sensitivity for all cultures (5) re-shaping the curriculum to meet learners needs (6) students leading classroom discourse (7) teacher facilitating classroom dialogue and (8) engaging in small group instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Teacher effectiveness is cited as the singular most significant influence on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rice, 2003). When the principles of culturally-responsive teaching are implemented, teaching effectiveness is enhanced in powerful ways (Kennedy, 2010), particularly in regard to student motivation and engagement. Gay (2000) provides five key features in culturally-responsive teaching:

“It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum. It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities. It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles. It teaches students to know and praise their own and each other's cultural heritages. It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools” (p. 29).

Developing caring relationships and maintaining high standards for all students is the cornerstone of successful culturally-responsive efforts. A common finding of recent research of student learning highlights the importance of establishing and maintaining positive teacher-student relationships that lead to positive academic outcomes for all students. Ferguson (2002) examined 95
ethnically diverse middle and high schools in 15 districts and concluded that positive teacher student relationships were found to be a strong source of motivation and positive influence on African American males.

Several researchers provide evidence demonstrating that culturally-responsive curricula improve student achievement levels. Cohen et. al. (2009) implemented culturally-centered writing assignments focused on self-affirming values such as personal experiences, relationships and musical interest student achievement levels increased. African American students showed marked improvement, as demonstrated by year over year increase in grade point average and decreases in remediation or grade repetition.

The research of Lee & Buxton (2010) reported positive findings in regard to culturally-responsive teaching strategies, as effective practices to engage learners from diverse backgrounds in science. Similarly, Copenhaver (2001) in language arts and Hill (2009) in reading found culturally-relevant curricula improved student engagement for diverse learners. Carol Lee’s Cultural Modeling Project, used Hip Hop to improve the literacy skills of underachieving urban African American high school students. Building on the African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) students used lyrics, videos and film to master complex problems in language and literacy, improve comprehension and their ability to describe their own thinking and reasoning skills (Lee, 2006). With a renewed focus on creating and maintaining culturally-responsive classrooms, Sleeter (2011) concludes that well-designed and well-taught ethnic studies curricula will produce positive academic and social outcomes for African American students. Would a Hip Hop infused curricula improve academic outcomes for African-American males?

African-American Males and Schooling

Hale (2001) suggests that schools operate from the assumption that students begin school with the academic skill-set necessary to be successful. This misconception is problematic when most
African-American males begin school without the “readiness to learn” or “cultural capital deficits.” School achievement research suggests that approximately 16.5% of African-American males are two or more grade levels behind in school (Davis, 2003; Watson & Smitherman, 1996).

Some assert that schools operate under paradigms that serve as anti-achievement institutions for African-American males. These studies seek to explore broader answers to questions about the resilience of African-American males. Research suggests that African-American male aspirations are often thwarted by their perceptions of the structural limitations and the denial of opportunities in American society (Ruck, et.al. 2002; Sutherland & Walker, 1993). Due to the challenges African-American males face, it is difficult for them to be resilient when the future seems so uncertain. Further these factors later impacts his ability to provide adequate support for himself or his family. Some authors suggest that ineffective teachers and their negative view of African-American male cognitive ability further impacts his ability to achieve at higher levels (Hale, 1982). Others suggest that African-American males underperform because of the view they will be labeled by their peers as “acting white” (Gadsden, 2001; Boykin, 2001). This perception stigmatizes the behaviors that are associated with academic achievement such as completing classwork, turning in homework, and active participation in class.

As African American adolescents learn to exist within two distinct cultures, their developing values and subsequent behavior become indicators of their ability or inability to integrate their experiences and function successfully (Ford, 1992; Staples, 1991). African-American children enter a school system that follows different cultural norms, and mores that is in contrast to their familial and community system. Ford (1992) suggests that African American adolescents’ perceptions of social, psychological, and cultural variables are linked directly to their academic performance (Taylor, et.al 1994). Others suggest that the assumptions, perceptions, and practices in schools significantly influence the success of African-American students, particularly males. Several authors agree there
are a number of salient themes in schools that are successful with American male students. These characteristics include (1) student-teacher interconnectedness (2) positive teacher expectations (3) rigorous coursework (4) competent teachers (5) supportive academic culture (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Murrell, 1999; Tatum, 2003; Yes We Can; 2010).

**African-American Male Students and Teacher Relationships**

Student-teacher relationships are important as they shape the experiences of students, their affirmations about their abilities, and engagement in school. Various factors influence the ability of teachers to connect to African-American students in meaningful ways both in class engagement, as mentor, and support system. Tracking and offering less rigorous coursework are documented practices regarding the schooling of African-American males (Duncan, 1999). Other practices that negatively influence the schooling and classroom engagement of African-American males include:

1. Seating African-American male students closer to them than they do other students to serve the purpose of surveillance.
2. Giving African-American males less direct instruction. This contributes to the feelings of confusion and frustration.
3. Paying less personal attention to African-American males in academic situations.
4. Calling on African-American males less often to answer classroom questions or to do demonstrations.
5. Giving African-American males less time to answer questions before moving on.
6. Failing to give African-American males feedback about their responses more frequently than other students. (Duncan, 1999, pp. 175-177).

These practices can decrease confidence levels in classwork and school engagement. These actions not only affirm messages African-American males receive from the media and other areas in their lives but further cause this group to question their abilities, goals, and skill levels. Factors such as race, cultural dispositions, and worldviews influence student and teacher relationships (Boog, 2003; Stringer & Genat, 2004). For example, racial identity has been identified as a complex issue. Teachers do not understand the ideas and concepts related to racial identity; therefore, are incapable of recognizing the influence race has on students in the classroom (Cartledge, & Lo, 2006; Gay,
Ideas such as code switching, self-fulfilling prophecy and perceptions have been linked to the significance of race in educational institutions. For example, it has been argued that children who are able to code switch can make it through the educational system successfully (Alim & Baugh, 2007; Delprit, 1995; Smitherman, 1998). On the contrary, those who are not able to code switch are less successful in the classroom and have a more difficult time in educational systems (Adger et al., 1999; Delprit, 1995; Smitherman, 1998). A child’s ability to succeed in school is affected by teacher’s expectations. Teachers do not understand the child and therefore blame the child (Delprit, 1995). In this self-fulfilling prophecy, if the teacher thinks the child is going to perform poorly, chances are, he will (Delprit, 1995). In addition, when African-American children are compared to White children different perceptions exist. The African-American boy is seen as aggressive and loud. In comparison, the White student is seen as a vocal, articulate, and a leader (Ford, Gratham, & Bailey, 1999).

Early school failure breeds the feeling of disconnectedness from their environment, uncertainty about cognitive ability, and causes young African-American males to feel maladjusted (Mincey, 1994; Polite & Davis, 1999). As African-American males matriculate through school, they often experience early feeling of inadequacy which plagues their future educational experiences. Students internalize their perceived belief of teachers and often will rise or decrease in academic ability based on this perception/expectation (Duncan, 1999; Murray & Jackson, 1999; Raffini, 1993).

Ford (1996) reports that teachers tend to have lower expectations for African-American male students. Teachers who have low expectations have a far more reaching negative affect that other school related experiences. The self-fulfilling prophesy begin to cause African-American males to not believe in their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Hence, African-American males develop low expectations for themselves and for their African-American male peers.
Asante (1992) asserts through observations, inquiry, and discussions, that children who are centered in their own cultural information are better students, more disciplined, and have greater motivation for schoolwork. The premise that African-American children are low performers solely due to lack of ability is flawed. In fact, many African-American students perform poorly in school, not because they lack basic intellectual competencies or specific learning skills, but because they have low expectations, feel hopeless, deny the importance of individual effort, or give up in the face of failure (Delprit, 1995; Grantham, 1994). Moreover, Fordham (1996) contends that Black students who are successful must adopt a “raceless” persona, distancing themselves from African-American cultural attributes. Thus, the “acting white” hypothesis asserts that African-Americans do not value education, viewing academic success as the domain of Whites and thus fundamentally in opposition to African-American culture and identity.

In tandem with the psycho-social factors that impact African-American male perceptions of school, teachers also have competing realities that affect the schooling experiences of African-American males. Ladson-Billings (1994) identifies five areas that are strongly influenced by teachers’ belief systems: curriculum content and materials, instructional approaches, educational settings, and teacher education. Therefore, learning environments for African-American students can be designed to increase student achievement levels. Irvine and York (1995) offers several distinctive cultural characteristics that impacts the learning experiences of African-American children: (a) “respond to things in terms of the whole instead of isolated parts (b) prefer inferential reasoning as opposed to deductive or inductive (c) approximate space and numbers rather than adhere to exactness or accuracy; focus on people rather than things (d) be more proficient in nonverbal than verbal communications (e) prefer learning characterized by variation and freedom of movement (f) prefer kinesthetic/active instructional activities (g) prefer evening rather than morning learning; choose
social over nonsocial cues; (h) proceed from a top-down processing approach rather than a bottom-up approach (i) prefer ‘vervistic’ learning experiences” (p.490).

Pang & Sablan (1995) found that a significant number of pre-service teachers felt that they could not effectively teach African American children what they need to be taught. African American children tend to be more kinesthetic and some boys tend to have higher levels of testosterone than European-American boys. This is important to understand in design of lessons and learning centers in schools. Teachers, therefore, need to provide an active setting rather than total reliance upon seat work (Hale, 2001). These active exercises can be both challenging, engaging, and offer a unique approach to meet the rigors of high standards in classrooms. Hale (2001) states an effective instructional model for African American children should diminish the use of ditto sheets, workbooks, textbooks, and skill-and-drill exercises. Emphasis should be placed on hands-activities, project-based learning experiences, field trips, speakers and classroom visitors.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this action research was to describe and understand the intersection of Hip Hop culture, teacher perceptions of African-American male students and the influence of culturally-relevant professional development on increasing student engagement. There are four sources of data in this study collected through the Hip Hop and Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey, The African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool, focus groups, and field notes. The survey assessed awareness, understandings, perspectives and the application of Hip Hop culture and culturally responsive teaching. Survey responses were analyzed and coded for critical professional growth domains in the teaching areas, which are Hip Hop Cultural Understandings, Hip Hop Culture: In Your Classrooms, and Understanding African-American Male Students.

Through observations, instructional practices of teachers were assessed for rigor, relevance, and effectiveness.

In this study I was interested in analyzing the impact that culturally-responsive professional development has on teachers’ engagement of African-American males in schools. To this end, I was interested in teachers developing into more reflective practitioners that will inform their instructional strategies. Specifically, in this action research I was interested in understanding the influence, if any, of targeted culturally-responsive professional development has on teachers’ perceptions of Hip Hop and increasing their engagement of African-American male students. The two research questions that served as a guide for this study were:

1. Does culturally-responsive and Hip Hop focused professional development change teachers’ perception of the influence of culture on teaching and learning?
2. Does the targeted professional development improve teachers’ engagement of African-American male students?
The study protocol was submitted to Florida State University’s Institutional Review Board - Human Subjects Committee for study review and was subsequently approved. In this study five teachers participated in two professional development sessions focused on culturally-responsive teaching strategies within a six week period. An initial observation of student engagement occurred and was followed by two professional development experiences for teachers. Each professional development session occurred for two and a half hour intervals. After both professional development workshops were completed, a final observation occurred. This research approach focused on teachers as reflective agents of change in their classroom. Participating teachers were administered the Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Culture Survey to gauge their awareness and knowledge. The survey focuses on four domain areas: (1) Hip Hop cultural understandings (2) Hip Hop cultural influence: personal perspective (3) Hip Hop culture: classrooms (4) African-American male student engagement. The focus of the study was thoroughly explained to participants for clarity and understanding. Teachers were also informed about the way in which the data will be used in developing the targeted professional development workshops. After the survey was administered, responses were analyzed to determine which professional development areas required more focus. Teachers were asked to provide feedback on areas they would like to have “deeper dive” sessions. Teachers were encouraged to inform the researcher if more relevant topics are of interest, and if so those topics were more thoroughly explored with a deeper dive.

The professional development meetings were arranged at a time that was convenient for all teachers. Teachers considered common planning time, after school, or the weekend as options. Teachers selected after school as the time for the targeted professional development sessions. Table 1 describes a description of the data that was gathered to understand the phenomenon in this study and to seek to answer the research questions.
This phenomenon was best studied using an action research approach because it provided the researcher with an opportunity to test the researcher's assumptions about motivating African-American male students in urban schools. Motivating African-American male students in classrooms can best be achieved by equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills on how to deliver academic content in diverse ways (Aaronson, et. al, 2007; Adger, et.al., 1999). Through targeted professional development teachers are provided access to a wide variety of instructional techniques.
that enable teachers to deliver content through diverse learners (Guskey, 2003; Loucks-Horsley, 1999).

One of the methods of improving urban schools is through action research. Action research has assumed a greater role in the research space because it provides a practical, relevant, and timely approach to the concerns that are common among K-12 teachers and administrators. The primary purpose of action research, although less formal than experimental research, is to improve teaching and learning in a school building (Slavin, 2006; Whitehead, 1989; Whitehead & Mcniff, 2006). It is a form of experiential research that is rooted in social psychology that focuses on why people think, act, and behave the way that they do (Funder & Krueger, 2004). This is important because it provides authentic representation of the actions and behaviors of participants in the study. Action research provides a significant approach to inquiry because it enables people to come together and share experiences, worldviews and negotiate meanings and interpretations (Boog, 2003; Hughes, 2003; Stringer & Genat, 2004). The findings of this study may form the basis for expanding culturally-responsive professional development awareness for teachers and school leaders in the District of Columbia metro area. Specifically, the direct actions of culturally-responsive teachers cause improvements in the classroom, a community of practitioners, or a system (Dick, 2002; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; McNiff, 2002). Engaging African-American males in schools will likely decrease disciplinary infractions, increase grade matriculation, improve climate and culture, and increase graduation rates for this group.

**Study Design**

This study was designed to examine teacher beliefs about Hip Hop culture, their use of culturally responsive classroom practices and the methods used to engage African-American male students. The study consisted of five teachers in a charter middle school located in Washington, D.C. Teachers participated in six weeks of observations and targeted professional development. The cycle began
with an observation followed by a professional development workshop, teachers practiced independently and were observed, and another cycle of professional development, following by independent practice and an observation.

Two instruments were developed to collect information about teachers’ knowledge and awareness of Hip Hop culture, culturally-responsive teaching strategies, and classroom room engagement practices of African-American males. The Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Survey provided information about teachers’ perceptions of Hip Hop culture and their instructional practices. The survey was administered twice to measure any change in perceptions and any impact from their participation in the professional development workshops. The data from the surveys were used to organize the targeted professional development sessions on the following themes:

- Culturally-responsive teaching strategies
- Middle school intervention techniques
- Hip Hop culture integration techniques to engage students

Study themes were constructed by utilizing a three level approach. First, the researcher observed if any collective views from survey responses were present. Second, the researcher analyzed the specific expression of experiences of teachers. Third, themes expressed through culture that seem to be important (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p.193) were identified. The following themes were also presumed to emerge from survey responses:

1. Current teaching strategies- observe what teachers are currently doing to drive the professional development calendar
2. Demonstrated knowledge and awareness of culturally-responsive teaching strategies
3. Knowledge and awareness of Hip Hop culture
4. Beliefs and assumptions about African American male youth in society and urban schools
5. Perceptions of current knowledge, skills and abilities in instructional content area
6. Perceptions of Hip Hop cultural influences

**School Choice and Setting**

The charter middle school selected for this study was purposefully chosen because it provided a good blend of students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The school is an education campus that serves grades 6-12. There is a middle school and high school both co-located on the same campus. For the purpose of this study, teachers were selected from the middle school building. There are approximately 200 students, and 15 teachers on staff of the middle school. The school is made up of 42% males and 58% females. The racial composition of the school is 100% African-American. The student-to-teacher ratio is 14:1. The formal state assessment for Washington, D.C. is the D.C. Comprehensive State Assessment (DC-CAS) that assesses student proficiency in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Health. Students are assessed in grades 2 through 10.

The following statistics provide a snapshot of student performance at the school selected for this study. In 2013, 36% of students scored proficient or advanced in reading. In 2012 in mathematics, 38% of students scored proficient and advanced (http://www.learndc.org). Students showed an average daily attendance of 83%. As it relates to teacher quality, 92% of teachers are deemed highly-qualified and is defined as, “a teacher possessing a bachelor's degree, subject matter expertise and certification in the area he or she teaches” (http://www.learndc.org). Twenty-eight percent of students are identified as special education students. Discipline data show 40% of students were suspended one or more days in 2013. The middle school does not have any English Language Learners. There are 83% of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch (http://www.learndc.org). These characteristics are important because I am interested in how targeted professional development can increase teachers’ awareness and engage African-American male students from moderate to low academic proficiency levels.
Studying the middle grades is significant because the action research can provide a better understanding of the challenges and plausible solutions for improving teachers’ cultural awareness and engagement of African-American males right before they enter high school and would be at risk for further alienation from education. The school emphasizes problem solving, critical thinking, college, and career readiness in its instructional model. This school was an excellent choice for the study because of the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of African-American students, a teaching staff with various levels of educational backgrounds and prior teaching experiences, and this study was viewed as important by the administration and teachers.

Selection of Participants

Teachers were chosen through purposeful sampling. The selection plan for teacher participants for the study occurred in two phases. First, the principal sent the request to participate in the study as an announcement to all middle school teachers at the selected school site. Next, the teachers that responded to the request were selected by the researcher because they met all four criteria; (1) willingness to participate (2) interest in targeting professional development (3) instructor of five or more African-American male students (4) teachers from different content areas. If more teachers expressed an interest than the study design, five teachers would have been selected at random. Once all interest surveys were submitted, exactly five teachers expressed an interest in participating. Teachers participated in two structured classroom observations and two professional development sessions during a six-week period.

An information workshop was conducted to provide an overview of the study and to solicit teacher commitment to participate in the study. All participants were asked to share their instructional experiences for the purposes of the study. Prior to the data collection, a letter documenting the research purpose was sent to each participant. All participants were assured their
anonymity would be maintained in all study reports. The names of the participants were suppressed and pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality.

The professional development sessions focused on Hip Hop cultural awareness, culturally responsive teaching strategies, instructional strategies for boys, and active teaching methods. Figure 2 provides an overview of the professional development workshops:

**Table 2. Professional Development Sessions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development #1</td>
<td>2.5 hours</td>
<td>Intervention #1 (targeted professional development on culturally-responsive teaching strategies to engage African-American males)</td>
<td>Targeted culturally-responsive professional development addressing the following four areas:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Hip Hop Culture 101</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Instructional strategies for boys Part I</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Communication of high expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Active teaching methods in a culturally-responsive classroom Part I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development #2</td>
<td>2.5 hours</td>
<td>Intervention #2 (targeted professional development on culturally-responsive teaching strategies to engage African-American males)</td>
<td>Targeted culturally-responsive professional development addressing the following four areas:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The teacher serves as a facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Reshape the curriculum to respond to learners needs in a culturally-responsive classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Instructional strategies for boys Part II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Active teaching methods in a culturally-responsive classroom Part II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Small group instruction and Academically-Related Discourse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professional development enables teachers to be exposed to new information and techniques that can improve instructional efficacy. Teacher effectiveness is often studied using a variety of indicators such as: teacher credentials, years of experience, opportunities to be coaches instructionally, class size, homogeneous population of students, and student performance on standardized assessments (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006). Often, researchers use an experimental and quasi-experimental design to better understand effective teaching through value-added measures. In contrast, this researcher is concerned about how culturally-responsive teaching practices impact African-American male students’ level of engagement in schools. Although many researchers have utilized different methodologies to examine the impact of teaching on student outcomes, this researcher believes the depth of meaning is better achieved through qualitative methods.

Creswell (2006) states that qualitative inquiry should be considered when the researcher’s intent is to describe what is occurring in a specific area of the study. Quantitative analysis provides a picture that is telling in terms of achievement of African-American males; qualitative analysis provides rich detail that can enable true reform to occur by better understandings the meanings behind the data. It is important to understand teachers’ strategies for engaging African-American male students because this awareness both informs practice and professional development efforts that may have a positive impact on long-term student persistence, matriculation, and subsequent graduation. I am interested in better understanding how teachers utilize culturally-responsive teaching strategies to engage students and if this makes a difference by increasing student involvement in classroom lessons. This inquiry is best answered through qualitative inquiry because it describes a situation, proposed interventions, and observed outcomes of the intervention (Stainback, S. & Stainback, 1988; Silverman, 1999). Qualitative researchers are concerned with understanding the way in which people construct meaning.
Acknowledging Bias

As an African-American man studying African-American teenagers, it is important that I recognize my biases and perspectives. This understanding is important because it informs my observation and analysis. The benefit of action research is the awareness of the researcher as an active participant in the study.

My understanding of what it means to be an African-American male in an urban public school system served as a positive lens as I examine the engagement levels of students in this study. I was able to decode nuances of African-American male behaviors in the classroom observations. I am also aware of my biases about social justice issues, gender influences, and societal perceptions of African-American males. My biases include my belief that institutional racism exists and that it impacts many aspects of the schooling experiences for African American-males. I also believe that African-American males who possess more outgoing personalities and/or higher levels of masculine behaviors will be treated differently than males who do not. For example, I believe males who are more vocal and command more attention will receive more help and support from teachers than males who are more quiet and subdued.

I also believe that males that demonstrate more masculine behaviors: deeper voices, a walk with confidence, nuanced non-verbal movements often associated with males, and the use of statements confirming male stereotypes will receive more attention from teachers. I also believe consciously or unconsciously that the majority of female teachers believe female students have a higher propensity to excel in schools than males. These beliefs stem from my K-12 experiences as a student and my observations as a teacher and an administrator. Last, I believe that African-American males internalize the images they see of themselves in popular media.

Understanding these biases is critical for several reasons. It is important to be transparent to the reader of this body of research about the assumptions and biases that I bring to this work. The
biases listed are important because they fuel my passion for this work. I am interested in understanding how can we motivate African-American males in urban schools to strive to be their best, take homework seriously, see a direct connection between education and upward economic mobility, and to appreciate the schooling process. These biases have shaped me as an urban school administrator and as scholar of educational leadership. How we prepare our teachers to provide high quality instruction in schools is also at the center of my professional passions. Teachers in urban schools need the tools to be able to effectively impact student learning, levels of engagement and excitement about the schooling experience.

In approaching this work it was important that I utilized a lens that would more accurately assist in answering the research questions that are at the core of my passions. After careful review of qualitative research approaches, the approach that appeared to be the best fit for this action research is a living educational theoretical construct. This epistemology is described as explaining how my educational influences on students, programs and schools have created my social formations, meanings, and purpose in my life (Whitehead, 1989; Whitehead & McGriff 2006). The purpose of a living educational theoretical construct is to support school leaders in understanding and utilizing past experiences, current understandings, and it is a continual process of reflection. This reflective process enables leaders to make decisions as the leader learns and develops new understandings.

Urban education reform is an evolving discipline as teachers and school leaders struggle to implement strategies to effectively support students in achieving academic goals. The educational theoretical construct is important in understanding my growth as an educational leader because it centers on the idea that what I do professionally is rooted in my personal values. It asks two central questions: (1) How am I improving what I am doing? (2) How do I improve my practice?

When a living educational theoretical approach is used it enables the researcher to hold their life as a question of inquiry by producing explanations of the educational researcher’s influences.
(Whitehead, 1989; Whitehead, J. & McNiff, J., 2006). This approach will allow me to provide context to my work in education reform by seeking to live my personal values that give my professional life meaning and purpose.

Over the last decade there has been a laser-like focus on teaching practices and highly effective teachers as the cornerstone of urban school reform (Duncan, 2007; Cartledge & Lo, 2006; Gay, 2000). Early in my teaching career as an alternative education teacher, I recall student evaluations where students commented about my excitement for teaching, my ability to get students excited about the content, and often times students would comment that I was the best teacher they ever had in their schooling experience. These comments caused me to have mixed thoughts about the topic of good teaching. I did not complete a formal or alternative teacher preparation program and consequently was not certified during my first two years of teaching. Certification was not required in Florida for alternative education teachers, therefore teacher candidates where hired based upon their propensity to develop into a good teacher.

*No Child Left Behind* set the bar through its standard for highlight qualified teacher that placed a premium on certification. Since my early teaching years I often wondered, what were the salient teaching strategies that I used that worked for diverse learners? As a novice teacher who was provided standards, a stack of books, and attendance sheets, I often thought about how was I able to engage my students to complete high school credits or earn their General Educational Development diploma. After some reflection, I surmised that the key factors that engaged my students in the content included: (1) providing students with challenging content while supporting them as they work towards finding the correct answers (2) presenting ideas holistically by providing ancillary material to help them build background knowledge and context (3) incorporating humor in the classroom to demonstrate that learning can be fun (4) allowing students to work in groups and independently to enrich the learning process and (5) using diverse methods to deliver content.
As I work with teachers, school leaders, and students in diverse schools in the Washington, D.C. metro area I have noticed a wide continuum of student engagement levels irrespective of socio-economic and racial composition of schools. This action research focused on teaching practices as they relate to student engagement at a middle school in Washington, D.C. that serves diverse learners.

The findings from this action research will inform the design and implementation of professional development activities that can engage African-American males in coursework. Engaging African-American males is important because it can improve course matriculation, academic achievement, and graduation rates. The findings of this study can have a direct relationship to my work in the District of Columbia and future roles. African-American males are in a crisis in the District of Columbia. Daily school-age African-American males are hanging out at the metro stations, sitting on street corners or just traveling throughout the city alongside adults.

The problem with this situation is that the people that I see are school-age African-American young males walking through the city during school hours, why are they not in school? Why do they not want to go to school? Prior to 2006 the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department would detain students who were truant, however due to the increase in crime and the lack of success in decreasing truancy the police force made a policy decision to shift resources and attention to other public safety issues.

This work is significant for a variety of reasons. Equipping teachers with the tools to successfully engage African-American males is one factor that can support youth in dedicating their attention and practice towards their schoolwork. The outcome of this study will support the working committee that I chair to create professional development workshops for middle and high school teachers in the District of Columbia. Professional development is a clear intervention that if implemented and monitored can have a meaningful impact on teachers’ ability to engage African-American males.
American males. Through direct inquiry I am able to make clear assumptions, observations, and self-reflect on my intervention strategies (McNiff, 2002; McNiff, 2000; Whitehead, 1989).

**Data Collection Instruments**

In this study two instruments were used to collect data (1) The Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Survey and (2) The African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool. The Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Student Engagement Survey and Observation Tool were modeled after two distinct assessments systems. The questions and the scales were adapted from both assessments to collect data for this action research, the two assessment tools that were used as a model are: (1) D.C. IMPACT Guidebook, Grades 1–12, General Education Teachers without Individual Value-Added Student Achievement Data, The District of Columbia Public Schools Effectiveness Assessment System for School-Based Personnel and (2) The Coalition of Essential Schools Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Tool.

The D.C. IMPACT is designed to measure effective instruction in D.C. Schools. The tool measures a teacher’s success on three domains: Plan, Teach, and Increase Effectiveness. This framework and subsequent assessment was created during the 2008-2009 academic school year and was implemented in 2010. The framework includes nine indicators to gauge teacher quality through curriculum and instructional practices. The second tool, The Coalition of Essential Schools Culturally Responsive Pedagogy instrument focuses on assessing teachers’ ability to understand student’s cultural knowledge, performance styles of students, and prior knowledge to develop relevant and appropriate teaching strategies. This tool has nine indicators to gauge teacher’s level cultural responsiveness.

The Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Survey is a survey that gathers information about teachers’ perceptions of Hip Hop culture and their instructional practices. The survey was administered at the beginning and at the end of the study to determine if there is any
impact of the professional development on teachers’ perceptions of Hip Hop and culturally-responsive pedagogy.

The Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Survey and the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool were created for this study to measure the levels of African-American male coursework engagement and culturally-responsive teaching practices. The Culturally Responsive Teaching and the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool was designed to capture the observable behaviors of teachers and to determine the level in which teachers implement strategies that were presented in professional development sessions. The specific outcomes from the professional development are aligned with the domain and skill areas of the observation tool. Specifically, the Culturally Responsive Teaching and the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool measures the level by which teachers implement their learning from the professional development sessions of this study with fidelity.

The professional development workshops were aligned to the behaviors that were measured by the Culturally Responsive Teaching and the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool. These instruments provide a solid foundation to address teacher practices, student engagement, and culturally-responsive strategies that are used in classrooms. These instruments are located in the Appendix.

**Data Collection Timeline**

The data collection occurred in a six week timeframe. The first step was to obtain preliminary data from the survey about teachers’ perceptions of Hip Hop culture, their classroom practices, and student engagement strategies. The following table provides details of the data collection methods and interventions for this study:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Data Collection Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Action item #1: Goals and Survey</td>
<td>Create a baseline</td>
<td>Meet with teachers to discuss an overview of the research and discuss goals. Administer Culturally-Responsive Teaching &amp; Hip Hop Survey instrument</td>
<td>Culturally-Responsive Teaching &amp; Hip Hop Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action #2: Survey Analysis</td>
<td>Determine salient themes</td>
<td>Analyze and code results of the survey to determine salient themes inform the professional development sessions</td>
<td>Culturally-Responsive Teaching &amp; Hip Hop Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action #3: Observation #1</td>
<td>Observe instructional practices and levels of student engagement prior to professional development</td>
<td>Classroom observations will be conducted to gauge teacher’s instructional practices, and African-American male student engagement levels in their classrooms. The Coalition of Essential Schools Benchmarks and Practice and the CES Classroom Observation Tool (Adapted from the Peer Learning Lab Project, PEBC, 2006) The African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool will be used to assess teacher practices and to observe African-American male engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Action #1: Reflection</td>
<td>Teachers to reflect on their teaching and student engagement</td>
<td>Discuss teacher feedback on their perceptions of the Pre-Observation. Provide formal feedback from the Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Student Engagement Observation Tool</td>
<td>The African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action #2: Reflection and Professional Development Planning</td>
<td>To plan professional development</td>
<td>Utilizing the feedback from the analysis of the Culturally-Responsive Teaching &amp; Hip Hop Survey and the Pre-Observation refine, and retool the professional development if necessary</td>
<td>African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool and the Culturally-Responsive Teaching &amp; Hip Hop Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 -continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Data Collection Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Week 3 Professional Development Action** | Action #1: Professional Development #1 | Intervention #1 (targeted professional development on culturally-responsive teaching strategies to engage African-American males) | Targeted culturally-responsive professional development addressing the following four areas:  
  - Hip Hop Culture 101  
  - Instructional strategies for boys-Part I  
  - Culturally responsive teaching worksheets: Communication of high expectations  
  - Culturally responsive teaching methods | Professional development worksheets and videos |
| **Week 4 Professional Develop. Planning** | Action #1: Teachers Practice | Teachers Practice | Teachers will practice instructional strategies | None |
|                                   | Action #2: Professional Development Planning | To plan professional development | Utilizing the feedback from the analysis of the Culturally-Responsive Teaching & Hip Hop Survey and the Pre-Observation refine, and retool the professional development if necessary | African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool and Culturally-Responsive Teaching & Hip Hop Survey |
| **Week 5**                        | Action #1: Professional Development #2 | Intervention #2 (targeted professional development on culturally-responsive teaching strategies to engage African-American males) | Targeted culturally-responsive professional development addressing these areas:  
  - Culturally responsive teaching strategy worksheet: The teacher serves as a facilitator  
  - Culturally responsive teaching strategy worksheet: Reshape the curriculum to respond to learners needs in a culturally-responsive classroom and small group instruction  
  - Instructional strategies for boys-Part II | None |
The following weekly action research study plan provides details that describe the scope and sequencing of events that occurred throughout this study.

**Planning Phase**

A meeting was scheduled one month prior to the start of the research to discuss the study and to answer questions teachers may have about the study. Teachers were asked to participate in

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**Table 3-continued.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Data Collection Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Week 6 Observation #2 and Final Group Feedback** | Action 1: Observation #2 | Observe instructional practices and levels of student engagement after professional development | ▪ Observe the instructional practices of teachers  
▪ Observe students perceived levels of engagement | The African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool will be used to assess teacher practices and to observe African-American male engagement in teachers classrooms |
| | Action #2: Post-Survey | Create a baseline | Meet with teachers to discuss an overview of the research and discuss goals. Administer Culturally-Responsive Teaching & Hip Hop Survey instrument | Culturally-Responsive Teaching & Hip Hop Survey |
| | Action #3 Final Group Feedback Session & Reflection | Determine salient themes, learnings and reflection. Teachers discuss next steps of their professional growth | Teachers will be provided a series of open-ended questions to reflect on their professional development experiences and their ability to engage African-American male students. Two weeks after the Final Group Feedback Session respondents will receive a composite of their responses. | The African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool and Culturally-Responsive Teaching & Hip Hop Survey |
two professional development sessions that occurred for two and half hour intervals per session.

Teachers were initially observed once before the first professional development. Teachers were observed again after both professional developments were completed. This format allowed teachers an opportunity to practice the strategies learned from the professional developments.

The targeted professional development sessions had three primary anchors: (1) culturally-responsive teaching strategies (2) middle school intervention techniques (3) Hip Hop cultural integration techniques to engage students in coursework. Information from the survey was incorporated into the refining of the professional development sessions. After a thorough review of the survey, knowledge gaps were identified and professional development sessions were moderately revised to provide more focus in certain areas based upon survey feedback. The aim of this action was to encourage teachers to be flexible, create a stronger learning community among teachers, and to excite teachers about the variety of instructional strategies that are available to them. Professional development is a careful balance of delivery of new material, building of existing knowledge and strengths, and making modifications as necessary.

**Week 1: Goals, Survey, and Pre-Observation**

**Action Item # 1 (Goals and Survey):** Goals were provided, expectations were shared, and questioned were answered for teachers. Next, the Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Pre-Survey was administered.

**Action Item #2 (Survey Analysis):** Surveys were analyzed to determine salient themes

**Action Item#3 (Observation #1):** The initial observation was conducted to determine teachers’ current teaching practices. This observation occurred without a prior professional development session or instructional coaching. During the observation I used the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool to determine the extent to which teachers applied these strategies prior to targeted professional development.
Week 2: Reflection and Professional Development Planning

Action Item #1 (Reflection): Teachers were asked to reflect at the beginning of the next professional development about three areas, how they perceive (1) their ability to apply culturally-responsive teaching strategies to their lesson content (2) their ability to engage African-American male students (3) their strengths and opportunities for growth. Teachers met at the school to discuss the reflection and professional development planning. I wrote teachers group responses on chart paper. This process enabled teachers to have ownership in the professional development planning.

Action Item #2 (Reflection and Professional Development Planning): Teachers were asked to provide feedback on the design of the initial professional development, and additional supports they need to further engage African-American males.

Week 3: Professional Development #1

Action #1 (Professional Development): Based on feedback from the reflection and the information obtained in the planning stage the first professional development was refined and conducted.

Week 4: Teachers Practice and Professional Development Planning

Action Item #1 (Teachers Practice): Teachers practiced for one week without professional development, coaching, or observation.

Action Item #2 (Professional Development Planning): Modifications were made to the professional development plan based on the feedback of teachers.

Week 5: Professional Development #2 Action

Action Item #1 (Professional Development #2). Teachers participated in the final professional development session.

Week 6: Post-Observation and Final Feedback Session

Action Item #1 (Observation #2): Teachers were observed to determine their ability to implement culturally-responsive teaching strategies to engage African-American male students.
Action Item #2 (Post-Survey): The Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Post-Survey was administered. This post-survey determined if their perceptions of Hip Hop and its influence had changed.

Action Item #3 (Final Feedback and Reflection): Teachers were asked to reflect on their experiences, their successes and challenges in applying culturally-responsive teaching strategies to engage African-American male students. In this final meeting teachers reflected on the entire process. This meeting focused on changes in perceptions, beliefs, and instructional practices. Teachers were provided a series of open-ended questions to chronicle their experiences and provide additional feedback. The questions that were asked included:

1. In what ways do you implement culturally-responsive teaching strategies in your classroom?
2. How do you implement culturally-responsive teaching strategies in your classroom?
3. How do you view African-American male classroom engagement levels?
4. In what ways did the professional development workshops influence your instructional strategies?

**The First Professional Development Workshop**

The first professional development session was divided into four areas of focus (1) Hip Hop Culture 101 (2) Instructional strategies for boys Part 1 (3) Communication of high expectations and (4) active teaching methods in a culturally-responsive classroom Part I. The researcher approached this initial professional development with baseline information about the teachers’ academic background, experience in the classroom, and grade and subjects taught. The pseudonyms of the five teachers are: Ramona, Brenda, William, Gary, and Reeva. Collectively teachers were most engaged about the topic of Hip Hop culture and instructional strategies for boys. Teachers shared thoughts, opinions and impressions about Hip Hop culture and all teachers shared a collective belief
that Hip Hop culture began as a societal movement for African-Americans in urban communities in the 1970’s. They also believe the culture has been derailed from its initial purpose and the popular Hip Hop music that students listen to today are misogynistic, boosts consumerism, and negative reflections about life. To reflect this collective view, Gary states:

The music students listen to today is garbage, and it's ridiculous. It doesn't support moral values, most of the males are down low gay and try to push being gay as normal. The music didn’t use to be about all that stuff. It use to be about community uplifting, supporting each other as Black people and reaching your goals. I don’t want to call this current music Hip Hop we need to come up with some other term. As a culture our youth has lost their way and I don’t know how to help them because they are so far gone.

Based on these views teachers were divided about whether the cultural influences of Hip Hop culture could be integrated in the classroom as a teaching strategy. Gary does not believe Hip Hop culture should have a mainstay in public schools. However, William, Reeva, Ramona and Brenda (participants will be described) believe that introducing students to the positive aspects of the culture could deem beneficial as teachers seek to make connections with African-American males. Ramona and Brenda state they integrate Hip Hop music, gestures, and other cultural influences in their classes to engage learners. Ramona provides this comment to echo her belief:

I mean I definitely understand what my colleagues are saying. But, I guess because I’m somewhat younger than the group I grew up to this stuff. I am Hip Hop, I live in the hood, I shop in the inner city, and I teach in an inner city school. The same thing the artists sing about and what these students experience is my life. I grew up like them, the only thing that is different is that I have a college degree and I am a teacher. I can relate to my students and I think that’s a good thing. I’m not saying that the other teachers can’t relate. I just like Hip Hop
culture and I listen to the same things they listen too. We listen to Hip Hop music in my classroom sometimes and have deep conversations about the artists and their views.

Most teachers shared that they believe that they effectively communicate high expectations to students. However, Gary shared that he does not always communicate his high expectations as clearly as he would like. Teachers had a genuine interest in understanding instructional strategies for boys and active teaching methods. The professional development focused on brain-based theory about the male development and how that is shaped in schools.

The professional development also provided information about researched based methods to actively engage boys. Collectively, teachers recognized some of these behaviors and responses from their male students. However, all of them agree they were not aware that a body of research exists dedicated to how boys learn. Teachers has a number of probing questions as they appeared to want to better understand how these instructional strategies would look in a classroom. Brenda was excited to learn and share about boy-friendly instructional practices; she shared:

This is very interesting I can definitely see some of these things in my male students. This is causing me to think of a couple things I might try in my class. As you saw Mr. Johnson I have a very interactive class and try to make sure all voices are heard. But, I do think I need to push some of my quieter male students more. I believe all of them can do the work, they just need different ways to look at the work and help.

**The Second Professional Development Workshop**

After the first professional development teachers were observed, and had an opportunity to apply what they learned. The second workshop focused more on providing teachers with a framework demonstrating how a culturally-responsive classroom is different than a traditional classroom. This workshop focused on teachers’ ability to reshape the curriculum and serve as facilitator of learning rather than a teacher-focused classroom. Gary and Reeva shared that their
students lacked a lot of the basic skills whereby causing group work and student lead work to be difficult and even impossible, Reeva states:

I definitely think it is important as a teacher to engage students in assignments in different ways. However, we have to be honest about our kids. They lack basic skills, most of them can't read well, process information, or even think for themselves. We struggle to get our kids to understand one syllable words it would be impossible to put them into groups and expect they would know what to do or to even take the assignments serious.

Gary believes that student grouping in a culturally-responsive classroom is challenging as well. However, Reeva believes the challenge is based on student ability and Gary believes the problem is a lack of student motivation, he states:

I know what is best for my students, if they got into groups they would be all over the place and not focused. It is our job as teachers to provide the lesson and for students to pay attention and learn. I will provide them all of things they need to know, and it is up to them to want it and receive. I’m not going to be a babysitter to them, I am a teacher. These students nowadays do not take their education seriously. For the few that do I will help them get there, and for those that don’t I will not waste my time if they are not serious.

Data Analysis

Data were collected in three ways – surveys, classroom observation and informal professional development observations. Data was collected by administering a pre- and post- survey to gather information about teachers’ Hip Hop cultural understandings, personal perspectives of Hip Hop culture, Hip Hop culture’s role in classrooms, and African-American male engagement strategies. Two classroom observations provided information on teachers’ engagement of African-American male students. Classroom observations were also used to make modifications to professional development sessions to ensure the needs of teachers are being met. In addition, information from
professional development sessions provided feedback loops to ensure that there was an ongoing
dialogue about what areas teachers were interested in addressing for their continuous improvement
(Dick, 2002).

**Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Culture Survey**

This survey was used to obtain information about teacher’s awareness of Hip Hop Culture and
culturally responsive teaching strategies. The survey was divided into four theme areas: Part 1: Hip
Hop Culture: In Your Classroom, and Part 4: African-American Male Students. Each section asked
participants questions on a Likert scale. Weights were assigned to each survey response to
determine a score for each item. Each response was assigned weights of 1 to 5. Responses provided
information related to a high level of awareness or knowledge designated with a score of 5, and the
gradation decreased from that point down to 1 for the decreased level of awareness of knowledge
related to the response. The mean score for each survey section (e.g. Part 1) was calculated, and
compared to the mean score for post survey scores.

The constant comparative method was used to develop scales. This method suggests that the
researchers focus is to find patterns and present those patterns. In presenting these patterns it is
important to preserve the authenticity of the study participants’ voice (Glasser & Strauss, 1967;
Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). As such, through a thorough analysis of the Culturally Responsive
Teaching and Hip Hop Survey each section of the survey was analyzed using the constant
comparative method to determine cut points for the scale (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

The constant comparative method yields that there are five distinct groups (cut points) in this
action research. Categories emerge from the measuring teachers’ knowledge and awareness and from
the attitudes that the researcher identified as significant to this action research inquiry focus (Glaser
and Straus, 1967). To investigate the phenomenon in a manner germane to the literature I created
five interval groups within each section of the survey (Parts 1-4) and then compared these groups to extant research in an effort to identify cutoff points. This method provides inductive reasoning to categorize, code, and group categories and to make connections (Glaser and Straus, 1967).

These scales measured knowledge, awareness, opinions, behaviors, and attitudinal tendencies. The survey items ranked from 1 to 5 (strong relationship to the item’s question) to a 1 (the weakest relationship or agreement to the question). The scales are used to compare participants. A narrow dispersion of the data suggests respondents have greater agreement between responses than a wider dispersion.

Scores are useful in analyzing survey responses because it assigns a value to the teacher’s response which makes interpreting the data more meaningful. This is also valuable because the score supports the understanding of the awareness levels of respondents to each set of questions. Awareness levels are not indicative of a positive or negative outcome. Rather awareness levels provide information about each teacher’s knowledge or experience in each area that is measured by the survey item.

**African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool**

The observation tool was designed with five domain areas: Domain 1: Engage Students at all Learning Levels, Domain 2: Provide Students Multiple Ways to Move Toward Mastery, Domain 3: Respond to Student Understanding, Domain 4: Build a Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom and Domain 5: Students Actively Engage in Assignments to Improve Learning Outcomes. Each domain area was evaluated based on evidence and observable behaviors during the classroom observation. The evidence and observable behaviors are scored on a 1 to 4 scale with 1 being limited evidence of use and 4 being exemplary evidence. The scale gauges the degree to which each activity in the domain area is implemented with fidelity. The following levels are used to measure degrees of domain implementation:
Level 1: Limited or no evidence of implementation

Level 2: Evidence of emerging implementation

Level 3: Evidence of consistent implementation

Level 4: Evidence of exemplary implementation

The total score for each domain area was added and the mean score calculated to determine the teacher’s level of implementation of instructional strategies. The higher the aggregate score for each evidence/observable behavior area indicates the degree to which the teacher demonstrated implementation of the skill area. Information gleaned from the survey instrument, classroom observations and professional development observations were used to determine areas of focus.

Several data collection strategies were used in this action research. Table 4 provides a statement of the research questions and the data collection strategies that were used to seek to answer each research question.

Table 4: Summary of Data Collection for the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Collection Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does culturally-responsive and Hip Hop focused professional development change</td>
<td>surveys, classroom observations, PD informal observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers’ perception of the influence of culture on teaching and learning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the targeted professional development improve teachers’ engagement of</td>
<td>surveys, classroom observations, PD informal observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American male students?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strengths and Limitations**

Understanding the strengths and limitations of this study is important because it helps to understand the effects of professional development on the participants with rich detail and depth. Nuances and complexities can clearly be unpacked to better understand the results. Specifically, the strengths of this study include:
1. The principal researcher is an African-American male

2. Teachers are all African-American

3. All teachers have previous teaching experience

4. All teachers have similar views about the importance of educating African-American males

Understanding these strengths is important because it provides a more thorough understanding of the lives of African-American males that is often not captured in depth in scholarly works. This understanding is imperative to support teachers in understanding Hip Hop culture as an influence on African-American male school motivation. This body of research is my contribution to the field of urban education and more specifically to the professional development community of practice that supports African-American male school engagement. Researchers who share the same racial identification of participants possess an “ingroup” advantage to understanding some of the nuances and other factors that influence an individual’s own racial group (Beaupré & Hess, 2006).

All teachers in the study possess previous teaching experience, this is important in recognizing teachers’ depth of understanding and applying various instructional techniques to engage students. In comparison, first year teachers often struggle with understanding routines, classroom management, curricular guidance and supports, and school culture (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Teachers in this study share a common understanding about the importance of educating African-American males. Teachers who share similar attitudes and beliefs about a particular group of students enable them to be more responsive to instructional strategies and professional development centered on their development and growth (Loucks-Horsley, 1999; Pang & Sablan, 1995).

Understanding the limitations of the study was also important because it explains subjectivities and other related factors that exist. The limitations of this study include:

1. Perceptions are subjective and therefore different across groups
2. Incidents that were critical for some teachers may not serve as critical incidents in the professional development of other teachers.

3. The study did not investigate how Hip Hop culture influences African-American females.

4. The timeframe of the study did not provide the opportunity to track teachers over time

Acknowledging these limitations are important to understand the interpretation of results in research. However, the benefit of action research provides relevance that is situational, time bound, and/or applies to a specific group (McNiff, 2000; Reason & Bradbury, 2001).
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS

The purpose of this action research study was to describe and understand the intersection of Hip Hop culture, teacher perceptions of African-American male students, and the influence of culturally-relevant professional development on increasing student engagement. This chapter presents an analysis of the findings of this action research. This action research study was guided by two research questions:

1. Does culturally-responsive and Hip Hop focused professional development change teachers’ perception of the influence of culture on teaching and learning?
2. Does the targeted professional development improve teachers’ engagement of African-American male students?

The literature supports culturally-responsive teaching strategies as an important instructional practice to engage students in urban schools (Cartledge & Lo, 2006). The literature also suggested that Hip Hop culture is dualistic and exerts both positive and negative influences, demonstrating that the culture has evolved from its initial conception as a vehicle for social consciousness (Guy, 2004; Kitwana, 2002; Perkins, 1996; Rose, 1994). Three themes emerged from the literature review and were used as a lens to understand instructional practices and African-American male engagement. The three themes include understanding Hip Hop culture, classroom engagement, and engaging African-American males. Table 5 provides a summary of the data collection tools and a crosswalk to the action research study themes:
Table 5: Data Collection Tools Crosswalk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Research Themes</th>
<th>African-American Male Student Engagement: Classroom Observation Tool</th>
<th>Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Culture Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hip Hop Cultural Understanding</strong></td>
<td>Domain 3. Respond to Student Understandings</td>
<td>Part I. Hip Hop Cultural Understandings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part II. Hip Hop Cultural Influence: Personal Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom Engagement Strategies for all students</strong></td>
<td>Domain 1. Engage Students at all Learning Levels</td>
<td>Part III. Hip Hop Culture : In Your Classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domain 2. Provide Students Multiple Ways to Move Toward Mastery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domain 5. Students actively engage in assignments to improve learning outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engaging African-American male students in academic content</strong></td>
<td>Domain 1. Engage Students at all Learning Levels</td>
<td>Part IV. African American Male Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domain 4. Build a Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the analysis, action research themes were crosswalked with The Hip Hop and Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey and The African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool. The three themes are: (1) Hip Hop Cultural Understanding (2) Classroom Engagement Strategies for all students (3) Engaging African-American male students in academic content. The Hip Hop and Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey organized questions using four categories: (1) Hip Hop Cultural Understanding (2) Hip Hop Culture from a Personal Perspective (3) Hip Hop Culture in the Classroom and (4) Understanding African-American Males.

**Teachers**

Before discussing the findings of the study, it is helpful to understand the participants of the study. In the information session for the study the five teachers provided demographic information.
This information is important to understand the background of participants, which could provide some context about their views on urban education. Table 6 provides self-reported information and demographics about each teacher.

**Table 6: Teacher Demographic and Background Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Ramona</th>
<th>Brenda</th>
<th>William</th>
<th>Gary</th>
<th>Reeva</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest Degree Attained</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees</td>
<td>▪ B.A. History/</td>
<td>▪ B.A. Liberal</td>
<td>▪ B.S. Finance</td>
<td>▪ B.S. Counseling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>concentration in Black History</td>
<td>Arts/ concentration in Mass Media</td>
<td>and Economics</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ M.S. in Social Work</td>
<td>▪ M.S. in Arts of Teaching</td>
<td>▪ M.S. Special Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ M.S. in Arts of Teaching (currently enrolled)</td>
<td>▪ B.S. Management</td>
<td>▪ M.A. Legal and Ethical Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ M.A. in Education</td>
<td>▪ M.A. in Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects Currently Taught</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>English &amp; Language Arts</td>
<td>Special Education: English &amp; Language Arts and Social Studies</td>
<td>English &amp; Language Arts</td>
<td>English &amp; Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades Taught</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>7th and 8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>30-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Teaching</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years at the Present School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reported demographics do not suggest salient themes of all members of similar teachers with comparable characteristics. However, the characteristics are important to understand the views of teachers in this study as it relates to Hip Hop culture, African-American male students, and instructional engagement strategies. Each teacher brought a different lens in which they viewed education, their role as a teacher, and their construction of Hip Hop Culture. Understanding the voice of each teacher is critical in unpacking the way teachers view their craft as a teacher and their perception of their development.
Ramona

Ramona is a very ambitious teacher, she wants the best for her students and it shows in her classroom. As a young teacher (20-30 age range) she struggles with building close relationships with her students while demanding respect. She manages her class firmly but fairly. Ramona was excited to share with the group that she maintains a Hip Hop blog that she posts lyrics, pictures, and poetry. She understands youth culture and believes that teaching is the social justice liberator for the 21st century. She appreciates helping students to find solutions. The researcher noticed in both of her in-class observations that she becomes frustrated with students who appear to not take their education seriously. In the first professional development session Ramona said her three areas of growth are: (1) classroom management (2) differentiated instruction (3) the ability to keep students engaged in lessons. She enjoys Hip Hop music from the 90s and present. Ramona makes connections in her classes between social issues, pop culture, history and politics. Students appear to appreciate her as teacher and follow her directions. Ramona has a strong voice, but it is not overpowering or intimidating rather reassuring and confident. Students consult with her during class and some remain after class to discuss assignments.

Brenda

Brenda can be described as a Renaissance woman, she is educated, poised and has diverse experiences. Brenda, writes in her free time. She has published two books and her third book was due to publish in a few months after the study concluded. Brenda shared that her writings reflect the experiences of womanhood, culture, values, and spiritual development. Brenda attends and participates open mic and spoken word events. She is very involved in her community and travels in several literary special interest groups. She is a deep thinker often analyzing the interconnectedness and depth of ideas. The researcher observed she is thoughtful and purposeful when she communicates. Brenda has a crisp and caring voice which students appear to embrace as she
explains lessons. Brenda appreciates the diversity of thought and approaches disagreements with diplomacy. She enjoys Hip Hop music from the 70s and 80s. She uses Hip Hop lyrics in her language arts classes and assigns students classwork associated with songs. She notes in the first professional development that she can grow as a teacher in the area of pacing.

**William**

William is a young teacher who has a very serious disposition. He has a very stern look on his face and firm handshake. Upon meeting the researcher, he asked for a verbal explanation of my work experiences and educational background. It was clear that he was about business and would like to know my background to understand who I am as a researcher. William is taking classes toward another credential, however, he did not offer details about the advanced degree he is working on. He shared his area of growth is differentiation in math and science. In the professional development sessions he asked focused questions seeking to understand other perspectives. However, it appeared clear to the researcher that he believes he has a firm grasp of teaching and learning. His comments were thoughtful and much aligned with the literature about Hip Hop culture and strategies to support minority students. William was not as open and reflective as other teachers, but more focused on saying “the right thing.” In his class, he is very stern, almost a military style and was very teacher focused.

**Gary**

Gary is a serious and stern teacher. He states he is often disappointed with youth who do not appear to appreciate a free public education. He believes society is set-up to stifle the upward growth of minority students. He believes that education is the great equalizer and the hard work and determination can mediate socio-economic disparities. He is health conscience and a vegan, who shares his perspective about the harmful products found in food and its deteriorating effects on the body. He has a firm control of his class, however it appears that students are borderline fearful of
him. Students attempt to answer questions; however they appear to be afraid of answering the questions incorrectly. Gary shared in the first professional development that his growth area is developing student relationships.

Reeva

Reeva is quiet and reserved. She does not get angry quickly and she appears to feel that she doesn’t have control of her classes. She often looks frustrated and concerned as she navigates the day. It appears Reeva is well liked by students and teachers. Due to her quiet and nice disposition she often receives a lot of visitors daily in her classroom. This is often a distraction for Reeva as she struggles to manage her class and engage her students. Students and faculty drop by to bring greetings, or to ask questions or share information.

In an attempt to provide a comfortable learning environment Reeva plays Hip Hop and R&B music on her iPod as students work. Many of her students have low literacy levels and Reeva shared that she needs more support to successfully deliver content to her students. Reeva, has some personal things occurring in her life which cause her to think a lot about how to manage those external factors throughout the school day.

Crosscutting Dimensions

In the initial professional development session teachers asserted their collective belief that Hip Hop culture plays a dynamic role in the lives of youth in urban schools. Teachers further state that culture has both positive and negative influences and that individuals conceptualize its meaning and determine how it will impact their life experiences. Teachers also agreed amongst themselves that Hip Hop culture has changed from its initial inception in the 1970s. In addition, during the first professional development session teachers shared a common belief that it is their collective duty to society and to the African-American community to ensure that students learn and have equal access to educational opportunities.
This social justice teaching philosophy was echoed throughout the professional development sessions. Teachers appeared to possess a genuine concern for African-American males who are disengaged from coursework. To illustrate this belief, Ramona states:

I mean I just don’t understand it, I try all strategies that I can to get them to learn. Some of them (African-American males) just seem to don’t get it. They don’t seem to understand right now in their lives how important education is for their future. I understand that they are middle school students, but my fear is by the time they understand how important education is, it will be too late. But, I am going to keep trying, keep pushing, to get through to them.

**Hip Hop Understandings, Influence, Classrooms & African American Male Students**

This action research study was able to describe the intersection of Hip Hop culture, teacher perceptions of African-American male students, and the influence of culturally-relevant professional development on increasing student engagement. Table 7 provides a summary of responses from The Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip-Hop Culture Survey.

**Table 7: Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Culture Survey Scores—Ramona and Brenda**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Ramona</th>
<th></th>
<th>Brenda</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>S2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1: Hip Hop Cultural Understandings</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2: Hip Hop Cultural Influence: Personal Perspective</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3: Hip Hop Culture: In Your Classroom</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4: African-American Male Students</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: (S1) represents the initial classroom survey administration. (S2) represents the post survey administration. (C) represents the change in the mean score.*

77
Table 8: Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Culture Survey Scores—William and Gary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>William</th>
<th>Gary</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>S2</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1: Hip Hop Cultural Understandings</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2: Hip Hop Cultural Influence: Personal Perspective</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3: Hip Hop Culture: In Your Classroom</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4: African-American Male Students</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Culture Survey Scores—Reeva

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Reeva</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1: Hip Hop Cultural Understandings</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2: Hip Hop Cultural Influence: Personal Perspective</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3: Hip Hop Culture: In Your Classroom</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4: African-American Male Students</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (S1) represents the initial classroom survey administration. (S2) represents the post-survey administration. (C) represents the change in the mean score.
Table 10. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Culture Survey Scale Score Ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Scale Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Part 1:** Hip Hop Cultural Understandings | Under 15: Not aware of Hip Hop as a Culture  
15-20: Slightly Aware of Hip Hop as a Culture  
21-25: Somewhat Aware of Hip Hop as a Culture  
26-30: Moderate Level of Awareness of Hip Hop as a Culture  
31-35: High Level of Hip Hop Cultural Awareness |
| **Part 2:** Hip Hop Cultural Influence:  
Personal Perspective | Under 60: Does not understand Hip Hop Culture  
60-68: Slightly Understands Hip Hop Culture  
69-77: Somewhat Understands Hip Hop Culture  
78-85: Moderately Understands Hip Hop Culture  
86-94: High Level of Hip Hop Cultural Understanding |
| **Part 3:** Hip Hop Culture: In Your Classroom | Under 60: Does not integrate elements of Hip Hop Culture  
60-68: Rarely integrates elements of Hip Hop Culture  
69-77: Occasionally integrates elements of Hip Hop Culture  
78-85: Sometimes integrates elements of Hip Hop Culture  
86-94: Often integrates elements of Hip Hop Culture |
| **Part 4:** African-American Male Students | Under 99: Does not Understand Strategies to Engage A-A Males  
99-104: Slightly Understands Strategies to Engage A-A Males  
105-110: Somewhat Understands Strategies to Engage A-A Males  
111-116: Moderately Understands Strategies to Engage A-A Males  
117-122: High Level of Understanding Strategies to Engage A-A Males |
First Survey- Baseline

The initial administration of the Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Culture Survey served as a baseline to understand teacher’s knowledge and awareness of Hip Hop culture and African-American male engagement strategies as seen in Tables 7 and 8. Data from the Part 1 of the survey, Hip Hop Cultural Understandings showed Brenda (26), William (27), and Gary (27) scores have a moderate understanding of Hip Hop Culture. Ramona’s score (32) shows a high level of understanding and Reeva (24) showed somewhat of a understanding of Hip Hop Culture. These scores are reflective of the in class observations and interactions with teachers during both professional development sessions.

In Part 2 of the survey, Hip Hop Cultural Influence: Personal Perspective showed Brenda (75) and William (72) somewhat understands Hip Hop culture from a personal connection. Ramona’s (89) and Reva’s scores (92) shows she has a high level of Hip Hop understanding from a personal perspective. Gary’s score (67) shows a slight understanding from a personal perspective.

Part 3 of the survey, Hip Hop Culture: In Your Classroom, reflects occasional integration of elements of Hip Hop in the classrooms of Ramona (69) and Brenda’s scores (73). William (68) and Gary’s score (63) reflects rare integration of Hip Hop in their classrooms. Reeva’s score (84) reflects rare implementation of Hip Hop in her classroom.

In the section, Part 4 of the survey: African-American Males: Ramona (118) and Reeva’s scores (121) reflects high levels of understanding strategies to engage African-American males. Brenda’s (110) score reflects she somewhat understands strategies to engage African-American males. William’s scores (116) suggest he moderately understands. Gary’s score (107) reflects he slightly understands strategies to engage African-American males.
Post-Survey

In the second survey administration there was slight changes across all four survey areas. In Part 1 Hip Hop Cultural Understandings Ramona’s score decreased by 2 points and Brenda’s decreased by 4 points. However, William (+2), Gary (+3), and Reeva (+2) scores increased. In Part 2 Hip Hop Cultural Understanding Ramona (+3) and William’s score increased (+3). In comparison Brenda, Gary, and Reeva’s score remained unchanged. In Part 3 Hip Hop Culture in Your Classroom, Ramona (+3) and Reeva’s (+5) score increased. The following three teachers scores showed a decline Brenda (-4), William (-4), Gary (-3). In Part 4 African-American Male Students Ramona (+2), Brenda (+2), William (+2), and Gary’s (+3) score increased. Reeva’s score remained unchanged.

Survey responses provided an understanding of teacher perceptions related to Hip Hop culture. These perceptions are important in understanding the specific worldviews teachers brought with them into the targeted professional development.

Hip Hop Cultural Understanding

Teachers in the study were interested in understanding how Hip Hop culture was constructed for this study. All the teachers participating in the study believe that Hip Hop culture has changed drastically from its initial conception as shared during the professional development sessions. Ramona shared that she believes that Hip Hop culture is an important aspect of urban life. She stated that she lives in the inner city and works in an inner city school and understands the plight of urban African-American male students. She is perplexed however on identifying diverse ways of engaging African-American males in course content. After hearing other teachers discuss Hip Hop culture, Ramona says:
Let me be honest, I like Hip Hop, well I love Hip Hop. I think it is a great thing. Some of the artists have some serious lyrics that make you pause, reflect, and think. Some of our students understand the positive messages of Hip Hop and others do not.

Ramona scored High on the survey for Hip Hop Cultural Understanding. The teacher was eager to participate in the study. During the first professional development session she shared with the group that she has created and maintains a Hip Hop blog. She considers herself “A person of the Hip Hop Generation.” She believes that much of Hip Hop has been commercialized over the last decade. However, she reminded the group that she believes understanding Hip Hop Culture is important to connect with students.

Brenda scored Moderate for the Hip Hop cultural understanding theme. This teacher believes Hip Hop culture was birthed out of a movement of social consciousness. She believes that it is important to expose students to the positive messages demonstrated by artists who use their music to convey an important message about resilience, faith, and persistence. Brenda also agreed that Hip Hop culture can be positive if used correctly in the classroom, she stated:

Hip Hop tells the story of a people, it describes a struggle, a collective identity and it’s filled with deep emotion. Hip Hop for me is the original artists like Talib Kweli, Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five, Whodini, Doug E. Fresh, Sugarhill Gang.

Echoing the beliefs of Brenda, Gary was very adverse to the belief that modern Hip Hop culture exists. He insists that Hip Hop culture exits as a separate distinct culture that should not be associated with current Hip Hop culture. He contended:

Hip Hop culture is about self-expression, it’s about political awareness, and it’s about community conscience. This garbage that young people listen to today is not Hip Hop, I don’t know what that mess is that they listen to, but it definitely isn’t Hip Hop.
William scored within the moderate range on the Hip Hop Cultural theme. This teacher describes Hip Hop Culture as:

An important force giving voice to students’ experiences, and their understanding of the world. Hip Hop Culture as I see it is how students make meaning of their situations.”

William described his role as a Special Education teacher as difficult yet rewarding. He described how he sees the influence of the culture impacting the lives of African-American males each day. He does not believe Hip Hop Culture has negatively influenced African-American males. Instead, he described a combination of social and economic forces that have impacted urban cities and hence negatively influenced the experiences of African-American males.

Hip Hop Culture from a Personal Perspective

Teachers were asked a series of questions related to their personal experience with Hip Hop culture and individuals who are influenced by the culture. Ramona and Reeva scored ‘high’ levels on the Hip Hop Understanding indicator. Brenda and William scored within the ‘somewhat understands’ Hip Hop Culture. Gary demonstrated a lessened amount of Hip Hop Cultural Understanding in comparison to the other four teachers.

Ramona shared that she has a deep appreciation for Hip Hop culture and therefore her score is aligned with her interest. Reeva was verbally less expressive than the other teachers but maintained eye contact and listened intensely to the exchange of ideas during professional development sessions.

Brenda scored a ‘somewhat understands’ Hip Hop culture and this score outcome is interesting. Brenda was able to quote many of the lyrics, history of Hip Hop culture and early movements within the culture. However, as the researcher reflects, Brenda did not seem to have the same depth of prior knowledge of current artists and messages of the culture.
William’s survey responses yield an ‘average score’ and it was similar to Brenda’s score. Both teachers appear to possess a deeper appreciation for the early beginnings of Hip Hop culture and less of an affinity for the current expression observed today.

Gary provided the least amount of Hip Hop cultural understanding, he said:

> It is not our responsibility in the education system as teachers to change the lessons, and the way we teach students. It is their responsibility to show up, do what they supposed to do and learn. If we start changing the curriculum to fit Hip Hop culture then we are doing a disservice to the students and what they need to learn. I think Hip Hop culture…let me change that….Street Culture or whatever this mess is called these days is ridiculous. It is negative, it supports sex, drugs, homosexuality, and all that other stuff that isn’t right. We have teaching all confused if we think we need to change to meet them, they need to conform to us, we are the teachers.

**Hip Hop Culture in the Classroom**

Teachers were asked a series of questions related to the influence of Hip Hop culture in their classrooms. Surprisingly, most teachers reported that that they did not integrate Hip Hop in their classrooms on a frequent basis. This outcome is intriguing because all teachers reported the importance of Hip Hop culture in the lives of African-American males and at a minimum a basic understanding of the culture. Both Ramona and Brenda used Hip Hop occasionally. William and Gary use Hip Hop rarely and Reeva integrated Hip Hop sometimes. Ramona and Reeva rated their understanding of Hip Hop culture on the higher end of the continuum. However, both teachers do not integrate elements of Hip Hop often.

Ramona considers herself a “Hip Hopper” however only uses Hip Hop in her classroom occasionally. Brenda and William also identifies themselves as having a close association with Hip Hop culture, but only occasionally or rarely integrates elements of Hip Hop into their classes. Gary
shared that he is a very traditional teacher and did not believe pop culture or Hip Hop culture has a place in public education. Reeva has a higher appreciation for Hip Hop than Gary and therefore occasionally implements elements of Hip Hop culture in her classroom.

African-American Male Students

Teachers were asked a series of questions about their expectations and engagement strategies of African-American males in their classes. Ramona and Reeva reported a high degree of understanding of strategies that effectively engage African-American males. Brenda, William, and Gary reported a somewhat, moderate, and slight understandings, respectively, of strategies that effectively engage African-American male students. Ramona provided this example of a strategy she used to engage African-American males:

I have some really bright boys in my class, and I have some males who are not as bright but they try really hard. I pair them up with other students; I refuse to let them give up. Even when they are lazy I push them to do work.

The intervention was deliberate and purposeful enabling teachers to explore professional development content in Hip-Hop cultural understandings, cultural responsive teaching strategies, and “boy-friendly” engagement strategies. The purpose of this intervention is to increase teachers’ ability to engage African-American males in classes and through self-reflective practices, teachers will be able to improve instructional strategies.

Classroom Observations: Engaging African-American Males

Overall, teachers were eager and excited to be observed. The teachers were interested in receiving feedback about how they engage African-American males. The African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool is comprised of five teaching and learning domains: Domain 1: Engage Students at all Learning Levels; Domain 2: Provide Students Multiple Ways to move Toward Mastery; Domain 3: Respond to Student Understanding; Domain 4: Build a
Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom; and Domain 5: Students actively engage in assignments to improve learning outcomes. Teachers were observed twice, once during week 3 and the last observation during week 5. Teachers were scored for each indicator during each observation period. Afterwards, both all indicators for both observations were totaled and then averaged to yield the overall implementation score for each domain. Tables 10 and 11 provide the observational data domain outcome disaggregated by teacher:

Table 11: Teachers’ Observation Scores: Ramona, Brenda, and William

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Ramona</th>
<th>Brenda</th>
<th>William</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain 1: Engage Students at All Learning Levels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>OB2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>OB1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain 2: Provide Students Multiple Ways to Move Toward Mastery</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>OB2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>OB1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain 3: Respond to Student Understanding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>OB2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>OB1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain 4: Build a Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>OB2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>OB1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain 5: Students Actively Engage in Assignments to Improve Learning Outcomes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>OB2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>OB1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* (OB1) represents the initial classroom observation. (OB2) represents the second classroom observation. (C) represents the change in the mean score.
Table 12: Teachers’ Observation Scores: Gary and Reeva

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Gary</th>
<th>Reeva</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domain 1: Engage Students at All Learning Levels</td>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>OB2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain 2: Provide Students Multiple Ways to Move Toward Mastery</td>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>OB2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain 3: Respond to Student Understanding</td>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>OB2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain 4: Build a Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom</td>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>OB2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain 5: Students Actively Engage in Assignments to Improve Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>OB1</td>
<td>OB2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (OB1) represents the initial classroom observation. (OB2) represents the second classroom observation. (C) represents the change in the mean score.

Ramona

Ramona lesson during the first observation was focused on a continuation of a Black History project that students have been working on for several class periods. Students were asked to identify and present on the life history of a famous African-American figure. Most males appeared disengaged, bored, and aloof. As Ramona made attempts to remain laser focused on the lesson, half of her time was dedicated to redirecting negative behaviors. As Ramona engaged students in the lesson, two students had their heads on their desks (one male and one female). Ramona continued her lesson by asking students probing questions about the Civil Rights Movement. She played the Black Panther mixed tapes and afterwards posed a series of questions. The researcher observed that female students were more engaged than male students. The class is very teacher-centered with Ramona directing the conversations. Ramona’s class was very fast-paced in an attempt to capture student interest however, she was not quite successful. One student made several outbursts and demanded to go to the bathroom. Ramona said:
Are you done now? You have continued to whine and complain and you have successfully distracted all of the other students. Are you happy now? Did you achieve your goal of getting all of the attention from everyone? The student snapped back, “that aint my goal, my goal is to go to the bathroom and I don’t know why you actin’ like this. You get on my nerves.” Ramona quickly responded, and said I am not here to be your friend. This conversation is over, leave now go to the office. The African-American male student then makes a dramatic exit.

In the second observation Ramona’s class had more structure than the first observation. On the board she listed a daily objective, warm up, and study skill. The class integrated technology as students continued to work on their research projects. Ramona distributed mini laptops that students used to conduct internet research for their assignments. There were not enough laptops for all students to use simultaneously, however the students shared the laptop time amongst each other. Ramona restates the goals of the assignment and clarifies her expectations. As students work on their assignment, students raise their hands and ask questions. The researcher noted there appeared to be good camaraderie among male and female students. Ramona is assisted by a co-teacher, Gary. The males in the class are quiet and subdued. When asked by a peer, they assist each other on the research assignment. A male placed his head on his desk during classwork, the teacher walked over to him and said:

   Excuse me sir, we will not be sleeping in class. You attempted to sleep in class earlier this week and I need you to take your education seriously. How are you going to learn if you are asleep.” The student snapped back and said,” I didn’t go to sleep this week that was last week.” The teacher responded, “Look, I am here to teach you and you need to want to learn, get up pay attention and get on task.”
The student picked his head up, looked around to see if his peers where watching him and
started working on his classwork.

Ramona’s score on the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation
Tool shows no change for Domains 1, 2,3, and 4. Ramona showed an increase of (+1) in Domain 5.

Brenda

In the initial observation it was noticed that Brenda has a structured and highly interactive
class. I noticed her class has more female students than male students. Brenda’s lesson was about
finding the main idea in literary prompts. Within 10 minutes into class a fight starts in the adjoining
class. The sounds of chairs being thrown, students yelling, and bodies hitting the wall can be heard.
Brenda, asked the students to remain seated, she asks the researcher to watch the students. Brenda
drops her book on her desk and runs next door. While Brenda is away, students talk among them
quietly questioning who they think may be fighting next door. Brenda returns to the class 15 minutes
later, unfazed as if constant fights are routine. She thanks me for watching her class and picks up her
teaching from where she left off before leaving to assist the teacher next door. Brenda engages male
and female students equally, provide them encouragement as they answer questions. After students
begin to work independently, Brenda shares with the researcher her use of interim assessments:

I use interim assessments from The Achievement Network specifically the Brief Constructed
Response interim assessments, I like their interim assessments, I think they are very helpful in
providing key information about what students have learned. I use data to determine where I need
to reteach and how success students have retained the information.

In Brenda’s second observation the researcher observes that Brenda continues to engage
male and female students equally. She balances asking probing questions with supporting students to
arrive at the correct answer. She is also successful in redirecting negative behaviors. Brenda score on
the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool showed no change in
Domains 1, 2, and 4. In Domain 3 she shows a slight decrease of (-0.3) and a decrease in Domain 5 (1.0).

**William**

In William’s initial observation his lesson was focused on understanding the main idea from a guided reading assignment. The researcher noticed the class consisted of only one female student. William led the guided reading assignment by reading aloud to students. Three male students were laughing and talking amongst themselves throughout the assignment. The class is largely disengaged and off task. The female student begins demanding attention and begins to challenge William, he makes a few brief statements and moves on with the lesson. He stops in the middle of lesson in an attempt to refocus students and says:

> We are in the middle of an assignment, I expect everyone to remain focused and pay attention. If you have a problem doing that now is your time to let me know. Education is serious and I will not tolerate any of you being off task.

In the second classroom observation William’s class was structured the same way. He continues to maintain firm control of the class as he walks around the tables to assist students as they work on assignments. William did not provide a teacher led lesson during the second observation. He assisted students on an assignment from the previous class session. William’s score on the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool did not show a change in Domains 1 and 5. There was an increase in Domain 3 by (+0.7). There was a decrease in Domains 2 (-1) and 4 (-0.3).

**Gary**

In the beginning of Gary’s initial observation he writes the warm up/up now, objective, behavioral expectations, homework, activity/independent practice, and wrap-up and exit slip on the board. After Gary writes the agenda on the board he meets students at the door as they walk in. One
student enters class on his knees and hands; he says he is a dog today. Another male student slaps another student on the back of the head. Gary begins his lesson and students are disengaged. There is a lot of talking off task. Gary appears frustrated and states:

There should be absolutely no talking. I will not continue with this assignment until everyone is absolutely quiet.

Male students were very quiet. Two male students were falling asleep during the assignment. Two female students gaze around the classroom. Another male student begins cleaning out his backpack quietly.

In the second observation of Gary his teaching techniques appear very similar. There is quite a bit of distraction because of the thin walls of the classroom. Much of the noise from the classroom next door can be heard and no carpet or drapes make the noise even more pronounced. Gary continues to redirect students attention and asks them to focus, be respectful and to be quiet and listen to the opinions of others. Gary calls students by name and acknowledges all students who raise their hands. Students appear to feel comfortable with expressing their opinion in his class. He reaffirms students with positive affirmations. Students appear to feel comfortable in expressing their opinion. He reaffirms students by stating very good sir or ma’am when they answer a question correctly. Gary’s score on the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool did not show a change in Domain 1. There was a decrease in Domains 2 (-0.5). There was an increase in Domains 3 (+0.3), Domain 4(+1.0) and 5 (+1.0).

Reeva

Reeva has a difficult time with classroom management as evidenced by her initial observation. Two teachers walk in and out of her classroom delivering messages and carrying on small talk. Reeva informed the researcher that half of her students were not present because they had to catch the public transportation and because the next bus doesn’t arrive for two hours they are
allowed to leave early. Two male students appeared to be engaged and although their responses to all of questions were incorrect, Reeva assists by responding with the correct answer. Another male student is playing in his phone that is charging and getting up and sharpening his pencil. Students work independently on the math assignment.

In the second observation students work independently on an assignment from the previous class session. Reeva circles the room periodically to check on students. Reeva turns on Hip Hop music while students work. Most students are not focused as evidence by the off task activity in the room. Male students are talking, walking around the classroom, and disengaged in the classwork. The bell rings and students begin to leave. Reeva asks one student to remain after class to talk, his name is Andre. Reeva says:

Andre, I want to talk to you about class yesterday. I know the assignments may seem very difficult and I saw how scared you were after I taught the lesson. It’s not as difficult as you think.

Andre responds:
It is hard, Im not smart I can’t do it.

Reeva responds:
Andre, look at me. I want you to know that I believe in you. I know you can do this work. I want to help you to understand this work. You are one of my best 8th graders I have to prepare you for high school next year. The assignments I gave you yesterday will do that. Being successful in high school next year will prepare you for college. I have seen how well you do when you work hard. I never want you to feel that you are alone and you can’t do the work, that is what I am here for. Let me help you, we are in this together. I know you can do this, we can do it. Do I have your commitment that we can do this together? Will you
let me help you? Andre smiles, and nods his head in agreement. Reeva, hugs him and he leaves the class.

Reeva is quite nurturing, but has some challenges related to using diverse teaching strategies to engage students. Reeva’s score on the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool did not show a change in Domain 5. Reeva showed a decrease in Domain 1 (-0.7). Domains 2 (+0.5), 3 (+0.4), and Domain 4 (+1.4) showed an increase.

The teaching and learning domains provides critical information in measuring the observable behaviors of teachers. Understanding teacher behavior informs professional development and instructional coaching in schools. Through observations information can be used to identify potential strategies for teacher implementation. Tables 13 through 16 provide disaggregated scores for each domain area.

**Table 13: Disaggregated Observation Scores: Ramona**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1: Engage Students at All Learning Levels</th>
<th>Domain 2: Provide Students Multiple Ways to Move Toward Mastery</th>
<th>Domain 3: Respond to Student Understanding</th>
<th>Domain 4: Build a Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom</th>
<th>Domain 5: Students Actively Engage in Assignments to Improve Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RS: 3.0 A: 3.0 Evidence of Consistent Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 3.0 A: 3.0 Evidence of Consistent Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 3.3 A: 3.0 Evidence of Consistent Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 4.0 A: 4.0 Evidence of exemplary implementation</td>
<td>RS: 3.5 A: 4.0 Evidence of exemplary implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. (RS) represents raw score and (A) represents average score*
Table 14: Disaggregated Observation Scores: Brenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1: Engage Students at All Learning Levels</th>
<th>Domain 2: Provide Students Multiple Ways to Move Toward Mastery</th>
<th>Domain 3: Respond to Student Understanding</th>
<th>Domain 4: Build a Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom</th>
<th>Domain 5: Students Actively Engage in Assignments to Improve Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RS: 4.0 A: 4.0 Evidence of exemplary implementation</td>
<td>RS: 4.0 A: 4.0 Evidence of exemplary implementation</td>
<td>RS: 3.15 A: 3.0 Evidence of Consistent Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 4.0 A: 4.0 Evidence of exemplary implementation</td>
<td>RS: 3.5 A: 4.0 Evidence of exemplary implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (RS) represents raw score and (A) represents average score

Table 15: Disaggregated Observation Scores: William

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1: Engage Students at All Learning Levels</th>
<th>Domain 2: Provide Students Multiple Ways to Move Toward Mastery</th>
<th>Domain 3: Respond to Student Understanding</th>
<th>Domain 4: Build a Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom</th>
<th>Domain 5: Students Actively Engage in Assignments to Improve Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RS: 1.7 A: 2.0 Evidence of Emerging Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 1.5 A: 2.0 Evidence of Emerging Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 1.65 A: 2.0 Evidence of Emerging Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 1.15 A: 1.0 Limited or no evidence of implementation</td>
<td>RS: 1.0 A: 1.0 Limited or no evidence of implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (RS) represents raw score and (A) represents average score

Table 16: Disaggregated Observation Scores: Gary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1: Engage Students at All Learning Levels</th>
<th>Domain 2: Provide Students Multiple Ways to Move Toward Mastery</th>
<th>Domain 3: Respond to Student Understanding</th>
<th>Domain 4: Build a Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom</th>
<th>Domain 5: Students Actively Engage in Assignments to Improve Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RS: 1.7 A: 2.0 Evidence of Emerging Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 1.25 A: 1.0 Limited or no evidence of implementation</td>
<td>RS: 1.85 A: 2.0 Evidence of Emerging Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 2.5 A: 3.0 Evidence of Consistent Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 1.5 A: 2.0 Evidence of Emerging Implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (RS) represents raw score and (A) represents average score
Table 17: Disaggregated Observation Scores: Reeva

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1: Engage Students at All Learning Levels</th>
<th>Domain 2: Provide Students Multiple Ways to Move Toward Mastery</th>
<th>Domain 3: Respond to Student Understanding</th>
<th>Domain 4: Build a Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom</th>
<th>Domain 5: Students Actively Engage in Assignments to Improve Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RS: 2.65 A: 3.0 Evidence of Consistent Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 2.75 A: 3.0 Evidence of Consistent Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 3.8 A: 4.0 Evidence of exemplary implementation</td>
<td>RS: 3.3 A: 3.0 Evidence of Consistent Implementation</td>
<td>RS: 2.5 A: 3.0 Evidence of Consistent Implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (RS) represents raw score and (A) represents average score

Summary of Findings

Ramona and Brenda demonstrated varying evidence of consistent or exemplary implementation of engaging African-American male students in coursework. Both teachers were highly engaged and demonstrated high degrees of emotional intelligence. In cases when African-American male students were off-task or appeared to not grasp content both teachers used multiple instructional methods to engage them in the academic content. Their classes were fast-paced, they anticipated student’s questions, and African-American males were encouraged to answer questions, and strategies were utilized to engage them. Both teachers appeared to be able to anticipate the academic needs of their African-American male students. In the classroom, Ramona, Similarly, Brenda has a high impact class that was demonstrated based on specific observable behaviors of the teacher and students. There are norms established for her class, students appeared to understand the routines and rules, if a student said something that was inappropriate, or demonstrated a behavior that was not positive there was a quick redirection of that behavior by Brenda, in one instance she said to a student who said the assignment was too difficult and the student didn’t believe they could achieve the goals of the assignment:
No…no…no we do not say we can’t in this class, a word like that belong where class?” In unison the students respond, “in the cemetery.” Brenda responds and says exactly. We do not say bad words like can’t in this class, a word like that is dead, it’s in the cemetery and we do not use it.

William demonstrated a high degree of classroom management skills. William also demonstrated a firm grasp of the content, however William was not able to engage African-American males in course content. His class was very teacher-centered and did not seek student input, or engage learners to explore the academic content. William said:

“Now that I have read the passage, I will explain to you why it makes sense for the author to choose the outcomes from the characters that he chose. Then, you will understand why the correct answer is that specific answer.”

In the class of William, three African-American males were have a quiet conversation that was clearly off task, another African-American male was looking around the classroom the entire class time. And a few other African-American males were engaged in content. It appears that the quiet students equated to students are learning and understand course content. In observing William and Reeva the researcher noticed that some African-American males were quiet, however they were not engaged. They were either day-dreaming, staring at the book or around the class. Due to the different activities occurring in the class, both William and Reeva equated several of the students’ quiet disposition as being on task.

Gary also has a high degree of classroom management skills as evidenced by his control of the class. It appears that most students are afraid of attempting to try new ideas in class because of the high locus of control that he exhibits. Reeva seems to be frustrated from her inability to engage her students; she has a large percentage of students in her class who are African-American students. She states:
It’s hard to engage these students, some of them don’t care. They are special education students and just do not understand concepts. I don’t know what to do. I try, but it’s really…really hard.

The effective use of culturally-responsive teaching strategies, understanding Hip Hop culture and targeted professional development can support the growth of teachers. The themes as measured by the Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Survey and the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool are supported by the literature and research related to African-American male achievement. The findings of this study show that Ramona and Brenda demonstrated evidence of consistent implementation of engagement strategies of African-American males. Teachers William, Gary, and Reeva demonstrated evidence of emerging implementation.

The specific characteristics of effective teaching and diverse ways to engage African-American male students (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Teachers in the study who demonstrated the most effective strategies to engage African-American male students had strong student-teacher relationships, were able to effectively redirect negative behaviors, and challenged students to think critically. The findings from this study answered the research questions.

**Research Question 1: Does culturally-responsive and Hip Hop focused professional development change teachers’ perception of the influence of culture on teaching and learning?**

Teachers in the study had a unique opportunity to exchange ideas about Hip Hop culture and its influence in the lives of African-American male middle school students. Teachers agreed that this urban cultural phenomenon has both positive and negative influences. Teachers also agree about the value that understanding this culture has on their ability to build meaningful relationships with their students (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). The area of professional development that appeared to be of most interest to teachers in the study was the gender-based brain theory and boy-friendly
instructional practices. Teachers were eager to learn about how males learn differently from female students. Teachers engaged in discussion and drew comparisons between students from different gender groups and how brain-based theory and boy-friendly instructional practices support what they observed in their classrooms. The highlights of the findings based upon the evidence from classroom observations, field notes from the professional development workshops, and the Culturally-Responsive Teaching and Hip Hop Survey include:

- There was no change in teachers perception of the influence of culture on teaching and learning
- Teachers believe that Hip Hop culture is important but students have the ability to decide how they will make meaning of their cultural influences
- Hip Hop culture was viewed as a unifying set of norms and values of group that over time has changed from its initial conception
- Teachers believe academic ability and internal motivation, are critical to student learning

Research Question 2: Does the targeted professional development improve teachers’ engagement of African-American male students?

The findings of this study indicate that teachers who understand Hip Hop culture and are able to implement culturally-responsive and other research-based instructional strategies are able to engage African-American males at a higher level than teachers who lack the cultural competence and implementation strategies. The key highlights of the findings of this study are:

- All teachers acknowledged a need for professional development to improve their ability to become a better teacher
- There was not a wide distinction between certified and uncertified teachers’ ability to engage African-American male students
Teachers with strong student-teacher relationships were able to engage African-American males at higher levels.

Teachers who are able to effectively redirect negative behaviors were more successful in engaging African-American male students than teachers who are not able to re-channel these behaviors.

Targeted professional development did indeed raise teachers’ awareness about gender-based instructional practices. Teachers’ level of awareness increased related to how lessons could be constructed differently to engage African-American male students. Effectively engaging African-American male students is multi-pronged. Pacing in coursework is important to engage African-American males and to focus their attention on instruction. When there is “dead-space” in instructional time it allows time for students to become disengaged. Disengagement then leads to disruptions in class. Teachers often believe that African-American male students take advantage of the opportunity of “dead space” in lessons. Teachers view many of these behaviors exhibited by African-American males as disruptive and challenging the mores of school. Equipping teachers with strategies to engage African-American male students and redirecting these behaviors to focus on classwork should be one of the important aspects of targeted professional development. African-American students fall in the same continuum as many students, there are students with skill deficits and whereby the coursework is beyond their current functioning level. There is another group of students that understand coursework and follows the momentum of the course. There is another group of students that excel past the current coursework and become disengaged because the pacing does not meet their higher functional levels.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

There are several implications for further research on Hip Hop culture, culturally-responsive teaching strategies and targeted professional development. The intersection of Hip Hop culture and teacher practices has left a significant gap in urban education research. The current body of literature lacks the connection between Hip Hop culture and effective instructional practice in urban schools. This connection is important because it enables practitioners to explore, understand, and practice instructional strategies to engage African-American males in urban schools.

Implications

The findings of this study are important for a several reasons. First, findings provide a better understanding of teachers’ awareness of culturally-responsive instructional strategies, their perceptions of their own ability, and their engagement of African-American males in the learning process. Teacher awareness is critical to supporting teachers to become reflective practitioners. Inherent in professional development are aware of or are open to obtaining a better understanding of their teacher ability. The aim of this study was to understand the ability of teacher’s to engage African-American male students that would then transfer over time to improved academic achievement levels.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge by focusing on Hip-Hop culture, culturally-responsive teaching strategies and targeted professional development. However, this study only provides a limited perspective of the complicated, complex, and multi-faceted area of Hip-Hop culture and instructional practices. More action and applied research studies are needed to provide more thorough understanding of these cultural phenomena that occur in urban schools. By identifying additional strategies to engage African-American males the outcome could lead to increased academic gains, higher matriculation rates, and increased graduation rates. The
implications for practice are a better understanding of the teacher-related practices that can inform school improvement efforts related to African-American male achievement.

All teachers in the study possess previous teaching experience. This condition is important in recognizing the teachers’ depth of understanding and ability to apply various instructional techniques to engage students. First year teachers often struggle with understanding routines, classroom management, curricular guidance and supports, and school culture (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Teachers in this study shared a common understanding about the importance of educating African-American males. Teachers who share similar attitudes and beliefs about a particular group of students enable them to be more responsive to instructional strategies and professional development centered on their development and growth (Loucks-Horsley, 1999; Pang & Sablan, 1995).

Understanding the limitations of the study was also important because it explains subjectivities and other factors that exist. The limitations of this study include:

1. Perceptions are subjective and therefore different across groups
2. Incidents that were critical for some teachers may not serve as critical incidents in the professional development of other teachers.
3. The study did not investigate how Hip Hop culture influences African-American females.
4. Due to the small sample size, this study cannot be generalized.

Acknowledging these limitations are important to understand the interpretation of results. Based upon these limitations the study results cannot be generalized. Action research provides relevance that is situational, time bound, and/or applies to a specific group (McNiff, 2000; Reason & Bradbury, 2001).
Call to Action

This study also provides implications for middle school instruction. This study begins the conversation about instructional strategies that can be considered as predictors for African-American male school success. Teachers in this study showed a genuine interest in learning about strategies to engage African-American males and were equally excited about being observed. Observations that provide feedback to teachers without linkages to high stakes such as continued employment is important in supporting teachers to improve instructional practices. As I reflect on the study more targeted focus on brain-based and gender based instructional practices could have provided teachers with more substantive strategies to use in classrooms. Another method that could have provided another feedback loop is the examination of lesson plans. Teachers could have submitted lesson plans, I could have evaluated them against the African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool domains. Further research on Hip Hop culture, culturally-responsive teaching and African-American male engagement strategies could be effective in developing urban teaching corps. Both qualitative and quantitative studies can support this work as urban school systems grapple with the best ways to develop teachers.

The outcome of this study informs planning for professional development by engaging teachers in targeted professional development that is viewed to be meaningful. Professional development planning should also engage both middle and high school teachers in the planning stages. Eighth and ninth grade teacher collaboration is particularly critical as teachers work to prepare students for the rigor of high school. Implementing culturally-responsive teaching and student engagement strategies as a priority area is critical to creating synergy in the classroom for African-American males. Creating classrooms where students see direct connections to the coursework and are able to make meanings based on those connections are critical to excite young males about school. African-American male success includes a focus on persistence and grit but it
also includes the relevance of curriculum to their lives and their ability to feel a sense of accomplishment as they matriculate through school.

There are several concrete steps that can be implemented to deliver high quality professional development, such as (1) active recruitment of organizations that demonstrate success in offering impactful culturally responsive professional development for teachers (2) leverage instructional coaches during lesson planning time (3) utilize technology as a method to deliver high quality PD that teachers can access as needed (4) create a “threaded discussion” where teachers can exchange ideas and reflections on instructional practices and lessons (5) query students on their assessment of lesson designs.

Further Research

Teachers in this study reported an understanding of Hip Hop culture. However, teachers did not believe they all possessed the strategies and tools to engage all African-American males at high levels. Creating additional classroom observation tools that look at more culturally-responsive approaches than those characteristics that are often found in teacher evaluation tools may deem useful. Additionally interviews with African-American males and their teachers could provide a deeper understanding of phenomena that occurs in classrooms related to teacher practices and student engagement. The findings of this study can be extended by selecting an expanded number of teachers and conducting the study in several urban schools. The expansion of the study would provide additional data by comparing schools, teachers’ characteristics, instructional practices, and possibly more themes.

Professional development of teachers in urban schools includes a set of skills and understandings that are distinct for this particular group of teachers. Teachers in urban schools must be able to 1) navigate the complexities of urban neighborhood influences that impact students, 2)
possess strong classroom management techniques, 3) are culturally-competent, and 4) are able to utilize a variety of instructional strategies to connect students to rigorous course content.

The African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool provided rich data about teachers’ ability to engage African-American male students. However, to provide another level of observation and analysis there are four areas that could be explored in a future study: (1) interviews of teachers to understand their lived experiences, instructional preparation, and impressions about their African-American male students (2) interview African-American male students to understand their home lives, views of schools, and impressions about their abilities and their teachers (3) interview school leaders to understand their academic preparation, views of teachers and their African-American male students (4) evaluate teachers over a longer period of time.

**Reflections**

There is a crisis in America; this problem is the lack of attention to the academic achievement and life success for many African-American males in urban cities. Classrooms in metropolitan cities consist of large populations of African-American males who lag behind all other groups in mathematics, reading, and graduation rates. This study focused on a small cadre of teachers with the goal of empowering them to be as effective as possible in the classroom when working with African-American males, to excite them about learning and engage them in a larger degree of inquiry in lessons.

The more engaged these young men are in lesson content the more apt they are to matriculate to the next grade, put forth more effort in school, excel academically, and subsequently graduate from high school. Teachers will be provided with targeted professional development aimed to increase their awareness and skill to engage these learners at high levels.
APPENDIX A

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS

APPROVAL LETTER

Office of the Vice President for Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 12/02/2013
To: Tony Johnson
Address:
Dept.: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
    Hip Hop Culture and Culturally-Responsive Teaching and the Engagement of African-American Male Students: The Case of an Urban Middle School

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 12/01/2014 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing, any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Patrice Iatarola <piatarola@fsu.edu>, Advisor
HSC No. 2012.9107
Dear Teacher:

My name is Tony Johnson and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Florida State University. As a part of my program, I will be conducting a research study to learn more about what teachers understand about urban African-American (A.A.) male students and what instructional practices are currently in use in your classroom. I would like to invite you to be a part of this study. The study will include 6 weeks of focused interviews, classroom observations, and targeted professional development. The targeted professional development will focus on the following content areas:

- Contemporary strategies to motivate urban A.A. males learners
- How to analyze current school and classroom culture and what each teacher can do to foster a positive classroom culture that is focused on high expectations and a challenging curriculum
- Hip hop culture and its impact on student engagement in the classroom
- The role of the teacher as change-agent in the lives of urban A.A. males and instructional techniques to boost student motivation
- The impact of A.A. self-identity and how to provide culturally-relevant pedagogy to support their development and content understanding
- Foster teacher reflective practice as an on-going professional development framework

Title of Study: Hip Hop Culture and Culturally-Responsive Teaching and the Engagement of African-American Male Students: The Case of an Urban Middle School

Principal Researcher: Tony D. Johnson, School of Education, Department of Educational Leadership. Florida State University, Phone: (850) 644-6777. Email: tonydc20020@gmail.com
Next, please find below information that may be helpful as you make an informed decision of your participation:

**Why is this study important?** I am very interested in learning what experiences do urban African-American males have in school and how do teachers engage them in the classroom. I would also like to learn why did you choose to teach. I would also like to find out more about your views on urban African-American males in schools and hip hop culture. I will be sharing my findings with the teachers who participate from Howard University School of Mathematics and Science to help them understand how to reflect on their instructional practice to bolster student motivation among urban A.A. males.

**Purpose:** You are being invited to participate in the above research study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about what teachers understand about urban African-American (A.A.) male students and what instructional practices are currently in use in your classroom. This project will not be used in any way to evaluate your performance, nor will it interfere with your normal classroom procedures.

**Who will know that you are in the study?** All responses you provide to me or other conversations we have will be kept confidential. I will not share those responses with any other participant in the study or staff member.

**Procedures:** If you agree to participate in this study, I would observe your class once per week for 6-weeks and provide targeted professional development on a one-one basis and in a larger focus group setting during a time that is convenient for your schedule.

**Risks:** There are no known risks for you to participate in this study.

**Benefits:** The benefit of participating in this study is that you will be provided free professional development and a certificate of completion. The global goal of this study includes equipping you with strategies and techniques that will support your further growth and development as a teacher.

**Confidentiality:** The confidentiality of this study will be protected to the fullest extent of the law. The transcripts will be kept in a secure location off of the campus of Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science (MS)² for three years after the commencing of the study. Responses to interview questions will be coded to ensure that your identity is concealed. You will never be identified with any particular response, comment or materials that you share with me. Teachers will be able to review their individual responses.

**Costs:** There is no cost beyond the time and effort required to participate in the activities described above. I will schedule interviews at times that are agreeable to you.

**Right to refuse or withdraw:** Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to participate you do not have to answer any question that does not provide you a level of comfort. Refusal to participate in the
study or withdrawing will in no way affect your relationship with Florida State University or your employment or evaluation at Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science (MS)²

Questions: If you have any questions, please contact me at the phone extension or e-mail address above. Please feel free to ask any question before or during the study. You may also contact The Florida State University Institutional Review Board at (850) 644-8633 or http://www.research.fsu.edu for further information of your rights as a research participant. You will also be provided a copy of this agreement prior to the start of the study.

Action Research Bill of Rights: The rights below are the rights of every person in this who is asked to be in this research study. As a research subject, you have the following rights:

1) To be told what area, subject, or issue is being studied.
2) To be told what will happen to you and what the procedures are.
3) To be told about the potential risks or discomforts, if any, of the research.
4) To be told if you can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefit might be.
5) To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study, both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
6) To be told what medical treatment is available if any complications or injuries arise as a result of the research study.
7) To refuse to participate in the study or to stop participating after the study starts.
8) To receive your signed and dated copy of this Bill of Rights and the consent form.
9) To be free of pressure when considering whether you wish to be in the study.

CONSENT: Your signature below will indicate that you have agreed to volunteer as a research subject and that you have read and understand the information provided above:

_______________________     ______________________
Teacher’s Name (Print)  Researcher’s Name (Print)

_______________________     ______________________
Teacher’s Signature        Researcher’s Signature

_______________________     ______________________
Date       Date

[Paste or compose an appendix here]
APPENDIX C
CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND
HIP HOP CULTURE SURVEY

Overview

The purpose of this survey is to obtain information about your awareness of Hip Hop culture and culturally-responsive teaching strategies. Please respond to Sections I through IV of the survey found in this document. The results of this survey will provide a description of your personal views of this topic and help the researcher better understand how to design targeted professional development that will meet individual and group needs.

Part I: Hip Hop Cultural Understandings

Instructions: Please indicate your choice that best expresses your views about the statements below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a clear understanding of hip hop culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The values and beliefs in hip hop culture are positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip Hop music is influenced by youth in urban cities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hip Hop music is popular because it reflects the challenges and triumphs in urban cities</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporations control mainstream hip hop that we see on television and what we listen to on the radio</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The language used in Hip Hop culture is offensive</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip Hop culture promotes a sexually seductive dress attire for women and a thug posture for men</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip Hop culture has artistry and a positive impacts in the lives of urban youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

109
Part II: Hip Hop Cultural Influence: Personal Perspective

Instructions: Please indicate your choice that best expresses your views about the statements below.

1) To what extent do you personally associate with any of the Hip Hop genres below, if any?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Political or message rap</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. East or West Coast</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Gangsta/Hardcore</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Commercial Hip Hop (Rap and R&amp;B mix)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) What value does Hip Hop provide for individuals that actively participate in the culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Individuals ability to navigate multiple realities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Appreciation of artistic expression</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Enjoy the beats, rhythm, and lyrics</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Indicate how Hip Hop has impacted your life, if at all?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Provides national awareness of societal issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Success as a method of upward mobility in society</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Encourages resilience in spite of challenges</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4) **How much do you believe Hip Hop culture messages these values?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. National awareness of societal issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Success as a method of upward mobility in society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Resilience in spite of challenges</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5) **Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements about experiences you have had in developing friendships and/or other relationships with member(s) of the Hip Hop culture?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I had a positive experience and we learned from each other</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. I have expanded my worldview</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. I am more self-aware of realities in urban communities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6) **How do you think Hip Hop culture has affected African American male middle school students?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Created a positive sense of self-awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Promotes male chauvinism and misogyny</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Created a culture of collective community empowerment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
7) How influential do you think the following factors are in terms of improving the image of the Hip Hop culture in society?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Extremely influential</th>
<th>Very influential</th>
<th>Somewhat influential</th>
<th>Slightly influential</th>
<th>Not at all influential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Presenting more culturally diverse Hip Hop artists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Promoting more positive messages through Hip Hop music</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. More actively involved youth and Hip Hop artists in public awareness campaigns</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Part III: Hip Hop Culture: In Your Classrooms

Instructions: Please indicate your choice that best expresses your views about the statements below.

1) How often have Hip Hop terms/language been expressed in your classrooms by African-American males for the following purposes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Students use the terms to make meaning of mainstream terms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Students use the terms to belittle each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Students use the terms a method of created an authentic voice in schools</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2) How helpful do you think the following strategies are in engaging African-American male students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The incorporation of hip hop music in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Lesson plans that include culturally relevant pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Utilizing the gradual-release-of-responsibility model across all middle school grades</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) What instructional strategies might be useful in reaching African-American male students who are heavily influenced by Hip Hop culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Use storytelling to connect with students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Allow students to demonstrate their learning through different modes of artistic expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Use references in instruction that demonstration an appreciation of hip-hop culture</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4) How effective do you think the following strategies will be to bridge any gap in the Hip Hop culture between African-American male students and teachers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Somewhat Effective</th>
<th>Not very Effective</th>
<th>Not effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Professional development in the area of youth culture in urban cities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Create a “critical friends” group</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
c. Promote co-teaching amongst teachers who have demonstrated success in implementing culturally-responsive teaching strategies

5) Of the following strategies, please indicate whether or not you agree that the particular strategy will be effective in creating a positive image of the Hip Hop culture within this school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Actively discuss the challenges and opportunities of reaching our students through Hip Hop culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Research best practice strategies related to Hip Hop and begin to utilize in the school</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Promote co-teaching amongst teachers who have demonstrated success in implementing culturally responsive strategies</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) What are your thoughts about culturally-relevant course material to engage African-American male students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Promotes positive images of minorities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Increases student self-worth</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Promotes student classroom engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part IV: African-American Male Students

Instructions: Please indicate your choice that best expresses your views about the statements below.

1) **How often do you use to the following strategies to engage your African-American male students?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empower them by enabling them to take on leadership roles in the classroom</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilize project-based and hands-on activities to engage difficult students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate more instructional technology in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) **To what extent do you agree with the following expectations about behavior?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My expectations are very clear and I model the behavior that I expect from my students</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My expectations are clear almost half of the time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>My expectations are unclear, and I should provide more clarity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3) How well do you keep momentum and pacing in your class for African-American male students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I keep momentum and pacing appropriate for the age group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I am not sure if my momentum and pacing is appropriate for the age group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Momentum and pacing works best when students work in groups</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) How often do you do the following to motivate African-American male students who show low interest in class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide additional encouragement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide incentives (e.g.) pizza parties, free time, candy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make real world connections to the content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) How often do you use the following strategies to control disruptive behavior African-American male students in your classroom, if any exist?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Set clear expectations around classroom behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Immediately diffuse potentially volatile situations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Redirect to a move positive behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6) How often do you use the following strategies to help African-American male students' value learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Use culturally relevant teaching strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Teach in a real world context</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Help students to see how a short term investment impacts their long term goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7) How often do you use the following strategies to foster student creativity among African-American male students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Provide opportunities for students to showcase their creativity (e.g.) project-based learning opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Allow students to demonstrate competencies through diverse methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Create a classroom culture of acceptance, where questioning is the norm and there are no wrong answers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8) **How do you gauge African-American male student comprehension of subject material?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Through a variety of assessments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Evaluating the types of questions asked by students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Through class work and homework mastery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9) **What do you do to improve the understanding of African-American males who are failing?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Offer tutoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Offer additional opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding of key concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Peer support; team failing students with high achieving students</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX D

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Professional Development #1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|     | Targeted professional development on culturally-responsive teaching strategies to engage African-American males | Targeted culturally-responsive professional development addressing the following four areas:  
- Hip Hop Culture 101  
- Instructional strategies for boys Part I  
- Communication of high expectations  
- Active teaching methods in a culturally-responsive classroom Part I |
| 1.0 | Hip Hop Culture 101 |  
- Participants will understand the history of Hip Hop culture  
- Participants will understand the elements of Hip Hop culture  
- Participants will understand the influence of Hip Hop culture on students  
- Participants will understand the ways Hip Hop culture can be incorporated into classroom instructional methods |
| 1.1 | Instructional strategies for boys Part I |  
- Participants will understand the importance of using graphics, pictures and other visual stimuli to make academic connections for boys  
- Participants will understand the importance of high interest assignments and student choice in classroom assignments  
- Participants will understand the importance of teaching time and organizational management skills to boys  
- Participants will understand the importance of teacher movement during instruction  
- Participants will understand the importance of gender specific classroom grouping for some assignments |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Instructional strategies for boys Part I</td>
<td>- Participants will understand the importance of gender identity in the classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participants will understand the importance of creating project-based learning experiences for boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participants will understand the importance of creating cooperative, collaborative, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>competitive academic classroom experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Communication of high expectations</td>
<td>- Participants will understand societal gender expectations and how it impacts student engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participants will understand the importance of reaffirming student potential for success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional Development #2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted professional development on culturally-responsive teaching strategies to engage African-American males</th>
<th>Targeted culturally-responsive professional development addressing the following four areas:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The teacher serves as a facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reshape the curriculum to respond to learners needs in a culturally-responsive classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Instructional strategies for boys Part II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Active teaching methods in a culturally-responsive classroom Part II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Small group instruction and Academically-Related Discourse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>The teacher serves as a facilitator</td>
<td>- Participants will understand the importance of flexible grouping classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participants will understand the process of “gradual release of responsibility”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participants will understand how to inspire boys and increase individual responsibility, work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ethic, and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Reshape the curriculum to respond to learners needs in a culturally-responsive classroom</td>
<td>- Participants will understand the importance of flexible grouping strategies (e.g. based on data,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>gender, interests, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participants will be able to make real-world connections for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participants will be able to make college and career connections for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Instructional strategies for boys Part II</td>
<td>▪ Participants will be able to understand the scope, relevance and variety of instructional strategies available to teach diverse groups of boys and all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Active teaching methods in a culturally-responsive classroom Part II</td>
<td>▪ Participants will be able to understand the types of active teaching methods accessible to teach diverse groups of boys and all students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2.4 | Small group instruction and Academically-Related Discourse             | ▪ Participants will be able to understand the purpose and benefits of small group instruction  
▪ Participants will be able to understand the successful strategies implementing small group learning experiences |
APPENDIX E

AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOOL

### African-American Male Student Engagement Classroom Observation Tool

**Teaching and Learning Domain:** Culture is central to learning. It plays a role not only in communicating and receiving information but also in shaping the thinking process of groups and individuals. A pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures offers full, equitable access to education for students from all cultures and prepares students to live in a pluralistic society. Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students’ cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billing, 1994).

The levels gauge to what degree the activity in the teaching domain is implemented in the classroom. Level one provides the least level of implementation and increased levels of implementation up to level 4.

- **Level 1:** Limited or no evidence of implementation
- **Level 2:** Evidence of emerging implementation
- **Level 3:** Evidence of consistent implementation
- **Level 4:** Evidence of exemplary implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching and Learning Domains</th>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>Evidence/Observable Behaviors (interactions between the teacher and African-American male students)</th>
<th>Potential Strategies</th>
<th>Observation Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domain 1: Engage Students at all Learning Levels</td>
<td>The teacher makes the lesson accessible to A.A. male students. It appears the teacher knows each A.A. male student’s level and ensures that the</td>
<td>1.1 The teacher makes the lesson challenging to all A.A. male students, by successfully implementing a Common Core State Standards based lesson plan. Level: 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>• Differentiate content, process, or product  • Flexible grouping  • Leveled texts  • Tiered assignments  • Leveled questions  • Extension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Domains</td>
<td>Skill Area</td>
<td>Evidence/Observable Behaviors (interactions between the teacher and African-American male students)</td>
<td>Potential Strategies</td>
<td>Observation Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>lesson meets students where they are.</td>
<td>1.2 There is evidence that the teacher knows each A.A. male student's level and ensures that the lesson pushes almost all A.A. male students forward from where they are. Level: 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>assignments • Differentiate content, process, or product • Flexible grouping • Leveled texts • Tiered assignments • Leveled questions • Extension assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 There is an appropriate balance between teacher-directed and student-centered learning during the lesson, such that A.A. male students have adequate opportunities to meaningfully practice, apply, and demonstrate what they are learning. Level: 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>• Content is delivered using a variety of instructional methods • Students work independently and in groups • Extension assignments are provided balanced with teacher support • Teachers provide immediate feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Domains</td>
<td>Skill Area</td>
<td>Evidence/Observable Behaviors (interactions between the teacher and African-American male students)</td>
<td>Potential Strategies</td>
<td>Observation Notes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain 2: Provide Students Multiple Ways to Move Toward Mastery</td>
<td>The teacher provides A.A. male students multiple ways to engage with content</td>
<td>2.1 The ways the teacher provides content include learning styles or modalities that are appropriate to A.A. male students’ needs; all students respond positively and are actively involved in the work. Level: 1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 The teacher makes connections with A.A. male students’ prior knowledge, students’ experiences and interests, other content areas, or current events to effectively build A.A. male student understanding of content. Level: 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>• Probe students to assess current understandings • Depth of student questioning • Use progressively challenging questions to develop higher-level understanding • Provides appropriate wait time after asking higher-level questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Domains</td>
<td>Skill Area</td>
<td>Evidence/Observable Behaviors (interactions between the teacher and African-American male students)</td>
<td>Potential Strategies</td>
<td>Observation Notes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain 3:</strong> Respond to Student Understanding</td>
<td>When A.A. male students demonstrate misunderstandings or partial understandings, the teacher almost always uses effective culturally-responsive techniques by scaffolding content that enable A.A. male students to construct their own understandings, when appropriate</td>
<td>3.1 The teacher re-teaches effectively when appropriate, such as in cases in which most of the class demonstrates a misunderstanding or an individual A.A. male student demonstrates a significant misunderstanding. Level: 1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 The teacher also anticipates common misunderstandings Level: 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>• Assist A.A. male students in finding errors • Assist A.A. male students in eliminating incorrect answers • Provide cues to help the A.A. male students arrive at the correct answer. • Use a different approach to present a concept • Re-explain a problematic step • Restate unclear academic vocabulary, • Re-check for understanding • Offer a misunderstanding as a correct answer to see how A.A. male students respond • Correct student misunderstanding with whole class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Domains</td>
<td>Skill Area</td>
<td>Evidence/ Observable Behaviors (interactions between the teacher and African-American male students)</td>
<td>Potential Strategies</td>
<td>Observation Notes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|                              |            | 3.3 The teacher almost always probes A.A. male students’ correct responses, when appropriate, to ensure A.A. male student understanding. Level: 1 2 3 4 | • Request evidence to support the answer  
• Push the A.A. male student to use academic vocabulary to more precisely explain a concept  
• Ask how and why the A.A. male student arrived at his answer | participation |


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching and Learning Domains</th>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>Evidence/Observable Behaviors (interactions between the teacher and African-American male students)</th>
<th>Potential Strategies</th>
<th>Observation Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Domain 4: Build a Supportive, Learning-Focused Classroom | A.A. male students are invested in their work and value academic success. | 4.1 The classroom environment is conducive for A.A. male students, such that A.A. male students are willing to take on challenges and risk failure.  
Level: 1 2 3 4 | • A.A. male students work hard without frequent reminders  
• A.A. male students provide remain focused on learning without frequent reminders  
• A.A. male students persevere through challenges | |
|                                           |                                                                             | 4.2 The teacher meaningfully reinforces positive behavior and good academic work, when appropriate for A.A. male students.  
Level: 1 2 3 4 | • Teacher offers students specific praise. | • A.A. male students |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching and Learning Domains</th>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>Evidence/Observable Behaviors (interactions between the teacher and African-American male students)</th>
<th>Potential Strategies</th>
<th>Observation Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4.3                          |            | The teacher has a positive rapport with A.A. male students, as demonstrated by displays of positive affect, evidence of relationship building, and expressions of interest in A.A. male students’ thoughts and opinions. Level: 1 2 3 4 | are eager to ask questions  
• A.A. male students ask the teacher for help  
• A.A. male students engage in constructive feedback with their classmates  
• A.A. male students provide do not respond negatively when a peer answers a question incorrectly. |                    |
| Domain 5:                    | Students actively engage in assignments to improve learning outcomes | Consistently discuss connections between what is being learned and their life experiences or other real life applications. Level: 1 2 3 4 | Consistently and routinely have a variety of choices in how to complete an assignment.  
• Consistently and routinely have a choice in |                    |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching and Learning Domains</th>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>Evidence/Observable Behaviors (interactions between the teacher and African-American male students)</th>
<th>Potential Strategies</th>
<th>Observation Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| taught in the formal curriculum. | 5.2 Assignments typically have a purpose that is meaningful to A.A. male students and/or an audience beyond the teacher. Level: 1 2 3 4 | the way they demonstrate competence  
- consistently and routinely have a choice about how to demonstrate learning from a set of structured or guided options  
- Pairs or small group assignments routinely have clear purpose, tasks, roles, and expectations for A.A. male students. |
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tony D. Johnson is the Career and Technical Education State Director at the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education. He holds dual baccalaureate degrees in Political Science and Criminal Justice, a Master’s degree in Public Administration and Public Policy and a doctorate in Educational Leadership, Policy, and Planning. Dr. Johnson has served as a Director of Adult & Community-Based Programs, a Coordinator of Teacher In-Service, an Associate Dean, a Department Chair, an Executive Director for The Literacy Council, a Program and Training Director for the Community Services Agency of the AFL-CIO, District of Columbia High School Principal, Spingarn Senior High School Teacher, Gadsden County Alternative High School, and Leon County Schools Teacher.

Tony Johnson also has a number of classroom-based and educational leadership experiences. Additionally, he has taught in the Colleges of Education and School of Arts & Sciences at Florida State University, Florida A&M University, Barry University, and George Washington University. He has successfully administered programs in Florida, Maryland, and Washington D.C.’s urban schools and community centers that also serve at-promise, and other marginalized populations.

These experiences include supervision of student populations of 1,500 students per semester and over 400 instructional personnel, including instructors, teachers, volunteers and program coordinators. He also managed annual state contracts and grant budgets of approximately $12 million dollars. He has provided training for teachers, staff, and education practitioners in best practices of working with African-American males.