ENSURING RIGOR & BUILDING EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN DIVERSE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS

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“To know where we are going, we must know where we’ve come from’

- The Adinkra symbolize the Akan way of life, and individually each symbol can be associated with an **aphorism or proverb** rooted in the Akan experience.
- African proverbs offer insight into African philosophical thought, cosmology, and worldview, so that collectively, the Adinkra and their accompanying proverbs form a communication system that preserves and transmits the accumulated cultural and spiritual values of the people.
Sankofa symbol

- One of the Adinkra symbols for Sankofa depicts a mythical bird flying forward with its head turned backward. The egg in its mouth represents the “gems” or knowledge of the past upon which wisdom is based; it also signifies the generation to come that would benefit from that wisdom. 

\[ (sa)\overline{m} = \text{"to return"} \times (ko)\overline{o} = \text{"to go"} \times (fe)\overline{e} = \text{"to look, to seek and take"} \]

The role of culturally responsive pedagogy

- There is great need to identify effective ways to prepare teachers who will implement culturally responsive practices that will engage and motivate all children while allowing and encouraging those children to affirm their cultural identity in a positive manner.

- An equally important area is the need to identify effective ways to alter attitudes of teachers so that they are willing to reflect upon and change as appropriate their long-held views about teaching, culture, and learning.

Linking culturally responsive pedagogy to retention and success of culturally diverse gifted students
Challenges for diverse gifted students

- Gaining a sense of belonging in gifted ed schools/classrooms
- Maintaining cultural legacy
- Focusing on 'scholar mentality' in the midst of oppressive school & community settings
- Overcoming discrimination through low expectations
- Feelings of 'being different' from the norm
- Accessing high end curriculum & programming opportunities elem-high school

Ensuring Rigor --

- Typically characterized as 'high-end' learning
- Students are placed in the 'mode' of practicing professionals
- Discuss and learn about ‘Big Ideas’
- Critically analyze literature, historical perspectives, scientific theories

- Matched with interest of learners
- Provide for creation of new ideas, products, knowledge in a given area
- Hands-on, using tools & methodologies of specific disciplines
- Opportunities for lab experiences, internships, and independent studies
Rigor across the curriculum

- Inquiry based teaching
- Historical criticism
- Problem-based learning
- Thinking like an 'engineer', artist, scientist, mathematician, etc.

Aligning strengths/inclinations with instruction

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CLD learners</th>
<th>Rigorous-Relevant Instruction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal, Linguistic Strengths</td>
<td>Literary analysis, read-alouds, forensics, using music to teach math/geography, focus on writing, oral competitions/debates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual/Spatial Strengths</td>
<td>STEM content focus, innovative technologies, Board Games to teach skills, engage across groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flourish in hands-on learning environments</td>
<td>Laboratory classrooms, Internships, Group problem solving experiments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facility &amp; ease with use of multiple modalities</td>
<td>Using visual imagery, music, hands-on, integration of technology throughout</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veristic, Energetic</td>
<td>Flexible grouping, allowing movement during class period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Situational, pragmatic problem solvers</td>
<td>Problem-based learning, Using word problems to teach math concepts, cross disciplinary instruction</td>
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</tbody>
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Relationships: connecting with students to increase access & improve opportunities

Relationships in gifted education classrooms that:

- build trust,
- attend to students’ psycho-social needs,
- sustain their engagement
- teach them to value the contributions of their peers across cultural groups

*will yield the most long-term effects*

Educators must be open to:

- Learning tools of ‘Code Switching’
- Arranging discussion groups re: Race & Education in non-defensive settings
- Understanding importance of Cohort groups with similar peers
- Examining lives and work of contemporary & historical figures across cultures and genders

**Historical Figure: Paul Robeson**

*Black & Gifted- Just like Me*

Paul Robeson was born in Princeton, New Jersey on April 9, 1898.

- His distinguished career as an actor, scholar (he was Phi Beta Kappa and valedictorian of his graduating class at Rutgers University),
- Athlete (two-time All-America Football Player at Rutgers University & Earned 15 Letters in Basketball, Track, Baseball and Football),
- Lawyer, Singer, Writer, and
- Multilingual (Robeson spoke more than 20 languages),

Made him one of the most versatile talents produced during The Harlem Renaissance.
Robeson as an Activist/Leader

- Robeson understood the power of his celebrity and combined it with activism to fight injustice. He opposed segregation in the North and South.
- He also spoke out loudly against lynching and in 1946 founded The American Crusade Against Lynching.

Power of Words – Mirror & Window Books

Share Mirror and Window Book lists

- Use for bibliotherapy
- Book reviews
- Literary analysis
- To open discussions re: cultural difference & similarities
  - See work of Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop
  - Book Review Listing (JLDavis)
African Americans in the STEM fields

STEM Leaders-

Problem Based Learning (PBL)

- Ill-Structured Problem
  - Group interaction
  - Inquiry
  - Research
  - Presentation of solution to public group
A Problem-Based Learning Inquiry:

Do the dry bones speak?

- http://www.history.buffalo.edu/documents/SeemanWMQ.pdf

Ill-structured Problem

- An Archaeological dig in the late 1990’s unearthed the remains of what appeared to be the remains of Africans buried in a particular lot/area of NYC.
- Landowners had made an earlier agreement to sell the property to a realtor ready to build a new high-rise apartment building.
- After the dig and discovery, the land deal was halted.
- Many interested in this discovery and land development were at odds; how can they resolve this matter to the satisfaction of all concerned (those interested in history of AA in colonial period NYC; land owner; realtor; national archaeologists; local politicians; local educators – high school and university personnel).

Your task: Create a plan for how this discovery can be successfully dealt with to the satisfaction of all parties.