

## Africa to America: Creating an Inclusive Curriculum

**Rationale:** Meet the needs of African American students who do not see themselves reflected in the present textbooks or American History in a positive light.

**Goal:** Design a curriculum enriched with the African American experience and history.

**Objective:** Teachers will become better equipped to work with their students and the community.

The work that I will be engaged with for the up coming school year offers many challenges. I am charged with the job of selecting books, materials, resources on the African American experience for the school library media center, as well as, books on this subject for the professional library at a small Christian school. I am also going to be working with the teachers to help them to infuse their curriculum with the African American experience. The challenge, as I see it, is the sincerity of the teachers, are they willing to spend the time and extra work that is necessary to properly infuse their curriculum? There is also an economic impact will there be monies to purchase the additional materials and resources. One of the first things I will be doing is taking an inventory of the books, videos, supplemental materials that are already in the building. The idea is that every teacher will attempt to incorporate some aspect of African American History into each of their classes this school year. That is not to say that some of them have not been doing this all along.

This school is a K-12 school with a student population that is mainly African American. The African American staff is comprised of young people that are new to the teaching profession. The challenge for them is getting to know their curriculum and their teaching strengths. The largest percent of the staff are experienced white teachers that come with a wealth of knowledge and a sincere desire to teach. The challenge for them in some instances is how to handle disruptive students within the classroom. Both these groups have many unique approaches when it comes to the way they would like to reach their students. These teachers believe if they are better equipped, that is, know more about the

students' culture, traditions and history they will be able to do a better job. They believe that in order for them to be successful teachers they need to improve their skills. This is one thing they all agree on they would like to make the curriculum more relevant to the students. The school has been besieged with low test scores, behavior problems and other issues surrounding poverty. The administration is in complete agreement with the staff and very supportive of infusing the curriculum.

On my initial meeting with these teachers there were many comments and questions. Questions, such as, are we talking just a few grade levels, are we talking only history, are we talking the lower grades? What about math and science, etc.? Some comments were "I'm already doing all I can in my classroom, I don't know anything about African American history, I'm willing to try, but I need help" In an attempt to put their minds at ease I brought along some materials to show that some of the work has already been started and if we have to we can start with these materials. What I shared with them was the book on African American History by Dr. Molefi Asante complete with activities. This book is by no means a complete all encompassing document but it is a start. I really appreciate the work that Dr. Asante has done with this book because it starts out with African history and brings us up to contemporary times. Of course, the comments were this book is all about history. I reminded that that is precisely the reason that I brought this book along because all of them have a history curriculum. This could be an excellent way that they could begin to infuse the African American experience in to their curriculum be it English, science, math, or whatever it is that they teach. For instance, I come from a middle school background. I am very familiar with the middle school Social Studies curriculum. In sixth grade World Cultures were taught; a great way to teach Africans in the diaspora in whatever the subject area. In our district the seventh grade Social Studies curricula focus is on Wisconsin history, what a great way to teach about African Americans that have made significant contributions to the state of Wisconsin. This will allow the teachers to have the students look at how African Americans, along with other ethnic groups, came to be in the state of Wisconsin. Why did we come, how did we come, where did we live, how were we treated what kind of work did we do?

In the area of English let's study Wisconsin African American writers in or from the state of Wisconsin. There is not a literary genre that you can't teach using the work of an African American writer.

In science let's look at African American scientists from the state of Wisconsin. If we can't make a connection there let's look at African American scientists in their area of expertise. If we're studying life, earth or physical science African American scientists have made significant contributions in each of those areas.

In Eighth grade the history focus is U.S. History a great chance to study African Americans from slavery, to Crispus Attucks to Black Codes to Jim Crow to the Civil Rights Movement right up to the present day. Everything that is taught will be taught as the regular curriculum is taught; only this way will be inclusive.

English math and science will be taught in the same way only more inclusive.

In the area of mathematics it is generally difficult to incorporate contributions in math on a daily basis; however, it is important to articulate to the students that they come from a legacy of greatness in math and that their ancestors in Africa were the original mathematicians. Several web sites are included that point to the prominence of African Americans in Math. One of our very early great mathematicians is Benjamin Banneker. Teachers will also be introduced to some of the African American religious and cultural traditions, such as, the Kwanzaa Holiday and the celebration of Juneteenth. Reading materials will be made available regarding the African American church. Local newspapers will be on hand and information will be presented to let them know about local radio stations and talk radio in the African American Community.

All of the teachers will be involved in helping to infuse their curriculum. Initially, we will meet on a weekend. The focus of this weekend inservice will not be on how to teach but what. We intend on making this a cultural experience. Consequently, we will have on hand many books, videos, presenters, such as, a historian, a storyteller, a drummer and a singer to interact with the teachers. We will meet on a Friday from 4pm to 8pm with a soul food dinner and 8 hours on Saturday with a West African lunch.

This task will not be accomplished in one weekend. The next phase of the plan is to meet bi-monthly with affinity groups. This will be an on going plan that could take a couple

of years to get the curriculum to the point where each teacher is comfortable with the infusion process. Most importantly, the availability of materials and resources and teacher exposure to on going workshops and in-services will determine whether this curriculum will work for the benefit of the students.

In addition to the resources included in this introductory plan, I will be also be incorporating the bibliography that we receive from this institute.

# Africa to America Teacher In-service

*“Europeans did not go to Africa to steal a lazy People.”  
....Jwanzaa Kunjufu*

## Friday

4:00pm---Drum Medley

Introductions

Black History Quiz  
Historical presentation on Africa  
(with emphasis on West Africa and the slave trade)

6:00pm--- Dinner (West African food)

6:30pm--- Drummers/Story teller/dancers (with historical information)

7:00pm--- Teachers are introduced to the process of curriculum infusion  
(discussion will follow)

7:45pm---Wrap Up/Questions

## Saturday

8:00am--- Negro Spirituals  
“Digging for Slaves” ---Video (with discussion for a lesson)

10:00am--- Discussion of the Quiz

10:30am---Discussion on contemporary African American Culture/Traditions

12pm----Lunch (African American food)

1:00pm----Research and planning by teachers (using computer, videos, books, etc.)

2:45pm---Teachers present an infused lesson plan to the group

3:45pm---Wrap Up/Questions

## **Schedule Next Inservice**

*“Without dignity there is no liberty, without justice there is no dignity, and  
without independence there are no free men”. - Lumumba*

## Selected Bibliography

We Can't Teach What We Don't Know—Gary Howard  
African American History w/Activity Book---Molefi Asante  
*Slave Narratives:*  
Frederick Douglass  
Sojourner Truth  
Harriett Tubman  
Harriett Jacobs  
Nat Turner  
Henry Highland Garnet  
David Walker's Appeal  
African American Almanac  
Remembering Slavery  
Forced into Glory  
Many Thousand Gone  
Time on the Cross  
Paul Laurence Dunbar  
Phillis Wheatley  
Jupiter Hammon  
Houston Baker  
Patrick Henry's Declaration of Independence Speech  
Beyond Heroes and Holidays---Enid Lee  
Black Folktales—Julius Lester  
Brer Rabbit Stories---Julius Lester  
The People Could Fly---Virginia Hamilton  
Sea Island Roots---Mary Twining  
Without Sanctuary---James Allen  
African American Scientists A-Z: Astrophysicist to Zoologist

## Websites

<http://www.sciway.net/afam/>  
<http://www.webarchaeology.com/html/Default.htm>  
<http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/madhists.html>  
<http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/madgreatest.html>  
<http://www.princeton.edu/~mcbrown/display/profession/m2.html>  
<http://barzilai.org/bm/>

## Music

Steal Away---Kim and Reggie Harris  
Africa to America---Sounds of Blackness

Negro Spirituals---Sweet Honey in the Rock  
Breaths---Sweet Honey in the Rock  
The Color of Dusk  
The Smoothest Jazz on Earth

### Fieldtrips

America's Black Holocaust Museum  
Wisconsin Black Historical Society Museum  
Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Cincinnati, OH  
Great Blacks in Wax Museum, Baltimore, MD  
Civil Rights Museum, Birmingham, AL  
Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, TN  
Charles Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI  
Colonial Williamsburg

### Curriculum

S.E.T.C.L.A.E---Self-Esteem through Culture Leads to Academic Success

### Videos

Color of Fear  
Digging for Slaves  
Slavery's Buried Past  
The Africans in America  
The Strange Career of Jim Crow  
Mandingo  
Feast of All Saints  
Eyes on the Prize  
Families Across the Sea  
Setting Sail: One Man's Journey to Africa

### Newspapers

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
Milwaukee Community Journal  
Milwaukee Courier  
Milwaukee Times

### Radio Stations

1290 WMCS  
860 WNOV

Dr. Marilyn Mobley McKenzie  
Institute Director

“Africa to America”  
Submitted: by Josephine D. Hill

Slavery, Literacy, and Freedom: African American Literature,  
Culture, and Folklore  
National Endowment for the Humanities  
July 5-29, 2005  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA



**Black History Survey 100 points (please answer true/false or fill in)**

1. The Souls of Black Folk was written by Booker T. Washington. F\_\_\_
2. The Emancipation Proclamation officially ended slavery in the US. F\_\_\_
3. The Trans-Atlantic importation of slaves became illegal in the US in 1808. T\_\_\_
4. Black History Month is celebrated in the United Kingdom in October. T\_\_\_
5. Kwanzaa is an African Holiday celebrated Dec. 20 to Dec. 26. F\_\_\_
6. Ghana became independent of British rule in March of 1957. T\_\_\_
7. Emmett Till was murdered in Mississippi when he refused to step off the sidewalk for a white woman. F\_\_\_
8. Slavery was abolished in the British Colonies in 1833. T\_\_\_
9. Name three European immigrant groups that migrated to America.  
Spanish      English      French (answers vary)
10. Name three African ethnic groups that were forced to come to America.  
Wolof      Igbo      Yoruba      (answers vary)

**Bonus (50 points)**

The G.A.P. Band came from the city of Tulsa recorded a song called "You Dropped a Bomb on Me" and took their name from streets named Greenwood, Archer and Pine.

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