

Making Black and Latino Students' Lives *Really* Matter in GATE and Other Classrooms



Dr. Gail L. Thompson

Wells Fargo Endowed Professor of Education
Creator and Director of Black Men Teaching (BMT) Program
Fayetteville State University

Website: www.drgailthompson.com
Email: gailt@aol.com

Agenda

Part 1

- Introduction
- Theme
- My Research

Part 2

- How Educators Can Improve the Schooling Experiences of African American and Latino Students
- My Story
- Conclusion
- Homework Assignment

Introduction

Recent shootings of unarmed Black men in various U.S. cities have resulted in protests and substantial media attention focusing on **common anti-Black policing and biased criminal justice practices.**

However, the **anti-Black and anti- “Brown”** practices that occur in **schools on a daily basis**, continue to be ignored, minimized, and more important, **continue to harm countless** African American and Latino Pre-K through 12 students.

An Emergency Situation:
Why This 911 Call to Educators is Necessary

- Standardized test scores
- Underrepresentation in GATE and AP classes
- School suspension and expulsion rates
- The “School-to-Prison Pipeline”
- School dropout and graduation rates
- Unemployment rates
- College readiness statistics

National Association for Gifted Children

“The school situation for high-potential students from low income and minority backgrounds is especially troublesome.”

“Data from every state reveal large ‘**excellence gaps**’, the gaps at the top achievement levels between minority and White students and between low-income and more advantaged students.”

“These gaps indicate a failure to identify high-ability students of color and from disadvantaged circumstances, and support them to reach the high levels of achievement of which they are capable.”

“These gaps also suggest there is a tremendous amount of talent being squandered. . . . Clearly, we can and must do better.”

Theme

In order to eradicate **inequality of educational opportunity**, and ensure that African American, Latino and other historically underserved **GATE** students receive a **quality education**, those of us who **care** about these students and our nation’s future, must **arm** ourselves with information, strategies, and other **resources** at our disposal **to fight** on the students’ and our nation’s behalf.

Heads, Hearts, Hands

In other words, we must use our **heads**, our **hearts**, and our **hands** to change the status quo.

11 Common Harmful School Practices

1. Stereotyping and placing negative labels on students and their parents/guardians
1. Academic tracking
3. Low expectations
4. Grade inflation
5. Ineffective instructional strategies
6. A refusal or inability to differentiate instruction and/or to assist struggling learners

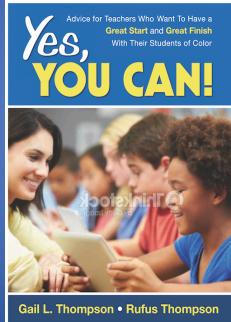
Harmful School Practices cont'd

7. A boring non-culturally relevant curriculum
8. A preoccupation with high-stakes testing
9. Ineffective, unfair and overly punitive classroom management strategies
10. Zero Tolerance Policy-related practices that result in tracking students into the prison pipeline
11. Rudeness, hypocrisy and sending mixed messages to parents/guardians

My Research Selected Results

- The Teacher Confidence Study
- The Mindset Study
- The Up Where We Belong Studies

*Yes, You Can! Advice for Teachers
Who Want a Great Start and a
Great Finish With Their Students of Color*



**“The Teacher Confidence Study”
(N =293)**

Teachers were **less likely** to feel confident about:

- their ability to teach Latino students than White or Asian American students
- their ability to teach African American students than White, Asian American or Latino students
- their ability to **teach African American males** than any other racial/ethnic group of students

Only **48%** of “Experienced Teachers” were “very confident” about their ability to effectively teach high achievers.

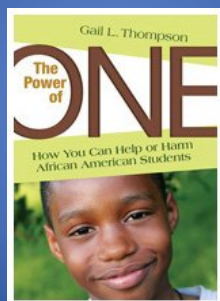
Other Issues

- Only 43% were very confident about their classroom management skills.
- Only 40% were very confident about their ability to effectively address racial conflicts that may arise in the classroom.
- Only 40% were very confident about their ability to incorporate racial issues into the curriculum.

Parents

- 60% were very confident about their ability to work effectively with Latino parents.
- 59% were very confident about their ability to work effectively with White parents.
- 56% were very confident about their ability to work effectively with Asian American parents.
- 50% were very confident about their ability to work effectively with African American parents.
- 26% were very confident about their ability to work effectively with ELL parents.

The Power of One: How You Can Help or Harm African American Students

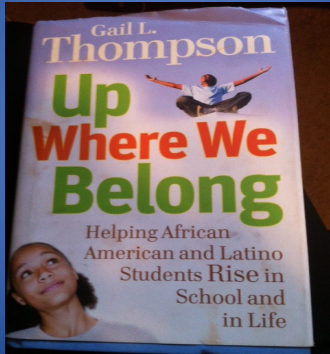


"The Mindset Study"

(N = 237)

- 93% said that most **teachers** do not know how to **work effectively** with African American students.
- 60% said that most **teachers** do not believe that most African American students are **capable of doing outstanding academic work**.
- 77% said that most **teachers don't treat or view** African American students in the same ways that they do non-Black students.
- 80% said that most **teachers don't believe** that most **Black parents care** about their children's education.

Up Where We Belong: Helping African American and Latino Students Rise in School and in Life



Data Collected

- Questionnaire data from **teachers**: N = 121
- Questionnaire data from **high school students**: N = 268
- **Student** Focus Groups: N=146

What Students Said About Their Teachers

Latinos and Blacks were **less likely** than Whites to:

- label their teachers as **“good”** teachers
- say that their teachers were **fair** about discipline
- believe that their teachers **cared** about them, and Latinas were the least likely to believe this

Blacks and Latinos were **more likely** than Whites to:

- say that their teachers **weren’t willing to answer questions** when they didn’t understand an assignment
- say that their teachers **wouldn’t give them extra help** during class time
- say that they **wished they had better teachers**

What Students Said About the Curriculum

Blacks and Latinos were **more likely** than Whites to say that:

- their classes **were boring**
- most of their classes **weren’t preparing them for the real world**
- they wanted to **learn more about their culture** in class

How Educators Can Improve the Schooling Experiences
of African American and Latino Students

1. *Make a choice to become a "turnaround" educator.
2. Learn the "Winning Formula."
3. Deal with your mental baggage, and adopt the correct mindset.
4. View and treat **each** student as a VIP.
5. Make the curriculum interesting, comprehensible, and culturally relevant.

How Educators Can Improve the Schooling Experiences
of African American and Latino Students cont'd

6. Try to form strong positive relationships with students.
7. Develop effective classroom management skills.
8. Use a recursive style of teaching.
9. Focus on the "alterable variables."
10. Form partnerships with parents and guardians of color.

How Educators Can Improve the Schooling Experiences
of African American and Latino Students cont'd

11. Build your confidence and improve your assertiveness skills.
12. Make a commitment to engage in ongoing personal and professional development.
13. Ask for help.
14. Be fair about discipline.
15. Be willing to give extra help during class time.
16. Be patient with all students, but especially with struggling learners.

How Educators Can Improve the Schooling Experiences
of African American and Latino Students cont'd

- 17. Look for potential instead of pathology.
- 18. Raise your expectations of yourself.
- 19. Raise your expectations of students.
- 20. Practice the "Golden Rule."

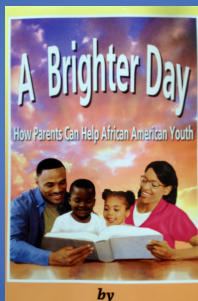
Make a choice to become a "turnaround" educator.

As you listen to my story, remember that your students, **especially the ones whom:**

- ❖ you can't stand,
- ❖ you believe are hopeless,
- ❖ you believe will end up badly, and
- ❖ you view as worthless

have the potential to end up where I am standing today!

A Brighter Day: How Parents
Can Help African American Youth



I had many strikes against me:

- ◆ Being an unwanted child who never felt loved during childhood
- ◆ Poverty
- ◆ Single parent home
- ◆ The “family tragedy”
- ◆ Abuse
- ◆ Substandard schools
- ◆ Repeatedly told that I was destined for Patton State M. H.
- ◆ Flunked first grade
- ◆ Was labeled a “discipline problem” and could’ve been pushed into the prison pipeline
- ◆ Low expectations from educators
- ◆ Father’s death
- ◆ Told to drop out of USC

from
*A Brighter Day: How Parents Can Help
 African American Youth*

Because of the many strikes against me, I could have:

- remained locked in a cycle of poverty
- become a gang member
- ended up in prison
- ended up on Death Row
- ended up passing negative generational cycles to my children

But my faith in God,
 one “turnaround” teacher,
 and a few mentors at my church made
 the
 ultimate difference
 for me.

What Mrs. Tessem Believed:

"Anybody who wants to be a teacher, has to realize the **nobility** of what you're doing on a **daily basis**."

"Teachers should treat each individual as a **precious mind**."

Many educators "haven't treated these children with the **respect and gentleness** that they need."

Resiliency Research

Many African American, Latino, and low-income students desperately need "turnaround" educators in their lives.

Characteristics of Turnaround Educators

- They look for **potential** instead of pathology in students.
- They **choose** to use their power to **help** rather than to harm students.
- They have **high expectations** for themselves and for their students.
- They find out **what students are good** at and they use these strengths to improve students' academic weaknesses.

The Winning Formula



The correct mindset +
effective instructional and classroom
management strategies
= the Winning Formula

Some Components of the Correct Mindset

- the belief that all students can learn
- the belief that most students want to learn
- the belief that academic problems can be eliminated
- the belief that every student is gifted and talented in at least one area that should be identified and used to build that student's confidence in other areas
- the belief that you can develop the skills and gain the knowledge that are necessary to improve students' academic skills
- the belief that you must start to develop a college-going mindset in students as early as possible, and provide parents with related strategies
- the belief that you should use your power to help rather than harm students
- the belief that you have a moral and a professional obligation to provide all students with an outstanding education

Conclusion

In order to make Black and Latino students' lives **really** matter in schools, there is work for all of us to do.

Therefore, we must use the resources at our disposal—including our heads, hearts, and hands-- on an ongoing basis to ensure that Black and Latino students receive an outstanding education that will increase their chances of having a great future.

Homework

1. Review the list of ways that “Educators Can Improve the Schooling Experiences of African American and Latino Students” Which of the strategies require “head” work, “heart” work, or “hand” work?
2. Which strategies do you already use, and what examples can you cite to support your answers?
3. Explain why you are or are not a “turnaround” educator?
4. What aspects of the mindset work are you willing to work on, and what are your action plans and timelines for doing this work?

Questions

What would our schools and our nation look like, if:

- ❖ we made improving the schooling experiences of African American and Latino students a top priority in classrooms, at school sites, in district offices, and at State Board of Education offices?
- ❖ we practiced the “Golden Rule” when speaking about and working with African American and Latino students and their parents/guardians?
- ❖ we chose to become “turnaround” individuals for African American and Latino students?
