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# ***Educating African American Males in the Era of Opportunity Gaps***

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***Loyola University Maryland***

Begin First Segment: ***Creating Success in the  
Urban Classroom***

Dr. Robert Simmons

# Growing a Rose from Concrete (Tupac Shakur): Creating Success in the Urban Classroom

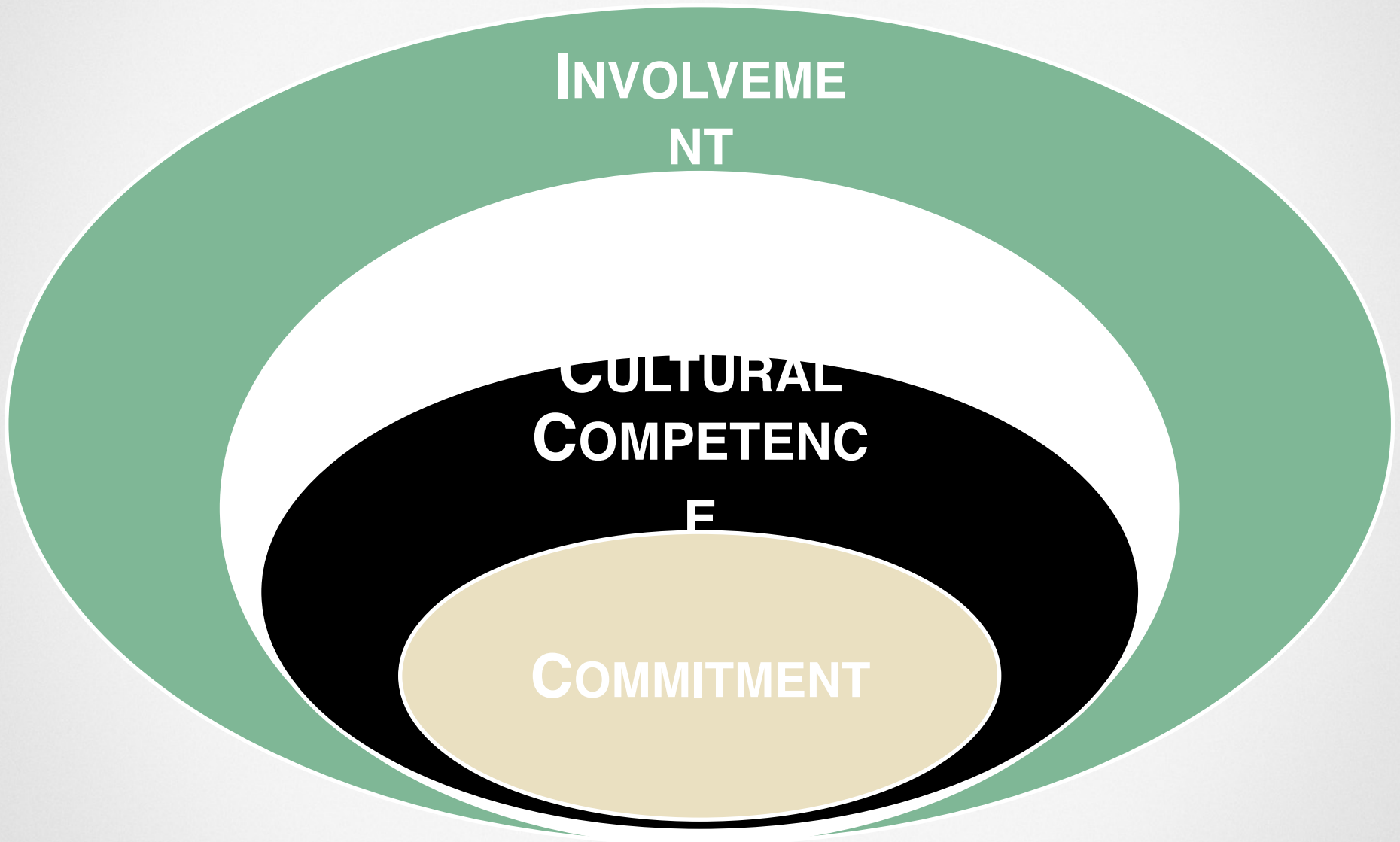




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## Successful African American teachers in urban schools

Detroit, Baltimore, Washington DC, & Minneapolis/St.  
Paul

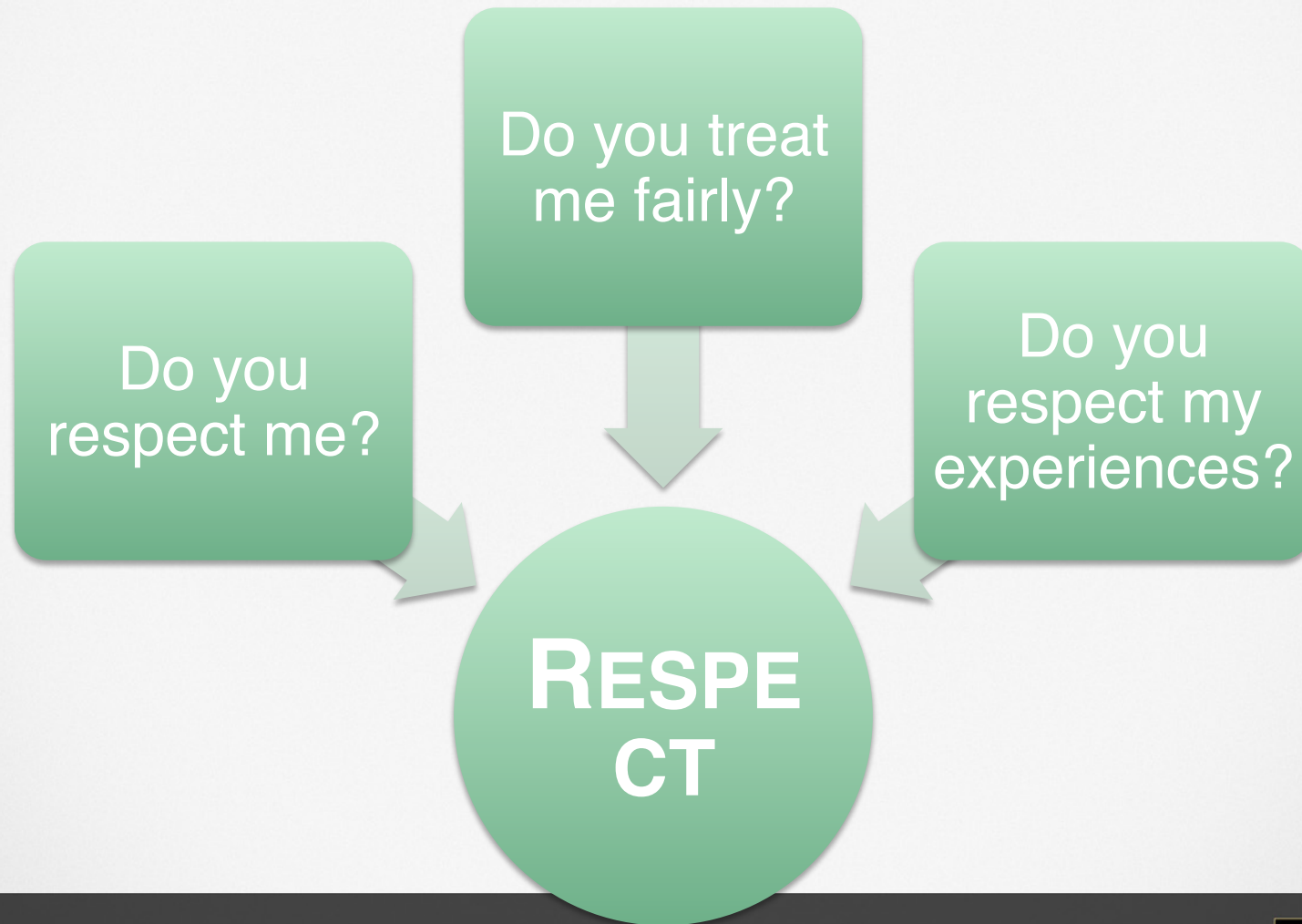


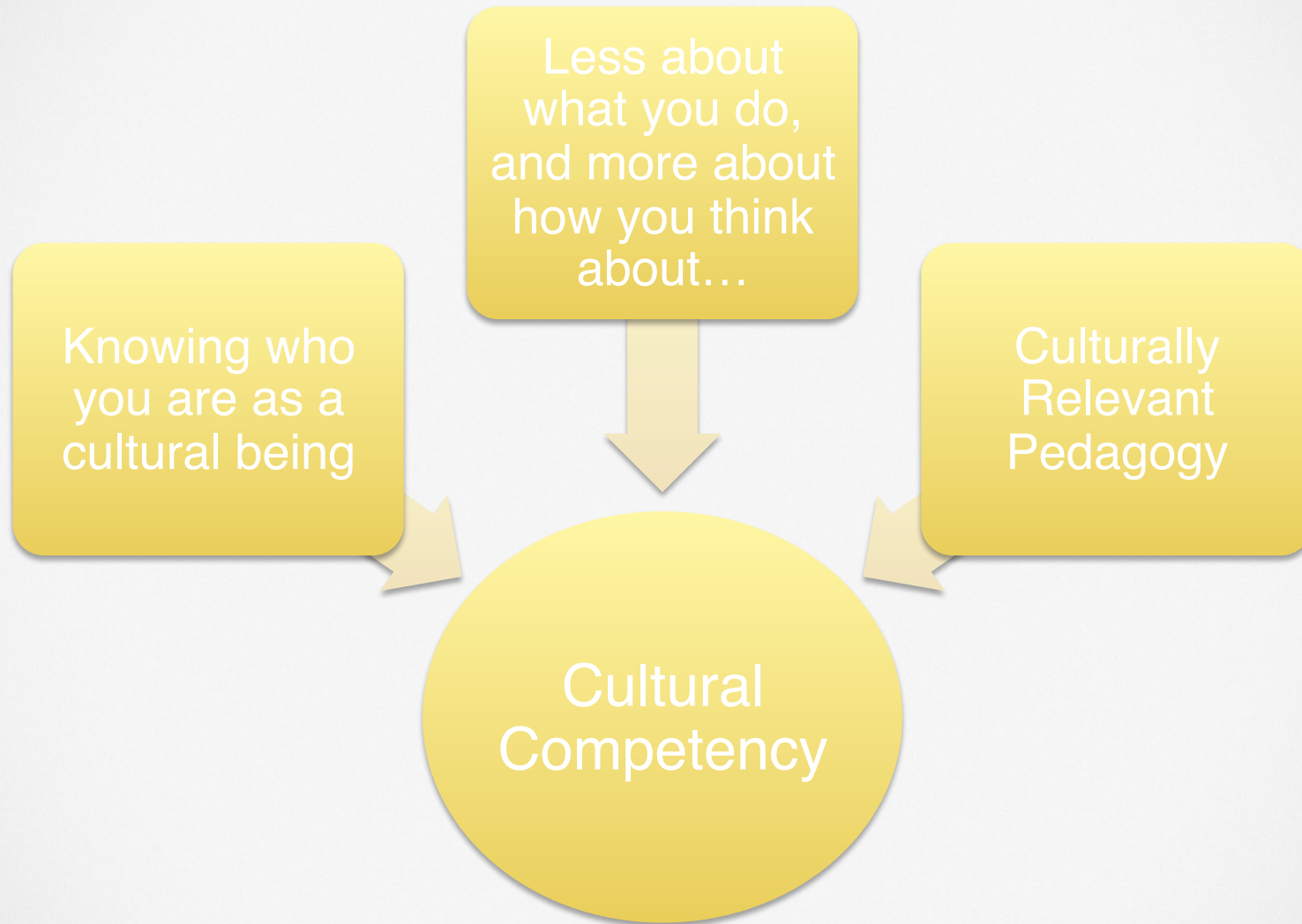
# INVOLVEMENT



## Students know when: you believe in me, care about me, have a relationship with me

- “She was hard on you, and you couldn’t run no game on her. She knew everybody, and she didn’t make you feel stupid even if you didn’t know the answers. That’s why I made sure I got her homework done even when I wouldn’t do it for anybody else.”
- “That dog. I hated him. He was evil, and didn’t care nothing about nobody. You couldn’t talk to him. He thought he was bad, and acted like he was king or something. All he wanted to do was flunk everybody.”

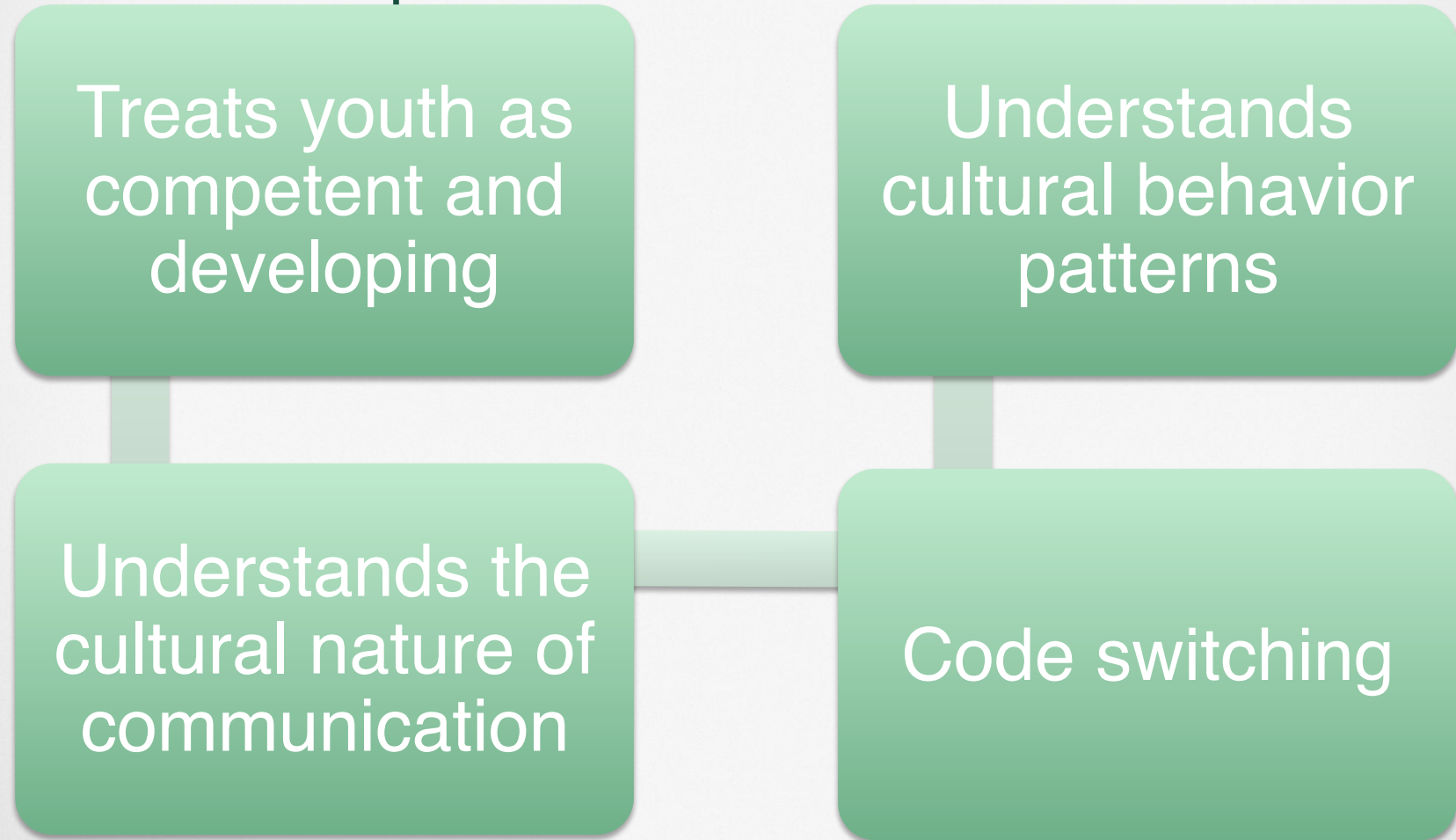




## Five essentials elements for individual and institutional cultural competency

- Value diversity
- Have the capacity for cultural self-assessment
- Be conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact
- Institutionalize cultural knowledge
- Develop adaptations to service delivery reflecting an understanding of diversity between and within cultures

## Introductory tenants of culturally competent educational personnel



# Commitment: The most critical element

High expectations with high responsibility

Commitment

Equity

Do you care about me?

What does high expectations look like?



End First Segment: *Creating Success in the  
Urban Classroom*

Questions?

# Begin Second Segment: *Creating the Successful Urban School*

Peter C. Murrell

## Rejected Titles for this Second Segment of the Presentation

- *Waiting for Superman: When Superman is Us*
- *The Good, The Bad, and the Challenging*
- *Whistling Vivaldi, Walking Tupac*
- *The Trouble With Black Boys*

## Organization of this Segment

African American teachers – you've already heard from Dr. Simmons on the characteristics of success classrooms – for African American students in challenged and challenging urban settings.

Remaining presentation focuses on the enterprise of creating a school context in those settings -- one that specifically addresses the challenges for education, schooling and development of African American boys.

An action theory put into practice.

# Where We Are Now...

## ▪US HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE

- 70% All students
- 55% African American students
- 48% African American males

## ▪PROFICIENCY

- 38% of the nation's 12th graders read at a proficient level
- Students who enroll in remedial reading courses are 3x more likely to drop out of college (NAEP)

## ▪JOBS and the ECONOMY

- 85% of current jobs require some postsecondary education
- On average, college graduates earn twice as much as those with just a high school degree.

## Some Structural Challenges

One of three African-American males is involved in penal institution;

By 2020 two of three African-American males will be involved in the penal system;

20% of African-American adults and 50% of African-American children live below the poverty line;

12% of African-American adults are unemployed vs. 6% of white.

*(Kunjufu, 2004)*

## More Structural Challenges

47% of penal population is African –American

Only 3.5 % of college students are African-American

37% of school suspensions are African-American

31% of African-American males between the ages of 15 – 25 are unemployed

*(Kunjufu, 2004)*

# Increasing Odds: African American High School Students

- 1 in 200,000 will play in the NBA
- 1 in 2,700 will earn a Ph.D.
- 1 in 766 will become a lawyer
- 1 in 395 will become a doctor
- 1 in 192 will become a teacher
- 1 in 20 will be incarcerated
- 1 in 12 will have and STD
- 1 in 9 will use cocaine
- **1 in 3 will drop out**

*(Kunjufu, 2004)*

## What We Know: Characteristics of At-Risk Schools that Don't Work

- Ineffective administrators
- Low expectations
- Incongruence between pedagogy and learning styles
- Irrelevant and inaccurate curriculum
- Tracking
- Lack of parental involvement and support
- Low student self-esteem and motivation
- Negative peer pressure
- Lack of African-American male teachers and role models
- Lack of safety

## What We Know About Schools that Work

- A rigorous academic program focused on higher order thinking, extended writing, problem-solving, and other skills for college and career success
- Knowledgeable and skilled teachers and leaders
- Strong, caring relationships between students and teachers, students and students, so no student falls through the cracks
- Extended learning opportunities
- Support for students – counseling, advisors
- Support for teachers – professional development
- Use of data –student work, attendance, test scores, graduation rates
- Strong parental and community involvement
- Shared accountability for student success
- Autonomy and flexibility to make decisions what's best for students

## The Transforming Urban Schools and Schooling

- Nationally: Over 5,000 schools, or 5% of the total, are now in “Restructuring” under NCLB by 2009-2010.
- In 2010 the number of schools in restructuring increased by 28% from 2009, and an alarming 118% from 2008.
- In large urban areas, failing schools comprise up to 22% of the total.

Chicago	Los Angeles	NYC	Washington, DC	Philadelphia
20%	18%	12%	15%	20%

## What's the cost?

In Maryland...

- Mentoring one youth in a one-to-one program for \$1000-\$1500 per year

Vs.

- Spending up to \$80,000 a year to house one youth in a correctional or rehabilitation facility.

## A Theory of Human Change

- Not about a “supports” mentality, but rather an “enculturating proficiency mentality”.
- Not about the insufficiency of individuals (teachers), but of a system with ***social amnesia*** (Russell Jacoby), ***political myopia*** (Jean Anyon) and ***cultural/color blindness***.

# School Transformation: What are We Aiming At?

## ▶ **Action Theory - Transformative Agency**

- Requires the autonomy to make fundamental changes in people, culture, operations, and program – all at once
- Leads to rapid achievement growth for existing and incoming students

## ▶ **Four Models for School Transformation**

- Turnaround
- Restart
- School Closure
- **Transformation**

## ▶ **What is Success**

- **Creating a school that works.** Closing the achievement gap: students out-perform average performance levels defined by districts and meet or exceed that of more affluent schools.

## Our Urban Early College (UEC) Approach

- A potent theory of change – grounded in multiple contexts including historical, cultural, and social;
- Community of practice from inception to opening the school doors in fall;
- Community-based, urban focused;
- Based upon the new turn in human development.

## Our Urban Early College (UEC) Team

- Dr. Sarah Manekin
- Mr. Ed Davies
- Mr. Jon McGill
- Mr. Chris Wilson
- Mr. Abe Yasser
- Dr. Peter C. Murrell, Jr.

## Research the UEC Approach Draws On

“Most urban high schools are too large and fail to promote close personal relationships and a sense of community between adults and students...**high schools should be structured to promote supportive personal relationships** among the members of its community.” *(National Research Council, 2003)*

## Research the UEC Approach Draws On

- Schools where **teams of teachers meet regularly, plan collaboratively**, and adapt their practice to students' needs get better results. (*Fullan, 2000*)
- When students participate in co-curricular activities more and are less alienated. (*Huling, 1980*)
- Small schools can “create social and academic **environments that lead to improved student outcomes**, particularly for disadvantaged students.” (*DeAngelis, Illinois Education Research Council, 2004*)

## Principals the UEC Approach is Based Upon

1. A rigorous, developmental college prep curriculum;
2. Teacher-counselor teams constructing and structuring learning environments;
3. A culture and expectation of continuous development of teachers;
4. Distributed counseling and enculturation of student capacities, abilities and proficiency;
5. Parental and family engagement;
6. Extended school day and school year.

# Rigorous, Developmental College Prep Curriculum

- **Inquiry-based** approach to curriculum and instruction that includes extensive writing across the curriculum, critical inquiry, higher order thinking, complex problem solving, self-discipline and effective work habits;
- **Engaging learners** with links to real-world issues and dilemmas;
- **Multiple forms of assessment** for instruction (not sort-and-select), including performance and portfolio assessments, teacher tests, standardized tests and value-added assessments;
- **Alignment with state standards** and new Common Core Curriculum to ensure that students pass applicable state exams;
- **A college preparatory orientation** throughout all grades including participation in college life at Loyola University Maryland.

# Teacher-Counselor Teams Construct Learning Contexts

- Consistent, clear and well-articulated learning trajectory for students throughout their six years;
- Teacher and counselor teams that develop individualized learning plans applying strategies for creating personalized, caring communities where students socialized into the practices of achievement and continuous improvement.
- Teachers continuously develop expertise in the subject area they teach and demonstrate successful experience teaching diverse learners.

# Continuous Development of Teachers in Practice

- Customized ongoing professional development to support teachers in developing effective teaching practices based on learning goals and students' needs;
- Embedded coaching (coteaching) targeted to individual teacher improvement and team development;
- Intensive Summer and Intersession professional development Institutes and content area workshops;
- Support by Teaching Fellows, Interns and field students from Loyola University School of Education.

## Extended School Day

- Intercession learning experiences for faculty and students;
- Time, attention and other supports students need to be successful in a challenging, college prep curriculum;
- Skill development; test preparation; talent development and enrichment; leadership development; homework support; travel; summer institutes in math, science and technology;
- Community service and internships which allow students to explore their interests, participate in "world of work" experiences and also make a contribution to others.

## Distributed Counseling and Support

- A team of counselors who works with the teams of teachers to create a personalized, caring community in which all students are known well.
- Counselors also provides direct services to students and their families, as required, sometimes through leveraging available community resources.
- The counselor teams work with the teams to address students' academic, social and emotional needs.
- Advisory structures consisting of 10-15 students with a faculty advisor to provide ongoing academic, social and emotional supports.

# Parent Engagement

- Teachers and counselors teams engage parents as partners – not merely as a valuable source of information about their children’s strengths and experiences, talents and aspirations, learning styles;
- Innovating new participant structures for parent -- participate regularly in conferences to review student work and progress together, to build relationships and to maintain open lines of communication;
- Innovating new social spaces and cultural rituals of the school to facilitate the development of strong family-school connections, such as ceremonies, orientations for new students/parents, family potluck nights, etc.

## Selected Research Groundings

- Maryland Task Force on African American Male
- The Trouble With Black Boys: ...And Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education

## Critical Concepts in the Action Theory

- Agency – Internal Locus of Control (Self-Regulation)
- Situated identity
- Positionality
- Community of practice

# The Action Theory

Individual

Social Context

Communities of Practice

**Table 1 – Framework for Mediated Identity Theory**

<b>Type of Identity Growth</b>	<b>Type of Social Context</b>	<b>Type of Cultural Practice</b>
Situated Identity	Social-Cultural Community	Primary Socialization
Positionality	Social-Symbolic Community (Figured World)	Secondary Socialization
Agency	Community of Practice Activity Setting	Improvisational Self-Determination

© Murrell, P. C., Jr. (2005). From Chapter One in *Identities of Achievement in Multiracial and Multicultural Classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

**Table 1 – Framework for Mediated Identity Theory **Made Plain****

Type of Identity Growth	Type of Social Context	Type of Cultural Practice
“Knowing where you come from”	The Family “Your People”	“How you was raised” “Home training”
Bein’ who you need to be, given who you really are	The wider world of the school, the playground, and in-between	Learnin’ lessons
Asserting who you need to be, despite the way others choose to see you	A crew, A set, A leaning community, A community of practice	Makin’ do with what you got to get to where you need to be

# Core Concept

The social identity of a young person is the most critical element in the educative process – and both shapes and is shaped by the social, cultural and historical contexts of his or her social activity, both in and out of school.

# Discovery Questions

1. How do we construct this rich cultural integrity and offer it as an enriched social environment in school contexts?
2. What vitally important aspects of African American culture, for example, have been overlooked in the intellectual and social environments of so many predominantly Black inner-city schools?

## Discovery Questions

3. What new understandings about intercultural existence in urban life among scores of ethnic, racial, and linguistic groups should be available and accessible to our children?
4. What would the social environment in schools be like if they were to eliminate the everyday toxins of racism?

## Core Research Constructs

I posit the concepts of *situated identity*, *positionality* and *agency*, using them explain identity as a *process of increasing participation in given settings* of activity constituting the school and schooling experiences of learners.

# Research Questions

1. In what ways does identity matter to achievement and scholastic development among children and youth, particularly those of color?
2. What should educators and other responsible adults know about identity processes and the social settings they occur in order to promote school success for everyone?
3. How should we structure the social environments of schools so as to promote identity development and achievement processes among all children?

# Stimulus – Reenactment of Doll Study

- Kiri Davis – *A Girl Like Me*
- Barbie Dolls

## Out of School Context - Mentoring Programs

- Must have clear developmental benchmarks;
- Provide for the presence of competent adult African American males (mentors) ;
- Capitalize on the assets of African American families;
- Synthesize the rich content of African American culture, literature, and African American children's literature in active learning experiences;
- Include a Celebratory/"Rites-of-Passage" experience

# Nguzo Saba

- Unity
- Self Determination
- Collective Work and Responsibility
- Cooperative Economics
- Purpose
- Creativity
- Faith

## Critical Points

- Develop your students
  - Situated Identity
  - Positionality
  - Agency
- Raising expectations for every student
  - All students graduate at college entry level
  - Design Personal Learning Plan – trajectory of development
- Provide credible role models for identities of achievement

QUESTIONS?