Blacks: Education Issues

The Black community faces educational issues similar to other minority groups, including the need for adequate funding for schools serving minority and disadvantaged students, as well as other issues with a special impact on the community:

- Student achievement gaps need to be aggressively addressed. For example, the percentage of Blacks age 25 and older with a high school diploma or more was 72 percent in the 2000 census, compared to 85.5 percent for Whites. In addition, the percentage of Blacks with bachelor's degrees or more was 14 percent, compared to 27 percent of Whites.

- Closing achievement gaps is a critical issue. The performance of Blacks is systematically different from that of other racial and ethnic groups. Decreasing gaps in student achievement means that we must increase the learning gains of Blacks. This will require the creation of public policies and legislation that support public schools committed to identifying and setting high, worthwhile, and attainable goals for students and ensuring that teachers and students are supported in these efforts. It will also require meaningful collaboration among community organizations and leaders, parents, and the school. The success of the school must become the success of the community.

- There is a need to increase diversity and cultural competence in the teaching workforce. Recruiting and retaining teachers of color is important, as some children of color will go through their entire educational career without having a teacher who looks like them or who can identify with the uniqueness of their cultural heritage.

- Adequate and equitable resources are important to the future success and development of Black students. Far too often, Black students—males in particular—are unnecessarily placed in special education classes, while the number of Black students who take honors and advanced courses remains significantly below that of other groups. School funding structures that lead to under-funding and under-resourcing our neediest schools have furthered the achievement gaps. All students deserve a quality public education, and this can only occur when we close the gaps in equity and access.

Lesson ideas

- Five Lessons for Black History Month
- Famous African Americans ABC Book
- Three-Way Match: Famous Black Americans
- Rosa Parks Changed the Rules
- The Black History Rap