

# **Relationship Building: Working with African American Girls and Boys**

CREATE a Culturally  
Responsive Environment  
Conference

April 28, 2010  
Green Bay, Wisconsin

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# Outline

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Outline of Project

The concept of Endangered Futures

The Lens of Negativity

Perceived Inconsistent/Unfair Treatment

Recommendations

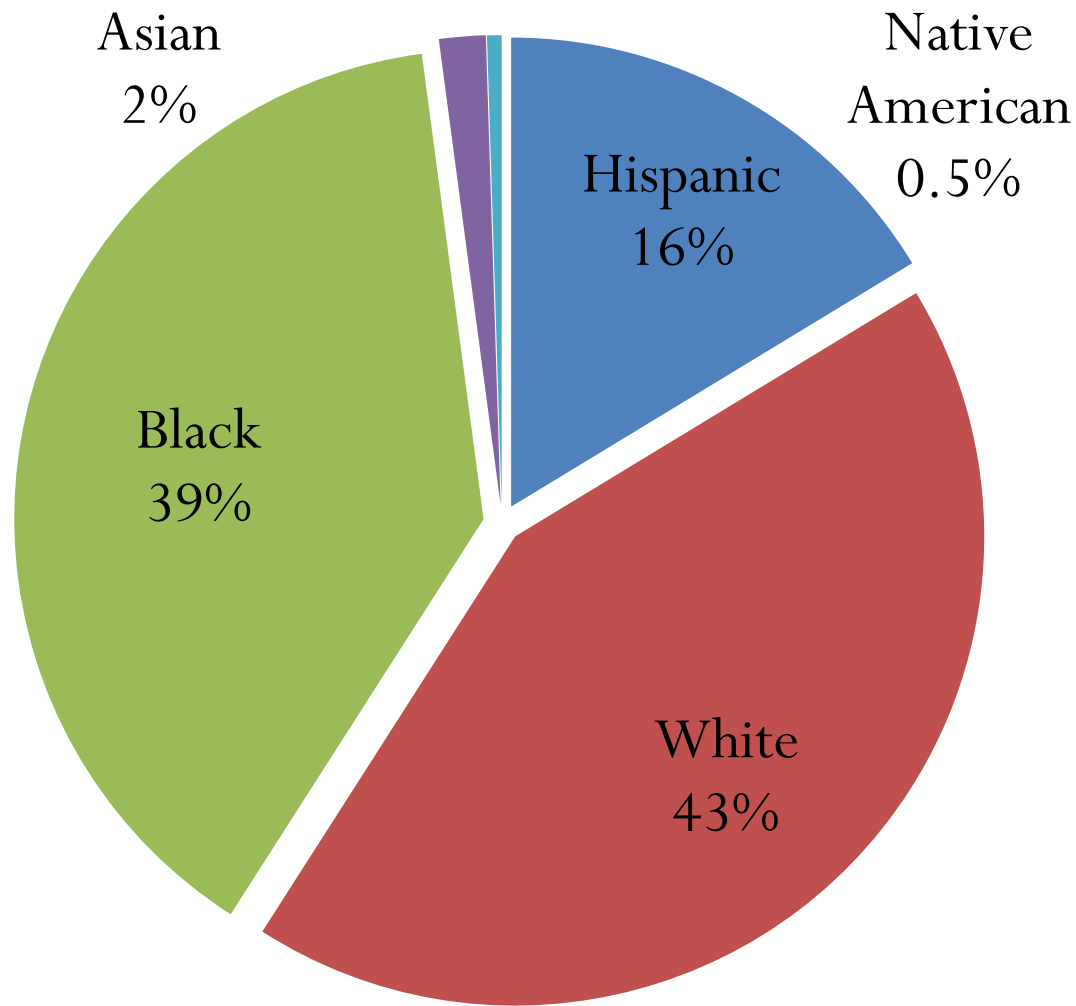
# Outline of Research/Program

## Boys

- Working to identify methods and strategies that aid in the academic and social success of the African American males.
- Conducting qualitative interviews geared to learn first-hand, the hopes and dreams of the boys, along with their fears.
- Working to create strategies and plans that productively counter the obstacles in their way.
- Sustainability and leadership

## Girls

- Interviewed each girl about her past and current experiences in middle school, what she hopes to become/do and what she fears becoming in high school
- Identity collages
- Video project to understand the challenges of middle school and address school issues
- Challenges with role relationship



- 62.5% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

# Endangered Futures

# DO YOU KNOW HER?

- I like things like history, social studies and language arts where you read all the time.
- If I get interested in a book, then I have to take it everywhere with me
- I read over the summer
- I like to draw cartoons and really like my art teacher
- I get frustrated and angry when I don't understand my homework
- I am frustrated when I'm late for school

SO HOW IS IT THAT...

# We Must Address Issues With the Current Pipeline



# Through the Lens of Negativity



# Perceived Negativity

How much do we project images onto students?

# Through the Lens of Negativity



# Gang Affiliation

“Teachers always think that everything we do is gang related.”

- Colors
- Styles
- Music
- Grouping
- “We never get a chance to be together...”

# Inconsistent/Unfair Treatment

“I think that some of the teachers are racist...  
When white kids dress or act the same way we do  
they don't in trouble like we do”

# Dress code

“We can’t help that we are developed and have a body...”

- Body Type: **Curvy girls** vs. Skinny girls

# Colors/Styles

“Anytime we all happen to wear the same color, teachers think we are in a gang.”

- Certain colors deemed gang affiliated
- Rubber bands on the bottom of jeans
- No skulls or crowns
- Disconnect with Popular Culture

# Difference in how conflict is viewed and engaged

- Relational aggression
- Physical aggression
- Interventions

# Current Discipline Practices

Takes students away from educational opportunities

- Actions that remove students from the classroom
- In School Suspension (ISS)
- Half Days
- Expulsion

# Recommendations

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**District- level**  
**School - level**

# Diversity Officer

- Hire a chief diversity officer that is culturally competent at the district level in order to have a consistent systematic approach to addressing diversity issues and implementing programming.

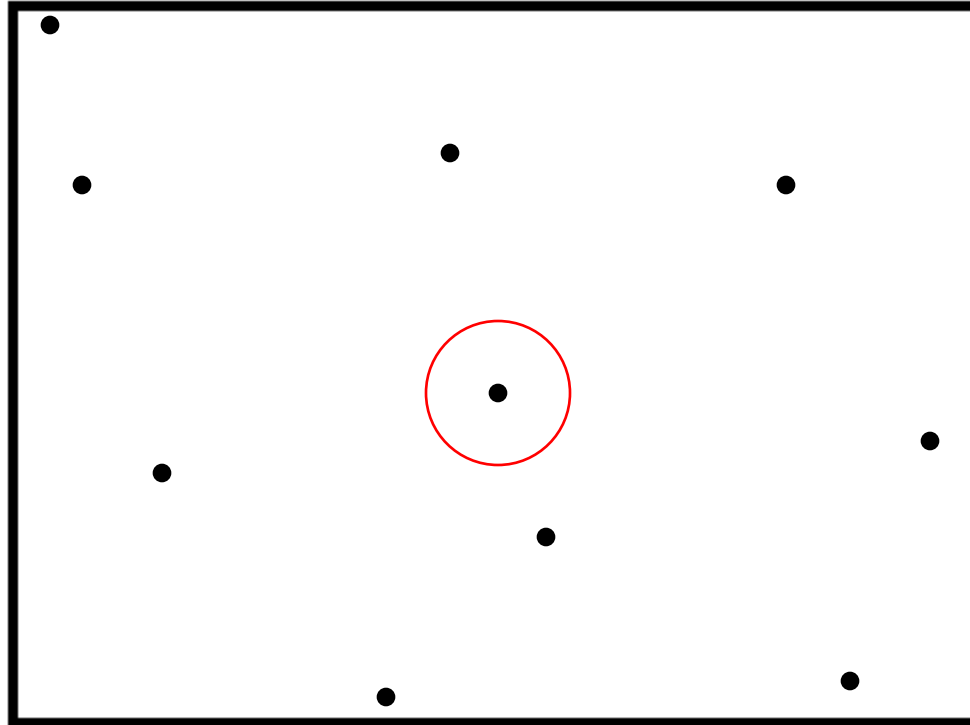
# Combat Isolation and Fragmentation

- Pipeline Minority Interaction program
- Have all of the African American boys and girls from 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade go to separate forums once a month, maybe every first Friday to help build support networks, and have younger youth mentored by older youth.
- This is a positive opportunity for collective socialization and rites of passage that will undercut sentiments of gang membership as a connection to others

# Cultural nourishment

- A sense of cultural replenishment that can be obtained by an individual and through collective engagement that aids in the sustenance of the individual (Gonzalez, 2002)

# The Pervasiveness of Whiteness



(Harper & Hurtado, 2007)

# Be Inclusive

- Youth should be partners in large decision making process.
- Make it democratic
- Ex. School uniforms

# Relationship Building

- For positive relationships to exist there must be respect, trust, interaction, consistency
- It's the little things
- Youth/Students are people too

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