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## Teaching Black Students

Kaitlyn Batts  
*Old Dominion University*

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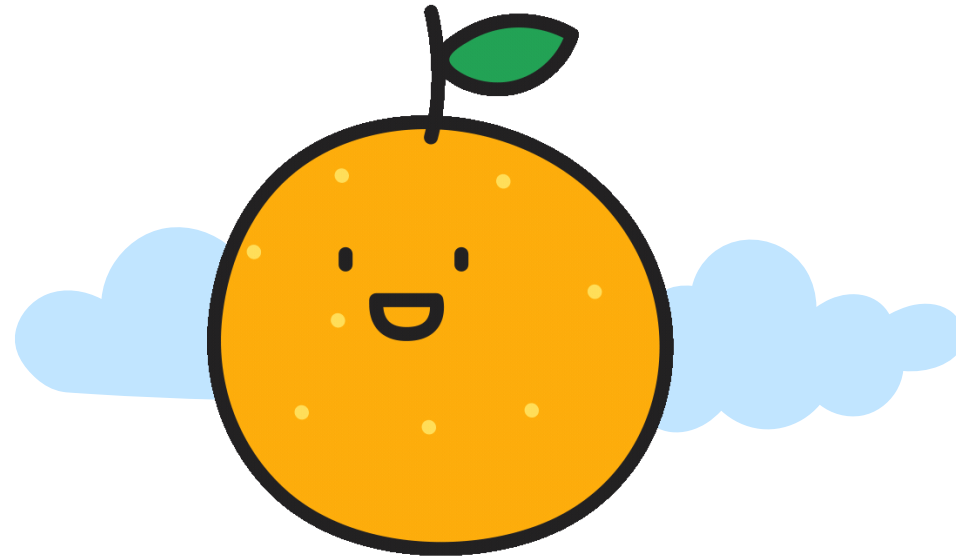
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## Teaching Black Students

### Cover Page Footnote

References: Coffey, H., & Farinde-Wu, A. (2016). Navigating the journey to culturally responsive teaching: Lessons from the success and struggles of one first-year, Black female teacher of Black students in an urban school. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 60, 24-33. El-Mekki, S. (2021, June 29). Far too many educators aren't prepared to teach black and brown students (opinion). *Education Week*. Retrieved January 27, 2022, from <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-far-too-many-educators-arent-prepared-to-teach-black-and-brown-students/2021/04> Love, B. L. (2021, August 5). Dear white teachers: You can't love your black students if you don't know them (opinion). *Education Week*. Retrieved January 27, 2022, from <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-dear-white-teachers-you-cant-love-your-black-students-if-you-dont-know-them/2019/03> Tuitt, F. (2012). Black Like Me: Graduate Students' Perceptions of their Pedagogical Experiences in Classes Taught by Black Faculty in a Predominantly White Institution. *Journal of Black Studies*, 43(2), 186–206.<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23215206> Watts, R. (2021, June 11). 5 strategies to help black students feel at home in school. *Edutopia*. Retrieved February 27, 2022, from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/5-strategies-help-black-students-feel-home-school> YouTube. (2015, March 12). How to close the academic achievement gap that's hurting America. YouTube. Retrieved February 27, 2022, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJtMIS8Gk\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJtMIS8Gk_I)



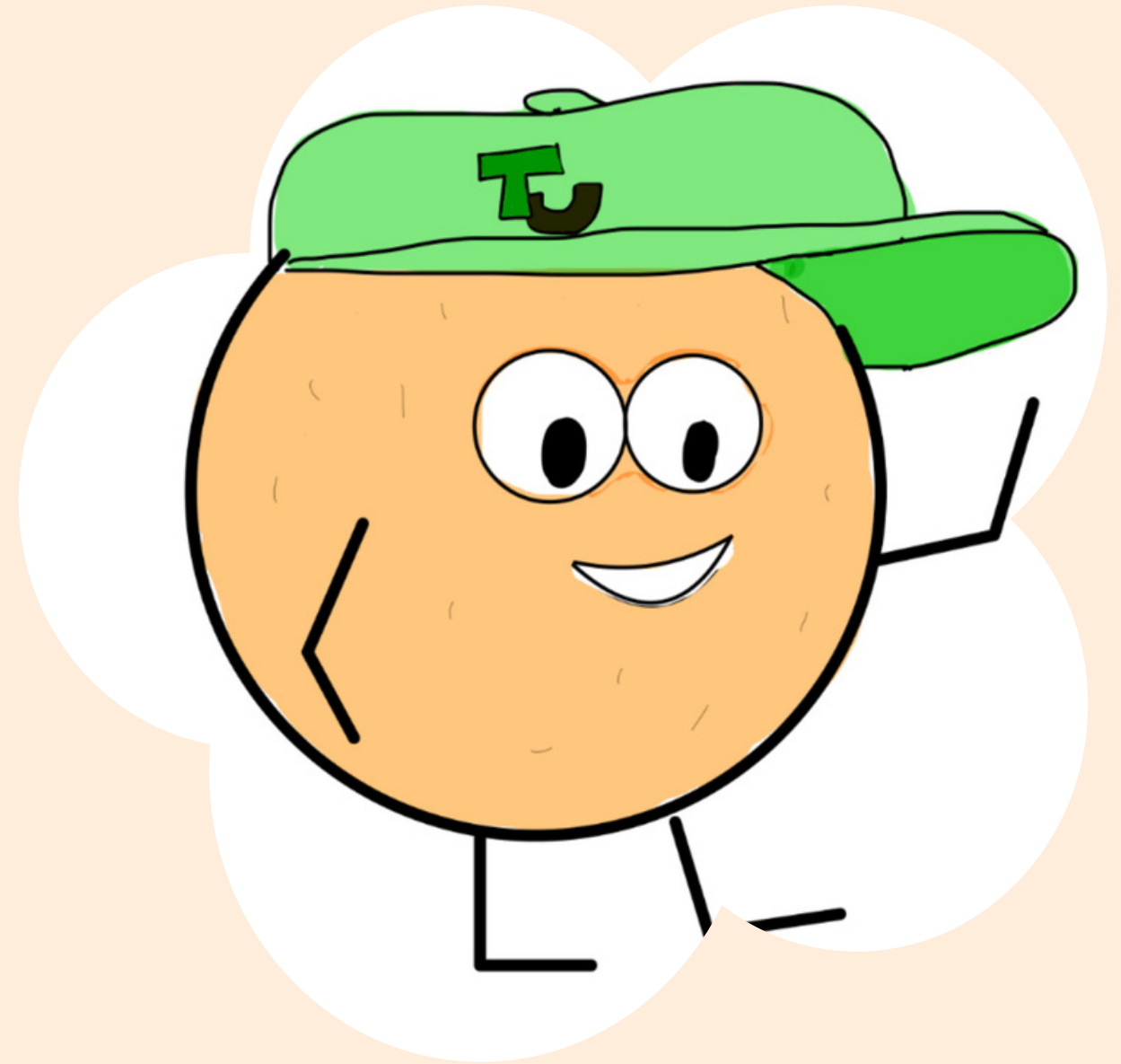
# Life As An Orange

3rd Grade - Section A

# Life As an Orange

Imagine for a minute that your name is Smiley, and you are an orange. Yes, that's right - an orange. Now let us also imagine that every day you attend Tree University. Within Tree University, there are not a lot of oranges. Maybe there are two or three other oranges that you have seen, but mostly its apples who attend Tree University. In your classes at Tree University, you noticed that a lot of the professors are also apples. You have also noticed that a lot of these professors tend to pay more attention to and call on other apples. How do you feel? Do you feel isolated or maybe overlooked? Chances are a lot of black students can relate what you are feeling as an orange; lonely and overlooked. Below, I will elaborate on the needs of black students and what we as teachers need to do to

improve.  
<https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ourj/vol10/iss1/3>  
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# As an educator, how can I make my black students feel more comfortable in the classroom?

1

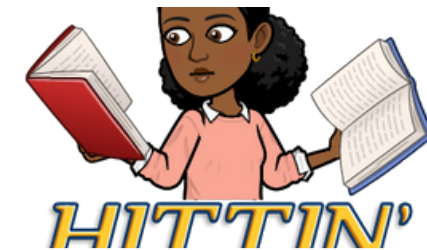
## Say Their Name!



In her article, "5 Strategies to Help Black Students Feel at Home in School", author and diversity director Ralinda Watts stresses the importance behind a concept as simple as saying black students' names correctly (2021). As a current black student, I appreciate that this issue was addressed because I have witnessed so many teachers not even attempting to pronounce a name. The reason they did not bother was because they thought it was too hard. Seeing this was confusing and damaging to me as a student and now as a future educator. Put yourself in their shoes as an educator, and imagine how offended you would be if someone did not bother learning your name correctly.

2

## Be Culturally Responsive



As a teacher with black students, you should practice culturally responsive teaching by embracing, learning, and understanding each student's background and where they come from (Watts, 2021). Bettina Love, a co-founder of the Abolitionist Teaching Network, argues that white teachers are not trying enough for black students (2021). While I do not believe we can place the blame on one group for black students not feeling welcomed, I do believe we should make an effort to ensure we are not contributing to the isolation of black students.

3



## Do Not Dwell on the Negative

Watts' third suggestion is the most interesting suggestion in my opinion: make black students feel welcomed by addressing the students' history from a positive perspective (2021). The only thing I remember learning about my race in class was slavery and the Civil Rights Movement. Both of these moments in history were not great for black people. From my experience, teaching about lows for a particular group can isolate these students.

4



## Its All in the Details

Next, the article proposes that teachers positively and accurately represent their students' culture through classroom decorations and images from lessons (Watts, 2021). For example, do not pick an image for an activity that shows little to no diversity. Try to find a picture that represents your class so that each student feels seen. This is something I wished I saw more of in my classes growing up.

5



## Do Not Make Them a Spokesperson

Lastly, Watts cautions teachers from isolating black students to discuss an issue simply because of their race (2021). For example, if you choose to discuss slavery, do not make your black students a spokesperson. Do not ask them to speak about it or ask them how they feel about it (Watts, 2021). This will most likely put immense pressure on that student along with making them feel uncomfortable.

# What role do teaching preparation programs have on teaching black students?



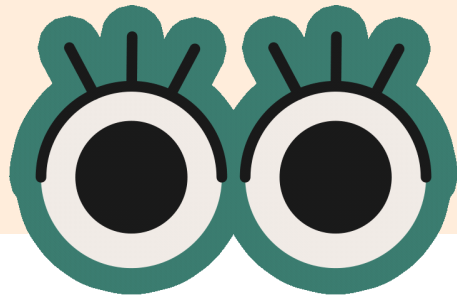
## Teaching Preparation Programs...

- Cause teacher burnout (Coffey, 2016).
- Aim to teach “all the necessary knowledge and skills” for teaching (Coffey, 2016).
- Lack preparing teachers for how to teach and connect with black students (Coffey, 2016).
- Drop inexperienced first-year teachers at high-poverty Title I schools (Coffey, 2016).

## Personal Anecdote

Based on personal experience, my teacher preparation program does a great job of preparing its students for teaching in any classroom. Not only does it provide many hands-on observations inside classrooms, but it also requires me to take classes that challenge me to think critically about teaching and what it entails. What about you? Do you think your teacher preparation program is adequately preparing you for teaching black students?





# The Black-White Achievement gap: What it is and how to close it.

(Center for American Progress, 2015)  
The video above does a great job explaining the black-white student achievement gap.

In the article "Far Too Many Educators Aren't Prepared to Teach Black and Brown Students," Sharif El-Mekki blames teacher preparation programs' inability to prepare teachers to teach black and brown students for the profound achievement gap (2021). El-Mekki suggests that teacher preparation programs do more to close the gap.

## So How Do We Close it?



**Have teacher preparation programs teach students the needs and requirements of being a teacher with black students (El-Mekki, 2021).**

**Focus on building relationships between black students and their teachers (Tuit, 2012).**

**Address and understand black students' needs (El-Mekki, 2021).**



# What Does This Have to do With Me?

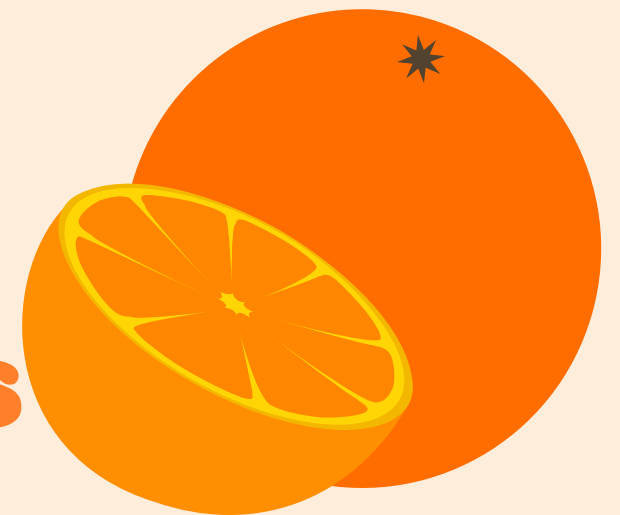
Surprisingly, it was my first time learning about the Black-White Student Achievement gap while researching for this lesson. I discovered that this gap is a fairly common phenomenon that occurs in numerous schools across the country where black students consistently underperform academically. If this gap was new information for me, then I could only imagine how many other educators are unaware of it. With that being said, it is my hope that you take this information and ask yourself this: "What can I do to close the gap as an educator?"

# From a Black Student's Perspective



**I was curious to hear from another person's perspective, as a black student, other than myself. So, I wrote down some questions and interviewed my sister who is nine years old and is also a black student at a predominately white institution. Although she did not want to be on camera, I thought it would be important to hear what she had to say.**

Scan the QR to see what my sister had to say



## Final Thoughts

Considering the information from the sources I have interpreted above, I believe that everyone is responsible for black students' feelings and success. As pointed out in the article "5 Ways to Help Black Students Feel at Home in School," teachers should make it their priority to connect with all students (Watts, 2021). Even though Love argues that it is specifically white teachers who do the most harm to black students, I believe this could be the case for any teacher who thinks about a student's identity as an afterthought (2021). I also agree with Coffey and El-Mekkin who blamed teacher preparation programs for their lack of preparing teachers to teach black students (2016; 2021). As a person who is currently in a teacher preparation program, I was fortunate enough to observe in a Title 1 elementary school this semester. This experience has allowed me to study a different perspective on a student's needs. For example, the school I am currently observing in has a high number of English learners. This means that they need a teacher who will take into consideration their perspective as an English learner. However, some teaching students may not have as much luck in gaining the same insight and experience as I have in my program. That is why this issue of teaching black students is so important. Because all teacher preparation programs may not focus on the importance and needs certain students require, it is my purpose to provide teachers with that new perspective – a perspective that I was fortunate enough to learn. Overall, these sources above have taught me the importance of making every student feel comfortable and how to accommodate their needs. In conclusion, just as "it takes a village to raise a child," it will take a community to celebrate and uplift black students.

### Two Question Formative Assessment

- 1) Ms. Smith looked at the results from her previous class's SOLs. She, along with the other second grade students, noticed a trend: the white students' scores outperformed the black students. What can this phenomenon be best described as?
  - a) A coincidence that occurs all the time with testing
  - b) Black-white student achievement gap
  - c) The "Bell-Curve"
  - d) Second grade teachers failing to prepare the students adequately
  
- 2) Ms. Smith just got the list of her new second grade class. She has been told by her co-workers that a few of the students on her list are black students. Ms. Smith is conflicted. She has not taught black students before because this is her second year teaching. What strategy would you suggest to Ms. Smith for teaching her new black students?
  - a) Ask the black students what accommodations they desire to feel comfortable.
  - b) Make the black students share their opinion on black current events during class.
  - c) Take the time to learn how to pronounce each student's name.
  - d) Treat the black students no different than the white students.

### REFERENCES

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**El-Mekki, S. (2021, June 29). Far too many educators aren't prepared to teach black and brown students (opinion). *Education Week*. Retrieved January 27, 2022, from <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-far-too-many-educators-arent-prepared-to-teach-black-and-brown-students/2021/04>**

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**Tuitt, F. (2012). Black Like Me: Graduate Students' Perceptions of their Pedagogical Experiences in Classes Taught by Black Faculty in a Predominantly White Institution. Journal of Black Studies, 43(2), 186–206.**Your paragraph text

**Watts, R. (2021, June 11). 5 strategies to help black students feel at home in school. Edutopia. Retrieved February 27, 2022, from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/5-strategies-help-black-students-feel-home-school>**

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