



SCHOOL CULTURAL ASSESSMENT MATRIX –SCAM

According to noted African Historian Dr. John Henrik Clarke, “EDUCATION IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF STRUGGLE”. Dr. Clarke went on to say that “we have been educated away from our culture” (values) to embrace the culture of others. The dilemma we face is can we alter the education “handed down” by our oppressor?

The history of education for African descendants in America seems to resemble a “round peg-square hole” methodology. There is a lot of “surface area” that never comes in contact within this pedagogy.

This issue was slowly being addressed during the African Centered Education (public school) Movement over the past 25 years. There have been earlier projects that over the last 70 years or more that have focused on “Independent Black Institutions of Education” for Afrikan American students (people), however due to lack of economic support of and “Integration” into the “Mainstream Culture” these Black Institutions are few in total number of people “culturally educated” per generation. The effectiveness of a “CULTURALLY RELEVANT SCHOOL EXPERIENCE” for children of color can’t be stressed enough!

Over the past 15 years the U.S. Department of Education has allowed the rise of the “Charter School/Privatizations” to “Dismantle Public Schools” in Urban Cities. This movement has a side affect of not only the “dummying down” of the predominantly African American students in these communities but also destroying the “community itself”. Now that Betsy DeVos of Grand Rapids has become Secretary of the U.S. Department of

Education, there is a great concern of more Charters Schools and a Voucher System to allow more students to become a "PRODUCT" of the "School to Prison Pipeline" as highlighted in Michelle Alexander's research in her book.

There have been numerous "Grassroot efforts over the years to combat this phenomena i.e.....African Centered Public Schools Education Movement as witnessed in the Detroit Public School System from 1990-99', Keep The Vote No Takeover (Detroit) to the Journey 4 Justice Alliance (Chicago) Racial Justice Now (Dayton Public Schools) and Parents Unified4 Local School Education (PULSE) (Newark, NJ.) All have been somewhat effective in "Slowing Down" this Dismantling of Community Schools but none have stopped the continuation of the Charter/Privatization of Schools in areas that serve children of COLOR!

Because of the issues of coordinating and communicating a collective strategy to this task, the development of a tool that allows any parents to measure their children school could be invaluable. This is why "SCHOOL CULTURAL ASSESSMENT MATRIX---SCAM would be helpful for parents/guardians of students of color regardless of what type of school their child attends. The SCAM would measure the four (4) basic areas of a schools structure. 1) Administration 2) Staff 3) Curriculum 4) Environment .The location, afterschool programs, clerical staff, availability of staff, food services, recess, library/computer, parents involvement can all be measured using SCAM. Because "SCAM" is designed to allow each parent to use it to rate their child's school "independently" from other parents of the same school so it can also serve as a discussion point between parents. Thereby creating a compare/contrast basis for communication among all "stakeholders" concerned with educating children of color. Most parents will

enjoy “RUNNING A SCAM” on their child’s school...Legally! All it takes is a small amount of time and a few questions to create a SCAM SCORE!

School Cultural Assessment Matrix (SCAM)

It’s not complicated to run the SCAM on the school.

Area 1. Administration

- 1) What degrees do you have?
- 2) How many African Studies courses have you completed in college?
- 3) What is your disciplinary policy for students and staff?
- 4) What other schools do you “network/partner with?
- 5) What is the staff retention rate?
- 6) How empowered is the Parent Organization?
- 7) What is your Leadership Team?
- 8) Do you live in/near the area of the community you serve?
- 9) How long have you been out of the classroom?
- 10) What is the diversity of staff with regards to Male: Female;
African American: Europeans; Experienced (10-15 years) v.
Beginning (1-4 years)
- 11) Foreign born staff with “English” as a second language

Area 2. Staff (Instructional)

- 1) What degrees have you obtained?
- 2) What’s your certification in?
- 3) What is the best method of communicating with parents?
- 4) How long have you been an educator?
- 5) How many African Studies courses did you take in college?

- 6) Do your children attend the school?
- 7) Do you live in the community in which you teach?
- 8) Have you worked in any other field that is related to servicing children and/or parents?
- 9) Do you incorporate an African Centered pedagogy in your classroom/lessons?
- 10) Do you use a "punishment or restorative" method of discipline?
- 11) What method of "assessment" of student achievement do you use to evaluate students?
- 12) Is there a morning ritual that students use to prepare for the school day?

Pre-K to 5th staff

- A) Do you model culture w/instruction?
- B) Do you have culturally relevant children stories? Library?
- C) Do you play/sing songs with cultural themes?
- D) What foreign languages do you include in your lessons?
- E) Which Cultural Holidays do you actively celebrate with students?
- F) Is phonics a part of your instruction?
- G) When displaying student work/grade/data do all students have positive examples of progress?
- H) Are your classroom rules culturally based?

6th-12th staff

- A) How is discipline maintained among the students?
- B) Is the culture reflected within the classroom?
- C) Are the lessons inclusive of the current events in today's culture/society?

- D) How do students refer to you? Title?
- E) What's your preferred method of communication with parents?
- F) What is your method of discipline?
- G) Do you provide tutorial/advanced/extra-curricular afterschool programs?
- H) How do you encourage "Peer to Peer" mentoring?
- I) How do you handle conflict between students?

School Building:

The Positive Images on Display In The Building: Hallways, Classrooms.

10 Point African Centered Check List.

- 1) Red-Black-Green Flag
- 2) Pictures Of The African Continent
- 3) Pictures Of African Leaders
- 4) Pictures Of Black Scientists
- 5) Pictures Of Kings And Queens Of Ancient Africa
- 6) Pictures Of Historical Black Leaders
- 7) Pictures Of Contemporary Black Leaders
- 8) African Centered Currents Events Board
- 9) African Centered School Pledge Posted
- 10) African Centered Reading Room or Library

Non-Instructional Staff...Office staff, food service, engineers, custodian, classroom aids

- 1) Is the clerical staff helpful/friendly?
- 2) Is there a "Parent Room" in the building?
- 3) Can the community have access to the building for events?
- 4) Are the meals "healthy and nutrition

- 5) Is the school building clean and maintained inside and out?
- 6) Are the classroom assistances well trained and knowledgeable?
- 7) Is there a level of "Cultural Consciousness" among this group?

SCAM SCORE SHEET:

For each question the following assessment grades will range from

- 1) Positive+ equals 5 points
- 2) Positive equals 3 points
- 3) Neutral equals 1 point
- 4) Not Applicable equals minus 1 point

The reason to NOT subtract the negative from the positive is due to the fact negative elements in a school setting can limited the effect of positive elements. Like planting seeds in contaminated soil will be impacted by the "amount/levels of the contamination"

When finished the SCAM SCORE will look like (positive #/ negative #) i.e. +105/-5 (good) v. +105/-35 (not good). The premise is that the positive affects will be minimized by a strong negative influence. A Perfect SCAM would be something like 280/0 depending on the amount of information a parent is able to gather. It may take a while to obtain the info due to people not wanting to be screened.

The higher the Positive score is when compared to the Negative score gives an idea of the schools overall "SCAM" level for providing a " Cultural Nurturing Environment" of the school. However this will be impacted by the amount of "negativity in the school environment".

SCAM is not an absolute measure of a schools ability to provide a meaningful education to children of color. Its main focus is to provide parents of students of color a "Framework" guideline when considering

where and how their child will develop the fundamental skills with which to solve the issues of being an “African living in America”. It can also serve as guide to “supplement” areas of content that their child may not get in school.

DEFINITION OF AFRICAN-CENTERED EDUCATION (ACE)

AFRICAN-CENTERED EDUCATION IS BASED UPON THE RESEARCH THAT ALL HUMANS HAVE THEIR PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, AND INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS IN AFRICA. THE CHILD IS PLACED AND GROUNDED AT “THIS CENTER” AND THROUGH AN INCLUSIONARY PROCESS, ALL REPRESENTATIVE GROUPS ARE PLACED, NOT ABOVE OR BELOW ANY GROUP, BUT ALONGSIDE THE REST OF HUMANITY AS EVENTS AND TRUTH DICTATES.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW ABOUT CULTURE?

- 1) Culture is a means of survival.
- 2) All people are cultural beings and need to be aware of how Culture affects peoples’ behavior
- 3) Culture is at work in every classroom.
- 4) Culture affects how learning is organized, how school rules and curriculum are developed and how teaching methods and evaluation procedures are implemented.
- 5) Schools can prepare students for effective citizenship in dealing with the cultures of the world.
- 6) Culture can help solve problems and conflicts in the school and the community.

This document was developed by teachers with over 20+ years of teaching in an African-Centered School System in Detroit Public Schools. It is a collaboration of Conscious African-Centered trained

instructors. It's dedicated to the memory of Dr. Clifford Dean
Watson...Founder and Late principal of the Malcolm X Academy DPS.