

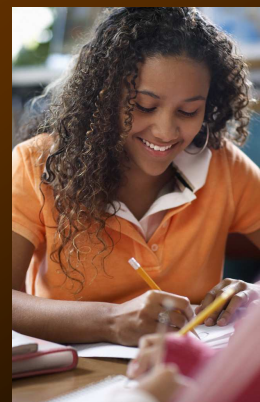
## Strategies to Help Minority Students Achieve Academic Success ©



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What are some of the challenges that African-American and Hispanic students face?



## Weighing in ...

Commonly held beliefs for White-Asian and Black-Hispanic Achievement Gap



1. **Deficient Innate Ability** – The lack of academic achievement is due to the lack of innate ability. Some people “have it” and some people don’t.

*This theory has been supported by eugenics advocates who believe that Blacks and Hispanics are incapable of excelling at the same academic level as Whites or Asians because of their lack of innate ability.*

2. **Tracking** – Black and Latino students are disproportionately represented among the students who are placed in the lower academic tracks. Students who are enrolled in basic English and math courses don’t have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform well in high stake tests.

Continued...

3. **Cultural Mismatch** – There is a mismatch between the home culture of many students of color and the school culture. Students who are raised in a home-culture that is non-conducive to academic success are less likely to experience academic success in school or perform well on high stake tests.

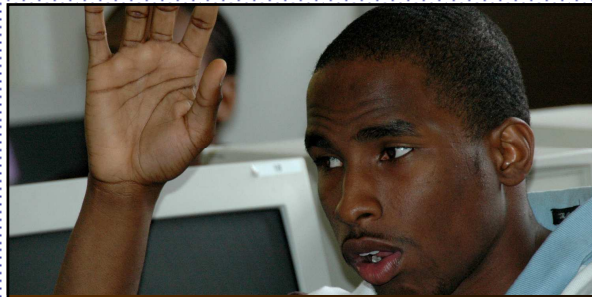
4. **Systemic Inequality** – Schools have been designed to perpetuate class difference that exist in the larger society.

*“Somebody has to pick up the garbage...”*

Continued...

5. **“Acting White”** – Black and Hispanic students underachieve (dumb-down) because they equate school success with being required to “act white” or act “güero”.
6. **Peer-Pressure and the Lure-of- Street-Life** – Peer pressure and the lure of the “street life” cause many Black and Hispanic students to reject school and a formal education.
7. **Parents-are-at-Fault** - Certain students perform poorly in school because their parents do not get involved or do not care about their children’s education.

# Strategies to Help Minority Students Achieve Academic Success



**8. Fear of Stereotype Confirmation** – The academic performance of Black and Hispanic students can be impaired by their anxiety concerning the possibility that if they try and fail, they will confirm the negative stereotype that others hold concerning them.

Continued...

**9. Generational Poverty**- Students who are raised in a culture of “generational poverty” are likely to do poorly in school because they do not share the beliefs, values, attitudes and perceptions of the middle class (mainstream) culture.

(Dr. Ruby Payne)

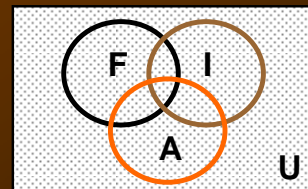
**10. Victimization** – Some African-American students are not motivated to achieve academic success because they see themselves and the world around them through a lens of racism; that is, their lack of achievement is due to past and current oppression.

(Dr. John McWhorter)

What strategies can schools implement to improve the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students?



The following strategies are divided into the following three categories.



- **F**oundation Strategies - F1 to F6
- **I**ntellectual Strategies – I1 to I8
- **A**dvocacy-Based Strategies- A1 to A9

**Foundation Strategies** are thought to be the ones that are foundation-based. Once mastered, they form a foundation that supports the implementation of the other sets of strategies. These strategies focus on building relationships, trust, empathy, authenticity and mutual respect. In other words, establishing a positive rapport paves the way for honest, unguarded exploration of the “real” presenting problems that students will bring to counselors they trust, respect and see as authentic helpers.

**Intellectual Strategies** are thought to be the ones that strengthen your cognitive abilities to anticipate and navigate through students’ problem manifestations. They form a “radar-type” investigative probe that provides deeper insights into what students may be experiencing. This can lead to more informative fact- finding questions. Additionally the counselor can achieve a heightened cultural awareness while discussing problems and solutions with students. The added-value provided by these strategies are confidence builders in dealing with sensitive issues related to race, ethnicity, culture, and distinct personal idiosyncrasies

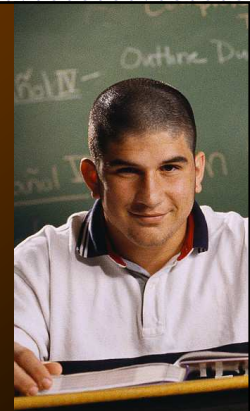
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**Advocacy Strategies** are thought to be the ones that can be resources to support the counselor's suggestions for action and contemplation. They form a support for proactive planning and concrete options for problem solving. We suggest that the counselor continue building on these strategies through net working, building up your contacts and documenting best practices.

**F1:** Become aware of the values, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, etc. of the mainstream culture  
– Know thy self first...

**F2:** Look beyond the “vener”  
– Avoid assumptions

*Learn as much as possible about your students – country of origin, languages they speak, who they live with, GPA, reading and math levels of proficiency, sports they play, hobbies, goals in life, challenges they face, etc.*



*A student's veneer might be his/her only defense or survival skill.*

**F3:** Exude comfort when encouraging students to communicate openly and work through their experiences with issues related to race/ethnicity, language, dislocation-isolation, immigration status, etc.

- Do recognize the student first and then in a cultural context to avoid stereotyping.
- Do provide students with coping skills to resist internalizing negative messages that reflect societal biases.
- Do provide students with strategies that will help them maneuver successfully between peer groups.
- Do not become defensive or de-legitimize the students' problems.
- Do not permit students to wallow in self-pity or mal-adaptive criticisms of school personnel.

**F4:** Operate from the belief system that every student can learn - Reject the idea that some people “have it” and some people don't

*Emphasize that proficiency in any subject can be reached through commitment, focus, effort, feedback, and strategy formulation.*

*“All students are diamonds in the rough.”*

**F5:** Promote an “authentic” rapport with your students based on trust, mutual respect and cultural acceptance

*Create a teaching/counseling environment in which the students perceive you as a person who truly cares.*



**F6:** Learn about the challenges immigrant students face and the stages they go through in the process of **language acquisition** and **acculturation**

**I1:** Learn strategies that increase the comprehensibility of the English language

**I2:** Explore the different cultures represented in the school student body

*Increase your knowledge of the students' cultures to avoid unintentionally ignoring, overlooking, or minimizing the contextual dimensions of race/ethnicity, culture, and class.*

**I3:** Be aware that although inter-racial/ethnic tensions consume a considerable amount of psychic energy of minority students, so too do intra-racial/ethnic issues such as “fictive kinship networks”, the “politics of hair and skin color”, English language proficiency, place of birth, immigration status, etc.

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**I4:** Be aware that some minority students hesitate seeking help because they think that the staff do not comprehend or might not care about issues related to their race/ethnicity, social class, country of origin, immigration status, level of language acquisition or acculturation, dislocation/isolation, etc.

*This can may lead to superficial self-disclosures, unhelpful counseling interventions, dissatisfaction with counseling services, and premature termination.*

**I5:** Recognize that “community-isolation” can lead a student to adopt a “race-less” persona, which will leave the student ill-prepared when confronted with inevitable future race/ethnicity related experiences



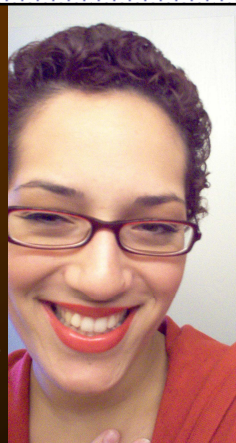
**I6:** Recognize “code-switching” and normalize the student’s need to navigate multiple and simultaneous cultural norms (language and behavior)

*“This school is ‘whack’” versus “I don’t like it here, the school is not really helping me”*

**I7:** Be aware that middle-class African American and Hispanic adolescents may have concerns that bear little relationship to poverty

*The staff needs to be attuned to the unique issues that middle-class minority students experience and avoid looking at them as monolithic entities.*

**I8:** Be aware that the students’ social class will influence the manifestation of their cultural background



**A1:** Consult with “cultural informants” to acquire additional information about working with minority students

*Cultural informants are people who can maneuver fluently in both the mainstream culture and in their own indigenous culture, while respecting the central properties of both cultures.*

**A2:** Maintain a current referral list of contacts within the Black and Hispanic communities to improve your responsiveness and cultural competence with Hispanic and African American students

**A3:** Form alliances with Black and Hispanic churches for those students who are reluctant to work with a counselor but may consider sharing their concerns with a clergy member

**A4:** Advocate for in-service training on topics such as diversity, culturally responsive teaching and counseling and model appropriate behavior in efforts to improve the in-school educational experiences of minority students

**A5:** Become an academic advocate for those students who lack a caring adult who supports their academic achievement

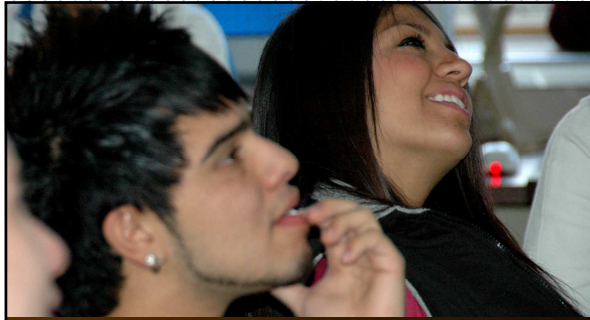
**A6:** Facilitate nurturing social engagements that promotes psychological anchorage and acceptance

**A7:** Connect students with civic/social organizations that can reinforce Black and Hispanic culture, instill confidence, and provide positive peer groups and adult role models for the students

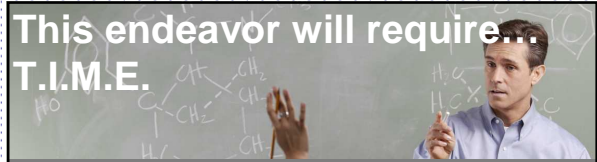
*These civic and social organizations often have youth components aimed at promoting healthy identity functioning, civic responsibility, leadership training, and racial uplift.*

**A8:** Promote bi-cultural and bi-lingual functioning by affirming and validating the students’ cultural backgrounds; normalizing the demands and expectations of each culture; and, helping students navigate fluidly between cultures

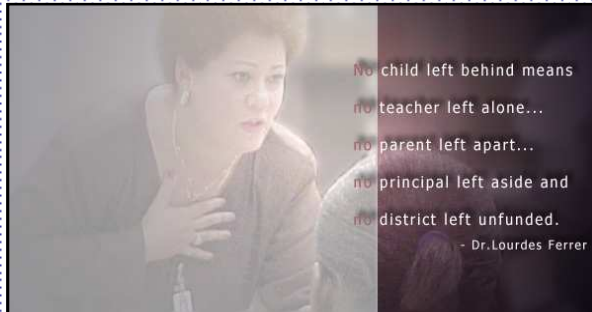
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**A9:** Support focus groups to permit students to process their individual and collective experiences, learn coping strategies, and feel less isolated



- T** - Transformational experiences
- I** - Intentional persuasive communication
- M** - Mentoring
- E** - Exposure to role models



No child left behind means  
no teacher left alone...  
no parent left apart...  
no principal left aside and  
no district left unfunded.  
- Dr. Lourdes Ferrer

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