



Exploring the Diversification of the American Literature Curriculum: A Framework

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+ Diversity in the American Literature Curriculum: An Ideal

- Effective diversification of the high school American literature curriculum must include
 - Clear philosophical and educational goals
 - A recursive process of curriculum development
 - A dynamic theoretical framework
 - Targeted in-class strategies for instruction





Exploring the Construction of Black Female Identity in the School Board of Broward County High School American Literature Curriculum: Janie and Sula

* Research Questions

- Which Black female characters/authors are represented in the high school required reading list as set forth by the School Board of Broward County?
- With which Black female characters/figures/authors are students familiar?
- Is there an effect of these portrayals on student perceptions of Black women?
- Is there an effect of the portrayal of characters like Janie and Sula on students' perceptions of Black women?





Exploring the Construction of Black Female Identity in the School Board of Broward County High School American Literature Curriculum: Janie and Sula

* Review of Literature

1. Curricula should be diversified to address changes in the intellectual, socioeconomic, and political life of the United States. Challenging literature from a wide variety of authors is required reading for all students so that they have the academic resources to be active members of American society (Auciello, 2000);
2. Education rooted in teaching and learning from positions of uncertainty, difference, and change informed by theories of anti-oppressive education is transformative (Kumashiro, 2000);
3. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Hurston, 1990), a seminal text, adds 'visual' storytelling to the 'trope' of oral tradition in the African American and wider American communities (Clarke, 2000);
4. *Sula* (Morrison, 2004), though framed around female protagonists, presents an examination of masculine types present in African American and larger American society (Maberry, 2003).
5. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Sula* can be taught to facilitate understanding of storytelling and improve skill in analysis, writing and oral communication (Garrigues, 2003, Delaney, 2004).



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* Methodology and Data Collection

■ Qualitative investigation

■ Document analysis

- Citizens Concerned for Our Children (CCC) Settlement with the School Board of Broward County (2000)
- School Board of Broward County High School Core Works (2008)

■ Student interview

■ Teacher interview



+ Which Black female characters/authors are represented in the high school required reading list as set forth by the School Board of Broward County?

- Black female authors included in High School Core Works:
 - Ninth Grade - Author study of Maya Angelou
 - Tenth Grade - Author study Alice Walker
 - Eleventh Grade - Essay of literary criticism by Toni Morrison, a newspaper article by Dahleen Glanton as part of the Langston Hughes author study
 - Twelfth Grade does not require the reading of any text by Black female writers.



+ Which Black female characters/authors are represented in the high school required reading list as set forth by the School Board of Broward County?

- Black female characters included in High School Core Works:
 - Ninth Grade - Author study of Maya Angelou is biographical
 - Tenth Grade - Author Study of Alice Walker is biographical
 - The characters in *Everyday Use* are a family of three African American women and one man
 - The voice in *Poem at Thirty-Nine* is that of the author
 - The selection *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* reflects on the creativity of women of African decent.
 - Eleventh Grade - Tituba is an Afro-Caribbean character in the required long work *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller.
- **None of the long form required works are by ANY women or ANY racial/ethnic minority**

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+ Exploring the Diversity of the American Literature Curriculum: A Framework

* Research Questions

- What are the current goals and objectives of the School Board of Broward County (SBBC) high school American Literature curriculum?
- What process is currently in place for the development of the SBBC high school American Literature curriculum?
- What, if any, theoretical frameworks guide the SBBC high school American Literature curriculum?
- What, if any, specific instructional strategies are used to implement the SBBC high school American Literature curriculum?



+ What are the current goals and objectives of the School Board of Broward County (SBBC) high school American Literature curriculum?

■ From the State –

- Demonstrate use of effective reading strategies to construct meaning from a range of representative American literature and related topics
- Demonstrate knowledge of various elements of American literature (e.g., theme, plot, setting, point of view, symbolism, character development)
- Compare and contrast various aspects of works of American literature (e.g., author, genre, style, historical and cultural context)

■ From the County –

- Through unit lessons, students are encouraged to address specific topics in American Literature. For example:
 - What is there about the darker side of mankind that has appealed to writers and readers since the late 18th century?
 - What issues have been important to women as reflected in the literature of the women's movement in the 19th and 20th centuries?
- School Board of Broward County High School Core Works
- School Board of Broward County High School English III Curriculum Map

+ What process is currently in place for the development of the SBBC high school American Literature curriculum?

- The current process for developing classroom curricula is centralized in terms of time and in terms of management;
 - At the school level, curricular changes are made once a year during pre-term planning
 - At the county level, only sitting chairs of high school language arts departments take part in the process



+ What, if any, theoretical frameworks guide the SBBC high school American Literature curriculum?

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- A process of program articulation that takes place on an on-going basis wherein all school and county language arts instructors interact with theory, participate in academic discussions about the curriculum, and share classroom best practices is critical to connecting theory, academic dialogue, and classroom practice.
- Integrating information from local college and university English departments and programs ensures that the curriculum is relevant to academic and cultural dialogues.



+ What, if any, specific instructional strategies are used to implement the SBBC high school American Literature curriculum?

- Six Traits + 1
- Project-based Lesson Planning
- Reading Across the Curriculum
- Cross-Curricular Instruction



+ Reactions



- Though there is a required American Literature component to State and County basic public education, *the directive lacks clear philosophical goals*
- The current process of curriculum development at the County and school level is *not recursive*
- At both the State and County level, the American Literature curriculum lacks a *dynamic theoretical framework*
- *Current in-class strategies for instruction can be targeted* to meet specific educational goals (diversity) once those goals are articulated

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