

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course: Best Practices for Teaching African American Boys

Presenters: Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu

Hours: 45

Course Overview

According to the most recent statistics, the dropout rate for African American males in US schools is over 50%. Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu links this trend with the disproportionate placement of these students in special education classes, a dearth of African American male teachers, and a failure to teach to African American boys' learning styles. In *Best Practices for Teaching African American Boys*, Dr. Kunjufu prepares educators to implement solutions to these problems in their classrooms and schools. He offers strategies for preventing the referral of students to special education that include constructing Afro-centric classrooms, integrating black male role models, supporting students' transitions through school and boyhood, accommodating these students' needs for curriculum that appeals to their interests and other characteristics, and designing instruction that exploits the best of their energy and intelligence. The course is punctuated by workshop discussions and classroom footage that illustrate the complexity of and solutions to the issues at hand, so that African American boys have the same opportunities for success as all of their peers.

Presenters' Bios

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu was educated at Morgan State, Illinois State, and Union Graduate School. He has been a guest speaker at many universities throughout the U.S., and has been a consultant to many urban school districts. He has authored 33 books including national best sellers *Black Students: Middle Class Teachers*; *Keeping Black Boys out of Special Education*; *Raising Black Boys*; *200 Plus Educational Strategies to Teach Children of Color*, and his latest title, *Understanding Black Male Learning Styles*. His work has been featured in *Ebony* and *Essence Magazine*, and he has been a guest on BET and Oprah. He is also a frequent guest on the Michael Baisden show.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, educators will know:

- Essential statistics about African American males' status in education and society
- Strategies to help preclude the disproportionate and destructive referrals of African American boys to special education
- Strategies to fully engage and motivate African American boys throughout their K-12 schooling

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, educators will apply the following skills:



- Convert their classrooms into productive learning environments for African American boys
- Employ curricular and instructional strategies that increase student learning and affect student achievement

Unit 1: Introduction

In this unit, Dr. Kunjufu and the workshop participants explore key statistics relevant to African American boys' status quo in educational institutions and society. These statistics highlight the severity of the current conditions for this population of students and should motivate educators to make modifications to their practice. The team also addresses such questions as whether we have designed female classrooms, what the most important qualifications are for selecting teachers for these students, and the effects of media on perceptions of African American boys.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- Statistics relevant to African American boys' status quo
- Priorities for hiring teachers for African American boys
- Media's effects on perceptions of African American boys and the impact of that in the classroom

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will apply the following skills:

- Analyze their classrooms to determine if they are female- or male-centered
- Engage and promote appropriate educators for African American boys
- Resist stereotypes

Text: "Confronting the Racism of Low Expectations"

Participants read "Confronting the Racism of Low Expectations," by Julie Landsman, and respond to reflection prompts that follow.

Unit 2: The 4th Grade Syndrome

African American boys suffer a marked decline in academic achievement in the 4th grade. In this unit, Dr. Kunjufu and the workshop participants inquire into the multiple reasons for that decline—from changes in the classroom environment to changes in the teacher/student relationship—and begin to posit solutions to prevent it, including providing more purposeful guidance for students during key transitions, both academic and personal.



Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- Reasons for the 4th grade decline of African American boys' academic progress
- Strategies to assist this population through key transitions
- Effective and ineffective types of teachers

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will apply the following skills:

- Modify their curriculum and instruction to help prevent the 4th grade syndrome
- Help African American boys make the transition into later grades and their different environments and demands.

Unit 3: Reading

Dr. Kunjufu calls the issues of African American boys' limited reading skills "the civil rights issue of this generation." The less we address those issues, the more we marginalize those learners. Weak reading skills are at the core of many African American boys' increasing disinterest and disengagement in school as they grow older. In this unit, Dr. Kunjufu guides participants to scrutinize and modify their curriculum and instruction to find ways to motivate and engage these students in the critical skills of reading and writing.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- Why African American boys' limited literacy skills is "the civil rights issue of this generation"
- Strategies for promoting this populations' engagement in reading and writing
- The phonics vs. whole language approach debate around teaching reading

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will apply the following skills:

- Improve the teaching of literacy skills to African American boys
- Embrace phonics over the whole language approach



Text: “African American Males in Urban Schools: No Excuses—Teach and Empower”

Participants read “African American Males in Urban Schools: No Excuses—Teach and Empower,” by H. Richard Milner, IV, and respond to reflection prompts that follow.

Unit 4: Gender Differences

Boys and girls learn differently for both genetic and social reasons. In this unit, Dr. Kunjufu and the workshop participants explore these differences and discuss how to accommodate them in coeducational classrooms without sacrificing any students’ needs.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- Gender differences in learning patterns
- Methods for accommodating gender differences in curriculum and instruction

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will apply the following skill:

- Accommodate gender differences in their curriculum and instruction

Text: “Teaching Boys and Girls Separately”

Participants read “Teaching Boys and Girls Separately,” by Elizabeth Weil, and respond to reflection prompts that follow.

Unit 5: Special Education

“Special education is the new form of segregation,” Dr. Kunjufu argues, as it limits African American boys’ access to a full curriculum, with both immediate and long-term consequences. Throughout this unit, the participants construct a thorough list of mainstreaming strategies to end this oppressive practice.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- The impact of referrals to special education for African American boys
- Strategies to preclude excessive and inappropriate referrals to special education



Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will apply the following skill:

- Employ mainstreaming strategies to help preclude inappropriate referrals to special education of African American boys

Unit 6: Learning Styles

Educators who truly want their classrooms to be learner-centered need to consider the full range of learning styles their students embody. Dr. Kunjufu and the workshop participants discuss left- and right-brain learning; oral, kinesthetic, and tactile learning; cooperative learning; and the need for authentic multicultural education.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- The differences between right- and left-brain learners
- Distinctions between oral, kinesthetic, and tactile learners
- Methods of reaching students with different learning styles
- What constitutes a multicultural education

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will apply the following skills:

- Construct lesson plans that teach to students' different learning styles
- Provide students with a multicultural education

Unit 7: Reducing the Male Dropout Rate

In this unit, Dr. Kunjufu and the workshop participants delve deeply into the reasons for the 53% high-school dropout rate (in 2012) for African American boys. Dr. Kunjufu argues that retention rather than social promotion leads to increased chances of students dropping out. Their proposed solutions include a multicultural curriculum relevant to students' real lives, direct instruction on what happens to dropouts, and strengthening partnerships among the school, family, and community.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:



- Why the dropout rate for African American males is so high
- Practical strategies for preventing dropping out

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will apply the following skills:

- Assist in preventing African American boys from dropping out of school
- Develop multicultural, relevant lesson plans

Unit 8: An Ideal African American Male Classroom

The issues identified throughout this course lead Dr. Kunjufu to the notion that the ideal classroom for African American boys would be single-gender and include a specific rites-of-passage curriculum. Even those teachers who cannot construct that particular environment will learn strategies to empower their black male students as learners in whatever contexts they inhabit.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, educators will know:

- The need for a rites-of-passage curriculum
- The benefits of single-gender classrooms
- Strategies for engaging African American male students

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, educators will apply the following skills:

- Begin to construct rites-of-passage curricula
- Improve their teaching in relation to the needs of African American boys

Text: “Building a Positive Future for Black Boys”

Participants read “Building a Positive Future for Black Boys,” by Rosa A. Smith, and respond to reflection prompts that follow.



Methods of Instruction

- Videos (presentations consisting of lecture, interviews, and classroom footage)
- Text (units based on required reading)
- Reflection questions (open-ended questions at intervals throughout the video presentations where participants are asked to reflect on the course content, their own practice, and their intentions for their practice)
- Quizzes (selected-response quizzes to assess understanding of the video presentations)

Plagiarism Policy

KDS recognizes plagiarism as a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else's work as one's own and includes failing to cite sources for others' ideas, copying material from books or the Internet (including lesson plans and rubrics), and handing in work written by someone other than the participant. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade and may have additional consequences. For more information about plagiarism and guidelines for appropriate citation, consult plagiarism.org.

Passing Requirements:

In order to complete the requirements of the course, the participant must complete all course work. We do not award partial credit.

- Quizzes 40% of total grade
- Reflection Questions 60% of total grade

KDS Self-Assessment Rubric:

	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory
Quizzes	100% Correct	80% Correct	60% Correct	0-40% Correct

	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Unsatisfactory
Reflection Questions	Participant provides rich detail from the content of the course in his or her responses Participant makes his or her responses to the questions personally meaningful	Participant includes appropriate content from the course in his or her responses Participant makes thoughtful comments in direct response to the questions	Participant includes some content from the course, usually appropriate, in his or her responses Participant answers the questions directly, not always fully	Participant includes no content from the course in his or her responses Participant does not address the questions posed