

**Raising Black Boy Joy: Will Diverse Books Increase Black Parents Trust in Educators of
Elementary Aged Black Boys?**

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Introduction

When my son arrived, I established a goal to read two books a day with him. Together, we read a variety of books featuring animals, shapes, children, and letters. I enjoyed picture books where I was able to make up my own bedtime story. During those moments, I would usually make him the lead character and use his favorite toys or foods all throughout the story. A few months into our reading time, I began to take inventory of the children's books within our home library. I became intrigued by the lack of diversity in the children's books within our home, and specifically the lack of every day stories featuring young Black boys as the protagonist.

I started to get more specific on the type of book that I was looking for – featuring a young Black boy. Many people love the children's book *I Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch. It is a story of a mother who loves her son and follows their journey from the son being raised by his mother, until the son ends up being the caregiver for his mother until she dies. I loved this story and the bond that it represents between a mother and her son. I felt confident that I would be able to find this every-day story told with mothers and sons from different cultural backgrounds. I decided to look on-line to see if I could find a few versions of this book and surprisingly, I could not find it. Instead, I found that there are more books with animals and trucks as the protagonist, than there are about people of Color.

I immediately leveraged my experience as a consultant, focused on problem-solving through sustainable solutions, and my passion as a Black mother, to author children's books with Black boys as the leading protagonist. My experience as a two-time children's book author allows me to authentically saturate the print media industry, as well as social media and television media with positive images of Black boys. I am also able to foster courageous

conversations about the role children's books in our homes and schools play in changing the negative narrative of Black boys in America to a positive one.

My entire life I have been exposed to the positive images of Black boys through my own personal encounters. Alternatively, I have watched the media publish demonizing images and stereotypes of Black boys that did not match my everyday experience. As a parent, I am passionate about marrying the media images of Black boys with the actual joy and experience that exists within my everyday life. I believe that once the two images match, society will begin to see Black boys as humans and not "things" such as a thug or athlete. The labels that are put on Black boys allows society to detach itself from the idea that Black boys are indeed humans that are loved by their mothers and bring joy to those around them.

I began to reflect further on the images that dominate the various forms of media, specifically children's books. Through my reflection, I identified my research question: Will diverse books and classroom materials increase the trust of Black parents of educators of Black elementary aged boys? This research will provide critical thought leadership on the importance of representation in children's books to Black parents in classroom settings.

Literature Review

The Benefits of Reading Interesting and Relatable Content

Reading is fundamental and a critical skill that is needed as children journey through life. Developing the interest in reading can happen in a variety of settings including home and school. Research conducted by Rahmawati et al. (2021) shows there are eight reasons why children should develop a fondness in reading. These reasons include: 1) can make children read well, 2) can have a high linguistic understanding such as speaking, writing, and understanding ideas well, 3) can excel in every field, 4) can overcome insecurity about academic abilities, 5) can

provide a variety of perspectives, 6) can help children have affection, 7) can expose children to a world filled with possibilities, and 8) can develop a creative mindset and gain happiness in life (Rahmawati et al., 2021, p. 114). These reasons emphasize the importance of fostering the love of reading in children and further highlight the benefits of reading beyond the school walls. Akanda et al. (2013) state that “Increasing students’ fondness for reading is essential to building their knowledge and turning them into lifelong students” (p. 10). Fostering a love of learning is necessary for children to become adaptable adults.

There are four components to measure a student’s interest in reading. The four components are awareness, attention, frequency, and pleasure. Each of the components can be influenced by internal and external factors (Harris & Sipay, 1985; Sandjaja, 2001). One of the primary external influences that impacts a student’s interest in reading is reading selection, which can be addressed by providing interesting content (Akanda et al., 2013; Sandjaja, 2001; Tarigan, 2008). When trying to gauge whether a child is relating to a book character, or understanding the underlying lesson within a book, it is worth paying close attention to what they spontaneously say during the reading as well as what they remember afterwards (Kruse et al., 2021). This can be assessed by watching for signs like whether the child points out the illustrations, notices similarities or differences, or tries to guess what is happening next.

Interesting content for many readers could also be relatable content. Relatable content is content where one can see themselves or others through the characters in the story. When we can relate to the content, we become much more interested in the journey that the characters will take (Souto-Manning, 2009). The journeys the characters take can also shape the journey we believe that we can take. A review of existing research reveals considerable evidence that children’s literature can serve as a useful resource for supporting principles of diversity (Souto

-Manning, 2009). Providing diverse and relatable reading content for children can reinforce positive self-images, principles of diversity, and introduce children to others who are different.

To further explore relatable content in children's books, we must examine how the content is typically published. According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center, 50% of children's books depicted White characters, 27% depicted Animals/Others, 10% depicted Black characters, 7% Asian Pacific Islander/Asian American, 5% Latinx, and 1% American Indians/First Nations (Huck & Dahlen, 2019). Nearly 80% of children's book content depicted White characters or animals and objects in the children's book stories. In addition to children being exposed to children's books at home, they are also exposed in a variety of different early childhood education facilities.

Books are one of the tools that help children develop an awareness and recognition of diversity early in life. Bar-Haim et al. (2006) found in a study of thirty-six infants, that children develop a bias towards their own race as early as three to six months of age. A study by Larsen et al. (2018) found that preschool-aged children were better able to understand the moral of a story and apply it to real-life situations when the story was presented with human characters rather than anthropomorphized animal characters. In their conclusion, the authors suggested that these children may have related more to human characters than to animal characters, and that this relatability may have made it easier for them to transfer what they learned from the book with human characters to real-life situations (Kruse et al., 2021). The publishing industry should take more ownership in the content that is published to ensure that the images and materials that are in children's homes and schools reflect the diverse make-up and inclusive world we want to continue to build.

Studies such as those conducted by Larsen et al. (2018) and Kucirkova et al. (2014a, b) shed light on the impact that a single storybook reading can have on a young child. For example, following their retellings, some participants would make comments such as, “I have a frisbee at home,” connecting the story to their own lives through the presence of a particular object without ever mentioning the characters within the story. It is important to have diverse authors and illustrators a part of the diverse story telling so that the story is authentic. Children connect with different components of the children’s books beyond the character’s name and race. To increase interest and ensure the content is relatable, representation at the writing and drawing tables is key.

The images that we take in early as a young child can shape conscious and unconscious bias. Adam et al. (2020) states “Continual exposure to such literature can cumulatively impact children’s long-term attitudes and perceptions of diversity and well-being.” (p.13, 17-20) Children spend most of their time in the classroom, yet many classrooms do not have images that reflect their diverse students. Evidence suggests that many educators hold limited understandings and beliefs about diversity which can contribute to inequitable provision and use of diverse books and to inequitable outcomes of book sharing for many children (Souto-Manning et al., 2009). Additional evidence suggests that educators are often hesitant to discuss issues relating to equality, power, values, and attitudes because they lack confidence and knowledge which is compounded by a lack of resources (Boutte et al., 2011). Others suggest that educators may avoid talking about race and racial issues, believing that children are too young for such discussions, or such a discussion might be considered racist in itself (Beneke & Cheatham, 2019). The reoccurring theme is that there is a lack of training, confidence, and awareness for educators. The evidence clearly states the need for representation in classrooms and the impact on students.

There is some evidence that some educators working in diverse settings and having a high level of cultural competence can still use books to teach in a culturally responsive way even when those books do not reflect diversity (Mendoza, 2001). Ultimately, this suggests that interactions between pedagogical practices, children's literature, and children's learning will depend, in part, upon educators' professional knowledge, their training, confidence, skills, and judgements and the quality and relevance of the literature they share with children. Despite this, there is a gap in the evidence on how educators' understandings of diversity impact on their pedagogy and practice (Buchori, 2015).

Applying Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy to Children's Literature

Providing interesting and relatable content for students requires culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy to be leveraged when choosing content. Embracing these methodologies consistently allows for students to be at the center of the instruction and for them to learn in a way that is meaningful to them. Educators can determine if Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) is being applied based on three tenets: "(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 160). CRP requires that the students are thriving and curious throughout the learning journey.

In addition to being culturally relevant, educators must be culturally responsive as well. Being culturally responsive means "using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for [students]" (Gay, 2000, p. 29). Being responsive means that as society and community trends and needs evolve, the educator applies that to the classroom. For example, an educator could be providing culturally relevant literature in the classroom for the students; but

if there is an election, an officer-involved shooting, or a major achievement in the diverse community and the educator does not incorporate that in the lesson, then they are not being responsive and could lose credibility with the students.

It is important that educators leverage culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy when instructing students. The combination of culturally responsive and culturally relevant approaches being applied in the classroom is often referred to as culturally informed literacy instruction. Fairbanks et al. (2009) described approaches that increased student talk as culturally informed because such approaches “make a space for students to bring their own language and cultural knowledge to the meaning-making process” (p. 595). They grouped culturally informed literacy instruction into three categories: (a) changing classroom participation structures, (b) cultural modeling, and (c) creating hybrid spaces (Fairbanks et al., 2009, pp. 595-597). As educators seek to continue to shape the curriculum to be culturally relevant and responsive the approach to instruction must reflect that starting with the books and materials that students have for their lessons

Summary

When educators use CRP through literature, they actively involve children in engaging with diverse literature and exploring meaning, viewpoints, ideas, and responses to books that reflect their own worlds and, importantly, the world of those different to themselves (Colby & Lyon, 2004). This is something that parents can do to reinforce a positive self-identity for Black boys. Evidence suggests that exploring race and culture, including through literature and literature discussion, can contribute to children’s worldviews and the development of their sense of identity and well-being.

Changing the narrative of Black boys using children's books can start with one book and be built from there. Teachers and students need access to more inclusive and authentic children's books. Children will be able to see themselves and identify similarities and differences. By learning and connecting with the diverse characters in the children's books, children will be able to see everyday stories of people who might look different from them. Celebrating those differences can help children at an early age find common ground beyond the stereotypes that are constantly flooding various forms of media.

There were insufficient number of studies that showed how diverse children's books impact children from a Black parents' perspective. Further, there was an insufficient number of studies that talked about Black parents' views without a disadvantaged and impoverished lens. There is a need for more research that shows these perspectives and outcomes from studies. This is what isn't yet addressed, so I am about to address it right now.

Methods

Introduction

There is a need to increase the trust between Black parents of Black boys in elementary schools and their teachers. This research is focused on determining if Black parents saw diverse books in their Black son's classroom would that increase the trust the parent may have of the teacher. To answer the research question, the researcher focused on gathering three sources of data to triangulate to include a mixed-method survey, formal interviews, and focus groups. The results of this data provided a narrative inquiry that would help to shape the innovative approach and recommendation.

Participants

Middle class Black parents of elementary aged Black boys are underrepresented in research. This researcher intentionally reached out to Black organizations that are associated with upward mobile Black families like Black Greek Letter Organizations, Historically Black College and University Alumni Associations, and Jack and Jill of America, Inc. The researcher encouraged initial participants to share within their networks to help gain a broader reach. Fifty-two parents with similar educational and socioeconomic backgrounds participated in the study. Thirty-eight parents responded to the ten-question mixed-method survey, two parents participated in a one-on-one formal interview, and twelve parents participated in a focus group that was conducted over three nights. Each of the Black parents are raising Black sons in an elementary school. The participants self-identified Black, parents of Black sons, middle-class and above, and with at least two active parents or caregivers. Parents who also identified as educators were asked to participate in a one-on-one interview (see Appendix A).

Materials

The researcher procured a paid Zoom account to conduct the focus group and one-on-one interview sessions. The paid account for Zoom allows for the researcher to record the sessions and to conduct the sessions longer than forty minutes. The researcher also used a paid Academic Facilitator to take notes on the nonverbal reactions and other key observations of the participants.

The researcher used a free Sign-up genius account to register the participants and allow them to select the date and time that would be most convenient for them to participate in the focus group and the one-on-one interview. The focus group was allotted for a 90-minute session and the interview was allotted a 60-minute session.

The response sheet consisted of ten questions that each participant received after the focus group discussion was conducted. Each participant received an identical electronic response

sheet to record their interactions and feedback. The response sheet included questions regarding their role in the life of their Black son, the types of books their son liked to read, and the recommendations they provide their son's teacher on books to have in the classroom. The researcher asked participants to provide an action they would want their son's teacher to take and one thing they wish their son's teacher knew about their son as a Black parent (see Appendix B).

Procedures

The focus group discussion happened with no more than seven participants in any one session over Zoom. The focus group was intentionally scheduled at three different times for the participants to choose the time best for their schedule so that they could be reasonably distraction free. For each session, participants consented to the Zoom call being recorded and participating in the study and received instructions orally and in writing. The researcher provided written and oral instructions for the participants to introduce themselves and include consistent demographic information. Each participant was given 60 seconds to complete the introduction and a timer was used to keep the conversation on track. The researcher then shared the remaining questions on the screen and went through each question before the focus group conversations began. This was a critical step to make sure all participants were aligned on terms and had time to begin processing their response. At the conclusion of the focus group, all participants were given three minutes to complete the electronic response sheet that was posted using the chat function in Zoom to support the conversation in the focus group. After completing their response sheet, the participants had the opportunity to ask any questions they had about the research.

In addition to the focus group, parent participants who identified as educators participated in a 60-minute one-on-one interview, regarding their role as a parent educator and how that shapes the way they parent at home and educate at school. The researcher asked the participants

eleven questions that included if they supplemented curriculum and employed intentional strategies for their students based on their experiences as a Black parent of Black son.

Design and Analyses.

The data was collected in three focus group settings, three one-on-one interviews, and a response sheet. The researcher viewed the data as a narrative inquiry. The researcher and observer coded for ideas, patterns, themes, and frequently used words or phrases as a leading indicator of important themes. The researcher refined the list by eliminating and combining outliers or things that are duplicative. The nominal data included gender, type of school their son attended, and profession. The items were analyzed both independently and dependently.

Results

Data was collected from three different sources using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The sources used were surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The results section will provide insight into what would increase the trust of Black parents of Black boys in elementary school. Results are also divided into subcategories to represent the different information collected to support the innovation.

Survey Data This data subgroup includes the survey responses scored using mixed method responses in the questions so the researcher could synthesize the responses. In the survey questions one, two, four, five, six, and seven are quantifiable questions. The results are in Appendix C.

Formal interview questions. The researcher had an extended conversation with two participants that were educators and parents of Black sons in elementary school. The participants were also included in the survey and focus groups. The results are in Appendix D.

Focus Groups. The researcher conducted three focus groups with twelve participants (nine females and three males) that were Black parents of Black sons in elementary school. There were four major themes that emerged throughout the focus groups. The themes are increase Black male elementary educators, provide experiential learning opportunities, increase and improve parent and teacher communication, and expand the diverse books used in the classroom.

Increase Black male elementary educators. Many Black parents of Black sons stated that they want to see Black male elementary educators in grade-level positions. Black parents felt that even if their Black son was not in the class of the Black male educator just the fact that he was a part of the grade level team would increase their trust in their son's classroom teacher. Black parents reflected on what roles they saw Black males in growing up through their own education to the present with their own son. Many of the roles include the School Resource Office, PE teachers, janitor, or behavior specialist. Many commented that they did not see a grade level or subject matter Black male educator until high school. The conversation continued around Black males not seen as nurturers, but enforcers or a threat and that is why they are not encouraged to go into elementary grade level roles.

Every participant in the focus group was in a two-parent home. It is important to note that the need for Black male educators was not because there was a lack in Black men in their Black son's life. The conversation was around making sure that their Black son would be represented in grade level meetings, plannings, etc. so that their Black son would be centered in conversations related to education. Black parents trust that if a Black man is at the table and their Black son is being singled out unfairly, then the Black male educator would help to redirect or provide insight to either the parent or his peer teachers.

Provide experiential learning opportunities. Black parents of Black sons unanimously agreed that they wanted their Black sons in an environment that provided the opportunity for their sons to have hands on and real-world situations to connect their studies. Each parent spoke about the need for movement and ways their Black sons learned beyond the text. In addition to hands-on learning in the classroom, there was a strong desire to go outside of the classroom and into the broader community to connect the lessons and expose Black boys to ways in which learning can be fun. There was also an aha moment around how there are select schools that seem to provide a movement based, hands-on learning approach. This moment also brought to light that majority of the Black parents in the focus group did not have their Black sons in their assigned neighborhood schools as they saw the lack of movement as a deterrent. Additionally, they highlighted that they did not think their Black sons would thrive in the current way they saw their neighborhood school operate.

Increase and improve parent teacher communication. Black parents of Black sons want to have proactive communication with their son's teacher. Many parents felt that their communication with the teacher was initiated by them and reactive to a situation that occurred. For example, several parents noted that their child would come home from school and tell them something and the parent would have to reach out to the teacher to understand what happened and come up with a path forward. The parents wondered what would happen if the child had not come home and shared and wondered what might be happening in the classroom that is inappropriate toward their child that child may not understand. Parents yearned for more communication that was positive and an opportunity for parents and teachers to partner together to course correct situations. Parents also wanted to talk about their desire for more diverse teachings and readings throughout the year but did not always feel safe and equipped enough to

have the conversation. Parents did not know where to start and were not sure if they should have meetings at the beginning of the year with their son's teacher or wait until parent and teacher conferences.

Expand the diverse books in the classroom. The participants shared the types of books that their sons like to read. They all agreed that if the book was on a topic that their son was interested in that they saw their son enjoying reading. Many of them said their son was able to read any book they wanted at school with the only rule being that they read every day. Parents also said that their students complained about not being able to find the books they want in their classroom or the school library. One parent shared that they only like reading at home and not at school because they could not find the books that they were interested in at school. Parents wanted the teachers to choose books that reflect the interest of their sons during story time, lessons references, and for the books to be made available during independent reading. Parents suggested that the teachers help the students find books that they are interested in to increase engagement and reach out to parents on a defined cadence to keep the books of interest included in the classroom rotation. Parents were open to providing recommendations, helping to donate books, and supporting in the lessons, but were rarely asked and was unsure if the teacher would be receptive. Parents are interested in how to help without also doing the teachers job and reinventing the wheel every year and across each individual school.

Discussions and Implications

Implications

Nearly a decade has passed since the murder of Trayvon Martin, a twelve-year-old boy who was murdered at the hands of police for walking in his neighborhood. Since then, the cry for Black boys to be humanized in the eyes of media, the law, and educators has been on an uprise.

Recently, the Black Lives Matter movement hit a peak in the summer of 2020 as a response to the murder of George Floyd that went viral at the hands of social media and smart phones. For centuries, Black parents have had a heightened sense of awareness to protect their Black sons from the various systems. Yet in 2022, that protectiveness from Black parents still exists and is felt where young Black boys spend most of their time, which is at school.

The purpose of this study was to hear directly from Black parents of Black elementary aged boys what would increase their trust in their son's teacher. This research is being conducted less than two years after the of Black Lives Matter and the impact of the various forms of media in the way people including educators see Black boys. This study seeks to understand if diverse books and classroom materials in the classroom could make a difference in the trust of Black parents. As a result of the research, majority of parents said yes, their trust would increase, but that is not enough. Over the course of the conversation, the word "safety" as used interchangeably with trust. Black parents have a distrust with their Black elementary aged sons in the educational system because they do not feel their sons are safe. Participants were asked to elaborate on what safe meant and some of the descriptors included "protecting joy and innocence" "not being over disciplined" and "age-appropriate expectations regardless of race." Learning this while increasing representation in the form of books would be a step for Black parents to trust the consciousness of the teacher, that representation in a variety of forms would be needed to make Black parents trust that their Black sons are safe. This would need to include Black male educators in leadership roles within the elementary school and primary teaching roles at every grade level.

Limitations

The participants in this study were Black middle-class parents. Previous research centers on Black boys from a socioeconomic disadvantage limiting the number of existing studies the researcher could leverage. The researcher wanted to interview Black elementary male educators that had a Black elementary aged son. After reaching out to ten principals the researcher was not able to identify one Black male educator to interview. The Black elementary educator and parent perspective would have enhanced the study.

Conclusion

Black parents of Black elementary aged boys recognize that there is a lack of trust between the parents and teachers of the Black elementary aged boys. There are many steps that need to be taken to increase trust, but an actionable first is to increase the amount of diverse books and classroom materials in the class. To make it easier for parents and educators, the researcher will create a platform by grade-level for educators to order diverse books, classroom materials, and corresponding lesson plans for their students. This will act as a toolkit for educators to use throughout the year and will be vetted and endorsed by Black parents. Additionally, this platform will have a parent page that will provide parents templates to initiate conversations if their son's teacher has not diversified the classroom enough. The templates could include introductory letters to teachers, suggestions on favorite books, and providing them the information to find this platform.

The consolidated platform will be mutually beneficial for the parents and the educators. The Black parents are finding themselves creating supplemental coursework to provide their Black son's teachers. The Black parents in the study want to have the ability to influence and shape their Black son's classroom experience but could benefit from not having to reinvent the wheel when other Black parents are creating and looking for the same type of information. The

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educators may have a willingness to diversify their classroom books and materials but may not know how to do it. This is where an increased partnership and communication between the parents and teachers will increase trust and have a life-long impact on the Black boy in the classroom.

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Appendix A:

Invitation to Participate in the Focus Group

Some of you may know that I am in my final semester of graduate school. As a part of my graduation, I am conducting an action research project focused on Black boys and their parents. I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group that will allow for Black parents of elementary-aged Black boys to share what would increase their trust for their son's teacher. This will be conducted over [Zoom](#). The focus group should last no longer than one and a half hours. There is no preparation needed to attend.

If you identify as Black and a parent/caregiver of a Black son and would like to take part in the focus group, please let us know by registering [here](#). Please also share with anyone in your network that you know is raising a Black son. I am looking for a diverse group of mothers, fathers, grandmothers, etc.

Thank you in advance,
Charlitta

Appendix B

* 1. Are you a parent of a Black son in elementary school?

Yes - Mother

Press F11 to exit full screen

Yes - Father

Yes - Primary Caregiver (That does not identify as a mother or father)

No

* 2. Do you read books at home with your son?

Yes

No

* 3. What type of books does your son like to read? (Free text response)

* 4. Do you read the types of books at home that your son likes?

Yes

* 4. Do you read the types of books at home that your son likes?

Yes

Press F11 to exit full screen

No

* 5. Does your son's teacher read those books at school?

Yes

No

* 6. How open is your son's teacher to receiving book recommendations from you?

1 - Not open at all to recommendations from me

2 - Open to receive recommendations from me during Black History Month

3 - Neutral - I have not provided recommendations and I have not been asked for recommendations

4 - Open to receive recommendations from me throughout the school year

5 - Proactively reaches out to me for recommendations

Appendix C

Q1. Are you a parent of a Black son in elementary school?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes - Mother	81.58%	31
Yes – Father	10.53%	4
Yes - Primary Caregiver (That does not identify as a mother or father)	5.26%	2
No	2.63%	1

Q2. Do you read books at home with your son?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	94.74%	36
No	5.26%	2

Q4. Do you read the types of books at home that your son likes?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	89.47%	34
No	10.53%	4

Q5. Does your son's teacher read those books at school?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	55.26%	21
No	44.74%	17

Q6. How open is your son's teacher to receiving book recommendations from you?

Answer Choices	Responses	
1 - Not open at all to recommendations from me	5.26%	2
2 - Open to receive recommendations from me during Black History Month	5.26%	2
3 - Neutral - I have not provided recommendations and I have not been asked for recommendations	63.16%	24
	21.05%	8
4 - Open to receive recommendations from me throughout the school year	5.26%	2
5 - Proactively reaches out to me for recommendations		

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Q7. Does your son’s interest in reading change based on the type of books he is reading?

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	68.42% 26
No	31.58% 12

In the survey questions three, eight, nine, and ten are qualitative questions. The results are below.

Q3. What type of books does your son like to read?



Q8. Do you feel more trust when a teacher has Black books and/or classroom materials in your son’s classroom? (If yes, please provide details).

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Respondents	Responses
1	Yes. It gives me hope that the teacher will take the time to get to know my son on an individual basis.
2	Yes
3	Yes because to me that is telling me they are trying to diversify their classroom and acknowledge our culture
4	Yes
5	Yes. It's beneficial for black boys to be able to see characters in books that make them feel inclusive.
6	I feel he's getting knowledge about his heritage
7	Yes, it signals that the teacher is open to inclusion and belonging
8	Yes because they know the perspective.
9	Yes because it displays a cultural competence that is important to me
10	Yes bc black lives matter
11	Yes. I would also feel more trust hearing and/or witnessing Black books and classroom materials also being implemented/connected to lessons. I feel that it will allow my son to feel more connected and open to comprehending what he reads or does in class as well as being willing to have open discussions with his peers and teachers.
12	Yes; this to me shows there is intention to be inclusive of a diverse student body.
13	Maybe not more trust, but certainly more appreciation for diversity.
14	Yes, I want my son to see himself at school
15	Yes! I think it is important to have diversity in all areas of our lives. Seeing people who look like him in his classroom, as a teacher, a doctor, etc is important to us.
16	Yes, provides a way for my son to self identify
17	Yes
18	Yes. It shows intentionality
19	Yes
20	Yes because I know he will be engaged.
21	I trust the teacher is open to cultural diversity on various levels when there is diverse books in the classroom. I went to read in the classroom at the beginning of March, I was provided 4 books to choose and one was on Duke Ellington. Later this month there was a discipline issue with my son and a white boy and I was more trusting.
22	I would because he is seeing books that look like him
23	I would. I have no clue what books are in my son's classroom.
24	Yes, inclusiveness
25	No
26	Yes, I at least know she's attempting to show diversity and provide books that represent my son.
27	Yes. I always believed that a teacher should always provide a diverse collection of books in the classroom.
28	Yes. I believe this helps cultivate a sense of self pride with book that have positive black boy protagonist.
29	I don't know what she has in there really so not sure i could say either way.
30	Yes.
31	I don't see color.
32	Yes, it makes me feel like the teacher has at least tried to understand our point of view based on life experience.
33	Never thought about it!
34	I had lots of insight into my son's preschool but he entered a new school for first grade and COVID-19 has limited my classroom interaction. His preschool had lots of Black books, and that let me know his educators understood representation and inclusion.
35	Yes
36	Yes I feel the school is being inclusive and teaching the students that books that include black characters should be of interest just as a character that is white.
37	No basis to provide a response
38	Yes, because it makes me feel the teacher will also be providing more relevant classroom material.

Q9. What is one action that your son's teacher could take within their classroom to continue to build your trust?

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Respondents	Responses
1	Continue to be proactive in the learning and telling us ways our sons can be better.
2	Communicate regularly with me
3	A continuous line of communication
4	More communication
5	Overall better communication.
6	More black books
7	Communication
8	Bring on the diverse materials to their curriculum.
9	Work to diversify their curriculum across cultures and abilities
10	Talking more about equality
11	Being open to recommendations by not only the parents but students. as well. Constant communication; not just each quarter with progress reports or during scheduled 1:1 conferences, but throughout the school year.
12	Learning what interests and motivates my son.
13	Have more Curriculum that directly addresses race.
14	His teacher is amazing, just continuing to show interest in him and support for him. Great dialogue around child's performance and create assignments that connect stories to personal experiences for the child
15	Openly recognize he is different in a positive way.
16	Attempt to develop connection
17	Have students bring in their favorite books
18	More direct communication on his performance in the classroom
19	
20	
21	Present the students with more content from black point of authorities on the topic and directly point it out.
22	Show pictures of what they read I would like to know how much reading he is doing in class and how he is progressing before report cards. My son
23	is "on track" with reading but what does that mean.
24	Better communication
25	Continue loving my child
26	Teach about more Black Americans than the usual people. Ask for different books and movies.
27	Provide a variety of diverse books in the classroom.
28	Develop lessons of Afrocentrism within traditional subjects
29	Try to understand the impact representation has on children of color
30	She had it. Amazing Black woman.
31	Respect my child
32	Consistent encouragement
33	Share what type of books she reads to the kids!
34	She could formally ask for recommendations or assign weeks for students to bring in books they like.
35	Share more of books that they are reading Periodic communication or newsletters about what is being taught especially during black history month. I have no idea and often times since my son is in kindergarten he doesn't mention it unless something jogs his memory. Ex. In music he learned about Ella Fitzgerald we happen to hear a song on the radio that sounded similar to hers he
36	think begins to share what he has learned.
37	Reflect an understanding and shift in approach to support my son's advanced cognition.
38	Provide curriculum that closely aligns with the students/students' identity/culture.

Q10. What is one thing that you would want your son's teacher to know as a parent of a Black son?

RAISING BLACK BOY JOY

Respondents	Responses
1	That I want my son to know he is in a safe space with a teacher that will make him feel confident about himself and his blackness.
2	He is a good kid. I feel the need to highlight this fact because I don't want my son to be stereotyped or treated unfairly.
3	That my son road will not be a easy journey but she will be there to help navigate for him and other black and brown little boys. She will also need to bring awareness to the injustice that they face
4	Boys and girls bring different gifts and energies. I worry that my son will be labeled or not allowed to flourish unless he conforms to behave in certain ways. As the mom of a daughter, I love how schools have tried to empower girls. But it does not have to be and should not be at the expense of boys. I worry that black boys are getting the subliminal message that they are not enough unless they can sit quietly and be "low-profile." My son is rambunctious and curious and high-energy and I don't think that is embraced at school.
5	My son's teacher is black and also has a black son.
6	Keep giving him knowledge of his ancestors
7	He is curious and smart just like any other student
8	How difficult society interactions with my Black boy Are.
9	It is incredibly hard to parent a black boy in a society that does not love them.
10	Education matters for these boys.
11	Listen. Be more open to building a relationship by listening to the thoughts of what books and/or topics interest my black son.
12	Simply put, I just want my sons to have a great school experience and continue to love school.
13	That he is capable and deserves access to every resource and opportunity to succeed.
14	Prepare white children to be less racist, so I don't have to do extra work to prepare them for racist white children.
15	That one moment can change his life forever! Teachers have such a big influence over our children's lives. The good ones will remain in the hearts forever while the bad ones could impact them so negatively that they don't recover from that experience.
16	Children have different interest. Basing curriculum off the white experience may create division in the way a child views themselves in terms of the curriculum. Don't take the ability to not relate as disinterest.
17	Find ways to make the material relate to every student.
18	He needs love, his confidence and strength built.
19	I'm watching you.. we have options
20	Representation matters His experience in this world will be different than most of his classmates, so building his confidence in himself and his capabilities is extremely important.
21	We are proud Black Americans and our so should see the efforts of other proud Black Americans and their contributions to our world.
22	The older he gets he may be viewed differently and have more struggles then others of different cultures
23	That he wants to learn to read even if he doesn't seem interested or seems distracted at times.
24	That his parents are serious about his education
25	His experiences are different and may not be able to relate to certain books or discussions
26	That people are always thinking that he is "less than". That he's stereotyped just because of his skin color. So he's going to "extra" because we tell him how "extraordinary" he is and if she sees any of that dwindling, we need to be contacted to provide more support.
27	Listen to the ideas and feelings of her students when it comes to the kinds of books they are interested in reading.
28	Black boy behaviors could be masking a deeper issue/concern than of just insubordination.
29	That I love my son like others do and i try to teach him to be respectful and kind just as white mothers are perceived to do with their kids.
30	He is more active than most kids.
31	I too, sing America!
32	He will be ignored and judged enough in the world. Please don't make him experience that in a classroom that should be a safe place.
33	We all have a story in our stories are all different!
34	As he grows, even his everyday moves are life or death. It's a delicate balance to teaching that while having balanced disciplinary policies.
35	It important to give praise
36	Understanding that culture is more than just a something that should be done during "culture day". I often send notes to school requesting specific things ie homework during a missed day due to an illness. I do not get a reply back or homework sent.
37	They deserve to be positively regarded for their intelligence.
38	We need to work together to encourage reading, foster a love of learning & provide a path to educational success.

Appendix D

1. Introduction and Demographics
 - a. AH – Married with 3 children – 18 (girl), 14 (girl), and 6 (boy) – began teaching when first child was 3 weeks old as the research at that time showed that if first year teachers started after the school year started, they would not be successful in their teaching career. K-1 Public school educator, administrator in diverse magnet public schools, Literacy Facilitator in Title 1 Public school, Elementary school IB Principal
 - b. RP – Married with one ten-year-old, 5th grade son. I was teaching a decade before I had my son and have spent my career at Title 1 Elementary schools.
2. How long have you been an educator?
 - a. AH - 18 years
 - b. RP - 21 years
3. How long have you been a parent?
 - a. AH - 18years
 - b. RP - 11 years
4. How do you feel being an educator helps you to raise your Black son?
 - a. AH - My greatest gift has been having children. I have always gone into the classroom with the heart of a parent. Responding to parents and students as if this were my son. Being an educator has instilled in me the importance of building up your child. Children pick up on differences in the classroom and it's important how you have those conversations. It's also important to learn what motivates your child since every child is different.
 - b. RP -I was an educator for 10 years and I believe that has helped me to have more patience with my son. I have also been able to see things through the eyes of a child. I am constantly wondering what children are thinking and can take that approach with my son to show I am interested in him.
5. How do you feel being an educator hinders you when raising your Black son?
 - a. AH – As an educator, there are some things I feel I cannot address as a parent particularly because my last 2 children are or have attended my schools. I have to take a step back and allow my husband to address things. I have extended more grace to teachers because I know what it feels like being an educator and assume positive intent. I have be mindful to take the educator lens off as a parent sometimes when responding to my children.
 - b. RP – As an educator it has been hard to allow my child to experience things on his own without stepping in on everything. I am constantly wondering what he is learning and if he is progressing as he should based on the standards that I know all too well.
6. As a parent, do you feel that it's hard for you to trust the school system because of your career in education?
 - a. AH – That's a hard question. I believe it's hard for me not because of the teachers themselves, but because of the way the system is designed. The system is not designed for our Black children especially our sons to thrive. From the curriculum, testing, and discipline methods it was built from a method of

exclusion and not inclusion. So, I am always watching for that. Additionally, I give a lot of grace to the system and educators because I know how hard it is to do the work that we do.

- b. RP – Yes. I see that just like in the world there are people who mean well and some that do not. I wish school did more to build relationships with parents and the broader community. I think students would excel academically if schools would help establish a village.
7. As an educator, do you feel that you supplement the curriculum to meet your diverse students need because of your role as a parent?
 - a. AH – Yes. I am always looking for ways to expand the curriculum to be more inclusive. Having my children at the school has allowed me to be able to say to other parents that I am making this decision not only as a Principal, but also a parent. I encourage my teachers to include different types of media, special guests, ensure their classroom books and materials reflect the world and not just the make-up of the students. I definitely put a huge emphasis on culturally relevant teaching and culturally responsive practices (Ron Clark Academy, Book Studies, Lewis Consultants). We have invested a significant amount of funding to this work over my tenure as a Principal.
 - b. RP – Absolutely. I have predominantly Black students in a Title 1 school. I view the curriculum as a guide and try to incorporate real life experiences so the students can relate. Some examples might be using the types of food they eat or asking the students what they know so I can build off that. This allows me to bring in cultural experiences and then affirm them and their experiences as well.
8. What intentional strategies do you employ as it relates to curriculum and classroom materials that you feel should be universal to all educators?
 - a. AH – I definitely put a huge emphasis on culturally relevant teaching and culturally responsive practices, relationship building, restorative practices, diverse textbooks and literature.
 - b. RP – I am very intentional about the books we read and how my classroom is set-up. As my students are mostly Black I am always seeking out diverse books, posters with Black children, and different types of music. Representation matters.
9. What type of support do you feel educators need from parents regarding classroom books and engagement of Black boys?
 - a. AH – I would say parent support in having an open mind to literature of students and supporting classroom libraries with donations is a support as well. The parent-teacher connection is key in understanding student’s motivation and interests to keep students engaged.
 - b. RP – Parents should advocate for their sons interest. Create a dialogue with the teacher and offer suggestions on the types of books that your son would be interested in reading.
10. What advice do you have for educators of Black boys regarding classroom books and materials?
 - a. AH – There shouldn’t be a situation where a child feels foreign. All students deserve to see themselves in the classroom with other students, books, and materials. Everyone tends to gravitate to who we are and what we look like. The same way we find comfort in those circles, our children do as well. Culturally

relevant teaching and culturally responsive practices are key as well as representation in literature. Encourage the work and make it intentional and not forced.

- b. RP – Get to know your students and be proactive with establishing a positive relationship with your parents especially your Black parents of Black sons. Understand their interests and do whatever you can to keep it. Think outside the box and bring in the outside world to make it real.
11. Do you see an increase of engagement defined as participation and increased scores when Black boys read books that have other Black boys in them?
- a. AH – Yes, I have gone out of my way to bring in Black authors to our school. Bringing in those authors has impacted engagement in a variety of ways. The boys start to ask questions and see themselves as writers. When they see the boys in the story they automatically ask if the story is about them. They are immersed in the stories because it feels more relatable. The correlation to actual test scores are research that I am not aware of. However, the connection of representation is always powerful.
 - b. RP – Recently, I read the book *I Promise* by LeBron James. My Black boys enjoyed the book so much. They were shouting out things in the story that looked like things they had at home. They talked about LeBron James as if they knew him. They asked the most questions about what it meant and wanted me to read the book every day for weeks because it meant so much for them to hear that story by such a famous Black man that made sure the illustrations looked like other young Black boys.