**African American Vernacular English, Code-Switching and the K-12 Inclusive Classroom**

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**Background Information: African American Vernacular English (AAE)**

* Between 80 and 90 percent of all African-Americans speak what is known as African-American English, also known as African-American Vernacular English, Black English, or Ebonics (Redd and Webb 2005).
* AAE manifests itself as a language that, while not always following the norms and rules of Standard English, nonetheless follows a set of rules that are just as complex (Redd and Webb 2005, Craig and Washington 2002).
* Rickford (2000) argues that it is no more correct to refer to African-American English as “lazy” or “broken” English than it is to refer to Italian as “lazy Latin”, citing a rule-governed language rich in conventions, such as the use of double negatives, the dropping of the letter *r* and *g* at the end of words, and rhetorical devices such as “signifyin’” and exaggerated language (Redd and Webb 2005).
* No matter the richness of the language, AAE deviates from the standard in the sense that many African-American students speak AAE, yet attend schools in which Standard English is the primary, if not sole, language taught (Wolfram 1999).
* African-American students often go from a home where they hear only AAE to a classroom where they are told by their teachers that the language they speak is incorrect. In an era of high-stakes standardized testing, African-American students take tests that are written in a language with which they are often unfamiliar (Redd and Webb 2005).
* In the case of African-American students, a difference is viewed as a deficiency, with someone speaking in primarily AAE being viewed in a manner that is “lesser-than” a speaker of SE; a speaker of AAE will find trouble, for instance, in the workforce, where there is a standardized English (Delpit, 2002).
* Teachers find themselves in the position of balancing an appropriate acknowledgment a student’s culture, while also preparing them for success in school and life after school. It is for this reason that the ability to code-switch is of the utmost importance.
* An effective code switching strategy includes scientific inquiry, comparison and contrast, and metacognition.

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