

# African-Centered Agricultural Education: Creating Unique Learning Experiences In Schools for Black Urban Youth

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## Intro

Agricultural Education uses a three-circle model of instruction. These are classroom and laboratory instruction, leadership development, and experiential learning. The successful integration of each of these three components results in a strong program that produces well rounded individuals who are prepared to be leaders inside or outside of agriculture (see Figure 1).

Black Youth are in need of unique learning opportunities in school because they disproportionately experience schools as outsiders (Gray et al., 2018). One way to support Black youths' belonging in STEM is to provide African Centered Agriculture Education.

My research addresses the question:

**What unique learning experiences can an African Centered Agricultural Education create in schools for Black Urban Youth?**

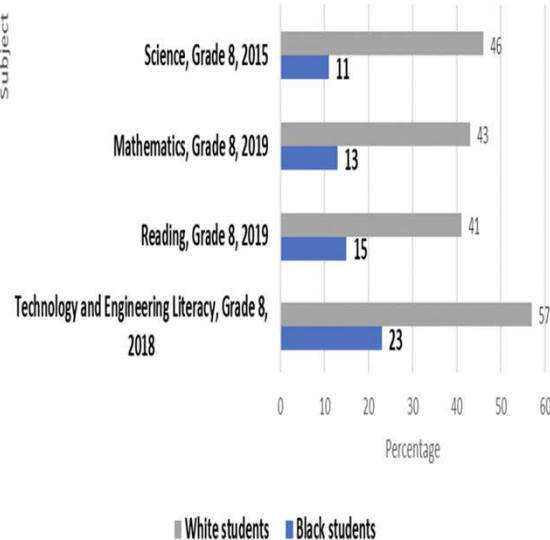
## Methodology

- The majority of my research is qualitative research. It consists of data showing how agricultural education has been put into practice successfully with interviews of both teachers and students.
- My positionality in this research is a student who has personally been a part of an African Centered agricultural education program called Sankofa Farms. I have witnessed the impacts that it can have on Black urban youth first hand.
- Because there is no data on African Centered Agricultural Programs and their benefits to Black urban youth, I synthesized research from the fields of agriculture Education, African Centered Education, STEM Education and Educational Psychology.

## Background

- Agriculture creates a unique learning experience because it combines science, math, leadership skills, and team building. Agriculture also teaches transferable skills; transferable skills are helpful for life outside of school or after graduation (Dailey 2001).
- Studies show that black youth are falling behind whites in public as well as private institutions (Table 1) because of the fear of falling into a negative stereotype and having a fear of affirming this stereotype can lead to underperformance. The experience of racism being a reality of black youth also contributes to their quality of school experience. It is emotionally taxing. (Ottley, 2005)

## Data



**Table 1.** Percentage of 8th grade students who performed at or above the Proficient, by subjects, Black vs. white students

## Background Cont.

- Agricultural schools in Tanzania had the idea of self reliance as a end goal. They also stress the importance of agriculture for humanity as a whole (Ngugi et al., 2002).
- African centered education is the act of placing the needs and interests of people of African descent at the center of their education experience.
- STEM is often thought of as being culturally neutral, however African centered scholars argue that the origins of STEM is cultural and rooted in African history and philosophy (Burbanks et al., 2020).
- When thinking about african centered agricultural learning; It is important to stress remembering your african heritage as you move forward in life. This is the lens that the education piece would be focused through to offer a connect to black youth.



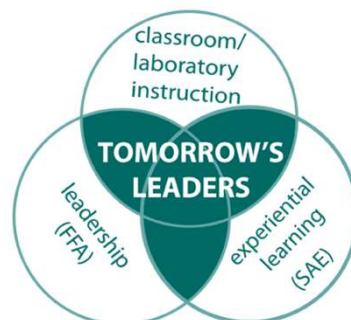
Sankofa Farms 2020

## Findings

- The research showed that agriculture which is a combination of science, math, leadership skills, management, economics, and team building is a unique learning experience that combines several skills in one.
- Additionally transferable life skills are acquired through agricultural education.
- Educators must build cultural connections for Black youth so that students learn when to apply certain skills.
- Developed agricultural education systems in Tanzania and Kenya stressed that students should let go of individualism. Additionally, the importance of self sustainability was stressed
- Agricultural Education can offer an African Centered Education because of Black people's deep rooted history in agriculture.

## Conclusion

Unique learning opportunities are created for Black youth through agricultural education by creating a culturally relevant learning environment. It leans away from eurocentric thought process and incorporates an afrocetric thought process of community and team building. Transferable skills are taught as well that will contribute to life outside of school and agriculture into any field desired. More African Centered Agricultural Education research should be done on Black urban youth, seeing that there is no current research that can be found. This research could lead to more funding for agricultural programs for Black youth as well as a pipeline of black youth going into STEM fields related to agriculture.



**Figure 1.** Agriculture Education Model