

## Services for Black Youth

### Course

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#### Effective Library Services for Black Youth [6:02]

[https://players.brightcove.net/2566261579001/HyuWsfFhb\\_default/index.html?videoId=5412519769001](https://players.brightcove.net/2566261579001/HyuWsfFhb_default/index.html?videoId=5412519769001)

#### About

Characteristics of effective libraries, librarians, and library instruction.

#### Transcript

So far, we have explored effective library services for African American youth on a mostly-theoretical level. In this segment, we will synthesize the research presented in segments one through five, findings from our own research, and insights from library practitioners, African American youth, administrators, policymakers, publishers, and authors to present a holistic model of effective library services for African American youth. The model accounts for library space, resources, and programs, as well as for librarians and library administrators. We will present highlights of the model here, but the full model, presented in our book, contains additional features and examples.

First, let's discuss library space. The library's physical space remains a primary locus for resources, programs, and services, and thus for connecting with African American youth. Unfortunately, youth spaces in libraries are often unwelcoming, undersized, or poorly designed. Many African American youth view the library as an unwelcoming or even hostile place, a situation that seriously limits the opportunities that librarians have to engage and build relationships with these young men and women.

Effective library spaces for Black youth are spaces that are safe—physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Effective spaces reflect, respect, and celebrate cultural diversity, for example by highlighting diverse resources in both physical and virtual displays. Ideally, library spaces would include areas for both quiet and noise, work and recreation, independence and collaboration.

Effective library resources, as discussed in the previous segment, are relevant, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate. Digital resources, including hardware, should also be a focus for libraries working to improve their services for African American youth.

Effective library programs honor and encourage the voices of African American youth by seeking and accepting their input into program design and by giving them access to multiple tools and outlets for self-expression. Effective programs are also collaborative, allowing African American youth and other young people to engage with and learn from one another, as well as from teachers, mentors, and other adults. Families are considered and involved when planning and implementing library programs. Finally, program planners and leaders set and communicate high expectations for all participants.

Over the past several decades, the role of the school librarian has expanded to include a greater emphasis on teaching and learning, especially through collaboration with classroom teachers. As instructors, school librarians have the opportunity to participate directly in the literacy education of African American youth. Public librarians may also enact an instructional role to supplement, complement, or extend the literacy education offered in local schools. Effective library instruction employs asset-based instructional strategies that build on the strengths of African American students and lead to improved academic achievement, increased resiliency, and agency among these and all students. Effective library instruction is culturally relevant. As discussed in Segment Two, this means that it is authentic and relevant, cooperative, communal, and interactive. Frameworks such as Connected Learning or Youth Participatory Action Research are employed to help foster agency and empower Black youth to take action in their communities.

Librarians who are effective in addressing the literacy needs of African American youth are caring, committed, and culturally competent. They reject the deficit-oriented perspective that represents the culture, race, language, and other characteristics of African American youth as limitations, and they similarly reject stereotypical views of African American youth that deny their individuality. Although the data on the need for improved literacy services to African American youth are clear, many communities may resist shifting their focus to this underserved group, and therefore effective librarians must be courageous in their advocacy for these children and teens and must fully embrace their responsibility to work with African American youth and their families. They engage in ongoing and critical evaluation of their library's resources, services, and programs, and use this data to develop responsive services and to advocate for additional resources—both monetary and human.

Effective library administrators and policymakers work to ensure adequate and equitable funding and employ dedicated and culturally competent staff members who are

knowledgeable about the needs of African American youth and committed to meeting those needs. They also examine library policies to ensure that they are respectful of the needs and lived experiences of African American youth. Administrators should ensure that all library staff members are provided with ongoing professional development to help them implement these policies, including training on the literacy needs of African American youth, cultural competence, social justice, collaboration, and evidence-based practice. Administrators and policymakers may also play important roles in establishing partnerships with other agencies in their communities who are also working to address the literacy needs of African American youth.

A library that effectively serves African American youth must look holistically at its resources, staff, programming, instruction, and space. None of these domains can function well without the others. For example, engaging, culturally responsive library programs will not attract youth and their families if the library space is unwelcoming or inaccessible.

The most powerful actions that you can take are local actions, created for and with the specific youth served by your library, taking into account their unique assets and challenges and the resources available in your library and community. Involving African American youth in the assessment and improvement of your library's space, resources, services, and programs is the best way to ensure that any changes that you make are truly in response to their needs, their voices, and their lived experiences.

In the next segment, we'll share one example of a librarian who is putting these characteristics into action.

Activities

### **Informal Self-Assessment**

#### **Context:**

This lesson synthesizes the theoretical foundation of Lessons 1-5 with practical applications for youth librarians in the form of a holistic model. The following elements are described: library space; library resources; library programs; roles, responsibilities and dispositions of school and public librarians; administrators, policymakers, and policies. "None of these domains can function well without the others."

#### **Instructions:**

1. Review the following section of this lesson:

*Librarians who are effective in addressing the literacy needs of African American youth are caring, committed, and culturally competent. They reject the deficit-oriented perspective that represents the culture, race, language, and other characteristics of African American youth as limitations, and they similarly reject stereotypical views of African American youth that deny their individuality. Although the data on the need for improved literacy services to African American youth are clear, many communities may resist shifting their focus to this underserved group, and therefore effective librarians must be courageous in their advocacy for these children and teens and must fully embrace their responsibility to work with African American youth and their families. They engage in ongoing and critical evaluation of their library's resources, services, and programs, and use this data to develop responsive services and to advocate for additional resources—both monetary and human.*

2. Conduct an informal self-assessment on your effectiveness at this time in terms of addressing the literacy needs of African American youth. One simple method is to mark up this paragraph to check or circle your current strengths, note areas for growth, and/or identify topics for which you need further information or support.

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### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Annotated Bibliography.](#)

#### MLA CITATION

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