Jawanza Kunjufu and the work of education

Name _____ Date _____

Essential question How can schools affirm students’ identities, remove barriers, and keep academic expectations high?

Do Now

What message does a classroom send about who belongs when only a few groups appear as authors, scientists, or leaders?

A1 Jawanza Kunjufu is an educator, author, and publisher whose work centers Black children and the adults who teach and support them. He founded African American Images, a publishing company. In an interview with the Journal of African American Males in Education, he described an educational philosophy that included higher teacher expectations, more time spent learning, and a curriculum connected to students’ cultural experiences. Those are positions he advocates. An interview establishes what he argues, while an evaluation would be needed to measure results.

A2 In “A Relevant Curriculum,” Chapter 3 of Developing Positive Self-Images & Discipline in Black Children, Kunjufu asks adults to examine whether classrooms nurture Black children, hold them to high expectations, encourage questions, and build thinking skills. He links curriculum and students’ self-image to discipline. He also urges adults to listen to children and begins his inquiry by asking them what adults say about school. This paragraph paraphrases the chapter opening.

A3 Two other works widen the inquiry. Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys addresses the upbringing and support of Black boys, with guidance for families, educators, and community members. Black Students–Middle Class Teachers raises questions about teacher preparation and how teachers understand Black students. The three works place responsibility in different places, including the family, the classroom, and the institutions that train teachers. A reader can investigate the claims implied by a title by asking what practices are documented and what evidence would establish their effects.

A4 Kunjufu estimates 22,800 hours in school by multiplying 19 years by 1,200 hours per year. His illustration assumes two years of preschool, nine years of elementary school, four years of high school, and four years of college. It treats a six-hour day as typical. At five days a week, 1,200 hours implies 40 weeks a year. He uses the estimate to argue that what happens repeatedly in classrooms deserves scrutiny. The estimate itself measures neither students’ actual time in school nor the effect of schooling on self-image.

Classroom synthesis and paraphrase of the supplied Chapter 3 opening, interview, and catalog records.

Annotate one claim, one supporting detail, and one question the source leaves open.

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Source analysis and quick write

Source Analysis

Use A4 to show how Kunjufu estimated 22,800 hours. Recalculate using 15 years and 1,080 hours per year. Explain what both estimates can illustrate and what evidence you would need to test whether classroom experiences shape self-image.

Quick Write

A school replaces a few posters with portraits of Black leaders but keeps assigning simplified work to the same students. Use A1–A2 to explain why the school should examine representation and the difficulty of students’ work. Write one question you would ask students to learn whether they are being challenged.

Exit Ticket

What does listening to children add to Kunjufu’s inquiry in A2? Give one example of evidence a student could provide.

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