

# **We Need More Drama: A Comparison of Ford, Hurston, and Boykin's African American Characteristics and Instructional Strategies for the Culturally Different Classroom**

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*The scholar, rhetorician, or historian who undertakes an analysis of the African American past without recognizing the important role that orature has played and continues to play in the lives of African Americans is treading on intellectual quicksand.*

-- Molefi Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*

Teachers who are not considered to be culturally competent may misinterpret many characteristics exhibited by African American students. They may be unaware of the African American linguistic practices and characteristics and they may also be unfamiliar with research conducted by scholars such as Zora Neale Hurston and A. Wade Boykin. This lack of knowledge may cause teachers to wrongly view the behaviors and/or learning styles of African American students in negative ways. These misunderstandings could inadvertently affect the way in which some teachers perceive and interact with these students. This article extends the comparison of Boykin's African American characteristics of ADHD and includes Hurston's characteristics of Negro expression and Ford's application of Boykin's characteristics to the characteristics of African American students. Through these comparisons, the authors suggest that the performing arts not only be used as a vehicle of expression for African American students in multiple settings (i.e., school and community) but also as a tool to empower African American students with and without high incidence disabilities.

*Keywords:* African American students, Black students, high incidence disabilities, ADHD, performing arts, drama, Ford, Hurston, Boykin

When African American children participate in settings that heavily cater to, and are designed for, children from the dominant culture, they are often culturally misunderstood (Ford, 2013; Hill, 2009). Teachers may mistakenly view culturally specific behavior as problem behavior or evidence of inferiority, thus resulting in negative experiences for African American students (Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Frazier Trotman, 2002). This negative perception is a consequence of many in the dominant culture not viewing African American culture as one that thrives academically (Grantham, Trotman Scott, & Harmon, 2012; Ford, 2013; Landson-Billings, 2007).

Teachers with predetermined negative attitudes or deficit thought processes overlook the beauty and strength of African American culture and how it can be used to enhance the education experience of all students. While the misunderstanding of African American culture and the subsequent misinterpretation of African American children's behavior are not new, they are persistent concerns in our schools and society (Ford, et al, 2002; Valencia, 2010). In 1934, Zora Neale Hurston discussed African American culture at length in her classic essay *Characteristics of Negro Expression*, which was eventually published in 1997 (Hurston, 1997).

### The Plot Thickens: Zora Neale Hurston and the Linguistic Practices of African Americans

Born in the late nineteenth century, Zora Neale Hurston was raised in Eatonville, Florida, the first incorporated town in the United States with an all African-American population. This unique community served as a catalyst for her future research and writings. Hurston was immersed in Black culture. She received her associate degree from Howard University, a historically Black college and went on to become the first African American student at Barnard College to earn a bachelor's degree. It was at Barnard that Hurston learned the effects of anthropology and its impact on racial discourse, and that each culture had its own importance according to its specific expectation (Kaplan, 2003). Hurston was devoted in her research on African American folk traditions as a mechanism to show the beauty and worth of the culture. She became one of the most influential, controversial, and well-known African-American writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Her essay, *Characteristics of Negro Expression*, was based on her folklore research and it serves as a blueprint for current African-American cultural and artistic expression (Watts, 2006).

Hurston believed that community encompassed more than a physical home—it represented where our identities were developed. Hurston's research was motivated and inspired by African-American ethos (i.e., the cultural behaviors) that existed within her own African-American community. She found value in collecting folklore in the Eatonville community and understood that folklore was a product of community. Her experiences and research lead to the identification of the characteristics of Negro expression (i.e., drama, will to adorn, angularity, asymmetry, dancing, Negro folklore, culture heroes, originality, imitation, the jook, and dialect), all of which constellated around understanding the nature of an African-American community (Hurston, 1997). Despite Hurston's work, African American culture has not always been valued by the dominate culture thereby placing African Americans at risk for being misunderstood when they are required to enter systems (e.g., schools) that are designed for members of the dominate culture.

Let the Dialogue Begin:

#### *Teacher Cultural Competence and Its Implications for School Behavior*

As previously stated, a lack of cultural competence and understanding can lead to misinterpretations of diverse students' behaviors within the academic setting, which is generally the case for African American students. There are many instances in which school environments require students to exhibit certain social and academic behaviors in order to meet specific goals.

These behaviors are listed in student handbooks across the country. And, throughout the school year, many teachers reiterate and reinforce these expectations to their students. In an effort to ensure that students meet certain expectations, many schools require parents/guardians to provide a written signature indicating that they understand that their child should follow the policies as stated in the handbook, or a consequence will ensue.

The way people behave, interact, and respond is greatly influenced by the rules and expectations of the culture of which they are accustomed. As such, both teachers' and students' perspectives are guided by their respective cultures. If teachers are not familiar with the norms of their students' culture, they may misjudge students' intentions. Behaviors exhibited by students that are viewed in a deficit manner by teachers will conflict with the expectations of the traditional academic environment (Ford & Trotman Scott, 2013), but behaviors exhibited by African Americans may be unique characteristics of their culture (Hurston, 1997). Furthermore, African-Americans exhibit certain cultural styles that are developed and nurtured within a specific familial and communal context (Boykin, 1994, 2011).

For over two decades, A. Wade Boykin has been prolific in conducting research on the cultural styles of African Americans. Afrocentric cultural styles identified by Boykin in 1994 and further examined in 2011 include: spirituality, harmony, movement, verve, affect, communalism, oral tradition, expressive individualism, and social time perspective. These characteristics are common in African American students and are often exhibited, accepted, and fostered within the African American community/home setting. But, when culturally different individuals are placed in situations different from what they are accustomed (i.e., monocultural school settings and expectations), they may have difficulty making the necessary social and cultural adjustments to be successful (e.g., Boykin, 1994, 2011). Schools are one setting where these cultural styles may be misunderstood, and in some instances, contribute to higher referrals to special education and subsequent overrepresentation (Cartledge, Gardner, & Ford, 2008).

Ford (1996, 2011) applied Boykin's cultural styles to the characteristics of gifted students to create characteristics of African American [Black] gifted students. Although Ford's application focused on the gifts and talents of African American students (1996, 2011), the same characteristics can be used to generally describe all African American students.

Using Hurston's (1934) characteristics of Negro expression, the authors compared Hurston's essay on *Characteristics of Negro Expression* to the characteristics and behaviors of Boykin's (1994, 2011) Afrocentric cultural styles and Ford's (1996, 2011) application of Boykin's Afrocentric cultural styles to gifted African American students (see Table 1). For the purpose of this article, we focused on a characteristic that Hurston described as indicative of African American artistic expression—drama, and found that many of the descriptions of African-American students were also identifiable within Hurston's *Characteristics of Negro Expression*.

Unfortunately, when African American students are viewed through a deficit lens, teachers assume the worst and they rely on limited understanding and stereotypes (Ford et al., 2002), which may in turn lead to a special education referral (Trotman Scott, 2014).

**TABLE 1**

**Ford's Characteristics of Black (African American) Students, Hurston's Characteristics of Negroes, and Boykin's Afrocentric Cultural Styles**

Ford's (Gifted) Black Student Characteristics	Hurston's Characteristics of Negro Expression	Boykin's Afrocentric Cultural Styles
Chooses not to study because of their belief in God's will (i.e., if God wants me to pass, I will pass. If not, failing must have been God's will).	<b>Originality:</b> The use of words to create something or to give it meaning. Every word has a purpose and a consequence. The exchange and re-exchange of ideas between groups.	<b>Spirituality:</b> Life's happenings are not automatic; religious and higher forces influence people's everyday lives and permeates all of life's affairs
Simultaneously working and/or singing/humming a tune	<b>Asymmetry:</b> The presence of rhythm is in frequent and unexpected segments.	<b>Harmony:</b> May maintain a high sensitivity to rhythm and harmony due to one's functioning being tightly linked to nature's order
Prefer kinesthetic (hands-on) learning styles as well as possess psychomotor intelligence	<b>Angularity:</b> Avoiding a straight line.  <b>Dance:</b> Dynamic suggestion	<b>Movement:</b> May have a desire to move or be physically engaged which emphasizes the interweaving of movement, rhythm, music and dance.
Lively and energetic interactions with peers and teachers.	<b>Drama:</b> Everything is acted out; words are action words and the interpretation of languages in terms of pictures.	<b>Verve:</b> Tend to display a high level of energy and enjoy action that is energetic and lively.
Have a tendency to know when one does not particularly care for them and may react in an emotional way that may be deemed inappropriate.	<b>Drama:</b> Everything is acted out; words are action words and the interpretation of languages in terms of pictures.	<b>Affect:</b> Often sensitive to emotional cues and feelings.
Have a need for affiliation and social acceptance/approval; because of this, their communal connections and conscientiousness surpass their individual privileges.	<b>Absence of the concept of privacy:</b> Communal life based on no privacy.	<b>Communalism:</b> A strong commitment to social connectedness.
Enjoy the use of elaborate and exaggerated language, storytelling and telling jokes. The direct, blunt, and metaphorically colorful use of language both spoken and auditory is treated as a performance.	<b>Dialect:</b> Self-expression in language.  <b>Negro Folklore:</b> Demonstrates adaptability.  <b>Will to Adorn:</b> Use of metaphor and simile and embellishment of language.	<b>Oral Tradition:</b> Prefer oral modes of communication.
Colorful use of language (metaphors, clichés, and idioms) and dress; display of creativity and risk taking.	<b>Imitation:</b> Modification of ideas.	<b>Expressive Individualism:</b> Seek and develop distinctive personalities that denote a uniqueness of personal style.
Treat time as a social phenomenon_ there is no beginning or end; may miss deadlines.	<b>Asymmetry:</b> The presence of rhythm is in frequent and unexpected segments.	<b>Social Time Perspective:</b> Emphasize what is occurring at the present...the here and now. The event is more important than the time and the future.

*Note:* Ford's characteristics of gifted African American [Black] students are being applied to African American students in general.

Few educators are familiar with Boykin's Afrocentric cultural styles; even fewer are familiar with the cultural styles of African American students (Trotman Scott & Ford, 2013). They are, however, familiar with the characteristics of ADHD and may assume that students who often squirm in their seat, are fidgety or can't be still, stand or roam when they are required to remain seated, appear to be restless, have difficulty quietly engaging in leisure activities, seem to often to be "on the go" or acts as if "driven by a motor", and talks excessively, are students with hyperactive ADHD. On the other hand, children who are considered impulsive often call out answers before a question is completed, have difficulty waiting their turn, and/or interrupt or intrude on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games) (American Psychiatric Association, APA, 2000).

Some characteristics of ADHD are similar to characteristics of African American students as identified by Ford's (1996, 2011) application of Boykin's characteristics. Regrettably, if African American students are viewed in a deficit manner, behaviors that are typical of their culture will appear to conflict within the traditional academic environment (Ford & Trotman, 2001). Conflicts must be resolved and in the case of African American students, the resolution lies within academic failure, special education referrals, and in some cases, suspension. Unfortunately, a lack of cultural competence, coupled with deficit thinking may lead to student failure, unnecessary special education referrals, and/or a constant push for African American students to assimilate to the dominate culture via monocultural traditional academic expectations (Spradlin, 2011).

Increasing the number of culturally competent teachers within the teaching force may reduce the occurrence of mislabeling that can lead to the overrepresentation of African American students in special education (Cartledge & Dukes, 2009; Cartledge et al., 2008). Teachers who lack cultural competence are not aware of beliefs and practices that occur within the cultural settings, out of which their students come. Their lack of awareness may cause them to easily mistake the behaviors of African American students for that of disrespect, insubordination, and/or lack of knowledge. This can also be applied to their belief that African American students may have a disability simply because students' cultural and academic beliefs differ from that of the dominant culture (Trotman Scott, 2014; Trotman Scott & Ford, 2013). A culturally competent teacher can discern cultural characteristics from disability characteristics. They are also able to identify teaching strategies that are culturally responsive and complimentary to the strengths of their students. The performing arts can be used as one of these strategies.

The Setting:

### *Using Performing Arts as a Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategy*

Knowledge about the characteristics of ADHD is more common among teachers than the characteristics of African Americans as described by Boykin. Many teachers are likely to discuss a 'trip to the pediatrician' for an ADHD screening with parents before providing a recommendation for other strategies that can be used to accommodate students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Trotman Scott, 2014). For example, very few teachers consider the performing arts as a strategy to positively incorporate students' need for movement. Some African American students do not need a special education label. Instead, these students need a culturally competent teacher who is able to understand the context of their students' behavior and

capable of identifying and implementing school-based strategies that utilize “high energy” behaviors in positive activities.

The authors believe that the characteristics seen as areas of weakness within the classroom setting serve as strengths in theatre and the performing arts. More specifically, drama can be used as both a learning and enrichment tool for many African American students who exhibit the characteristics described by Hurston (1934), Boykin (1994, 2001), and Ford (1996, 2011).

The Cast:

### *Black Actors with High-Incidence Disabilities*

Several African American actors with a disability attribute acting to their ability to cope and succeed. Will Smith, an African American rapper, actor, and producer with ADHD and dyslexia has discussed how he used his learning disability as an asset for acting by taking very little downtime and working non-stop (“Dyslexia and Will Smith”, n.d.). He also learned to use characteristics of his learning disability as an asset by finding and analyzing patterns in his acting, something he attributes to his dyslexia.

Whoopi Goldberg was diagnosed with dyslexia as an adult. Goldberg utilized her ambition, passion, and talent to help her succeed. She disclosed that those who called her dumb and stupid when she was younger, motivated her success as an actress. Acting gave her the tools to prove naysayers wrong. Goldberg was able to replace her feelings of inadequacy as a student with adequacy on stage and in front of a camera. In other words, she was able to find success. Despite being labeled with a disability, the Oscar award-winning actress became a part of an elite group of only ten actors who have won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony Award. She was also the first woman to be honored with the prestigious Mark Twain Prize for American Humor (“Whoopi Goldberg, Comedian and Award-winning Actress”, n.d.).

What if Will Smith and Whoopi Goldberg had a culturally competent teacher who saw and understood their expressive energy and referred them to the performing arts rather than special education? Both are gifted performers, yet their school behaviors were more often viewed from a deficit perspective.

The act of performing can also motivate people to overcome difficulties. Actor James Earl Jones’ disability manifested itself in stuttering. As a young student, a teacher helped him conquer his fear of speaking in front of others through the performance of poetry (Hartley, 2010). His teacher did not focus on his deficits, but instead utilized a strategy that helped him overcome his fear while strengthening his area of weakness. Jones went on to study drama at the University of Michigan and is most known for his voiceover work in movies like Star Wars and the Lion King. In essence, drama, performance, and public speaking helped Jones overcome his fear of public speaking due to stuttering.

Award winning actor Samuel L. Jackson also had a debilitating speech impediment as a child. However, he began acting at the urging of his speech therapist and was able to gain theatrical success and esteem (Anonymous, 2012).

The Production:

*Bringing it All Together*

As stated earlier, theatre can serve as a useful tool for some African American students whose behaviors may be misinterpreted as those of ADHD and other high-incidence disabilities. When the authors examined the characteristics of students with ADHD, it was determined that Hurston's (1981) characteristics and Boykin's (1994, 2011) Afrocentric cultural styles closely resembled the characteristics of African American students (i.e., Ford, 1996, 2011). When engaged in drama, actors use action words/language that allowed the audience to interpret words and form pictures (Hurston, 1997). Students are often very talkative and prefer to speak rather than write. Some are also emotional and sensitive.

Although teachers may recognize characteristics of ADHD, most may not be familiar with the characteristics of African American students. Teachers who lack cultural competence may focus on the negative traits of students and look at them through a deficit lens. Negative thoughts about a student can lead to low expectations and negative academic outcomes, especially if students are not given the opportunity to utilize additional and/or alternative activities to display their strengths.

However, teachers familiar with the characteristics of African American students may utilize dramatization within the classroom as a means of providing students with the opportunity to capitalize on their strengths. Culturally competent teachers may also suggest drama and/or theater as an outlet for providing students with opportunities to overcome, e.g., fear, anxiety, embarrassment, low self esteem, inadequacy. Table 2 displays a comparison of ADHD characteristics and Ford's (1996, 2011) African American student characteristics with Boykin (1994, 2011) and Hurston (1981) identifiers and academic implications when viewed within a deficit lens.

Act 1: Culturally Responsive Strategies for African Americans Students with Flips to the Script

**Scene 1, Strategy 1.** Evaluation of students orally and/or through simulations and skits to enrich their learning experiences and address cultural needs.

Many African American students prefer hands on strategies (Ford, 1996, 2011), and there are several that appeal to African American students with ADHD. Teachers need to consider and implement alternative assessment modalities to measure the learning of African American students with high incidence disabilities. Allowing students to act, dance, sing, rap, or produce a visual piece would not only enrich their learning experience but also meet many of Hurston's (1981) expression characteristics (i.e., angularity, dance, asymmetry, dialect, negro folklore, will to adorn, and originality) and Boykin's (1994, 2011) cultural styles (i.e., movement, harmony, verve, oral, and tradition)

**TABLE 2**

**Comparison of Ford/Hurston/Boykin’s Characteristics to ADHD Characteristics Through a Deficit Lens and Possible Academic Implications**

Ford/Hurston/Boykin	ADHD	Deficit Lens	Academic Implication
<p><b>F:</b> Prefer kinesthetic (hands-on) learning styles as well as possess psychomotor intelligence.</p> <p><b>H:</b> Angularity, Dance</p> <p><b>B:</b> Movement</p>	<p>Often runs about or climbs when and where it is not viewed as appropriate (adolescents or adults may feel very restless).</p> <p>Often fidgets with hands or feet, or squirms in seat.</p> <p>Often gets up from seat when remaining in seat is expected.</p>	<p>Chooses to teach in other modes of teaching and does not allow students to use the style of learning most comfortable.</p> <p>Students are considered to be over-excitabile, off-task and/or hyperactive</p>	<p>Student learning may be stifled → academic failure.</p>
<p><b>F:</b> Lively and energetic interactions with peers and teachers.</p> <p><b>H:</b> Drama</p> <p><b>B:</b> Verve</p>	<p>Is often “on the go” or often acts as if “driven by a motor.” Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games). Often has trouble waiting one’s turn.</p> <p>Often blurts out answers before questions have been finished.</p>	<p>Considers Black students loud and even obnoxious and rude, off-task, lazy and/or unmotivated when they remain unresponsive to lecture-typed teaching.</p>	<p>Forced to learn in a way considered boring → perpetual unresponsiveness → academic failure.</p>
<p><b>F:</b> Have a tendency to know when one does not particularly care for them and may react in an emotional way that may be deemed inappropriate.</p> <p><b>H:</b> Drama</p> <p><b>B:</b> Affect</p>	<p>Very emotional and sensitive.</p> <p>Impulsive.</p> <p>Immediate gratification, short-term goals.</p>	<p>May consider student’s response as insubordinate.</p>	<p>The child may be sent out of the classroom → may reiterate the students' belief that the teacher dislikes them → reduced opportunities to learn → academic failure.</p>
<p><b>F:</b> Have a need for affiliation and social acceptance/approval and because of this their communal connections and conscientiousness surpass their individual privileges.</p> <p><b>H:</b> Absence of concept of privacy.</p> <p><b>B:</b> Community</p>	<p>Socially dependent and needy.</p> <p>Dislikes independent work. Prefers to work with others; prefers to help others.</p>	<p>May assume that the student is not capable of achieving independent of others.</p>	<p>Assumption → decreased opportunities for students to ‘show what they know’ → reduced likelihood of exposure to more rigorous curricula.</p>

*Note:* **F** = Ford, **H** = Hurston, **B** = Boykin



**TABLE 2** (continued)

Comparison of Ford/Hurston/Boykin's Characteristics to ADHD Characteristics Through a Deficit Lens and Possible Academic Implications

Ford/Hurston/Boykin	ADHD	Deficit Lens	Academic Implication
<p>F: Enjoy the use of elaborate and exaggerated language, storytelling and telling jokes. The direct, blunt and meta-phorically colorful use of language both spoken and auditory is treated as performance.</p> <p>H: Dialect, Negro Folklore, Will to Adorn</p> <p>B: Oral Tradition</p>	<p>Often talks excessively; talkative.</p> <p>Blunt, direct, forthright. Prefers to speak rather than write</p>	<p>May become frustrated with the joking and embellishments and may misinterpret it as a form disrespect or impoliteness.</p>	<p>Misinterpretation → student may be removed from the classroom → missed opportunities to learn → academic failure</p>
<p>Colorful use of language (metaphors, clichés, and idioms) and dress; display of creativity and risk taking.</p> <p>H: Imitation &amp; Originality</p> <p>B: Expressive Individualism</p>	<p>Expressive, demonstrative. Unique, clever, innovative in personal style.</p> <p>Creates own rules; resists following rules.</p> <p>Resourceful.</p>	<p>May consider students as impulsive, eccentric or as attention seekers.</p>	<p>Misinterpretation → student may feel ostracized from peers and teachers → may respond in an emotional manner → student may be removed from the classroom → missed opportunities to learn → academic failure</p>
<p>Treat time as a social phenomenon - there is no beginning or end; may miss deadlines.</p> <p>H: Asymmetry</p> <p>B: Social Time Perspective</p>	<p>Often forgetful in daily activities.</p> <p>Often does not give close attention to details; makes careless mistakes in school-work, work, or other activities.</p>	<p>Student doesn't care about deadlines and is not capable of turning assignments in on time.</p>	<p>Late assignments → points deducted → lower grades → academic failure</p>
<p>Chooses not to study because of their belief in God's will (i.e., if God wants me to pass, I will pass. If not, failing must have been God's will).</p> <p>H: Originality</p> <p>B: Spirituality</p>		<p>Lazy or the student possesses a low level of knowledge, especially if the student continuously fails.</p>	<p>The student may not master enough information to comprehend what is needed in the future → academic failure → possible special education referral.</p>
<p>Simultaneously working and/or singing/humming a tune.</p> <p>H: Asymmetry</p> <p>B: Harmony</p> <p>The noise is distracting to teachers and other classmates.</p>		<p>The noise is distracting to teachers and other classmates.</p>	<p>May cause conflict → child may be sent out of class → reduced number of learning opportunities → academic failure → possible special education referral</p>

Note: F = Ford, H = Hurston, B = Boykin

*Flip the Script* ~ The identifying characteristics of ADHD (e.g., often talks excessively, talkative; blunt, direct, forthright; prefers to speak rather than write; expressive, demonstrative; unique, clever, innovative in personal style; creates own rules; and resourceful) (APA, 2000), can be addressed and ‘down played’ using verbal and expressive strategies that allow African American students to be mobile and engage in hands on activities. This approach welcomes and displays many of the characteristics that can sometimes lead to a diagnosis of ADHD. In other words, for some African American students, these behaviors are necessary for a successful outcome and will no longer be seen as inappropriate.

**Scene 2, Strategy 2.** Provide frequent breaks during instruction and independent work to allow students to work in ‘chunks’ of time, as measured through the use of timers (Trotman Scott, 2014).

Some African American students treat time as a social phenomenon and do not consider time to have a beginning or an end. Considering time in this manner could cause them to miss deadlines (Ford, 2011). However, using kinesthetic and tactile strategies (i.e., experiments, projects, and games) could provide them with the ability to take frequent breaks and be mobile while also engaging in hand-on activities (Trotman Scott, 2014). Using these strategies can meet the needs of African American students with ADHD while meeting Hurston’s (1981) expression characteristic of asymmetry and Boykin’s (1994, 2011) cultural style of social time perspective. Chunking instruction also provides African American students with the ability to focus on a specified amount of material during a predetermined period of time, thereby decreasing the likelihood of them missing deadlines or forgetting what is needed to complete the assignment.

*Flip the Script* ~ Children with ADHD are forgetful when it comes to engaging in and completing daily activities. They often do not pay close attention to details and make careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other school activities. If children with ADHD are able to learn and work in small sections that will eventually make a whole, they will more than likely remain focused and not get lost in time. They will also be able to remain on task if the strategies used are designed to incorporate frequent breaks. When students know that a break is coming, they are more likely to remain committed to the task at hand.

**Scene 3, Strategy 3.** Incorporate cooperative activities to allow African American students with ADHD to tap into their area of communalism.

Many African American students possess a strong commitment to social connectedness and bonds. For example, they focus on making sure that their peers are okay and up to speed, and they do not only think of themselves. Instead, they may also want to help their friend, etc. who may be struggling with a concept that they have mastered. Occasionally, assigning activities that require students to work in groups will meet Hurston’s (1981) community characteristic and Boykin’s (1994, 2011) communalism cultural style.

*Flip the Script* ~ Students with ADHD are socially dependent and needy. They dislike independent work, prefer to work with others, and prefer to help others. Providing them with the opportunity to collaborate with peers fulfills their need for affiliation, social acceptance, and approval (Ford, 1996, 2011), as well as appease their strong commitment to social

connectedness. In so doing, they no longer feel as if they are unable to interact with their peers and/or help those who are in need. Instead, according to Hurston's (1981) characteristics of absence of the concept of privacy, these students will not have a reserve, so they may feel as if they are part of a community. Hurston's characteristics stress the importance of culture and community, which allow more opportunity for engagement by focusing on the positive results from these characteristics. For example, in dance Hurston describes the performer as being able to encourage others to finish the suggested action of the dancer. If teachers utilize drama, it will enable them to observe how students may interpret language in multiple ways.

**Scene 4, Strategy 4.** Use alternative presentation modalities (other than lecturing). This will be helpful when teaching information.

Many African American students implement a colorful use of language (i.e., metaphors, clichés, and idioms) and they also display creativity and risk taking. Teachers may mistakenly interpret these behaviors as impulsive, or they may feel that the students are trying to gain attention. If teachers consider and implement alternative presentation modalities to enrich the learning experience of African American students with ADHD, it will allow them to learn in their preferred learning mode (i.e., audio, visual, kinesthetic). Thus, Hurston's (1981) expressive characteristic of imitation and Boykin's (1994, 2011) cultural style of expressive individualism will be met using the different teaching modalities.

*Flip the Script* ~ As previously mentioned, students diagnosed with ADHD are expressive and demonstrative, resourceful, unique, clever, and innovative personal styles. Using a variety of instructional styles increases the likelihood that all students will be able to learn information in a manner that caters to their area(s) of strength. Teachers who provide a picture, gesture, and/or description of information allows students to see, hear and/or feel what they are expected to know and it provides them with a model of the expected outcome.

#### Curtain Call

Culturally competent teachers are effective with diverse students. They are able to recognize and understand their own worldviews, which enables them to improve their ability to understand the different worldviews of their students (Bennett, 1993). Additionally, teachers who confront their personal biases and stereotypes learn more about their students' cultures, and perceive the world through diverse cultural lenses (Banks, 1994).

If teachers are aware of the different norms, values, systems, customs, learning, communication, and behavioral styles of diverse populations, they will be better equipped to understand how culture affects learning. Teachers who realize that "we need more drama" understand the importance of using non-traditional methods in the classroom. Drama can be utilized for more than just pure entertainment. It can be a highly effective teaching and learning tool that can provide students with the opportunity to utilize drama as an outlet to practice speaking in public and as a way to display creativity. It can also allow students with and without ADHD and other high incidence disabilities to work with others in a manner that lead to success in and outside the classroom environment.

## AUTHOR NOTES

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