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Incorporating African American Vernacular English in Education: Fostering Linguistic Diversity Within Mississippi K-12 Classrooms

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INCORPORATING AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH IN
EDUCATION: FOSTERING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY WITHIN MISSISSIPPI K-12
CLASSROOMS

by

Alyssa Marguerite Eilers

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

University, Mississippi

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Approved by:

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I dedicate this thesis to God, with whom all things are possible, and my parents.

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ABSTRACT

In the United States, the language of education is American English; although everyone speaks a dialect, the institution of education values a standard, which devalues nonstandard varieties of English like African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Because language is intricately connected to identity, the way that AAVE is or is not included in classroom pedagogy points to the inclusion, or lack thereof, of students who speak vernaculars of English. Research shows that AAVE is related to Southern American English and exists proportionately in the south. Because Mississippi, a southern state, continuously ranks as one of the states with the lowest test scores, it is necessary to investigate how AAVE-speaking students, comprising nearly half of the student population, are integrated into a classroom that teaches to a standard.

Additionally, since a standard is required, one must consider how to teach in a way that includes dialects of English but allows for student and teacher success in the classroom. How can Mississippi K-12 educators incorporate dialects, specifically AAVE, in their classrooms? Thus, the thesis presented will investigate prior research regarding the incorporation of AAVE in the classroom to build a teacher's guide for Mississippi educators. To begin, the thesis will build a foundational knowledge of dialect features of AAVE and explain replacive and additive attitudes toward the dialect's incorporation in the classroom from a linguistic standpoint to better understand how to guide teachers. Next, the thesis will explore the experiences of students who speak AAVE, as they hold an equal share of the classroom environment. The thesis will look at the linguistic approach to fostering dialectal diversity in the K-12 classroom, then investigate the classroom practices already in use to build upon for Mississippi educators. Finally, the

thesis will culminate in the creation of a guide for educators in K-12 Mississippi classrooms. Through this research, the thesis aims to understand the previous research and suggest a potential model for education in Mississippi to better serve student AAVE speakers.

Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	v
List of figures	9
Abbreviations	10
Chapter 1: Thesis Overview	11
Introduction	11
A note on terminology	15
Chapter 2: Literature Review	17
Introduction	17
Notes on education in the United States and Mississippi	17
Dialectal features of African American Vernacular English	21
Replacive and additive attitudes	25
Students' experience	28
Linguistic approach	30
Classroom practices already in use	32

Chapter 3: Guide for Educators	38
Introduction	38
Mississippi English Language Arts Standards overview	39
Structure of lessons	40
Patricia McKissack	42
Christopher Paul Curtis	45
Langston Hughes	50
Angie Thomas	56
Zora Neale Hurston	67
Chapter 4: Conclusion	73
List of References	77

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of K-12 Public School Teachers by Race/Ethnicity, 1987-2012	18
Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of Teachers in Geographic Regions by Race/Ethnicity, 2014	20
Figure 3: 2018-2019 Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Mississippi Classrooms	21
Figure 4: Environmental Language Chart	36
Figure 5: Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Levels	41

ABBREVIATIONS

MAE: Mainstream (“standard”) American English

AAVE: African American Vernacular English

SAE: Southern American English

ELA: English Language Arts

DOK: Depth of Knowledge

CHAPTER 1: Thesis Overview

Introduction

To speak a language is to speak a dialect of that language. A dialect or vernacular is “how we refer to any language variety that typifies a group of speakers within a language,” while a standard is simply the “socially favored” dialect (Wolfram and Schilling 2). Nonstandard varieties of English are often associated with social attitudes or notions about the people who speak those dialects. Since “standard” is defined as “socially favored,” when members of socially disfavored groups produce nonstandard language, it is assumed that they tried to produce the standard but failed, instead delivering a “deviant” form; however, Wolfram and Schilling explain that careful examination of nonstandard dialects has revealed that those dialects are not deviant but instead different systems with “distinct subsets of language patterns” (4). Language patterning refers to language features being distributed systematically and orderly, rather than randomly (Wolfram and Schilling). Therefore, the entire belief behind a nonstandard dialect is a social construction based on social values.

The American education system, including state and national testing, regards intellect in direct relation to communication, appealing to the idea of a “standard” and the social importance of speakers’ ability to adhere to that standard in written and spoken language (Wolfram and Schilling). As children advance in the American system, this link between sounding “educated” and communicating in a standard English (hence “mainstream American English” or “MAE”) seems to grow in importance. In the 1960s and 70s, educational circles debated the deficit-difference controversy (Siegel, Wolfram and Schilling), in which language scholars argued that language variation developed from

difference in language usage and not deficit in the capability of producing the standard, while some educators argued that variation constituted that fundamental deficit in language production (Siegel). This debate returned in the 1990s, specifically in relation to African American Vernacular English (hence, “AAVE”) (Wolfram and Schilling). When language variation involves groups unequal in power relations, the principle of linguistic subordination is observed, which maintains that the language of a socially subordinate group will be perceived as socially inadequate compared to the speech of a socially dominant group (Wolfram and Schilling). As this attitude is grounded in social inequities, avoiding language associated with socially disfavored groups is tacitly promoted. Therefore, opportunities are found in using the socially favored “standard” as opposed to speaking a nonstandard dialect. In the Oakland trial concerning a school district wanting to create curriculum specifically for speakers of what was then referred to as Ebonics (modern AAVE), the judge recognized that teachers didn’t acknowledge how they were asking students to move between two dialects and, hence, ruled that the district should provide:

“training for its teachers to ensure their knowledge of the linguistic structures associated with [AAVE] and how those dialect differences may interfere with developing literacy for Black students who do not speak, read, or write” in MAE (Baugh 93).

Thus, one observes the need for teacher training. While Charity-Hudley and Mallinson (2011, 2014), Brice-Heath (1983), and others have studied perceptual dialectology in K-12 classrooms across the U.S., I would like to expand my research to not only investigate the history of linguistic awareness and perceptual dialectology in education, but to create a guide for Mississippi teachers to incorporate current research into their classrooms.

Little research has been done by linguists in conjunction with educators in the state of Mississippi. According to *The Nation's Report Card*, in 2017, Mississippi fourth graders scored, on average, 6 points less than the national average for reading and 11 points lower for writing, leaving Mississippi ranked the eighth and fourth lowest, respectively, in the nation. Further, eighth graders scored 8 points lower on reading and 10 points less than the national average in writing, ranking Mississippi, respectively, seventh and fifth lowest nationally ("National Data Explorer"). This research shows that, in the past year, Mississippi students consistently, across K-12 testing, rank in the bottom ten jurisdictions in reading and writing. Specifically, reading and writing are the tests that would most directly relate to students' language usage and variation. In addition, the Mississippi Department of Education shows that, of 110,870 K-12 students identifying as white, 54.6% were proficient in English Language Arts, while the percent proficiency of the 124,812 K-12 students identifying as African American was 25.0% ("2018 Student Assessment"). While there were 13,942 more African American students than white students, the achievement gap between black and white students is -29.6% for English Language Arts. Further, Mississippi's state proficiency goal is 70% by 2025; while white student scores in 2018 represent a -15.4% gap from that goal, African American student scores show a -45.0% gap ("2018 Student Assessment"). Generally, Mississippi is defined as a Southern state. In this state, the most common dialects students would speak in the classroom are Southern American English (further, "SAE") and African American Vernacular English. While SAE is defined as a nonstandard dialect, it falls much more closely to MAE "standards" than a variety such as AAVE (Wolfram and Schilling). According to the U.S. Census, in 2017, 37.8% of the Mississippi population, or 1,127,990

of 2,984,100 people, identified as “black or African American” (“U.S. Census”). Thus, a large portion of the population speaks this nonstandard dialect. With Mississippi’s national test averages, it is evident that language in the classroom is an important issue affecting a large proportion of the population. Yet, Mississippi has not been the focus of co-linguistic and educational research.

With this gap in Mississippi-specific research, I intend to investigate the research that has already been done nationally on African American Vernacular English and nonstandard varieties’ incorporation into the classroom to better understand how educators may be more aware of this dialect in Mississippi classrooms. I will look at what national research has been adopted into curriculum on small- or large-scales. Furthermore, I will investigate the role that additive and replacive attitudes play within the classroom environment, and how these can be incorporated into teacher education. With this knowledge, I will create a guide for educators in Mississippi to better serve both their students’ and their own success.

Language is a fundamental part of identity. Many black students bring a different variety of English into the classroom when they begin their education, but current American education, in the form of standardized testing, involves both the understanding and application of Mainstream American English. It is necessary, therefore, to recognize the language that students, especially those who speak nonstandard varieties of English, bring into the classroom, and its relation to their identity. At the same time, one cannot ignore the value of teaching the standard. How can these ideas coexist in the classroom? How might educators approach linguistic diversity with an additive attitude, while also not framing a correctionist viewpoint in teaching their students to pass exams?

Thus, the importance of understanding former linguistic research in this area is founded. Linguists have long worked with educators to bring awareness of nonstandard varieties to the classroom to encourage both educator and student success. My research, in combining the former research into a guide for Mississippi teachers to include AAVE in their classrooms, will reveal ways that those entering education in the state of Mississippi, where AAVE is a widely-spoken dialect, may better the education experience for their nonstandard dialect speakers. This thesis will be divided into two main parts: a review of interdisciplinary literature on a variety of subtopics necessary to the discussion of AAVE in the K-12 classroom in Mississippi, and the teacher's guide.

It is my intent to recognize a foundational link between linguistic awareness to student success. While the research proposed is within the scope of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College Senior Thesis requirement, my hope is that the beneficial knowledge gained from this project could be shared with the School of Education, the Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program, University of Mississippi administration, or any other interested party to continue to build upon the good that this research will do.

A note on terminology

Language and power are intricately related. Thus, the reference of terminology in relation to dialects is an important discussion before one can read further into this research. To begin, the dialect I refer to as African American Vernacular English has been named and renamed many times (McWhorter). Additionally, Mainstream American English, the term I use to refer to the "standard," is a predominately white dialect and often referred to as the "language of power" (Delpit and Dowdy). It is necessary to note that, as everyone speaks a dialect, every dialect is naturally varied (Wolfram and

Schilling); hence, a “standard” itself is simply a construct, as no speaker actually prescribes to all features of MAE at all times. Therefore, “standard” and “nonstandard” distinctions are constructed in relation to the power dynamic and social favor given to one over the other (Godley and Minnici). Godley and Minnici prefer the term “privileged” to distinguish those dialects which are preferred in “influential academic, political, economic, and civic institutions” and the term “stigmatized” to refer to those dialects “that are devalued in such settings” to represent dialects and their usage without reinforcing existing, negative attitudes and stereotypes surrounding language (321). Though I find great value in their dedication to appropriate terminology, this thesis will still utilize the terms “standard dialect,” “nonstandard dialect,” and “vernacular variety” as those are widely accepted and understood across linguistic, educational, and various other disciplines’ research. However, it is a necessary critique to this research to recognize that utilizing this terminology privileges the way we name the world around us with continued existence in a social, socioeconomic, and racial power relation.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

Introduction

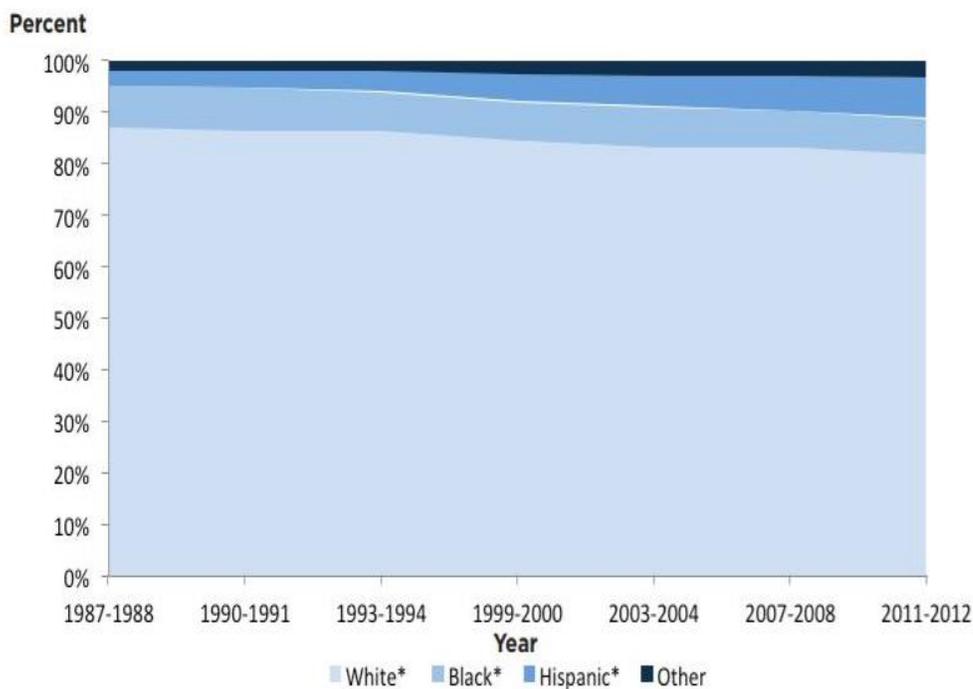
To reiterate, everyone speaks a dialect. Mainstream American English is, itself, a dialect, and American English more broadly is just one variety of World Englishes; understanding that what one often refers to as “standard” is variation itself is essential to continuing a conversation about other varieties of American English in the classroom. As the United States became an independent nation, people sought to change various customs, traditions, and aspects of life to create a new national identity apart from Britain; one such aspect included language (Devereaux). This was an idea, like the Declaration, that was founded by the American elites of the time. Heath explains that John Adams, one of the founders of the nation, argued that the U.S. would need to establish a variety of English unique to America, with its own unique grammar and rules of usage, so that, as the nation expanded in trade and spread its language, it would be easily recognizable; this argument helped found what we today call MAE (221). When anyone, especially teachers, lacks the understanding of the development of MAE as a variation of a World English itself, it can create problems in the understanding and incorporation of other nonstandard dialects of English, whose variation may be less recognized or acceptable.

Notes on education in the United States and Mississippi

Understanding this piece of linguistic history is necessary to break down the stereotypes and prejudices associated with AAVE in education, but one must also understand the institution of education in the United States and specifically in

Mississippi. Formal education is longstanding in the United States. Foundationally, education is built of three main parts: administration, whether that be within the school or at a state or national level; educators, who teach; and students, who learn. It is necessary to recognize the role that educators play in education, especially when discussing the inclusion of nonstandard dialects in the classroom. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education published a report entitled “The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce,” which investigated the diversity of educators in the United States. Figure 1 below shows the percentage distribution of K-12 public school teachers by race/ethnicity from 1987-2012. What one can observe is that, while the number of white teachers in public education is slowly and minimally decreasing, over 80% of public K-12 teachers identified as white in the 2011-2012 school year (The United States Department of Education).

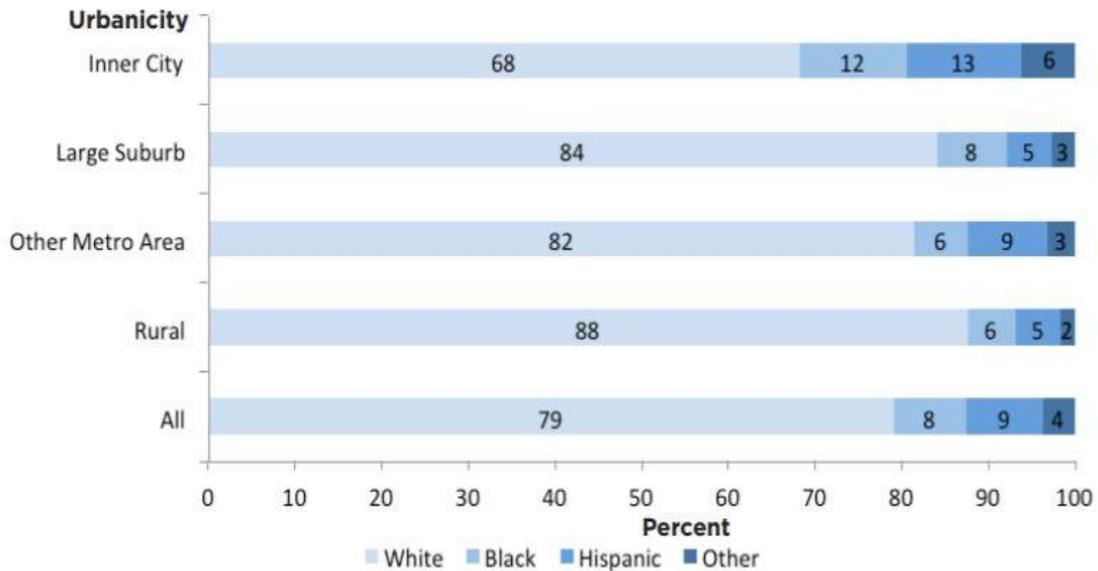
Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of K-12 Public School Teachers by Race/Ethnicity, 1987-2012 (The United States Department of Education)



While it is not impossible that a person identifying as white may speak AAVE, most educators who hold a college degree and state licensure to teach are fluent in MAE knowledge and instruction. Because students who speak AAVE are predominantly nonwhite, there is an important conversation to be had concerning the power between a white teacher, who most likely does not share the same language, background, or struggles as a student of color, and the student who speaks AAVE. Further, as will be discussed later in the thesis, white teachers often struggle to recognize that they are asking students to switch between dialects or the impact they have on students in the way they treat language in the classroom (Godley and Minnicci; Marshall; Lyiscott).

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education's report used data from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to examine the 2014 percent distribution of teachers in various geographic districts by race/ethnicity, shown in Figure 2 below. Notably, teachers of color are more disproportionately working in "inner city" placements, where 12% were black and 13% Hispanic, but 68% of teachers in this geographic location were white. In suburban areas, however, only 8% and 5% of teachers were black or Hispanic, respectively, while 84% were white. Additionally, in rural areas, the white-black-Hispanic teacher percentage distributions were 88%, 6%, and 5%. In 2014, 79% of all teachers were white, aligning with the data in Figure 1. This graph is a necessary addition to this project because, when thinking about Mississippi, very few districts are described as "inner city;" instead, the majority of schools are either in large suburban or rural areas. No matter what geographic location one examines, teachers identifying as white make up over 60% of the educator demographics.

Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of Teachers in Geographic Regions by Race/Ethnicity, 2014 (The U.S. Department of Education)



Though the data from the U.S. Department of Education relates nationwide statistics, it is important to note the geographic distribution of teachers by race when looking at the racial diversity of Mississippi K-12 classrooms. Figure 3 below shows the makeup of Mississippi classrooms in the 2018-2019 school year. Of the racial and ethnic categories, African American students represent the highest percentage of students in the state, a distribution of 48.12% (“State Level Data 2018-2019”). While the majority of students in Mississippi are black or African American, and many will speak either SAE or AAVE, both of which are nonstandard dialects, they are less likely to have teachers who look like them, share their experience, or share their linguistic background. It is necessary to understand the makeup of classrooms in Mississippi to best recognize how teachers and students would be affected by the incorporation of pedagogy that includes AAVE in the classroom. Additionally, understanding that the majority of students in Mississippi K-12 schools are nonwhite allows for better understanding of cultural and linguistic awareness and competence for educators entering the classroom.

Figure 3: 2018-2019 Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Mississippi Classrooms (“State Level Data 2018-2019”)

Group Name	Group Number	Group Percent (%)
Female	230232	48.92%
Male	240436	51.08%
Asian	5125	1.09%
African American	226491	48.12%
Hispanic or Latino	18762	3.99%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1090	0.23%
White	207166	44.02%
Two or More Races	11729	2.49%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	305	0.06%

First, one must understand the national and state-level context of education to build any understanding of the incorporation of dialects in the classroom. To continue, one must increase their awareness of the other pieces of this puzzle.

Dialectal features of African American Vernacular English

A basic understanding of dialects, standard or nonstandard, including AAVE is foundational to this project. Everyone speaks a dialect. As mentioned introductorily, a dialect or vernacular is “how we refer to any language variety that typifies a group of speakers within a language,” while a standard is simply the “socially favored” dialect (Wolfram and Schilling 2). Dialects are intrinsically connected to social perceptions of speakers; the field of sociolinguistics focuses on interactions between linguistic features and speaker variables like race, ethnicity, gender, location, or class (Wolfram and Schilling). One can study a variety of interrelations between linguistic feature(s) and speaker variable(s), allowing for an individual or intersectional analysis of either. Due to

the connections that can be made between variables and features, one may more easily recognize a speaker of a dialect based on the features of that dialect. For example, when presented with a randomly selected set of audio recordings that contain no culturally identifiable material, listeners will accurately identify African American speakers over eighty percent of the time (Thomas and Reaser). To clarify, not all African American- or black-identifying people speak AAVE (Charity), but AAVE features are often used to identify speakers by voice who cannot be seen. Linguists name dialects based on commonalities between speaker variables and linguistic features; African American Vernacular English may be easily recognizable based on these features. To better understand this, one must review the features linguistically associated with AAVE. Some distinguishing features of AAVE include:

- “habitual *be* for habitual or intermittent activity
 - *She don’t usually be there.*
- absence of copula for contracted forms of *is/are*
 - *She nice.*
- present tense, third person -s absence
 - *she walk* for *she walks*
- possessive -s absence
 - *Jack_ car* for *Jack’s car*
- general plural -s absence
 - *a lot of time* for *a lot of times*
- remote time stressed *béen* to mark a state or action that began a long time ago and is still relevant
 - *I béen known him a long time*
- *had* + verb for simple past tense
 - *They had went outside and then they had messed up the yard*
- *ain’t* for *didn’t*
 - *He ain’t go there yesterday*
- reduction of final consonant clusters when followed by a word beginning with a vowel
 - *lif’ up* for *lift up*
- *skr* for *str* initial clusters
 - *skraight* for *straight*
- Use of [f] and [v] for final *th*

- *toof* for *tooth*”
(Wolfram 221-222).

Further research on William Labov’s contributions to the study of AAVE highlights the following structural features of AAVE:

“about a dozen phonological features, including consonant cluster simplification, the deletion of plural, possessive, and third present –s, and the PIN/PEN merger, and another ten or eleven grammatical features, including copula contraction and deletion, negative concord and negative inversion, and various aspects of question formation and tense marking” (Rickford 563).

Rickford continues to explain Labov’s generalization between AAVE and MAE: where MAE may contract a copula (*he is* becomes *he’s*), AAVE deletes it, and vice versa; and where MAE cannot contract, AAVE cannot delete, i.e. at the end of a sentence (Rickford). In addition to the aforementioned features, a phonological analysis of AAVE provides more insight. Pollock and Meredith add the following features: haplology, or deletion of repeated syllables like “proibly” for “probably;” metathesis, or flipping syllables, of final -s with stop clusters, such as “aks” for “ask;” and the deletion of unstressed syllables in the word-initial and word-medial positions, as shown by “bout” given for “about” (49-50). Finally, Mallinson and Hudley (2011) identify many of the above features, as well as what they refer to as “the *call -self* construction,” in which, when the speaker produces something like, “‘He calls himself cooking,’ the speaker is producing the equivalent of ‘He thinks he’s cooking, but he’s merely playing around in the kitchen” (94). Linguistic structures like these differentiate AAVE from MAE, making AAVE more easily recognizable. One may quickly recognize AAVE as these features are “marked,” or actively noticed as different from the dialect of the observer when heard or read, to MAE speakers (Wolfram and Schilling). Furthermore, studies

show that some features of MAE are avoided in AAVE as a formation of oppositional identity because the adherence to MAE features topped the list of prominent behaviors that meant “acting white” by African American high school students (Fordham).

While the above are generally accepted foundational features of African American Vernacular English, it is important to note that the dialect is not monolithic. In the same way that a speaker of Southern American English in Mississippi may speak with certain features of the dialect, a speaker of Southern American English in Georgia may be observed as using other features of SAE. In conversations recorded during a classroom research project, it was found that AAVE-speaking students viewed their vernacular in terms of the variation between the neighborhoods they lived in rather than a regional or national dialect (Godley and Minnici). It would be a minimization of a varied dialect to treat AAVE as a list of features all speakers can be observed as using. Many authors, like Anne Charity, critique what she refers to as the “Educational Linguistics literature” for presenting lists of common features without information about their distribution or frequency among speakers (“Regional differences”). While that information may be omitted for brevity or clarity, it is important to understand the features of the dialect that are present in the region of the teacher. Charity furthers this point through her observational research of a total of 157 African American children, aged 5-8, across the lowest performing schools in the lowest socioeconomic status neighborhoods in three regions: Cleveland, Ohio; Washington, D.C.; and New Orleans, LA. Her findings were that students in different regions did not produce features of AAVE at the same frequency: her analysis found a higher frequency for both phonological and morphosyntactic features of AAVE in each grade for the New Orleans students

(“Regional differences”). For her research, New Orleans was representative of the South. Therefore, her research provides a foundation for understanding the vastness and richness of AAVE as a dialect as well as the necessity for pertinent linguistic educational literature for Southern educators.

When students enter the classroom, they bring their dialect with them – it is their way of communicating. Further, communication is linked to identity in the field of sociolinguistics. Because AAVE is viewed as a nonstandard dialect and education institutionally teaches “standard” MAE, a foundational understanding of AAVE as a dialect can help educators bridge the dialectal differences in the classroom. All teachers, regardless of grade level, have the opportunity to confront nonstandard varieties of English in one of three ways: demonstrating a willingness to understand the interaction between language, culture, and power; demonstrating a belief in linguistic purism and standard grammar; or offering a way for students to find correlations between their dialect and MAE while encouraging understanding of how the two can be used situationally and shape students’ perspective of content (Marshall 2018). One must explore the attitudes teachers may bring into the classroom if relevant linguistic educational guides may be created.

Replacive and additive attitudes

Linguists observe two main attitudes related to teaching MAE to vernacular speakers: replacive and additive. While replacive attitudes are hierarchical and structured in a belief of linguistic purism, correct grammar, and standard English, additive attitudes maintain that dialectal diversity adds something to the classroom environment and can enrich both the individual and collective student experience. Teachers’ belief systems

about language allow students to switch freely between different language varieties or force them to adhere to presumed fixed rules about language (Marshall 2018).

Linguistics upholds a direct connection between language use and identity. When forced adherence to “standard English rules” is true, students may question their identity and place within the classroom. Replacive ideals reveal deeper beliefs of linguistic inferiority of vernacular varieties to the linguistic superiority of MAE, as well as bias against the value and use of nonstandard dialects (Wolfram and Schilling).

Replacive attitudes function within the framework of the correctionist or eradicationist viewpoint (Wolfram and Schilling). This refers to the belief that there is a correct way to speak or write, and nonstandard varieties need to be “corrected” in education. To believe this, one works against the understanding of language as a part of a cultural system and the understanding that language varies naturally (Gee). Replacive attitudes demonstrate a dilemma to connect language, culture, and power. Across linguistic research, MAE, a historically and socially “white” dialect, is referred to as the “language of power,” which is the foundation for the system in which AAVE speakers are educated (Delpit and Dowdy). In his article about critical awareness, Siegel asserts that the educational system teaches vernacular speakers that MAE is superior in structure and importance while also enforcing the inferiority of vernaculars through denigration and by their altogether exclusion in the educational process. He argues that societal belief in AAVE’s inferiority keeps it out of the classroom, which perpetuates the belief of superior and inferior dialects; thus, he says that language may be the primary form of social power and control (Siegel). His research makes clear the connection between replacive attitudes and social and cultural domination. In fact, current research suggests

that AAVE speakers’ “confusion” about MAE features is not the cause of the racial “achievement gap” in literacy; instead, the gap is more likely caused by teachers’ lack of acceptance of AAVE to teach MAE (Escher and Godley). Additionally, Tanji Reed Marshall’s (2018) interview with a teacher who believed there was a definitive “right” way to speak and write lead her to the following conclusion:

“She engaged in cultural warfare, which stripped her students’ ability to learn about English in relation to how they understood and used English. Her ideals about the way students should speak depicted a ‘linguistic inferiority principle’ (Wolfram and Schilling 6) revealing a hidden bias against the use and value of AAVE” (53).

Marshall holds degrees and works in the field of education, and she connects her research to linguistic findings; across both fields, the connection between language, power, and correction through educators in the classroom is clear. Research related to replace attitudes, however, argues that correction is only necessary when it advances learning – not as a way to insert cultural or social domination over students (Lyiscott).

Wolfram and Schilling explain that MAE should be taught as replace, exploring the position of bidialectalism. Bidialectalism gears education toward maintaining vernaculars and MAE in the classroom, while fostering situational understanding for switching between MAE and the speaker’s natural dialect. Further, while bidialectalism recognizes that nonstandard dialects are socially stigmatized, it rejects the belief of linguistic inferiority of the vernacular. Instead, bidialectalism is closely related to the idea of code-switching, in which speakers are taught to use MAE in formal situations but are encouraged to use their own vernacular variety in home and social solidarity situations. In fact, their research indicates students will better master MAE if the linguistic structures, principles, and systems of their home dialect are both recognized

and respected rather than reduced to linguistic mistakes (Wolfram and Schilling). Additionally, Marshall's interviews describe another teacher who openly valued students' language and offered a way for them to learn MAE and use AAVE in her classroom. Through her interview, Marshall (2018) finds that this teacher used AAVE as a tool to connect the dialects to the benefit of students learning MAE; in recognizing this, she says that "the relationship between language and culture served as a mechanism for mutuality instead of domination" (54). Understanding the harms and benefits of these attitudes is fundamental in creating a proper guide for teachers in Mississippi to better value dialectal diversity in their classrooms.

Students' experiences

To understand the necessity of fostering linguistic inclusivity in education, it is necessary to examine, through the research that will be discussed in-depth below, the experiences students who speak AAVE have in the classroom. The struggles students face in the classroom concerning code-switching or dialectal usage are very personal. Research shows that these students must reconcile a desire for academic and/or professional success with their perceptions of why teachers ask them to speak a certain way (Godley and Minnici). Students who speak AAVE are acutely aware of how standard English is perceived as successful in education, but they also do not always understand why they are asked or told they have to speak differently. Furthermore, it is clear from the accounts below that students' feelings are often infringed upon when told they must change the way they speak, especially by a white teacher.

When thinking directly about additive and replacive attitudes, one must confront that, despite AAVE being characterized as "nonstandard," every dialect accomplishes

communication in “improper” or ungrammatical ways; it is the social value attached to the dialect that determines whether variation is acceptable or not. For example, a teacher said in an interview that she would challenge her students by asking, “are you gonna say that in an interview, like how unprofessional do you look” (Marshall 2017, 105). In re-examining this interview in her 2018 article, Marshall comments on the bias hidden in the teacher’s own nonstandard variation of “go” as “gonna;” the teacher ignored her use of casual English while trying to force strict, proper English on vernacular speakers (Marshall 2018). This is one example of experiences students who speak AAVE face in the classroom. While a teacher’s use of casual English is accepted in the classroom due to the power dynamic, students are told their nonstandard features are unprofessional. The language they first learned to speak is unacceptable. Returning to the foundational statement that language is linked to identity, these criticisms can often mask meaning connected to how the speaker’s identity is seen or valued. On one hand, the teacher could recognize her informal usage of MAE while asking students to translate, or codeswitch, from AAVE to MAE; instead, she makes a value statement about the dialect they have spoken for, presumably, their whole life. To this point, Lyiscott asserts that she speaks three varieties of English but explores how AAVE for her, and others, is “the language that is responsible for the transaction between my inner self and immediate outer world, my home and my community. I was *socialized* in this tongue” (50). Because MAE serves as the language of communication for many speakers and their use of nonstandard forms goes uncriticized, even by teachers, one cannot expect speakers of AAVE to switch out of their immediate self-expressive language. There must be education for both

teachers and students toward bidialectalism and the value of dialects in the classroom, without AAVE speakers receiving consequences for using their native dialect.

In interviews, a student was able to respond directly to questions concerning the consequences of “talking Black” in school (Godley and Minnici). The student explains, ““She says we have to say it right. And if we don’t say it her way, she won’t answer our question”” (336). By using her own dialect rather than MAE, this student is confronted with the reality that a teacher will withhold academic knowledge from her. A different research project conducted with tenth-grade English students showed that 23 of the 51 students, or 45%, thought AAVE should be spoken in class because “students were more proficient and ‘comfortable’ speaking in AAVE, and thus speaking in AAVE would allow for better communication and classroom environment” (Escher and Godley 707). Students themselves made these observations about their language; however, teachers still avoid the incorporation of nonstandard dialects into classroom lessons.

Linguistic approach

Shirley Brice Heath is well known for her work connecting linguistics and education. Specifically, her research in linguistics motivated this project to work on a state-specific teacher’s guide. For a decade, she researched in two culturally diverse communities in the Piedmont Carolinas, studying white and black language in the community and classroom. Both communities were rural, working class: Roadville represented her study of white language and Trackton of black language. Through her research in the communities themselves, she noticed important differences in children’s upbringing in Roadville compared to Trackton that importantly distinguished children’s early learning abilities. For example, children in Trackton, the black community, are not

born into solely a family but a community; thus, they learn to communicate between their own family and others. Furthermore, as they learn language, they are taught through repetition and storytelling, so imagination and creativity are highly valued. In contrast, the white children in Roadville acquire language through baby talk and memorization, mostly observed through playing games or with toys. There is also a value placed on going to school, so parents attempt to adequately prepare their children for such an environment through correction. While the black children learn to interact in a variety of situations and tell stories for creativity, white children learn the foundation of proper grammar, telling stories to understand realistic events and chronology, and to be aware of their situations: for example, when their mom is talking, they are not. Therefore, when these children enter formal education, they have learned different language skills and social skills that drastically change their learning perspective. Finally, she observes that the Roadville children acquire language through reading books, which already use proper grammar and MAE, whereas Trackton children are raised in a community that values oral language more than written. Using this knowledge, she studied bringing together children's learning to use language with teachers' understanding of the children's home language communities in the classroom to help achieve overall success. She asserts that not explicitly addressing language in literacy pedagogy may lead teachers to unintentionally reinforce unequal social relations. In conclusion, she finds that cultural background affected students' language development and usage; therefore, she dedicated time to working with the schools to create effective language development strategies and curriculum to benefit both the teachers and students. An interactive approach to incorporating the language, knowledge, and expression of knowledge of students in the

classroom in connection to that of the school enabled students to understand how to make language usage choices between a home language and school language, and to link those language choices to life chances (Heath).

Similarly, Anne H. Charity Hudley and Christine Mallinson have collaborated on two books in a Multicultural Education Series. A “multicultural, multidisciplinary model of *linguistic awareness* that addresses contemporary, pressing educational challenges related to language and culture in the United States” (Charity Hudley and Mallinson 2011, 141) is advocated across grade levels and academic subjects, allowing respect for linguistic and cultural diversity in classroom pedagogy. Language variation is directly related to the research done across the educational and social policy spectrum to benefit students and educators alike. With research across grade levels, disciplines, and within schools and the larger framework of language policy, they assert that students develop linguistic agency when they are allowed and empowered to explore and build upon their own language variation and that of their homes or communities. This agency becomes a skill both in and out of the classroom. Additionally, they conclude that this appreciation for language variation allows students to develop linguistic awareness and view variation as an asset, rather than a deficit (Charity Hudley and Mallinson 2014). Their conclusion is within the additive attitude framework, advocating that this awareness and appreciation for language variation positions students to communicate effectively with diverse audiences in diverse situations.

Classroom practices already in use

Across disciplines, there is an abundance of resources on how teachers can implement or are implementing various classroom practices to enhance the experience of

AAVE learners. Studying strategies which are already being employed allows for a better realization and application of practices for Mississippi teachers.

One approach that educators may take to incorporating African American Vernacular English in the classroom is open communication in the comparison of MAE and AAVE features. Some research may refer to this as translation or code-switching. Research observation of a sixth-grade teacher showed that she willingly encouraged her students to speak and write in their native dialect; however, she then required them to translate it into MAE. By the end of the year, her class could easily code-switch and better mastered both dialects (Ladson-Billings). Additionally, Godley and Minnici created a one-week classroom lesson on language variation in which one of the activities involved “translating” sentences both from AAVE to academically written MAE and from the academic to how they would speak with their friends. They observed that students in all classes could construct some understanding of AAVE as a dialect based on their own language use in the translation exercise (Godley and Minnici). Further, in her book *Teaching about Dialect Variations and Language in Secondary English Classrooms: Power, Prestige, and Prejudice*, Michelle Devereaux explains that teachers might foster language learning by constructing a side-by-side analysis of MAE and AAVE. Through this, students can analyze the structure of both dialect’s use of a given feature, which allows them to see how language naturally varies (Devereaux). Its variation is governed by audience, situation, and purpose (Gee), but it allows students to appreciate rather than negate the different ways that dialects accomplish communication (Devereaux).

Additionally, teachers might adopt varied-language curriculum. While William Shakespeare and Harper Lee are common reading across many public schools, adopting authors like Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes may enrich students' learning experiences by using the texts as windows to the interrelations between language, culture, and identity (Devereaux). As an example, Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* could help bridge a gap between students and teachers about dialectal varieties: though Hurston uses SAE in her narration throughout the novel, the main character, Janie, speaks through a dialect (Devereaux). In using varied-language curriculum, educators can introduce students to language variation in formal literature, which aids in the understanding that dialects, specifically AAVE, do have a place in the classroom. When an educator includes literature that features a variety of voices and backgrounds, their students are also more included in the lesson and invested in learning, because these characters and stories may look or sound like them. Further, Lyiscott asserts that the disregard for Black literature in classrooms "reflects larger social attitudes about Black lives" (50) and that critically engaging students with black textual expressions and their sociocultural contexts can lead to classroom inclusion on a linguistic, content, and analytic level to discuss social and institutional power relations (Lyiscott). When literature is white-washed, not including the experiences, language, or characters who reflect what society truly looks like, it reflects how society can leave out the experiences, background, language, and identity of nonwhite people. In the classroom environment, the active choices of teachers or administrators to not include black literature, or any other diverse literature, becomes a reflection of their power to choose what to expose students to in the classroom. Teaching and learning literature encapsulate multiple

higher-order thinking processes necessary in higher education and as life skills, so choosing to include diverse literature can also allow educators to engage with students about educational matters and about the power relations in society, both textually and in real life.

Students, regardless of the dialect they speak, would benefit from interacting with literature in formal schooling that embraces the vernaculars the authors use. This research should not be taken as solely appropriate for AAVE speakers. As John Baugh points out,

“Considered collectively, we should have special language programs for all students. [MAE] speakers would learn about the history of American dialects and languages, giving them a better sense of the linguistic dimensions of ‘the melting pot.’ Courses that enhance linguistic tolerance (and more?) are needed to counter existing linguistic prejudice. Students who speak non-Standard English would not only learn about this history, but would also receive special instruction based on their personal linguistic heritage; again, that instruction should be tailored to the needs of [MAE] students at individual schools. Moreover, this instruction would be provided in such a way that no student would be made to feel ashamed of her or his linguistic ancestry” (101).

None of the practices being discussed are necessarily meant for teachers of classes made of solely AAVE speakers. There are a variety of ways that educators may enhance the learning experience of all students; however, the research does focus on encouraging linguistic inclusivity with dialectal diversity in the classroom, concentrating on AAVE.

Expanding on this idea, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y'all Too* explores a whole discourse approach. Throughout the year, a teacher may make and build on a chart that provides different environments a word would be used in with the same meaning. For example, these categories might include: English (as a class), science, and slang. As the year progresses, the chart would grow; however, the

basis for this approach is a vernacular speaker learning to translate from their dialect (in the example given by the author, “slang”) into more formal contexts. Additionally, this gives students easy access and context to expanded vocabulary terms.

Figure 4: Environmental Language Chart, Emdin (179)

English	Science	Slang
Light	Photon	Lyte
Shine	Emit	Bling
Entire	Surface area	Whole joint

The chart would grow throughout the year to encompass more categories and more terms. Hence, a student that produced a logical sentence from terms in the “slang” category would be just as correct as a student that produced the same logical sentence using the terms in the “science” or “English” category; however, the first student would learn to translate based on situational context (Emdin).

There are other ways to produce practices that are linguistically, culturally, and educationally relevant. Hip-hop lyrics are discussed as another practice educators can use to foster linguistic awareness and complete teaching standards (Ladson-Billings, Lyiscott). By engaging students with culturally relevant material, teachers can better explore dialect diversity and spoken-word poetry, as well as issues of race and society (Lyiscott). More teachers use this practice as a form of “culturally-relevant pedagogy,” pedagogy committed to collective empowerment through three criteria:

“(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competency; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (Ladson-Billings 160).

Through this approach, Ladson-Billings observed a second-grade teacher who allowed students to bring in previously-deemed-appropriate rap lyrics and perform them. After

the performance, the teacher used an overhead projector to show the lyrics to the class and analyze literal and figurative meanings, rhyme scheme, onomatopoeia, and alliteration (Ladson-Billings).

Research in “Critical Language Pedagogy in an Urban High School English Class” asserts the necessity of a democratic classroom to discuss the relation of language and power (Godley and Minnici). Through this approach, students are able to share their viewpoints through discussion and debate. Blurring the distinctions between educator and student is essential to this practice; everyone in the classroom must take both roles in the conversation. Thus, one dialect or way of using language is never presented as the “right” one; rather, dialectal diversity is celebrated, and variation is seen as natural and beneficial to the classroom (Godley and Minnici).

CHAPTER 3: Guide for Educators

“Our point is that the challenge facing teacher education, curriculum, and school reform is *not* to find, standardize, and implement the one true method, but for teachers to develop flexible repertoires of field-, discourse-, and text-specific pedagogies, suited to particular textual artifacts, technologies, social and linguistic/interactional outcomes, and adaptable for students of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (Luke 90).

Introduction

The essential question this thesis seeks to answer is, how can Mississippi K-12 educators incorporate dialects, specifically AAVE, in their classrooms? Though a teacher’s guide may offer a partial answer, it cannot, by itself, fully respond to the issue at hand. In the first part of this thesis, linguistic, educational, and sociological perspectives were discussed in detail to provide a full-scope understanding of linguistic diversity and inclusion in the classroom. This foundation, from features of AAVE, to replacive and additive attitudes, to student experiences, to classroom practices already in use, was necessary in order to offer any form of an educator’s guide. Each section builds upon the one before, showing that this is an interdisciplinary issue and that it cannot just be approached from one perspective. To be exact, the guide proposed below may only be effective if an educator promotes a linguistically inclusive environment in the classroom from the beginning of the year. As shown in the research in Chapter 2, students are aware when teachers approach their dialectal diversity with a replacive attitude, and those students do not feel welcome to take part in the classroom dynamics due to these attitudes and the power associated with the educator’s position (Escher and Godley; Godley and Minnici; Lyiscott; Marshall 2017; Marshall 2018). Therefore, this introduction serves as

a reminder that educators must address linguistic diversity with an additive attitude if the proposed guide may have any positive linguistic or educational effect.

The guide is substantiated through black literature: picture books, a chapter book, poetry, an essay, a contemporary young-adult novel, and a coming-of-age novel. In using literature written by black voices, presenting black characters, and featuring black voices who speak through both AAVE and MAE, educators can better enrich the literary engagement of their students and show students how authors and characters codeswitch. Further, teachers can engage students in dialogue about their experiences in education and in their everyday lives, fostering an inclusive and understanding environment. Through these works, lessons are created that could be made part of a larger ELA unit or, in some cases, used on their own to compare and contrast AAVE in the work, in students' lives, and in the world. Additionally, the lessons will draw upon the linguistic, educational, and sociological research discussed in Chapter 2 to foster inclusion and acceptance of dialectal diversity and to create dialogue between students and teachers about AAVE. As noted above, should teachers take steps to actively recognize and accept students' verbal communication in their native dialect, these lessons may validate that work through the teacher's actions to include literature and discussion that relates to students' language usage. The lessons may also open the door to truthful conversation with students, leading to stronger relationship and better teacher-student engagement throughout the year.

Mississippi English Language Arts Standards overview

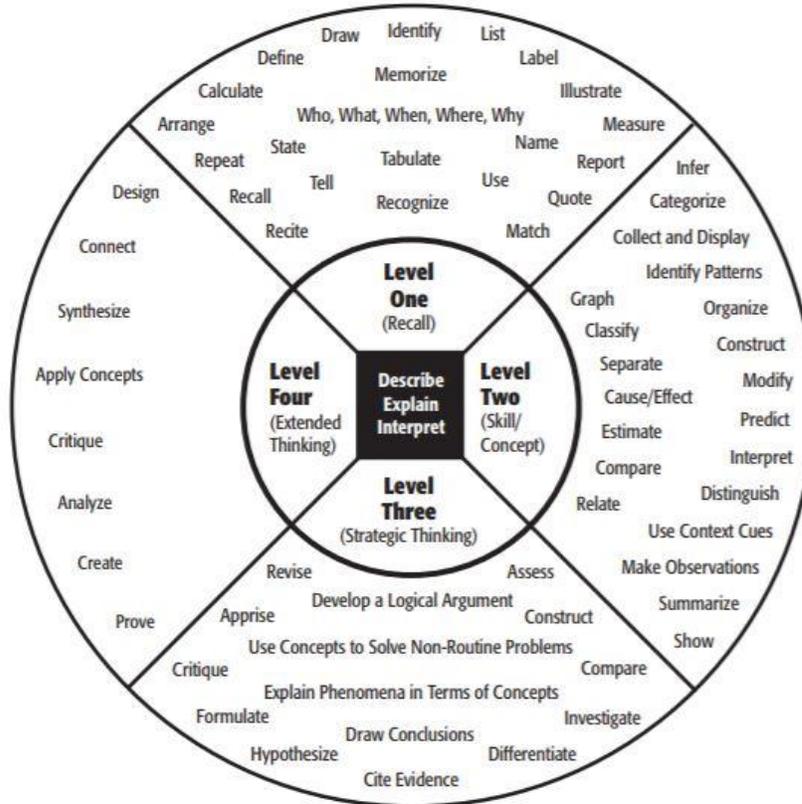
The most recent Mississippi English Language Arts (hence, "ELA") education standards were published in 2016. Comprising 229 pages, these standards encompass

educational regulations and requirements. At the end of each year in grades 3 through 8 and in English II (on track for grade 10), state standardized testing is implemented to measure students' understanding and application of these education standards as well as to determine whether the teachers (1) taught the standard and (2) taught at or above proficiency for that grade level ("Student Assessment"). The Mississippi ELA standards form the foundation for the guide created below. By doing this, any Mississippi educator could look at this thesis project and incorporate the proposed lesson, or a similar one, both to teach or reinforce standards and to foster linguistic awareness and inclusion in the classroom. Each of the following sections will highlight specifically which standards they will meet.

Structure of lessons

The lessons follow specific parameters. Each lesson is structured for a 45- to 50-minute class period. Additionally, each section will outline which grade(s) the literature and lessons are structured for, as well as listing the Mississippi ELA standards for that grade(s). The lessons will incorporate Webb's four Depth of Knowledge ("DOK") levels, which, as named, refer to the depth of knowledge students are expected to reach when asked a question or asked to complete any given assignment or assessment (Amidon). The DOK levels can be found in Figure 5 below. Since there are four levels, there are specific characteristics of each level: level one, recall; level two, skill/concept; level three, strategic thinking; level four, extended thinking.

Figure 5: Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Levels (Webb)



Level One Activities	Level Two Activities	Level Three Activities	Level Four Activities
Recall elements and details of story structure, such as sequence of events, character, plot and setting.	Identify and summarize the major events in a narrative.	Support ideas with details and examples.	Conduct a project that requires specifying a problem, designing and conducting an experiment, analyzing its data, and reporting results/ solutions.
Conduct basic mathematical calculations.	Use context cues to identify the meaning of unfamiliar words.	Use voice appropriate to the purpose and audience.	Apply mathematical model to illuminate a problem or situation.
Label locations on a map.	Solve routine multiple-step problems.	Identify research questions and design investigations for a scientific problem.	Analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources.
Represent in words or diagrams a scientific concept or relationship.	Describe the cause/effect of a particular event.	Develop a scientific model for a complex situation.	Describe and illustrate how common themes are found across texts from different cultures.
Perform routine procedures like measuring length or using punctuation marks correctly.	Identify patterns in events or behavior.	Determine the author's purpose and describe how it affects the interpretation of a reading selection.	Design a mathematical model to inform and solve a practical or abstract situation.
Describe the features of a place or people.	Formulate a routine problem given data and conditions.	Apply a concept in other contexts.	
	Organize, represent and interpret data.		

Further, each level consists of verbs, focuses, and activities for educators to create daily learning objectives to teach the standard(s) (Amidon). The lessons proposed will cite DOK levels in their daily objectives, so understanding the above figure is necessary to understanding the objectives and the lessons.

Finally, the units are divided below by author name. While the first three units, within the grade level K through 8 range, offer lessons that could comprise the entire unit or that could be incorporated into a teacher's pre-planned unit, the last two units, for high school, are lessons that are solely intended to be included into a teacher's unit on the given book, rather than suggesting daily lessons for the entirety of the unit. Of the latter, however, most lessons will connect due to their basing upon the same or similar standards.

Patricia McKissack

McKissack has two picture books that will be utilized in this guide: *Mirandy and Brother Wind* and *Goin' Someplace Special*. Both books are rated for grades PreK-2 by Scholastic ("Mirandy," "Goin'"). *Mirandy and Brother Wind* is a book about a young African American girl, Mirandy, who is attending her first cakewalk, a dance competition, and wants to catch Brother Wind as her partner because she knows she will win. She goes on a journey asking everyone how to capture Brother Wind, and finally does; however, a girl made fun of her friend Ezel, so Mirandy made her wish to Brother Wind and danced with Ezel. Together, they won the cakewalk, and her grandmother said they danced with the wind (*Mirandy*). The other book, *Goin' Someplace Special*, contains a similar main character: 'Tricia Ann is a young African American girl in the 1950s who is very excited about going "someplace special" alone for the first time. As she travels, she encounters various structures of segregation that make her feel like she cannot travel the world on her own. She remembers what her grandmother told her, though, and pushes forward until she arrives at her someplace special: the public library,

where everyone can read, regardless of their race (*Goin'*). The guide will propose a 2-day lesson for kindergarten and grade 1.

Mississippi ELA standard(s) the unit will teach, by grade level, are:

- Kindergarten: “RL.K.9 With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories” (28).
- Grade 1: “RL.1.9 Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories” (36).

Lesson Plan 1: McKissack Picture Books

Students will compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of Mirandy and ‘Tricia Ann.

On Day 1, the objective is to know the “who, what, when, where, and why” of Mirandy’s adventure in a DOK Level 1 lesson. To accomplish this, the teacher will spend the first 30 minutes of class introducing students to the book, gathering them in the classroom reading space, and reading *Mirandy and Brother Wind* to the students. As they read, the teacher will ask, “Who is Mirandy? Can you point to her (in the given picture)?”; “Is Mirandy a boy or a girl?”; “Who is Mirandy trying to catch?”; “Why does Mirandy want to catch him?” After they read, the teacher will continue to ask students similar questions about what happened, asking students to recall her adventure. The teacher can ask, “How did she catch Brother Wind?” and “Did Mirandy win the cakewalk competition?” As an informal check, at the end of class, the teacher will ask students what their favorite part of the story was.

On Day 2, students will compare the experiences of Mirandy and ‘Tricia Ann in a DOK Level 2 lesson. At the beginning of class, the teacher will ask students what they remember about *Mirandy and Brother Wind*. Then, the teacher will introduce them to the new book, *Goin’ Someplace Special*, and read it aloud to the students. While reading, the teacher may ask questions like the day before, “Who is ‘Tricia Ann? Can you point to her (in the given picture)?”; “Is ‘Tricia Ann a boy or a girl?”; “Where is ‘Tricia Ann going?”; “What did ‘Tricia Ann use to go across town?” When they finish the book, the teacher will ask, “What was ‘Tricia Ann’s someplace special?” and “Was it hard for her to get there? Why do you think that?” After this discussion, the teacher will use the last 15 minutes to ask students to compare Mirandy and ‘Tricia Ann’s experiences. The teacher may use visuals from both books. To begin, the teacher may ask, “How are Mirandy and ‘Tricia Ann the same?” Students may answer that they are both girls or both African American. The teacher can encourage students to talk about how the characters talk. Additionally, the teacher may prompt how both characters wanted to accomplish something: Mirandy wanted to catch Brother Wind, and ‘Tricia Ann wanted to go someplace special on her own. Then, students can answer, “Was it easy for (character) to do that? Why?” This will allow them to think about the similarities of the experiences and adventures of the two girls; however, they can also contrast the characters’ experiences. The teacher can ask about what their goals were: they both wanted to accomplish something. While Mirandy wanted to win a dance competition, ‘Tricia Ann wanted to go somewhere by herself. Mirandy had to catch the wind, but ‘Tricia Ann had to travel alone. At the end of the lesson, students should see how there are similarities and differences in the stories, and they should be able to talk about them by comparing

and contrasting the characters' experiences, with encouragement from the teacher when needed.

While it would be difficult to ask kindergarteners and first-graders about the features of AAVE in the books, teaching these books with the compare-and-contrast standard allows the teacher to ask about a character's language. Additionally, through incorporating black literature with characters who speak AAVE, the teacher would encourage the additive attitude framework while including characters who may speak like their students. Even though the students may not have the academic language or critical-thinking skills at this level to discuss the appearance of AAVE in their reading, they can hear it through the teacher reading the text aloud, which fosters a dialect-inclusive environment for the students. Though the discussion of language specifically may be minimal, using these books allows for teachers and students to begin the work of talking about dialects in the classroom, building a foundation for this dialogue to continue throughout K-12 education.

Christopher Paul Curtis

Curtis' *Bud, Not Buddy*, a chapter book, is rated by Scholastic for grades 3-5 ("Bud"). Set in 1936, readers meet a young boy, Bud, who insists his name is not Buddy, living in an orphanage in Flint, Michigan, after his mother died. He carries with him a suitcase with his prized possessions that remind him of his mom. When he is sent to live with another family, the son bullies him and they get in a fight, which results in Bud running away. From his mother's possessions, Bud infers clues about his father, and sets off to find him (Curtis). Through first-person telling by Bud himself, the story wrestles with issues of identity, family, and history. While the book is recommended for grade

levels 3-5, this guide will suggest a unit for grades 3 and 4. The unit proposed should last for one week.

Mississippi ELA standard(s) the unit will teach, by grade level, are:

- Grade 3: “RL.3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events” (52).
- Grade 4: “RL.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions)” (60).

Lesson Plan 2: *Bud, Not Buddy*

Students will understand the characterization of Bud through various elements, but specifically his language use, and how his actions affect plot, and students will apply their knowledge of characterization more broadly.

Monday, the objective is to characterize Bud in Chapter 1 (eight pages) in a DOK Level 1 lesson. To do this, the teacher will begin by introducing the book and making sure each student has a copy. Then, the teacher will read the chapter aloud to the class. The teacher may pause during the reading for discussion with students. When finished, the teacher will ask about the students’ favorite part that was read; then, the teacher will ask about Bud. What do they think of him and why? As an activity, the students will share what they remember about Bud, and the teacher will write those qualities on the board. Together, they will talk about how those qualities show different things about his character in the book. As an assessment, students participate in a think-pair-share

activity where they will think about what characteristic they like, dislike, or identify with about Bud, find a partner, and share their chosen characteristics. For homework, they will read Chapters 2 and 3 with their parent or guardian at home.

Tuesday, students will summarize the events and compare and contrast the characters they read about in Chapters 2 and 3 for homework in a DOK Level 2 lesson. First, the teacher will facilitate discussion about the plot, asking the students, “What happened in your reading for last night?” and calling upon students to answer. As they answer, the teacher will encourage the students to talk about Mr. Amos, Mrs. Amos, and Todd Amos directly, reminding them of how they characterized Bud the day before. The teacher will read from the students’ assigned reading:

“She talked like this and she wasn’t even a preacher or a teacher. Shucks, she talked strange like this and she wasn’t even a librarian” (Curtis 15).

Using this quote, the teacher will ask students about the characterization of Mrs. Amos, asking, “What do you learn about her from the way Bud describes her speech?”

Additionally, the teacher will encourage students to compare and contrast the way that Mrs. Amos speaks and the way that Bud speaks. Then, the teacher will ask if how he talks says anything about him: does it show he is young or old, or in school, etc.? After these activities, the students will have the rest of the class period to read Chapters 4 through 9, with the rest being homework. The students will be given a handout with all of the main character’s names, and they will be expected to fill in each person’s characteristics as they read.

Wednesday, the students will use their knowledge about Bud’s characterization so far to predict what happens in the second half of the book in a DOK Level 2 lesson.

To begin class, the teacher will perform an informal check by going past the desks and asking students to show that they completed the handout for characters for as far as they read for homework. Then, the teacher will ask them to again summarize their assigned reading from the previous day. After discussion, the teacher will place students in small groups to begin making predictions about the second half of the book as a group. The group will complete a handout asking for their prediction, what they know about Bud so far, and why or how they think what they know about him will contribute to their prediction of the events. After fifteen minutes, the teacher will ask each group to talk about their prediction. After every group has shared, students will be able to offer opinions on the predictions other groups made. Then, students will be given the final 10-15 minutes to begin popcorn reading Chapter 10. For homework, the students will be asked to read Chapters 10-14 and continue filling out the characterization handout.

Thursday, the students will revise their predictions from the day before and assess Bud's character development in a DOK Level 3 lesson. When class starts, the teacher will check the handouts for completion again before placing students in the same prediction groups they were in the previous day. Students will discuss the predictions they made compared to what actually happened, and they will discuss how Bud's actions affected the plot of the story. Then, they will be asked to revise their predictions for the last four chapters of the book, using a blank version of the worksheet from the previous day. How will Bud's actions in the last chapters of the book affect the ending? The teacher will collect these worksheets. As a class, the students will discuss how Bud's character developed from Chapter 1 to Chapter 15. They will recall the characterization list they made on Monday while discussing what has changed or how he has grown.

Students will be expected to cite specific examples. Additionally, the teacher may ask about Bud's interactions with Lefty Lewis in Chapter 10 or the band in Chapter 13 (pages 154-155 specifically); how does the way he changes how he talks contribute to his character development? Finally, the teacher will have the students participate in a think-pair-share activity asking, "Why is it important that Bud grows and changes in the text? Why does the author develop his character?" For homework, the students will be expected to read the final chapters of the book, Chapters 15-19, and finish the characterization handout.

Friday, students will use their knowledge of characterization to create their own fictional character for the *Bud, Not Buddy* story in a DOK Level 4 lesson. To begin class, the teacher will collect the handouts while asking students what they thought of the ending of the book; did it match their original (Wednesday) or revised (Thursday) predictions? After this five-minute discussion, students will be given thirty minutes to create a character who could be in *Bud, Not Buddy*: maybe another kid at the orphanage that Bud could have become friends with, a new member of the band, or even what Bud's mom would have been like as a child. The students can create this character by writing a story about them, drawing a comic book scene for the character, combining these styles in a picture-book-type format, or even writing or drawing a short play they will act out for the class. Additionally, students will be asked to think about the way their character will speak, perhaps like Mrs. Amos or maybe like Bud. This encourages students to think about language as an aspect of characterization. Once this activity is completed, any student who wants to share the character they created may be allowed to do so. In the last five minutes, the students will complete an exit ticket asking why language is

important to the development of either Bud or their created character and what it says about that character: are they young or old; formal or informal; educated or uneducated? Through this activity, students may begin thinking about language in new ways, and the teacher can use their responses on the exit slips to begin fostering more conversations about language in the real world.

Throughout this unit, the teacher can discuss how authors create human characters to resemble people, so the characters have to talk like real people. People, however, speak differently. If applicable, the teacher can talk about how they might talk differently than their students do, and that is okay. Giving students the tools to see that characterization and development also apply to people in the “real world,” specifically with language, will help students begin to identify their language and the language of those around them. Teachers can foster inclusive conversations by talking about how Bud talks differently to people he doesn’t know (Lefty, the band) than to himself (narration) or to his friends, and why that might be. Further, teachers can ask students if they ever switch their language in that way, and teachers can give examples of times they might change their own language, too. While educators can encourage that this is either normal or necessary, they can also open dialogue about how it makes students feel to switch their language in different contexts, especially at school. Teachers must approach these dialogues with an additive attitude, reminding students that how they speak is a part of them, the same way that how Bud speaks is a part of him.

Langston Hughes

For the Langston Hughes poetry unit, this guide will incorporate five poems in various ways: “Mother to Son,” “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” “I, Too,” “The Negro

Mother,” and “Theme for English B.” The first four are included in the collective book, *The Dream Keeper and other poems*, which Scholastic rates as a grade 3-8 level book (“The Dream”). “Theme for English B” is not part of a collection rated by Scholastic; however, due to its content, it fits with the former four. Since each selected poem for this guide has its own depth, the guide will approach the poems for grades 7 and 8. The unit proposed should span four-days’ time.

Mississippi ELA standard(s) the unit will teach, by grade level, are:

- Grade 7: “RL.7.5 Analyze how a drama’s or poem’s form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning” (86).
- Grade 8: “RL.8.5 Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style” (94).

Lesson Plan 3: Langston Hughes’ Poetry

Students will analyze the structure, meaning, and style of poems, with specific regards to the way that language builds one or many of those characteristics.

On Day One, the objective is to analyze the structure of the poems “The Negro Mother” and “Mother to Son,” discussing how their structure contributes to their meaning in a DOK Level 2 lesson. To begin class, the teacher will hand out a packet with copies of all of the poems for the unit and three compare-contrast charts for each day. If the students have already had a unit on poetry, the teacher may instruct them to spend the first five minutes completing an additional handout on poetry vocabulary recall with a partner. Then, they will read the poems for the day. A student will volunteer to read the

poem “Mother to Son” for the class. As a class, the students will discuss the structure of the poem while taking notes on the compare-contrast charts for that day. Does it have a rhyme scheme? What is the form of the poem? The teacher may explain that the poem is in free-verse, with no rhyme scheme or other structural patterns, in the case that students have not already had a unit on poetry. Then, the teacher will ask about other stylistic aspects of the poem. Who is speaking? How can they tell? This allows the students to analyze the vernacular variety used in the speech of the narrator, the mother (“Mother to Son”). After this poem, approximately fifteen minutes, the students will popcorn-read “The Negro Mother.” Again, the teacher will ask about the rhyme scheme and structure of the poem. Unlike the former, this poem has an AABB rhyme scheme and is organized in three stanzas, telling a chronological story (“The Negro Mother”). Then, the teacher will ask about stylistic choices: who is speaking and how can they tell? This poem should also take fifteen minutes. After analyzing “The Negro Mother,” students will discuss how the two mothers speak differently in the two poems. How do the structure and the way the narrator speaks contribute to the meaning of the poem? “The Negro Mother” speaks in MAE while the mother in “Mother to Son” speaks in vernacular. As an exit ticket, students will write their own explanation of the structure and meaning of one of the poems (for grade 7) or both of the poems (for grade 8) and which they liked better.

On Day Two, students will analyze the structure, meaning, and style of the poems “The Weary Blues” and “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” in a DOK Level 2 lesson. To begin class, the teacher will introduce the two poems and remind students to complete their compare-contrast chart for the day. A student will read “The Negro Speaks of

Rivers” aloud. The teacher will use maps to explain the significance of the four regions referenced in the poem: the Euphrates, the Congo, the Nile, and the Mississippi (“The Negro Speaks”). Together, the class will analyze the structure of the poem. What is the rhyme scheme and the organization? Though the poem does not rhyme, it is organized in 5 stanzas: two lines, one line, five lines, two lines, one line. Additionally, the poem repeats the first line as the eighth line, “I’ve known rivers,” and the third line as the tenth, “My soul has grown deep like the rivers” (“The Negro Speaks”). This poem is written in MAE. The students will discuss how these specific structural and stylistic choices contribute to the meaning of the poem. This should take twenty minutes. Then, the students will popcorn-read “The Weary Blues.” Together, they will again answer the question, what is the organization and rhyme scheme of the poem? The poem is organized into two stanzas. While the poem seems to have a rhyme scheme to begin, it is actually irregular; the teacher will encourage students to brainstorm why that is important to the style and meaning of the poem. The poem is entitled “The Weary Blues;” together with the use of quoted AAVE throughout the poem (“The Weary Blues”), the irregular rhyme scheme mimics the natural, irregular patterns of music and speech. The teacher will ask a student to reread the first stanza aloud; after having this conversation, do students hear how the irregular rhyme and use of AAVE contributes to the sound of speech and flow of music in the poem? In this way, the structure affects the style and meaning of the poem. At the end of class, students will fill out an exit ticket describing the structure and meaning of one (grade 7) or both (grade 8) poems, as well as any questions they still have. This will be collected, and the teacher will address the questions at the beginning of the next class.

On Day Three, students will analyze the poems “Theme for English B” and “I, Too,” comparing and contrasting their structure and style in a DOK Level 2 lesson. To begin, the teacher will review any large-scale specific questions about the lesson from the previous day, per the exit tickets. If there were no specific questions, the teacher would try to address general questions (i.e., what is rhyme scheme?) throughout the following lesson. The teacher will introduce the poems for the day and remind students to fill out their last compare-contrast chart throughout the discussion. First, the teacher will ask a student to volunteer to read the poem “I, Too.” Together, the students will answer the question, what is the structure and rhyme scheme of the poem? The poem is organized in five stanzas of a total of eighteen short lines with no rhyme scheme. The teacher will reference the first line, “I, too, sing America” and the last, “I, too, am America,” and ask how the structure of the poem between these lines explains the narrator’s shift in statement and the meaning of the poem (“I, Too” lines 1, 18). The teacher may lead the discussion of this stanza. The students should understand that the second stanza explains the narrator’s “today,” where he declares his difference by saying he is “the darker brother” (line 1) and is sent away to eat when company comes (lines 3-4). Understanding that he is sent away and not part of the collective, the students are asked to analyze how “I, too, sing America” means the speaker contributes to America but isn’t a part of the collective. In the third stanza, however, the students will analyze what the speaker’s “tomorrow” means (line 8), and why “sing” from the first line becomes “I, too, am America” in the last. This should take 30 minutes. With a partner or alone, students will be asked to read “Theme for English B” and finish filling out the compare-contrast chart to turn in at the end of class as their informal check. The teacher will write the questions

they have been asked to answer for other poems on the board as a reference: (1) What is the rhyme scheme? (2) What is the organization? (3) What does the narrator’s language tell us about them? (4) How does the structure of the poem affect the meaning? The teacher may assist students as necessary, and the teacher will collect the charts at the end of class.

On Day Four, students will create a visual aid comparing and contrasting the structure, meaning, and style of their two favorite poems (that were not taught on the same day) in a DOK Level 4 lesson. At the beginning of class, the teacher will return the charts from the previous day and spend the first ten minutes discussing “Theme for English B” with the class. Then, the teacher will allow students to choose to work alone, with a partner, or with a group of 3-4 total students to create a visual aid comparing and contrasting the structure, meaning, and style of the their two favorite poems from the past three days; however, they must choose poems that were not presented together on the same day. The teacher will provide paper and drawing materials (markers, crayons, etc.). The students will have thirty minutes to create their visual aid. At the end of class, students will briefly present their visual aid and then tape it to the wall, having written their names on it for grading.

Though this unit may not directly discuss dialectal diversity, the poems are paired in order for students to compare and contrast not only the structure but the style of the poems, including the variety of English used by the narrator of each. For example, even though “Theme for English B” is written in MAE, the narrator writes, “But I guess I’m what / I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you. / hear you, hear me—we two—you, me, talk on this page,” (lines 17-19) and, “I guess being colored doesn’t make me *not* like

/ the same things other folks like who are other races. / So will my page be colored that I write? / Being me, it will not be white” (lines 25-28). This is one aspect that the teacher may reference on Day Four. We know the narrator is in college and expected to converse in MAE, but the narrator expresses that they hear Harlem, that Harlem and the narrator talk on the page, and that the page the narrator writes cannot be white because they are colored. How does this connect to, say, the “Mother to Son” narrator’s voice, or the narrator in “I, Too”? This could be a suggestion for students to consider when creating their visual project. Specific conversations about AAVE in the classroom may or may not be fostered by the teacher, but including poetry by a black author who writes in both MAE and AAVE shows students the ability of authors to codeswitch in their writing, which allows students to understand how language can function in specific contexts, which is a required standard for high school English I through English IV.

Angie Thomas

Angie Thomas’ 2017 debut, a contemporary young adult novel entitled *The Hate U Give*, follows the story of a young girl named Starr Carter after she witnesses the murder of her best friend by a police officer. While Starr is the only witness in the main plot of the novel, the book also explores what being a black young adult in twenty-first century America means: from gang violence, to code-switching, to police fear and police brutality, to dating, friendships, and familial relationships (A. Thomas). The novel encompasses so many contemporary aspects of black identity that it is a necessary inclusion, in various ways, in public education; however, the guide will propose lessons specific to the turmoil Starr conveys in her narration about code-switching. Since Scholastic rated Angie Thomas’ *The Hate U Give* as a Z+ reading level, meaning above

grade 6, the guide utilizes Bookstore’s interest level guide instead, which rates the book for 14-17-year-olds (“Hate”). Given this information, the guide seeks to propose a unit on *The Hate U Give* for an English I (on track for grade 9) class. Unlike the previous examples, the unit proposed for this guide will compose supplementary lessons to a unit already created by an educator, rather than the lessons below comprising the entire unit. Therefore, an educator could choose one or many of the proposed lessons to incorporate into their own unit for *The Hate U Give*. Because of the nature of this unit, lessons will be proposed by chapter.

Mississippi ELA standard(s) the unit will teach, by grade level, are:

- English I: “RL.9.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a literary text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme” (107).
- English I: “L.9.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening” (114).

Lesson Plan 4: *The Hate U Give*

Students will analyze Starr’s character development over the course of the novel with specific focus on code-switching, the contexts in which it happens and is necessary, and her double-consciousness as Garden Heights Starr or Williamson Starr.

In Chapter One, the students' objective is to identify characteristics about Starr's character and language in a DOK Level 1 lesson. The students will have read the chapter prior to coming to class. At the beginning of class, the teacher will ask students to recall the major events of the chapter. Then, the students will spend five minutes writing a reflection on Starr's identity in comparison to their own: how do they relate to Starr and what about their lives is different from hers? Do they feel like they have a "home" identity and a "school" identity, or just one version of themselves, and do they feel like they fit in more at either place? After their reflection, students will get into small groups and begin identifying Starr's characteristics for ten minutes. The groups will go to the board one at a time and write out what they decided were important characteristics about her, and subsequent groups will add a check mark next to any characteristic already listed. Together, the teacher and the students will read the list, and the students will cite textual evidence for why they described Starr in that way. If the students missed any key characteristics, the teacher will add them in at the end of the discussion. The teacher will ask students specifically about the way that Starr speaks and what, if anything, her language usage says about her. Were they surprised that the author would write the entire book the way that she did, and do they like it? Finally, the teacher will ask the students to choose a partner and participate in a think-pair-share activity by revisiting their reflective writing from the beginning of class. Students can share about their personal experiences or what they wrote about Starr. At the end of class, students will turn in their reflective writing.

For Chapter Five, students will make observations about Williamson Starr and Garden Heights Starr and how Starr's overall character is developed through both

versions of herself in a DOK Level 2 lesson. The students will have read the chapter prior to coming to class. At the beginning of class, students will get into groups. Together, they will summarize the previous night's reading and begin working on characterization charts for both "versions" of Starr for fifteen minutes. Once they complete their charts, the teacher will read the following passage, as students read in their books:

“I get out the car. For at least seven hours I don't have to talk about One-Fifteen. I don't have to think about Khalil. I just have to be normal Starr at normal Williamson and have a normal day. That means flipping the switch in my brain so I'm Williamson Starr. Williamson Starr doesn't use slang—if a rapper would say it, she doesn't say it, even if her white friends do. Slang makes them cool. Slang makes her 'hood.' Williamson Starr holds her tongue when people piss her off so nobody will think she's the 'angry black girl.' Williamson Starr is approachable. No stank-eyes, side-eyes, none of that. Williamson Starr is nonconfrontational. Basically, Williamson Starr doesn't give anyone a reason to call her ghetto” (A. Thomas 71).

In a full-class discussion, the students will be asked to talk about how Williamson Starr and Garden Heights Starr both make up the same character, and they will be asked to share their characterization charts in order to better understand how Starr's character is developed. One part of her development to discuss is her language usage and ability to code-switch. This can lead into a conversation about students' experiences in school: do they feel like they have to code-switch, in either their language or the way they act? Do they think the language they use at home is appropriate or inappropriate for school or professional situations, and why? Starr feels this way because she is from an all-black neighborhood and commutes to attend a predominantly white school, where she is one of only two black students. This may or may not resound with the educational community of the students in a teacher's classroom or school; however, students can compare and

contrast their experience with Starr’s as well. What might help them feel more comfortable to be themselves at school? As an exit-ticket, students will be asked to choose one of the passages to write a short reflection about on an index card. In the reflection, they will answer two questions: (1) how are their experiences similar or different from Starr’s? I.e., do they code-switch at school or in other situations? (2) how does switching between these two identities affect the development of Starr’s character this far into the book? If time permits, students may write about how their development is or isn’t affected by code-switching, comparing their experience to Starr’s development. They will turn this reflection in at the end of class.

For Chapter Six, the objective is to apply students’ knowledge of MAE in specific contexts to analyze why Starr code-switches and what her motivation is in a DOK Level 4 lesson. To note, students or teachers may refer to MAE as “standard” or “proper” English; however, to reinforce that one dialect is only more academically and socially favored than another, the educator may choose to refer to it as “mainstream English” throughout the class conversation. The teacher will reference two passages from the chapter:

“I let go of my mom’s hand to shake the detectives’ hands. ‘Hello.’ My voice is changing already. It always happens around ‘other’ people, whether I’m at Williamson or not. I don’t talk like me or sound like me. I choose every word carefully and make sure I pronounce them well. I can never, ever let anyone think I’m ghetto” (95).

and,

“I raise an eyebrow. ‘Nah.’

Dammit. Proper English.

I sit up straight. ‘I mean, no ma’am. We were talking when the fight occurred.’” (98).

To begin class, the students will complete a bell-ringer asking them to write as many “nonstandard” language variants in the chapter on the board and to then translate them into “standard” MAE. After this exercise, teacher will reference the above passages, either through reading them aloud with the class following in their own copies or by passing out a handout with both quotes. The class will discuss Starr’s codeswitching following the guiding question: until this point, Starr’s language switching is only discussed in reference to Williamson, but now the readers observe it happening in other contexts, so when is it appropriate for Starr to speak comfortably and when is it required that she speak in mainstream English? As this discussion continues, the teacher will push the students to analyze *why* these switches are necessary. Why is MAE required in school or in an interview with police? One of Starr’s motivations for codeswitching is that she fears that speaking comfortably makes her sound “ghetto.” Students will be asked to analyze that perspective and offer their insights about whether AAVE features make someone sound “ghetto” or not and to defend their opinion. At the end of this discussion, the teacher should talk about how AAVE is a dialect of American English, in the same way that MAE is, and that one dialect is not more correct than other; instead, one dialect has more social power. As an informal check, students will complete an exit ticket where they will brainstorm three places a person could speak in their own dialect and three places a person would need to use MAE, if they think Starr should be able to use her natural language (AAVE) at school or in the interview, and why. This way, the teacher can check that students have knowledge of how language applies in specific contexts in addition to understanding their opinion of language variation, especially if they have students who speak AAVE.

The teacher can reiterate throughout the lesson that, while MAE is the language of education, other dialects that are considered nonstandard, and specifically, for this lesson, AAVE, are welcome for students to express their thoughts and emotions. Due to education and societal requirements, however, students must learn to code-switch effectively between their dialect and MAE for writing essays, taking standardized tests, going on interviews, and giving presentations. With the activity at the beginning of class, the teacher may take time to begin creating or continue creating a classroom chart of vocabulary and grammar terms between students' dialects and MAE, much like Christopher Emdin's chart in the previous section. It is important for educators to take these moments to discuss why code-switching is currently necessary for nonstandard-speaking students, giving them the tools to do so effectively in the classroom, while also encouraging students that their language usage is valid. As shown in the research in the previous section, insisting that students express their ideas in MAE can be destructive for students' identities and learning environments, so teachers must approach these conversations with inclusive and additive attitudes. In this way, teachers can build both better relationships and stronger trust with their students, so that students feel comfortable sharing their ideas, thoughts, and beliefs in the classroom in the way they feel most comfortable without judgement or continuous correction to their dialectal variety.

In Chapter Seventeen, students will analyze how Starr's character, with specific regards to Williamson Starr, has developed over the course of the text and develops one of the themes of the novel concerning double-consciousness with language usage in a DOK Level 4 lesson. When class begins, the students will be asked to participate in a

ten-minute group brainstorming about how Starr has developed so far in the text. Groups must cite three examples from Chapters One through Seventeen that show her development; students should pay special attention to Williamson Starr, but it is not required that each of the three examples be about that part of her identity. After these ten minutes, students will share their examples group-by-group. Then, the teacher will draw students to a specific example, which may or may not have been referenced by the students in their activity:

“God. Being two different people is so exhausting. I’ve taught myself to speak with two different voices and only say certain things around certain people. I’ve mastered it. As much as I say I don’t have to choose which Starr I am with Chris, maybe without realizing it, I have to an extent. Part of me feels like I can’t exist around people like him” (301).

The teacher will remind students that, until this point, Starr has talked about how she has to be Williamson Starr in certain situations and how she feels the most real with Chris, her white boyfriend, but now she is developing to realize that she doesn’t feel she can completely be herself around “people like him:” white people. Additionally, this is the first time that she references her double identity as being “exhausting.” Before reaching this point in the novel, the teacher should have introduced various themes, one of which being double-consciousness and language usage. Now, the class will spend twenty minutes in a teacher-guided, Socratic-style discussion about this theme in connection to Starr’s character development. In the last 15 minutes, students will write a short essay about either Starr’s development or the double-consciousness with language theme, connecting the text to a personal experience or belief about language. This essay will be collected at the end of class.

For Chapter Twenty-One, the objective is for students to evaluate Starr's character development at the end of the novel concerning her language usage in a DOK Level 4 lesson. Students will analyze how Williamson Starr's code-switching extends outside of the school when she is around her non-black friends. To begin, the students will spend ten minutes in groups comparing and contrasting Starr's character in the first five chapters and in the final chapters. In what areas has she grown, changed, or developed, and how? Together, the class will read the following excerpt:

“Chris and Maya walk through the gate, and my stomach gets all jittery. I should be used to my two worlds colliding, but I never know which Starr I should be. I can use some slang, but not too much slang, some attitude, but not too much attitude, so I'm not a 'sassy black girl.' I have to watch what I say and how I say it, but I can't sound 'white.'

Shit is exhausting” (357).

Then, the groups will complete the compare-contrast exercise again, with specific regards to Starr's feelings about being Williamson Starr and her interactions with Maya and Chris at the beginning of the novel compared to Chapter Twenty-One. After the students finish, the teacher will pose the question, what does it mean to be a “sassy black girl” and to “sound white?” What choices does Starr make about those two characteristics through her language usage? Should Starr have to feel like she has to choose which version of herself to be? How has she developed, if at all, from the beginning of the book? The students will discuss their second compare-contrast exercise as a class. The teacher should verify that students understand that Starr is growing more comfortable in her language and identity around her school friends, even while not at school, but she still feels that she can't be entirely herself. Finally, the teacher will encourage students to discuss their experiences. Do they ever have to choose who to be, and in what ways do they make those choices (i.e., language, attitude, slang, music, clothes)? What does code-

switching mean to them? How do they use language to code-switch, and when? Do they think it is beneficial or detrimental? Students will complete an exit ticket asking for three examples of code-switching, two ways Starr’s character developed over the book (at least one with language), and one question they have (about the novel, Starr’s development, code-switching, or language in general).

This lesson is a place for teachers to take time to talk about language and identity in depth. Language is an integral part of identity; when people change the way they express their thoughts, emotions, or beliefs, they may be changing something inherent to their identity. Though there is a standard and it is important to learn the situations in which to use the standard for personal progress in society, language is cultural, regional, and personal. Educators might spend time talking about SAE, MAE, and AAVE features, and how each is valid. Additionally, they might ask if students feel their language matters: if they feel it is valued at school or if they must present themselves as somebody else, and how that makes them feel? Fostering these conversations allows educators to understand how students feel about their experience in the classroom, which can help teachers improve that experience for their students. Further, it can build more trust and stronger relationships for students and teachers, so that students feel more comfortable expressing their feelings and beliefs in the classroom.

For Chapter Twenty-Three, students will expand their knowledge of the theme of double-consciousness and language to societal standards in a DOK Level 4 lesson. To begin, the students will brainstorm “what are normal names?” as a class and the teacher will write these on the board. Then, the class will visit the following passage:

“‘Anyway, Chris,’ Seven says, ‘DeVante’s got a point. What makes his name or our names any less normal than yours? Who or what defines ‘normal’ to you? If my pops were here, he’d say you’ve fallen into the trap of the white standard.’

Color creeps into Chris’s neck and face. ‘I didn’t mean—okay, maybe ‘normal’ isn’t the right world.’

‘Nope,’ I say.

‘I guess uncommon is the word instead?’ he asks. ‘You guys have *uncommon* names.’

‘I know ‘bout three other DeVantes in the neighborhood though,’ says DeVante.

‘Right. It’s about perspective,’ says Seven” (401).

The teacher will ask students to reflect on the “normal” names they suggested. Do the names fall into the “white standard” that Seven suggests in the text; why or why not? Why did students choose the names they chose as normal? After this discussion, students will be asked to think about other ways that perspective defines “normal.” The teacher may offer MAE as an example. Students will spend twenty minutes discussing other institutions in society in which the “standard” is defined by perspective, and how people with different backgrounds or living in different communities may view it differently. For example, the students may talk about the institution of policing or jail time, using Hailey’s perspective that One-Fifteen was suffering for doing his job in contrast to Garden Heights perspective of police brutality. Then, students will be asked how this connects to the theme of double consciousness? Do they think that Starr sees the names from both sides: Chris’s “uncommon” argument and DeVante’s “common in the neighborhood” perspective? Further, students will be asked to discuss how language constructs normalcy. This may connect to Starr feeling she has to speak what she calls “proper English” at Williamson or to how Chris considers black names “uncommon” because they don’t fit the “white standard.” At the end of class, students will write their

opinion about the “white standard” and three (total) examples of it in the book and society.

Students who can effectively express their beliefs, evidence, and arguments in their native dialect show that they can synthesize information at high intellectual levels, which should be encouraged. Before expressing themselves in MAE can matter, students must first be able to understand and apply the information they are given, which will be easiest to accomplish in their native dialect. Then, when students show that they understand what is happening, the teacher can use the conversations fostered through this text to encourage them to code-switch successfully for writing essays, giving presentations, and other academic or professional skills in which MAE is expected. *The Hate U Give*'s inclusion in this guide was necessary to foster conversations about code-switching and identity, with specific regards to AAVE and to other aspects of life. While the book provides opportunities to discuss current issues black Americans face and facets of identity in high-school-aged black youth today, it is also an excellent model to initiate discourse about language usage, codeswitching, and AAVE in and out of the classroom.

Zora Neale Hurston

Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* serves as the guide's coming-of-age novel. A witty and soulful Southern love story, the text is a reflective conversation between Janie Crawford, a black woman, and her friend Pheoby, about Janie's life after leaving Eatonville, Florida, with a man named Tea Cake. Returning without him sparked speculation from the townspeople, and Pheoby goes to check on Janie, who recounts her love and life choices up until her homecoming (Hurston). Though the story is about this woman's life, it is more a telling of the evolution of Janie's sense of self through her

three marriages, trials, abuse, poverty, and purpose. According to Scholastic, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is rated for grades 9-12 (“Their Eyes”). This guide will propose a lesson for English IV, which combines standards for grades 11-12. Similar to the previous unit, the guide will propose lessons that may be incorporated into an educator’s unit for *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, rather than suggesting lessons that would make up an entire unit from start to finish.

Mississippi ELA standard(s) the unit will teach, by grade level, are:

- “RL.12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain” (141).
- “SL.12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively” (147).
- “L.12.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening” (149).

Lesson Plan 5: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Students will analyze the text and the author’s use of language in the text through various collaborative discussions, citing evidence where necessary.

In Chapter 1, the objective is for students to explain the effects of the author’s choice to use different language varieties for the narrator and the characters, citing

specific evidence to support their claims, in a DOK Level 2 lesson. The students will have read the chapter before coming to class. To begin, the teacher will ask for preliminary observations about the novel. If students do not talk about the language differences between the narration and the characters, the teacher will suggest that discussion point. The class will turn to Chapter 1, and one student will read the first paragraph while another will read the second paragraph of the following passage:

“Seeing the woman as she was made them remember the envy they had stored up from the other times. So they chewed up the back parts of their minds and swallowed with relish. They made burning statements with questions, and killing tools out of laughs. It was mass cruelty. A mood come alive. Words walking without masters, walking altogether like harmony in a song.

‘What she doin coming back here in dem overhalls? Can’t she find no dress to put on?—Where’s dat blue satin dress she left here in?—Where all dat money her husband took and died and left her?—What dat ole forty year ole ‘oman doin’ wid her hair swingin’ down her back lak some young gal?—Where she left dat young lad of a boy she went off here wid?—Thought she was going to marry?—Where he left *her*?—What he done wid all her money?—Betcha he off wid some gal so young she ain’t even got no hairs—why she don’t stay in her class?—’” (2).

This is the first excerpt of the novel where the language shifts from MAE to AAVE. The teacher will ask students what effect this linguistic shift has on the tone of the novel.

What can readers tell about the characters from their speech? Why does the narrator speak in a dialect closer to MAE than to AAVE? The students may draw evidence from the entire chapter. First, students will be placed with partners to discuss these questions for five minutes, and then the partners will join into small groups and again share their ideas for five minutes. Once those ten minutes have elapsed, the students will return to a full-class discussion facilitated by the teacher. What did the students decide about the use of language variation in the text in this way? The teacher will encourage students to respond to one another constructively, either agreeing or disagreeing and supporting their

arguments. Additionally, the teacher will ask why the narrator speaks differently from the characters. What does it accomplish for the overall tone of the text? Students will be expected to cite textual evidence when appropriate to support their claims. This discussion should last for thirty minutes. At the end of class, students will complete a one-paragraph written exit ticket answering the two following questions: (1) Do you like the author's use of language variation; why or why not? and (2) What is the author's purpose in incorporating different varieties of English in the novel? This must be turned in at the end of class.

The above lesson could be revisited throughout the novel in **any** chapter by comparing and contrasting the language of the narrator to the language of the characters. As proposed in previous lessons, a teacher could also use this lesson to create or maintain a classroom code-switching chart, similar to the one put forth by Christopher Emdin. This could be accomplished by asking students to translate the aspects of the characters' AAVE that they find relevant into MAE on the board. Additionally, continued conversations concerning the purpose of the shift between the narrator's MAE and characters' AAVE could open dialogue about how language functions in specific contexts. Further, because code-switching is usually a necessary tool for students who speak AAVE to succeed in the academic and professional world, understanding the author's purpose in switching the narrator's and characters' varieties of English could help better explain code-switching in today's society.

In Chapter 19, students will analyze the ways Janie, Tea Cake, the white Doctor Simmons, and the white court characters speak to understand how language varies according to context, citing examples when necessary, in a DOK Level 4 lesson.

Students are expected to have read the material prior to the class meeting. To begin class, students will summarize the main events of the chapter, as it contains a lot of plot advancements. Then, in either partners or groups, students will spend twenty minutes to create visual charts explaining the similarities or differences between the ways that Janie and Tea Cake, Doctor Simmons, and the white court characters speak. When they are finished, the students will place these charts on the board. Each group will present one example from each column of their chart for the sake of time; this should take ten minutes. It is important that the teacher notes, if students do not, that on page 175, the doctor is identified as “white,” but his speech resembles the speech of Janie and Tea Cake more closely than it resembles the speech of the white court characters. Janie and Tea Cake’s language features align with AAVE while the doctor’s align with SAE and the court character’s language features are formal MAE. After the students’ explanations of their charts, they will participate in a Socratic-style discussion facilitated by the teacher. The teacher will ask why the author included white people who speak so differently, and the students may answer and respond to one another, citing evidence from the text as necessary. Additionally, the teacher will encourage students to think about how the narrator and the court characters speak MAE, but they speak this variety differently from one another. Why is this important? What do we learn about language variation from all of these characters? Why does language change when telling a story (the narrator) versus speaking in court? The rest of the class period will be spent in discussion about language variation, reminding the students to reference evidence cited on their charts or in the book. This conversation should help students understand how language varies according to specific contexts. In closing, the students will participate in a think-pair-share activity

with a partner, answering the question, what purpose does the author accomplish in using these different language variants in her text?

CHAPTER 4: Conclusion

Language is a fundamental aspect of identity. Every person speaks a dialect; however, Mainstream American English is the socially favored variant in the United States, making it the “standard” for education. Due to the existence of a standard and the power associated with it, varieties of American English that differ in phonological, morphological, or syntactic ways are considered “nonstandard.” Since standards are socially constructed, they are fluid. Therefore, some nonstandard dialects are considered closer to the standard than others; such is the case with Southern American English and African American Vernacular English. While both exist in the United States, features of SAE are less marked and criticized in education than features of AAVE.

Due to the concentration of populations that would speak both dialects, this thesis has chosen to focus on furthering the incorporation of dialectal diversity in the state of Mississippi. In Mississippi K-12 schools, 48.12% of students identify as African-American (“State Level Data 2018-2019”). Although not all African-American students speak AAVE, many students in the south, specifically Mississippi, will either speak AAVE or SAE, which share similar features. Further, though data is not available specifically for the state of Mississippi, the U.S. Department of Education shows that, in 2014, the percentage of white and black teachers nationally was 79% and 8%, respectively (The U.S. Department of Education). Most teachers will not share the linguistic or cultural background of their students in Mississippi, especially if those students speak AAVE.

Using research from various linguistic, educational, and sociological sources, the thesis investigates features of African American Vernacular English, replacive and

additive attitudes, students' experience in the classroom, the linguistic approach, and classroom practices already in use. By doing this, the thesis offers a wide scope of understanding of the issue of dialectal diversity in the classroom. Educators must understand the features of AAVE to better teach students who speak it and to understand them when they express their ideas in class, though not all features may be used by all speakers at all times. Additionally, educators may approach dialectal diversity in the classroom with either a replacive or additive attitude. Through others' research, the thesis explains the importance of the additive attitude approach, connecting it to students' documented experiences and feelings in the classroom. Then, the thesis examines the linguistic and educational approaches currently in use across the nation to better incorporate AAVE in the classroom. Each of these steps creates a foundation on which to build a teacher's guide for Mississippi K-12 educators.

The proposed guide incorporates all of the research from various disciplines into lesson plans that educators could incorporate into their teaching. While the guide proposes lessons for picture books, a chapter book, poetry, a contemporary young-adult novel, and a classic coming-of-age novel, this is not an extensive list. Each lesson is structured under specific parameters and tailored to Mississippi English Language Arts educational standards. Further, a fault of this thesis is that, while directed by a faculty member of the School of Education, its author is not educated in writing extensive lesson plans. The lesson plans do, however, incorporate positive linguistic outlooks on AAVE in the classroom, incorporating literature written by black voices that use both AAVE and MAE. By doing this, an educator may include AAVE in the class curriculum and foster conversations about dialectal diversity and code-switching.

Guiding this thesis was the question, how can Mississippi K-12 educators incorporate dialects, specifically AAVE, in their classrooms? Through the examination of various disciplines' research, with special attention paid to research performed by linguists in the field of education, the thesis sought to answer that question through the formation of a teacher's guide. Using various texts from grades K through 12, the guide provides educators with a skeleton of lessons that could be incorporated into a unit for a specific standard, i.e., the Patricia McKissack picture books, or for a specific piece of literature, i.e., *Bud Not Buddy*, the Langston Hughes poetry, *The Hate U Give*, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Given the lesson plans, educators can choose to incorporate what has been created or to structure similar lessons with the same guiding principles of linguistic diversity and fostering open conversations about language variation.

Students have a right to learn. Because language is a fundamental part of identity, they bring their language with them to the classroom. When students continuously critiqued for their speech, it is difficult for them to learn or effectively express their ideas. Instead, teachers can foster understanding of language variation in their classroom by approaching diversity with an additive attitude, always encouraging their students to engage with the texts and lessons, while also teaching them to effectively code-switch to meet the standards required for testing and for later societal success. At the same time, educators must understand that an additive attitude means that they must continue open conversations with their students about why code-switching is necessary. They must explain that AAVE is a valid dialect, the same as MAE, but is not currently accepted as such; however, that does not mean that their language, or their identity, is in any way "less" because it is not the societally-favored "standard." The proposed guide gives

teachers a road map for how to confront those conversations by engaging with texts, teaching standards, and building relationships with students by having conversations about their language and being real with them. Everyone speaks a dialect, and everyone deserves an equal opportunity to use their own language to express their ideas and identities in the classroom. Teachers can incorporate African American Vernacular English into education in Mississippi.

The work in this thesis is open and available to any Mississippi K-12 educator or education program and can be tailored to fit state educational standards for any state other than Mississippi.

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