

“Talented Tenth” Scholars

Youth Empowerment Curriculum



Developed for the Clyde Malone Community Center
Lincoln, Nebraska

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Course Type: Empowerment and Academic Enhancement for African American Males

Targeted Age: 13-17

Curriculum Description

The *“Talented Tenth” Scholars Youth Empowerment Curriculum* has been designed to provide urban adolescents with cultural awareness, social support, and academic enrichment. This style of instruction encourages youth of color to redefine who they are as culturally aware individual scholars. At the same time, the Curriculum encourages youth to view themselves as members of a larger cultural collective, one that is rich in history and tradition. The Youth Empowerment Curriculum has been customized to address the unique developmental needs of African American boys, in particular, in order to combat negative statistics surrounding the social development and academic achievement of young black males.

The Curriculum draws strength from the African American cultural ideal of collective work and responsibility. It does this in two ways: (1) by creating a cohort of adolescent scholar-participants who will experience the Curriculum together (following the traditional model of the age-set of youth who go through rites of passage together), and (2) by matching the young scholars with mentors (again, drawing on the traditional cultural roles played by elders from the local community).

We also invoke the spirit of Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, the intellectual father of Pan-Africanism. Dr. Du Bois' called on educated African Americans to further develop their skills and knowledge, so that an elite group of leaders might arise to serve the people. In 1903, Du Bois wrote: "The Talented Tenth rises and pulls all that are worth the saving up to their vantage ground." Du Bois hoped that this group of college-trained African Americans would become the "Talented Tenth" who would lead and uplift their communities. Thus, our program takes its name from the vision of Dr. Du Bois. The Youth Empowerment Curriculum aims to create and motivate a cohort of young "Talented Tenth" Scholars who will work for the betterment of themselves as individuals, and as conscious and committed members of their families and communities.

Curriculum Goals

The Youth Empowerment Curriculum addresses three developmental goals that we believe contribute to the personal and group identity development of youth of color.

The Curriculum aims to:

1. Encourage positive attitudes and behavior in both academic and social settings
2. Support school attendance and co-curricular and community involvement
3. Strengthen connections to family and community based on seven principles known as the "Nguzo Saba"

The Nguzo Saba: 7 Principles for Life

The Nguzo Saba, or “Seven Principles,” are guideposts for culturally-conscious living. They were first developed by Dr. Maulana Karenga, the creator of the African American holiday known as Kwanzaa. Dr. Karenga named the Nguzo Saba using words from the pan-African language of Swahili. He wanted African American people to acknowledge the cultural legacy and unity of black Africa. Since Africa is the ancestral homeland of all African American youth, and the original source of our rich heritage and culture, it is culturally appropriate to draw on Afrocentric perspectives to strengthen the development of our young people.

The Seven Principles of the Nguzo Saba are as follows:

1. *Umoja* (Unity)
2. *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination)
3. *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility)
4. *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics)
5. *Nia* (Purpose)
6. *Kuumba* (Creativity)
7. *Imani* (Faith)

The Nguzo Saba come from Dr. Karenga’s cultural philosophy of Kawaida. It is important to note that the Nguzo Saba do not require belief in any one particular religious faith. As cultural guideposts, the Seven Principles have become widely accepted among African Americans of many faiths. They remind us to strive for excellence in our

everyday lives, always keeping in mind the benefit of our families and communities.

Here are Dr. Karenga's descriptions of the Seven Principles or Nguzo Saba:

1. *Umoja* (Unity): To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

2. *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves.

3. *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our sister's and brother's problems our problems and to solve them together.

4. *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics): To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

5. *Nia* (Purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

6. *Kuumba* (Creativity): To do always as much as we can, in the way that we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

7. *Imani* (Faith): To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

The “*Talented Tenth*” *Scholars Youth Empowerment Curriculum* (re)introduces the Nguzo Saba to young people who may or may not have heard of them. Each session centers on one or more of the Seven Principles, and aims to encourage reflection on what they mean personally to the young scholar-participants and their mentors.

Session Format: “We Are, Therefore I Am”

Each session is designed around the suggested format of Introduction, Reflection, and Discussion. This format is designed to encourage the development of individual and group identity. In this sense, the format reinforces the Afrocentric ideal, “We are, therefore I am.” In the introduction section, leaders will introduce the scholar-participants to a Principle, such as Ujamaa/Unity. Leaders will share their own definitions and understandings, and help the scholars learn the content in the Curriculum (see Sessions section below). Leaders could next lead group reflection on the meaning of the Principle. For example, scholars might brainstorm different interpretations, and discuss ways the Principle can be seen in action—or in some cases, how it may be missing from—their lives and communities. Finally, leaders can facilitate a group discussion of the Principle in our lives, helping scholars understand the benefits to be gained by following it as a guidepost.

Using the suggested format of Introduction, Reflection, and Discussion, the scholar-participants will be supported in examining their own attitudes and behavior in light of the larger group. In this way, scholars will learn to view their personal struggles culturally, that is, as manifestations of the ongoing challenges that affect African American people as a whole, both locally and nationally. Coming to value the strength of our families and communities and understanding our connections to history and tradition will enhance self-esteem and foster awareness of both individual and social responsibility. During each session, the leaders will invite participants to think about the individual *choices* each of us can make, guided by the Nguzo Saba, to develop ourselves

academically and socially. Scholars will come to understand the wisdom of the proverb “We are, therefore I am” and the inspiration contained in the Nguzo Saba..

Learning Outcomes and Objectives

Our goals for the youth who participate in the Curriculum are more than just pretty-sounding words on paper. We fully expect participating scholars to become empowered young people by the end of the program. After participating in the “*Talented Tenth*” Scholars Youth Empowerment Curriculum, the young scholars will **know** and **do** the things that support their own development and that also benefit their families and communities. Specifically, scholar-participants will be able to:

1.1 List the 7 Principles of the Nguzo Saba.

1.2 Explain in their own words the importance of the 7 Principles to personal and group survival as African American adolescents.

2.1 Explain the connections between school attendance, individual and social development, and the potential pitfalls of negative choices.

3.1 Engage in some form of community service, for example, acting as mentors for other young African American boys in their neighborhood.

4.1 Value their own family and community, for example, by organizing activities for a “Family and Friends Week” that celebrates and honors connections to important people in their lives.

In addition to the minimum Outcomes listed above, scholar-participants will be held accountable for the following Objectives:

1.1 Make a Personal Empowerment Plan that states personal strategies for attending class regularly.

2.1 Dress appropriately for specific business or social events.

3.1 Explain the difference between acceptable behavior and unacceptable behavior, in both verbal and written form.

4.1 Explain the difference between blame and responsibility.

5.1 Explain the idea of *choices* and how the choices we make influence our personal and group identities and chances for survival.

Sessions Content and Activities

This section describes the specific learning objectives and activities for each session. Each session will last 90 minutes, and is designed to be interactive, so that the scholar-participants take an *active* (rather than passive) role in their education.

The Coordinator and Program Mentors should keep the following goals in mind:

1. Scholar-participants will be required to submit weekly school attendance reports to program mentors. Additionally, consequences for non-attendance will be developed as another mode of accountability between participant-scholars and their mentors.
2. Each scholar will be encouraged to attend class regularly by offering recognition or rewards for consistent class attendance.
3. Program Mentors will provide community service opportunities for each participant-scholar. Additionally, through increased co-curricular involvement, scholars will learn tools in order to access community resources.
4. Scholars and family members will be strongly encouraged to attend and participate in social events sponsored by the Malone Community Center and other local agencies.
5. Program Mentors will personally call parents/guardians to advise them of upcoming events that should be attended by both scholars and their parents/guardians.
6. The Malone Community Center will provide social etiquette training for each participant.
7. Scholar-participants will take a field trip to an incarceration facility in order to gain a greater understanding of the possible end result of unacceptable behaviors.

Week 1: “Who Am I? Who Are We?: Identity From an African-Centered Viewpoint”

Weekly Principles: Overview of the Nguzo Saba (the 7 Principles)

Activity: Using art materials, make a personal shield that represents who you are as an individual and as a person of African descent. Be prepared to talk about the symbols you used on your shield.

Middle Passage Simulation: The scholar-participants will play the role of captured and abducted Africans during the historic slave trade. They will endure the recreated conditions of the Middle Passage from Africa to the Americas—being separated from friends and family, forced into overcrowded quarters, being bound to restrict movement, and treated as less than human.

Optional: Each scholar will complete a Cultural Survey pre-test using the assessment tool provided. Results of the survey may be used to guide the implementation of African-centered weekly curriculum activities that reinforce the Nguzo Saba, by focusing on the holistic cultural development of each scholar.

Key concepts: Nguzo Saba, oppression

Week 2: “Unity in the Community”

Weekly Principle: Umoja (Unity): “To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.”

This session addresses concepts about unifying our communities from the perspectives of the individual and the family. Week 2 highlights various dimensions of the family and related dynamics, and draws out the impact of slavery on current dynamics at play in black families and communities.

Activity: Interview an extended family member about your family’s history. How did your family come to Lincoln? How far back can you trace your family history?

Key concepts: community, extended family, unity

Week 3: “In Control: Speaking For Ourselves”

Weekly Principle: Kujichagulia (Self-Determination): “To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves.”

Discuss motivation by examining the lives of leaders and public figures such as Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad, and Muhammad Ali.

Goal: Focus on how youth see themselves and how others see them. What motivates them to achieve? What can we learn from the examples of effective leaders?

Activity: Film about Muhammad Ali.

Key concepts: self-love, self-esteem, self-worth, self-discipline

Week 4: “To Be Free: Responsibility for Self and Others”

Weekly Principle: Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility): “To build and maintain our community together and make our sister’s and brother’s problems our problems and to solve them together.”

Activity: Scholars will work together to design a group project related to improving their families and communities. Also, distribute monthly behavior reports to be signed by teachers and a parent/guardian.

Key concepts: common goals, unity, motivation, planning

Week 5: “Mind On My Money, Money On My Mind”

Weekly Principle: Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics): “To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.”

Discuss the economic future of Black America and our individual roles.

Activity: Guest speaker to talk about personal finances and money management.

Goal: Scholars will begin to develop a plan for saving for the future (e.g., college, home ownership, retirement). Also, submit monthly behavior reports that have been signed by teachers and a parent/guardian.

Key concepts: “Those who fail to plan, plan to fail.”

Week 6: “Stepping Up and Out: Understanding What We’re Here For”

Weekly Principle: Nia (Purpose): “To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.”

Discuss the question of one’s purpose in life.

Activity: Brainstorming where scholars want to be in one year, 2 years, and 3 years. Also, begin plans for the Week 8 ceremony. Choose a topic to present (see Week 8).

Key concepts: direction, purpose, motivation, planning

Week 7: “To Live Is To Create”

Weekly Principle: Kuumba (Creativity): “To do always as much as we can, in the way that we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.”

Week 7 introduces the role of the drum in African culture, and the importance of music in African and African-American communities.

Activity: Guest instructor, a Master Drummer, to demonstrate and teach African rhythms on various percussion instruments. Scholars will also finalize plans for the Week 8 ceremony.

Review: Explain in their own words the importance of the 7 Principles to personal and group survival as African American adolescents. Rehearse presentations or demonstrations of one of the topics for the Week 8 ceremony. Also, distribute monthly behavior reports to be signed by teachers and a parent/guardian.

Key concepts: creativity, using personal creativity to contribute to the group

Week 8: “The Rite of Passage: Changing Boys To Men”

Weekly Principle: Imani (Faith): “To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.”

This session culminates in a celebration of the accomplishments of the scholar-participants. We began this program with the simulation of the Middle Passage endured by our ancestors. After working and learning together in this program, it is now highly appropriate to end with another more positive passage, an actual *rite of passage*, namely, the passage from boyhood to adulthood.

Activity: Family and community members are invited to join the youth in a ceremony that publicly recognizes the contributions of individuals and the group. This may include a performance of African rhythms on percussion instruments. It will also include discussions, demonstrations, or presentations about one or more of the following topics:

- the connections between school attendance, individual and social development, and the potential pitfalls of negative choices;
- a Personal Empowerment Plan that states personal strategies for attending class regularly;
- the difference between acceptable behavior and unacceptable behavior;
- the difference between blame and responsibility;
- how the choices we make influence our personal and group identities and chances for survival.

Also, collect monthly behavior reports that have been signed by teachers and a parent/guardian. Distribute certificates that acknowledge improvements in school attendance and behavior. Give special recognition to the personal accomplishments of individual scholar-participants.

Goals: To emphasize the roles of faith in the application of all 7 principles of the Nguzo Saba to our daily lives.

Key concepts: Conscious thinking and listening, accountability, rite of passage

A Pledge to Myself

Today I pledge to be
The best possible me
No matter how good I am
I know that I can become better

Today I pledge to build
On the work of yesterday
Which will lead me
Into the rewards of tomorrow

Today I pledge to feed
My mind: knowledge
My body: strength, and
My spirit: faith

Today I pledge to reach
New goals
New challenges, and
New horizons

Today I pledge to listen
To the beat of my drummer
Who leads me onward
In search of my dreams

Today I pledge to believe in me.

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