

ABSTRACT

TARRA DENISE ELLIS. Effects of the shared principles of middle school philosophy and culturally responsive education on the academic achievement of African American middle school students. (Under the direction of DR. JEANNEINE JONES)

This study was an investigation of the overlapping principles of relevance, rigor, and relationships inherent in both middle school philosophy and culturally responsive education to determine their effects on the academic achievement of African American middle school students. Utilizing a mixed-methods design, the following research questions were probed: (1) Is there a significant difference in the academic achievement of African American students in middle schools that highly implement the shared principles of middle school philosophy and culturally responsive education and those in middle schools that do not? (2) Describe the implementation of the shared principles of middle school philosophy and culturally responsive education in an exemplary middle school. Quantitative data included EOG test passing percentages of African American students in *Schools to Watch (STW)* and one-to-one matched non-*Schools to Watch* middle schools. Qualitative data was gathered through a case study of an urban *STW* middle school with a large African American student population. It consisted of student interviews and observations. There was no significant difference in the academic achievement of African American eighth graders in the two cohorts. The case study results detailed how the exemplary middle school employed the shared principles via

- 1) A shared vision of high expectations for all,
- 2) Support for the diverse needs of students,
- 3) Empowerment for decision-making and risk-taking,
- 4) Assessment and modification,
- 5) Real-world application, and
- 6) Firm, proactive, and positive discipline.