

The Case for Standard English.

Legitimizing AAE in general education would be a huge mistake. It would set the educational standard for black children low, and it would also condition them to believe that they do not need to try to excel academically. They should instead expect to be accommodated because they are black. It is a well-known fact that standard English is the referent for testing the language proficiency level of English speakers. This applies to all English-speaking children in American schools, including black American children. Conversations surrounding this issue call for AAE to be accommodated in schools because black children struggle with assessment tests. Those for this accommodation claim they struggle due to the cultural barrier caused by only speaking their ethnic dialect. This claim implies that speaking a different language from standard English ensures academic failure in American schools, which we know is not true. Asian students and Caribbean students do fine. This claim is erroneous in many ways, but simply, it is not the case that black children struggle to comprehend standard English because they speak a cultural dialect different from the standard. They struggle to comprehend coursework and assessments because these children can't read, write or speak their language well. In 2019 the National Assessment of Educational Progress found that 86% of black children, in Virginia alone, were functionally illiterate. Their inability to pass assessments had nothing to do with cultural barriers and everything to do with low educational expectations.

When deciding whether we should accommodate AAE in schools, I think it is important to consider the purpose of general education. The whole point of general education is to be general, broad, and useful for everyone regardless of ethnic identity. Its prime directive, its end goal, is to prepare students for their eventual transition into their adulthood and the workplace. Everything they learn in school is leading up to said transition. They need the basic and necessary skills learned in school like arithmetic, reading, writing, and English, to navigate adulthood and the professional arena later, at least at the basic level. Given this, how exactly will not enforcing the learning and use of standard English help black children? If they are allowed to continue speaking just their ethnic and cultural dialect (I'm being nice here as I personally don't consider AAE to be a cultural dialect), they will be wildly unprepared when it comes time for them to leave the safety of school and their communities and enter the real world. AAE is not a neutral language; you need to be brought up in the community that speaks it to understand and use it. It won't help black children to enter a workplace speaking their cultural dialect around others who don't, can't, and should not be expected to. A cultural dialect is specific to the cultural group that speaks. It cannot be disseminated to others outside the group easily. Black children won't transition into a world of just other black people; they will need standard English in their arsenal to be successful.

The world is becoming more and more globalized every day and every year. If we intend to see black children successfully compete, fairly of course, with their peers for employment and

business, they will need to be equipped with tools that make that success possible. Standard English is such a tool. It is a global lingua franca, a language that allows people of various ethnic backgrounds to communicate cross-culturally. You do not need to speak their ethnic language; they don't need to speak yours. You have a language that both of you can share regardless of racial or ethnic identity. Standard English is that language. Once school ends black children will be faced with the reality of the world. They will not be able to sequester themselves inside of their communities where they only speak AAE among others who only speak AAE. If they intend to work or seek higher education, they will have to enter into mixed spaces, where not everyone speaks their dialect. Not everyone will feel the need to accommodate them, not when there is someone else who can do the job and won't need to be catered to. It does not help black children to not know standard English. When they find that all their non-black peers speak standard English and they don't, they will hit a wall...hard. They will find out the world does not revolve around them and their specific needs, nor does it for anyone. Everyone else will continue to advance without them, such is life, and once again black children will be left behind. If black children only speak standard English and their non-black peers are able to speak both their own dialects and standard English, black children will be even more disadvantaged not less. They will then have to combat a cultural and language barrier that will make their ability to compete for employment that much harder, and their success even further removed from them.

The formation of a cross-cultural language is inevitable. It will always happen. That is a good thing. It is profoundly important for our societies that we are able to communicate across cultures, regions, and nations. This ability to traverse language barriers makes trade, foreign exchange, and commerce possible. Trade and commerce that we should want black children to be a part of. "The USD was involved in nearly 90% of global [foreign exchange] transactions, making it the single most traded currency in the [foreign exchange] market." To give you a figure that's trillions of dollars in 2022 alone. Trillions of dollars that black children should be able to touch, if they can get in the room, providing they can speak a neutral language that others around them speak too. "Just as there is no one right way to cook candied yams, there is no one right way to speak English. In fact, there are about 1.5 billion people on this earth who speak English. How do we determine which flavor of English is the "right" flavor? All dialects are equal in linguistic sophistication; there really is no "standard." " says Megan Brette-Hamilton in her article Legitimizing AAVE: Should Black Students Code-Switch in School? While I appreciate her, and others' attempts to make black children feel good about themselves by telling them there is nothing wrong with the way they speak, I think this kind of over-mothering and coddling is crippling. Yes, it affirms feelings of inadequacy, but sometimes allowing someone to feel their lack, empowers them to fight their way out of it. It is not a comfortable feeling; one should not want to make this feeling their permanent home. Allowing black children to become comfortable in their feelings of inadequacy does not equip them to deal with the struggle of everyday life in the adult world. It enables them to quit, to default on themselves before they even try. Furthermore, to claim that there is no standard form of English is erroneous. If there is no

standard, how do we arrive at a dialect? Where does the dialect stem from? It does not happen on its own; it must be an off-shoot of a mother tongue.

On the issue of their dialect affecting their test scores. Well yes, again school is generalized to provide a basic form of education necessary for these children's success later in life. It is not feasible to even think that standardized tests should be personalized to meet each individual black child's educational needs. Furthermore, If those who claim they care about cultural differences being acknowledged in schools truly meant it they would hold the same sentiments for Hispanic and Asian children. They're really silent on these matters as they pertain to other minority children who also struggle with language and understanding, yet somehow still do well in school.

If all things are kept fair, every dialect would need to be accommodated in schools. Which is simply not possible to achieve while ensuring the children are all receiving the same education. This is why education is generalized.

These children will not have every accommodation made for them when they enter adulthood and the workplace. They need to learn that reality now, as they will be facing it soon. They should not be taught to expect to be accommodated for things outside of everyone else's control. That will only enable feelings of entitlement and victimhood in the minds of these children. This type of mentality kills a strong work ethic and an entrepreneurial spirit. Installing AAE in schools to be taught, and used for teaching, will give black children this belief that they can expect to be catered to because they are black (again, no one is talking about accommodating dialects of other racial groups). We should not just want to raise children, but strong children. Children who won't crumble when they feel pressure, or when the world won't bend to their whim. Accommodating AAE in schools does not push black children to meet expectations, it lowers expectations to meet them and requires little from them in the way of cultivating their minds. That won't empower black children, it will cripple them, and make their participation in society outside of their neighborhoods next to impossible. They will be stuck in one state of mind never growing or changing, and they will grow up to hate those around them who allowed it to happen. If what those who claim they care for black children want is to see them succeed, help them do so by preparing them for the future world they will inherit, one in which they will not be able to only speak AAE, and if they want to compete with their peers and gain upward mobility, they will need to speak standard English and speak it well.