

## DARASA: PASSING ON KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Darasa is a Kiswahili word for “class”. Darasa at Ahidiana W/S Center is that time period in which our children are trained in classroom protocol and taught knowledge and skills that will defend and develop themselves and our people. It is a controlled and structured session led by the teacher. Darasa is a formal teaching and learning situation in which our children are taught and trained in relating to a teacher, educational aids/materials and concepts.

How is Darasa structured? First, there is a prescribed protocol. Each class, no matter the curriculum area or the teacher, begins with a standard exchange of questions and answers which includes greeting, what day it is, what class and group it is, and the definition and rationale for the curriculum area. Second, our seating positions are the same daily with students sitting with good posture, hands in lap and feet on the floor. Third, generally, there is no talking and if one wishes to speak, we raise our hand in a fist to get permission to do so. Fourth, the teacher is the leader setting time limits, activities, and format.

We prepare our children to function in Darasa in several ways. The total school environment is well organized. Routines and schedules are set. Limits are implemented from day first to the last. Our students are secure in what is going to happen and when. Standards are clearly taught early in the program so that our children will not ramble from one thing to another or show little interest in learning. We have also developed techniques for instilling values, building trust and following a prescribed protocol. We are constantly reinforcing behavior that we view as positive and ignore behavior that is negative.

Key in this preparation to function in Darasa is keeping our teaching staff well trained politically and technically to insure that we move as a teaching team with each teacher supportive of the goals and objectives of our program and teaching philosophy.

Formal preparation to function in Darasa begins in an Orientation program of four to six weeks at the beginning of each school year. The Orientation period enables teachers and students to familiarize themselves with the routine and schedules, the protocol and each other. Teachers make clear their expectations and protocol is introduced and taught. Each child’s manipulative and academic skills are tested for grouping. The social development of each student is also observed, that is,

how does this child relate to peers and relate to adults, is this child self-motivated and outgoing, is this child able to wait for a turn and share. Once this Orientation period is completed, we begin our classes in communications, science, culture, math and physical development.

Every day we begin class with stating the definition of the curriculum area and why we study it. We are constantly reminding ourselves what we are about and why. The following are our definitions and rationales.

What is Communications?

Communications is the study of understanding symbols, exchanging information and expressing ideas.

Why do we study Communications?

We study Communications to gain and pass on knowledge and skills that are useful in our struggle.

What is Culture?

Culture is the study of the material and social conditions and practices of our people and the world.

Why do we study Culture?

We study our Culture to develop our own identity, purpose and direction. We study world cultures to better understand and live in the world.

What is Mathematics?

Mathematics is the study of quantity (How many? How much?) and connections as well as relationships.

Why do we study Mathematics?

We study Mathematics to enable us to build, plan and analyze with precision.

What is Science?

Science is the systematic study of the laws and order of the universe.

Why do we study Science?

We study and apply Science for the defense and development of our people and the improvement and beautification of the world.

What is Taburu?

Taburu is physical development.

Why do we do Taburu?

We do Taburu to prepare our bodies for protracted struggle.

### **DARASA Teaching Steps**

Each Darasa involves one of four steps in teaching a concept introduce, state, drill and test.

#### **Introduce**

The purpose of this step is to make the child aware or prepare the child for understanding the concept. The teacher begins teaching the concept by building a solid foundation. There are three main techniques we employ to introduce a concept:

- A. Use the child's body. In introducing a concept, plan activities that will cause the child to physically move and/or use the senses. Body movement can include picking up objects and carrying them to another place. It may be a dance imitation of what you will be presenting. Body movement also includes the manipulation of real objects or tools. Be aware of the senses as our children's tools of learning. How can we get our children to use their eyes, ears, nose and/or tongue? What can we do to get them to see, hear, smell and/or taste? The sense of feeling is a particularly unique and often misunderstood sense in that one can feel all over our skin both outside our bodies as well as feel inside our bodies. Helping our children use their senses will develop their perceptual skills.
- B. Use the child's environment and experiences. Choose examples, objects situations and events that are familiar to our children. This is one of those consistent spots where we can bring in political/cultural experiences and examples. Also move out of the classroom by taking walks and field trips.

- C. Experience Chart. After such experiences, have a discussion and list key words. When listing key words put the more correct words toward the top of the list. Help the children write an experience chart by recording their words about the experience in an orderly manner. The experience chart should summarize key points related to the concept and is a good concluding activity for this step in teaching a concept.

### **State**

The purpose of this step is to tell or to say the concept. After reviewing what happened in the introduction step, use some form of visual reinforcement (a chart, bulletin board, picture cards or posters) to aid in stating the concept or as a visual reminder of the concept.

Use symbols to aid our children in understanding abstract concepts. Symbols enable our children to sense abstractions, those concepts which are beyond the physical, the concrete. Often traditional African symbols are perfect for this use.

Bold print the key words related to the concept and write definitions, which state the concept and its political use or purpose.

The children can complete projects such as their own charts or booklets about a concept. Books and charts should be completed with the use of at least one or two of the motor skills, such as cutting, tracing, pasting, threading, and coloring. Books and charts should also include the use of a wide variety of materials: leaves, burlap, construction paper, yarn.

### **Drill**

The purpose of this step is to employ the use of rote, rhythm, repetition, rhyme and review to develop and deepen the child's understanding and/or skills in relation to the concept.

Rote is saying or doing without thinking. Rhythm is regular reoccurrence of beat and/or movement. Rhyme is repeating similar or same sounds. Repetition is doing over and over again. Review is practice in developing and retaining knowledge and skills.

- A. Finger plays, songs, chants and poems are useful for oral drill.

- B. Shelf work, manipulatives and “work jobs” which are boxed organized neatly on shelves are useful in drilling manipulative skill and perceptual skill. Shelf work activities would make use of real objects, felt boards, classification boards, pegboards, matching activities and various textured materials such as woods, papers, fabrics. The activities should be collective in nature. They should also aid in the children applying what they have learned in everyday situations through conversation, problem solving and decision-making.
- C. Seat work such as wipe-offs, work sheets and work books are also used in this step of teaching a concept. Writing activities involving listing words or copying phrases or a sentence are also excellent drill activities.

### **Test**

The purpose of this step is to measure how well the child has mastered the concept taught. A test can be oral, manipulative or written. It can also be an independent project, which proves that the child has accomplished the terminal behavior of the lesson steps for a particular concept.

Homework is an invaluable activity for all four-lesson steps. It brings school to the home and home to the school in that parents participate in their child’s schoolwork. Socially, the child develops responsibility in completing work and brings parent and child together around experiences that are important to the child.

Our goal is to create students who are academically excellent. Such students are not fearful of theoretical knowledge (as in the sciences), are skilled in communicating ideas in speaking, writing, art, music, dance and any other varied median and are competent in gaining knowledge and skills.

We are trying to develop students who are socially advance. Such students are committed to our greater collective good rather than exclusively to individual desires or pleasures and are respectful of our total environment rather than destructive of it.

Finally, we need students who are politically progressive. Such students have a sense of identity (know how to accomplish their life purposes). Students who are committed to our people first and are conscious of our history, our collective

condition and our hoped-for future. Students who are conscious of an ideology of liberation and are capable (possessing the will and the ability) of being activists, leaders and workers for our people. Politically progressive students seek the truth and base their ideas on reality rather than metaphysics or fatalism.

We know that our educational program is rigorous, but it takes pressure and persistence to produce diamonds. We are African people struggling in America under conditions of oppression and exploitation. We are not trying to raise “cute” (simply black and beautiful) children or “smart” (high IQs) children who will feed into and become a part of the American system. We are trying to raise soldiers and warriors, future leaders in our people’s struggle for power and national liberation.

Power to our people must start with positive education for our children. We are proud to be able to make this contribution to our people’s struggle. Prepare our children to take the lead. Give our children an education that will be useful in our struggle. Raise soldiers and warriors. Tomorrow will belong to us, only if we educate our children today. Power to our people, education to our children!







AHIDIANA WORK/STUDY CENTER

Definitions & Rationales

PRAXIS: the practice of an art, a science or a technical skill or occupation.

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