



# Excellence for All:

Creating Environments for  
Success for Males of Color  
in the Great City Schools







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# Introduction

In the Spring of 2017, the Council gathered school district practitioners at the Males of Color Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., for an extensive discussion on building and implementing programs to improve the academic outcomes of young men and boys of color. School districts, which have already begun implementing initiatives, shared their progress, while other districts in the beginning stages of planning an initiative learned from colleagues. The conference touched on areas spanning the schooling continuum such as early childhood learning, accessing rigorous curriculum, college access and persistence, social and emotional learning, communication and leadership strategies, and legal considerations.

This report is a summary of those discussions paired with research-based strategies for boosting the outcomes of males of color. Urban schools are in the best position to change how society values males of color and invests in their success.

The scope of the conference reflected the degree of the educational crisis facing males of color. In large urban school districts, males of color are consistently the lowest performing student group on annual state assessments and the most harshly disciplined. Young men and boys of color also face negative stereotypes and implicit biases, often from teachers and school staff. In the Council's 2012 report on solutions to improving the outcomes of males of color, *A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Male Achievement*,<sup>1</sup> Pedro Noguera aptly stated the danger in normalizing these trends:

Throughout American society these patterns have become so common, widespread, and entrenched that a recitation of the dismal statistics no longer generates surprise or even alarm. The Black and Latino male problem has been normalized and like other unpleasant social conditions... there is a widespread sense that it will always be with us (p. 8).

This report seeks to counter that normalizing and contribute to the ongoing dialogue of raising our expectations for males of color and provide a resource for school districts seeking to build or recalibrate their initiatives to improve the academic outcomes of young men and boys of color. Throughout this report there are exemplars of current initiatives across the nation's big cities as well as promising practices in various areas.

Our hope is that this report will serve as a catalyst for school districts to build and strengthen programs for young men and boys of color. The urgency of the moment should not be lost to the perceived normalcy of the problem. We have a responsibility to millions of students who want to succeed and only need the opportunity.

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1 Lewis, S., Casserly, M., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., & Palacios, M. (December, 2012). *A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Male Achievement*. Council of the Great City Schools. [https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/88/A%20Call%20For%20Change\\_FinaleBook.pdf](https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/88/A%20Call%20For%20Change_FinaleBook.pdf)

# Ensuring Access to and Readiness for Rigorous Curriculum

## Introduction

A student's academic trajectory is essentially defined by a culmination of experiences and opportunities in the classroom. Beginning as early as pre-kindergarten, the expectations students are held to are reflected in the academic rigor and quality of support available to students. For young men and boys of color, who persistently encounter low academic expectations, the culmination of their academic experience often leaves them with gaps in foundational knowledge in reading and math. This essentially shuts the door on advanced courses in high school and valuable opportunities after high school. Among those students who decide to enroll in postsecondary education or job training, many often require remedial courses that do not count towards a degree. In fact, research shows that between 40 and 60 percent of first-time college students require remedial education each year.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, students who enroll in remedial courses are less likely to graduate with a postsecondary degree. Moreover, African American (56 percent) and Latino (45 percent) students are more likely than their White peers (35 percent) to enroll in remedial courses.<sup>3</sup>

This section explores how to ensure that males of color have access to rigorous and engaging curriculum beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout high school. In the summer of 2017, the Council's *Supporting Excellence* report on developing, implementing, and sustaining a high-quality curriculum defined a curriculum as:

the central guide for teachers and all instructional personnel about what is essential to teach and how to teach it throughout the district so that every child has access to rigorous academic experiences and instructional support in meeting academic standards.

A district curriculum goes beyond a mere listing of standards, although it is based on the college-and-career readiness standards adopted by the state. However, it incorporates the additions the school system has made to more clearly translate the content knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skills students are expected to learn. The district's philosophy of what learning is essential, how students learn, and how to gauge student progress is central to the development of the curriculum. The curriculum itself explicitly indicates what the district requires (holds tightly) in every classroom, and acknowledge where schools and teachers have autonomy.<sup>4</sup>

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2 The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2010). *Beyond the rhetoric: Improving college readiness through coherent state policy*. Retrieved from [http://www.highereducation.org/reports/college\\_readiness/CollegeReadiness.pdf](http://www.highereducation.org/reports/college_readiness/CollegeReadiness.pdf)

3 Complete College America. *Corequisite remediation: Spanning the completion divide*. Retrieved from <http://completecollege.org/spanningthedivide/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/CCA-SpanningTheDivide-ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

4 Council of the Great City Schools (2017). *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum*. Retrieved from <https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Curriculum%20Framework%20First%20Edition%20Final.pdf>

Furthermore, the report outlines the goals of what any curriculum should include:

- To prepare students for college and careers,
- To support teachers in delivering effective instruction, and
- To ensure access for all students to rigorous and meaningful educational experiences in every school and classroom throughout the district.

Building on these insights, the Council collected feedback from school districts during the Males of Color Policy Conference that included strategies to bolster student engagement by reviewing how district curriculum can adapt to student learning needs. These strategies are presented below and address the following areas:

- Develop and implement a rigorous curriculum that supports high academic expectations for students,
- Ensure that the curriculum includes culturally and socially relevant content to boost student engagement,
- Increase access to high-quality opportunities from pre-kindergarten through high school,
- Leverage data from early-warning indicators to identify students in need of additional academic support,
- Revamp hiring practices to recruit teachers from diverse racial, gender, and linguistic backgrounds, and
- Develop strategies for continuous professional development that emphasizes cultural awareness and alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices.

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION
<p>Develop a high-quality curriculum that is built on high academic expectations for all students, including males of color.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Set a unifying vision for high-quality school and classroom practice that is rooted in college-and-career-readiness standards.</li> <li>■ Embed high academic expectations in your district by conducting in-depth curriculum reviews and working in conjunction with school and district leadership teams. This involves creating concrete academic expectations for each grade level and subject area that reflect high expectations for all students. As the Council’s guidance on developing a high-quality curriculum states, “the curriculum should create the floor, not the ceiling, for learning at every grade level and in every course.”</li> <li>■ Develop a culture of shared accountability across schools, departments, and staff for the success of all students, including males of color.</li> <li>■ In districts with high rates of student mobility, ensure that curriculum expectations are clearly communicated districtwide to reduce the disruption to students’ education when moving to a new school.</li> </ul>
<p>Increase access to quality early childhood education for young men and boys of color.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Skills gaps by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and English fluency are already present when students enter Kindergarten.<sup>5</sup> While these gaps can be explained by factors beyond the control of schools, such as a child’s home environment and access to early childhood education, they have been proven to be significant mitigating factors on later academic success. Expanding enrollment—and perhaps more critically—increasing the quality of early childhood education could help significantly decrease racial achievement gaps. For example, attending an early childhood education program has a significant positive affect on English acquisition for children of Hispanic immigrants, especially those from low-income families.<sup>6</sup> Districts should move toward universal Pre-K. Evaluations of school-provided universal early childhood programs have shown positive outcomes for students across a span of identities.<sup>7</sup> Carefully evaluate the effectiveness of these and other programs in your school district to ensure they are supporting your efforts to close achievement gaps.</li> <li>■ Engage parents and families in their children’s reading and literacy activities (e.g., teaching the alphabet, reading to children, telling stories, singing to children, etc.). Schools should encourage low-income families, in particular, to take advantage of public resources, such as libraries and museums, to expose their children to a wider variety of literary materials.<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>

5 Garcia, E. (2015). *Inequalities at the starting gate: Cognitive and noncognitive skills gaps between 2010-2011 kindergarten classmates*. Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED560407.pdf>

6 Bumgarner, E. & Lin, M. (2014). Hispanic immigrant children’s English language acquisition: The role of socioeconomic status and early care arrangement. *Early Education and Development*, 25(4), 515-529. doi: 10.1080/10409289.2013.822230

7 Gormley Jr., W. T., Gayer, T., Phillophs, D. & Dawson, B. (2005). The Effects of universal pre-k on cognitive development. *Developmental Psychology*, 41(6):872-884. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.41.6.872

8 Chen, J., Pisani, L., White, S., & Soroui, J. (2012). Parental engagement in early childhood education at home. *Reading Psychology*, 33(6), 497-524.



Improve the quality and timeliness of targeted interventions for struggling students.

- Use data from early warning indicator systems to ensure that your district is identifying males of color who may be falling behind academically and promptly intervene when they need additional support.
- A strong Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model should be in place and strong classroom-based Tier 1 instruction should be available to all students.
- Implement multilevel and comprehensive interventions that address various issues with a marriage of academic interventions and social emotional supports, including student empowerment strategies.<sup>9</sup>
- Review district procedures for placing students in special education.

Raise readiness and participation of males of color in advanced courses in middle and high school.

- In 2016, the Council analyzed data from the College Board that measured how many males of color were ready for Advanced Placement (AP) courses based on their performance on the PSAT. Then the Council compared the number of students who were prepared for advanced placement to the number of students enrolled in advanced placement. The results showed that 4.7 percent of Black male students and 7.1 percent of Hispanic male students in Council districts were ready for AP courses (compared to roughly 30 percent of their White male counterparts). Even fewer males of color enrolled in advanced placement courses. This highlights two leverage points for change: preparing middle school students for advanced course-taking in high school; and counseling qualified students into advanced courses.
- The low number of males of color in advanced courses is also a matter of access to AP and *International Baccalaureate* courses at the school. Students in low-income urban contexts have more limited AP and advanced coursework options.<sup>10</sup> Districts should set annual targets for increasing access to advanced courses in schools serving low-income students.

9 Rowley, L. L., & Bowman, P. J. (2009). Risk, protection, and achievement disparities among African American males: Cross-generation theory, research, and comprehensive intervention. *The Journal of Negro Education* 78(3), 305-320.

10 Solórzano, D. G. & Ornelas, A. (2002). A critical race analysis of advanced placement classes: A case of educational inequality. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1(4), 215-219 ; Handwerk, P., Tognata, N., Coley, R. K. Gitomer, D. H. (2008) *Access to Success: Patterns of Advanced Placement Participation in U.S. High Schools*. Educational Testing Services. <https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PIC-ACCESS.pdf>

<p>Develop culturally and socially relevant curriculum that boosts the academic engagement of males of color.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ As districts develop and implement a districtwide curriculum that is shaped by a clear vision of learning and instruction, determining how much autonomy, and in which areas, schools will have is an important consideration. One of these considerations could involve tailoring the curriculum to embrace cultural and socially relevant themes that reflect the diversity of the student body at a particular school. A few themes could include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reconstructing <i>traditional</i> narratives of racial and ethnic peoples,</li> <li>– Positive depictions of manhood and coming of age, and</li> <li>– Exploring current social issues that affect students daily.</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Creating a list of books and materials that is culturally relevant and depict males of color in a positive light is also beneficial. Young men and boys of color routinely see negative portrayals of men of color that perpetuate negative stereotypes. These portrayals embed unconscious expectations that can affect how males of color see themselves and their role in society. Furthermore, notions of manhood and masculinity are profoundly shaped by the examples of men of color that students see. In essence, culturally relevant materials recognize and embrace students' cultural heritage/background and will enhance student engagement with academic content and help build strong ethnic identity.</li> </ul>
<p>Develop practices to recruit teachers from diverse backgrounds, and develop current teachers to meet the needs of males of color in the classroom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Retool recruiting practices to hire culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse teachers and men of color into the teaching profession. Emerging research shows that teachers of color are warmly perceived by students of all races.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, some research shows that positive teacher interactions lead black male students to consider teaching as a profession.<sup>12</sup></li> <li>■ Develop new teacher induction and continuous professional development that is led by experienced urban teachers.</li> <li>■ Work with local universities to adapt teacher training to meet the needs of students in low-income schools, including males of color. Partnerships with local universities can also provide alternative licenses and certification for currently employed teachers.</li> <li>■ Create incentives for teaching in low-income and low performing schools. This should be a priority particularly in hard to staff areas such as STEM subjects and advanced placement courses. These incentives need not be salary based. For example, employee benefits such as volume-pricing incentives between the district and local businesses may serve to encourage recruitment efforts.</li> </ul>

11 Cherng, H.S. & Halpin, P. (2016). The importance of minority teachers: Student perceptions of minority versus white teachers. *Educational Researcher*, 45(7), 407-420.

12 Goings, R.B., & Bianco, M. (2016). It's hard To Be Who You Don't See: An Exploration of High School Student's Perspectives on Becoming Teachers. *The Urban Review*, 48(4), 628.

## Oakland Unified School District's Office of African American Male Achievement

*In 2010, the Oakland Unified School District decided to rethink how the district was meeting the needs of African American males. After analyzing their student data, the district realized that despite its efforts the outcomes for African American males had not changed. As a result, Oakland USD made a commitment that, "African American male students are extraordinary and deserve a school system that meets their unique and dynamic needs." Since then, the district has worked toward systems change and implemented various programs to uplift African American males through mentoring, leadership opportunities, and access to rigorous and culturally relevant curriculum.*

*A few of their featured programs include:*

- *The Manhood Development Program – an academic mentoring program that offers elective classes led by African American male teachers. The courses strive to strengthen students' racial and ethnic identity with the goal of increasing attendance, graduation rates, and literacy.*
- *Student Leadership Council – Creates networks of African American male students in leadership positions at schools across the district. Students support each other and participate in local and national leadership activities.*
- *Khepera Pathway – A college and career academic pathway that focuses on entrepreneurship, social innovation, and civic engagement.*

*To learn more about Oakland USD's Office of African American Male Achievement and their initiatives, visit them at [www.ousd.org/Page/12225](http://www.ousd.org/Page/12225)*



**OAKLAND UNIFIED  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**



# Creating Access and Continuous Support Systems to Postsecondary and Career Opportunities for Males of Color

## Introduction

Preparing young boys and men of color to succeed in postsecondary settings, whether it's graduating from college or advancing in the workforce, is one of the core missions of a school system and one that is ripe for innovation. A national effort to expand access to postsecondary opportunities has resulted in all-time highs in the college enrollment rates of Black and Hispanic males. However, while the college-going rates of Black and Hispanic males between the ages of 18 and 24 has substantially increased since 2000, their graduation rates at 4-year postsecondary institutions continue to trail that of their White peers by large margins.<sup>13</sup>

More recently, districts have adopted strategies to increase the chances of student success by reducing the need for remedial classes in college and helping students manage the financial stress of paying for college. For students choosing to enter career and technical fields, school districts are fostering innovative partnerships with businesses and local colleges and universities to provide early exposure to careers and give students a head start in earning industry certifications.

This section explores the challenges and potential strategies in various areas related to creating access to and continuous support systems for college and career opportunities for males of color. Whether a student decides to pursue a two- or four-year degree program, certification program, or enter directly into the workforce, the strategies presented here are intended to support students in whatever path they choose after high school. Many of the challenges and solutions discussed here are informed by feedback from Council districts on implementing programs for young men and boys of color. These areas include:

- Early exposure to postsecondary and career options,
- Access to rigorous coursework that aligns to students' academic and career goals,
- Building innovative community and business partnerships,
- Navigating the college admissions process,
- Financial aid literacy, and
- Strategies for persisting in college and long-term success.

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<sup>13</sup> McFarland, J., Hussar, B., de Brey, C. Snyder, T., Wang, X., Wilkinson-Flicker, S...Hinz, S.(2017). *Condition of Education 2017*, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION
<p>Providing young men and boys of color guidance in middle and high school to help navigate course selection and chart a path after high school. For many prospective first-generation college students, planning for college can feel overwhelming, particularly when planning can start as early as middle school. Students may not have the social capital at home to guide them through the various decisions they will need to make plan for college.</p>	<p>Schools should be prepared to guide students by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Investing in high school counselors focused on college readiness whose role includes three core responsibilities to help students: 1) pursue the most challenging curriculum that results in enhanced postsecondary options; 2) identify and satisfy requirements for college access; and 3) navigate the financial aid, college choice, and admissions process.<sup>14</sup> Compared to private schools, low-income public schools have much higher student/counselor ratios and assume a wider range of responsibilities in addition to college counseling and ensuring students' academic preparation for postsecondary options.<sup>15</sup></li> <li>■ Districts should emphasize increasing access to college preparatory programs. These programs can include dual enrollment and extended 13<sup>th</sup> year high school programs, financial literacy programs, and college counseling. Approximately three-fourths of low-income students do not complete a college preparatory course, but those who do are more likely to enroll in 4-year postsecondary schools.<sup>16</sup> Ideally, college preparatory programs should be built in partnership with local and state higher education institutions to align academic expectations to meet the needs of students and communities.</li> <li>■ Speaking with and listening to students to understand their goals, challenges, and perspectives should be a major emphasis of school personnel. Young men and boys of color bring perspectives and experiences that are not often discussed openly with school staff. Their experiences may include challenges in their lives that can shape their perceptions of postsecondary options and their plans after high school. In fact, many low-income students of color do not follow traditional postsecondary pathways and are more likely to encounter interruptions in their postsecondary education due to home factors, financial hardship, or child care situations.<sup>17</sup> School staff should create welcoming school environments and have intentional conversations with students to understand their personal goals, motivations, and reservations about pursuing postsecondary opportunities. This should allow school staff to guide students toward the best options based on their strengths, goals, and family and financial circumstances.</li> <li>■ All of this should be undergirded by an asset-based approach to counseling that recognizes students' strengths to inform their postsecondary and career plans. Beginning in middle school, programs should include hands-on opportunities to learn about various careers, guidance in selecting courses, and planning for life after high school.</li> </ul>

14 National Association for College Admissions Counseling (1990). *Statement on Precollege Guidance and the Role of the School Counselor*. Retrieved from [www.nacacnet.org/about/Governance/Policies/Documents/RoleofSchlCounsNEW.pdf](http://www.nacacnet.org/about/Governance/Policies/Documents/RoleofSchlCounsNEW.pdf)

15 National Association for College Admission Counseling (2015). *State of College Admission*. Retrieved from [www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/soca\\_chapter4.pdf](http://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/soca_chapter4.pdf)

16 Oseguera, L. (2012). *High school coursework and postsecondary education trajectories: Disparities between youth who grew up in and out of poverty*. Retrieved from [www.pathways.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/201201\\_OsegueraRB\\_online.pdf](http://www.pathways.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/201201_OsegueraRB_online.pdf)

17 Pathways to Postsecondary Success (2013). *Maximizing Opportunities for Youth in Poverty*. Retrieved from [www.pathways.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/PathwaysReport.pdf](http://www.pathways.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/PathwaysReport.pdf)

<p>Ensuring equity in advanced courses, dual enrollment, or other academic and career opportunities in middle and high school. As noted before, males of color have the lowest rates of participation in advanced courses, such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate. This is due, in part, to academic unpreparedness or insufficient counseling in selecting courses but also to a lack of access to schools that offer advanced courses.</p>	<p>Districts can address these issues by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Creating education pathways and academies in high-poverty schools that low-income learners can more easily access. Doing so requires a districtwide commitment that all students, particularly students of color, are prepared for rigorous coursework and are on track to take advanced coursework (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, etc.) in high school. Ensure these academies are not developed for students outside the local community but target low income participants. For example, nationally, White male 12<sup>TH</sup> graders were four times more likely than Black males and three times more likely than Hispanic males to have taken a math course beyond Algebra II.<sup>18</sup> In effect, the pathway to rigorous coursework in math is closed to many students before entering high school.</li> <li>■ Noting that the pathway can be opened through rigorous, targeted interventions to support students when enrolled in more challenging courses. Larger numbers of students can be successful, for example, in eighth grade Algebra I with the proper supports inside and outside of the classroom.</li> <li>■ Ensuring that high-poverty schools are staffed with teachers certified to teach advanced courses.</li> <li>■ Increasing the numbers of students enrolling in advanced coursework. As stated before, the Council’s analysis of Advanced Placement participation data from the College Board shows that only a small percentage of males of color are academically prepared for advanced coursework and even fewer enroll in AP classes.</li> <li>■ Reducing the need for remedial courses in college by ensuring that students have regular access to rigorous coursework that builds critical thinking skills.</li> </ul>
<p>Developing a curriculum that is inclusive of Career and Technical Education and prepares students for regional opportunities in economic development in a diverse range of industries.</p>	<p>Increasingly, college preparatory programs and school districts are partnering with local community colleges and businesses to attract students to industries important to local economies. These partnerships can inform curriculum that allows students to focus more on Career and Technical Education. These types of programs, coupled with career and postsecondary counseling, can HELP students to develop a long-term plan for academic and/or career success.</p>

<sup>18</sup> National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2015). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Helping students navigate the financial aid process and reduce the price shock of postsecondary education. Paying for college can be a daunting task for many low-income and first-generation students.

Schools can offer guidance by:

- Increasing students' financial aid literacy. Helping students understand and plan for the cost of college and reduce financial stress can improve their chances of college graduation.<sup>19</sup> Key areas of financial literacy include: budgeting for the cost of college, the basics of finding scholarships and borrowing money to pay for college, and the process of repaying student loans.
- Providing intentional financial aid guidance to help students navigate the process of paying for college. While an abundance of information exists on financial aid, helping students and families navigate through the financial aid process has been shown to increase the likelihood of low-income students enrolling in a postsecondary institution.<sup>20</sup> Many students are deterred by the yearly price of attending college but the net cost of a postsecondary education—the cost of college minus all grants and scholarships—is typically a much lower figure. There are various types of federal, state, and non-federal sources of financial aid and tax benefits that students will need help sorting through to cover expenses.<sup>21</sup>
- Helping students to complete the FAFSA form to become eligible for federal student aid. This is a critical step in the financial aid process and requires parental involvement to complete. For students who may be undocumented, providing guidance to alternative ways to pay for college—either through private scholarships, institutional aid, or work-study programs—will be essential.
- Instituting college and financial aid guidance for students after high school graduation to reduce the number of students who are accepted to a college but do not enroll in the Fall – known as summer melt—is also important.<sup>22</sup> Some charter schools offer alumni access to counselors to support students after high school graduation to ensure students don't miss critical financial aid deadlines and tasks—something that all schools could do. Using data, these initiatives can predict the students in need of additional support and provide targeted outreach.<sup>23</sup>

Ensuring that students not only have greater access to postsecondary education but also are able to graduate.

Teaching strategies for persisting in college and long-term success. Transitioning from high school to a less structured college setting often represents a steep learning curve for students. Enhancing students' resiliency and self-advocacy skills are important aspects of being able to navigate unfamiliar settings on college campuses or in the workplace.

19 Britt, S. L., Ammerman, D. A., Barrett, S. F., & Jones, S. (2017). Student Loans, Financial Stress, and College Student Retention. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, 47(1), 3.

20 Scott-Clayton, J. (2015). The role of financial aid in promoting college access and success: Research evidence and proposals for reform. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, 45(3), 3.

21 U.S. Department of Education, (2017). 2017-2018 counselors and mentors handbook on federal student aid. Available at: <https://financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/resources/counselors-handbook-2017-18.pdf>

22 Castleman, B.L, Page, L.C., & Schooley, K. (2014). The forgotten summer: Does the offer of college counseling after high school mitigate summer melt among college-attending, low-income college graduates? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 33(2), 320-344.

23 Kuester, B., Stepner, M., Westerlund, M., Anand, A., & Fritzler, A. (2015). *College persistence: Helping students beyond high school graduation*. Retrieved from <https://dssg.uchicago.edu/2015/09/22/college-persistence-helping-students-beyond-high-school-graduation/>

## Dallas Independent School District's Collegiate Academies

*In 2016, the Dallas Independent School District initiated a set of innovative collegiate academies in partnership with higher education, industry, and community leaders designed to increase college access and persistence among first-generation college students and those students who have been historically underrepresented in college. Among the initial academies was P-TECH, a 4-6 year technology focused career pathway that allows high school students to earn up to 60 college credit hours and/or industry-certification tuition-free at local community colleges. Through industry partners, students enrolled in P-TECH have access to mentoring and internship opportunities to ensure they have the skills and job experience required for in-demand jobs in the technology sector. Furthermore, the college credits students earn are transferrable to partnering 4-year colleges and universities so that students get a head start on earning a 4-year degree and reduce the financial burden of higher education.*

*This model for partnerships between K-12 school systems, institutions of higher education, community organizations, and industry-leading companies supports cohorts of students throughout high school. Beginning in the ninth grade, collegiate academies allow students to earn up to 60 tuition-free credit hours toward an Associate's or four-year degree, saving students and families thousands of dollars in college expenses. Curriculum and course offerings are cross-walked between the school district and community colleges to ensure students are academically supported throughout the program. Transportation is also provided to students between their home school and community college campuses. Each college academy is aligned to an industry pathway such as health sciences, information technology, cyber security, culinary arts, animal sciences, and law enforcement.*

*Dallas ISD plans to add 10 collegiate academies for the 2017-18 school year. To learn more about Dallas ISD's collegiate academies, visit [www.dallasisd.org/collegiateacademies](http://www.dallasisd.org/collegiateacademies).*





# School Culture: Discipline, Social Emotional Learning, and Cultural Competence

## Introduction

Schools shape and reinforce students' academic, emotional, and social identity through the substance and quality of interactions with peers and school staff. School culture largely dictates these interactions and, if ignored, can perpetuate negative perceptions of certain groups of students. Young men and boys of color are perpetually faced with low academic expectations and harsh disciplinary practices that are informed, often unconsciously, by implicit negative stereotypes and biases toward males of color.

For example, students of color are disproportionately disciplined compared to their white peers.<sup>24</sup> The suspension rate for Black students is three times that for white students. Boys of color with disabilities have the highest suspension rates overall. Additionally, Black students are also overrepresented in "referrals to law enforcement," fueling the school-to-prison pipeline.<sup>25</sup> Exposure to harsh disciplinary systems further compounds the disadvantages males of color face by decreasing the likelihood of high academic performance, and increasing the chances of student retention and attrition.<sup>26</sup> However, in recent years there has been a nascent interest in the role that school culture plays in mitigating these factors.

Schools with a coherent, student-centered culture that prioritizes equitable opportunity, academic growth, and strong positive relationships can enact great change. Although positive school culture will benefit all students, districts and schools must be attuned to the unique needs of males of color. Here, we address three core attributes of school culture that supports diverse learners:

- Discipline
- Social emotional learning
- Cultural competence

Each component, while distinct, supports and depends upon the others. When employed incorrectly or insufficiently, these factors can negatively impact student academic and personal identities. However, if intentionally addressed by educators well-versed in the research literature and best practices, they can help to foster a positive culture that supports and inspires males of color and all other students. In the table below, we outline the challenges and several studies or best practices emanating from our conference and discussions with practitioners that address the challenges related to these three elements.

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24 U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014). Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (School Discipline). Retrieved from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC-School-Discipline-Snapshot.pdf>

25 Ibid.

26 Raush, M. K. & Skiba, R. J. (2005). The academic cost of discipline: The relationship between Suspension/Expulsion and Student Achievement. Retrieved from <http://www.indiana.edu/~atlantic/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Academic-Cost-of-School-Discipline.pdf>

CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
<p>Working with teachers and school staff to address implicit and explicit biases that affect their expectations and understandings of young men and boys of color.</p> <p>Although young boys and men of color do not misbehave more than their white peers, they are punished more frequently and severely.<sup>27</sup> This disparate treatment occurs in schools nationwide, regardless of students' socioeconomic background or school demographics. Educators' preconceived notions and stereotypes of—or biases toward—males of color is a major contributor to policies and practices that result in higher disciplinary rates.<sup>28</sup> These biases fall into two main categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Implicit – unconscious stereotypes and associations that affect our actions, understandings, and decisions. Everyone has these biases that manifest as either positive or negative stereotypes. These biases are triggered involuntarily and without awareness or control.</li> <li>■ Explicit – conscious beliefs and principles which someone may choose to disclose publicly.<sup>29</sup></li> </ul>	<p>Implicit biases can be changed and modified through various forms of professional development and debiasing techniques, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cultural Competence: a process where individuals openly and positively engage with other cultures to build deeper knowledge and openness towards diversity.<sup>30</sup> Culturally competent educators understand the necessity and value of cultural differences and diversity, support intercultural exchange, and help build culturally inclusive environments.<sup>31</sup> Cultural competence positively influences educators' relationships with students and families, teaching practice, and disciplinary strategies.<sup>32</sup> For example, once educators can strengthen their understanding of cultural competency, they can begin to address their implicit biases toward different groups of students<sup>33</sup> and begin to develop culturally relevant curriculum for students.<sup>34</sup></li> <li>■ Debiasing: an act of self-reflection, where an individual identifies and acknowledges their biases, identifies when they are “activated,” and challenges them when they occur.<sup>35</sup> Professionals in other fields, such as police officers, judges, and lawyers are already incorporating debiasing into their professional development.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, debiasing or anti-bias training can help teachers identify and correct how their personal biases impact students.<sup>37</sup> Research in the field of debiasing has identified promising strategies for correcting subconscious and conscious prejudices. Such strategies include taking the Implicit Association Test to discover which biases one unconsciously possesses, counter-stereotypic training, exposure to diverse communities and counter narratives to stereotypes, empathy training, and engaging with diverse communities that are the target of biases.<sup>38</sup></li> </ul>

27 Huang, F. L. (2016). Do Black students misbehave more? Investigating the differential involvement hypothesis and out-of-school suspensions. *The Journal of Educational Research*. doi: 10.1080/00220671.2016.1253538

28 Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Nardo, A. C., & Peterson, R. (2000). *The color of discipline*. The Indiana Education Policy Center. Retrieved from <http://www.indiana.edu/~equity/docs/ColorOfDiscipline.pdf>

29 Staats, C., Capatosto, K., Wright, R., & Jackson, V. (2016). *State of the science: Implicit bias review*. Kirwan Institute. Retrieved from <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/implicit-bias-2016.pdf>

30 Berardo, K. & Deardorff, D. K. (Eds.). (2012). *Building cultural competence: Innovative activities and models*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

31 Ford, D. Y. & Whiting, G. W. (2007). *Another perspective on cultural competence: Preparing students for an increasingly diverse society*. *Gifted Child Today* 30(2):52-55.

Revise school policies to move away from an overreliance on exclusionary discipline strategies, such as detentions, suspensions, and expulsions.

Exclusionary discipline strategies, in the most extreme example referred to as zero tolerance or “no excuses” policies, are often employed by schools and rarely benefit students. There is limited research evidence to indicate that the use of exclusionary discipline deters future student misbehaviors, improves school climate, or improves the coherence of school disciplinary systems.<sup>39</sup> However, research does indicate that exclusionary discipline increases the likelihood of student interactions with the juvenile justice system, contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, out-of-school suspensions result in students receiving less instructional time and negatively impacts students’ academic achievement.<sup>41</sup>

While schools and districts can and should choose to eliminate or limit the use of zero tolerance and exclusionary discipline policies, alternative disciplinary strategies must take their place. Certain strategies, when applied coherently across entire school/district communities, can create positive, supportive disciplinary systems that support males of color and all students. These include:

- School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS) break the cycle of harsh discipline through prevention and ongoing student support. SWPBIS is a multi-tiered system of evidence-based practices, which create positive, non-punitive classroom management and disciplinary systems, and reduce the use of suspensions and help students’ behavioral management.
- Restorative justice, used in response to student misbehavior, functions as an alternative to suspensions and expulsions. Restorative justice focuses on the perpetrator-victim relationship by highlighting individual accountability for wrongdoing and creating a pathway towards redemptive healing. There are many iterations of restorative justice with differing configurations reflecting the unique needs of a community and school district’s culture. When implemented effectively, restorative justice produces school climates that are perceived as more equitable, fair, and safe. Additionally, restorative justice can promote the voices and experiences of students and their families, strengthening community-school bonds.

- 32 National Educators Association (2008). *Promoting educators’ cultural competence to better serve culturally diverse students: An NEA policy brief*. Retrieved from [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB13\\_CulturalCompetence08.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB13_CulturalCompetence08.pdf)
- 33 Colombo, M. W. (2007). Developing cultural competence: Mainstream teachers and professional development. *Multicultural Perspectives* 9(2), 10-16.
- 34 Landa, M. S. & Stephens, G. (2017). Promoting cultural competence in preservice teacher education through children’s literature: An exemplary case study. *Issues in Teacher Education* 26(1), 53-71.
- 35 Wald, J. (2014). *Can “de-biasing” strategies help to reduce racial disparities in school discipline?* Institute for Race & Justice, Harvard University. Retrieved from [http://www.indiana.edu/~atlantic/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Implicit-Bias\\_031214.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~atlantic/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Implicit-Bias_031214.pdf)
- 36 American Bar Association (2016). *Implicit bias and de-biasing strategies: A workshop for judges and lawyers*. American Bar Association 2016 Annual Meeting. Retrieved from [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/events/criminal\\_justice/2016/annual16\\_jointbias.authcheckdam.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/events/criminal_justice/2016/annual16_jointbias.authcheckdam.pdf)
- 37 Mayfield, V. (2017). The burden of inequity—and what schools can do about it. *Phi Delta Kappan* 98(5), 8-11. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0031721717690358>
- 38 Staats, C. (2015). Understanding implicit bias: What educators should know. *American Educator* (Winter 2015-2016). American Federation of Teachers. Retrieved from <https://www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/staats>; Staats, 2015; and Wald, 2014.
- 39 American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008). *Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools?* *American Psychological Association*, 63(9), 852-862. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.63.9.852.
- 40 Advancement Project (2000). *Opportunities suspended: The devastating consequences of zero tolerance and school discipline*. The Advancement Project, the Civil Rights Project, and Harvard University. Retrieved from <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/opportunities-suspended-the-devastating-consequences-of-zero-tolerance-and-school-discipline-policies/crp-opportunities-suspended-zero-tolerance-2000.pdf>; Heitzeg, N. A. (2009). *Education or incarceration: Zero tolerance policies and the school to prison pipeline*. Forum on Public Policy. Retrieved from <http://forumonpublicpolicy.com/summer09/issuesineducation.html>
- 41 Rausch, M.K. & Skiba, R.J. (2005) *The academic cost of discipline: The relationship between suspensions/expulsion and school achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, Indiana University. Retrieved from <http://www.indiana.edu/~atlantic/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Academic-Cost-of-School-Discipline.pdf>

Creating school environments that are attuned to the various forms of environmental and circumstantial trauma that young men and boys of color encounter in their daily lives in and outside of school.

The trauma experienced by young men and boys of color takes many forms and can reverberate across various aspects of personal identity and experience, such as race, poverty, education, and manhood. The psychological and physical trauma experienced by these students can significantly hinder their willingness and ability to perform well in school.<sup>42</sup>

Some strategies that schools can employ to help students constructively manage trauma include:

- Implementing district-wide trauma informed practices. Although trauma-informed care is relatively new to public education, mental health and social service practitioners, as well as some schools and districts, have laid the groundwork for practices and strategies that support affected students, including males of color. The practice begins with a system-wide awareness and commitment to trauma-informed care.<sup>43</sup> Implementation may include a combination of general and targeted supports such as positive interpersonal interactions with peers and educators; culturally responsive classroom management and pedagogy; appropriate individualized interventions, meditation, and student empowerment.<sup>44</sup> When organizations adopt a trauma-informed approach they support survivors of trauma by avoiding re-traumatization, promoting healing and spurring academic achievement, and mitigating negative experiences in the classroom and outside of school.<sup>45</sup>
- Introducing social and emotional learning (SEL) to help students work through trauma and related issues. Through SEL instruction, educators can help students leverage their social and emotional skills to self-monitor and persist academically in the classroom, resulting in increased student academic performance (e.g., GPA and standardized test scores) and decreased behavioral issues (e.g., suspensions, attendance, and graduation).<sup>46</sup> Also, helping educators build their own social emotional skills can increase educator quality. SEL professional development can increase teachers' ability to build positive student-teacher relationships, employ appropriate and fair classroom management and discipline, as well as instructing students in SEL skills.<sup>47</sup> SEL is often linked with high-need student groups, including males of color, who may need more instruction in SEL. It can also operate as a classroom management strategy and a positive alternative to strict disciplinary strategies

42 Schwartz, J. M. (2012). *A new normal: Young men of color, trauma and engagement in learning*. Adult Education Research Conference. Retrieved from <http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2012/papers/41>

43 Cavanaugh, B. (2016). Trauma-informed classrooms and schools. *Beyond Behavior* 25(2), 41-46.

44 Cavanaugh, 2016; McInerney, M. & McKlinton, A. (2014). *Unlocking the door to learning: Trauma-informed classrooms & transformational schools*. Education Law Center. Retrieved from <http://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Trauma-Informed-in-Schools-Classrooms-FINAL-December2014-2.pdf>; Capatosto, K. (2015). *From punitive to restorative: Advantages of using trauma-informed practices in schools*. Kirwan Institute: Ohio State University. Retrieved from <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ki-punitive-to-restorative.pdf>

45 McInerney & McKlinton, 2014.

46 Kendziora, K. and Yoder, N. (2016). *When Districts Support and Integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)*. American Institutes of Research. Retrieved from <http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/When-Districts-Support-and-Integrate-SEL-October-2016.pdf>

47 Jones, S. M., Bouffard, S. M., & Weissbourd, R. (2013). Educators' social and emotional skills vital to learning. *Phi Delta Kappan* 94(8), 62-65.

Proactively include parent and community voices and perspectives in discussions of discipline and culture.

From the perspective of a family and a community, the act of disciplining a student is a delicate balance of power dynamics between parents and school staff. Creating positive disciplinary systems requires the involvement of parents and the broader community to build a positive behavior and school climate.<sup>48</sup> Community engagement and parent involvement moves educational goals beyond impacting a single student, to changing the conditions of a collective community.<sup>49</sup> Incorporating parents and families in restorative justice practices reinforces school expectations and supports students.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, exposing teachers to students' families and communities can aid in reducing educator bias and prejudice against them.<sup>51</sup>

48 Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2002). Improving student behavior and school discipline with family and community involvement. *Education and Urban Society* 35(1), 4-26. doi: 10.1177/001312402237212

49 Schutz, A. (2006). Home is a prison in the global city: The tragic failure of school-based community engagement strategies. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(4), 691-743.

50 Garcia, 2014.

51 Colombo, 2007.

## Jefferson County Public Schools' Department of Diversity, Equity, and Poverty Programs

Over the last four years, Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) has intentionally focused on improving the academic outcomes for boys of color. After signing the Males of Color Pledge in 2014, the Diversity, Equity, Poverty Department, a unique department in JCPS, led a coalition of central office departments to ensure that boys of color were a priority in their work. The intentional focus on males of color has evoked a community level of awareness and support that has brought significant changes to the district, which include:



- Changes to the student code of conduct to remove the infraction of deliberate disruption under which a disproportionate number of suspensions were subjectively given to boys of color.
- In a school district that is now comprised of more non-white students than white students, JCPS schools started challenging the lack of participation of students of color in Gifted and Talented programs. JCPS began a sweeping communications campaign to inform students and parents of underserved populations that they could request that their child participate in gifted classes. This effort, coupled with increasing the number of teachers certified in Gifted and Talented and piloting different means of assessing giftedness, led to an increase in males of color accessing Gifted and Talented programs and more rigorous curriculum.
- District-wide Equity Institutes that focus on reaching and teaching males of color. To date, the Equity Institutes have touted some of the highest participation levels of similar institutes in the region.
- Developed STEAM programs geared specifically for males of color that introduces students to computer coding, music, design, poetry, producing, and art.

In addition, JCPS has approved the creation of a middle school geared toward meeting the academic needs of males of color that will open in 2018. The school, which will be open to students from across the district, will feature an Afro-Latino centric curriculum to promote cultural competency and create an environment where young boys of color can thrive academically. The district is also slated to review school system policies to highlight inequities and inform the creation of an Equity and Race Policy that will add another layer of support for students and families of color.

To learn more about Jefferson County's Public School Diversity, Equity, Poverty Department and their initiatives to support young boys and men of color, visit <https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/departments/diversity-equity-and-poverty-programs-division>.



# Planning Effective Leadership and Communication Strategies for Males of Color Programs

## Introduction

The notion of investing in boys and men of color is politically charged and rife with legacies of systemic discrimination through generations of families from various social, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Deciding to address issues of race and gender in an education context can carry political risk. However, as school districts already know, the risk of political pushback is outweighed by the risk that inaction poses to students being educated in our nation's urban public schools. A school district's ability to implement and sustain an initiative for males of color will require district leaders to navigate local politics and create community ownership for this type of initiative. Developing a leadership and communications framework that informs the messaging, public engagement, and advocacy activities for the district is a critical tool in building public support and creating consistent messaging for the initiative that is aligned to the district's overall academic priorities.

This section will present factors to consider in developing a coherent and persuasive leadership and communications framework.<sup>52</sup> A leadership and communications framework should take various factors into consideration, including local political and social context, localized levers of influence, alignment of equity issues with academic priorities, and, finally, anticipating public pushback to the greatest extent possible. Many school districts seeking to implement programs for boys and men of color have also faced questions over the legality of such programs given federal laws barring racial and gender discrimination, which this guide addresses in the following section.

For purposes of this section, we propose that the goals of developing a leadership and communications framework are to:

- Sustain a long-term initiative focused on improving the academic outcomes of young boys and men of color,
- Align issues of equity with the district's academic priorities,
- Cultivate a broad network of support for the initiative, and
- Prioritize the needs of students and the local community.

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52 Many of the strategies presented in this section are informed by the Council's guide "Communicating the Common Core State Standards: A Resource for Superintendents, School Board Members, and Public Relations Executives." Available at <https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/FINAL%20Communicating%20Common%20Core%2011.13.pdf>

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION
<p>Build a compelling case to invest in young men and boys of color.</p>	<p>Ultimately, an initiative that is focused on young men and boys of color is about creating real and meaningful pathways to academic opportunity. Equity is built on the idea of driving additional investments—males of color need additional support and attention to overcome academic and social hurdles. Although school district practitioners may know this intuitively, building public support among elected officials and members of the community will require using evidence and data to demonstrate the need for initiatives that support males of color.</p> <p>The types of data that districts could use include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Achievement on interim and summative assessments at various grade levels</li> <li>■ Participation in advanced coursework (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment, etc.)</li> <li>■ Graduation rates</li> <li>■ Disproportionality in suspensions and expulsion rates compared to their white, female, or more affluent peers</li> <li>■ Postsecondary enrollment rates</li> <li>■ Percent of ninth-grade students with a B average GPA or more</li> <li>■ Student mobility, etc.</li> </ul> <p>The data that a district chooses to use to build the rationale for an initiative on males of color should be coupled with a detailed plan for the immediate rollout of the initiative and measurable short-term and long-term goals that include improving identified outcomes.</p>



Identify the target audience at all levels of the school district and the community to build a broad coalition of partners to support initiatives for males of color.

Public school districts are layered organizations that have constituents inside and outside of the school system. Each layer will have a target audience for which district leadership should keep in mind when planning a leadership and communications strategy. The various layers in a district include: school-level staff, district-level staff, and city/county/business-level partners. The target audiences at each level include:

#### School/District level

- Teachers and principals
- Parents
- Students
- School board
- Non-instructional school staff
- Central office administrators

#### City/County level

- Elected officials
- Business community
- Higher education institutions
- Religious institutions
- Non-profit organizations
- Teachers' associations
- News media

Develop primary and secondary messages that align issues of equity with the district's academic priorities.

Members of the community will want to know how an initiative for young boys and men of color fits with the academic priorities of the school district. Developing a set of targeted messages for various stakeholders will be important. Two types of messages districts may need to craft are primary and secondary messages:

- Primary messages are short and deliver a quick and compelling message.
- Secondary messages may contain more detailed information and are targeted to specific groups in more traditional media formats.

There are a few guidelines that school and district leaders might follow when crafting messages:

- Keep messages short and simple.
- Don't be afraid to repeat messages. Consistency and repetition can create an effective and enduring message.
- Tailor messages and the level of detail for each target audience (school staff and central office administrators want detailed information while parents and reporters may want broad, high-level, information).

All communication should be translated into the major languages spoken in the district.

Leverage different messengers to spread the word and create broader community ownership of the initiative.

Teachers, parents, and non-instructional staff can serve as auxiliary messengers for the district. Often, teachers and school staff are the first sources of information for parents. It is also common that parents rely on the opinions of teachers and other parents in making choices about their children's education. Cultivating a wide network of messengers ensures not only that multiple stakeholders are informed about an initiative but also helps spread the word to families about taking advantage of new opportunities for their children.

Local businesses and universities can also help to spread the word about your district's initiative and provide opportunities for unique partnerships and collaborations. Likewise, community-based organizations and non-profits, especially organizations that work directly with communities of color, can help in reaching diverse families.

<p>Engage the community and solicit feedback.</p>	<p>Community engagement requires thoughtful outreach that reflects the intricacies of local communities. Developing printed materials and messaging is only one component of meaningful community engagement and should be coupled with community town halls to solicit community feedback on initiatives for males of color.</p>
<p>Identify concerns and misinformation. Prepare to respond to these and other challenges to the initiative immediately.</p>	<p>Initiatives that focus on disadvantaged students attract attention and, often, criticisms as well. Districts should be proactive about addressing areas of concern and misinformation before they appear in media or other venues. This strategy can serve to build public support for the initiative as well as mitigate against prolonged public confrontations that can risk alienating supporters of the initiative. Districts have often faced questions about the legal grounds on which public funds can be used for programs for specific racial or gender student groups. This topic will be discussed more in-depth in the next section.</p>

## District of Columbia's Empowering Males of Color Initiative

*In 2015, the District of Columbia's public-school system announced an effort to dedicate monetary resources to addressing the unique needs of Black and Latino males. The initiative was grounded in a theory of action that indicated that the district would engage students and families; improve and expand research-based strategies with an emphasis on equity; and innovate - and challenge- policies that consistently made an impact on the academic achievement and development of males of color. The goal of the initiative was to ensure that males of color received structured support in the form of mentoring, character development, internships, and specialized courses.*

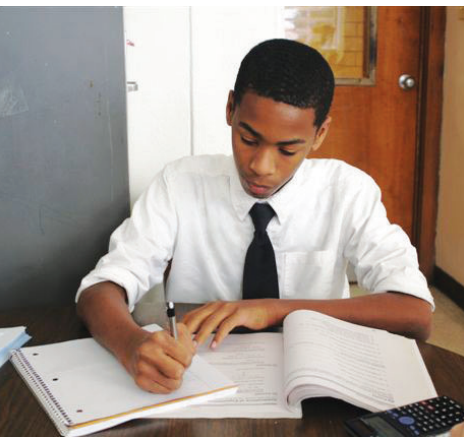


*Since the initiative's announcement, DCPS has created the following programs in support of its goals:*

- *Innovation grants – a multi-year initiative to develop programming specifically addressing the needs of Black and Latino male students and educators.*
- *Male Educators of Color Collaborative – a fellowship for male teachers of color that provides professional development and national networking to community organizations and districts across the country.*
- *Leading Men Fellowship – a structured opportunity for recent DCPS graduates who are young men of color to work in classrooms and receive support to pursue a degree in education. The program is part of a district-wide commitment to recruit more males of color in to the teaching profession and support current male of color teachers.*
- *EMOC 1000 – an initiative to partner with community organizations to create one-to-one mentorship opportunities for males of color throughout the city.*
- *Ron Brown College Preparatory High School – DCPS opened the city's first all-male college preparatory school that prepares students for college and careers with the goal of attaining a 100 percent graduation rate.*

*Moreover, DCPS has announced the creation of a companion initiative for young women of color called Reign: Empowering Young Women as Leaders. This initiative will aim to create safe spaces for young women of color to develop as leaders and provide teachers with professional development on racial and gender equity issues.*

*For more on the DCPS initiative, visit their website at <http://www.emocdc.org/>*



# Legal Issues Related to Implementing Programs for Males of Color

The history of education in the United States might be characterized by a constant negotiation between civil rights and limited resources. Since the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which ruled that segregated schools violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, there has been a conscious recognition by the federal government that certain groups of people face systemic discrimination and weak access to equal opportunities along the lines of race, gender, and nationality. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Education Amendments of 1972 codified these protections for students based on race and gender, respectively.

While these protections are meant to prevent discrimination, they can also be used to deter programs that are designed to alleviate the effects of discrimination or provide support to groups like young men and boys of color. Furthermore, some of these initiatives have been challenged in courts on the grounds that specific student groups are granted preferential treatment, therefore, not all students are equally protected under the law.<sup>53</sup> However, there are important precedents and judicial standards that allow for public institutions, such as public schools, to create programs to support specific student groups with the use of public money. As school districts plan initiatives to support males of color, it would be prudent to include the district's legal counsel at the onset to ensure that proper legal thresholds are met.

This section will explore two specific laws that directly relate to race- and gender-based initiatives:<sup>54</sup>

- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964** – prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program receiving federal assistance.
- **Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972** – prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any program receiving federal assistance.

The table below notes similarities in legal definitions in both laws and where they overlap. This section also adds to the strategies outlined in the previous sections on how to build a compelling interest in creating intervention programs to support young men and boys of color. Like topics already covered in this guide, using data is important to highlight concerns and create the justification for the programs.

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53 See *Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke* (1978), *Gratz vs. Bollinger* (2003), *Grutter vs. Bollinger* (2003), *Fischer vs. The University of Texas* (2016).

54 This section is based on the conference presentation, *Legal Issues, Effective Leadership, and Communication Strategies in Designing Initiatives for Males of Color* available at <https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/259/Legal%20Issues%20Effective%20Leadership%20and%20Communication%20Strategies.pdf>

## TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

Impact: The law compels schools to prevent and address discrimination on the basis of race, color, or nationality. Applies to all elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities that receive federal financial assistance. This includes all school programs and activities.

Legal standard to comply with the law	Strategy to meet standard
<p>Strict Scrutiny: A form of judicial review that courts use to determine the legality of certain actions taken regarding race, color, or national origin. To follow strict scrutiny, race-based actions must further a “compelling government interest” that is “narrowly tailored” to achieve that interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Compelling government interest</i> for the purposes of implementing programs for males of color can be to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Remedy the effects of past discrimination</li> <li>– Promote the benefits of racial diversity and avoid the potential harms of racial isolation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <i>Narrowly tailored</i>: any race-based initiative must be specifically designed to fulfill only the intended goals of the initiative. To meet this standard, districts need to show serious consideration of race-neutral alternatives that will achieve the desired outcome of the initiative (i.e., socio-economic status and academic achievement).</li> </ul> <p>Violations of Title VI must show intentional discrimination or disparate impact/effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Intentional discrimination: similarly situated persons are treated differently based on race, color, or nationality. Must show awareness of a complainant’s race, color, or national origin. In addition, must show that any actions were motivated, at least in part, because of a complainant’s race, color, or national origin.</li> <li>■ Disparate impact/effect: Must show that a practice or procedure has a disparate impact based on race, color, or national origin. This policy must <i>lack a substantive justification</i>.</li> </ul>	<p>Leverage data to illustrate a compelling government interest for creating a program geared toward males of color. For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In most large urban school districts, males of color are the lowest performing group of students on annual state assessments and interim benchmark assessments. It is in the interest of school districts to ensure that all students can meet challenging academic standards.</li> <li>■ Review data on resource comparability and disciplinary practices to highlight racial disparities in areas such as teacher quality, school funding, and suspension rates.</li> <li>■ Consider using data from other sectors, including postsecondary education, labor, and the criminal justice system. Such data can include college retention rates, remedial course-taking, incarceration rates, and the skills and training required by various industries in a rapidly evolving economy.</li> </ul> <p>Creating an initiative that is narrowly tailored will look differently across cities depending on student demographics. In some school districts where males of color and students from low-income families comprise nearly half of the student body, these data can show that race-neutral efforts would not achieve the desired outcomes to improve the academic outcomes of males of color. As districts consider various approaches to meeting this standard, there are a few points to keep in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Analyze district data to compare the effect of using other race-neutral classifications would have on meeting the goal of boosting the academic achievement of males of color. If there is an acceptable race-neutral alternative, districts should consider using that standard instead.</li> <li>■ Periodically review the need for race-neutral alternatives in your district.</li> <li>■ Programs or initiatives that are geared toward young men and boys of color can have open enrollment policies that allow all students to participate in the program.</li> </ul>

## TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972

Impact: Prohibits discrimination based on sex or gender in any federally funded education program or activity. This applies to elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, and any education or training program. Girls and boys are protected under the law, which compels schools to investigate and address any sex-based discrimination in areas such as athletics, sexual violence, and instructional settings.

Legal standard to comply with the law	Strategy to meet standard
<p>Intermediate scrutiny: A form of judicial review to determine the legality of certain actions taken in regard to sex. These actions must serve an important governmental objective and must be substantially related to the achievement of those objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Important governmental objective</i> is a similar but broader category of possible government objectives than “compelling interest” under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (see above). Can include, but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Social needs</li> <li>– Academic needs</li> <li>– School climate and culture</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <i>Substantially related sex-based actions</i> require an “exceedingly persuasive justification” that a particular set of actions achieve the stated governmental objective advocated by the district.<sup>55</sup></li> </ul> <p>Violations to Title IX must cause disparate impacts/effects similar to Title VI in regard to race-based actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Disparate impact/effect: procedure or practice that has disparate impact on individuals of a particular gender.</li> </ul>	<p>Creating an <i>important governmental objective</i> will rely on illustrating how educational settings or curriculum offerings geared toward males of color meet social and educational needs not met in traditional education offerings. A few points to keep in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Analyze and present data on a wide range of indicators to establish an important governmental objective. Due to the broad nature of this standard, it may include social as well as educational needs of students that are not met by traditional or coed settings. Indicators can include student achievement, school climate surveys, disciplinary rates, and postsecondary indicators. School districts should present disaggregated data by race and gender for each indicator.</li> <li>■ In the broader societal context, it may also be helpful to present the government’s interest in ensuring that males of color are prepared to access meaningful academic opportunities that promote gainful employment later in life and increase contributions to local and state tax bases and civic engagement (e.g., voting).</li> </ul> <p>Showing that an initiative for males of color is substantially related to <i>important governmental objectives</i> will largely depend on the objectives of the initiative undertaken by the district. However, general tips to follow are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identify the educational achievement or benefit the district seeks to improve by providing educational opportunities for males of color. This requires highlighting an educational or social need that is not being met by traditional learning environments or curriculum offerings.</li> <li>■ Do not rely on overly broad generalizations about different talents, capacities, or preferences of either sex.</li> <li>■ Use evidence to justify all actions and highlight how it relates to the <i>important governmental objectives</i> outlined by the district.</li> <li>■ Ensure that student participation in district initiatives is voluntary.</li> <li>■ Provide a parallel program for young girls and women of color that is geared toward meeting specific social and educational goals.</li> <li>■ Conduct periodic evaluations to determine if initiatives for males of color comply with Title IX, and if not, modify to ensure compliance.</li> </ul>

55 See *United States v. Virginia*, 518 U.S. 515 (1996).

There are differences between the compliance requirements in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, but there are common strategies to ensure your district remains in good legal standing. Implementing a program for young men and boys of color falls under both laws and therefore districts should ensure they are following both.<sup>56</sup> Strategies that ensure compliance with both laws include:

- Disaggregate data by race and gender for all indicators used to build a compelling interest (or important governmental interest under Title IX).
- Build initiatives for young men and boys of color around concrete and well-defined goals and objectives.
- Ensure that participation in district programs is voluntary and open to all students.
- Periodically review the need for race and sex-based initiatives in your district.

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<sup>56</sup> See the Council's webinar "Implementing the 'Pledge' Consistent with Federal Civil Rights Law" November 18, 2015.



## New York State's My Brother's Keeper Initiative

*In 2016, New York became the first state in the country to formally adopt the goals of My Brother's Keeper advanced by President Barack Obama's administration. In addition to national goals set forth by the White House, New York State committed to the following:*

- *Ensuring equitable access to high quality schools and programs*
- *Expanding prevention, early warning, and intervention services*
- *Using differentiated approaches based on need and culture*
- *Responding to structural and institutional racism*
- *Making comprehensive and coordinated support services widely available*
- *Engaging families and communities in a trusted and respectful way*

*In pursuit of these commitments, the state budgeted money to support school districts in four main areas: recruiting and retaining teachers who reflect the diversity of students across the state; career-to-cradle programs; strengthening involvement of families and communities, and creating and expanding school models that improve outcomes for males of color.<sup>57</sup>*

*To learn more about the initiative and browse through related resources, visit [www.nysed.gov/mbk/schools/my-brothers-keeper](http://www.nysed.gov/mbk/schools/my-brothers-keeper)*



<sup>57</sup> New York State Department of Education (2016). Guidance Document: Emerging Practices for Schools and Communities. Available at: <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/MLK%20Brief-FINAL%2012-5-16.pdf>



# Special Thank You

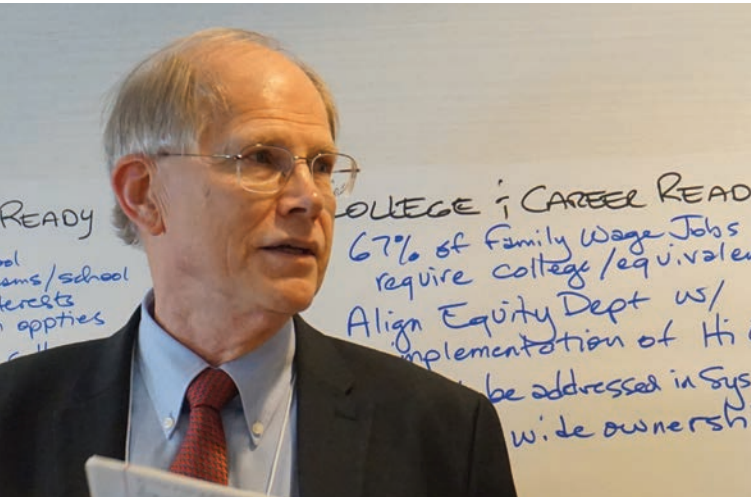
First and foremost, we would like to thank all the school districts who contributed to this report through your participation in the Males of Color Policy Conference and your continued input throughout the years.

We also thank The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for supporting the Council of the Great City Schools' work to improve the academic outcomes of young men and boys of color.

## About the Males of Color Initiative

In October 2010, the Council of the Great City Schools released a major report on the academic status of African American males, *A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools*. The report was the first phase of the Council's ongoing efforts to recommit the energies of the nation's urban public-school systems to improving the quality of education for African American, Latino, Native American and other males of color nationwide. The report, along with efforts by other groups and individuals, was instrumental in calling attention to the issues facing boys and young men of color.

Since that time, the Council has moved beyond analysis of data and worked to identify solutions and spearhead systemic change in urban districts across the country. The Council's website [www.malesofcolor.org](http://www.malesofcolor.org) has been established as a resource for various stakeholders, including school districts, administrators, teachers and the community at large to improve the academic outcomes of males of color. The website provides reports, data, events, and other resources to support the work of districts and program administrators.





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