

African American Male Workgroup Report



June 30, 2010

African American Male Workgroup Report

Foreword

This African American Male Workgroup Report will be utilized as a foundation for an implementation plan to assist in addressing and eliminating the academic achievement gap among African American males in the State of Maryland.

The Strategy Workgroup has worked diligently to ensure that all recommendations from the Task Force Report, relative to education, were adequately addressed. Further, while many of the 40 strategies detailed herein are representative of work that was/is routinely occurring at the Maryland State Department of Education, others are new endeavors that the Strategy Workgroup identified to add breadth as well as depth to this most serious matter.

It is our hope that other agencies and organizations that are assigned responsibilities for the Task Force's recommendations will meticulously consider using this Report as a catalyst to action.

African American Male Workgroup Report

African American Male Workgroup Membership

Maryland State Department of Education Members

Michial A. Gill, Co-Chair, Division of Instruction

Walter J. Sallee, Co-Chair, Division of Student, Family and School Support

Brian Bartels, Division of Student, Family and School Support

Anthony Bell, Division of Business Services

Joe Freed, Division for Leadership Development

Beth Hart, Division of Career and College Readiness

Roni Jolley, Division of Instruction

Elizabeth Kameen, Office of the Attorney General

Valarie Kaufmann, Division of Early Childhood Development

Maggie Madden, Division of Certification and Accreditation

Maureen Mirabito, Office of Instruction and Academic Acceleration

Maureen Moran, Division of Academic Policy

Robert Murphy, Division of Student, Family and School Support

Colleen Seremet, Assistant Superintendent, Division for Instruction

John Smeallie, Deputy Superintendent for Administration

Irene Stiebing, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services

Marcie Taylor-Thoma, Division of Instruction

Gail V. Tucker, Editor, Division of Academic Policy

Robin Ziegler, Division of Business Services

External Members

Rhonda Jones, Chairperson, NAACP Education

Larry Walker, Parent

Judith Smith, Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students (AIMMS)

George Van Hook, Maryland Association of Boards of Education

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Introduction

In June 2003, the Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African American males was convened by the Maryland K-16 Leadership Council to evaluate Maryland's progress in addressing the persistent academic achievement problems among African American males.

In March 2007, the Task Force released its report, which outlines 18 recommendations grounded in state and national research. Each recommendation falls into one of the six requirements of success identified by the Task Force:

1. Skilled, Culturally Competent Teachers
2. High Standards and Academic Opportunity
3. In-School Support
4. Family and Community Support
5. Prevention and Intervention Services
6. College Preparation and Financial Assistance



The Task Force's work did not conclude with the recommendations. Responsibility was assigned for each recommendation with nearly twenty organizations and public agencies throughout the State of Maryland. In some cases, recommendations are shared between agencies.

Dr.

...We acknowledge that, at every level, there's been a fundamental failure on behalf of our African American male students and a persistent bias against them. (These recommendations are intended to rectify both.)

– from the Report on the Task Force on the Education of African American Males
March 2007

Startling statistics taken from the Task Force on the Education of African American Males, March 2007

- African American boys start school woefully behind their peers. After a year in kindergarten, just seven percent of African American boys are reading.
- Statewide, nearly one in ten African American men, aged 20–30 is in prison or jail, and nearly three in ten are under some form of criminal justice control.
- Black males make up 19.3 percent of the state's student population, but just 4.8 percent of its teaching force.
- In 2005, 2,119 African American male students were identified as mentally retarded (62 percent of all identified male students); 4,051 as emotionally disturbed (57 percent); and 1,529 as developmentally delayed (44 percent). Given that African American males make up only 19 percent of Maryland's total student population, the case for over-referral for special education is an easy one to make.

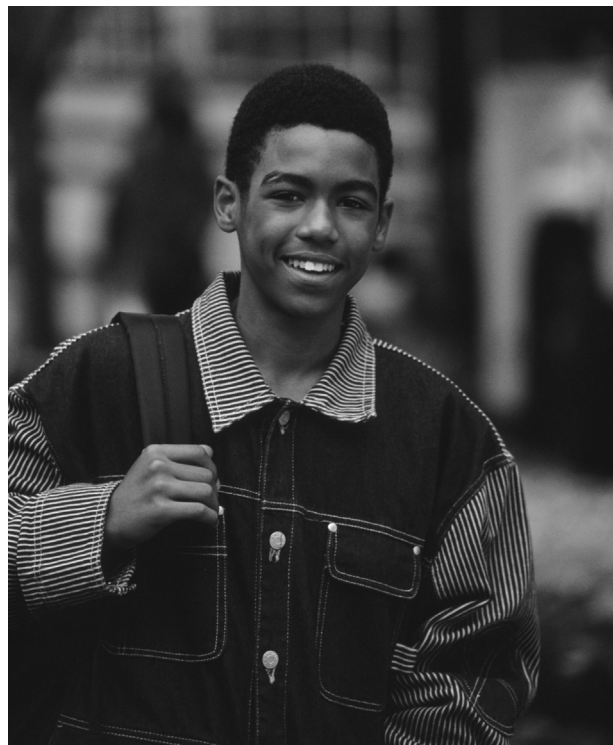
Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, immediately convened a Strategy Workgroup of internal and external individuals to examine those recommendations, for which the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was assigned responsibility. The Workgroup was tasked with developing a set of strategies that the Department could employ to reverse the trend of under-performance among this population of students.

The Work Plan that follows is a culmination of the scrutiny that the Workgroup applied to its charge. There were lengthy discussions regarding strategies that are currently underway and others that are not, but must be implemented.

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The Workgroup also considered the role of MSDE and the types of action it could legally and reasonably require local school districts and partner agencies to take. As a result, the Workgroup applied a “comparative advantage lens” to its work. In other words, how could MSDE use its position and its vantage point to continue, encourage, support, and advance the work of districts and partner agencies in strategically addressing the achievement problems of African American males?

While the Work Plan identifies a few strategies that mandate districts to enhance their practices to support this population of students, it identifies many more strategies that ask MSDE to facilitate and broker opportunities for cross-district sharing and collaboration that will result in increased access to high quality instruction and widespread cultural proficiency.



...the African American male is still imperiled. And while he is ultimately responsible for his own learning, many of the young men we talked to said it's not that they don't respond to education; it's that they don't respond to what passes for it.

– from the Report on the Task Force on
the Education of African American Males
March 2007

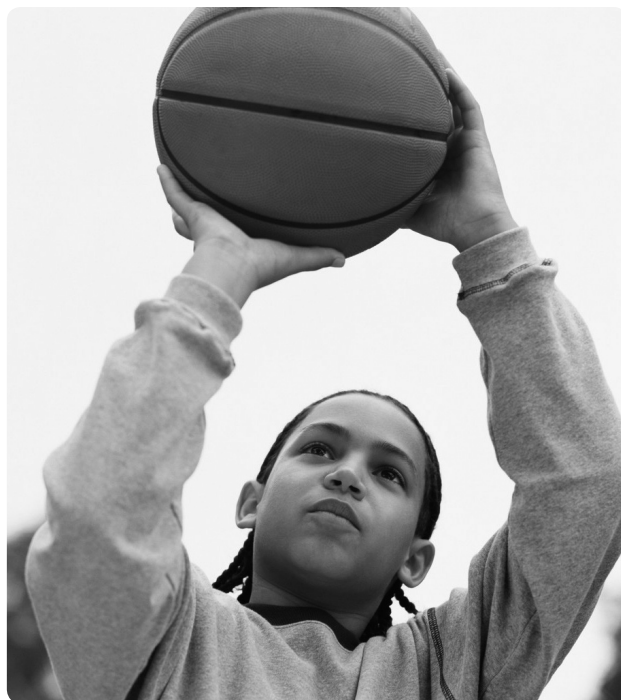
Organization of the Work Plan

The Work Plan begins with two overarching strategies that are essential to the successful sustainability of this effort. The strategies capitalize on MSDE's comparative advantage and guide the remainder of the Work Plan.

Following the overarching strategies, a comprehensive view of the strategies are organized according to the six "Requirements of Success" identified by the original Task Force.

The Workgroup determined that there are already efforts at MSDE that address this crisis and student achievement. The Breakthrough Center is one such effort. The innovative Breakthrough Center is an internal MSDE operation dedicated to coordinating, brokering, and delivering support to low-achieving schools and districts across Maryland. The mission of the Center is to ensure that the right services are delivered to the right districts and schools at the right time to: (1) accelerate school performance; and (2) cultivate people by improving the capacity of individuals through Breakthrough Leading and Teaching. The core work of the Center's operation is instruction. Every effort, every expectation, and every consequence leads to the same result: improved teaching, improved school leadership, and improved learning.

However, the Workgroup strongly believes that a well-coordinated infrastructure is necessary to ensure that these efforts are maximized for greatest impact. With that in mind, the Workgroup identified two overarching strategies specific to this population of students that reinforce MSDE's effort to improve the coordination and collaboration across the Department.



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Overarching Strategies

1. Launch an awareness and solutions campaign for this urgent dilemma that communicates its causes, consequences, and remedies. Utilize the existing statewide conference structure to involve local school system staff and educational stakeholders (parents, higher education, business community, PTAs, boards of education) in applying a conscious lens to this matter with dedicated conference strands that promote widespread sharing of successful solutions.



2. Convene a cross-divisional implementation team to manage the implementation of the strategies included in the Work Plan, monitor their effectiveness, and disseminate information and updates on their implementation and results throughout the Department.

The original task force report provides strong recommendations for addressing the serious achievement problems of African American males. This Work Plan identifies specific, coordinated, and efficient strategies that call for action toward achieving each recommendation. The Workgroup believes that in order for the strategies to take hold and make the impact required, an initial and ongoing step must include a shared awareness of the problem and its complexity. The Workgroup encourages MSDE to build an awareness campaign that will gather the momentum required to carry these strategies forward.

In addition to the awareness campaign, the Workgroup felt strongly about instituting practices dedicated to sharing solutions. Throughout its deliberations, the Workgroup learned of several programs and practices that are employed in districts throughout the state with success—ranging from recruitment of African American males into teaching to the reduction in the referral for special education and disproportionate representation of African American males for special education.

Furthermore, under the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act (section 5-401 of the Annotated Code of Maryland) local school systems are required to develop comprehensive master plans designed to accelerate academic performance of all students and eliminate achievement gaps that exist among various segments of the population. These plans describe specific strategies districts employ to address underperformance, including among African American students. Similarly, another pressing issue is the under-representation of African American males in advanced and gifted and talented programs. Drawing from this history and the rich information contained within the master plans, MSDE will identify those strategies that appear to have the greatest impact in turning around this underperformance and under-representation and infuse them into existing statewide conferences, promoting cross-district and cross-agency sharing and collaboration to reverse this trend once and for all. MSDE should also consider adding these promising practices to its website.

The Workgroup realized that the Department's effort must be consciously applied and seamlessly coordinated across and among every division. Therefore, the Workgroup strongly recommends that an MSDE cross-divisional team be convened to maximize the resources available and monitor the ongoing effectiveness of the strategies and activities identified in the pages of this document. Furthermore, the Workgroup believes that a knowledge management component—the consistent sharing and dissemination of the implementation and results of these strategies—is essential to maintaining the momentum and strengthening the infrastructure that will advance these strategies.

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Targeted and Specific Strategies

These strategies are organized by the *Six Requirements of Success* described in the *Report of the Task Force on the Education of African American Males*, June 2008. It should be noted that even though all Task Force recommendations do not contain a component that is assigned to MSDE, all 18 recommendations are listed in this document. Further, those recommendations that are not specifically related to education are identified as such with an asterisk (*).

REQUIREMENT: Skilled, culturally competent teachers

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #1:
Place the most effective teachers in the highest need classrooms and place the most effective principals in the highest need schools.

Workgroup Strategies:

1. Develop and implement a cultural proficiency program based upon the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework for all principals and instructional leaders that builds
 - a) their knowledge and skill in understanding and addressing the role that culture plays in teaching and learning; and
 - b) their ability to expand this knowledge and skill to their instructional staff and broader school community (parents, staff, students, volunteers).
2. Continue to incorporate content into the Maryland Principals' Academy that specifically addresses instructional and school climate strategies and approaches that are proven to promote the academic achievement of all students especially African American male students.
3. Formalize a timeline and a process for public recognition of those systems and schools that are successful in placing highly qualified teachers in the highest need classrooms.
4. Reexamine the selection process for the Algebra, Biology, English, and Government Governor's Academy to grant priority to teachers representing schools where African American males are underperforming.
5. Ensure all Governor's Academies include topics that promote research-based pedagogical approaches that increase achievement of African American males.
6. Continue to develop and offer MSDE-approved Continuing Professional Development courses that promote the identification of talent in underrepresented populations.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION # 2:
Recruit African American men into teaching

Workgroup Strategies:

7. Recruit African American male students into Future Educator Association chapters within local school systems throughout the State.
8. Facilitate district-driven development of the Teacher Academy Program for African American males, which provides a course for classroom experience, teacher certification, and provides direct linkages to certification and support programs through their post-secondary educational experience.
9. Facilitate district-driven development of programs for paraprofessionals that provide consistent and convenient support to African American males in becoming fully certified as a teacher (e.g. cohort programs, tutorials for Praxis, SAT, ACT, and GRE, alternative certification routes, etc.)
10. Encourage two- and four-year higher educational institutions to develop certification programs, for example, 2+2 program, with recruitment targeted at African American males.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION # 3:
Include in teacher programs cultural competency training, especially as it relates to African American males, and make teachers demonstrate effectiveness in this area.

Workgroup Strategies:

11. Develop a three-credit, MSDE-approved cultural proficiency course for teachers.

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Targeted and Specific Strategies

Requirement: High Standards and Academic Opportunity

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #4:

Stop inappropriate referral and disproportionate representation of African American males for special education.

Workgroup Strategies:

12. Provide a Response to Intervention (RTI) instruction model for reading including:
 - Universal screening;
 - Explicit differentiated reading instruction for all students in Tier 1;
 - Intensive, instructional interventions for small groups (no more than 6 students) in Tier 2;
 - Progress monitoring every six weeks;
 - A Tier 3 intensive program daily for students not making progress at Tier 2.
13. Provide data regarding identification, placement, and discipline of students with disabilities, disaggregated by race/ethnicity to each LEA annually.
14. Continue to award annual discretionary grants to LEAs to address the over-referral and suspension of African American males in special education through the implementation of focused behavioral interventions and positive behavioral supports, targeted academic interventions, and professional development.
15. Require LEAs identified as significantly disproportionate in the identification, placement, and suspension of African American students with disabilities to use 15 percent of the LEA's IDEA Part B funds to provide Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS).
16. Require LEAs to complete a self-assessment that may include the review and revision of LEA policies, procedures and practices related to the identification, placement and suspension of students with disabilities that includes African American males as part of the Local Application for Federal Funds.

17. Continue to support increased participation of African American male students with disabilities in the general education classroom through the allocation of funds to support those students in the least restrictive environment based on direct allocations related to local data and competitive discretionary grants.
18. Conduct monitoring via onsite comprehensive, focused, and/or desk audits, and provide targeted technical assistance to LEAs based on identification of non-compliance regarding identification, placement and/or discipline of African American males. Assist LEAs to develop Corrective Action Plans and/or Improvement Plans to address deficiencies.
19. Continue technical assistance from Mid-South Regional Resource Center regarding over-referral and on-going dialogue and reflection regarding cultural competency and the role that teachers, schools, and community play in supporting African American males.

Continue to offer MSDE-approved Continuing Professional Development courses that promote the identification of twice exceptional gifted students with learning disabilities such as Smart Kids with Learning Difficulties.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #5:

Increase the proportion of African American males taking the PSAT/NMSQT in 10th and 11th grade and provide them with the academic preparation and support they need to be successful.

Workgroup Strategies:

20. Develop statewide training on mechanisms of communication for local school systems on administration of PSAT/NMSQT/NMSQT to all students with focus on African American males and disaggregation methods to inform instruction and intervention strategies.

Targeted and Specific Strategies

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #5: (cont'd.)

21. Develop statewide training for local school systems on PSAT/NMSQT best practices and strategies to inform curriculum and instruction, including data interpretation, student and teacher resources, and classroom intervention strategies, particularly addressing the needs of the African American males.
22. Examine current scope and sequence of high school mathematics curriculum to ensure that students taking PSAT/NMSQT in 10th and 11th grade have been successful in their high school algebra course that is aligned with the Algebra/Data Analysis State Curriculum.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #6: Ensure that every public high school offers an Advanced Placement (AP) program and that the prevalence of African American males enrolled in AP reflects the demographics of the overall student.

Workgroup Strategies:

23. Develop cross-district distance-learning infrastructure that enables students in districts without AP programs to access instruction delivered in other districts (e.g. video conferencing, Webinars, etc.).
24. As part of the solutions campaign, develop targeted cultural competency training that specifically addresses enrollment of African American males in advanced programming opportunities as a conference strand.

25. Target African American male participation in AP through Project 3+3 and develop support systems and strategies to increase participation and performance.
26. Continue expansion of Project 3+3 in identified Baltimore City High Schools, Advanced Placement Incentive Program (APIP) grant, is funding AP expansion in identified Baltimore City high schools with a pervasive need for AP expansion.
27. Target African American male identification for gifted and talented education programs using culture sensitive performance-based identification methods such as the Primary Talent Development Early Learning Program and the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking,
28. Examine the AP Score Report to understand the diagnostic information of African American males and assist them in planning for high school, college, and career.

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Targeted and Specific Strategies

Requirement: In-school Support

*** TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #7:**
Increase and improve in-school supervised suspension programs focused on academic development and behavioral counseling. Significantly reduce out-of-school, unsupervised suspensions.

*** TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #8:**
Establish within the African American majority schools some single-sex classes, primarily enrolling students with academic, attendance, and discipline problems.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #9:
Assign to all high-risk African American male students an advocate to work through academic and disciplinary problems and provide college and career guidance.

Workgroup Strategies:

29. Promote cross-district sharing of successful programs that provide in-school advocates to high-risk African American males.



Requirement: Family and Community Support

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #10:
Fund and provide direction for programs in which one-on-one and group mentoring is provided to African American males.

Workgroup Strategies:

30. Promote cross-district sharing of successful programs that provide mentors to high-risk African American males, for example, Principals' Partners, 100 Black Men, Inc., and the Prodigy Project.
31. Launch a statewide campaign to recruit parents and African American males to serve as mentors in districts and facilitate connections between volunteers and districts.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #11:
Provide educational materials to young African American fathers and their children.

Workgroup Strategies:

32. Capitalize on existing partnerships with community organizations, districts, churches, and state agencies to disseminate educational materials to young African American fathers and their children. Provide parent education materials to these organizations through state and federally funded projects such as Reading First and Early Reading First.

*** TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #12:**
Encourage certain ex-offenders convicted of non-violent felonies to volunteer in their communities.

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Targeted and Specific Strategies

Requirement: Prevention and intervention services

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #13:
Provide high-quality early care and education to all children

Workgroup Strategies:

33. Determine which elementary schools have a documented achievement gap but do not have a Judy Center and ensure that they are first targeted for establishment as funds become available.
34. Continue implementation of the Early Childhood Curriculum Project, which provides funds to Child Care Providers to purchase Division of Early Childhood Development approved curricular resources aligned with the Maryland State Curriculum.

Provide technical assistance to Judy Centers and other Early Childhood centers in the implementation of the Primary Talent Development Early Learning Program, PreK – 2.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #14:
In areas of high need, provide the physical, dental, and mental health services needed to support greater academic achievement.

Workgroup Strategies:

35. Expand Maryland's School-based Health Centers.
36. Expand the Maryland Meals for Achievement Program.

*** TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION # 15:**
Increase funding for correctional education programs so that every resident receives the academic and occupational services he needs to transition back into his school and community.

Requirement: College Preparation and Financial Assistance

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #16:
Help African American males make the transition from high school to college.

Workgroup Strategies:

37. Continue the alignment work with the American Diploma Project and our higher education partners to ensure that high school courses adequately prepare students for the first credit bearing college course in English and mathematics.
38. Examine implementation of statewide 2+2+2 articulation model with P-20 Leadership Council.
39. Convene middle and high school teachers and college faculty to establish performance expectations for students completing college-prep and advanced curriculum programs and engage in work sessions to ensure that expectations are aligned with course rigor.

*** TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #17:**
Make college financially viable for African American males.

*** TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #18:**
Provide full funding for state need-based grant and scholarship programs and extend them to certain incarcerated students.

Workgroup Strategies:

40. Encourage private organizations to provide tuition assistance to African American male students, including incarcerated students.

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Conclusion

Promising reforms are taking place in districts throughout the State of Maryland as well as the nation. In addition, changing the trajectory of African American male students is on the national radar screen with the U.S. Department of Education. Several studies, that include *A Call for Change* by the Council of the Great City Schools; *We Dream a World* by the 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys; and *Yes We Can, the Schott Foundation's 50-State Report on Public Education and Black Males* by the Schott Foundation for Public Education, report that African American youths are struggling along all points of the academic continuum.

Finally, to address reform and complement existing improvements statewide, Maryland Schools Superintendent Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick charged the African American Male Workgroup Members to not only raise awareness and stimulus, but to also develop a blueprint for the global sharing of successful solutions that will help to eliminate the academic achievement gap among African American males.