

A photograph of three young Black boys in soccer attire. The boy in the center is wearing a bright green mesh vest over a black and white striped shirt, smiling broadly. He has his arms around the shoulders of two other boys. The boy on the left is wearing a yellow jersey and is also smiling. The boy on the right is wearing a red jersey and is looking down with a slight smile. The background is a blurred outdoor field.

TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE OF MARYLAND'S SCHOOLS FOR BLACK BOYS

**Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity
and Excellence for Black Boys**

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Task Force wishes to thank all those who offered their time, energy, and talent to support this great work on behalf of Black boys and young men in Maryland's schools. We send our sincere thanks to the expert authors and speakers whose presentations provided unique perspectives to our research.

You gifted us with your knowledge and expertise because of your own passion to see our Black boys and young men succeed.

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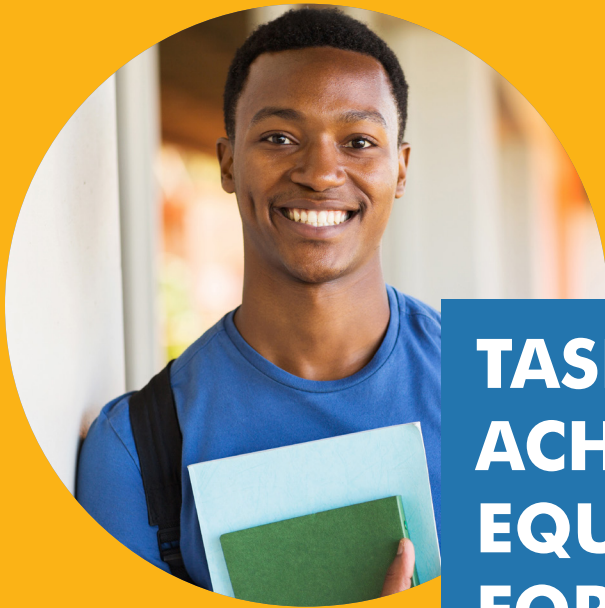
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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

So, why the focus on Black boys?

Other student groups need help, too. In response, I offer the metaphor of the fire engine responding to an alarm. It races through the neighborhood, bypassing many homes, to help the house engulfed in flames. The crisis with our Black boys and young men can be compared to that blazing inferno, and they urgently need our help. Fighting the fire with garden-hose solutions – spraying well-intended but ineffectual, inconsistent, or half-hearted efforts – will only endanger the other homes (students) or destroy the entire neighborhood (school).

For the three years that I have served on the Maryland State Board of Education, I have reviewed and expressed my concerns about data that have consistently shown the underperformance of boys, specifically Black boys. Unfortunately, this is not just a three-year old problem – as a closer look at trend data over many years reveals a long history of lower academic performance and graduation rates. On the other hand, dropout rates and incidents of exclusionary disciplinary practices, e.g., suspension and expulsion, are much higher when compared to their peers. These inequities have a detrimental impact and, as research has shown, contribute to the conditions that lead to the school-to-prison pipeline for our Black young men.

“The continued failure of so many young men not only increases the likelihood that they’ll end up in prison, permanently unemployed, or dead at an early age but [their continued failure increases the likelihood] that our society will accept such conditions as normal. As that begins to occur, all of us are endangered.”

Dr. Pedro A. Noguera

Distinguished Professor of Education at the Graduate School of Education, UCLA

The Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys was convened to explore these inequities and develop a set of evidence-based recommendations and strategies to improve the educational experiences and outcomes for Black boys in Maryland’s schools. The recommendations are intended to be practical, feasible, meaningful, reasonable, justifiable, and actionable. **They will also require engagement of multiple stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, administrators, schools and school districts, legislators, citizens at-large as well as business, community, and religious leaders.** Moreover, there must be consistent monitoring and accountability to ensure that the recommendations are implemented with fidelity and lead to more positive outcomes.

The recommendations are not intended to be a “one-size fits all” approach; nor is it our expectation that all districts will adopt every recommendation presented in this report, as student needs and experiences will differ. However, we believe that there are strategies that can be explored, adopted, and/or modified for every school community.

With the passage of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, our State is able to financially support new initiatives that increase equity and excellence for students. It would be ill-advised not to direct portions of this available funding towards creating social-emotional programs and academic supports for our Black boys and young men. For many of them, a lack of educational equity may cause **their future in Maryland** to be less promising than their peers.

Our Black boys are intelligent and capable. Like all other children, they want to learn and be successful. Yet, this will not happen if as a

state education system we – either through ignorance or neglect – fail to educate them in ways that affirm their learning differences, attend to their social-emotional needs, appreciate their culture, set high expectations, and respect them as unique individuals.

If the education system of Maryland is sincerely committed to equity and excellence for ALL students, then the mis-education of Black boys and young men can no longer be tolerated. The time has arrived – and is long past due – to rectify the hindrances that have prevented them from reaching their God-given potential.

If our Black boys are in trouble, then so are we all.



Vermelle D. Greene, Ph.D.

Chair, Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys, Maryland State Board of Education

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For nearly 30 years, Maryland has been engaged in efforts to examine the experiences and achievement of Black male students. Many have offered recommendations that address and promote excellence and equity among this group.

In 1993, the Governor’s Commission on Black Males issued a report on conditions related to employment, health, criminal justice, and education. The report revealed important findings and powerful recommendations in each of the areas studied and pointed to serious and continuing problems concerning the education and development of Maryland’s African-American boys and young men. Since that seminal report, various task forces, committees, and work groups have been convened to explore and address issues highlighted in the report.

A tremendous amount of work, passion, and good intentions fueled these previous efforts to advance achievement and equitable outcomes. Unfortunately, implementation – and perhaps more importantly, regular monitoring and oversight – of the recommendations did not translate into the desired improvements for Black boys in Maryland’s schools, as state assessment data for this student group consistently reveal test scores that remain at the bottom while suspension and expulsion rates remain consistently high (Maryland State Department of Education, 2018).

These data are neither indicators of educational excellence nor equity for these children and call for a renewed emphasis on improving educational outcomes for Black boys. As State Superintendent Dr. Karen Salmon has expressed,

“We have a call to action to work together to tackle the inequities and systemic racial barriers that persist for our Black students...”

In response, the Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) formed the Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys to more closely examine the disparities in the academic experiences and outcomes of Black male students and propose actionable, evidence-based recommendations and strategies for implementation.

The Task Force held monthly meetings from July 2020 through March 2021. Information was gathered through presentations from state and nationally known subject-matter experts; reviews of literature, research, and previous state reports related to academic performance and outcomes for Black boys; and intensive work group discussions and data analysis.

This information was used to guide the work of the Task Force and inform the development of recommendations in three key areas for which study groups were formed, as outlined below:

STUDY GROUP 1: SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS

- **Recommendation 1.1:**
Require de-escalation and other evidence-based intervention and training for all school staff.
- **Recommendation 1.2:**
Include gender equity as part of the Maryland School Report Card, which would give a true measure of equity or lack of equity being achieved for Black boys.
- **Recommendation 1.3:**
Coordinate structured mentoring programs (adult male and/or peer mentoring) tailored to meet the social and emotional learning needs for identified Black boys in grades K-12.
- **Recommendation 1.4:**
Implement a Rites of Passage program for Black boys in Grades 6-12.

STUDY GROUP 2: RECRUITING AND TRAINING SKILLED, COMPETENT TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

- **Recommendation 2.1:**
Provide financial incentives to recruit and retain racially and ethnically diverse teachers and administrators in the profession.
- **Recommendation 2.2:**
Require school district representatives with teacher and administrator hiring responsibilities (e.g., human resource officers, supervisors, and school principals) to have training on equitable hiring practices of racially and ethnically diverse teacher candidates.
- **Recommendation 2.3:**
Recruit racially and ethnically diverse teacher and administrator candidates into programs to educate and prepare them to enter the profession.
- **Recommendation 2.4:**
Provide all teachers and school-based administrators, along with all other district personnel, continued professional development on culturally-responsive teaching practices and methods to support the academic, social-emotional, and developmental needs of Black boys and young men.
- **Recommendation 2.5:**
Use a multi-prong approach to retain Black men and other ethnically diverse teachers and administrators in the profession.

STUDY GROUP 3 – CURRICULA AND INSTRUCTION

- **Recommendation 3.1:**
Provide professional learning to support the implementation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy/Culturally Responsive Teaching and Anti-bias practices in classrooms and schools.
- **Recommendation 3.2:**
Address ongoing achievement gaps by using the science of reading (systematic phonics instruction, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, methods to improve fluency, and ways to enhance comprehension) for grades K-3 and beyond for older struggling readers.
- **Recommendation 3.3:**
Address ongoing gaps in math, and continual math decline through advancing grades by using standards-based, real-world math instruction infused with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) activities.

- **Recommendation 3.4:**
Use a proven program, such as The Algebra Project, to address persistent gaps in math and the continual decline in math achievement through advancing grades.
- **Recommendation 3.5:**
Expand Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) and the African American Male Initiative (AAMI) to address reduced enrollment in Advanced Placement courses and gaps in advancement to college and college graduation.
- **Recommendation 3.6:**
Districts encourage individual co-ed schools to create single-gender classes across grades or for selected subjects. Districts may also consider approving charter schools with single-gender classes for boys and girls.
- **Recommendation 3.7:**
An annual symposium on teaching and engaging Black boys hosted by the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE).



The recommendations are intended to promote long overdue improvements in educational experiences and outcomes for Black boys. While the Task Force acknowledges that many individual teachers, schools, and districts, as well as the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), have worked toward and made some gains in addressing the low performance and inequities that plague far too many of our Black boys and young men, we must ensure that the strategies and practices used are monitored, evaluated, effective, wide-ranging, and long-lasting in their impact.

It is also important to note that while not a specific area of focus for this work, the Task Force acknowledges the need for further discussion regarding strategies to mitigate the yet unknown effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Maryland's students, particularly Black male students. Appendix A includes an addendum that lists specific recommendations to support Black boys and young men in the wake of COVID-19.

II. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The underperformance of our Black boys and young men is not a recent phenomenon. The overwhelming national, state, and local data regarding the underachievement of black boys is a historical concern and requires intentional and unapologetic action.

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu (2020), in his extensive research on educating boys of color, reports: 12% of 8th graders are proficient in reading; 29% are retained; 80% of black/Hispanic students in special education are male; 24% are suspended; 25-53% dropout; and 52% of male inmates are Black/Hispanic.

Maryland public school data reveal consistently lower proficiency and graduation rates for Black boys. Figure 1 shows the percent of Black boys scoring proficient at level 4 or 5 on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests in Math grades 3-8 and Algebra I. Figure 2 shows that all Black students scored below other races and ethnicities for English-Language Arts on PARCC. When compared to their Black female peers (Figure 3), Black boys scored even lower. Figure 3 shows males have consistently scored lower in English-Language Arts than Females from 2015–2019.

Figure 1 / Academic Achievement: PARCC Tests - Percent of Students Scoring “Proficient” in Math and Algebra (African-American Females and African-American Males)

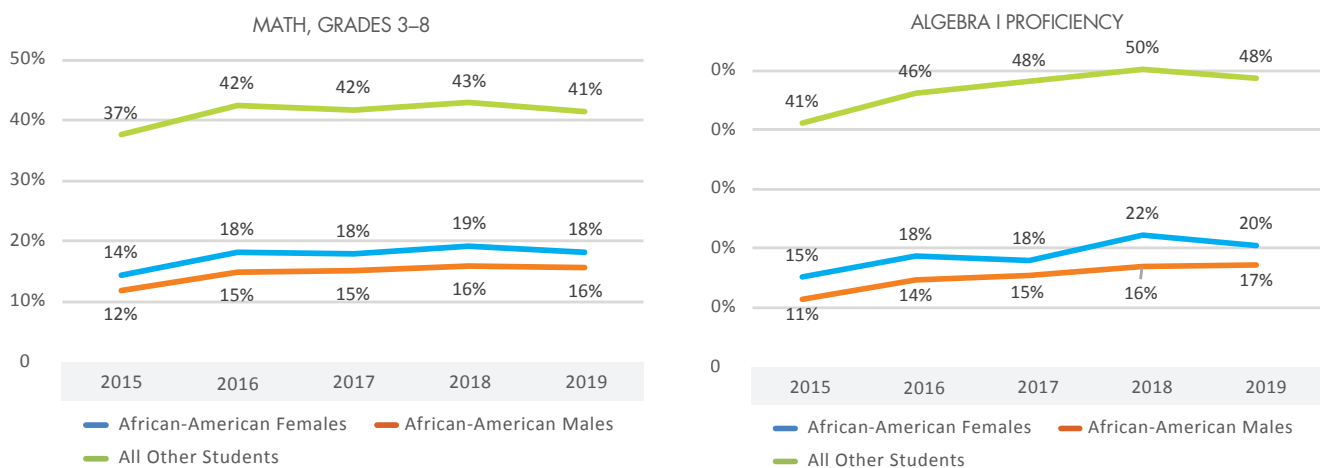


Figure 2 / Academic Achievement: PARCC Tests - Percent of Students Scoring at Performance Level 4 or Higher in English Language Arts (by Race/Ethnicity)

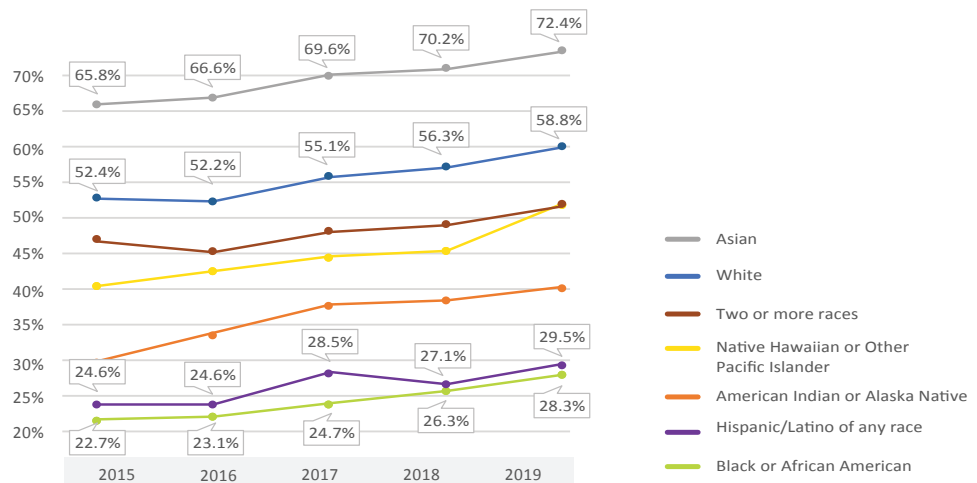


Figure 3 / Academic Achievement: PARCC Tests - Percent of Students at Performance Level 4 or Higher In English Language Arts 3-8 (by Gender)

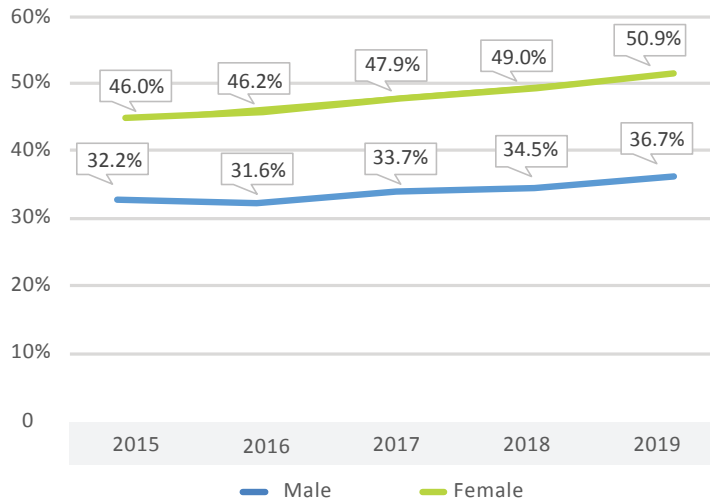
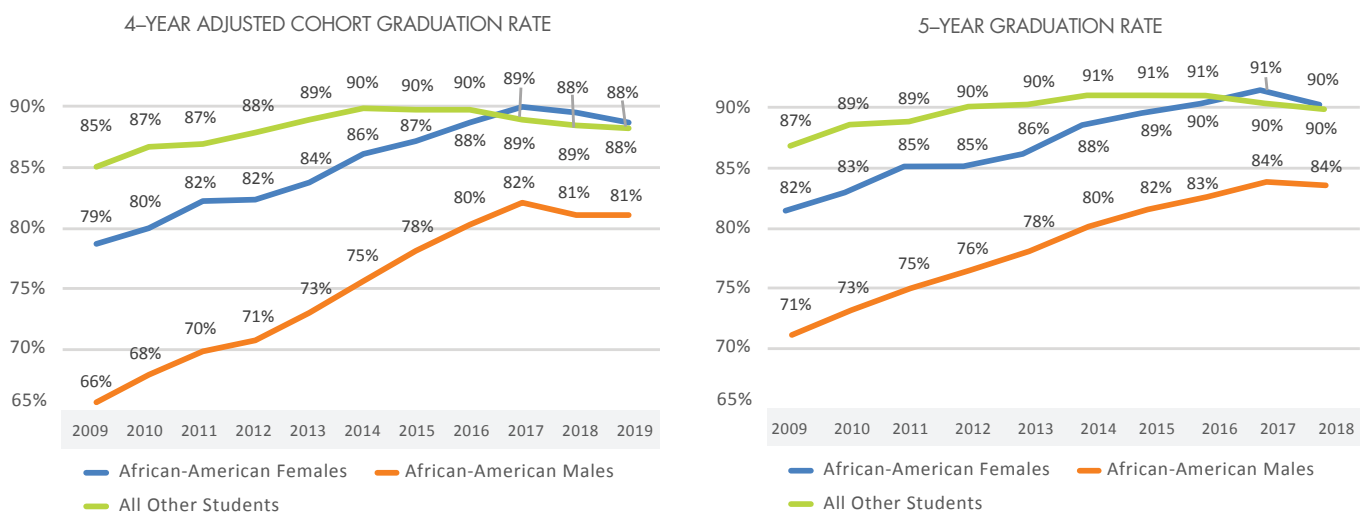


Figure 4 shows high school graduation rates of Black young men compared to Black young women and other student groups. This achievement gap between Black teens and their peers has persisted unabated for years, if not decades. The result is a generation of young Black men who are at a disadvantage when attempting to compete academically, and subsequently economically, with their peers.

Figure 4 / High School Graduation Rate (African-American Females and African-American Males)



Equally troubling are the discipline data for Black boys. Male students are suspended and/or expelled at more than twice the rate of female students. (Figure 5) Then we see that Black students have triple the rate of suspensions and expulsions compared to white students and other student groups. Therefore, the students most affected by exclusionary discipline in Maryland schools are Black boys and young men (Figure 6).

Figure 5 / Suspension and Expulsion Data (by Gender)

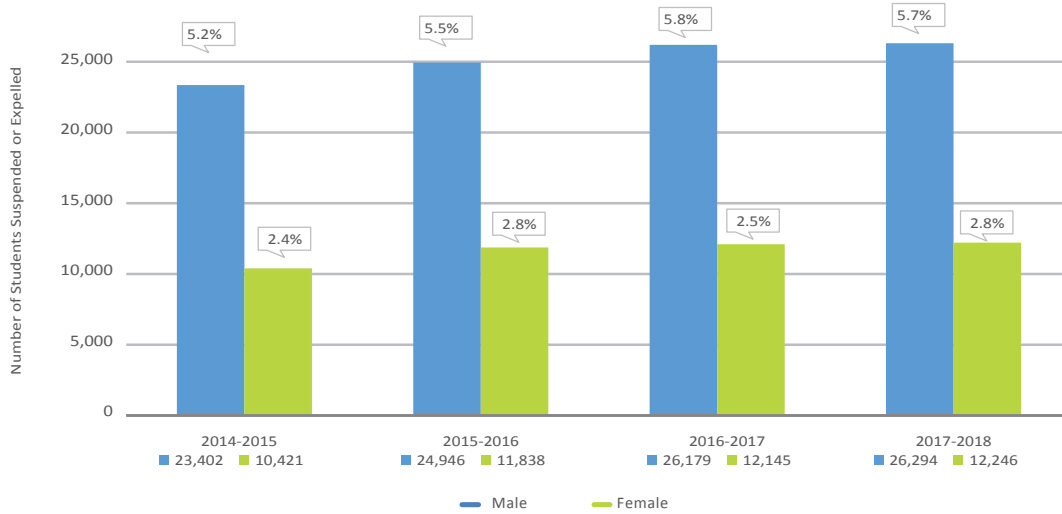
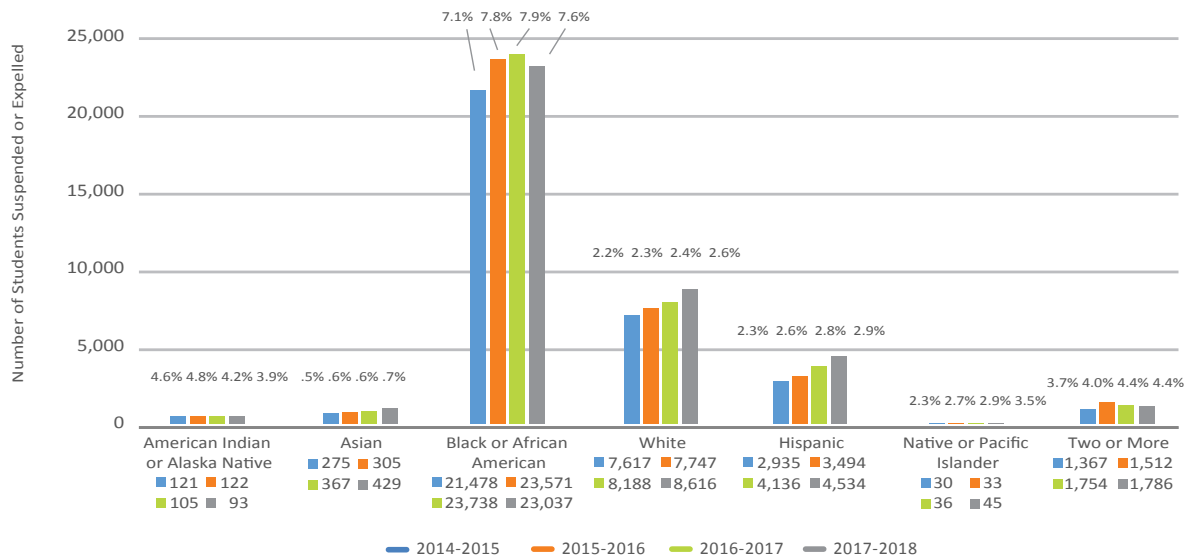


Figure 6 / Suspension and Expulsion Data (by Race/Ethnicity)



The perpetuation and seeming tolerance of low academic performance combined with disproportionately harsher discipline consequences, even if unintended, denies Black boys the same opportunities available to their better-educated peers. This can result in their lacking the foundational skills necessary to thrive in this knowledge-based economy.

Those who are poorly educated or lack trade skills will have difficulty benefitting from available opportunities to make a living wage or contribute to society. Unfortunately, they may resort to survival methods that rely on an underground (and illegal) economy, which only leads to the exacerbation of society’s problems. Finding solutions to the academic disconnect that undeniably exists in educating Black boys is an urgent priority requiring commitment, engagement, and resources.

THE CHARGE

III. THE CHARGE

In June 2020, the State Board approved the formation of the Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys.

Guided by the understanding that all students in Maryland should receive an education that is both equitable and excellent, the Task Force was charged to explore the following:

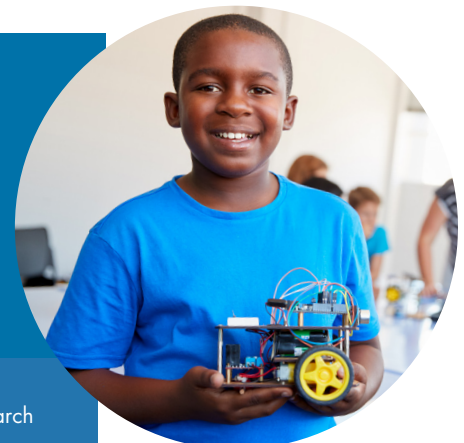
- Consider the impact that discipline policies have on Black boys in the classroom; determine best practices to minimize disciplinary problems and correct behavior without discouraging academic achievement.
- Evaluate the availability and effectiveness of teacher preparation and professional development for culturally responsive teaching and cultural literacy as it pertains to Black boys.
- Identify opportunities to improve current curricula and instructional techniques, strategies, and methods to educate Black boys.
- Review current research and identify effective, research-based practices for educating boys of color inside and outside of Maryland; best practices can include but are not limited to, single-sex classes, mentoring, Rites of Passage programs, male-specific pedagogy, and phonics-based reading instruction.
- Evaluate current hiring methods and identify obstacles to the recruitment and retention of Black male teachers; identify organizations that could form partnerships to support the Department's efforts to recruit Black male teachers.
- Examine the reports of other MSDE task forces and commissions, including, but not limited to, the Kirwan Commission, the Commission on the School to Prison Pipeline, the Task Force on Student Discipline Regulations, and the Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African-American Males (March 2007); review those reports' findings and determine to what degree the recommendations have been successfully implemented.



The information gathered guided the development of practical recommendations for improving the learning environment for Black male students in Maryland public schools with consideration of the following areas: social, emotional, and behavioral supports; regulatory, policy, or guidance changes; curricular changes; adoption of instructional materials and resources; professional development; financial and human resources; and where appropriate, recommendations for legislative actions.

"[Researchers] identified the key conditions underlying the successful engagement of boys in their learning. In their resounding validation of teachers who inspired, helped, and uplifted them, boys led the investigators to the conclusion that "relationship is the very medium through which successful teaching and learning is performed."

– D. Autor et al
Institute for Policy Research



IV. THE PROCESS

The process used to derive the recommendations began with selecting the key components of a successful educational experience for all children. The Task Force identified three critical focus areas: 1) social, emotional, and behavioral supports; 2) recruitment and training of effective teachers and administrators; 3) curricula and instruction.

The Task Force held meetings from July 2020 – March 2021. Data was gathered through presentations from state and nationally recognized experts, reviews of relevant literature and reports, and work group discussions. A brief description of each activity/approach is provided below.

1 — PRESENTATIONS

Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC) | August 13, 2020

Presenters: Ron Walker, Founder and Executive Director; Deidre Farmbry, Ph.D.; Timothy Jones; Kamau Ptah; and Jamila Sams, M.Ed.

A review of standards and promising practices for advancing achievement, social emotional and cultural development, and the role and impact of Rites of Passage programs in mentoring and improving educational outcomes for boys of color.

Maryland State Department of Education PreK-2 Suspension Data | September 10, 2020

Presenter: Dara Shaw, Ph.D., Executive Director, MSDE Office of Research and Strategic Data Use

Review of relevant legislation and state data on suspension and expulsions for PreK-2.

Boys Adrift | September 10, 2020

Presenter: Dr. Leonard Sax, M.D., Ph.D., Psychologist, Practicing Physician, Author

Review of factors that influence motivation and achievement among young men, along with male-specific pedagogy and strategies for effectively engaging them in the learning process.

Educating Black Male Students | October 8, 2020

Presenter: Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu, Nationally Renowned Scholar, Author, Educational Consultant

Review and discussion of male-specific pedagogy and best practices for educating male students.

Spotlight on Best Practices: Single-Gender Schools | November 12, 2020

Presenter: Dr. Melinda Johnson, Principal - J.P. Ryon Elementary School, Charles County Public Schools, Superintendent's Academic Leadership Team

Overview of the Scholars Exhibiting Leadership Excellence Character and Teamwork (S.E.L.E.C.T.) program, a gender-based program established to address the achievement gap for African-American boys, as well as bolster the performance of girls in science and math, by employing teaching methods and activities that are designed for the different ways boys and girls acquire and process knowledge.

Spotlight on Best Practices: Building our Network of Diversity (BOND) Project | November 12, 2020

Presenter: Dr. Daryl Howard, Equity Instructional Specialist, Montgomery County Public Schools

Overview of the BOND project, an organization of male educators of color and their allies who work to improve recruitment, retention, development, and empowerment of male educators of color, as well as boys of color.

Logic of English | December 10, 2020

Presenter: Denise Eides, Founder/CEO Logic of English

Review of rules, research and strategies for common-sense approaches to reading, spelling, and literacy.

2 — STUDY GROUPS

Three study groups were formed, each tasked with specific goals as described below:

- **Study Group 1: Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports**
To develop recommendations to provide effective approaches for the social, emotional, and behavioral supports for Black boys.
- **Study Group 2: Recruiting and Training Skilled, Competent Teachers and Administrators**
To develop recommendations to recruit, retain, and develop a cadre of teachers and administrators trained to support Black boys.
- **Study Group 3: Curriculum and Instruction**
To develop recommendations about effective, research-based strategies and instructional approaches to improve academic outcomes for Black boys.

3 — REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND REPORTS

Task Force members reviewed and analyzed relevant research, literature, and reports related to improving academic performance and outcomes for Black boys. This included reports from other MSDE and state task forces, commissions/committees, and work groups including, but not limited to, the *Kirwan Commission*, the *Commission on the School to Prison Pipeline*, the *Task Force on Student Discipline Regulations, Equity and Excellence – A Guide to Educational Equity in Maryland*, and the *Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African-American Males (March 2007)*. The study groups determined the extent to which the recommendations were successfully implemented. Information was used to enhance understanding, provide additional insight, and inform the work to be accomplished. A comprehensive list of references and resources is included at the end of this report.

4 — RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

Based on information and feedback gathered over the eight-month period each study group developed recommendations for the State Board's consideration. In developing this mix of strategies and methods, each work group was tasked to provide 1) justification and supporting evidence for each recommendation, 2) strategies for carrying out the recommendation, 3) potential roadblocks to implementation, and 4) suggested solutions and approaches to those roadblocks. This information is presented for each study group.

The Task Force recommendations are intended to serve as a guide to help educators improve academic achievement and equity for Black boys in Maryland's schools. This includes reducing the number of behavior problems which result in suspensions and expulsions; providing social, emotional, and behavioral supports; supporting district administrators in recruiting well-qualified educators and administrators; preparing principals to recruit and train effective teachers; locating and/or writing curricula; and delivering instruction tailored to the needs of Black boys and young men.

As noted, the recommendations include a mix of strategies and methods – many of which can be implemented immediately by classroom teachers and building principals on their own initiative and others that may require an intermediate- or long-term timeline. Other recommendations involve resources and personnel outside the local school, requiring the support of district superintendents working with their local boards of education. Some require the intervention of the State Board in conjunction with the State Superintendent and team of specialists at the Maryland State Department of Education. Also, some recommendations involve bringing in consultants and trainers who have worked with other state and local school systems and experienced success with improving the performance of Black boys and young men.

Finally, the Task Force recognizes the need for (and encourages) schools and districts to partner with local colleges and universities, particularly tapping into their resources for pre-service training of our teachers and administrators, developing curricula, and ongoing professional development.



The following section shows the Task Force’s Recommendations and Rationales, organized by specific Study Groups (Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports; Recruiting and Training Skilled, Competent Teachers and Administrators; and Study Curriculum and Instruction).

We have provided notes pages for each Study Group for recording any thoughts or ideas that this resource guide may elicit or inspire.

TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE OF MARYLAND'S SCHOOLS FOR BLACK BOYS



STUDY GROUP 1: **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS**



STUDY GROUP 1: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS

The purpose of this study group was to develop recommendations to provide effective approaches for social, emotional, and behavioral supports for Black boys.

While there are many systems of support in place in our schools, they are not effectively addressing the disparities that exist between Black boys and their peer groups. The following recommendations and strategies are designed to improve the learning environment so that every Black boy enrolled in Maryland Public Schools receives the social, emotional, and behavioral supports that lead to a sense of school belonging and improved outcomes. For each recommendation, an accompanying table outlines potential roadblocks and suggested solutions and approaches to prevent or minimize them.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1

Require de-escalation and other evidence-based intervention and training for all school staff.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. Funding

Local school systems will designate and/or secure funding to support verbal intervention and de-escalation training.

- a. Review Title grant funds to reallocate resources to support staff de-escalation training.
- b. Increase Title grant requests to include funds to deliver verbal intervention and de-escalation training to all staff.

2. Training

- a. Identify staff members who will be trained in the train-the-trainer model to include the following: school counselors, school psychologists, teacher specialists, coordinators/supervisors, and aspiring lead teachers and administrators, etc.
- b. Develop a schedule to ensure that all staff are trained.
 - Use professional development time prior to the start of the school year to train all staff.
 - Create a tiered schedule for training throughout the school year.

3. Data Review

Create a team to review student data to determine and analyze the impact of the implementation of the strategies.

- a. Connect outcomes to school improvement goals.
- b. Disaggregate Black male student group data for use by the school improvement team, department teams, grade level teams, etc.
- c. Create professional learning time for staff to review discipline data and analyze the outcomes on a regular basis to determine if the implemented strategies and practices are having a positive impact on Black boys' discipline data.

4. Collaboration

- a. Building administrators will provide opportunities for teachers to share best practices regarding verbal intervention techniques.
- b. Designate periods of time during grade level or department meetings for teachers to share progress reports.
- c. Utilize peer leaders and trainers for classroom observations, coaching, and collaboration.

“When Black boys feel they are not liked, respected, understood, and nurtured by their teachers, they devise schemes to get suspended. Out-of-school suspensions are like vacations for boys...Clearly, as a punitive measure, out-of-school suspensions do not change behavior.”

– Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu
Changing the School Culture for Black Boys



Table 1.1

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. Not enough money in the school-based budget for training and/or substitute pay.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use the train-the-trainer model, and only pay to have specific staff members trained to deliver the program at their school. 2. Have designated staff members certified for the verbal intervention program as a means to potentially reduce cost. 3. Use professional development days to train staff.
<p>B. Not enough time to have trainers certified and remaining staff trained.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be strategic about which staff and how many will get certified as trainers e.g., choose those staff members who have the most flexibility to be trained and deliver training. 2. Provide training opportunities for staff to be certified virtually. 3. Identify specific staff to be trained in the virtual learning course. 4. Investigate the delivery of training through staff meetings and/or professional learning communities.
<p>C. Staff may not see the relevance or believe in the benefits of verbal intervention and de-escalation training.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share data that reflect the sense of urgency for trying a new or different approach. Highlight data showing the kinds of incidents that result in discipline referrals and disruptions. Take note of the referral categories that are precipitated by negative verbal interactions. 2. Calculate the hours of instructional time lost due to classroom and school disruptions. 3. Share testimonials about success stories. 4. Include real-life scenarios in the beginning and throughout the training. Include role-plays to demonstrate the spectrum of methods used to address student-teacher conflicts.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

Include gender equity as part of the Maryland School Report Card (Report Card) which would give a true measure of equity or lack of equity being achieved for Black boys.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. Currently, under the “Equity” tab on the Report Card, data are not disaggregated by gender, meaning the data for Black male and female students are combined. There should be an option to view separate data for boys and girls. This gives educators and parents a more accurate picture of how well the schools and districts are meeting the academic needs of their students and reveals gender equity gaps. Also, data displayed on the Report Card site are for all students and the same data is available on the opening report card screen. The equity data are only available for comparisons between races and students with disabilities. Instead, this screen could show a gender breakdown for each racial group as well as students with disabilities.

- MSDE should require districts to report and address persistent inequities in the achievement gaps between Black boys when compared to other student groups. Annual mandatory accountability reports should include the concrete strategies and methods that will be implemented throughout the district to decrease the negative equity gap scores in schools wherever they exist. This is especially critical to address such inequities in schools awarded high star ratings.

Table 1.2

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. Public resistance and perception of assisting one group of students at the expense of other groups, e.g., Black girls or Hispanic/Latino students.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing strategies to improve the overall performance of one student group will not be done to the detriment of other student groups. To the contrary, when Black boys are achieving and their social, emotional, physical, and academic needs are being addressed, behavior problems will decrease. This will have a positive effect on the learning environment. Thus, the school can maintain a safe and orderly environment for all students and staff, which benefits everyone. Highlighting the urgent needs of Black boys now does not preclude addressing the problems experienced by other student groups in the future. In fact, shining a light on Black boys exposes other inequities that must be addressed.
<p>B. Pushback from local school system staff and teacher and administrator unions who feel they already have too much on their plate.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> By elevating the performance of Black boys in the measures listed in the Maryland School Report Card, schools may come under public scrutiny and be motivated to make improvements by adopting more effective methods and strategies to reverse the negative metrics that consistently impact Black boys and young men. Fewer disruptions and distractions in classrooms result in more time for teachers to implement their instructional goals and lesson plans. Likewise, fewer school discipline problems will enable administrators to devote more time to being instructional leaders and focus on elevating the total educational program for all students. Further, improved grades and test scores bring well-deserved recognition for students’ achievements and increases the morale of the staff.
<p>C. The Maryland Report Card indicators are already established and disaggregated equity data for boys and girls cannot be added.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Data can be disaggregated and tracked separately by the MSDE. This may require creating methods other than the Report Card to not only draw attention to schools not meeting equity expectations but to recognize schools and school districts for closing the achievement and discipline gaps for Black boys and young men.

Table 1.2 continued on the next page »

“Beyond teaching style or academic outcomes, the two highest priorities expressed by Black boys about their teachers: care and being seen beyond stereotypes of Black masculinity.”

– M.C. Reichert and J.D. Nelson
 The State of America’s Boys: An Urgent Case for a
 More Connected Boyhood

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>D. If the data on the Report Card is not fully explained and understood, schools and districts may be set up for further criticism.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">/ TABLE 1.2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schools and districts should be transparent and disclose existing inequities while assuring the public that efforts are underway to close those achievement gaps. Districts and MSDE could publicize schools that succeed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting special awards events • Providing framed certificates or plaques for the school or district • Highlighting schools or districts on the MSDE website, in the local newspaper, and on social media • Collecting gift certificates and coupons from business partners and community leaders to award to school staff members • Noting achievements on performance evaluations of teachers and administrators

RECOMMENDATION 1.3

Coordinate structured mentoring programs (adult male and/or peer mentoring) tailored to meet the social and emotional learning needs for identified Black boys in grades K-12.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. Amend COMAR 13A.01.06 Educational Equity to include the following language: “Equity and Excellence: A Guide to Educational Equity in Maryland will be used as a foundational document for implementing educational equity in Maryland’s local school systems.”
2. Add the following language to *Equity and Excellence: A Guide to Educational Equity in Maryland under Focus1: Academic Achievement and Growth*¹, to include the following actions:
 - a. Local School System Level: “The school system will establish a model for a comprehensive mentoring program.” (The amended regulation could increase the number of mentoring programs for Black boys across the state of Maryland.)
 - b. School Level: “Principals will adapt the district model to meet the needs of Black boys in their school community to enhance/support students’ academic, social, and emotional success.”
3. Establish a district-level position or restructure the job responsibilities assumed by staff already in place to oversee school-based mentoring programs and work with school-based mentoring coordinators to ensure program fidelity.
4. To make the best use of limited funding in local school districts, each school should review and analyze data (e.g. disciplinary, academic) to determine which Black boys would benefit the most from having a mentor. The overall costs will be affected by the mentoring needs of each school as indicated by available data. Schools should consider the following line items that will impact funding needs of the mentorship program:
 - a. Marketing materials and mass communication to assist with the recruitment effort
 - b. The cost for potential mentors’ background checks
 - c. Cost of training materials and supplies
 - d. Stipends for school-based coordinators

- e. Transportation and other program costs
5. Districts should work with their schools to identify criteria for selecting mentees. This might include the following: (a) grade retention; (b) poor academic performance; (c) poor attendance/chronic absenteeism; (d) discipline referrals, in-school and out-of-school suspension data, (e) literacy data, (f) teacher, school guidance counselor, administrative referral, (g) parent referral, (h) private mental health professional's referral, and/or (i) judicial referral.
 6. Develop district-wide criteria for the selection of adult male mentors that include the following:
 - a. Use a central data system to secure sensitive and confidential information such as demographics, personal information, etc. Stringent protocols must be put in place to protect confidential information.
 - b. Require prospective mentors (must) to complete a written application that includes references (private and professional).
 - c. Develop a screening process for applicants to identify any potential red flags. This should include at least one face-to-face interview with each prospective mentor that includes questions designed to help the program assess each candidate's suitability for mentoring Black mentees and to assess their safety and suitability.
 - d. Candidates who are being seriously considered to become a mentor, must undergo a thorough criminal background check along with a review of the sex offender and child abuse registries to ensure the safety of prospective mentees.
 - e. Selected mentors must be able to meet the time commitments to foster positive relationships and outcomes for the mentees.
 - f. Mentors must agree to enter a contract with a commitment of a full calendar year. They will be required to meet with mentees at least once a week and a total of three or more hours per month over the course of the contract year to provide the social-emotional learning support needed for mentees.
 7. District mentoring coordinators should work with school-based coordinators to recruit adult male mentors to provide our Black boys with guidance and SEL support beyond the classroom, with consideration of the following:
 - a. Use mentoring programs that have proven to be effective (e.g., Maryland MENTORing Institute, Maryland Mentors, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America), which can assist with establishing the recruiting guidelines for local school districts.
 - b. Develop recruitment materials that are relevant to the population in which mentors will serve. Recruitment materials need to be designed to attract and engage targeted audiences whose skills best match the goals and structure of the mentoring program. The content of recruitment materials can have a direct impact on the success of the candidate pool.
 - c. Create a job description outlining the eligibility requirements for a mentor.
 - d. Recruit candidates that are skilled, motivated, and have backgrounds that match the goals and structure of the program. Appropriate adult male mentors for the mentees are an important component of any mentoring program.
 - e. Develop and implement a recruitment and retention strategy that attracts and inspires mentors to serve mentees. Recruitment strategies must realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of mentoring.
 - f. Maximize ongoing recruitment efforts in obtaining appropriate mentors by doing the following: Contacting candidates directly, publicizing on social media, and utilizing traditional methods of mass communication such as mailers, radio, and television.
 - g. Use selected mentors to assist with continuous recruitment efforts. These mentors can personally ask individuals they know – who meet the criteria of the program – to apply to become a mentor.
 - h. Solicit support from faith-based and civic organizations to publicize the importance of the mentoring role and to provide volunteers. People are more likely to volunteer to support program activities when they are asked by someone they know. All volunteers from these organizations must be made aware of the requirement for background checks.

8. Host well-publicized, district-wide training events for mentors.
 - a. The success of any mentoring program is dependent upon the training of its mentors. District and school-based mentoring coordinators should vet and oversee all training provided for mentors. Training will inform mentors about what is acceptable and what is prohibited. It is essential that program coordinators understand that mentors will come from all walks of life and possess varying perspectives on the world and the causes for the issues faced by Black boys, as well as differ in beliefs, personality, and best approaches for working with youth.
 - b. Request support from well-established mentoring programs (as mentioned previously) to assist in developing training for mentors. Partnering with well-established mentoring programs will assist each program with implementing evidence-based standards and best practices for mentors, providing initial and ongoing training of the coordinators and mentors, building capacity for sustainability and growth.
 - c. Ensure mentors are trained to understand the unique perspective and culture of Black boys. Although adult male mentors are not substitute fathers, it is important to recognize how mentees are affected by not having a positive and involved father figure in their lives. Providing information and statistics on the effect of fatherlessness and absent fathers on children, youth, families, and society could be helpful.
 - d. Use training events to define, share ideas, examine data and culture, and highlight quality mentoring programs. Stress the importance of respecting the confidentiality of mentees and their families' personal data.
 - e. Use guides such as *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring 4th Edition*² to support the training for mentors. Local school districts can make program modifications to such guides as needed.
 - f. Require a minimum of 8 hours of in-person mentor training each year. If meeting in-person is not possible mentor training can be accomplished using virtual communication platforms e.g., Zoom, Google Duo, FaceTime, etc. In addition, monthly meetings should occur along with weekly check-ins with staff.
9. Establish peer mentoring programs and enlist the help of older high and middle school boys to mentor younger boys (For example, a fifth grader would mentor a third grader, a seventh grader would mentor a fifth grader, an eleventh grader would mentor a ninth grader. When the mentee reaches the grade, he returns the favor by mentoring a younger student for another two-year period.) Peer mentors should receive leadership training and agree to work with their mentee for at least a year, and when possible, for two. This program could start with as few as 20-25 boys or less. Contact the MAC Scholars and Kingmakers of Oakland (discussed previously) for ideas and guidance.
10. MSDE assists districts with planning and hosting a mentoring summit which includes training workshops and discussion groups. Invite organizations and consultants that have instituted successful mentoring programs for Black boys and young men. Include sessions taught by Maryland schools with successful programs to share their best practices and network with other schools. The summit would be primarily for mentoring coordinators, mentors, and administrators and would be less costly if held virtually.

“Studies demonstrate how school design systemically ignores the collective genius and lived experiences of Black boys, ultimately hampering their ability to flourish.”

– Kingmakers of Oakland



Table 1.3

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. Limited funding will negatively impact implementing mentoring programs. Funding is one of the primary reasons mentoring programs are not as effective or do not exist in many Maryland schools.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The primary responsibility should fall upon local school districts rather than individual schools to reallocate funds and identify funding sources to invest in this critical component to support the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of underserved Black boys in grades K-12.³ 2. Once data confirms the need for a mentoring program, local school districts should seek community partners to provide support for schools to supplement funding for mentoring programs. Districts can access social-emotional learning (SEL) grants, solicit private or corporation donors, apply for local government grants, or request funding from MSDE. 3. The local school districts should work with their established school mentoring programs and parent organizations to identify ways to show appreciation for community partners, businesses, and donors.
<p>B. The establishment of the mentoring program for Black males may be met with resistance from the school community.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refer school staff, parents, and the community to the regulations as outlined in the amended COMAR 13A.01.06 related to Educational Equity (referenced in a previous recommendation). In the interim, there is sufficient quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrates the effectiveness of mentoring for Black boys. 2. Appoint district-wide or school-based mentoring coordinators and allow them to focus solely on effective program implementation. (Smaller school districts may opt to have district-wide coordinators while larger school districts may have school-based coordinators.) This would avoid increasing the workload of existing staff or asking staff to volunteer. Staff who do elect to serve as school-based coordinators could be paid a stipend to serve as coordinators.
<p>C. The recruitment of appropriate mentors may be a challenge.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A district-wide focus could assist with publicizing the need. Then each school district partner within an established mentoring program (listed previously) could provide technical support and program training. 2. Established programs can serve as advisors to support the recruitment efforts of the local school districts. 3. Local community partners could publicize the importance of the mentoring role to recruit more adult male mentors. 4. Mentoring coordinators to coordinate district-wide training for the recruitment of appropriate mentors as this would decrease the risk of selecting inappropriate individuals. 5. Reach out to the community and create partnerships with community colleges and universities, trade schools, churches, faith-based organizations, local businesses and corporations, fraternities, legislators, local government leaders, and civic organizations. If these relationships are developed and nurtured, they will be a source of mentors for years to come.

Table 1.3 continued on the next page »

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES / TABLE 1.3
<p>C. The recruitment of appropriate mentors may be a challenge.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Teachers could be asked to recruit at least one positive Black male. 7. Establish a peer mentoring program to recruit more mentors. This type of mentoring program uses the strongest influence in the life of Black boys and young men – their peer group. Peer pressure is not always negative and can be used to give boys a sense of direction. 8. Encourage upper-grade students to mentor lower-grade boys⁴ (with appropriate training)
<p>D. Using peer mentors could be disruptive to the learning environment when they must leave to meet with their mentees; instructional time is lost when students are pulled from class.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students involved would be expected to make up all work assignments just as when they miss classes for club activities or sports competitions. 2. Students could also earn community service credit(s). 3. Student mentors will be expected to maintain average (minimum), but preferably better than average grades to remain in the program. 4. Parental permission would be required for both the mentor and mentee to participate.
<p>E. Districts and schools may not have available funds to hire a dedicated mentor coordinator.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overseeing the mentoring program could be assigned to other central office personnel, perhaps one whose workload would be lessened due to a decrease in the number of school crises and other discipline problems. 2. Individual schools could share a mentoring coordinator who receives a stipend comparable to a club sponsor or sports coach. 3. The in-school mentoring coordinator could be given an adjusted schedule, duty-free days, extra planning periods, or assigned an instructional assistant.
<p>F. Peer mentors would not have transportation to travel between schools to visit mentees.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Activity buses could be used to transport students to biweekly or monthly mentor-mentee sessions. Another option is to restrict mentors to work only with younger students enrolled in the same school.

RECOMMENDATION 1.4

Implement a Rites of Passage program for Black boys in grades 6-12.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. Create a working committee of dedicated school stakeholders consisting of students, parents, staff, and community partners to provide valuable perspectives in developing a Rites of Passage program. Examples of tasks for the committee include the following:
 - a. Create a shared vision for the plan.
 - b. Review components of Rites of Passage programs and decide which elements best fit the school community. Possible topics include

- African and African American history, career development, community involvement, family responsibility, and physical fitness.⁵
 - c. Develop program goals and benchmarks
 - d. Develop criteria for participants, peer mentors and facilitators
 - e. Define roles and responsibilities
 - f. Investigate curricula and other successful Rites of Passage programs, such as Sankofa from the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC) and Mastering Our Identity: African American Male Image from the Kingmakers of Oakland.
 - g. Review opportunities for data collection
 - h. Customize the program for your school community
 - i. Present the finalized Rites of Passage program to your school community
 - j. Make sure your school staff understands the program, responsibilities, and their role as role models and advocates for participants
2. Recruit and train staff to facilitate the program "...The success of all youth development designs ultimately [hinges upon] the relationships between youth and adults, and between the adults and the program."⁶
 3. Solicit community partnerships to assist with securing funding and/or donations, recruiting and selecting volunteers, identifying guest speakers, providing internships, scheduling field trips, and planning an annual calendar with established benchmarks.
 4. Review data based on established participant criteria and host parent information events to share the vision and recruit students. The following could be included on the agenda:
 - a. School data that will support the need for this intervention
 - b. Purpose and history of Rites of Passage programs
 - c. Principles of the program and the need for commitment
 - d. Staff introductions and bios
 - e. Information emphasizing the importance of school-to-home partnership(s)
 - f. Dedicated time for questions and discussion
 5. Investigate the ManKind Project, one of the most widespread and effective Rites of Passage programs (New Warrior Training Adventure).⁷

Table 1.4

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
A. The question, "Why just focus on Black Boys?"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share school data on the academic achievement gap, discipline (suspensions, expulsions, arrests), and special education referrals for Black boys as evidence of the need and importance of focusing on this group. If schools clearly articulate their commitment to provide equity for all students, the school data will identify persistent gaps and support the need to address the gaps, determine the root causes, and make the necessary changes so that all students are able to reach their potential at the schools they attend.⁸

Table 1.4 continued on the next page »

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES / TABLE 1.4
<p>B. To implement the program with fidelity, afterschool and weekend hours will be needed and staffing may be an issue.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Required afterschool and weekend hours are also needed for athletic programs. The same information and/or recruitment strategies could be beneficial for staffing programs. 2. Provide stipends for facilitators/staff. 3. Recruit committed adult volunteers who have demonstrated caring and concern for students.
<p>C. Staff and community buy-in are needed to support the vision.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce the program to staff by providing school data and stressing the importance of a growth mindset for staff. 2. School leadership must convey their conviction for the program, and consistency will be key. 3. Share school data on the academic achievement gap, discipline actions (suspensions, expulsions, arrests), and special education referrals for Black boys, and include statistics on fatherlessness and its impact upon all students, especially Black boys.

Will You?

Will you greet me with a smile and have encouraging words to say?

Will you appreciate my learning style and coach me along the way?

Will you provide images of role models who look like me?

Will you expect me to become all that I can be?

Will you notice my hand when it goes into the air?

Will you call on me so that I know that you care?

Will you have a relevant curriculum when teaching the class?

Will you establish a relationship and allow enough time on task?

Will you inspire me to dream until my dreams come true?

Will you insist that nothing less than excellence will do?

Will you value me and see past my race, gender, poverty, and my parents?

Will you believe that I will make a contribution to this great nation?

– Written by a Black male student
Changing School Culture for Black
Males (Kunjufu, 2013)

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

STUDY GROUP 1: SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATION 1.1

Require de-escalation and other evidence-based intervention and training for all school staff.

Conflicts in the classroom between teachers and students often result in a student's removal from class, loss of instructional time, damage to the student-teacher relationship, and increased suspension and expulsion rates, especially for Black boys. As noted in the Task Force on Student Discipline Regulations report (2019), systems/schools should "recognize the disproportionality in discipline referrals, suspension and expulsions between student groups, specifically African American male [students] and other marginalized groups, and schools should seek ways to train all staff..." One of the most effective ways to reduce the number of Black male suspensions is good classroom management (Kunjufu 2013). Maintaining a positive classroom environment would be strengthened by integrating conflict de-escalation strategies and other evidence-based training and behavioral programs and practices.

Verbal intervention and de-escalation skills are an important tool for educators to use to minimize the exclusionary practices of referral, suspension, and expulsion. Providing verbal de-escalation training for all school staff could be effective in decreasing the number of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions for Black boys. Using these strategies in the school environment would improve student-staff relationships and align with the restorative approaches and positive behavioral interventions recommended by previous studies.

Conflict de-escalation is a broad term used to describe a wide variety of techniques that are useful in reducing tension between two people or groups. In school settings, conflict de-escalation is typically facilitated by adult staff. For staff to learn how to effectively address conflict or disruptive behaviors they need to have the appropriate training. This training also helps individuals recognize their own triggers and responses. Therefore, more energy can be focused on identifying the student's needs and behaviors and adjusting their own response by using the appropriate intervention strategy. Staff can contribute to power struggles when they become escalated themselves, or when they lack clear strategies for dealing with problematic behavior. Training in de-escalation techniques can help prevent or reduce the likelihood of staff engaging in power struggles with students.

Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI), a training provider, supports the use of verbal intervention and de-escalation strategies to improve student outcomes and has found that:

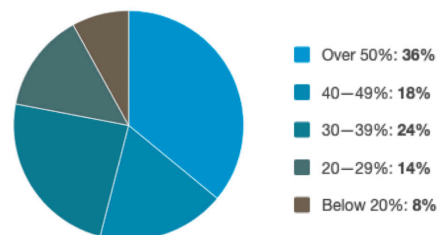
- 36% of educators have reduced challenging behaviors by more than half.
- 88% of schools report achieving return on investment with CPI by improving staff skills and confidence.

- 95% of educators who use CPI report improving their de-escalation skills and overall school safety.
- 74% of educators who use CPI report that grades, test scores, and graduation rates go up as a result of staff training.

TechValidate also surveyed 1579 users of CPI de-escalation strategies. Figure 7 shows how CPI has reduced challenging behaviors in education/educational environments.⁹

Reducing Challenging Behaviors in Education

Since implementing CPI de-escalation techniques, how much have you reduced challenging/disruptive behaviors?



Evidence-based behavioral programs will help to develop students' social skills, strengthen school connections and improve their overall behavioral outcomes. Restorative Approaches and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) have been identified as best practices by the Maryland State Department of Education (Task Force on Student Discipline Regulations, 2019). A restorative approach combines high behavioral expectations and limit setting with adequate nurturing and support. Restorative approaches emphasize relationships and connectedness in the school community.¹⁰ The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has partnered with the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland (C-DRUM), which provides technical support, consultation and training to school boards and schools throughout Maryland. This collaboration was initiated to increase implementation of restorative approaches in more Maryland schools.

PBIS is a broad, comprehensive approach which includes individual systemic applications. The Maryland State Board of Education approved the use of PBIS to (a) build capacity among school staff to adopt and sustain the use of positive, effective practices to create learning environments where teachers can teach and students can learn and (b) improve the link between evidence-based practices and the environments in which teaching and learning occur.¹¹

Like PBIS, the strategies, skills, interventions, and techniques taught within the Nonviolent Crisis Intervention® training program can also be used by individual staff members as well as by a team. Implementation

and training of both programs are designed to achieve culture change throughout an organization.¹²

Conflict de-escalation strategies and skills complement desired outcomes of restorative approaches, as indicated below, and could be effective in improving the academic experiences and achievement of Black boys.

- A safer, more caring environment.
- A more effective teaching and learning environment.
- Greater commitment by everyone for taking the time to listen to one another.
- A reduction in bullying and other interpersonal conflicts.
- Greater awareness of the importance of connectedness to young people.
- An increased sense of belonging and being valued by peers and significant adults.
- Greater emphasis on responses to inappropriate behavior that seek to reconnect, and not further disconnect, young people.
- A reduction in temporary or permanent exclusions.
- Greater confidence in the staff team to deal with challenging situations.
- An increased belief in the ability of young people to take responsibility for their choices, and more people giving them opportunities to do so.¹³

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

Include gender equity as part of the Maryland School Report Card, which would give a true measure of equity or lack of equity being achieved for Black boys.

Achieving educational equity means that every student has access to the opportunities, resources, and educational rigor they need throughout their school years. Educational equity maximizes academic success, increases social-emotional well-being, and views each student's individual characteristics as valuable.

The Maryland School Report Card (Report Card) measures the following for every public school in the state of Maryland: (a) Academic Achievement, (b) Graduation Rate, (c) Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency, (d) Readiness for Post-Secondary Success, and (e) School Quality and Student Success. Since achieving educational equity is a priority for all Maryland schools, measuring a school's success in closing the achievement gaps between male and female students should be part of the Report Card. This becomes critically important if data from expert authors and researchers consistently show most Black boys and young men are at the bottom of all metrics indicating success, and at the top of all metrics indicating failure.

Achieving equity for its student groups should have a greater effect on a school or a school district's star rating. Displaying Report Card data disaggregated by gender, as well as by race, accomplishes three goals:

- Raises educators' and the public's awareness of the performance of Black boys when compared to their peers for the indicators measured.
- Demonstrates a continuous commitment to monitoring and improving education outcomes for Black boys; and
- Provides data that can be used to identify and recognize schools that show gains in academic achievement and other improved outcomes (e.g., attendance, decrease in referral and suspensions, etc.) for Black boys.

Expanding this component of the Report Card will provide schools with another valuable tool as they dig deeper into their student data. When administrators review the performance of student groups disaggregated by gender, they can readily compare Black male students with other students. Such targeted data analysis would give schools the ability to identify strategies to address challenges in achieving equity for Black male students. When implementing those strategies results in improvements, schools would be able to celebrate and share their success with their entire school community and district.

Included in COMAR 13A.01.06 Educational Equity is a chapter with the purpose of establishing as a matter of policy and priority the following statements:

- Each Maryland public school will provide every student equitable access to the educational rigor, resources, and supports that are designed to maximize the student's academic success and social/emotional well-being.
- Each local school system's procedures and practices provide for educational equity and ensure that there are no obstacles to accessing educational opportunities for any student.
- Achievement will improve for all Maryland students and achievement gaps will be eliminated.

"We must approach equity with urgency so that all children can realize the promise of public education. The importance of EDUCATIONAL EQUITY and its relationship to EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE is highlighted in the Maryland State Department of Education logo, but more importantly, it is and must continue to be evident in our work."

***- Dr. Karen B. Salmon,
State Superintendent of Schools***

RECOMMENDATION 1.3**Coordinate structured mentoring programs (adult male and/or peer mentoring) tailored to meet the social and emotional learning needs for identified Black boys in grades K-12.**

The difficulties faced by Black boys in their quest for achieving academic equity and excellence are well documented (Kunjufu, 2013). The Maryland State Department of Education reports that Black students are suspended and expelled from Maryland Public Schools at higher rates than all other races/ethnicities¹⁴. Some are disadvantaged in their skill development and socialization due to the absence of positive male role models, fathers, or committed father figures influencing their decisions. (Kunjufu, 2013; Smith, 2015)

Mentoring

Many studies have demonstrated the benefits of mentoring (<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/professional-development/mentoring/benefits-of-a-mentoring-relationship.page>). Mentoring programs have proven to be successful for helping Black male students and can assist in removing some of the existing barriers preventing their overall achievement in school and in life:

- High quality mentoring programs tailored to meet the needs of Black boys have been shown to strengthen motivation as well as encourage a positive attitude and improved academic achievement (Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, & Boyd, 2018).
- Mentoring also increases the likelihood that these youngsters feel that they matter and increases their positive racial identity and self-efficacy in academics and life (Buckley, 2018)
- The Better Conversation blog reports that when student mentor Marc Robinson met Chris, he had 60 referrals the first semester of school. After a few short months of working with Chris, the referrals dropped to 17 for the entire spring semester. Another student in the mentoring program went from 103 referrals in the fall to 11 in the spring.¹⁵
- Bryce Logan, a mentee in the program sponsored by the Black Men of Greater Knoxville, Inc. shared that he was glad his mother had made him participate in the mentoring program. Bryce said that the program exposed him to a variety of experiences and showed him how to act and conduct himself as he watched how the mentors treated, addressed, and respected one another.¹⁶
- John Grant, Chief Executive Officer of 100 Black Men of Atlanta, reported that the mentoring program was successful (Sanchez, Hurd, Neblett, & Vaclavik, 2018), and more than ninety-nine percent of the students involved graduated on time (Levs, 2007).
- Levs (2007) showed significant positive GPA and math outcomes for Black boys that enrolled (compared to those not enrolled) in the Benjamin E. Mays Institute and had positive academic and personal outcomes through modeling and mentoring.

- Shaker Heights High School (Ohio) initiated one of the most successful and widely known peer mentoring programs in the country. The MAC (Minority Achievement Committee) Scholars Program first began in 1990 and is led by top juniors and seniors with the goal of improving the academic performance of their fellow Black boys and young men. The peer mentoring program includes setting goals, study skills help, and officially recognizing academic improvement.¹⁷

Research also suggests that students can benefit from having an adult male mentor, noting the following stipulations:

- The mentor possesses personal attributes needed in a student's life.
- The mentor is trained properly.
- The mentor and mentee are matched appropriately.

Many Black men are uniquely equipped and positioned to help guide Black boys towards academic success. However, there are frequently more Black boys to be mentored than Black men to mentor them. In addition, individual schools have been responsible for developing their own programs and recruiting their own mentors which can be challenging.

A district-wide initiative focused on recruiting male mentors and establishing structured mentoring programs in identified schools will help address the shortage and emphasize the district's total support and commitment to mentoring its students. With leadership from the district, activities can be coordinated for identified schools with district-wide recruiting, training opportunities, and shared resources for mentor-mentee events.

The Kingmakers of Oakland (California) Collaborative is developing a network of student leaders who will support their peers at their schools and in their district. They are role models to other students and work with the school administration to assess and create effective programming and interventions for Black boys. The Council consists of middle and high school young men who have been requested to present details of their successful program at local and national conferences. The Collaborative is only one component of the total approach of the Kingmakers of Oakland (KOO) and has proven "it is possible to rebuild the systems, structures, conditions, and culture of school so Black boys can thrive. These improvements, when sustained, allow educators to engage, encourage and empower the next generation of leaders and changemakers."¹⁸

The quantitative evidence for mentoring programs aimed at Black youth is still developing and growing. However, there is synthesis research that has compiled core elements of after-school programs that have been shown effective for this population. Woodland (2008) has gathered a lengthy and informative list of essential components that such programs should incorporate.

RECOMMENDATION 1.4**Implement a Rites of Passage program for Black boys in grades 6-12.****School Belonging**

The purpose of this intervention is to foster student accountability and improvement in attendance, academics, behavior, and social-emotional growth through strengthening the sense of school belonging.

The need to belong is a basic human motivation, and educational equity gaps suggest that many Black boys are not being motivated by traditional school environments where they are highest in the number of disciplinary actions and lowest in academic achievement. The psychological sense of school belonging is defined as “the extent to which students perceive themselves to be welcomed, valued, and respected members of the school community” (Goodenow, 1993).

According to studies in developmental psychology, the adolescent years are marked with a deep longing for public acceptance, support, and confirmation of adulthood. “In the absence of meaningful community-based rituals, youth will define and create their own marker events based on peer or media values, many of which may be destructive both individually and communally” (Blumenkrantz, 2010). A strong sense of school belonging is associated with low levels of delinquent behavior, such as alcohol and substance abuse (Napoli, 2003).

A distinguishing factor that separates schools that have met the challenge of closing the achievement gap for Black boys is the school culture that counters negative influences and affirms the importance of learning and building relationships (Noguera, 2012). Best practices recommend schools promote positive student outcomes through the integration of cultural responsiveness and social emotional, and academic development (SEAD) (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). Social Emotional Learning programs are successful interventions to promote positive development of students in improving student academic achievement and positive social behavior while reducing emotional distress.

Rites of Passage programs and other after-school programs, (e.g. extracurriculars, clubs, team sports, etc.), have been shown to be promising interventions for Black male students (Loyd & Williams, 2017; Woodland, 2016, 2008). One research study has evidence-derived conceptual models and frameworks that propose the pathways and factors that could explain why certain programs developed for Black boys have been especially successful in meeting their unique and dynamic needs (Loyd & Williams, 2017). Through a school-based Rites of Passage program, the school environment will become a safe space for Black boys to be themselves while receiving support from caring adults as they go through the transitional phases of development. The goal is to create a school environment that supports student and staff capacity to build trusting relationships, while holding all parties accountable for their actions (Chatmon, 2015).

In his many books about educating Black boys and young men, Dr. Juwanza Kunjufu strongly advocates for Rites of Passage (male socialization) programs that give young boys a defined description of what it means to be a man and prepares them for manhood. He states that because too many Black boys do not know when they are men, it is up to the men in the family and community to teach them. However, if the men avoid that responsibility, young boys are left to find their own standards of manhood through fighting, using drugs and alcohol, wearing expensive clothes, driving fast cars, or making babies (Kunjufu, 2013).

The Brotherhood/Sister Sol Organization of Harlem has documented outcomes that surpass New York City’s youth and young adult numbers:

- Harlem’s teen pregnancy rate is 15% compared to the Rites of Passage membership with is less than 2%.
- Ninety percent of the Rites of Passage alumni have graduated from high school and 95% either graduated from high school or earned their GED.
- Ninety-five percent are working full time or enrolled in college compared to similar populations in West Harlem where only 40% of 18-25 year-olds are either working full time or enrolled in college.¹⁹

A traditional Rites of Passage program is a community intervention designed to embrace children in their transformative years using guiding principles, rituals, and celebrations designed to teach life lessons and empowerment. A modern-day Rites of Passage program as a school intervention is achieved when the school, home, and community create a safe environment for children to participate in learning experiences, rituals, and celebrations that support youth through a healthy transformative process from adolescence into adulthood.²⁰

The Rites of Passage principles will provide culturally responsive tools and standards for students to grow in accountability, responsibility, and self-advocacy. It will also provide a safe space for Black boys to develop a positive sense of identity and grow as recognized leaders in the school community. For school staff, it will provide tools to shift mindsets from punitive to restorative and introduce a powerful counter-narrative.

TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE OF MARYLAND FOR BLACK



STUDY GROUP 2: **RECRUITING AND TRAINING SKILLED, COMPETENT TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS**



STUDY GROUP 2: RECRUITING AND TRAINING SKILLED, COMPETENT TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

The purpose of this study group was to develop recommendations to recruit, retain, and develop a cadre of teachers and administrators that are trained to support Black boys.

The recommendations address how the State of Maryland can recruit, incentivize, and hire teachers and administrators, which strategies could be used to retain them as district employees, and how they could be trained to engage in pedagogical and leadership practices that can support the academic and social success of Black boys. For each recommendation, an accompanying table outlines potential roadblocks and suggested solutions and approaches.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1**Provide financial incentives to recruit and retain racially and ethnically diverse teachers and administrators in the profession.****Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:**

1. Districts should keep their teachers informed and provide information and guidance about special benefits available. These include Federal student loan forgiveness programs; special home loans and down payment assistance programs to buy homes in the state or city/county where they teach; and partnerships with local banks, credit unions, or other financial institutions.
2. State and local governments along with business and corporate partners can be strongly encouraged to provide teachers and administrators with service scholarships and other benefits, e.g. discount services, housing allowances, and gift cards to attract teachers and administrators to locations where they are needed most.²¹
3. The Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars Program (STEP) at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County serves as a model on how to provide financial incentives to recruit racially and ethnically diverse teacher candidates. STEP provides academic and career coaching to students to create a cadre of culturally responsive STEM educators.²²
4. Use the momentum behind the 2021 Blueprint for Maryland's Future which requires the state to use millions of dollars over two years to support recommended programs. MSDE will allocate funding directly to districts to support teachers.
5. MSDE is encouraged to work with colleges and universities to increase the number of National Science Foundation Noyce Scholarships awarded to teachers. This program seeks to encourage talented science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors and professionals to become K-12 mathematics and science (including engineering and computer science) teachers.²³ The State Board should receive updates as to the success of the program, including disaggregated data on the awardees.
6. MSDE should allocate funds to support districts to provide racially and ethnically diverse teachers with retention-based salary increases, retention bonuses, and bonuses or salary increases for working in hard-to-staff schools.
7. MSDE and districts should partner with credit unions and banks to retain qualified teachers and administrators by offering reduced cost home refinance and lines of credit programs for staying in the profession.
8. Offer training opportunities to teachers and school leaders on financial literacy and planning throughout their career to help them build wealth.
9. Continue to provide teachers and administrators with tuition and scholarship support to earn graduate degrees and take courses to improve their performance on teacher competency tests.
10. Districts can partner with area colleges and universities to enable school employees to complete graduate degree programs off-campus at reduced tuition costs.
11. Share information about education degree programs that are 100% online such as those available through American Public University and American Military University. Both universities have no or low costs for admission, textbooks, technology, and tuition. Active-duty military spouses and dependents also qualify for Freedom grants to pay for undergraduate and master's education.

“Being taught by someone who has no cultural or gender-specific connection to how one sees the world can be an obvious barrier to learning.”

– Dr. Daryl Howard
Complex People: Insights at the Intersection of Black Culture and American Social Life

Table 2.1

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. Programs receiving state and federal funding cannot be used to explicitly recruit only racially and ethnically diverse teacher candidates.</p>	<p>1. While programs cannot be discriminatory in their recruitment efforts, they can be strategic and develop partnerships as a component of their recruitment efforts with minority-serving institutions that have a record of producing racially and ethnically diverse teacher candidates, such as some local community colleges and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).</p>
<p>B. The increasing debt burden of college may play a role in declining interest in pursuing education careers.</p>	<p>2. The MSDE should work with school districts to disseminate information to prospective teachers about available funding options for teachers, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maryland TEACH Grant – For undergraduate and graduate students who plan to teach. This is a federal program that provides annual grants and requires teaching service in return for the grant. TEACH Grant recipients must agree to teach full-time in high-need subject areas at schools serving children from low income families. • Maryland Teaching Fellows – This scholarship is awarded to students who, upon completion of their studies, pledge to work in Maryland as public school or public prekindergarten teachers at schools having at least 50% of the students eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2

Require school district representatives with teacher and administrator hiring responsibilities (e.g., human resource officers, supervisors, and school principals) to have training on equitable hiring practices of racially and ethnically diverse teacher candidates.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. School district hiring managers and personnel who have no formal human resources management training, should be required to take at least one 3-credit graduate level course on employee recruitment and selection. Principals and supervisors who are involved with recruiting, interviewing, and hiring teachers should also receive this training.
2. School districts should establish hiring goals for racially and ethnically diverse teachers with whom many Black boys do not have access in their schools.
3. Hiring and retention data (disaggregated by race and gender) should be released to MSDE for the previous year, and every school district should report to what extent its hiring goals were achieved. MSDE should use the data to plan strategies and professional development to support districts as they strive to achieve those goals.
4. MSDE staff and certification specialists in the Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval are the first to receive applications from candidates seeking to teach or become administrators in Maryland. The Division should report monthly to the State Board regarding the number of candidates that have applied for state licenses with accompanying data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender. This should be accompanied by data indicating the disposition of candidates, e.g. approved, rejected, approved conditionally, etc.

- The Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval should establish a means to inform school districts about applications submitted by promising candidates who have received MSDE approval or been given conditional approval.

Table 2.2

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. Under COMAR regulations, administrator candidates are not explicitly required to complete any coursework on the recruitment and selection of teacher candidates to obtain an Administrator I or II license.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Revise COMAR to state that for educators to earn their administrator license (I or II), graduate course work shall include training on selecting and hiring diverse candidates. Districts should offer training workshops for human resource personnel and school administrators on effective hiring practices and strategies.
<p>B. Requiring everyone to have at least one course in recruitment and selection could serve as a roadblock.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> School districts can assist with this requirement by working with MSDE to develop an approved professional development course or workshop on equity practices in school hiring. This training would be required for all district administrators.

RECOMMENDATION 2.3

Recruit racially and ethnically diverse teacher and administrator candidates into programs to educate and prepare them to enter the profession.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

- MSDE should develop a sustainable grant or scholarship designated specifically for Black male students to become teachers. Partnerships can be formed with Maryland community colleges and universities which can host prospective teacher programs on campus for Black male students.
- The MSDE should launch a marketing campaign targeting Black male students’ families and members of their communities. Parents and siblings (especially mothers and sisters), religious and faith leaders, and local celebrities would encourage their sons and brothers to consider the teaching profession and the benefits of becoming teachers, e.g., job security, competitive salary and benefits, opportunities for advancement. This campaign could be done by using print and social media to publicize teacher education and training programs that begin as early as middle and high school.
- Recruit racially and ethnically diverse teachers and administrators and their spouses from the military into educator preparation programs and the profession. Districts can create ongoing partnerships with Maryland military bases to actively recruit military spouses and military personnel that are near retirement.
- The MSDE should adopt strategies that create high school, dual enrollment, and Grow Your Own educator preparation models to recruit diverse students into career pathways in education. The Division of Career and College Readiness (DCCR) should take a leadership role and support the efforts of school districts in the following ways:
 - Continue to encourage middle and high school students to participate in the Maryland Career and Technical Education Early

Childhood Education (ECE) and Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) in each school system. District Career and Technical Education (CTE) Directors should provide data (disaggregated by gender) on the effectiveness of the programs and the numbers of students involved. Describe and implement strategies to increase the number of Black boys and young men in these programs. Semi-annual reports should be given to the DCCR to track the numbers and report them to the State Board.

- b. Create and implement specialized middle and high school programs to expose underrepresented students – with a focus on Black boys and young men – to majors and careers in education. Support districts as they follow guidance on learning experiences²⁴ and submit information and data (disaggregated by race and gender) regarding career exploration activities implemented in grades K-12²⁵. The data collected should be reported to the State Board.
 - c. The DCCR should implement Educators Rising as a state Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO). This will allow districts to use federal funds to support student participation in this program. Funds can be used for advisor stipends, field trips, competitive events, and other learning experiences.
 - d. Expand the use of Educators Rising as a platform to engage future educators in becoming teachers. Districts submit participant information and data (disaggregated by race and gender) to DCCR and describe methods used to build relationships with and recruit Black male high school students to become teachers.
5. Create conferences, summits, webinars, and events to recruit racially and ethnically diverse students, instructional support, and career changers. Share successful methods and recruitment strategies with all districts.
 6. Promote the Associate of Arts in Teaching program to attract diverse teachers into educator preparation programs and the profession.
 7. The MSDE can encourage the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), which facilitates the College Preparation Intervention Program (CPIP), to prioritize proposals designed to expose and prepare high school students to become educators.²⁶
 - a. Encourage the University System of Maryland (USM) – especially Maryland’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) – and other higher education institutions to increase investment in students becoming teachers and to create targeted recruitment efforts for underrepresented groups to become teachers. Investigate the program instituted by Knox County Public Schools (Tennessee) which partners with the University of Tennessee to recruit and train teachers for the school district.

Table 2.3

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
A. Many Black male students have negative experiences in school, particularly with teachers. ²⁷	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Districts support teacher training opportunities on educating boys and culturally responsive teaching. 2. School administrators must hold teachers accountable for establishing and maintaining a classroom environment where all students are respected, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity. 3. Add a component of the teacher formal observation rubric where principals can check for behaviors, methods, and strategies that indicate that Black boys are being supported emotionally, socially, and academically in the classroom.
B. The establishment of the mentoring program for Black males may be met with resistance from the school community. ²⁸	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create and fund multi-year curricula for Black male high school students to explore and learn more about the teaching profession. Programs should include a tiered mentoring structure (peers, college students, Black male teachers, educational leaders, college professors). 2. Districts should provide high school students with early experiences teaching and tutoring younger students.

Table 2.3 continued on the next page »

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES / TABLE 2.3
<p>C. There are limited Black male teachers teaching in the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) and Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs and throughout schools and school systems.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The MSDE should review the demographics of TAM and ECE program teachers to examine if they reflect the population they serve. If not, there will need to be a concerted effort to diversify the TAM and ECE teacher workforce. 2. Disaggregated data should be collected and reported to the MSDE and State Board.
<p>D. Dual enrollment programs offer high school students an AAT degree whereas TAM provides 3 college credits.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TAM should be expanded so students can earn more college credits to make the program more attractive when compared to a dual enrollment program.
<p>E. There are limited Black male teachers teaching in the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) and Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs and throughout schools and school systems.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The MSDE should review the demographics of TAM and ECE program teachers to examine if they reflect the population they serve. If not, there will need to be a concerted effort to diversify the TAM and ECE teacher workforce. 2. Disaggregated data should be collected and reported to the MSDE and State Board.
<p>F. University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) offers an expansive list of academic degrees and certificates but does not offer education as an option for active, retired, military or their spouses.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE should partner with UMGC to develop certification pathways for active, retired military and their spouses in the field of education. This would be related to Maryland’s becoming a partner with Troops to Teachers.
<p>G. Provide paraprofessional educators, substitute teachers, and instructional support staff with opportunities to earn degrees and become licensed teachers.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each district should partner with an institution of higher education (IHE) to provide paraprofessionals the opportunity to complete degree requirements for teacher licensure. Classes could be held off-campus and at a reduced tuition rate. Through Title II, target non-licensed school personnel and offer incentives for them to become teachers.

“Educators get very little, if any help from undergraduate or graduate course work, as well as most in-service education programs intended to help them understand and deal with the black male stereotypes.”

– H. Foster
Journal of African American Men Life



RECOMMENDATION 2.4

Provide all teachers and school-based administrators, along with all other district personnel, continued professional development on culturally-responsive teaching practices and methods to support the academic, social-emotional, and developmental needs of Black boys and young men.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. Provide professional development - initial and on-going training combined with coaching – for teachers on brain-based gender differences in learning and research-based strategies for educating boys (and girls) most effectively.
 - a. Use knowledgeable personnel from other schools, MSDE specialists, or private expert consultants who can inform educators as they explore how the brain works differently between boys and girls and guide them to incorporate gender-based instruction into existing instructional programs.
 - b. Include training on educating Black boys, by merging the knowledge of Black male culture with brain-based gender differences.
 - c. Establish a professional library that will supplement the training as described above. Acquire literature, journal articles, and books to provide resource and reference materials for teachers. These readings can be used in school staff meetings, department meetings, team meetings, etc.
 - d. Introduce brain-based gender differences to parents for raising boys and girls most effectively. Invite them to parent training programs that will assist them as they support their children.

2. Explore Micro-Credentialing²⁹ - Develop, pilot, and implement micro-credentials for research-based topics that are accessible and assessable as a means for teachers to demonstrate competency in areas such as culturally responsive teaching, brain-based gender differences, and educating Black boys. Consider connecting the micro-credentials to teacher licensure renewal and professional learning.

Table 2.4

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. There are currently no mandates in teacher and administrator preparation programs that require educators to be taught strategies to support Black male students specifically. Currently, teacher education and administrator preparation programs address learning pedagogy from a Eurocentric perspective that is not always in alignment with the needs of Black male students.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher and administrator preparation programs should develop a course focused on brain-based learning differences between boys and girls and that also adds instruction on cultural issues that are to be considered when teaching black boys. (See micro-credentialing above.) 2. Districts could bring in consultants and speakers to train teachers on effective classroom instructional strategies for educating Black boys and young men. 3. MSDE could host a virtual summit on Changing the School Culture for Black Boys and Young Men to train educators on cultural differences and how boys learn differently than girls. This could also be a session in a state-sponsored symposium (see recommendation from Study Group 3). 4. MSDE regulations should require teacher preparation programs and school systems to provide ongoing educational and professional learning and experiences in culturally-responsive teaching and cultural literacy as it pertains to Black boys and other ethnicities. Regulations already in existence should be monitored and enforced.

Table 2.4 continued on the next page »

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES / TABLE 2.4
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Administrator and teacher licensure standards and accountability measures should include competencies to teach and support Black boys. 6. MSDE can partner with colleges and universities to ensure that teacher preparation programs include core competencies and updated licensure standards related to cultural literacy, culturally-responsive instructional practices, and teaching Black boys.

RECOMMENDATION 2.5

Use a multi-prong approach to retain Black men and other ethnically diverse teachers and administrators in the profession.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations

1. As part of Title II, districts should continue to provide Black male teachers and administrators with clear career pathways for professional growth to become national board certified, instructional leaders, and professional development leaders; as well as school, district, and state administrators.
2. MSDE should move ahead with producing a Teacher Leadership Toolkit that outlines what career pathways exist for teachers, and ensure that all teachers receive the information. The Department should create a survey to assess the degree of dissemination and effectiveness of the Toolkit and report to the State Board.
3. Districts should provide Black male teachers and administrators with racial, ethnic, and gender-based professional affinity or mentoring groups to provide them with induction, professional learning, mentorship, and support in school systems. Districts should investigate and implement programs such as BOND³⁰ currently operating in Montgomery County Public Schools.
4. As required by COMAR, school and district leaders should create teacher and school leader retention plans– with special attention for Black male teachers. These plans should include teacher induction and orientation, mentoring, monthly professional and social gatherings, data collection and analysis about retention factors, regular check-ins with the principal or district leaders, and designated contact persons for different areas of need.³¹
 - a. MSDE should collect quantitative and qualitative data from districts as to the extent the regulation is implemented.
5. All new Black male educators will be provided a mentor to support them for their first five years in the classroom.
 - a. Provide opportunities for seasoned Black male educators to opt into a “safe space” program that allows for conversation and critical dialogue on issues and concerns they have as professionals.
6. Under Title II, districts should provide principals and vice principals with ongoing professional learning about how to support teachers, specifically those from diverse backgrounds.
7. Under Title II, districts should recruit prospective educators from racially and ethnically diverse community colleges and 4-year universities.
8. Create Black male principal cohorts, then recruit and retain Black men to move into school-based administration.
9. The cohort would work towards achieving a state-based certification or license endorsement on best practices related to serving and supporting Black male students in PreK-12. Sample certification courses/classes would include:

- a. Brain-based learning differences between boys and girls
 - b. Project-based learning and teaching across multiple modalities
 - c. Anti-racist training for principals to help their teachers/staff navigate bias in the interaction between students and teachers
 - d. Bias training to help administrators recognized and mitigate bias in testing and curricula
 - e. Overview of African norms for Rites of Passage programs to create school-based programming without the need for support from an extremely limited community partner pool.
10. Districts can select 15-20 Black males with at least 10 years of teaching experience who are interested in becoming school-based administrators (principals and assistant principals). The individuals would take the required classes to earn an administrator/supervisor license. While finishing their classes, they would work as administrative assistants or administrative interns in schools.
11. Increase leadership opportunities for teachers while they remain in the classroom, e.g. math instructional leader and reading instructional leader, by getting licensure endorsements which also qualify for pay increases. Some COMAR licensure requirements would have to be revised.

Table 2.5

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. The requirements for teacher licensure can be burdensome for students depending on the program of study and it can take a long time for a candidate to complete the degree program.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School districts partner with local IHEs to develop degree programs that allow candidates to hold employment in the district while completing their degrees. Districts should work closely with the MSDE Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval to ensure the course requirements are being met.
<p>B. Traditional undergraduate course schedules can sometimes be a challenge, particularly if courses are only available during the workday.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher preparation programs should consider flexible class scheduling that occurs during the evening and weekends so candidates can maintain full-time employment while completing coursework. 2. The MSDE could advocate for prospective teacher candidates by requesting IHEs in Maryland to hold evening classes for undergrad teacher candidates.
<p>C. The internship (student teaching) component of teacher education programs requires interns to engage in unpaid internship experiences that do not allow them to work to support themselves and, in some cases, their families.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School districts should consider hiring interns as paraprofessionals or substitute teachers during their early internship experience to help candidates generate income. 2. MSDE should encourage college and university teacher preparation programs to credit the hours working as <i>long-term</i> substitute teachers towards the student teaching requirement.
<p>D. Many Black male teachers and administrators feel isolated throughout the school district, especially in schools with predominantly white and female staff.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School districts can sponsor district-wide affinity groups to limit isolation by creating networks for ethnically and racially diverse teachers and administrators. 2. Regular professional development and workshops can be offered to help with the cultural adjustment required by many Black male teachers.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

STUDY GROUP 2: RECRUITING AND TRAINING SKILLED, COMPETENT TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATOR

RECOMMENDATION 2.1

Provide financial incentives to recruit and retain racially and ethnically diverse teachers and administrators in the profession.

Teacher Incentives and Recruitment

Becoming a teacher is a costly pursuit, requiring a minimum of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. Once students graduate from the basic teacher preparation program and begin their career, they must maintain their license by taking additional classes. Furthermore, to advance in their profession, educators will strive for graduate degrees and National Board Certification. Teachers and administrators who may still be repaying college loans are saddled with additional tuition and fees and a growing financial burden.

Research has found that it is more costly for students of color to enter the teaching profession compared to White students. The findings also signaled that teachers of color appreciated the use of school-related perks such as professional development opportunities and financial incentives such as tuition assistance and scholarships (Dixon, Griffin, and Teoh, 2019). If Maryland wants to attract – and retain – qualified teachers of color, steps must be taken to decrease the financial strain that would make another career move more attractive.

Teach for America is a national organization which operates in over fifty urban and rural regions across the country. They hire a diverse network of individuals who make a two-year commitment to teach in low-income communities. Following the initial two years, these teachers are alumni. Some choose to continue their teaching career, others pursue roles in school leadership or school administration, and many choose to affect educational opportunity in different fields. Teach for America has a record of success, especially in urban school districts, with recruiting individuals into the teaching profession due to the social capital it provides and financial incentives (e.g., resume builder for graduate school and loan forgiveness). When such incentives are connected, college students may consider teaching as a viable opportunity.³²

A promising initiative to recruit a racially diverse educator workforce is the Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars Program (STEP) at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. This program has served as a model for the use of financial incentives that are attractive to those who have debts or who wish to avoid debt as they seek to sharpen their teaching or administrative skills. This program is especially effective because it works to grow the ranks of hard-to-fill teaching positions in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Now entering its thirteenth year, STEP has supported over 150 students to become STEM educators. Demographically, over the life of the program, participants (who are referred to as “Sherman Scholars”) have been 26% Black, 10% Hispanic, 3% Pacific Islander, 15% Asian, 8% multiracial, and 38% White. With 62% of program participants being pre-service teacher candidates of color, this percentage outpaces national teacher demographics (17% teachers of color) as well as Maryland state teacher demographics (24% teachers of color) (Hrabowski & Sanders, 2015).

RECOMMENDATION 2.2

Require school district representatives with teacher and administrator hiring responsibilities (e.g., human resource officers, supervisors, and school principals) to have training on equitable hiring practices of racially and ethnically diverse teacher candidates.

Equitable Hiring Practices

Among the first persons a prospective teacher candidate meets are the personnel in the district's human resource office. Without the approval of human resource officers (HROs) during the pre-screening procedures, a candidate will not advance through the hiring process. This may be the result of an unsuccessful interview and the inability for the HRO to look past cultural differences, ignore their own racial biases, and see the potential the individual would offer. Unfortunately, without the referral from HROs, even promising, prospective teachers will not have the opportunity to be interviewed and considered by a principal attempting to fill vacancies at their schools.

Training in equitable hiring practices could address the bias – intentional or unintentional – and/or inexperience of human resource officers and help increase the number of racially and ethnically diverse teachers. Goings et al. (2019) examined the preparation of school human resource personnel and their capability to hire teachers of color. Participants who had been former principals and made the career move to the district personnel department had not received any human resource training prior to entering the position. In terms of training, they found that the American Association for School Personnel Administrators did focus on equity in hiring which could help principals as they interview candidates. However, the Society for Human Resource Management was more concerned with traditional businesses, and the professional development offered was not relevant for those hiring career educators.

Furthermore, researchers conducted a qualitative study to examine

how human resource personnel used intuition in their hiring decisions of teacher candidates of color (Goings et al., 2020). Findings suggested that human resource personnel had conflicting views on the use of intuition. Some found their intuitive sense to be beneficial and used their past experiences as teachers and school leaders when selecting candidates. The findings also suggested that human resource personnel, although they thought diversity was important, did not consider teacher diversity to be a priority in hiring.

In a similar study, D’Amico et al. (2017) examined the hiring data for a large suburban school district and found that Black candidates were less likely than White candidates to be hired. Additionally, when they were hired, they were placed in hard to teach schools with higher concentrations of students of color and students living in poverty. Often it has been our experience to learn from Black teachers – especially Black men – that when they are hired, they are often seen as a disciplinarian. As a result, they are placed in the most challenging schools with limited instructional resources and professional development.

RECOMMENDATION 2.3

Recruit racially and ethnically diverse teacher and administrator candidates into programs to educate and prepare them to enter the profession.

It has long been held that children learn best from teachers who understand their culture. For Black boys not only do they need teachers who know them culturally, they also benefit from having teachers that look like them and who are positive role models. Black male teachers fit both characteristics. Unfortunately, Black male teachers are scarce and a small percentage of the teaching profession in Maryland and across the country. The challenge for school districts is finding and convincing qualified Black men to enter the teaching profession. Therefore, creative strategies are necessary to attract these candidates.

Diversity of the Teacher Workplace

A research study explored the benefits of increasing the diversity of the teaching workforce, specifically when it comes to Black teachers. Although there are significant benefits specifically for Black students, all students benefit from having a teacher that looks like them. Researchers cite better academic performance including improved reading and math test scores, improved graduation rates, and an increased desire to attend college.³³

Pabon et al. (2011) reported on practices of the Urban Community Teachers Project, an initiative focused on recruiting and preparing Black male teachers to teach in urban schools. They found that “Black male teacher candidates need additional support in navigating college, academics, personal matters, and work responsibilities. Without that assistance, these young men will begin to consider careers and occupations that invest in them as professionals.

Districts must actively pursue Black men and other racially and

ethnically diverse candidates wherever they can be found. Recruiters and HROs must use creative strategies to bring them to their schools and retain their services.

Innovative approaches could entail reaching out to family members of prospective teachers. One study examined the influence of the Black family on the career choices of their children and siblings (Yates et al., 2008). This was done for eight Black male pre-service teachers who all attended a historically Black university in the south. In the study, the teachers were greatly influenced by their parents and siblings. They possessed a personal drive to succeed, and their religious and spiritual beliefs played a major role in their success, as well as with three other factors – having high expectations, building personal relationships with peers, and being in a caring environment.

Huebeck (2020) examined another more obvious approach to address a racial gap between teachers and their students – recruit non-licensed school staff (also called education support professionals or ESPs). The study suggests that often ESPs typically are more diverse and not only represent their community but have close ties to the area in which they serve.³⁴

RECOMMENDATION 2.4

Provide all teachers and school-based administrators, along with all other district personnel, continued professional development on culturally-responsive teaching practices and methods to support the academic, social-emotional, and developmental needs of Black boys and young men.

To teach a child effectively, his or her culture must be recognized and understood. This aids in communicating knowledge as well as receiving information and shapes how individuals and groups think. We must face the reality that most of our teachers in Maryland are non-minority women, yet they still are tasked with delivering an instructional program to students who often look differently, speak differently, and come from different family circumstances and communities. Half of those children will be boys and a large percentage of those boys will be black.

Not only do teachers need to be recruited and retained, but school districts should also provide training to develop the professional skills required for their teachers to help boys, as well girls, achieve.

Research shows that boys learn differently than girls; and gender-based brain research, supported by PET, MRI, and SPECT³⁵ scans clearly show functioning and processing differences between male and female brains. Internationally known gender expert and physician, Dr. Leonard Sax (2017) stated:

“There are few differences in what girls and boys can learn. But there are big differences in the best ways to teach them.” What a boy

needs to achieve in school is frequently different than what a girl needs, and to ignore those differences shortchanges both.”

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

CRT is defined as “a pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures.”³⁶ When teachers use Black boys’ culture as a key source of their education, this is called a culturally responsive approach.

Two of the characteristics of CRT are “communication of high expectations” and “reshaping the curriculum.”³⁷ Educators must incorporate these into the instructional program if the goal is to help Black boys and young men achieve and reach their potential. However, there is a disproportionate placement of Black boys in special education classes and they continue to underperform in many academic subjects. Those observations, when combined with low test scores, may be a clear indication that a renewed focus on CRT is needed; as well as a new focus on male specific pedagogy (boy-friendly instruction).

Evidence has shown the positive impact that caring and culturally responsive teachers and administrators can have on the academic and social trajectory of Black boys (Khalifa, 2018; Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017). Additionally, research suggests that Black boys benefit when they have teachers and administrators that share their lived experiences (Goings, Walker, & Cotignola-Pickens, 2018). The research further shows that the opportunity to learn increases when students’ instruction is delivered in a manner aligned with the values and interaction norms of the community.

“ ***For black adolescent males, in order to offset resistance that occurs because of cultural differences and to help develop their identities, it is essential to establish culturally responsive instructional practices and infuse the curriculum with culturally relevant materials. In this way, these young men will not view their lived experiences outside of school as being marginalized inside it.***”

- *Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males,*
Tatum (2005)

RECOMMENDATION 2.5

Use a multi-prong approach to retain Black men and other ethnically diverse teachers and administrators in the profession.

Ethically Diverse Teacher Retainment

Districts invest time, energy, effort, and expense to recruit, hire, and train their teachers and administrators. However, to protect the investment, there must be a plan to retain the very workforce that

was the focus of the hiring process. This is especially true for Black male teachers who remain in so few numbers that districts must use innovative methods to keep these talented individuals in their schools.

There are several ways to keep the teachers feeling appreciated, supported, and satisfied with their work conditions. One critical strategy is providing leadership opportunities and career advancement. Many Black male educators leave the classroom to become administrators to receive higher pay and to benefit from professional growth opportunities. However, these men are needed to stay in the classroom as well. With opportunities to lead from within the teacher ranks, Black male educators may be convinced to remain in the classroom and education profession longer.

In addition to career advancement, financial incentives, and professional development opportunities, research has shown that one of those most effective ways to retain Black men and other ethnically diverse teachers is by organizing affinity groups for professional support.

A qualitative study of 27 Black male pre-service teachers and three affinity group facilitators found that the groups provided a space for Black male pre-service teachers to be vulnerable, solve problems collaboratively, and build a community to improve their pedagogical abilities (Bristol, Wallace, Manchanda, & Rodriguez, 2020). It is vital that districts and schools provide these support groups and mentors to facilitate an environment of camaraderie for their Black teachers. Failing to do so causes feelings of isolation, which makes retaining Black male teachers a challenge (Huebeck, 2020). This is demonstrated by other researchers who reported findings from a different same race and gender mentoring program that helped Black male mathematics teachers. These new hires received proper induction into the school district, assistance to navigate their schools and district, and help to create an environment to support their retention in the schools and the district (Harris & Davis, 2018).

A similar research study reported findings from another racial affinity group for Black teachers. The focus was on two areas – the impact of Black teacher inquiry groups and Black teacher wellness and rejuvenation. The Black teacher inquiry group was reported as a “safe” space to bring their identity into conversations and was considered an important support in the workplace. Participants also appreciated having a space to talk with Black colleagues about navigating the perceived inequity in the school system and dealing with microaggressions.³⁸ The Black Teacher Wellness and Rejuvenation theme described how participants in these monthly meetings gained skills to support their physical, emotional, and social health as teachers and leaders in their community (Harris & Davis, 2018).

TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE OF MARYLAND'S SCHOOLS FOR BOYS



STUDY GROUP 3: **CURRICULA AND INSTRUCTION**



STUDY GROUP 3: CURRICULA AND INSTRUCTION

The purpose of this study group was to develop recommendations about effective, research-based strategies and instructional approaches to improve Black boys' academic outcomes.

This section examines seven recommendations designed to address the underperformance of Black boys and young men in Maryland's public schools. For each recommendation, an accompanying table outlines potential roadblocks and suggested solutions and approaches to prevent or minimize them.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1

Provide professional learning to support the implementation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy/Culturally Responsive Teaching and Anti-bias practices in classrooms and schools.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. This recommendation could be carried out by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) by establishing a required equity policy and strategic plan for culturally responsive professional development around curriculum, discipline methodologies, and instructional practices within each district.
2. MSDE could provide a template for curriculum changes that need to occur, as well as develop a network of partnerships with various higher education institutions and nonprofit organizations in districts that can share cultural resources. Most importantly, MSDE could provide an outline or template for equity growth across the state.

Bulleted below are some of the professional learning delivery models that can be utilized to increase cultural competence among staff across the state of Maryland:

- a. Trainer of Trainers model
 - b. Continuing education credits
 - c. Third-party vendors
 - d. Book studies
 - e. Virtual conference for teachers and administration
 - f. Use of instructional reflection tools to help teacher's measure student engagement while implementing CRP
3. MSDE should examine if the appropriate data is being collected and reported by each district and whether that data can be used to support decision-making on the need of culturally responsive professional development and culturally relevant pedagogy. Reliable tools for data collection need to do more than gather demographics and grade level but should also measure the quality and effectiveness of instruction and level of academic growth.



“We must welcome Black male culture into classrooms and schools.”

– Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu
Changing the School Culture for Black Boys

Table 3.1

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. There is no requirement to implement these practices in districts across the state, and therefore a lack of commitment or buy-in.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE could mandate the inclusion of CRP goals for professional development and instruction in every district's plan (Continuity of Learning/Recovery Plans/School Improvement Plans) as a component of equitable instructional practices. 2. Each district should collect data that gauges the extent that CRP principles and techniques are used by classroom teachers and analyze correlations with academic performance of Black boys and young men.
<p>B. Teachers reported challenges with CRP. Some of those challenges included navigating controversial topics, having a narrow understanding of students' culture, and recognizing their own implicit biases.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage teachers and principals in bias-motivated or cultural proficiency professional development before implementing CRP. 2. Create a resource page for districts with information about CRP, available training, instructional tools, and frameworks. 3. School leaders should identify CRP instructional leaders who can assist and coach their colleagues, facilitate round table discussions, and present training sessions during staff and department meetings. 4. MSDE can offer a CRP endorsement for education licensure as a motivation for teachers to seek additional training. 5. Districts can design and offer CRP professional development courses for which teachers can receive credit towards license renewal.
<p>C. Many teachers struggle with gaining the necessary knowledge to differentiate instruction to Black boys because they lack the time to obtain specialized experience in the specific educational and cultural techniques needed to make an academic difference with Black boys.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE should work with districts to develop a framework that supports teachers' growth in cultural competency. This framework creates an environment where cultural competency is supported and where courageous conversations about race and culture can be discussed. This work includes inviting various stakeholders in the development of the framework.
<p>D. Since post-secondary institutions do not require teachers to gain technical knowledge in cultural understanding, teachers must gain this knowledge on their own time. This takes away from their limited time for other required professional development or the pursuit of personal goals and objectives.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE should require CRP training for licensure and work with local colleges and universities to offer classes for teachers on how to be culturally responsive educators. The Department should also encourage higher education programs to mandate courses centered on culturally relevant pedagogy and improve Black boys' and young men's outcomes. 2. Districts provide time in the teacher workday for required culturally relevant professional development. The CRP training could support and prepare teachers to engage in the difficult discussions that may ensue from reading novels from a wide range of diverse authors and topics for ELA instruction. Examples of books include <i>Just Mercy</i>, <i>The Hate You Give</i>, <i>Brown Girl Dreaming</i>, <i>Refugee</i>, <i>Americanah</i>, <i>Purple Hibiscus</i>.

Table 3.1 continued on the next page »

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES / TABLE 3.1
<p>E. Some people will be resistant to MSDE and districts’ work in cultural relevance because of their lack of understanding and personal appreciation for its importance. Some community members may not want their child to have access to culturally-competent resources and cultural facts.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE should work with districts to conduct community town halls and partner with PTAs/PTSAs/SGAs and community groups to provide educational resources, statistical data, and local/national research on the impact of cultural relevance in the educational setting. By providing information directly to communities, MDSE can control the narrative and importance of culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy. 2. Districts should widely disseminate information and data on the positive effects of CRP on school climate and classroom environment, and how such practices help foster and maintain a safe and orderly environment for teaching and learning.
<p>F. Culturally responsive pedagogy is a key determinant to improving the academic achievement of Black students. However, some teachers do not believe or understand this because of their personal experiences or misconceptions.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE could use the results contained within the congressionally mandated Condition of Education 2020 report to support the narrative. The National School Boards Association (NSBA)³⁹ wrote, “We tried hard to find a significant improvement for Black students in the Condition of Education 2020. Yet, what the data demonstrate is disappointing and discouraging.”
<p>G. Along with challenges in measuring mindset shifts and instructional outcomes, many educators will discourage this work and see it as an unproven approach and added responsibility.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Districts must strive to keep their school-based administrators and teachers regularly informed about the data demonstrating the continued underperformance of ethnic groups, especially Black boys in their schools. CRP while not an end-all solution is an effective strategy as part of a multi-prong approach to address the dilemma and improve learning for all students of all ethnicities.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2

Address ongoing achievement gaps by using the science of reading (systematic phonics instruction, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, methods to improve fluency, and ways to enhance comprehension) for grades K-3 and beyond for older struggling readers.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. Given that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)⁴⁰ requires instructional approaches that have a scientific basis, schools/districts must have assistance and ease of access to new instructional practices that align with legislative requirements and with outcomes verified by scientific research.
2. Use the recently revised Maryland’s Keys to Comprehensive Literacy⁴¹ for guidance and assistance with the following:
 - a. Evidence-based resources (Appendix C)
 - b. Definitions of comprehensive literacy instruction (Appendix D)

3. Funds from the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant and other funding sources can be used for the following:
 - a. Hire literacy staff (literacy coaches, reading specialists, master teachers, instructional data specialists).
 - b. Purchase evidence-based curricula and interventions such as Read 180, System 44, Wilson, Orton Gillingham, Achieve 3000, Corrective Reading, Reading Mastery, Just Words, and Phonics Boost.
 - c. For older struggling readers in grades 6-12, train teachers to use the highly-rated Reading Apprenticeship, an adolescent literacy program.
 - d. Use LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) to conduct professional development in reading instruction for elementary through secondary school teachers.⁴²
4. Teaching a sequence of phonics skills does not translate to learning to read the text and overall reading competency. The program or curriculum selected must be based on scientific evidence for effectiveness, include teacher training, and be implemented with fidelity. Other assessment and instructional measures need to be part of the instructional strategy to monitor progress to modify the instructional plan to ensure children learn and progress in their reading skills.
5. Implement an explicit, systematic approach to reading instruction that includes phonics, phonemic awareness, morphological awareness, reading fluency, and spelling.
6. Conduct quarterly benchmarking so teachers will know if students are not making progress. Monitor progress frequently if a student requires additional intensive instruction to ensure steady and meaningful progress toward a pre-set goal.
7. Require more intensive instruction or instructional adjustments for students who are behind the achievement of their peers and state and national benchmarks.
8. Revamp ELA classes so they may be scheduled for flexible groupings. Use personnel (included Specialized Instructional Support Personnel, trained teaching assistants, college interns) to work with these groups to decrease student-teacher ratio and increase instruction intensity.
9. Use benchmarking computerized systems for reading that provide a quick, accurate assessment of students' skills measured against national norms.
10. Implement a school-wide or district-wide program of explicit, systematic phonics, phonemic awareness, and reading fluency in grades K-3 and older students with persistent reading difficulties.
11. Conduct universal reading screening in grades K-3.
12. Provide teacher training in an evidence-based approach to explicit, systematic phonics that includes the science of reading, the oral language precursors to reading, phonemic processing and phonological awareness, phonics, morphological awareness, spelling (encoding), and reading fluency, and dialectal differences that may affect reading decoding and spelling.
13. Implement a teacher training model that includes knowledge acquisition as well as coaching in the classroom.
14. Schools and districts should investigate working with the AARP Foundation Experience Corps. This is a proven, intergenerational volunteer-based tutoring program. Trained volunteers work collaboratively with teachers and other volunteers. They are dedicated to improving literacy and turning children into proficient readers before they complete third grade.

“Boys who can read well have a place at the table of opportunity, whether they aspire to attend college or enter the workforce.”

– Tracy Weeden
CEO - Neuhaus Education Center



Table 3.2

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. Selecting an evidence-based explicit, systematic phonics curriculum that includes all the components supported by science of reading research may be difficult for an individual school or school district.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE creates a rubric based on the science of reading to guide districts on selecting reading curricula and planning professional development. 2. Braid funding from ESSA, Title I⁴³, and IDEA⁴⁴ for screening instruments, benchmarking system, and teacher training 3. Districts partner with the University of Maryland Department of Education to help evaluate and select evidence-based explicit phonics programs, reliable screening instruments, and benchmarking systems 4. Several organizations can assist schools with the selection of an instructional reading program, such as The International Dyslexia Association (IDA)⁴⁵, Haskins Global Literacy Hub⁴⁶, the Reading League, and the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR).⁴⁷
<p>B. Finding ways to train teachers to implement an explicit, systematic reading approach may be complicated concerning funding and timing.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide training in the summer with incentives such as acquiring CPDs toward licensure renewal and stipends for summer work. 2. Select a reading program that incorporates teacher training and classroom coaching as part of its product and distribution.
<p>C. Selecting an appropriate instrument to screen for reading, funding the purchase, and training all teachers.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE should work with districts to develop a framework that supports teachers' growth in cultural competency. This framework creates an environment where cultural competency is supported and where courageous conversations about race and culture can be discussed. This work includes inviting various stakeholders in the development of the framework.
<p>D. Schools or school districts may be hesitant to embark on a complete overhaul of their reading instruction practices without the benefit of following a successful model.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE offers pilot programs in schools or school districts in various geographic/ demographic settings to demonstrate the efficacy and outcomes of explicit, systematic phonics instruction. 2. Pilot programs will establish ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the methods used and make needed adjustments, report what works and what doesn't. 3. MSDE could establish methods for the school or school district to receive incentives to participate.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3

Address ongoing gaps in math and continual math decline through advancing grades by using standards-based, real-world math instruction infused with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) activities.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. Include concept-based instruction to support math fact fluency and math calculation procedures (monitor progress quarterly).
2. Teach the use of algorithms and equations for application in math problem solving (monitor progress quarterly).
3. Incorporate building projects and cooking into instruction which naturally requires the use of math.
4. Research available resource materials, websites, or design your science experiments which incorporate math computation. Coordinate within the district to share successful and creative experiments among schools and explain what works.
5. Present opportunities to solve real-world problems using math, science and social studies skills and knowledge. This brings a sense of relevancy by reinforcing the everyday application of math concepts and skills.
6. School districts or individual schools could provide planning opportunities or summer curriculum-writing workshops for teachers to create interdisciplinary activities using science and social studies as a context for learning and applying math concepts and procedures.
7. Incorporate financial literacy instruction using real-world projects like starting a business (e.g., lemonade stand or an in-school business like a school store), which involve simple and higher-order math.
8. Engage in a daily spiral review of concepts by including these in STEM activities. Math skill development for children who come to the math table at a disadvantage compared to their higher-performing peers need multiple practice opportunities. These opportunities will help boost and internalize skills that will help them become proficient with higher-order math and problem-solving skills. Provide fun and motivating practice and use data to track progress.
9. Engage in daily practice of math facts using computer game software to promote engagement and motivation to build automaticity. These platforms also track student performance and provide teachers with quick insights into how a child progresses toward a pre-set goal, helping to guide instruction.
10. Provide targeted skill instruction in small groups. This should be three to four times a week, for 20-minute sessions, in eight-week modules. Using small groups can supplement classroom instruction.
11. Implement a teacher training model that includes knowledge acquisition as well as classroom coaching.



“Should we keep trying to change the boys and their energy, or should we change the educational system they find themselves in?”

– Michael Gurian and Kathy Stevens
How Boys Learn

Table 3.3

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. Teachers have many competing instructional and curricular demands. Any enhancement or overhaul of current practices in any content curriculum must be implemented with ease, support, and demonstrated outcomes.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilize MSDE resources for STEM education, including a juried list of nonprofit and for-profit organizations that strive to partner with schools and teachers to integrate STEM into the curriculum. 2. Partner with the University of Maryland to review curriculum guidelines and rewrite the curriculum where necessary to enhance math teaching by infusing STEM activities and community resources into instruction. 3. Seek off-the-shelf curricula complete with lesson plans and materials that are aligned with state math standards.
<p>B. Changing current practice and what teachers know how to do in math instruction may be a concern. Starting in third grade and every year after that, children are assessed in math. Teachers have to work through a sequenced and sizable curriculum, and children are tested on each specific instructional unit.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local school districts and MSDE could develop summer institutes that support STEM infused learning in math instruction that includes strategies to keep math instruction explicit and targeted to meet state grade-level standards. 2. MSDE could host regional seminars using teachers from districts across the state who have successfully integrated STEM with math.
<p>C. Using STEM activities in instruction can slow down the pace of teaching, which impedes a teacher’s ability to get through the grade-level math curriculum mandated by their county and the state. State standards may dictate STEM integration in all teaching areas, but teacher training and professional development are not necessarily aligned with the standards.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE could review state standards to ensure alignment with curricula currently available and produces a list of approved resources, materials, and texts. 2. MSDE could collect data from schools using STEM in math instruction, conducting the Department’s action research. Teachers who are being successful can lead and teach sessions at the summer training institutes. 3. Disaggregated data should be shared demonstrating effectiveness in improving math achievement for all students, including Black boys and young men.
<p>D. Funding for curriculum, materials, professional development, and coaching may be outside the school’s or district’s budget allotments.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek grants at the school and district level to support professional development, materials, and program acquisition. 2. Braid funding from ESSA, Title I, and IDEA for programs, materials, and teacher training. 3. Use current teachers to present professional development and serve as coaches. This is an opportunity for teachers with a mathematics instructional leadership endorsement. 4. Districts hold their curriculum writing workshops during the summer, extended breaks, or during the school year. Workshops can be guided by college, university, or private specialists.

RECOMMENDATION 3.4

Use a proven program, such as the Algebra Project, to address persistent gaps in math and the continual decline in math achievement through advancing grades.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. The Algebra Project is rooted in the understanding that students learn real-world concepts through observation and hands-on labs and games. These activities allow students to ask questions, explain the methodology and develop a pedagogy for ideas using their own words to reframe their thinking and will enable them to develop higher order thinking skills.
2. The use of summer institutes over two to six weeks allows students to reinforce math skills and develop an algebraic framework that will put them on par with their peers. Additionally, this learning experience will enable them to build towards a greater understanding of the real world through challenging and engaging activities. These experiences would come in a variety of ways:
 - a. **Math Labs:** Math-related games/activities for third through sixth graders. These are activities that can be integrated into the daily and weekly parts of a unit. Peer-to-peer mentoring through casual games and labs allows students in different areas of the math spectrum to collaborate. Students have a sense that each person has a role and something to contribute.
 - b. **Algebra Labs:** Math-related activities for seventh to eighth graders. These experiences are hands-on labs that challenge the students to discuss the procedures, results, analysis, and conclusions in their language related to physical motion. These are precursor concepts to physics. The use of mathematical objects will allow them to develop new schema.

In addition to math, students have to present and share their knowledge by creating arguments with supporting claims and evidence. They learn the value of trial and error and problem-solving mistakes. Engaging mathematical models allow students to conceptualize abstract concepts that are bridges to other higher order thinking skills.
 - c. **Community Activities:** These events are math competitions between members of different classes and other schools that promote increased reinforcement and participation of both grade level and higher-order concepts.
 - d. **Summer Institute:** Summer mentoring experiences led by math literate tutors who could be high school or college students that have mastered these concepts. Institute leaders could include members of businesses that apply these concepts in their daily practices. Pairing local businesses with teachers is essential in developing activities that promote the math literacy concepts of the Algebra Project.

Table 3.4

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. Funding and timing of implementation are always crucial considerations for a new initiative.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Algebra Project was funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in several states. NSF supported the curriculum, instructional training workshops, and summer institutes for teachers and students. Grant writing proposals to assist in the widespread implementation of the project may be necessary. 2. MSDE can assist with allocating funds from less successful programs.
<p>B. There must be buy-in of the school, district, and parents for the success of the Algebra Project.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schools and families must have high expectations of educational success. Districts should host information fairs for families of students where programs exist. Explain that these programs can be considered “culturally responsive” but not culturally exclusive. Instruction begins where students are and build upon strengths consistent with the best science and teaching practices. 2. Data should be presented to prove the success of the model in improving math achievement for all students, especially Black boys and young men.

RECOMMENDATION 3.5

Expand Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) and the African American Male Initiative (AAMI) to address reduced enrollment in Advanced Placement courses and gaps in advancement to college and college graduation.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. Increase the percentage of schools across the state that will implement the AAMI as part of EOS, especially schools with a high percentage of students who participate in the free and reduced meals program.
2. As stated earlier, EOS has partnered with 53 high schools in the state over the past five years. MSDE should encourage and incentivize those schools to adopt the AAMI initiative that explicitly recruits and supports Black boys’ participation in AP coursework.
3. MSDE should expand this current partnership which would help enhance Maryland’s equity and excellence initiatives. The partnership can increase its positive impact on traditionally underserved students.

Table 3.5

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. Long-range planning is imperative. With the EOS, a minimum two-year commitment is recommended to start the process. The first year is typically centered on identifying students, examining course trajectories, and developing strategies to support them.</p> <p>The method also includes analyzing grades, test scores, considering recommendations and student interviews, and long-term monitoring of progress.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A school-based team should be established to design the plan to implement EOS, including making a proposal to the district superintendent, seeking grant opportunities, and determining faculty, parent, and student interest. 2. The goals and projected outcomes should be clearly articulated in all planning, proposals, and communication materials. 3. Securing a consultant from an existing EOS program to coach the planning and implementation would ensure the program’s successful planning and execution.
<p>B. EOS/AAMI programs require funding and timing for their implementation to be successful.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE must reinforce its Lead Higher initiative’s goals, focusing on closing the equity gaps for traditionally underserved students in Maryland and providing the necessary funding required to support their academic success.



“Inequity exists in silence.”

– Dr. Daryl Howard
Specialist / Equity Initiatives Unit
Montgomery County Public Schools

RECOMMENDATION 3.6

Districts encourage individual co-ed schools to create single-gender classes across grades or for selected subjects. Districts may also consider approving charter schools with single-gender classes for boys and girls.

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

The US Department of Education published a “significant guidance document” in 2014 that gives detailed instructions for districts which are planning to implement single-gender classes. MSDE and the district-level Title IX coordinator must work closely with the district leadership and the individual schools to closely adhere to all USDE Title IX regulations as well as other program requirements:

1. The district’s planning committee must first
 - a. Meet the necessary criteria for offering single-gender classes
 - b. Decide on the justification for the classes
 - c. Identify the appropriate objective – diversity objective or needs objective – as the basis for offering single-gender classes
 - d. Describe the needed evidence to achieve the objective, especially any research evidence.
2. Student enrollment in a single-gender class must be completely voluntary and with parental written consent. A substantially equal coed class in the same subject or grade must also be offered.
3. Schools should assign teachers and begin professional development (on brain-based learning differences, instructional strategies to teach boys and girls) for each single-gender class. Training and coaching must continue throughout the school year.
4. School administrators provide information about each class to students and parents in advance, e.g. during the spring or last grading quarter, allowing them time to make informed decisions. Use pre-enrollment packets with the following:
 - a. School’s justification for single-gender classes
 - b. Data which the school used to develop its justification
 - c. Statement that substantially equal coed classes are available
 - d. Description of the differences between the single-gender and coed classes
 - e. Consent forms for parents to opt-in (if not returned, student will be placed in a coed class). If single-gender classes are by subjects, e.g., reading and math, a separate consent form is needed for each.
5. It is key that the district and school establish a method to periodically evaluate how the single-gender instructional program is in compliance with Title IX regulations.

TABLE 3.6

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. Having single-gender classes is gender discrimination and violates Title IX regulations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Although Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded education programs and activities, regulations issued by the Department authorizes schools to offer single-sex classes or extracurricular activities under certain circumstances. (US Department of Education – Office for Civil Rights, 2014) 2. Explain that this is not a “zero-sum” game where one gender will win at the expense of the other. This is your school’s effort to teach children how they learn best and to minimize distractions, stress, other roadblocks to their reaching their potential.
<p>B. Single-gender classes will not give boys and girls the opportunity to socialize and prepare them for personal relationships.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform parents and educators that as boys and girls gain confidence and experience success in their same-sex classes, they can better relate authentically to the other gender. 2. Also, there are many extracurricular activities and opportunities outside of school for boys to interact with their female peers – community boys and girls clubs, church youth groups, or even at the mall, to name a few. Parents can choose the activities best suited for their sons and daughters. 3. In co-ed environments, some boys feel they must demonstrate their masculinity by engaging in macho activities designed to impress their female classmates. A girls-only environment provides a classroom free from their feeling they have to focus on physical appearances and compete for male attention.
<p>C. Some parents and educators may feel that boys-only classes should be taught by men and girls-only classes taught by women. This would be difficult when there are so few male teachers, particularly in elementary schools.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information should be shared regarding Title IX regulations prohibiting assigning a teacher solely based on their sex. 2. Explain that women can be successful teachers of boys, as well as men. When female teachers prefer to work with boys, receive training, and are knowledgeable about boys’ developmental and learning needs, they can be extremely effective. Men can be successful teachers of girls when they are trained to understand the learning differences as well as the academic, social, and developmental needs of female students.
<p>D. Teachers who do not buy into the concept of gender learning differences will not be successful as they attempt to implement the pedagogy that is required.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adequate preparation combined with initial and ongoing training are critical to the success of single-gender classes. Placing a teacher who has not been trained into a room full of boys would be disastrous, just as it would be to place a teacher who does not understand female learning differences into a room full of girls. It would be better for the school not to attempt to change to single-sex classes rather than take the risk of a monumental failure.

Table 3.6 continued on the next page »

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES / TABLE 3.6
<p>E. Boys do better in classes with girls who can help calm them or set the example of good behavior.</p> <p>Why separate them?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain that many boys often feel at a disadvantage around their more verbal female peers whose reading skills frequently surpass theirs. However, in an all-boy environment, the teacher’s expectations are shaped by the developmental and verbal strengths of boys. The teacher can focus on helping boys develop their “voice” and speaking skills. More time can be devoted to helping boys improve their written language skills and reading skills without them having to compete with the girls. 2. In addition, in a single-sex environment, boys can participate in activities and clubs, e.g. the choir, without being labeled and teased. They are free to pursue their artistic and musical talents. Dramas and play productions take on a new perspective with the boys being pushed into the leading roles without being able to “hide behind” the girls. 3. Explain the advantages for girls when they study in all-girls environments, especially in STEM areas – science, technology, engineering, and math. Young women have begun to make great strides in engineering, medicine, and computer programming. These fields are still dominated chiefly by males, but girls and women are making gains as colleges and special programs proliferate to provide them with opportunities to improve their skills. 4. While it is evident that single-sex classes can improve test scores, grades, and decrease discipline referrals, one of the most beneficial aspects is with classroom interactions. The kinds of discussions and the nature of the questions asked when there is a room full of boys or girls is different from what would occur in a coed environment where they can just be themselves.
<p>F. Will single-gender classes permit transgender students to enroll?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Announce that according to the Department, “Schools must treat transgender students consistent with their gender identity in all aspects of the planning, implementation, enrollment, operation, and evaluation of single-sex classes.” (US Department of Education, 2014.

RECOMMENDATION 3.7

An annual symposium on teaching and engaging Black boys hosted by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Proposed strategies to carry out the recommendations:

1. Although sponsored by MSDE, the event could be led by local educators or third-party vendors, either in person or virtually. The summit would be attractive to educators as a means of earning continuing education and professional development credits.
2. MSDE should partner with area universities to reach their teachers in training.
3. Workshop sessions could include the following:
 - a. How brain-based differences affect learning and behavior
 - b. Teaching boys the way they learn best
 - c. Educating boys of color

- d. Educating for character
 - e. Creating a Rites of Passage program
 - f. Mentoring for success
 - g. Changing the school culture for Black boys
 - h. Creating a boy-friendly classroom that helps the girls, too!
 - i. Keeping Black boys out of special education
 - j. Teaching boys to read
 - k. Single-gender classrooms for boys and girls
 - l. Boys and girls learn differently
4. The Maryland State Board of Education could assign credit for attending these specific professional learning experiences for certification, licensure, renewal, or tenure.
 5. Brain-based gender differences, specifically male-specific pedagogy (educating boys) could qualify as an endorsement on teachers’ licenses.
 6. Educators could receive special training to return to their schools to train and coach others.
 7. Staff of pilot schools could attend for free; other Maryland educators pay nominal fee; out-of-state attendees pay full cost (virtual or in-person).
 8. The Equity Initiatives Unit in Montgomery County Public Schools provides a model event in the two-day training module for district educators called Elevating the Black Male Student.⁴⁸ This module addresses issues discussed earlier in the recommendation: Sustained racial disparities in schools; Analyze data to identify successful and problematic school/classroom behaviors, practices, and processes; Societal bias in the perceptions of black boys; Stages of development and brain differences between girls and boys (that transcends race or ethnicity); Cultural patterns of African American male students; Ways of engaging Black boys and strategies for their success.

TABLE 3.7

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES
<p>A. If attendance at this summit is voluntary, some teachers may not see it as valuable or necessary, as is often true for other professional development on equity or culturally responsive practices.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Maryland State Department of Education offers this event annually for continuing education or continuing professional development units/credits. 2. Districts could receive incentives, e.g., discounted rates on other professional development offerings and special acknowledgments for having cohorts of educators attend the conference.
<p>B. There may be socio-political or policy considerations that surface around sex and gender. These considerations may suggest that a focus on one demographic will lead to other groups’ disenfranchisement by race and or sex.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSDE must stress the importance of this type of training and professional development for educators which will lead to better outcomes for all students. 2. Year after year, the data for Black boys in every academic performance area (i.e., standardized testing, higher-level courses, graduation rates) are at the bottom. Yet, in every area of discipline problems (i.e., referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and arrests), Black boys are at the top. 3. If the state and districts are serious about this disproportionality, they will find ways for their educators to engage in this professional development. Without this annual symposium, the needs and strategies for teaching and engaging Black boys will continue to be a brief conversation.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

STUDY GROUP 3: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

RECOMMENDATION 3.1

Provide professional learning to support the implementation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy/ Culturally Responsive Teaching and Anti-bias practices in classrooms and schools.

The Maryland State Department of Education has mandated that all schools integrate culturally responsive practices in the professional development of staff, in the curriculum, in discipline, and in instruction. It has become increasingly apparent that to build professional capacity centered on educational equity, educators must do the following: Continually examine their biases; learn about the racial, ethnic, and cultural experiences of their students; and create a safe and inclusive learning environment. MSDE and the school districts share a responsibility with institutes of higher education to provide the adequate groundwork for this crucial professional learning.

This recommendation is guided by two conceptual assumptions of educating Black boys and young men. First, a sociocultural perspective is essential in helping educators understand the way culture and ethnicity impact learning (Goings, Smith, Harris, Wilson & Lancaster, 2015). Sociocultural Theory is the ideology that explains how culture and ethnicity impact learning. It is an approach to instruction that incorporates ethnically diverse students' cultural norms, experiences, and learning styles to make learning relevant (Mercer and Howe, 2012; Waddell, 2014). Second, teachers who teach Black boys and young men should be knowledgeable about effective instructional pedagogy (Battey, 2013). The concepts of culturally responsive pedagogy and anti-bias practices are introduced as critical tenets for learning and teaching. To fully understand the recommendation, a description of the ideology behind the key concepts is provided.

Culturally Responsive Practices

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) is an approach to teaching and learning that draws from students' culture, learning styles, and experiences to increase engagement and academic achievement (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2013). CRP connects learning in school with students' experiences at home to increase the potential of enduring, positive effects on learning (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Culturally-Relevant Teaching (CRT) research shows evidence of being beneficial in relationship building, fostering cross-cultural understanding and inclusiveness, influencing more diverse world views, influencing positive classroom culture, fostering positive relationships, and building trust in the classroom.

Samuels (2018) conducted a study centered on teachers' perspectives on implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and collected data

from approximately 200 teachers over four months. Sixty percent of the teachers were elementary teachers, and 40% were middle and high school teachers. All served in low socioeconomic K-12 schools representing multiple content areas in the same large urban school district. Teachers spoke about how culturally relevant teaching practices encouraged students to feel connected, included, and valued and led to their empowerment on students' behalf. Teachers also reported that using these strategies inspired students to maintain their cultural identity (Samuels, 2018).

Anti-bias practices can be described as ways to address bias and prejudice through awareness, intervention, and personal action. An anti-bias approach fosters positive relationships and an inclusive, welcoming environment for all community members (Anti-Defamation League, 2021).

Anti-bias education is a systemic, proactive approach that integrates anti-bias principles into all aspects of school culture, policies, and pedagogy which includes the following:

- Anti-bias curriculum and resources for educators
- Staff professional development in areas of anti-bias education, social-emotional learning, and bullying prevention
- Student leadership training and opportunities to develop ally behavior
- Educational forums and community events for families
- An ongoing, school-wide commitment to promoting a culture of respect and inclusion (Anti-Defamation League, 2021)

Practices for anti-bias education are grounded in actions that actively challenge bias, stereotyping, and all forms of discrimination in schools. Classrooms become safe spaces, inclusive, and respectful learning communities (Learning for Justice: Social Justice Standards, 2018). Together, sociocultural theory and culturally relevant pedagogy form a framework focused on learning and teaching that is student-centered and measurable.

Participation in meaningful and engaging professional development is considered one of the best ways to improve educators' instructional practices. The field of education is continually evolving, and there is a compelling need for teachers to examine their instructional and engagement practices. With the rapidly changing demographics of our state and country, educators must understand the importance of implementing culturally responsive teaching practices to connect with their linguistically and culturally diverse students.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2**Address ongoing achievement gaps by using the science of reading (systematic phonics instruction, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness methods to improve fluency, and ways to enhance comprehension) for grades K-3 and beyond for older struggling readers.**

We have a crisis in Maryland regarding Black boys' education, and one of the critical components of this crisis revolves around reading achievement. According to the World Literacy Foundation (2015), "...low literacy is a major contributor to inequality and increases the likelihood of poor physical and mental health, workplace accidents, misuse of medication, participation in crime, and welfare dependency, all of which also have substantial additional social and economic costs".

Reading Achievement

Reading is the single-most predictor of school success and achievement later in life (Lyon, 2005; Richie & Bates, 2013), yet only 35% of Maryland's students in fourth grade and 36% of eighth-graders read at the level of proficiency or better according to the National Assessment of Education Progress (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).⁴⁹ Disaggregated data show that 21.4% of third grade Black boys read at Proficiency Level 4 or higher⁵⁰ compared to 50.7% of their White male peers. This achievement gap continues through grade eight ELA and through tenth and eleventh grade English. National data reflect a similar difference in Black boys' reading achievement compared to Black girls who attained higher levels of reading success (Matthews, Kizzie, Rowley, & Cortina, 2010).

Research shows that many factors contribute to the reading achievement gap including characteristics of the child, parents, home environment, schools, culture, and socioeconomic environment (Yeung and Pfeiffer, 2009). Additionally, lowered teacher expectations, racial discrimination in the classroom, and disproportional representation in lower-tiered classes have been reported as contributors to the achievement gap, particularly for boys (Ferguson, 2000; McIntosh, 2002).

Solving the problem of this persistent achievement gap must be a priority for researchers, policymakers, and educators. We cannot allow this population of learners to continue to lag academically; research has shown that academic underperformance and failure affect future life choices, physical and mental health, and financial security (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018).

According to the National Reading Panel (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001), a groundbreaking and landmark report based upon a meta-analysis of more than 10,000 research studies, effective reading instruction must include five main elements: 1) explicit instruction in phonemic awareness; 2) systematic phonics instruction; 3) vocabulary

development; 4) comprehension strategies; and 5) reading fluency practice.

When children struggle with reading, 80 to 90% struggle because they cannot decode (sound out) the words (Lerner, 1989). Implementing explicit, systematic phonics instruction that includes phonemic awareness and consistent reading fluency practice with feedback to all children has been recommended by the research (National Reading Panel, 2001; Russell, J. & Shiffler, 2019). An explicit, systematic phonics approach to reading instruction teaches students the process of reading, over time, following a specific sequence of objectives, with continuous reinforcement and practice of skills previously taught and learned. For students who do not meet grade-level benchmarks, explicit, systematic reading instruction has demonstrated improved reading outcomes (Alamprese, MacArthur, Price, & Knight, 2011; Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001; Hatcher, Hulme, & Snowling, 2004; Joshi, Dahlgren, & Boulware-Gooden, 2002; Nagy, Berninger, Abbott, Vaughan, & Vermeulen, 2003; Nagy, Berninger, & Abbott, 2006; Wolf, Miller, & Donnelly, 2000).

There are many reasons why students struggle with reading. Some have a neurobiological predisposition for word level reading difficulties such as dyslexia. Some struggle with reading comprehension secondary to their inherent neurobiological oral language development. Some students struggle with reading because they do not speak English as a first language. Some children may struggle because they speak a non-standard form (dialect) of English (i.e., African American English). When children speak a very pronounced dialect of English that does not align with the structure of mainstream American English (MAE) (phonology, morphology, syntax) in texts and literature, the reading task becomes linguistically more difficult than it is for children who speak MAE. (Bowman, Comer, & Johns, 2018; Charity, Scarborough, & Griffin, 2004; Washington, Terry, & Seidenberg, 2013). Some students may struggle because they come from a background of poverty which brings with it a multitude of reasons for low academic achievement in general, including reading (Bowman, Comer, & Johns, 2018; Hoff, 2013). And for some children who struggle with reading, the reason may be "instructional casualties" (Lyon, 2005).

Besides building discreet reading skills systematically, the reading materials used must be culturally relevant and diverse. Vocabulary development and comprehension skill development will be best served when literature and texts reflect students' race, ethnicity, culture, and experiences. Children of color need to see themselves in their curriculum and in the materials used to teach the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3**Address ongoing gaps in math, and continual math decline through advancing grades by using standards-based, real-world math instruction infused with science, technology, engineering, and**

math (STEM) activities.

Early math knowledge and early reading success are positively related to later school success (Duncan et al., 2007). Unfortunately, Maryland 2019 MCAP data for math in grades three through eight reveal that African American students scored the lowest of all subgroups (MSDE, 2019). Disaggregated 2019 MCAP math data reveal that only 25% of third-grade Black boys perform at Level 4 or higher, compared to 60% of White boys. What is even more concerning is that Black boys in Maryland perform more poorly in math in each successive grade through grade eight, with only 11% performing at Level 4 or higher in eighth grade. While White boys demonstrate declines in math through eighth grade as well, they perform between 32 to 37 points higher than their Black male peers. It is interesting to note that there is an incremental increase in math scores for Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry for Black young men, revealing that 10%, 23%, and 49% are proficient with each successive math course. However, the gap persists, and same progression is evident for White male students, with scores increasing in high school math courses from 48%, 67%, and 79% for Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry (MSDE, 2019).

Math Achievement Gap

Research that explores math cognitive development, neural systems related to math learning, math instruction, and math learning difficulties is not as prolific as reading research. However, research in math is becoming more prevalent in the research literature and is increasingly requested by educators to guide practice. Of primary concern for this Task Force report is how to address the low math achievement of Black boys and how to implement evidence-based practices to close the achievement gap.

Neuroscientific studies recently have demonstrated the interaction between executive functions (planning, organization, working memory, self-regulation, cognitive flexibility) and exposure to poverty (Noble et al., 2015). Children in poverty and underserved communities tend to have less exposure to routines in their everyday lives and greater exposure to the stressful environments that accompany poverty, with boys more affected than girls. Children from poverty backgrounds are less likely to have well-developed executive functions and math skills; math skills are highly dependent upon the cognitive substrates involved in executive functions (Ursache and Noble, 2016). The Annie E Casey Foundation (2018) reported that as of 2016, 34 percent of African American children came from low-income homes and lived in underserved communities, therefore implicating poverty and executive functions as possible early causes of early math achievement disparities in the preschool years for Black boys.

Davis and Farran (2018) contend that we should be rethinking early math enrichment and experiences as early as preschool for children of color in low-income environments. Early math experiences should be more challenging and supportive and “over time, open doors to STEM careers” (Berry III 2008; McGee & Pearman II 2014; Zilanawala et al. 2017).

To close the math achievement gap, we can borrow from implementation science research that has demonstrated positive math achievement results in other learners’ subgroups. A robust body of research has explored math interventions in early elementary school, specifically with students who have documented math disabilities. In targeted intervention studies, notable improvement in foundational math skills has been reported and persisted one year later (Fuchs et al. 2008).

Fuchs et al. (2008) reported an evidence base for seven principles of effective intervention for students with mathematics disabilities:

1. Instructional explicitness
2. Instructional design to minimize learning challenge
3. Strong conceptual basis
4. Drill and practice
5. Cumulative review
6. Motivators to help students regulate their attention and behavior to work hard
7. Ongoing progress monitoring

Fuchs et al. (2008) noted that “progress monitoring [is] the most essential principle of intensive intervention.” When implementing a STEM-infused approach to math instruction, using these seven principles will keep the lesson planning focused on explicit instructional objectives.

Fuchs et al. (2008) also reported a study involving 169 students at risk for math difficulties who received small-group tutoring for 16 weeks, three times per week. Results showed that math gains were significant for the tutored group on computation, concepts, applications, and story problems. This study’s interventions were a computerized math fact fluency routine and an instructional routine to teach children how to solve story problems. Results of this study support the recommendation for specific skill-targeted, small group instruction in addition to classroom instruction to “bootstrap” children’s foundational math skills that will enable them to progress in math skills and problem-solving.

Other research has demonstrated specific foundational math concepts that serve as precursors to math achievement in high school. It appears that knowledge of fractions and division predicts later acumen in algebra and other higher-order math, even after statistically controlling for different types of mathematical knowledge, general intellectual ability, working memory, and family income and education (Siegler et al. 2012).

Math Instruction

In this fast-paced world of technology, gaming, and immediate

reinforcement, students cannot fully understand the long-term gains for working through mathematics instructional building blocks. They want to know what the real-world applications are for learning long division or algebra, or calculus. Superimpose this generational impression of “old school” math instruction and learning on a population of learners who may be disengaged in school overall. These learners may not see themselves in the curriculum or see adults in their environment who look like them. They may lack early childhood stimulation in numeracy and application of math concepts that form the foundation for math learning and appreciation. These children approach their place in a math class with disinterest and lack of engagement due to those factors.

Berry III (2008) culled nine broad factors from a variety of research studies that contribute to Black boys’ success in school mathematics: 1) positive rapport with caring teachers, 2) previous exposure to rigorous mathematics, 3) standards-based instructional practices, 4) positive academic and social peer interactions, 5) positive self-image toward mathematics and school, 6) a countering of negative images of African American males, 7) advocacy from adults (parents, teachers, or others), 8) role models, and 9) racialized experiences (p. 466). When math instruction is engaging, involves rigorous thinking, and includes lesson planning tailored to students’ interests and skill competencies and needs, it sets up an expectation of success, purpose, and growth. (Bjorklund-Young and Plasman, 2020).

Systematic STEM-infused math instruction that adheres to grade-level standards for skill sequences provides sound math instruction structure with relevant, real-world application that is very appealing to children from preschool through high school. In particular, however, early positive and successful experiences with math-related activities that are enriching have been shown to underscore later math achievement (Davis & Farran, 2018).

Today’s students, especially boys, like to be engaged in their learning. They want to move, manipulate, and be active participants in their learning experience. The rise of STEM has taken root in today’s schools in the past ten years. Thus, it is logical to use a STEM-infused approach to teaching math to promote interest, motivation, and engagement in math activities, leading to curiosity and persistence in math skill development. When students understand how math enhances their everyday life and how it will ensure a more secure and exciting future for them, they are more motivated to engage in and persevere with math learning. Additionally, using a real-world, standards-based approach to math instruction that is infused with STEM activities inherently elevates critical thinking and student expectations, which have been demonstrated to be factors in increased math achievement for African American boys (Davis & Farran, 2018).

RECOMMENDATION 3.4

Use a proven program, such as The Algebra

Project, to address persistent gaps in math and the continual decline in math achievement through advancing grades.

Many Black boys struggle in math throughout their school experience, even as early as the preschool years. In the early education years, this low math performance often becomes one of the contributing factors for low enrollment in honors, gifted, and advanced placement courses among Black boys and young men between 2015 and 2018. The Algebra Project has proven to be effective for improving performance in math.

The Algebra Project

The Algebra project was founded in 1995 to accelerate math learning, and address student achievement ranked in the lowest 25th percentile on state standardized math achievement scores. It operates to enable students to succeed in Algebra 1 in late middle school through 9th grade. Seven cohorts of students were tracked in Cambridge, Massachusetts, into high school and graduates entered Geometry at twice the rate of students that did not participate in the Algebra Project. This also resulted in over 60% of these students passing Trigonometry by 11th grade.

These schools scored over the median for all schools of similar demographics. This initiative has had marked success in states like California, New York, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Florida, and Massachusetts.

Sixty-nine percent of the students who participated in the Algebra Project graduated high school in four years, as opposed to 27 percent in the project for one year or less. This study was conducted at some of the lowest-performing high schools in Mississippi. More than twice as many middle school students participated in college prep level math courses in high school compared to students that did not participate in the Algebra Project (Cazden et al. 1995)

Several components are fundamental to the Algebra Project. Math-related games and activities for third through sixth graders are taught through math labs. Algebra labs where math is taught to seventh and eighth-graders. Student learning is rooted in group work and observational experiences. They discuss these results in their language and represent them in pictures. There is also a component that links career and college readiness.

There is a class size of 20 students with 60 (and ideally 90) minutes of math instruction daily. Students would participate in the program for four years with participation in summer institutes to reinforce their learning.

The expected outcomes of the Algebra Project include the following:

- Ninety percent of the students remain in the project for four years.
- All cohort students will pass state math exams.

- All cohort students will perform well on SAT or ACT entrance exams.
- Many cohort students who remain in the program will place out of remedial math in college and will be qualified to enroll in mathematics courses for college credit. (Moses, West, and Davis, 2009)

Black boys must be afforded a pathway to higher-level coursework. As indicated in the outcomes, participants’ success in the Algebra Project could improve academic achievement, particularly related to advanced placement and SAT scores.

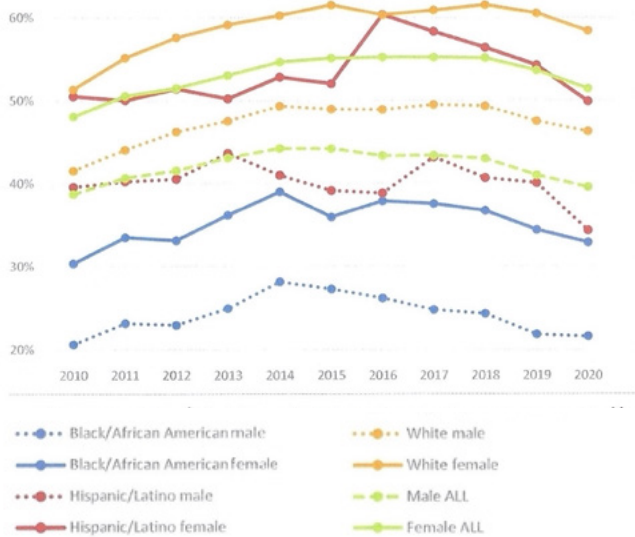
RECOMMENDATION 3.5

Expand Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) and the African American Male Initiative (AAMI) to address reduced enrollment in Advanced Placement courses, and gaps in advancement to college and college graduation.

A gap exists for Black young men in placement in advanced high school coursework. According to the 10th Annual AP Report to the Nation (2014), only three out of ten Black students who qualify for advanced placement courses are enrolled in those classes, with two of these three students more likely to be female. Additionally, the report indicates that Black high school students in the class of 2013 were the most underrepresented group (9.2%) enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and the least likely to pass (4.6%) the AP Exam.

As is true across the nation, gaps exist for Black young men in Maryland in advanced placement (AP) courses. Among student groups, Black male students were the least likely to take at least one AP course in high school. (Figure 8)

Figure 8, Percent of Graduates Taking at Least One AP in High School.



Furthermore, out of 8,889 Black male high school graduates in the class of 2020 in Maryland, only 1,917 (21.6%) took at least one AP exam. Only 887 or 10.0% scored 3 or higher. (Figure 9)

Group	Number of graduates taking at least one AP exam*	Number of graduates scoring 3 or higher*	Number of graduates**
American Indian/AK Native male	28	14	69
American Indian/AK Native female	34	20	75
Asian male	1,447	1,195	2,120
Asian female	1,659	1,396	2,179
Black/African American male	1,917	887	8,889
Black/African American female	3,245	1,502	9,864
Hispanic/Latino male	1,552	1,020	4,518
Hispanic/Latino female	2,272	1,496	4,553
Native HI/Pacific Islander male	12	N < 10	43
Native HI/Pacific Islander female	12	N < 10	28
White male	5,500	4,196	11,888
White female	6,807	5,068	11,660
Two or More Races male	612	438	1,147
Two or More Races female	953	651	1,242
Male ALL	11,342	7,955	28,674
Female ALL	15,225	10,307	29,601
ALL	26,567	18,262	58,275

Research provided by the College Board shows that students who take AP courses in high school are better prepared for college than students who do not participate in these higher-level courses (The 10th Annual AP Report to the Nation, 2014). Not only will these students be more likely to attend college, but they are predicted to thrive academically and typically graduate in four years. When addressing equity and excellence in education for Black boys, it is recommended that MSDE continue to support programs that help increase Black males’ opportunities to participate in AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses by enhancing its current partnerships and programs proven to be effective in the state.

The Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) program results in increased participation and success in AP and IB programs for Black young men. EOS is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization that collaborates with school districts to recruit and support qualified students of color and low-income students into AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes who typically would not have the opportunity.⁵¹ It focuses on increasing equitable academic opportunities for traditionally underserved students, supporting MSDE’s Lead Higher Initiative (Salmon, 2017). Established in 2010, EOS has partnered with over 600 high schools across 30 states, including 53 in Maryland over the past five years (Salmon, 2020).

Beginning during the 2016-17 school year, EOS collaborated with 53 high schools in Maryland (over five years) to help identify low-income and students of color to participate in AP courses that generally would not have had this opportunity.⁵² The results indicated that schools who collaborated with EOS experienced an underrepresented student participation rate seven percentage points higher than schools that did not work with EOS (Salmon, 2017). However, schools that partnered with EOS AP exam scores were on par with schools that did not partner with EOS. Of note, these results are from the 2016-17 and

2017-18 cohorts, which consisted of 21 high schools; an updated report on the other 29 schools has yet to be released. While this increase might seem modest, it is definitely a step in the right direction towards decreasing the opportunity gaps for traditionally underserved student populations in Maryland's public education system.

In the Spring of 2020, EOS initiated its African American Male Initiative (AAMI), which explicitly focuses on recruiting and supporting Black males to enroll and participate in AP/IB courses. They are currently working with six school districts and at least eight high schools across the Nation to support this endeavor.⁵³ In August 2020, MSDE provided a report describing the impact of the EOS programs in the state.

In 2012, the University System of Georgia's African American Male Initiative examined the data of 12 higher education institutions in the State that housed AAMI programs on their campuses for eight years between 2002 and 2010.⁵⁴ Their findings suggested that retention rates, graduation level, and the number of degrees conferred all grew among the African-American males who attended those four-year universities in the study.

Implementing the AAMI program at the high school level for AP/IB coursework would help Black male students develop the skills required to thrive when attending college.

RECOMMENDATION 3.6

Districts encourage individual co-ed schools to create single-gender classes across grades or for selected subjects. Districts may also consider approving charter schools with single-gender classes for boys and girls.

The 2007 Report on the Education of Maryland's African American Males boldly stated, "Single-sex classes work...and consistently show a positive effect on academic outcomes and have proved a viable alternative to the educational settings to which at-risk students – particularly African-American and Hispanic students – are overwhelmingly consigned." We, the Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys, agree with that assessment.

Furthermore, we also believe that single-sex or single-gender classes will also positively affect academic outcomes for girls. Therefore, we recommend that school districts and individual schools establish single-gender instructional programs as an available option to enable ALL children – boys and girls – to reach their potential.

In a single-gender environment, the teacher will be able focus on methods and strategies that cater to the learning needs and developmental needs of boys and girls alike.

On average, female students in Maryland's schools outperform their

male peers, as reflected in test scores and report card grades. This is the case for most subjects, across all grades, and transcends race. The average girl develops and matures earlier than the average boy, meaning that their cognitive abilities often surpass their male classmates of the same age, particularly in the primary grades. Despite the many differences between boys and girls, they are placed in the same classroom and boys are expected to do equally well.

For most young boys, their high energy, impulsiveness, competitiveness, aggressiveness, combined with their emotional immaturity makes teaching them difficult when compared to their less hyper, more mature female classmates. When the boy looks at the adults in charge of the school and sees very few, if any, men, he begins to feel that school is not for boys but is an institution designed for "little girls" run by "big girls."

When gender is not considered for classroom instruction, not only is it discouraging and harmful to boys, but girls can also be shortchanged as well. There are many studies that present quantitative and qualitative research that when single-gender classes are planned and implemented, they bring more fairness into the instructional program (Sax, 2016; Kunjufu, 2013; Bristol, 2015; Gurian, 2010). Kunjufu (2013) advocates for single-sex classrooms especially for black boys and contends that such schools are better equipped to address the epidemic of dropouts among black high school students and points to the nationally recognized Eagle Academy for Young Men in New York and Urban Prep Academies in Chicago as prime examples of how successful single-gender schools can be for young black men.

Several schools around the country have demonstrated that learning in a single-gender environment works very well. However, the key to successful boy-centered or girl-centered instruction is teachers who have been trained in boy-girl learning differences and recognize the characteristics and gender differences in learning styles and development.

RECOMMENDATION 3.7

An annual Symposium on Teaching and Engaging Black Boys hosted by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education (2017-2018), 89% of elementary and secondary school teachers are women. Of that number, 79% are White women which means Black boys spend most of their education under cross-gender and cross-cultural supervision (Lewis & Toldson, p.18). According to Maryland Professional Staff Data (2019),⁵⁵ 78% of elementary and secondary school teachers are women. Furthermore, 67% of elementary school teachers, 49% of middle/combined school teachers, and 43% of high school teachers are White women.

Unfortunately, culturally responsive training for teachers at higher

education institutions is inadequate. And worse, professional learning that teaches and trains educators about how boys and girls learn best is relatively nonexistent. Therefore, it is the boys who must adjust to teaching styles that may not be geared to how they learn. Educators must begin to ask how teachers will learn about boys' experiences and educational needs, particularly those who are black.

Research shows that boys and girls learn differently, and if teachers are trained to recognize those differences, they can raise the achievement of their students, lower the number of discipline referrals, and close persistent achievement gaps. (Gurian, 2010)

Today's classroom is not designed with most boys in mind, particularly those who are black. Sadly, there are few K12 professional development opportunities for educators to help them shift this narrative. When we examine the impact of race and gender-specific training and what extent it improves instruction and engagement, there is a need for more research, study, and gatherings that share best practices.

Although there are studies that explore co-ed versus single-sex learning environments, there is still more to learn about the effectiveness of educators who have had training on how to teach boys in the most effective way (acknowledging gender-specific differences in learning) versus educators who have not. Part of the reason for limited research is few educator preparation programs teach educators about the brain and behavioral differences between boys and girls, and even fewer programs include a focus on the cultural experiences of Black boys.

Outside of traditional K-12 school settings, many consultants, authors, and professors advocate for educators' professional development. Dr. Leonard Sax (2016) addresses the need in his book, *Boys Adrift*:

"In view of the research demonstrating large and robust differences in the development of girls' brains compared with boys' brains, you might expect to find that teachers and school administrators are trying hard to accommodate girl-boy differences in learning. But if that's what you expect, you will be disappointed. Most teachers and school administrators are not familiar with his research. Instead, many have been taught that gender is nothing more than a social construct, no different from race or social class."

Dr. Michael Gurian of the Gurian Institute has contributed significantly to the body of research around brain differences in boys and girls. He notes in his more than twenty books and countless articles that "if teachers were trained in the differences in learning styles between boys and girls, they could profoundly improve education for all students." (Gurian, 2010)

In addition to studying brain differences, culture is the other critical element to understanding Black boys. Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu has contributed significantly to the literature around this fusion with books such as *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, *Changing School Culture for Black Males*, and over sixty other books and

contributions in this area.

Dr. Cortland Lee, Professor of Chicago School of Professional Psychology, has also written extensively about African American male students and their challenges when teachers do not know how to reach them culturally or as boys. In his book, *Empowering Young Black Males* (1992), he asserts:

"... [C]lassrooms are generally oriented toward feminine values, and the behaviors encouraged are those that are more natural for girls. While males of other ethnic backgrounds also experience problems in such an environment, Black males experience the greatest difficulty. This is especially the case when these educators have a limited understanding of, or negative preconceived notions about, the dynamics associated with Black male development and culture. Educators frequently have predetermined negative views about Black males and their behavior in academic potential. They see these boys as black and male; therefore, they expect "double trouble," which can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy."

These ideas, many birthed years ago, indicate negative trends that educators and leaders have yet to heed. The impact of cultural and gender differences in classrooms cannot be denied. Educators often speak of differentiating instruction, but they rarely consider race and gender in that differentiation. It is approached as though it is a fringe topic. Therefore, it is primarily discussed by those outside of K-12 education.

The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys (Moore, Michael, Penick-Parks, 2017) is a popular resource for educators, primarily for White women teachers, who desire to learn more about teaching and engaging Black male students. This text offers over forty articles and video resources that speak to these strategies and approaches. Additionally, resources such as *The Journal of African American Males in Education* have countless articles that explore black boys' experiences (and men) in education.

In consideration of the dearth of training opportunities, professional learning must be offered to help educators 1) explore male-female brain differences which transcend all races and ethnicities, 2) recognize the sustained racial disparities in schools and examine societal bias in the perceptions of Black boys, 3) understand the culture of Black boys, and 4) consider new, developmentally appropriate, and engaging strategies for their success.

V. NEXT STEPS

Following the presentation of this report to the Maryland State Board of Education for consideration and adoption, the feedback received will be used to refine and finalize the recommendations outlined; and to support and guide the next steps in engaging MSDE, local school systems, and other stakeholders in successful implementation and monitoring.

In addition to the recommendations developed for each of the three focus areas described in the report, the Task Force also urges the following priority actions as immediate next steps to begin moving the work forward:

PRIORITY ACTION A

Establish an Advisory Council/Committee to work with pilot schools/systems and monitor the implementation of the Task Force recommendations.

This Advisory Council/Committee would be comprised of Task Force members, MSDE staff, local school system leaders, teachers and/or designated staff, parents, a representative of Maryland's Equity & Excellence in Education Network (NE3), and other stakeholders. The initial goal will be to work with schools/systems that have agreed to pilot recommendations and strategies and provide guidance and support as they develop action and accountability plans and monitor progress (See Appendices: B1 and B2). The Advisory Council/Committee would also continue to study, support, and keep a focus on equity and excellence for Black boys and provide regular updates to the State Board. It is further recommended that this Advisory Council be replaced within 6 months by a permanent office within MSDE, as proposed in Priority D, which would continue to provide guidance, monitoring, and oversight.

PRIORITY ACTION B

Identify local schools/systems to pilot recommendations.

The Task Force contends that the recommendations contained in this report will help transform the Maryland educational system for Black boys. Transformation, of course, will depend upon whether there are deliberate efforts to implement those recommendations by school leaders and teachers and a demonstrative proof of concept. Several principals, district superintendents, and school board members have already expressed a keen interest in the Task Force's work. Once they have had an opportunity to review the final Board-approved report, superintendents will decide whether to be one of the first districts to pilot the recommendations.

As the second priority, the Task Force recommends continuing to reach out to local school/system leaders to identify schools/systems to pilot recommendations. School leaders and staff would select recommendations as appropriate for their students/school/community from each of the three focus areas (Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports; Recruiting and Training Skilled, Competent Teachers and Administrators; Curricula and Instruction) and work closely with their district leadership, the Advisory Council and MSDE staff to prepare a detailed action and accountability plan for implementation (see Sample Action and Accountability Framework and Example in Appendix E and Appendix F, respectively).

PRIORITY ACTION C

Urge and provide guidance to local school districts to focus on Black male students as a specific student group in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated Strategic Plan (as related to ensuring Educational Equity and considerations for specific student groups) currently being prepared by the 24 Maryland school districts, particularly for those where disaggregated trend data indicate consistently low performance for Black boys.

The MSDE has provided a detailed Guidance document for each of the 24 school districts to create their Consolidated Strategic Plan (Local Every Student Succeeds Act - ESSA) for 2021. According to the guidance document, as school systems develop their Local ESSA Consolidated Needs Assessment Summary and Local ESSA Consolidated Strategic Plan, the Plan must include how all students regardless of ability (cognitive, social/emotional, and physical), ethnicity, family structure, gender identity and expression, language, national origin, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other individual characteristics will have equitable access to the educational rigor, resources, and supports that are designed to maximize the students' academic and career success and social-emotional well-being are afforded equitable access to resources that support their diverse learning needs.

Further, the guidance document indicates that school systems must consider goals, objectives, and strategies/evidence-based interventions to address any disparities in the achievement identified for any segment of the performance of the following specific student groups to include, "... students of any student group failing to meet, or failing to make progress towards meeting State performance standards, including any segment of the population that is, on average, performing at a lower achievement level than the student population as a whole..."

The procedure to begin the writing process requires: "school systems to analyze local performance data to identify two to three areas of focus. These are areas where the school system is performing below grade expectations based on data analysis. These areas require targeted strategies and/or evidence-based interventions to improve the achievement of ALL students while closing the achievement gap and decreasing the number of non-proficient students" [emphasis added]. The Guidance document offers school districts the following example:

For example, using the local performance data, if the school system identified disproportionality as an area of focus, and identified the group of students who are not performing as evident by the data analysis, then the school system should discuss how the system is going to target strategies/evidence-based interventions to address the area of focus. When the school system analyzes the data and examines the needs assessment, the discussion should lead to the question of why the identified group of students is not performing. [Emphasis added]

Based on this guidance, the Task Force believes that Black boys should be a specific area of focus for any district where the data indicate they are "failing to meet, failing to make progress, and/or on average are performing at a lower achievement level than the student population as a whole". The Task Force offers for consideration the evidence-based strategies described in this report as effective "interventions to address any disparities in [their] achievement."

PRIORITY ACTION D

Create the Maryland State Department of Education Office for Achievement of Academic Excellence and Equity for Black Boys (AAEEBB).

The Task Force highly recommends that the State Superintendent establishes an Office for the Achievement of Academic Excellence and Equity for Black Boys (AAEEBB) and appoint a dedicated coordinator or director to head that office. This would be one of only a handful of school system offices in the nation focusing primarily on Black male youth. The primary responsibility would be to monitor, oversee, and in some instances, direct the programs and policies designed to achieve academic equity and improve academic performance for Black boys and young men. The Office would continue the work begun by the Advisory Council/Committee and work closely with Maryland's Equity & Excellence in Education Network (NE3) to connect with the 24 school districts' equity coordinators. The Office would be responsible for viewing all Department policies and regulations through an equity lens and consider the possible ramifications on Black male students.

Another central role for this AAEEBB Office is to continually raise awareness and shine a spotlight on the educational crisis for Black boys in this state, as is true throughout this country. It is hoped that the establishment of this Office not only keeps the goal of improving educational experiences and outcomes for Black boys at the forefront, but also demonstrates that educators in Maryland are committed to rectifying the educational injustices that have affected our Black boys for decades.

APPENDIX: A

COVID-19 ADDENDUM

Once leaders recognized the life-threatening effects of the disease, they closed schools then scrambled for the best ways to educate children remotely. School boards, superintendents, and principals then struggled to seek solutions and decide whether to introduce summer programs, an extended school year, or some other type of recovery program.

Due to the turmoil created, it was difficult to assess progress in meaningful and accurate ways; even struggling students were being promoted.

Preliminary data describes the pandemic's adverse effects on the educational achievement and mental health of America's schoolchildren. According to Emma Garcia and Elaine Weiss of the Economic Policy Institute, "The school lockdowns that started in the spring of 2020 reduced instructional and learning time, which are known to impede student performance, with disparate impacts on different groups of students."⁵⁶

Furthermore, nationally known expert Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings described the emotional belonging of children affected by the pandemic: "Think about the heavy lift of both the social-emotional and mental health needs. If we don't attend to these really important emotional and mental needs, I don't think we (educators) have a fighting chance."⁵⁷

This month, the work of the Task Force concludes, and all of Maryland's 24 school districts are preparing to reopen – nearly one year after the official closing of schools and beginning of the quarantine. It is estimated that 20 million children across the country have not been in school since March of 2020. Some have seen loved ones get sick or even succumb to the effects of the virus. Others have witnessed the economic loss and suffered from isolation and the lack of social interactions. Many have struggled with virtual learning, received failing grades, and suffered some degree of learning loss..

While MSDE and district leaders must develop a comprehensive approach to support all groups of children in the wake of COVID-19, there should be an intense focus on supporting the group of young people who often fail to achieve even in optimal conditions – Black boys and teens. Given the disparities in household income, technology resources, and educational opportunities, one can assume that these young people will be disproportionately affected yet again.

In January of 2021, the Maryland State Department of Education announced a \$781 million award from the Federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRSSA) Act to be reapportioned to school districts for PPE and retrofitting buildings to adhere to safety standards and ensure building cleanliness... Then in March 2021, a considerable amount of additional Federal funds were received to support reopening schools and addressing students' needs as they recover from the pandemic.

One of the frequently noted roadblocks to implementing the recommendations of the Task Force is the potential lack of State funding. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the State's response to COVID-19 includes allocating a portion of the funds to jumpstart and finance the Task Force recommendations and strategies that create supplemental social-emotional supports and academic programs for Black boys.

The recommendations below are the most appropriate for these funds:

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS

Recommendation 1.1:

Require verbal intervention and de-escalation training for all school staff.

Recommendation 1.3:

Coordinate structured mentoring programs (adult male and/or peer mentoring) tailored to meet the social and emotional learning needs for identified Black boys in grades K-12.

Recommendation 1.4:

Implement a Rites of Passage program for Black boys in grades 6-12.

CURRICULA AND INSTRUCTION

Recommendation 3.2:

Address ongoing achievement gaps by using the science of reading (explicit systematic phonics instruction) for grades K-3 and beyond for older struggling readers.

Recommendation 3.3:

Address ongoing gaps in math, and continual math decline through advancing grades by using standards-based, real-world math instruction infused with STEM activities.

Recommendation 3.4:

Use a proven program such as The Algebra Project to address persistent gaps in math and the continual decline in math achievement through advancing grades.

Recommendation 3.5:

Expand Equal Opportunity Schools and the African American Male Initiative to address reduced enrollment in Advanced Placement courses, and gaps in advancement to college and college graduation.

Maryland’s educators have been entrusted with the academic and social-emotional development of our young people, and therefore must be strategic when implementing programs to address the damage caused by the pandemic. The principle of **helping them -- helps them all** asserts that through transforming education for the lowest performing students – our Black boys and young men – Maryland will create an education system that improves the academic, social, and emotional outcomes for students of all races and ethnicities. Notwithstanding the 2020-2021 pandemic or similar crises in the future, this must be the overriding purpose and plan.

“Fortunately, the answer to boys’ underachievement, even as it manifests among disadvantaged boys, is actually under educators’ noses. Contrary to conventional stereotypes about boys who don’t “do school,” a series of global studies showed that when they are relationally engaged, paid attention, known, and understood as they know and understand themselves, boys will and do try...When they are effectively reached, boys who are failing and underperforming become engaged, improve, and excel. Boys who are distracting and oppositional in class become attentive, respectful contributors. Attentive, caring relationships transform boys – especially boys struggling or in peril.”

– M.C. Reichert and J.D. Nelson
The State of America’s Boys: An Urgent Case
for a More Connected Boyhood

ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN - Framework

<p>1</p> <p>Strategy to Carry Out the Recommendation</p>	<p>Identify the specific recommendation to be addressed</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Responsible Parties</p>	<p>Identify appropriate state and local staff, policy makers, and/or other stakeholders to be engaged in implementation of recommendation</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Possible Indicators of Progress and Data to Be Collected</p>	<p>Identify the metrics/data points to be used in monitoring effective implementation and outcomes for success</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Resources and Budget Items Needed for Success</p>	<p>Identify the resources available and those needed for successful implementation of the recommendation</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Correlation with Current Statute, Regulations, and/or State and Local Policy(ies)</p>	<p>Identify current statutes, regulations, and state and local policies that may be related to or aligned with the recommendation, and that could promote or hinder successful implementation</p>
<p>6</p> <p>Implementation Timeline Start Date / End Date</p>	<p>Identify timeframe for completion and/or whether the recommendation is a short-, medium- or long-term goal</p>

ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN - Sample

RECOMMENDATION 2.4:

Provide all teachers, school-based administrators, along with all other district personnel, continued professional development on culturally-responsive teaching practices and supporting the academic, social-emotional, and developmental needs of Black boys and young men.

<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Strategy to Carry Out the Recommendation</p>	<p>Provide professional development – initial and on-going training -- for teachers on brain-based gender differences in learning and research-based strategies for educating boys (and girls) most effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use knowledgeable personnel from other schools, MSDE specialists, or private expert consultants who can inform educators as they explore how the brain works differently between boys and girls and guide them to incorporate gender-based instruction into existing instructional programs. • Include training on educating boys of color (merging the knowledge of Black male culture with brain-based gender differences). • Establish a professional library that will supplement the training as described above. Acquire literature, journal articles, and books to provide resource and reference materials for teachers. Use for book or literature studies in school staff meetings, department meetings, team meetings, etc. • Introduce brain-based gender differences to parents for raising boys and girls most effectively. Invite them to parent training programs that will assist them as they support their children.
<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Responsible Parties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School principal and staff • District Equity Office • MSDE Equity Specialist and Staff • AAEEBB Advisory Council)
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Possible Indicators of Progress and Data to Be Collected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and type of professional development/learning opportunities provided • Number of participants who complete training • Pre- and post-training surveys (knowledge, attitude) • Documented decrease in behavior referrals and suspensions for Black boys • Documented improvement in GPA for Black boys • Parent/family, teachers, students, and school leader positive climate surveys • Documented improvement in test scores • Teachers demonstrate knowledge of the Black male culture and gender-based learning differences on in-house assessment • Participant evaluations of professional development training and workshops

Action and Accountability Plan - Sample is continued on the next page »

ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN - Sample (Continued)

<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Resources and Budget Items Needed for Success</p>	<p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainers/teachers and coaches • Literature on gender-based learning differences • Staff time (flex time?) and budget allocations for substitutes as needed • Teachers for in-school peer coaching <p>Budget Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training and materials • Consultants and trainers • Books and literature for professional libraries • Stipends for staff sponsors • Conference registrations and fees • Course tuition and fees • Substitute coverage for in-school peer coaches and mentors
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Correlation with Current Statute, Regulations, and/or State and Local Policy(ies)</p>	<p>COMAR 13A.07 School Personnel</p> <p>.01 Scope: This chapter applies to a comprehensive induction program for new teachers. The purpose of this regulation is to provide guidance for local school systems to establish a high-quality induction program that addresses critical professional learning needs of new teachers, improves instructional quality, and helps inductees achieve success in their initial assignments, resulting in improved student learning and higher retention in the profession.</p> <p>.04 General Requirements: A.) Each local school system shall establish and maintain a comprehensive induction program for all new teachers. B.) The comprehensive induction program shall be designed to provide participating teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in their classrooms and schools to enable them to stay in the profession.</p> <p>COMAR 13A.01.06.04 Requirements — Educational Equity in Maryland.</p> <p>C. The policy and regulations shall: (8) Require that an equity lens be used in reviews of staff, curriculum, pedagogy, professional learning, instructional materials, and assessment design;</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Implementation Timeline Start Date / End Date</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Start Date: June 2021 / End Date: Ongoing</p>

TASK FORCE MEMBERS



Dr. Vermelle D. Greene (Chair) has been an educator for more than 44 years (teaching at the elementary through college levels). Her experience extends to the corporate world where she was a Customer Education Representative with the Xerox Corporation. She holds degrees from Dickinson College (B.S. in Biology), George Washington University (M.A. in Education), and International Seminary (Ph.D. in Christian Education).

Dr. Greene is an author, education consultant, and conference speaker. She has conducted professional development and training workshops as well as online classes for thousands of teachers and administrators from coast to coast. Her focus areas include closing the gender achievement gap, educating for character, and managing classrooms effectively.

During her tenure with Prince George's County Public Schools, she served as an administrator at Buck Lodge Middle School. She piloted the school's award-winning character education program which was featured in area newspapers and on-air media.

After her retirement from Prince George's County Public Schools, Dr. Greene founded S.A.C.R.E.D. Life Academy for Boys in Capitol Heights. The school's innovative curriculum focused on building character and accommodating the academic, social, developmental, and physical needs of young boys in kindergarten through 8th grade. In recognition of her achievements as Principal, she was honored by the Greater Prince George's Business Roundtable (a non-profit, nonpartisan business alliance of Chief Executives) and presented with their Outstanding CEO Award.

Dr. Greene and her husband Vernon live in Charles County. They have two married children and six amazingly beautiful grandchildren.



Dr. Joan Mele-McCarthy, D.A., CCC-SLP (Co-Chair) brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the Maryland State Board of Education. She currently serves as the Executive Director at The Summit School in Edgewater, MD, an independent school serving bright children with dyslexia and other learning differences. She is a nationally recognized speech-language pathologist with expertise in theoretical models and practical application of the link between oral language and reading, service delivery models in school settings, and teacher training.

Prior to her current position, Dr. Mele-McCarthy served as Senior Policy Advisor and Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) in the U.S. Department of Education. She has a national perspective on general education and special education as a result of her policy work on the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004). Her philosophy of education holds as a priority, high expectations for all children in a way that meets their learning needs. In addition to her federal policy role, Dr. Mele-McCarthy has worked in public schools, universities, and private practice. As part of her clinical work, she served children with communication disorders, reading difficulties, and executive function challenges, which she brings to her work with children in classrooms. She believes in partnerships between families and schools and continues to be a strong and effective advocate for that partnership.

Dr. Mele-McCarthy's scholarly work includes presentation of peer reviewed research-to-practice papers, seminars, and workshops locally and nationally. Her publications include articles and book chapters related to policy for NCLB, IDEA, students with disabilities, and English learners with disabilities.

Dr. Mele-McCarthy lives in Calvert County with her husband, Kevin, where they raised two children, who are now adults residing with their families in the greater Washington DC and Southern Maryland regions.



Gail Bates (Co-Chair) was appointed to the Maryland State Board of Education in 2019. As a member of the Maryland General Assembly, serving in both the Maryland Senate and Maryland House of Delegates, Ms. Bates served on the Appropriations Committee, the Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, and the Special Joint Committee on Pensions.

Mrs. Bates previously taught mathematics and home economics in Anne Arundel County. She was also a tax supervisor and manager for the Records and Tax Department of the Maryland Farm Bureau, and since 1984, has been a sole proprietor as a Certified Public Accountant. Ms. Bates was also an assistant to the Howard County Executive.

Mrs. Bates has been an active member of different organizations to include the Howard County Republican Club, the Maryland Federation of Republican Women, the Howard County Republican Central Committee (previously serving as Treasurer), the Howard County Chamber of Commerce, the Maryland Association of Certified Public Accountants, and the Howard County Republican Women (serving as president since 2001).

Ms. Bates has been a board member of the Howard County Chapter of the American Red Cross. She has served with the Christian Jail Ministry since 1997 and the Howard County Farm Bureau since 1998. Ms. Bates has been the Treasurer of the Howard County Tourism Council since 2004. She is also a member of the Therapeutic Horsemanship Association and received the Life Achievement Award from the Howard County Republican Central Committee in 1990. Ms. Bates graduate from the University of Maryland with a B.S. in Education.



Dr. Marcia Sprankle (Co-Chair) currently serves as the Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Curriculum, Instructional Improvement, and Professional Learning at the Maryland State Department of Education.

Dr. Sprankle attended Virginia Beach’s elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools and began her career in education teaching in Virginia Beach Public Schools, where she taught for eight years. Shortly after relocating to Easton, Maryland, and continuing to teach for two years in Talbot County Public Schools, Dr. Sprankle was sought out to move into school administration. She served as an Assistant Principal for a year at a middle/high school setting. After serving as an Assistant Principal for one year, she was appointed Principal of a primary building for five years. Dr. Sprankle was then asked to serve as Principal at a middle school for several years and later went on to serve as Principal of an elementary school. She then went on to serve as a Supervisor at the central office for Talbot County Public Schools. After twenty years of service in Talbot County Public Schools, Dr. Sprankle was afforded the opportunity to transition to the Maryland State Department of Education as the Title I Executive Director. She humbly embraced the opportunity to serve in this role. Dr. Sprankle has held numerous titles, received many awards, merits, and Governor’s Citations during her 32-year career.

Dr. Sprankle earned her master’s degree from Regent University and a bachelor’s degree from Norfolk State University.



Dr. Karen B. Salmon has served as State Superintendent of Schools and Secretary-Treasurer of the State Board since 2016. She joined the State Department of Education last year, first as Assistant State Superintendent for College and Career Readiness and soon thereafter as Interim State Superintendent for School Effectiveness.

Immediately prior to joining MSDE, Dr. Salmon served as Superintendent of Schools on the Bay Shore Union Free School District in Bay Shore, NY.

Dr. Salmon spent more than 30 years as an educator on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, beginning her career as a special education teacher in the Caroline County Public Schools. She later became a vocational coordinator and an assistant principal in the Caroline schools before moving to Talbot County as Coordinator of Services for Exceptional Children. Dr. Salmon became Assistant Superintendent of the Talbot County schools in 1997 and Superintendent in 2003.

Named the Maryland Superintendent of the Year in 2012, Dr. Salmon is the recipient of numerous awards and honors throughout her educational career. Dr. Salmon holds a Ph.D. in Special Education/Administration from the University of Maryland College Park, as well as a Masters in Special Education from the same institution. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communication from the University of Delaware.

A native of Harford County and the daughter of an educator, Dr. Salmon and her husband John reside in Bozman, MD. They are the parents of two grown daughters: Lauren, an oncologist living in Virginia, and Rachael is a special education teacher in Caroline County. Both children graduated from Talbot County public schools.



Inez Claggett is a newly appointed member to the Calvert County Board of Education. Ms. Claggett brings with her extensive knowledge in public service, auditing, budgeting, internal controls, and policy development. She has been a public servant for over ten (10) years and currently serves as a Senior Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst for a local county government.

Ms. Claggett holds certifications in public sector auditing, internal controls, and risk management. She earned her Master’s degree in Accounting and Financial Management from the University of Maryland University College (College Park, MD) and her Bachelor’s degree at the University of Delaware (Newark, DE).

As a first year Board of Education Member Ms. Claggett championed policy changes to restrict the use of restraint and seclusion within Calvert County Public Schools with a vision toward abolishing the use of restraint within schools. This leadership fortitude led her to be voted as the Vice President of the Calvert County Board of Education for the current calendar year. In this capacity she provides leadership and direction to carry out and effectuate the goals and objectives of the collective Board.

Ms. Claggett is a servant leader who has volunteered within the Calvert County community in many various capacities. Her current and former community service includes membership, as well as leadership roles in the Calvert County Commission for Women, the Calvert County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the Concerned Black Women of Calvert County, League of Women Voters of Calvert County, the Calvert County Minority Business Alliance, and several local youth sports organizations. She also participated as a member of the Board of Education’s Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC) for five years prior to becoming a Board Member. It was in this capacity that Inez became interested in becoming a catalyst for change within the School System.

Ms. Claggett resides in Owings along with her husband and son. She enjoys exercising, riding motorcycles, reading, and watching her scholar athlete play lacrosse.



Hampton E. Conway, III has been an educator for over 20 years. He has taught at all grade school levels from elementary, middle, and high school. He served as assistant principal and principal of Propel Charter School, a K-8 charter school in Pittsburgh. Propel was awarded several grants for innovative projects and received the E.P.I.C. Award for three successive years as one of the top performing charter schools in the country.

Mr. Conway is the father of four sons and has always been particularly passionate about “leveling the playing field” for black students, especially black boys. He strives to serve children in impoverished communities, focusing on closing the achievement, exposure, and opportunity gaps that exist. He has volunteered as a mentor and served in juvenile detention centers and prisons. Mr. Conway is currently an Instructional Technology Specialist for the ESSA & Title I Department of Prince George’s County Public Schools.



Tracey Cottman is a licensed clinical social worker who obtained her Bachelors of Social Work from Salisbury University and Masters of Social Work from the University of Maryland at Baltimore. Mrs. Cottman has been working in the child welfare and educational field for 25 years. Currently, she is the Supervisor of Student Services for Somerset County Public Schools. In this role she oversees numerous staff including School Counselors, Learning Support Specialists, Behavior Intervention Specialists, Community Liaisons, Student Service Coordinators, and a Mental Health Coordinator. Some of the programming within Student Services includes the McKinney Vento Homeless program, School Based Mental Health, Social/Emotional programming; Equity; Training and Professional Development; Truancy; College & Career Readiness; Wraparound Services for children and families; Juvenile Services Liaison; Social Services Liaison, etc. Mrs. Cottman is a community advocate and activist, most notably being elected as the first African American woman to the City Council of Pocomoke City, where she served three consecutive terms. She coordinates the Pocomoke City Drug Free Coalition.

Ms. Cottman is married to a retired military officer, and they have two daughters, one of whom is a lawyer and the other a chemist. Mrs. Cottman’s passion is to provide support and encouragement to others to help them achieve their dreams.



Dr. Julius Davis is the University System of Maryland Wilson H. Elkins Associate Professor of Mathematics Education, Founding Director of the Center for Research and Mentoring of Black Male Students and Teachers, and Coordinator of the Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Bowie State University. His research focuses on Black male students in K-12 urban areas and higher education settings, Black male pre-service, and in-service teachers. He has or currently works with Black males in mentoring and manhood training programs in schools, universities, job corps, community, and juvenile offender programs. Dr. Davis also conducts professional development for teachers and leaders focused on Black males, culturally responsive practices, and STEM education.

Dr. Davis is the co-editor of the book, *Critical Race Theory in Mathematics Education* (Routledge). He has authored publications focused on Black male students and teachers.



Nicole N. Fisher serves as the Supervisor of Alternate Programs and is completing her 20th year with Caroline County Public Schools (CCPS). Her educational and administrative background includes: eight years as a school counselor, nine years as an assistant principal, and three years in her current supervisory position, providing oversight for the alternative education program, service learning, virtual learning and the CCPS equity initiative.

Ms. Fisher delivers professional development and training in restorative practice, ACE's, Youth Mental Health First Aid, and cultural/equity competency development. The leadership she currently provides requires that she blends her school counseling skills with her understanding of building level administration. Ms. Fisher's primary role is to support administrators, school-based leadership teams, teachers and Board members, as they work together to learn more about the students they serve and analyze the data to make informed decisions about current and future programs, interventions, supports, and closing the achievement gap.

Ms. Fisher's career goal is to guide the work of making CCPS a more culturally proficient and academically excellent school system for ALL students. Ms. Fisher is eager to connect with an extended network of colleagues to delve into the research and planning that is critical to address this troubling disparity and be of service to improve the educational outcomes for black males and ALL students in the great State of Maryland.

Ms. Fisher earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Delaware and her Master of Education in Elementary and Secondary School Counseling and Administrative Certification from Wilmington University.



Dr. Ramon Goings (Facilitator, Study Group 2) is an assistant professor in the Language, Literacy, and Culture interdisciplinary doctoral program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Dr. Goings' research interests are centered on exploring the academic and social experiences of gifted/high-achieving Black males PK-PhD, diversifying the teacher and school leader workforce, and investigating the contributions of historically Black colleges and universities.

Dr. Goings is the author of over 50 scholarly publications including four books. His scholarship has been featured in leading academic and popular press outlets including: *Teachers College Record*, *Adult Education Quarterly*, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Education Week*, and *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. His most recent research on Black male adult learners won the 2019 Imogene Oaks Award from the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education which honors a scholar whose research contributes significantly to the advancement of adult and continuing education. Along with his scholarship Dr. Goings served as the Editor-In-Chief of the *Journal of African American Males in Education* from 2017-2020, was named a 2017 Emerging Scholar by *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* and received the 2016 College Board Professional Fellowship.

Prior to working in higher education, Goings was a music education and special education teacher in several urban school districts including Baltimore City Public Schools and was a foster care and youth probation counselor/advocate in New Haven, Connecticut. In 2013 he served as a fellow with the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans.

Dr. Goings earned his Doctor of Education degree in urban educational leadership from Morgan State University, Master

of Science in human services from Post University, and Bachelor of Arts in music education from Lynchburg College (now University of Lynchburg). More information is available on Dr. Goings' website: <http://ramongoings.com/>



Dr. Theo Holt is a military veteran who has over ten years of experience teaching, mentoring, and advocating in academic institutions and has taught elementary school to college levels students. He holds degrees from Southern University (B.S. and M.S. in Therapeutic Recreation) and the University of West Georgia (Ph.D. in Psychology: Consciousness in Society).

Dr. Holt is currently a co-teacher and case manager in special education for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). While at Southern University, he studied the influence of parental involvement on student success. As an educator in Louisiana, he created a black male mentoring program for middle school boys. As an educational advocate for children placed in foster care, he collaborated with the students' major stakeholders to help maximize their opportunities for academic success. At the University of West Georgia, he volunteered with the African American Male Initiative (AAMI) mentoring both undergraduate and graduate students on campus, presented on Rites of Passages program for Black males and has conducted research focused on student success (Dissertation: Black Undergraduate Students' Experiences of Thriving at a Predominately White Institution: A Photovoice Study). He also advocated for the racial diversity of the Psychology faculty and graduate student population.

As an educator in MCPS, he serves on the study circle committee and is an active member of the Building Our Networks of Diversity (BOND) Initiative. Dr. Holt's focus areas are racial and educational equity, student thriving, and community-based participatory research.



Dr. Daryl Howard (Facilitator, Study Group 3) is an equity instructional specialist in Montgomery County Public Schools (MD). His work and research interests include race and cultural proficiency, social emotional learning, and the triumphs and challenges of African American male students. He is instrumental in the work of the Building Our Network of Diversity (BOND) Project where he leads initiatives focused on the recruitment, development, and retention of male educators of color.

Dr. Howard is the author of *Complex People: Insights at the Intersection of Black Culture and American Social Life*. He shares his life with his wife and three children.



Dr. John E. Howard has been in education for 25 years. He holds degrees from North Carolina Central University (B.A. in English/Media Journalism), Bowie State University (M.A. in Literature), and Johns Hopkins University (Ed.D. in Educational Leadership).

Dr. Howard is currently an International Baccalaureate Coordinator in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). He is a former Consulting Teacher, and English department chair at John F. Kennedy High School in Silver Spring, Maryland. Dr. Howard also taught previously in Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland, and Durham County Public Schools in North Carolina.

Dr. Howard serves on the Curriculum Advisory Committee for MCPS, and the advisory committee for the Hip Hop History and Culture class created for MCPS. He is a member of the leadership team for the Building Our Network of Diversity (BOND) Project, which is committed to advancing efforts to recruit, develop, support, and retain male educators of color at all grade levels within Montgomery County Public Schools. Dr. Howard is also a lead teacher for Project Enrich, a program in Prince George's County, Maryland, sponsored by the Gamma Pi chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., which provides African-American high school student's college preparatory opportunities. Dr. Howard's academic interests include analyzing the value of teacher credentials in the screening and selection of teacher candidates.



Philip Johnson has been an educator for 23 years and a cross country/track & field coach for 20 years. He taught in Baltimore City at Southwestern High School for 5 years, then at Montgomery Blair High School in Montgomery County for 6 years. For the past 12 years, he has been a biology and AP biology teacher at Glenelg High School in Howard County. He serves as the advisor for the Alpha Achievers and the Black Student Union.

Mr. Johnson has been fortunate to have taught in many socioeconomically different situations that have shaped him as an educator. His experience as a teacher in Baltimore showed him that not all children have access to the same resources. Students had many obstacles, yet when given the same opportunities as their peers, were just as successful. Blair High School (Montgomery County) is probably one of the most diverse places anyone could hope to teach, and Howard County is also a diverse county. Mr. Johnson learned much about how exposure to others' cultures can benefit the educational experiences of students by breaking down many of the misconceptions they have about each other. He believes all students should have the opportunity to be taught by teachers of many different backgrounds. He also believes our state can do better by using the collective experiences of many different professionals to uplift young Black males.

Mr. Johnson is a proud graduate of Coppin State University, an Historically Black College, where he was allowed to grow as an individual and experience many wonderful things about Baltimore City in an educational setting.



Dwayne Jones retired on August 1, 2019 after 31 years in the Prince George's County Public School System. Prior to his retirement, he was the principal of Laurel High School for 14 years, the school from which he had graduated as a member of the Class of 1981.

Mr. Jones started his educational career in Prince George's County as an Adaptive/General Physical Education Teacher. As an itinerant teacher, he taught at five different schools. The following school year he joined the staff of Laurel High School as a Social Studies/Physical Education Teacher. He coached several sports (football, basketball, tennis, track and field) and served as a sponsor for several classes. He became an assistant principal at Laurel and in 2005, was appointed principal. Throughout his administrative career, he served in national, state, and local professional organizations. He held various positions including National Vice President for the American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA), President Elect and Executive Board Member of the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP), and Secretary, Vice President and President of the Association of Supervisory and Administrative School Personnel (ASASP).

Mr. Jones names the highlights of his educational career as visiting the White House and meeting President Obama, traveling to China as an educational ambassador in 2018, and being awarded the Key to the City of Laurel at his retirement celebration.

He has been married to Debbi Jones for 32 years and they have two children, Summer and Noah. All three graduated from Bowie High School in Prince George's County in 1981, 2013, and 2019, respectively.

Mr. Jones attended Howard University on a football scholarship and graduated in 1986 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He attended Bowie State University and earned a Masters of Education degree in School Administration and Supervision.



Dr. Andrea Kane was appointed Superintendent for Queen Anne's County Public Schools in Maryland in July 2017. With over 25 years of education experience, including ten years at the central office level, Dr. Kane has earned the characterization as a visionary leader. In collaboration with district, business, and community partners, Dr. Kane has been effective in leading large suburban, urban, and small rural districts during times of change and challenges associated with academics, state mandates, and leadership; and in building trust, transparency, and stability during transitions and keeping the focus on that which benefits students.

Dr. Kane dedicated 22 years of service to Anne Arundel County Public Schools, where she held a multitude of

instructional and leadership roles. Dr. Kane’s proven experience as an education leader led to her appointment as Superintendent of Schools in Queen Anne’s County in July 2017. The establishment of the district’s first Superintendent’s student, parent, and staff advisory councils provided a forum for regular face-to-face interaction and shared decision-making. As the district’s first African American Superintendent, Dr. Kane set professional and personal goals focused on implementing equitable practices across all areas of the organization.

Dr. Kane holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Northcentral University, Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction and Administration/Supervision certification from Loyola University in Maryland, and Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Sweet Briar College.



Alysia Lee is the education program supervisor for Fine Arts education for the Maryland State Department of Education, where she shares her vision of statewide equity and excellence across five arts disciplines: music, dance, visual arts, theatre, and media arts. She is a proud member of the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE) and a 2019-2020 Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Fellow. Ms. Lee’s full circle role as an artist, arts educator, teaching artist and arts advocate, gives her a broad perspective of the arts ecosystem. Alysia received national recognition for advancing access, equity, visibility, representation, and power-sharing between artists, organizations, and communities. Key to her methods are empowerment, partnership construction, and intersectional approaches to community exchange while centering anti-racism, creativity, and social justice.

She is the Founder and Artistic Director of Sister Cities Girlchoir (SCG), the El Sistema-inspired, girl empowerment, choral academy in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey. SCG has performed for various audiences and recent recognitions include awards from The Kennedy Center, The Knight Foundation, National Association of University Women, Stockton Bartol Foundation, and Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. Recent speaking/facilitation engagements include the U.S. Department of Education, The Kennedy Center, Americans for the Arts, Arts Education Partnership, Chorus America, Maryland Citizens for the Arts, Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University, TEDx, and Temple University.

A Baltimore native, Ms. Lee is an alumna of Maryland public schools. She earned her graduate degree from Peabody Conservatory. In 2011, Ms. Lee was selected from an international pool of applicants to the third cohort of the Sistema Fellowship at New England Conservatory in partnership with TED. She also completed Executive Education programs at Harvard University and La Salle University.



Jocelyn Potts is a third-grade teacher within Anne Arundel County Public Schools. She is entering her tenth year as an educator. In addition to being a classroom teacher, Mrs. Potts is also the Equity Liaison for her building and offers support and professional development surrounding equitable practices to her colleagues. Mrs. Potts supports the faculty within her school as the Data Liaison and serves on the leadership team.

Prior to teaching, Mrs. Potts and her husband served young males of Washington, D.C. as house parents in a residential group home for six years. Over the course of their tenure, they cared for over 80 youth. They were honored with the 2007 Child Welfare and Advocacy Award by the D.C. Consortium of Child Welfare.

She is a member and a volunteer of M.O.B.B. United for Social Change (Moms of Black Boys United). Mrs. Potts is also a member of the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa Incorporated which is a professional organization of women in the field of education.

Mrs. Potts attended and graduated from Notre Dame of Maryland University with an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education and a Master of Science degree in Gifted and Talented Education. Mrs. Potts is currently enrolled in Goucher College pursuing her Administrator I Certification.

Mrs. Potts has worked closely with Black Quilted Narratives which is a program through The National Visionary Leadership Project. During her time with Black Quilted Narratives, Mrs. Potts contributed to curriculum writing which would provide teachers with culturally responsive lessons and online resources for educators. Mrs. Potts most honorable role to date is that of a being a mom to an awesome 12-year-old boy.



Diane Roberts (Facilitator, Study Group 1) Ms. Diane Roberts was named principal at Westlake High School in 2018. As principal, Ms. Roberts plans to partner with the Westlake High School community to provide valuable leadership and educational opportunities to the next generation of global leaders.

Ms. Roberts began her career with Charles County Public Schools in 2003 as a teacher at Thomas Stone High School where she served for three years. She also taught at North Point High School for six years and served as the high school resource teacher for one year. She spent the last four years as a vice principal at Thomas Stone High School. Ms. Roberts began her teaching career with Chicago Public Schools in 1996.

Ms. Roberts is a graduate of Chicago State University and McDaniel College where she received her Bachelor of Science in Business Education and Master of Science in curriculum and instruction, respectively.



Desmond Williams is an educator, former principal, and author. He is driven to help all children live their dreams. He has spent his entire professional career working with youth serving as a special educator, classroom teacher, assistant principal, and principal. Mr. Williams’ educational philosophy is simply that education should be used for the process of building and maintaining a nation.

Mr. Williams received his bachelor’s degree in English Literature from Howard University and his master’s degree in Education from George Washington University. He started his teaching career in District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) as a special educator. He subsequently moved through the ranks and became a special education coordinator because of his business acumen and understanding of children with special needs. Afterwards, Mr. Williams ventured into the world of school-based administration. His expertise includes, student engagement, restorative justice, relationship building with students, and family engagement.

In 2015, Mr. Williams launched the #SOBTC Twitter chat that united teachers from across the country to discuss issues related to educating boys of color. Desmond served six years at an all-boys school in Washington DC, teaching four years and serving as an administrator and principal for two more years. In his first year as an administrator, reading scores soared to 64% proficient. In his second year, The Bishop Walker School (BWS) boasted reading scores of 83% proficiency! After leaving BWS, Mr. Williams launched Nylinka School Solutions. One of his big goals was to help other educators increase the level of engagement and investment of boys of color. The goal of Nylinka School Solutions is to help children achieve their dreams one solution at a time.

Mr. Williams’ greatest satisfaction is seeing kids maintain their enthusiasm for leaving their mark on the world. He has recently ventured into the world of writing. His first book, *The Burning House: Educating Black Boys in Modern America* was released in February of 2020 and debuted as a #1 New Release. In the fall of 2020, Desmond will return to Howard University to pursue his PhD in Educational Psychology.



Juan Wilder is Senior Pastor of Impact One Church in Capitol Heights, Maryland and one of today’s most dynamic leaders. Pastor Juan promotes unity, transformative change, and “love in action”– a foregoing message and motto that has empowered the DC-MD-VA community. He is known as the “Community Pastor” because of the care he renders in the community to fight world hunger, social injustice, and systemic inequities.

By way of credentials, Juan Wilder attended and graduated from the Minnesota Graduate School of Theology at the top of his class maintaining a 4.0 GPA with a B.A. in Biblical Studies and Theology, Summa Cum Laude. Additionally, he completed all requirements to obtain his credentials (License to Preach; nationally) with the Assemblies of God. Currently, Pastor Juan leads one church in multiple countries and his evangelistic efforts have impacted lives all over the world.

Pastor Juan is a decorated veteran of the armed forces. After his tenure in the United States Air Force, he began teaching Math and Science at the Christian Fellowship Academy in Warner Robins, Georgia while also mentoring black male students with Godly counsel for righteous living. Juan Wilder is married to the wife of his youth, Melanie Wilder and they share in the delight and joy of three beautiful boys - Juan Jr., Jacob, and Jordan.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 | Maryland Equity and Excellence Guide, p. 7 (<http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/EEE/MSDEEquityGuidebook.pdf>)
- 2 | National Mentoring Resource Center (<https://www.mentoring.org/resource/national-mentoring-resource-center>)
- 3 | Jarjoura (2013). (<https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Effective%20Strategies%20for%20Mentoring%20African%20American%20Boys.pdf>)
- 4 | Kunjufu (2013)
- 5 | Kunjufu (2013)
- 6 | Blumenkrantz (2010)
- 7 | Mankind Project (<https://mankindproject.org>)
- 8 | MSDE Equity and Excellence Guide (2017) (<http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/EEE/MSDEEquityGuidebook.pdf>)
- 9 | <https://www.techvalidate.com/product-research/crisis-prevention-institute/charts>
- 10 | Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices (<https://www.law.umaryland.edu/media/SOL/pdfs/Programs/ADR/STPP%20%20R%20Commission%20Final%20Report.pdf>)
- 11 | COMAR 13A.08.06.01
- 12 | <https://www.crisisprevention.com/CPI/media/Media/Resources/alignments/PBIS-Alignment-2013.pdf>
- 13 | <https://transformingconflict.org/in-educational-settings/>
- 14 | (<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20182019Student/2019SuspensionsbySchoolOUT.pdf>)
- 15 | Education Post: Better Conversation. Better Education (<https://educationpost.org/conversation/blog/better-conversation/>)
- 16 | 100 Black Men Of America Mentoring (<https://100blackmen.org/four-for-the-future/mentoring/>)
- 17 | The MAC Scholars Program (<https://www.shaker.org/macscholars1.aspx>)
- 18 | The Kingmakers of Oakland (<https://kingmakersofoakland.org/>)
- 19 | Retrieved from the Brotherhood SisterSol (2021) (<https://brotherhood-sistersol.org/programs/rites-of-passage-program>)
- 20 | Blumenkrantz (2010)
- 21 | Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program (<https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/teacher>)
- 22 | Hrabowski & Sanders (2015). (<https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/84031/IncreasingRacialDiversityUniversity.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>)
- 23 | The Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program (<https://www.nsfnoyce.org/about>)
- 24 | Work-based Learning Continuum (http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/CTE/Work-based_Learning.aspx)
- 25 | MSDE holds districts accountable for implementing equitable practices for exposing and recruiting non-traditional and underrepresented students to CTE programs (like TAM) through the Methods of Administration Monitoring Process (<http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/CTE/CTE%20Accountability/Maryland-Consolidated-Perkins-Methods-of-Administration-Monitoring-Program.aspx>)
- 26 | College Preparation Intervention Program (https://mhcc.maryland.gov/institutions_training/Pages/grants/cpip.aspx)
- 27 | Bianco, Leech & Mitchell (2011); Goings & Bianco (2016); Graham & Erwin (2011)
- 28 | Ibid
- 29 | At the most basic level, micro-credentials verify, validate, and attest that specific skills and/or competencies have been achieved. They differ from traditional degrees and certificates in that they are generally offered in shorter or more flexible timespans and tend to be more narrowly focused. Micro-credentials can be offered online, in the classroom, or via a hybrid of both. (<https://system.suny.edu/academic-affairs/microcredentials/>)
- 30 | Building Our Network of Diversity (BOND). (<https://bondeducators.org>)
- 31 | COMAR 13A.07.01 Comprehensive Teacher Induction Program
- 32 | Teach for America (<https://www.teachforamerica.org/>)
- 33 | Carver-Thomas (2018)
- 34 | Huebeck (2020)
- 35 | Positron emission tomography (PET), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), single-photon emission computerized tomography (SPECT) scans
- 36 | Brown University <<https://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/teaching-diverse-learners/strategies-0/culturally-responsive-teaching-0>> accessed 2.8.2021 .
- 37 | Ibid.
- 38 | A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority.

- 39 | National School Boards Association (<https://www.nsba.org>)
- 40 | Every Student Succeeds Act: (<https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn>)
- 41 | Maryland's Keys to Comprehensive Literacy, MSDE Division of Teaching and Learning (<http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/ELA/MDKeysComprehensiveLiteracy.pdf>)
- 42 | Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (<https://www.voyagersopris.com/professional-development/letrs/letrs-k-5>)
- 43 | ESSA Title 1: <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
- 44 | Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA): <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
- 45 | The International Dyslexia Association: www.interdys.org
- 46 | Haskins Global Literacy Hub: <https://haskinslabs.org/research-centers/haskins-global-literacy-hub>
- 47 | The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR): <https://www.fcrr.org/>
- 48 | This popular module is known to fill as soon as it is offered. Participants leave having explored their implicit biases and having considered their Black male students in new and empathetic ways. Additionally, teachers have reported that through studying the educational experiences of black boys, they have also become better equipped to meet the needs of other student groups.
- 49 | <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/>
- 50 | Level 1 (did not meet expectations); Level 2 (Partially met expectations); Level 3 (approached expectations); Level 4 (met expectations); Level 5 (exceeded expectations).
- 51 | Equal Opportunity Schools <https://eoschools.org/>
- 52 | <https://eoschools.org/approach/impact/>
- 53 | Equal Opportunity Schools
- 54 | The University System of Georgia's African-American Male Initiative, A Model for Increasing Higher Education Attainment, September 2012, Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. <https://www.usg.edu/aami/assets/aami/files/AAMIAssessmentBrochure.pdf>
- 55 | <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20192020Staff/2020ProfStaffbyRace.pdf>
- 56 | Garcia, Emma and Weiss, Elaine "COVID-19 and student performance, equity, and U.S. education policy." The Economic Policy Institute September 10, 2020
- 57 | Instruction Partners.org, "Rethinking Intervention." <https://instructionpartners.org/2020/08/07/dr-gloria-ladson-billings/>. (Accessed 3/2021).

