

- Recognize the role of deliberate underachieving and the lack of hope among black males.
- Understand that some doctors, social workers and psychologists are vested in the special education system.
- Recognize that parents may benefit financially from having their child classified as a special education student.

## Our thanks to those who helped draft the recommendations.

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# A New Look at the Educational System and Its Impact on the African American Male

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## The Recommendations

The following are recommendations from a small group assembled at Carbondale, Illinois, by the Southern Illinois University Public Policy Institute and the Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity. A list of the participants follows the recommendations.

### Leadership

- Promote greater awareness of the problem by educating leaders and developing strategies to allow them to champion this issue across various disciplines and in a way that promotes connectivity, i.e., child, family, church and community.
- Identify strategies for promoting a message of high expectation, positive imaging and visualization of a positive future for African-American males.
- Identify programs that recognize in advance the characteristics of natural leaders.
- Address family leadership strategies that empower parents to more effectively manage the school/teacher/community dynamic.
- Promote peer-to-peer and mentoring activities that school African-American males in successful mainstream tactics.



*Father Joseph Brown in small break-out session.*

### Community

- Church – Family**
  - Regularly recognize academic achievement.
  - Develop counseling programs that connect in the school.
  - Give special attention to programs for those in the 0 – 5 and 13 – 17 age brackets.
  - Promote and develop mentoring programs that reflect the African-rooted, rites of passage tutelage that guides adolescent youths toward adulthood.
  - Establish and promote frequent visits to schools by pastors, parents, Sunday School teachers and youth directors.
  - Develop programs that will stimulate and assist parental participation in the learning process.

- Arrange for some parent-teacher conferences to be held in the churches and the community.
- Involve more black men in schools via church or other community service.

### B. Community Services

- Develop, promote and expand after-school programs by building from successful programs and seeking greater federal support.
- Increase involvement of teachers in after school programs.
- Encourage, establish and expand diversity programs that allow people to meet others from different races, nationalities and religions.
- Support constructive programs and activities for students in places, such as malls and movie theaters, where they tend to gather.
- Insist on diversity training for teachers. Teachers should meet people in the community.
- Stimulate communities to become child-centered.
- Make sure that schools provide solid job training for students.
- Push for universities to provide computers to churches and community centers including changing laws and policies that sometimes make it difficult for universities to do so.
- Encourage university professors to serve as mentors and seek funding that would allow professors to receive pay for those services if and when such an incentive is needed.
- Expand and improve efforts to teach students about businesses and other career choices.
- Support programs that serve students of color and help them to become productive citizens.

## Schools

### A. Recruit black male teachers – especially for the lower grades

- Make it a priority for counselors in high schools and universities.
- Seek changes in teacher certification laws that will provide exemptions so black males in other occupations can be recruited.
- Provide scholarships and other incentives to encourage black males to enter the teaching profession.

### B. Teacher training

- Seek federal or state funding for a special one-year teacher preparation program that will emphasize teaching techniques and knowledge of cultural histories that are needed to be effective in diverse classrooms.
- Teacher training institutions should provide all students with instruction in the psychology of self-esteem, which emphasizes the important role that perception plays in human behavior and show them how to promote positive interactions.
- Teachers should be shown how to capitalize on the strengths of the child, which may not be apparent.



*Daphne Robinson, Dr. James Battles, Dr. Elizabeth Lewin, Michael Pope*

4. Teachers should be provided interactive learning experiences with black males in community groups such as churches, youth groups, parent groups, community action organizations, neighborhood associations, fraternal orders that work with black males, etc.
5. Teachers should be shown how to employ methodologies for promoting motivation and providing insights regarding the important role that expectations play in human achievement.
6. Teachers should be shown how to employ a variety of strategies to assist those who then are mandated to serve in achieving desired results.

#### C. Classification

1. Establish community-based review boards to oversee both the decision making process and the decisions themselves regarding classifications.
2. Develop print and other materials that will help black parents to better understand the special education system and teachers' impact on black males.

#### D. Community Networking

1. Schools must solicit support from the community in recruiting black male teachers, providing mentoring for children, parents and grandparents and assuring there is a ready referral network of services, churches and agencies to support the school system and children within it.
2. Use students as mentors.

## Parents

- A. Make sure school officials assess parent/family needs, including having them visit parents in their homes.
- B. Stimulate parental involvement in the lives of their children by encouraging them to participate in school and community activities, including doing volunteer work in the schools.
- C. Develop, promote and expand training programs for parents.
- D. Communicate regularly with parents through bulletins, newsletters and other forms of written and oral communication.
- E. Develop a mechanism so parents can evaluate teachers.
- F. Modify teacher contracts and develop school support network.
- G. Develop clearinghouse or database of programs that work.

## The Child

#### A. Assure that children are:

1. Taught strategies they can use to acquire and maintain positive perceptions of self-worth.
3. Shown how to employ strategies to achieve desired results.
4. Shown how to use strategies to assist them in avoiding conflict with legal authorities and emitting behavior that is self-enhancing rather than self-defeating.
5. Taught strategies that promote:
  - a) Resourcefulness
  - b) Resilience
  - c) Connectedness
  - d) Spirituality
  - e) Emotional vitality  
(be authentic while expressing feelings)
  - f) Gallows humor (be able to see the irony in life)
6. Shown how to identify resources they need to achieve desired results.
7. Shown how to think and how to use imaginative approaches to problem solving.
8. Shown how to be alert to possibilities in the environment that are not clearly visible, which they can use to obtain their goals.

#### B. Press politicians, government and private agencies to provide funding required for the development and implementation of programs that have demonstrated effectiveness in helping African-American males in:

1. Avoiding conflict with legal authority.
2. Completing high school and advanced levels of academic programs.
3. Reducing violence and self-defeating behavior.
4. Promoting harmony among all groups of Americans.



*Dr. Joseph White*



*Audrey McCrimon*

## Task Force

Establish a task force to identify successful programs throughout the nation and to develop strategies, including possible pilot projects, to implement recommendations of the conference.

## Additional Suggestions from Conference Organizers

#### Policy makers should:

- Develop and distribute an annual report card that lists the number of black males participating in special education and in lower track programs.
- Employ black males in positive staff and administrative positions.
- Develop and require teachers to update their knowledge and skills in courses that discuss demographic changes, especially for people of color and black males in particular.
- Develop a required reading list for teachers and others who are responsible for serving black males.
- Encourage and support the involvement of black males in religious programs and activities.
- Encourage black males to view participation in athletics as a means to an end and not the end.
- Develop teacher-training programs that recognize and understand the educational and cultural backgrounds of parents.
- Require schools to proactively plan, organize, promote and implement programs that encourage students to showcase their skills and abilities.
- Develop and consistently enforce standards and expectations for participants in all extracurricular activities.
- Encourage and support the participation of black males in school activities, particularly at elementary and middle schools.
- Encourage and support the early involvement of black males in programs for youth.
- Develop recognition and achievement programs that recognize the academic achievement and positive behavior of black males.

- Review the existing process that is used to label and enroll black males in special education.
- Identify and train community members who can participate in the special education review process and who can serve as advocates for parents and their children.
- Teach parents how to promote and encourage acceptable and appropriate classroom behavior.
- Teach parents how to effectively advocate for their children in education settings.
- Teach parents the role of education in their children's futures, careers and educational choices.
- Develop and distribute videotapes and other materials that describe special education programs, including their advantages and disadvantages.
- Encourage parents to seek the best education for their children, rather than the most appropriate education.



*Paul Simon makes a point during working group.*

## Additional Strategies for Working with Black Males

- Recognize that parents are critical factors in the change process.
- Differentiate between capacity, motivation, skill and ability.
- Identify significant barriers confronting black males in K-12.
- Recognize that many parents do not understand the educational system and its impact on the individual.
- Assess and consider the student's attitude towards learning.
- Understand and consider black males' developmental needs.
- Society must devote more energy towards basic skills.
- Understand the impact of technology on socio-economic class.
- Recognize that the role of grandparents needs to be acknowledged.
- Develop special focused programs for black males.
- Consider the importance and need for extended day programs for certain students.