

Louisiana Home & Foreign Missions  
Baptist State Convention, Inc.

1401 Moeling Street, Lake Charles, La 70601

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AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE  
EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

**D.A.D.S. CLUB**

*Developing And Directing Saints To  
Mobilize*



*"Saving our African American Men & Boys"*

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## INTRODUCTION/STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Tavis Smiley began his introduction in the book titled The Covenant by citing a quotation from A. Phillip Randolph, a great African American labor leader – *“At the banquet table of life there are no reserved souls. You get what you can take and keep what you can hold. If you can’t take anything, you won’t get anything. And if you can’t hold anything, you won’t keep anything. And you can’t take anything without organization.”*

Without organization African American people will never be able to take, keep or hold onto anything much less the hard-fought gains we have struggled to achieve. To save our African American males we have to organize, mobilize and make it happen.

Our mission with this document is to address the problems our African American men and boys are facing and create an action plan under the “auspices” of Louisiana Home & Foreign Missions Baptist State Convention, Inc. (LH&FMBSC) for churches to use as a model to mobilize, provide service and support.

Churches have been a dynamic support to the African American community. There seem to be churches on every corner in some communities. While we have been successful at delivering service and support to African American females we have fallen short in reaching out to and engaging African American males. And without these men we are missing a key contributor to the overall health of the African American family and community.

Many of our men (especially young men) are bitter, angry and desperate. Many have grown up without involved fathers in a world that continues to hammer on their manhood.

While children know that they are loved by their mothers, they yearn for the other half of the devotion God designed for them. They will look for that absent father’s love with an overwhelming intensity, but often in wrong places, and it often leads to addictions or other inappropriate behavior. We know of the bedlam engulfing the streets, the pre-teen and teenage gangs, the ongoing violence and brutality. In a society where being a man or father has a lot of expectation, many of our young males grow up wanting to be like sport stars and hustlers, not like their fathers.

Dr. Kuame Bediako, a leading African theologian, had this to say about African American men (when interviewed by Dr. Bernard Franklin during a trip to West Africa). *“You should be our voice of hope,”* He said. *“You should be telling us in*

*Africa that God would deliver our war torn impoverished continent and that if HE delivered you from slavery and racism, He can deliver us from our plagues. You should be instructing African Men to remain true to their God and families ---But in your condition you can't tell us anything."*

To be successful in delivering our African American males, the church must be included. Every successful movement in support of our African American community included God and the church, i.e., the slave revolts, the Underground Railroad, the Abolitionist Movement and the Civil Rights Movement.

To reach them (African American males) through this mobilization we must be open about our own failures as men and fathers. Many men, due to their poor track record with male authority figures, are suspicious and distrustful of pastors and ministers. A broken man cannot relate to sinless perfection. The church can be a refuge for broken men--a place where they can forgive the sins of their biological fathers and white forefathers.

Dr. Willie Richardson in his book, Reclaiming the Urban Family, says the church cannot build strong families without reaching out to fathers and sons. The church can help men overcome their anger and bitterness. We want to help them face their unresolved issues and refrain from letting imprisonment become the new slavery for the African American community.

To our Leaders, the road ahead will not be easy. Yes, it is filled with despair, but it is also filled with "Hope". I share the words of Dr. Cornel West:

*"You can't lead our people if you don't love our people.  
You can't save our people if you won't serve our people."*

Let's mobilize and organize to save our African American males!! We give you research data and examples that hopefully will enlighten and empower as you emulate some of the strategies and activities listed on the following pages.

May you be embodied with God's love, grace and wisdom.

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE**

Research shows that in Louisiana (Scott Foundation for Public Education) prior to Katrina, three of the following four districts had the highest enrollment of African Americans: Caddo Parish 14,131, graduation rate 34%; East Baton Rouge Parish 19,205, graduation rate 45%; Jefferson Parish 13,063, graduation rate 43%; and Orleans Parish 33,017, graduation rate 42%. The total African American enrollment in New Orleans was 33,515. Suspensions were 6,885, expulsions 690, mental retardation 1,160, emotional disturbance 760, specific learning disability 1,170. New Orleans Non-Hispanic African American students (male/female) accounted for 93% of public school enrollment and Non-Hispanic white students accounted for 4%. African American students (male/female) received 98% of the out-of-school suspensions, while white student's received 1% and African American students received 99% of the unusually large number of suspensions.

African American children are disproportionately denied a fair chance and are disproportionately poor. Education starts at home. Reading to children, creating time and space for homework and demonstrating through words and deeds that education is important are the key first building blocks for high educational achievement.

The Factor on Public Education, borrowed from Dr. Edmund W. Gordon, gives the following key points:

➤ **Early Childhood Education**

Early Childhood education is key to school readiness and sustained academic achievement. Yet at age three only 45% of African American children are enrolled and at age four 75% are registered.

➤ **Reading Comprehension**

Only 12 % of African American 4<sup>th</sup> graders have reached proficient or advanced reading levels, while 61% have yet to reach the basic level

In a national assessment of student reading ability, African American children scored 16% below white children

➤ **Mathematical Proficiency**

Many African American 17-year olds graduating from high school have math skills equivalent to white 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

➤ **Promotions/Retentions, Suspensions/Expulsions**

While 9% of white students have repeated a grade, 18% of African American students have been held back at least once.

One out of three or 33% of African American students in seventh through twelfth grades have been suspended or expelled at some point as opposed to 15% of white students

➤ **Higher Education**

Recent statistics show that the national college graduation rate for enrolled African American students is 4% compared to 61% of enrolled white students.

Of African American 16-24 year-olds, 13% have not earned a high school diploma or GED; 7% white young people are without a high school credential

In 2000 31% of African Americans ages 18-24 were enrolled in college ad universities; nearly two-thirds of these students were females.

## **A Recipe for Change**

### **What Community Can Do**

- Action Steps*
1. We must demand that local communities provide the resources to educate our children.
    - a. Restore visual arts, performing arts and music in schools forced cut
    - b. Federal Aid at all grade level
    - c. Comprehensive curriculum resources and material
    - d. After school programs (develop and fund)

From the time of slavery to the present day African Americans have struggled to attain high quality education. During slavery educating African Americans was forbidden. Today there is a legal right to attend schools but for many African Americans, a quality education is almost as difficult to attain as it was 20 years ago.

### **What Each Of Us Can Do**

- Action Steps*
- Read the Bible and other books to our children or grand-children daily

*Action Steps*

- Designate quiet spaces for family study time
  - Schedule homework for children
  - Parents check for homework completion
  - Turn off TV from 7pm to 8pm Monday thru Thursday

*Action Steps*

- We challenge all families to get family library cards by April 30, 2008 or at least within 90 days after your church begins this Initiative

*Action Steps*

- Arrange family and neighborhood activities
  - Field trips
  - Educational games
  - Spelling bees
  - Science fairs

*Action Steps*

- Become involved in school activities
  - Parent meetings
  - School committees
  - Monitor out-of-school activities
  - Talk with children and teenagers
  - Communicate positive values and character traits, such as respect, hard work and responsibility
  - Express high expectations and offer praise and encouragement

## **What Churches/Convention Can Do**

*Action Steps*

- Establish church/school family partnerships that :
  - Combat alcohol, drugs and violence in and around the school and neighborhood.
    - a) Parents need to enroll their children in DARE (*elementary to middle*) and International Drug Free Youth (IDFY) (*high school*)
  - Reinforce parenting skills by providing training in parenting and early childhood education, literacy and career training, referrals for services and how to access other helpful programs (*see our list for a resource we recommend*)
  - Establish after-school and/or weekend tutoring classes (*See appendix A "From Research to Practice" Grades 1-3*)
  - Partner with classroom teachers on students' areas of need by every church adopting a school

- Churches can call their city halls, city councils, etc. about their summer learning and recreational programs
- Every church should organize Cub/Boy Scout troops in 2008 (*See National African American Baptist Faith-Based Initiative – Scouting in Ministry located in our State Office or call your local Scouting office*)
- Promote parent involvement strategies geared toward high learning standards and expectations for their children
- Establish a family ministry that focus on assisting parents and guardians
  - a) Gain access to state and federal resources in their community by calling your local school district or LA Department of Education and requesting information on their Parenting Education grant that they provide to State school districts
  - b) Provide child care and transportation for parent workshops and training

## **PRIMARY RESOURCES**

National African American Baptist Faith-Based Initiative – Scouting is Ministry

Parenting The Early Years

Drs. Les & Lesile Parrott

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

1. National Center for Fathering  
[www.fathers.com](http://www.fathers.com)
2. Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African-American Males  
Maryland State Superintendent of Schools  
<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/FCB60C1D-6CC2-4270-BDAA53D67247324/11495/AfricanAmericanMaleTaskForceReportDecember06.pdf>
3. Scott Foundation for Public Education
4. Epstein, J.L. (1991 b) Paths to Partnership  
What we can learn from federal, state, district and school initiatives  
Phi Delta Kappa 72(5), 344-349 January
5. US Department of Education  
[www.ed.gov/index.jhtml](http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml)

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# MENTORING AND CHARACTER BUILDING

The “Mentoring and Character Building” component of the African American Initiative is an essential part of nurturing and growth. The mentoring concept may have originated in Ancient Greece in Homer’s Odyssey.

When Odysseus began his famous odyssey, he left his infant son, **Telemaches** in the care of a companion named Mentor. This relationship came to define mentoring as a process through which an older person helps to counsel and guide a younger person. Although mentoring began as a process by a known and trusted person, it has evolved into a variety of programs that recruit and train adults to become mentors for youth in need of adult assistance.

The process of mentoring (in this initiative) is used to help African American youth to:

- 1) develop and refine citizenship skills
- 2) explore career options, and
- 3) ignite career aspirations.

Mentoring, according to recent research, has become a promising strategy for violence and drop-out preventions. (Hayashi, Y. and O’Donnell, C.R., 2006).

## **RATIONALE**

Adult-to-youth mentoring is one way that churches can invest in young African Americans. By listening and giving feedback, coaching, providing positive experience and sharing networks and skills, those more senior in experience can nurture the development of those with less experience. The process of mentoring can be used to help African Americans fine-tune leadership skills, explore career options and expand opportunities. The focus of mentor recruitment efforts should be on motivated, high caliber men. While non-academic interventions are, in general, uneven in affecting school achievement, tightly controlled mentoring programs involving intensive volunteer and youth screening, thorough training, close supervision, controlled matching and high expectations do have academic benefit. In the largest study of the mentoring effect, Big Brothers, Big Sisters found that in addition to inhibiting risky behaviors and improving parent and peer relationships, effective mentoring reduced the number of days students skipped school, increased their feelings of competence in doing school work and modestly improved their grade point average.

## GETTING STARTED/ACTION STEPS

### I. Developing Your Program Plan

#### A. Get Organized

##### *Action Steps*

1. Write out your initial thoughts and broad answers to questions below:
  - Who are the youth we want to serve?
  - What impact on their lives do we want the program to make?
  - Who are the mentors we will recruit?
  - Where will the mentoring take place?
  - What resources (time, money, staffing) do we need?
  - What existing programs already serve or could potentially serve these youth?
  - Who will assist staff/volunteers in developing the mentoring program?

#### B. Conduct a Needs Assessment

*(See example of Needs Assessment in Appendix)*

- Challenges and problems facing youth being served
- Existing available service

##### **NOTE!**

*By comparing the needs of the youth with the existing services currently being provided - - you will be able to determine the unmet needs your program can address. The needs assessment will give you "the big picture" of what is happening and the role your church might play.*

### **C. Create a Steering Committee**

Soliciting input from parents, community leaders, youth, school officials and other faith-based groups in the planning process ensures that your program is going in a direction that will meet the needs of everyone involved.

Have a representative from each of the above list on your steering committee.

***NOTE!***

*The most successful committee's represented as equal partners rather than as silent observers. They should have meaningful roles in guiding the program development.*

### **D. Develop a Mission Statement**

*(See appendix on how to develop a Mission Statement)*

Informed by your needs assessment, your mission statement should drive all program activities. It should reflect short- and long-term goals and answer the question “Why do we exist?”

### **E. Write Your Program Proposal**

LH&FMBSC will provide a Youth Program Proposal Writing Seminar on May 17, 2008 at Greater St. Mary Missionary Baptist Church (GSM) (Focus on Youth Funding Seminar). This written plan will help in

- 1) finding funding
- 2) staying focused on needs of youth, and
- 3) how you will meet those needs.

**Example:**

- a) Statement of need
- b) Specific problems to be addressed
- c) Goals/objectives of program
- d) Project strategy/design
  - Youth selection and orientation
  - Mentor recruitment screening, instructor and training
  - Matching mentor and mentee
  - Parental/Guardian involvement
  - Monitoring/supervising the match
  - Evaluation methods and processes
  - Sustainability
- e) Management capability
- f) Program budget

**F. Resource Development Plan**

This plan sets the course for action on how you will initially fund and sustain your program. It should include development goals and objectives, strategies, timelines and assigned tasks for making the plan happen.

**Example:**

In-kind donations, grants, local business support and fundraising.

**G. Program Implementation**

*Action Step*

This step is development of written program policies and operating procedures. This step will allow you to implement a program that reflects research-based, effective practices. The policies and procedures should work in concert with the components that will make up the structure of your day-to-day operations.

## Components:

- Recruitment and Marketing Strategies
- Eligibility Criteria
- Screening Process
  - *Written application*
  - *Reference check (employment, character references, child abuse registry check, criminal record check)*
  - *Face-to-face interview*
  - *An orientation program*

### \* Orientation and Training

#### 1. Orientation

The Orientation may take place during an initial recruitment presentation or as a follow-up for interested individuals, but it should always take place before the volunteer application and screening process begins.

#### 2. Training

*LH&FMBSC will provide a Youth Program Proposal writing Training program at Greater St. Mary MBC on May 17, 2008.*

A structured training program for mentors, mentees, parents and care-givers should include:

**NOTE!**

*Utilize Local Brotherhood  
Department/Ministry*

- a. An overview of the program
- b. Clarification of roles
- c. Responsibilities and expectations
- d. Discussion on how to handle a variety of situations
- e. Concepts and strategies to help build the relationship between mentor and youth

## \* **Matching Process**

This is a crucial step not only for the success of that individual match but for the overall success of your program. Your matching process should reflect your program goals and objectives.

### *Action Step*

- Identify what qualities you are looking for in mentors and mentees that will allow you to make a good match
- Your criteria will depend on the type of program being implemented

## \* **Monitoring and Supervision**

It should ensure

- a) The safety of meeting locations and circumstances
- b) That matches have resources and materials for activities
- c) That training opportunities continue
- d) Peer support of grievances and offering positive feedback
- e) that appropriate documentation is done on a regular basis

### **NOTE!**

*Your Program cannot exist alone!!*

## \* **Match Closure**

Support in helping make the transition out of present match and prepare them for a possible new mentoring relationship in confidential interview with mentor and mentee.

## \* **Program Evaluation**

- a) It helps your program know if mentoring is making a difference
- b) It helps refine and improve services
- c) Provides marketing statistics

## \* **Collaborating with Other Youth Service Providers**

## RESOURCES

National Mentoring Center  
<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring>

Big Brother Big Sister of America  
<http://www.bbbsa.org>

John Demarco (1993)  
Peer Helping Skills  
Guide: Leader's Guide for Training Peer Helpers and Peer Tutors  
[For Middle & High School] (Paperback)

100 Black Men  
[www.100blackmen.org](http://www.100blackmen.org)

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## **PARENTING**

### **“Fathers Under Siege”**

Over the last thirty years divorce reforms and the expansion of our welfare system have made it difficult for a large proportion of American men either to live with or stay in effective touch with their children. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), now called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), for three decades provided the lion’s share of income support for poor families but it was set up to exclude fathers. The rules were that if an “able – bodied man” stayed in the house a woman with dependent children was unable to claim benefits for her and the children. This caused men to be pushed out of the nest. Not only did AFDC regulations create a decretal to marry, but they made it difficult for poor men to become fathers to their children.

In recent years men have experienced a tremendous loss of power in the work place and in the family. There is now a weight of evidence connecting fatherlessness to child poverty, juvenile crime and teen suicide. If we are to succeed in this mobilization, “Save the African American Male,” we must learn to give new and self-conscious value to the art and practice of parenting.

## The Parent-Child Bond

The parent-child bond is the strongest of all human attachments. When it weakens, devastating consequences ripple through our community because this bond is the source of connectedness in society.

The development of the whole child requires more than food and water, it requires something much deeper and more complicated; it requires sustained and sustaining love. Dr. Willard Gaylor, a psychiatrist, says “It is necessary to care for a child with love, in order to initiate a similar capacity in the child”. When a child is deprived of parental love, that youngster may grow up in an infantilized state – never developing a love of self, never developing the ability to reach out to others. This is a recipe for violence, against oneself and against others, for anger and aggression remain raw and exposed, untempered by a commitment to anyone or anything. How do you persuade a young man who is careless of his own or of others’ well-being to join a Boys Club?

Let’s look at a conversation Dr. Cornel West (Harvard University Professor) had with a disconnected young African American man after a talk at a Community Center in New Jersey. *“The young man said, “Professor West I hear you’re a pretty smart brother, you write this deep stuff, it must take a lotta talent and a lotta work to do something like that – Well I got talent too. I’m the smartest guy in my class. But the rub is I can’t find any motivation. I don’t see why I should try to do what you do. More and more I feel I belong to the streets, hustling, dealing and hurting like every one else. That’s the way to survive where I live.”*

He then asked the question, *“Brother, what made you want to do all that hard work, what made you believe in some kind of different future”?*

Dr. West talked about his Dad’s encouraging and disciplining him, his Mom’s reading poetry to him, and his elder brother helping with his homework and his younger sisters cheering him on. The young man listened and, then, in obvious pain, said, *“Here is the score – I’m in this world by myself. My mother is strung out and turned out. I have brothers, but I don’t know them and as for as my father, where he is nobody knows. I sure have never seen him.”*

This bleak and bitter encounter reflects the agony of a child who was born without the tender love of an attentive parent. The relationship that transmits self-love and the capacity to love others – had never been developed and the consequences were quite deadly. *(Dr. Cornel West)*

This young African American is not alone. In America, across race, gender and class, millions of children are in terrible trouble.

## **Facts: (Statistics)**

- The homicide rate for children aged fourteen to seventeen has risen 172% since 1985.
- One fifth (20.5%) of all children are growing up in poverty.
- The number of homeless children has tripled since the late 1980's.
- The use of illicit drugs among High School seniors is up 44% since 1992.
- SAT scores have slipped 27 points.
- The rate of suicide among African American teenagers has tripled since 1990.
- Obesity among children 12-17 has doubled.

The surge in youth violence is perhaps the most cruel and costly manifestation of our inability to nurture our young.

In a day and age when we associate a crime with young African American men, it is important to remember that increases in Juvenile Court cases apply across the board, in all races, social classes and lifestyles. Although young African American males are four to five times more likely to be arrested than white youth of the same age, the increases in the rate of arrests are higher for white youth than African Americans; a 44% increase compared to a 19% increase between 1998 and 1993.

## **Discipline**

*“Correct thy son and he shall give thee rest, yea he shall give delight unto thy soul” Proverbs 29:17*

The Bible clearly admonishes parents to discipline children to help them learn to be Godly and wise. Consider these passages:

*“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” Proverbs 13:24*

*“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” Hebrews 12:11*

These passages make one point very clear: As parents we are responsible for appropriately and effectively disciplining our children. The Book of Proverbs describes the purpose of discipline as the attainment of wisdom. It is a tool to help children become wise. True wisdom leads a person toward God, not away from him. The words used in the scripture teaches us that in addition to providing chastisement for misbehavior, biblical discipline also provides instruction in Godly and wise behavior (e.g., training for life, teaching how to make wise choices, warning of the consequences of foolish behavior). Biblical discipline teaches children how 1) to live correctly, 2) avoid the traps of sin and poor decision-making, and 3) help them to understand how appropriate behavior results in positive consequences and is an outgrowth of their relationship with God.

There are two things we need to understand about discipline:

***NOTE!***

*Make sure your child knows the difference between your “play” voice and your “command” voice.*

- 1. We are commanded to discipline our children. Biblical Discipline is best understood as including instruction, training and guidance as well as correction.**
- 2. Discipline has corrective, forward purpose. Discipline helps our children learn how to make wise decisions as they are growing up. We are not to discipline because we are angry (although we may be angry); we are to discipline because we want our children to learn from that behavior, even if the learning comes in small steps.**

### **Discipline Guidelines**

*Action Steps*

- 1. Make sure your child is listening.**
- 2. Speak clearly and firmly.**
- 3. Don’t speak in a threatening voice.**
- 4. Cut down on unnecessary commands.**
- 5. Offer alternatives instead of just saying no.**

## WINNING THE WAR AGAINST FATHERS

Increasingly devalued in the workplace, men have also been discounted and pushed aside by government. In recent decades the political establishment has not come through for Fathers.

### **Example:**

Case of the disadvantaged men: However one judges the year on poverty, it clearly creates a social welfare system that focuses on women. Men, especially poor black men, have been ignored.

- The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) provides income support for poor families, was set up in such a way to deliberately exclude fathers.
- Anti-father bias
  - Dead beat dads  
(fathers who fail to pay child support)
- Demonized and demoralized by the media

### Example:

Movies such as 1) “Thelma and Louise,” 2) “Boys on the Side,” and 3) “Waiting to Exhale” show men as redundant and expendable.

## **What Can Churches Do?**

### Economic Security

Research shows that over 50% of US employers say they cannot find qualified applicants for entry-level jobs, while more than 40% of African Americans never make it into a mainstream job.

#### *Action Steps*

1. Encourage African American young men to:
  - a. Pursue college/university degree or vocational skill training
  - b. Attend college/university job recruiting fairs
  - c. Seek advice from school counselors regarding college/university or vocational skill training entry

#### *Action Steps*

2. Partner with local schools/districts and businesses to access State, Federal and private grants to develop programs that place more emphasis on work experience in high schools.
  - a. More on-the-job training in the work place
  - b. Re-entrance of young African American ex-cons to the job market after serving their time
  - c. Implement Honor/Banner Roll Rewards Program (*see Honor/Banner Roll Program in Appendix*)

- Action Steps*    **3.** Establish child care/learning centers  
Community Development Corporations (CDC)
- Action Steps*    **4.** Partner with local job placement organizations to have semi-annual job fairs. (*contact your local Work Force Development Office*)  
Theme Examples:  
    a) Males Get In The Game  
    b) Swing into Jobs
- Action Steps*    **5.** Sponsor “Saturday Night Alive” youth activities  
Examples:  
    a. Mid-night Basketball                      d. Drill Teams  
    b. Video Games                                e. Christian Rap Groups  
    c. Boxing                                         f. Bible Quiz Bowl, etc.
- Action Steps*    **6.** Annual male recruitment rallies  
    • Church/School  
    • Youth Ministry  
    • Recreation Leaders
- Action Steps*    **7.** Conduct parent training and workshops that include discipline.

## RESOURCES

\*Barbara M. Jones  
“Guns, Drugs and Juvenile Justice”

“Three Appeals of the Crisis in Youth Violence”  
Task Force on Parent Empowerment

\*Sylvia Ann Hewlett  
“Child Neglect in Rich Nations”

\*Center for Disease Control  
“Suicide Among Children, Adolescents and Young Adults”  
[www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm4415.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm4415.pdf)

\*Parents Interview  
Task Force On Parent Empowerment  
[www.cop.gov.hk/eng/pdf/TFCY\\_1\\_2006%20eng.pdf](http://www.cop.gov.hk/eng/pdf/TFCY_1_2006%20eng.pdf)

\*Sylvia Ann Hewlett & Cornel West  
“The War Against Parents”

\*Dr. Todd Cartwell  
“The Parent Saver”

\*Dr. Leslie Parrott  
“Parenting the Early Years”

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## **HEALTH CARE AND WELL-BEING**

### **A. Social Disparities**

African Americans face social disparities in health care due to our treatment being less than equal in quality and access.

Dr. David Satcher, M.D., PhD, and Interim President of Morehouse School of Medicine, states, “If we had eliminated the disparities in the last century there would have been 85,000 fewer African American deaths overall in 2000. Among others, these include: 24,000 fewer African American deaths from cardiovascular disease; 4,700 fewer African American infant deaths in the first year of life; 22,000 fewer deaths from diabetes; and almost 2,000 fewer African American women would have died from breast cancer.

### **Access**

Access to health care is determined by insurance status, living in underserved communities, under-representation in the health care professions, being uninformed about health care services and needs, and feeling insecure about or untrusting of the system.

Lifestyle and environment are other causes of health disparities. According to a major study, the environment accounts for 20-30 % of morbidity and mortality, genetics for 15-20%, and lifestyle for 40-50%. Lifestyle is a major consideration in the elimination of health disparities.

The epidemic of overweight and obesity and its disproportionate impact on African Americans is a clear point of attack. Obesity is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, including hypertension and strokes, diabetes, cancer of the colon and prostate.

### **B. Environment**

Environment makes a major contribution to disparities. African American children, along with Hispanic children, are more than likely to be exposed to toxic substances or lead paint than their white counterparts. Violence and gun related-deaths have a tremendous impact on African American males. Disproportionate numbers of African American men are incarcerated as a result of policies that mandate imprisonment as opposed to treatment for substance abuse.

## C. Mental Health

Mental disorders are so common in the United States that one out of five Americans has a diagnosable mental disorder each year. This includes 44 million adults and 13.7 million children. Mental disorders are as disabling as cancer or heart disease in terms of premature death and lost productivity. They interfere with quality of life and cause unnecessary pain and suffering. Mental Health also interferes with the development of positive relationships.

African Americans are not exempt from mental illness and mental disorders. We have a greater burden of mental illness because of difficulty in accessing treatment. Since 1980, suicide has doubled among young African American males. Eighty to ninety percent of people who die by suicide are suffering from a diagnosable mental illness or substance abuse or both.

### Facts

To change these health adjustments we must advocate for system changes that include universal health insurance, guaranteed primary medical care, non-violent and free neighborhoods, nutritious food outlets, educational equality, career opportunities, parity in income, home ownership, and hope. There are individual, community and governmental responsibilities for achieving these goals. We must mobilize to find ways to bring these different levels of responsibility together in a concerted effort to eliminate disparities in health care and health outcomes.

### What Churches Can Do

1. Organize a “Healthy Living Ministry” that focuses on:

- Action Steps*
- \*accessing primary health care through health fairs  
(bring in local doctors, nurses, etc.)
  - \*partner with Parent Teacher Associations to set up nutritional standards for snacks and renegotiate vending contracts at schools
  - \*organize walking groups
  - \*research local health department statistics on chronic illnesses among African American males and invite professionals to discuss prevention and treatment. (this can be done through workshops and seminars)
  - \*research the status on mental health in your membership-living areas and organize “Focus Groups” to address the findings
  - \*Declare a “Get A Physical Month” in the local church

## RESOURCES

- \*“How Diet Affects African American Men’s Health: High Blood Pressure”  
[www.5day.goal/aahealth/aamen/diet/pressure](http://www.5day.goal/aahealth/aamen/diet/pressure)
- \*Diabetes in African Americans  
Fact Sheet, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease, NIH Publication No. 98-3266, June 1998  
[www.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.niddk.nih.gov)
- \*K. Wright, “The Time Is Now”  
“The State of AIDS in African America”  
African American AIDS Institute, Los Angeles, Ca., Feb. 2005, pp 5,8  
<http://www.thebody.com/index/whatis/africanam.html>  
[www.blackaids.org/](http://www.blackaids.org/)
- \*Mental Health; Culture, Race and Ethnicity  
[www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/cre/](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/cre/)  
US Department of Health and Human Service
- \*”History of the Bucket Brigade Movement”  
[www.bucketbrigade.org](http://www.bucketbrigade.org)

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## SYSTEM OF UNEQUAL JUSTICE

*“Often the voice of conscience whispers;  
often we silence it;  
always we will have to pay” Anonymous*

### **Differential Treatment**

While “Equal Justice Under the Law” is the foundation of our legal system and is carried on the front of the U.S. Supreme Court, the Juvenile justice system is any thing but equal for all. Throughout the system African American youth receive different and harsher treatment for similar offenses.

The following report documents a juvenile justice system that is “separate and unequal”.

*“And Justice for some”  
Different Treatment of youth of color in the Justice System  
National Council on Crime and Delinquency  
January 2007*

### **Detention and Incarceration in Juvenile Facilities**

- Although African American youth are 16% of the adolescent population in the United States, they are 38% of the almost 100,000 youth confined in local detention and state correctional systems. They are over-represented in all offense categories
- Youth of color make up the majority of youth held in both public and private facilities

#### **NOTE!**

*In a 1995 study NCCD found that when white and African American youth were charged with the same offenses, African American youth with no prior admissions were six times more likely to be incarcerated in public facilities than white youth with the same background.*

Admission rates to public facilities were seven times greater among African American youth with one or two prior admissions than white youth in 1993. They were confined on an average for 611 days longer than white youth.

James Bell, Executive Director of the W. Haywood Burns Institute in San Francisco, states:

*Since before this country's inception, African Americans have struggled against deeply ingrained race-based expressions of power, privilege and exclusion. During the era of Jim Crow in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, America's elite universities and well respected "scientists" advanced claims of biological evidence connecting African American physical features to inferior intelligence and predisposition to criminal behavior. This "evidence" further fueled the national hysteria about a growing African American population and afforded justification for criminalizing African American men.*

Today there is a more nuanced but equally damaging perception of poor African Americans that has regulated a cradle-to-prison super highway (CPS). The CPS is a network of legislation, policy, practice, and structural racism that has fostered African Americans being incarcerated at unconscionable levels at increasingly younger ages for increasingly minor acts.

Data from the Federal Justice System reveals that warehousing these African Americans is extremely expensive, is non-rehabilitative and lacks evidence that it reduces crime. Nevertheless, this track record of incarceration, continues to be growth industry.

**NOTE!**

*Given the current systems unfair disproportionate and negative impart on the African American Community. We should be leading the effort to demand that resources be diverted from prisons to the interventions and treatments that can make a real difference in the lives of our people.*

## **Crisis of African American Men and the Justice System**

### **The Facts**

- Of the 2.1 million inmates today, 910,000 are African American Males who make up 43.9% of the state and federal prison population but only 12.3% of the U.S. population.
- One of every three African American males born today can expect to go to prison in his lifetime
- 1.4 million African American men or 13% have currently or permanently lost their right to vote as a result of a felony conviction seven times the national average
- In at least 15 states African American men were sent to prison on drug charges at a rate ranging from 20 to 57 times those of white men.
- On any given day one of every 14 African American children has a parent in prison
- Youth of all races use drugs at similar rates, but African American youth represent 60 to 75% of drug arrests today
- Nationwide young African American offenders are more than twice as likely to be transferred to adult court as their white counterparts.

### **What Can Churches Do?**

1. Partner with local justice systems and schools to:
  - a. Help children do well in school
  - b. Plan and implement safe, engaging after-school activities for children and youth
  - c. Hold elected officials responsible for rehabilitation and successful re-entry of ex-felons back into communities
  - d. Conduct research to assess the number of African American youth in detention visit and develop an action plan for re-entry into the community
  - e. Utilize mentor program to connect every child (of incarcerated male) to a caring adult.
  - f. Utilize ministry job fairs and counseling to help adults returning from prison to find jobs
  - g. Contact Re-entry National Media Outreach Campaign for receipt of media resources that will facilitate discussion and decision-making about solution based re-entry programs. These resources are designed to support the work of community and faith-based organizations.

#### *Action Steps*

## RESOURCES

\*More Movers

The Crisis of Young African Males and the Criminal Justice System

[www.sentencingproject.org/Admin/Documents/publications/rd\\_crisisoftheyoung.pdf](http://www.sentencingproject.org/Admin/Documents/publications/rd_crisisoftheyoung.pdf)

\*Re-entry National Media Outreach Campaign

[www.reentrymediaoutreach.org](http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org)

\*Volvo for Life Awards: Charmaney Bayton

[www.volvoforlifeawards.org](http://www.volvoforlifeawards.org)

\*"Young African American Americans and the Criminal Justice Systems:  
Five Years Later"

[www.sentencingproject.org](http://www.sentencingproject.org)

April 2001, The Sentencing Project

\*And Justice for Some

National Council on Crime and Delinquency

[www.nccd-crc.org](http://www.nccd-crc.org)

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# Appendix A

**From Research to Practice  
Grades 1-3**

# THE TUTORIAL READING PROGRAM

## I. PURPOSE

Assist the classroom teachers (at participating Calcasieu Parish Schools) in reinforcing activities and strategies most often associated with literature-based integrated language arts instruction.

### A. ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF A BALANCED, COMPREHENSIVE READING PROGRAM - "FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE"

1. a strong literature, language and comprehension tutorial program that includes a balance of oral and written language;
2. an organized, explicit skills tutorial program that includes phonemic awareness (sounds in words), phonics and decoding skills to address the "needs" of the student.
3. ongoing diagnosis that informs teaching and assessment
4. provide individual tutoring for students at risk of reading failure

## II. PREDICATORS FOR READING SUCCESS

### 1. PHONEMIC AWARENESS

"The understanding that spoken words and syllables are themselves made up of elementary speed sounds."

**NOTE!** This understanding is essential for learning to read an alphabetic language because it is these elementary sounds or phonemes that letters represent. Without phonemic awareness, phonics can make no sense and the spelling of words can be learned only by rote.

#### **RESEARCH:**

If children cannot hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words, they have an extremely difficult time learning how to map those sounds to letters and letter patterns-the essence of decoding (Adams, 1990).

Support for phonemic awareness development should occur in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade (Yapp, 1992) including abilities to:

- attend to the separate words of sentences (e.g., rhyming songs, print tracking);
- break up words into syllables (e.g., clapping syllables);
- detect and generate rhymes;
- engage in alliterative (repetition of an initial sound) language play (e.g., listening for or generating words that begin with a specific initial phonemic);
- blend phonemics to make words (e.g., /b/-a/-t/= bat;
- make new words by substituting one phoneme for another (e.g., change the h in “hot” to p).

## **2. SYSTEMATIC EXPLICIT PHONICS**

The above term refers to an organized program where letter-sound correspondence for letters and letter clusters are directly taught, blended, practiced in words, word lists and word families, practiced initially in text with a high percentage of decodable words linked to the phonics lesson.

### **RESEARCH**

Research reveals that only poor and disabled readers rely on context for word identification (Stanovich,1980). Poorly developed knowledge of spellings and spelling-sound correspondences is found to be the most frequent, debilitating and pervasive cause of reading difficulty (Bruck,1990; Perfetti, 1985; Rack Snowling, & Olson, 1992; Villutino, 1991).

## **3. SPELLING**

The primary goal of spelling reinforcement instruction at Saturday tutorial program is to alert students to patterns, to how words are put together and to conventions and correctness. Spelling lists and quizzes should be purposeful and support and reinforce reading and writing instruction.

## **RESEARCH**

Good spelling is much more than a literary nicety. Poorly developed spelling knowledge is shown to hinder children's writing, to disrupt their reading fluency, and to obstruct their vocabulary development. (Adams Trieman & Pressley 1996)

Although it is appropriate to encourage beginners to use temporary or invented spellings to express their thoughts in print, programmatic instructions in correct spelling should begin in first grade and continue across the school years. In addition, students should see the correctness of their spelling in their writing.

### **4. VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT**

Tutorial reading program encourages reading to all students as much as possible. First, children will be encouraged to attend to the meanings of new words they encounter in the text; second, the ability to understand and remember the meanings of new words depends strongly on how well developed one's vocabulary is already.

## **RESEARCH**

The ninetieth percentile fifth grader reads about 200 times more text per year than the tenth percentile reader does (Nagy, Herman & Anderson 1985).

### **5. COMPREHENSION & HIGHER ORDER THINKING**

The priority issues while reading will include the following questions: Why am I reading this and how does this information relate to my reasons for doing so? What is the author's point of view? What are the underlying assumptions? Do I understand what the author is saying and why? Do I know where the author is headed? Do I already know and believe or have learned elsewhere? If not where does it depart and what do I think about the discrepancy?

In the interest of developing student's reading comprehension, the students should be given many opportunities for open discussion of both the highlights and difficulties of the text.

## **RESEARCH**

Through reading, students encounter new words, new language and new facts. Beyond that, however, they encounter thoughts and modes of thinking that might never arise in their face-to-face words. In the interest of their own potential and fulfillment, all students should be encouraged to read as frequently, broadly, and thoughtfully as possible.

Research shows that children's reflective control of text can be improved through direct instruction strategies. Discussions and reading activities should be conducted throughout a range of genres, both fiction and non-fiction. Beginning with kindergarten, they should be a regular part of the language arts curriculum throughout the student's school years.

## **IV. GRADE-LEVEL EXPECTATION**

### **KINDERGARTEN**

At the end of Kindergarten, every child should:

- have mastered all of the concepts about print, including the names and shapes of most of the letters of the alphabet;
- Demonstrate phonemic awareness through activities such as rhyming, clapping syllables, substituting sounds and blending phonemes;
- recognize upper and lower case letters;
- know how to read his/her own and others' names and common environmental print in the classroom;
- read some high-frequency words;
- write independently at the alphabetic stage of development;
- retell in simple terms stories that have been read to him/her as well as make simple evaluations and interpretations of their content;
- connect, with the teacher's help, what is read to him/her with real experiences;

## **FIRST GRADE**

At the end of first grade, every child should:

- demonstrate phonemic awareness and knowledge of how print is organized;
- demonstrate fluent and accurate decoding skills with grade- level materials;
- read independently grade-level materials that contain the most common sight words and employ knowledge of most consonants, short vowels and the silent “e” rule;
- use conventional spelling for simple, regularly spelled words as well as temporary spelling for more complex words;
- identify all letter names and shapes;
- retell stories he/she has read with a beginning, middle and end;
- relate parts of stories to his/her own experience and tell about the parts liked best and why; and
- make predictions about what is read to him/her or what he/she has read.

## **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

- separating words into separate sounds;
- providing multiple opportunities first to read decodable text and eventually to read predictable text and easy trade books;
- participating in word play (small groups of students construct words by changing the beginning, middle or ending of more complex words;
- blending letters when learning common spelling and sound patterns;
- decoding big words by decoding smaller words or word parts within them;
- writing in stories or recording observations, using conventional spelling for simple, regularly spelled words as well as temporary spelling for more complex words;
- maintaining a reading log of leveled books read independently, showing reading of increasingly complex text;
- writing captions for pictures;
- making story boards or other graphic organizers with others that show the setting, characters and events in a story;
- engaging in shared, guided and independent reading and writing;
- using a language experience approach to reading activities; and
- having guided discussions focused on comprehension and thinking.

## **SECOND GRADE**

At the end of second grade, every child should:

- read grade-level material independently;
- demonstrate mastery of most phonics elements (e.g. consonants, vowels, blends, clusters, syllables, common phonics rules);
- use conventional spelling in his/her own writing for high-frequency words and words with regular spelling patterns;
- connect readings to experiences or knowledge; and
- ask test-like questions about what has been read, clarify common new terms in context, confirm predictions, summarize, interpret and analyze the content in simple terms.

## **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

- changing or deleting the beginning, middle and ending sounds of words in a pocket chart to make new words;
- decoding more complex words in a shared reading;
- writing an imaginative story or a letter, using conventional spelling;
- maintaining a reading log of books read independently, showing reading of increasingly complex texts;
- engaging in word studies and maintaining word logs for spelling and vocabulary development;
- participating in shared, guided and independent reading and writing;
- participating in a choral reading performance for parents or other students; and
- participating in discussions and writing that develop comprehension and thinking skills.

## **THIRD GRADE**

At the end of third grade, every child should:

- read independently grade-level fiction and nonfiction materials with literal and inferential comprehension;
- develop a knowledge of common spelling patterns, roots and affixes;
- use conventional spelling and conventions of prints (paragraphs, end - sentence punctuation);
- question, clarify new words; make predictions and answer “if-then” questions; summarize reading passages; and answer questions that require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of grade-level fiction and non-fiction material; and
- support answers to questions about the reading by drawing on background knowledge and upon literal and inferential information from the text.

## **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

- reading aloud to a partner with rhythm, pace and intonation that sounds like natural speech;
- maintaining a reading log of books read independently, showing reading of increasingly complex texts;
- writing a report based upon reading about a topic in several sources that includes appropriate facts and uses conventional spelling and conventions of print (paragraphs, end-sentence punctuation);
- engaging in word studies and maintaining word logs for spelling and vocabulary development;
- doing process writing for different purposes and audiences that develop higher-order thinking; and
- participating in guided and independent discussions that promote effective comprehension strategies and higher order thinking.

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# Appendix B

## Needs Assessment

# NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Once you have answered the basic questions under “Developing Your Program Plan”

1. Investigate
  - Challenges and problems facing youth you are going to serve
  - What are the existing services (provided by community, church and school)
  - Compare needs with services already being provided

**NOTE!**

*Your investigation should focus on input from community leaders, schools and other youth services agencies.*

2. Build your program around the unmet needs.
3. Determine which (if any) needs are best met through training.  
This type of assessment will give you the “big picture” of what is happening in your community and the role your church might play, and help you design a program that fills a real need and whose services will be in demand.

# Appendix C

## Honor/Banner Roll Rewards Program

# **Honor & Banner Roll Reward Program**

## **PURPOSE:**

This program was designed to reward students who are Honor Roll or Banner Roll Recipients during the 2007-2008 Academic School Year.

## **REWARD:**

Honor Roll Students - will receive \$20 per 6-week (or 9-week) period  
Banner Roll Students - will receive \$40 per 6-week (or 9-week) period

## **REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Students must be in grades 1 thru 12 and attending a private or public school located in Calcasieu Parish.
2. Student must submit an enrollment form.
3. Students must be an active member of the Children or Youth Ministry. Active is defined as:
  - a. Attendance at Youth & Children Sunday Church Service (third Sunday of each month). A sign-up sheet will be provided. Student or parents are responsible for ensuring you log your name so your attendance is counted.
  - b. Must attend church school at least 4 out of the 6 Wednesdays that fall into that 6-week period. (For students on 9-week period, you must attend 6 out of 9 Wednesdays). Excused absences are permitted for school activities or student's jobs. Excused Absence Form must be signed by the appropriate teacher, school official or employer and submitted to the Youth or Children's Ministry Director 1 week after date of absence.
4. Original Report Card & a copy of the report card must be presented to the Youth or Children's Ministry Director within 14 days of the end of the 6-(or 9-) week Academic Period. Original Report Card will be verified against the copy and Original will be returned to the student.
5. Awards will be distributed to the qualifying student on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday following the end of the 6-(or 9-) week academic period. Because students are allowed 2 weeks to submit their report card, the money may not be distributed until the month following the end of the 6 (or 9) week period.

*Parent Signature:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix D

**To Close Gaps, Schools Focus on Black Boys**

# To Close Gaps, Schools Focus on Black Boys

By [WINNIE HU](#)  
Published: April 9, 2007

OSSINING, N.Y. — In an effort to ensure racial diversity, the school system here in northern Westchester County is set up in an unusual way, its six school buildings divided not by neighborhood but by grade level. So all of the second and third graders in the Ossining Union Free School District attend the Brookside School.



Kindergarten and first grade boys tour the Museum of Natural History

But some minority students, the black boys at Brookside, are set apart, in a way, by a special mentoring program that pairs them with black teachers for one-on-one guidance outside class, extra homework help, and cultural activities during the school day. “All the black boys used to end up in the office, so we had to do something,” said Lorraine Richardson, a second-grade teacher and mentor. “We wanted to teach them to help each other” instead of fight each other.

While many school districts have long worked to close the achievement gap between minority and white students, Ossining’s programs aimed to get black male students to college are a new frontier.

Ossining school officials said they were not singling out black boys, but after a district analysis of high school students’ grade-point averages revealed that black boys were performing far worse than any other group, they decided to act. In contrast, these officials said, the performance of black girls compared favorably with other students and did not warrant the same concern.

The district calls it a “moral imperative,” and administrators and teachers say their top priority is improving the academic performance of black male students, who account for less than 10 percent of the district’s 4,200 students but disproportionately and consistently rank at the bottom in grades and test scores. The programs are voluntary, school officials said, and some students choose not to take part.

The special efforts for Ossining’s black male students began in 2005 with a college-preparatory program for high schoolers and, starting last month, now stretch all the way to kindergarten, with 5-year-olds going on field trips to the [American Museum of Natural History](#) and Knicks and Mets games to practice counting.

Ossining's unusual programs for black boys have drawn the attention of educators across the country as school districts in diversifying suburbs are coming under new pressure to address what many see as a seemingly intractable racial divide with no obvious solution.

The federal No Child Left Behind law's requirement that test scores be analyzed for each racial group has over the past decade spotlighted the achievement gap even in predominantly white suburban districts.

Some of the nation's leading minority scholars have praised Ossining's approach, but other educators, parents and civil rights groups contend that such separate programs do more harm than good. Last year, the New York Civil Rights Coalition filed a complaint with the United States Department of Education over such a program at the [City University of New York](#), and the group plans to file a complaint with the state against Ossining's program.

"I think this is a form of racial profiling in the public school system," said the coalition's executive director, Michael Meyers. "What they're doing here, under the guise of helping more boys, is they're singling them out and making them feel inferior or different simply because of their race and gender."

At a time of wider debate over the socioeconomic barriers facing black boys, the focus on boosting educational support has gained traction with policymakers. In Maryland, a state education task force asserted in December that "school, itself, is an at-risk environment for African-American male youth" and issued a 58-page report "to justify fixing it — whatever the cost."

In New York and other large cities, such concerns have spurred the creation of all-male schools aimed at drawing black students. Now, with debate over the achievement gap spreading beyond city borders, efforts like Ossining's — though few as comprehensive — are sprouting up in suburbs nationwide.

In Teaneck, N.J., school officials formed an after-school club for black boys in 2005, with local black businessmen serving as role models. In the Cleveland suburbs, the South Euclid-Lyndhurst district has spent more than \$20,000 a year on clubs that reward black male students for good grades with sleepovers and guest speakers.

And in the neighboring community of Shaker Heights, one of the nation's best-known honors programs for black male students, the Minority Achievement Committee Scholars, has since 2004 received calls from more than 40 school districts that want to copy its efforts.

Here in Ossining, where Sing Sing state prison looms as a reminder that more black men are behind bars than enrolled in college, Latoya Morris, who is black, said that most of her black male classmates dropped out of school before she graduated in 1999. Now the mother of a 5-year-old boy in kindergarten, Ms. Morris, a nurse, said the extra support for black boys makes sense because the statistics are stacked against them.

"I don't want my son to be in jail when he becomes a teenager," she said. "I want him to have the same chances as a white child."

The school officials here noted that it is too soon to measure the impact of their programs with test scores, but that the percentage of black students enrolled in college-level courses in 11th and 12th grades has more than doubled to 55 percent this year from 26 percent in 2004.

In the lower grades, teachers have also reported that disciplinary referrals for black boys have dropped — as much as 80 percent at Brookside — and that the boys are missing fewer homework assignments and paying more attention in class. (Efforts are under way now to begin similar programs for Hispanic boys, who have also not performed well.)

Since Lenox Robinson, a 12-year-old sixth grader, joined the district's mentoring program in October, he has begun saving pennies and quarters in a glass jar under his bed — he has \$10 so far — to pay for college. Lenox failed science last marking period mainly because, he said, he stopped trying after his friends made fun of him, adding, "I realize I shouldn't have done that."

Programs aimed specifically at black students, and the boys in particular, are a departure from past efforts that sought to erase the achievement gap by raising the performance of every student, but are gaining acceptance in some circles.

This summer, the law firm Sullivan and Cromwell and the investment bank Goldman Sachs are scheduled to convene their third conference of educators and professionals in the past year to brainstorm on "winning strategies for young black men."

While most schools are reluctant to focus on any particular group of students, opposition has lessened.

Some black scholars said that achievement-gap programs must be tailored to the needs of black male students if the programs are to succeed. Freeman A. Hrabowski III, president of the [University of Maryland, Baltimore County](#), said that many black boys grow up with few male role models and in high-crime neighborhoods, where being smart in school is not considered cool. “You can’t just ignore the needs of a group and say all children are the same,” he said.

But Kati Haycock, president of the Education Trust, a Washington-based group that advocates for disadvantaged children, worried that such efforts may unintentionally lump together high-achieving black students with low-achieving ones and, in effect, “declare a whole set of kids at risk.”

“You do have to worry whether you’re creating a stereotype that is as damaging as the one you’re trying to replace,” she said.

The Ossining district is one of the most racially and economically mixed in the affluent Westchester suburbs: about 16 percent of the students are black and 38 percent Hispanic, and nearly one-third qualify for free and reduced lunches.

A New York Times analysis of state education data showed that, among about 150 districts that tested students in the 2004-5 school year, the most recent available, Ossining’s achievement gap between black and white students was in the top fifth. For fourth graders, the gap widened on the English tests from four years earlier, while for eighth graders, the gap narrowed during the same period but was still twice as big as in all the other districts.

Since 2005, Ossining’s programs for black boys have cost more than \$50,000, most of it from donations, grants and a student telethon. School officials said they had not received any complaints about the district’s use of resources for this purpose.

None of more than two dozen parents who were interviewed directly criticized the focus on black boys, or said that the boys were receiving preferential treatment. But several said the programs should be made available to struggling students regardless of race.

Under the programs, the extra attention begins in elementary school; every black boy in fourth and fifth grades, for example, is assigned a team of teachers to track his academic progress.

The boys also meet black role models, while their parents attend workshops on planning for college. Motivation is emphasized throughout. As part of a recent dress for success contest, high school boys wore suits to school for a month. The two winners received hand-tailored suits.

Last month, Brookside started a music class in which, with teacher approval, black boys are allowed to miss one period a week to learn to play conga drums and sing West African welcome songs. After one recent drum fest, 9-year-old Arthur Stokeley, a third grader, sat down with his mentor, Ms. Richardson, to review his class work.

“So how was school today?” Ms. Richardson said.

“It was great,” Arthur said.

*Griff Palmer contributed reporting.*