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Acting Superintendent of Schools

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Bridgeport, Connecticut

June 2, 2020

## Board Members:

A meeting of the Ad-Hoc Great City Schools Males of Color Committee of the Board of Education will be held on Thursday, June 4, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. via Video Conference Call. A link to view the meeting will be made available to the public through <https://www.bridgeportedu.net/stream>.

## Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes – February 26, 2020
2. Update on White Paper
3. Presentation on Mass Mentoring
4. Presentation on National Equity Project
5. Discussion on Covid Iniquities on MOC
6. Adjourn

Bobbi Brown  
Secretary  
Board of Education

## BBOE Ad-Hoc Great City Schools Males of Color Committee Members:

Joseph Sokolovic (Chair)

Dr. Melissa Jenkins (Staff)

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AD HOC COMMITTEE OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS/MALES OF COLOR OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held February 26, 2020, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:42 p.m. Present were members Chair Joseph Sokolovic, Dr. Melissa Jenkins, JoAnn Kennedy, Sauda Baraka, and John Ramos Jr.

Ms. Kennedy moved approval of the committee's minutes of January 29, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved. A correction was noted.

The next agenda item was on a possible collaboration with the New Haven Family Alliance. Anthony Stanley, a lead mentor, was present, along with Shirley Ellis West.

Ms. West, executive director of the New Haven Family Alliance, said the group is a nonprofit that has been operating for about 29 years, providing supportive case management services to children and fathers in the community. She said the foundation was merging with another nonprofit that hires veterans to mentor challenged young people statewide, and will soon be known as Urban Community Alliance.

Ms. West said the foundation has been looking to build capacity in Bridgeport and Hartford. She said a grant proposal will be submitted to the Fairfield Community Foundation. She said they would like to partner with a school

district to offer an afterschool activity focused on social-emotional learning.

Ms. West said social-emotional learning is one of the critical contributing elements to the success of high-performing schools. She noted the mentors who are veterans in her program are paid, while the district's programs use volunteers and focuses just on males.

In response to a question, Ms West said no funding is being requested from the district. She said she hires male and female veterans who go through two interviews and a DCF background check.

Ms. West said the proposal is to hold the afterschool sessions twice a week for at least two hours. She said two veterans, one male and one female, participate in each day's session. She said the size of the groups should not exceed twenty students.

Ms. West described the training, which takes about nine weeks, that is given to the veteran mentors. It includes engagement, assessments, restorative practice, and life skills.

Mr. Stanley, a Navy veteran, said the mentors are able to discuss a lot of things other people don't want to based on their experience from the military. Ms. West said the mentors are available to the students on a 24/7 basis. She said even though there is offsite mentoring in her program certain approvals are needed for things such as an overnight stay.

In response to a question, Ms. West said the program mostly works with children from 15 to 19.

Ms. Baraka said Mr. Ramos has been involved in mentoring boys at Harding for five years. Mr. Stanley said the majority of the mentoring he does is one-on-one.

In response to a question, Ms. West said the organization was a 501(c) and was insured. Dr. Jenkins noted the current mentoring in the district involved certified staff.

Ms. West said her program could work with Mr. Ramos's mentoring program as a partner where students could be referred to higher level mentoring.

Dr. Jenkins said most of the district's mentoring program is aimed at children who have not been successful in Tier I mainstream rather than those who have had involvement with the juvenile court system. She said the district did not have the intensive mentoring individual program being described.

Carrie Ramanuskas, social-emotional coordinator for the district, said there is an active partnership with the Juvenile Review board(JRB) in Bridgeport. Ms. West said she was very familiar with the urban JRBs. Ms. Ramanuskas said RYASAP was in the lead agency for students with JRB involvement in Bridgeport.

Ms West said she would provide her organization's letter of intent to the committee to see where the proposal would fit with what the district is currently doing. Ms. Ramanuskas said she would like to see the social-emotional curriculum of the proposal because she would be consulted on how it meshes with current district practices. Ms. Baraka said the experiences and skills of the veterans would be valuable to the students who are mentored. Mr. Stanley described his background and what he brings to the table in mentoring.

Ms. Kennedy noted there had been 50 expulsions in the district. Ms. West said her organization had helped improved the expulsion situation in New Haven. She said chronic truancy is another big issue,

Mr. Sokolovic said there would likely have to be another presentation to the full board.

Mr. Sokolovic moved “to move this action forward to Mr. Testani and the full board.” The motion was seconded by Ms. Baraka and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible creation of professional development focused on unconscious bias.

Ms. Ramanuskas said unconscious bias isn’t identified specifically under her work, but is covered under building cultural competence, which she described as learning about the whole person.

Ms. Ramanuskas said the packet she distributed contains the current active training, including restorative practices. She said restorative practices are about building relationships, shifting from a punitive mindset to relationships. She said there is training for adults, high school students, and middle school students. She described some aspects of training, including the use of words.

Ms. Ramanuskas said school climate training is also offered to middle school and high school students. She said all the high schools have a minimum of five student ambassadors. She noted Central and Harding had greatly expanded the numbers of their student ambassadors.

Ms. Ramanuskas said there is training for adults, which includes resilience trauma-informed practice training created with Dr. Freiberg of the state Department of Education. She said all the district's social workers and school counselors have been through this training. She described a film about resilience that is used.

Ms. Ramanuskas said RULER is very effective in the district. She said the student ambassadors receive a full day of RULER training. She described how emotions can impact the grading done by teachers.

Ms. Ramanuskas she brought a book named *Blindspot* which discusses hidden biases of good people. She described recently learning that we perpetuate a culture of violence in everyday language.

Ms. Ramanuskas said there is an annual SEL event called The Human Library. Last year about 60-plus middle school students and 36 high school students attended. She said this year there will be 140 middle-school students and over a hundred high school students, which will take place over two full days. She described how the students learned from the experiences and struggles of district staff members.

In response to a question, Ms. Ramanuskas said she is hoping to build professional development around the *Blindspot* book. She said members of this committee could be part of the development of the training. She said the hardest part of giving training is obtaining the expenditure of funds for substitutes for classroom teachers. She said a two-day training costs \$240 per staff member. She said other trainings have been paid for by philanthropy.

Dr. Jenkins said if grant money was not available cohorts of staff members could be offered the training over time such as with RULER. Ms. Ramanuskas said cultural competence training was done in that fashion. She described the involved process required for getting staff members trained in restorative practices.

Ms. Ramanuskas said the lead agency for the social-emotional learning initiative is the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition, under RYASAP, which includes partnership with the Yale Center For Emotional Intelligence and school-based health clinics.

There was a discussion of the steps that would be needed to develop unconscious bias training. Ms. Ramanuskas said every SEL training that has been developed has been approved by the superintendent or his predecessor.

There was a discussion of the title of the training. Ms. Ramanuskas said it would probably not be called unconscious bias.

Ms. Baraka suggested a couple of schools be selected to roll some things out at. She said some schools have serious issues around this subject. She said she believed the national climate we are in has spilled over to Fairchild Wheeler and some elementary schools.

Ms. Ramanuskas said the issues happen in every community. Mr. Sokolovic said perhaps Bridgeport could be a trailblazer.

Ms. Ramanuskas said new teachers in the district go through two full days of restorative practice training and a

half day of RULER training. She said a new component could be part of this training.

Mr. Sokolovic said the demographic data provided on specific schools included the total population, including males and females.

The next agenda item was on the white paper. Dr. Jenkins said she will box out some days to bring it to a conclusion. She said she has not had an opportunity to work on it. She said she will be receiving academic data from data management to add to the paper.

There was a discussion of how the suspension data should be presented in the white paper. Mr. Sokolovic suggested presenting the percentage of black males represented in the data.

There was a discussion of whether the budget had to be presented to the full board. Mr. Sokolovic said there are many budget items that do not receive board approval. Dr. Jenkins noted Mr. Testani modified but approved Ms. Noel's budget that she sent directly to him. She said Harding and Central's budgets have not gone to the superintendent yet.

Ms. Baraka moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod



BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**COUNCIL OF GREAT CITY  
SCHOOL AD-HOC MALES OF  
COLOR COMMITTEE**

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**Committee Members**

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## Introduction to the White Paper

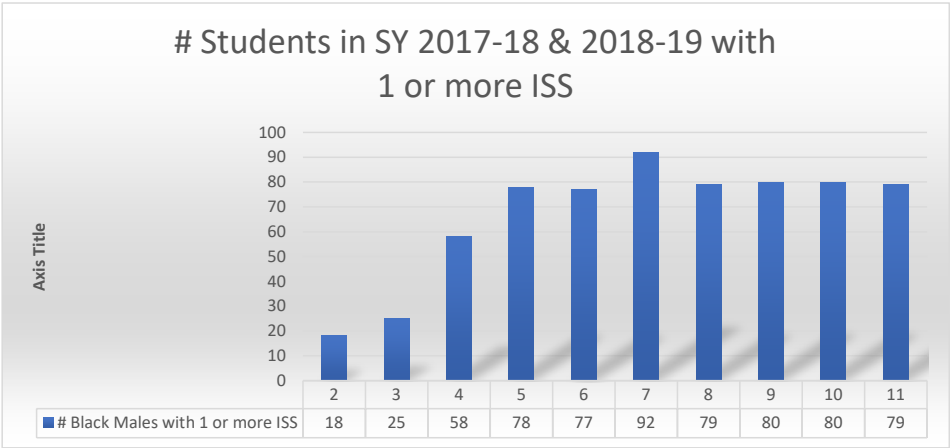
In 2015 Bridgeport Board of Education adopted the Great City Schools Male of Color position statement (Appendix A) to address the needs of males of color within the district and to understand the effects of systemic racism and institutional inequity on the education of males of color.

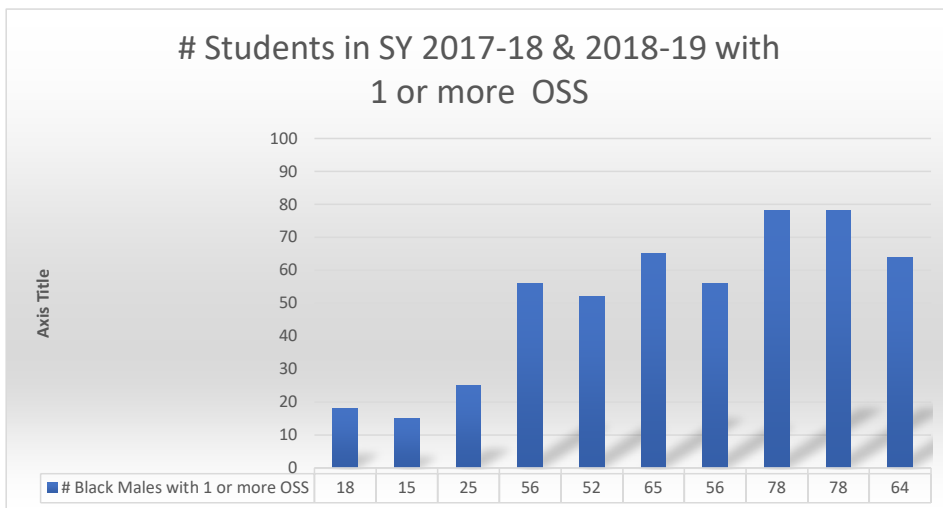
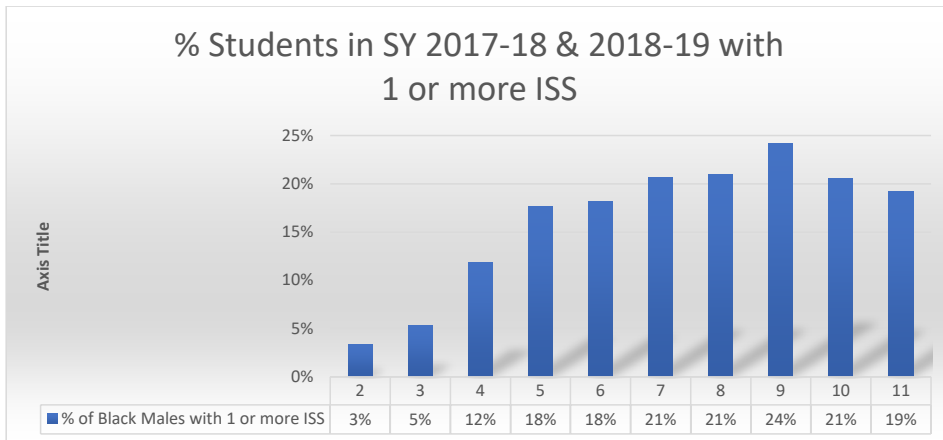
The Board of Education Ad-Hoc Committee Males of Color was formed in 2016 to assess, research, understand, and propose solutions to the exodus of young males of who were voting with their feet, choosing to drop out and/or choosing to disengage with the current socio-political context of schooling. This paper will summarize the thoughts of community members, the personal experiences of committee members, and the literature of racial oppression and educational inequity in an effort to argue for overt structural supports for males of color and to argue for the systemic practice of equity audits for all children. Kendi (2019) states that racism “is not equivalent of a slur. It is descriptive, and the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it – and then dismantle it.” To identify and describe the racism, challenges, and plight of the men of color is to advance justice and equity for all children because it is in the identification and description of the injustice that creates action. If all children lives matter, then we take up the mantle for all children when we assure that the male of color life matters.

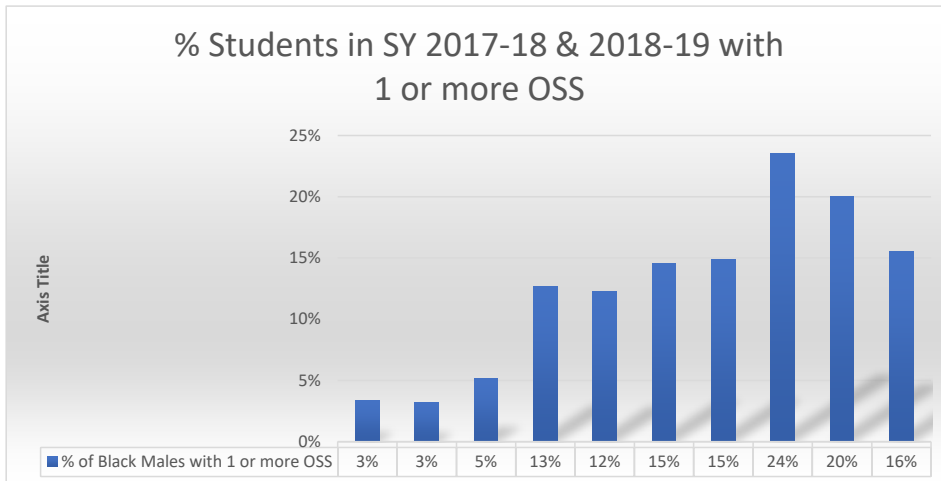
Thus, this white paper does not seek to compare males of color achievement to anything other than the standard of excellence that has been created for all children. The committee does not strive to present a response based on comparison. The committee strives to identify, describe, and recommend a systemic response to what, why, and how males of color navigate the school system as a whole based on the “wedge between the current performance of males of color and the levels of excellence” that is needed for males of color to thrive academically, socially, emotionally, and civically. More attention needs to be given to how to maximize males of color opportunities to learn and to achieve based on the standard of excellence within and beyond the school system (Hilliard, 2003, p. 138).

The ultimate goal of the white paper is (1) to argue for a formalize mentoring program to provide young men of color with strategies, interventions and experiences that will inspire them to make positive choices that ensure positive outcomes during their elementary, middle, and high school careers and beyond and (2) to argue for an equity audit of the school system to restructure how males of color experience school.

Systemic Challenges for Males of Color







### **Societal and Educational Setting for Males of Color**

#### ***White supremacy and the impact on educational system***

White supremacy or white supremacism is the racist belief that white people are superior to people of other races and therefore should be dominant over them.

In academic usage, particularly in usage, which draws on critical race theory or intersectionality, the term “white supremacy” can also refer to a political or socioeconomic system, in which white people enjoy a structural advantage (privilege) over other ethnic groups, on both a collective and individual level.

My experience with so called white supremacy is when my children started to attend Bridgeport Public Schools. Whenever I had a problem or serious question about what was happening with the students at their school particularly at Bassick I would always end up in front of a white male. I found that problematic, so I began to take notice of how people of color were treated in this district.

The fact that we as black people especially and people of color respectively are not adequately represented in the Bridgeport Public Schools. How can the children in this school district be expected to succeed, if it is not set up for them to succeed and they are not properly represented in decision making positions? Our MOC do not see

enough of people they can relate to as teachers, principals, board members etc. and that must change.

### ***Marginalization and Oppression of Black Boys***

This is what happens when we are not properly represented in our district. Right now, we are up to 34 expulsion hearings for this 2019/2020 school year. Dr. Umar Johnson, doctor of clinical psychology and certified school psychologist states: (1) mis-education, (2) special education, (3) psychiatric medication, (4) juvenile incarceration, (5) psychological frustration, (6) premature extermination. These are all results of the white power structure.

### ***Institutional Racism***

Institutional racism was a term first coined by Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) in the late 1960's to distinguish between personal bias and institutional bias.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-institutional-racism-721594>

Institutional biases differ from personal biases insofar as institutional biases have a much greater impact on society than individualized racism. Nowhere does the disparate impact on minorities have a more pronounced lifelong impact, than those suffered by children in our educational institutions. Institutional racism in education is most often carried out unknowingly through unconscious bias. It is only by recognizing and changing the implicit biases in those that run our educational institutions that positive change can take place. The first step is recognizing that there is a problem.

Often times encounters with institutional racism are stumbled upon by happenstance. A case in point according to a study published by the Pew Research Center

<https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/01/09/diversity-in-the-stem-workforce-varies-widely-across-jobs/>



[Diversity in the STEM workforce varies widely across jobs | Pew Research Center](https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/01/09/diversity-in-the-stem-workforce-varies-widely-across-jobs/)

Women and Men in STEM Often at Odds Over Workplace Equity 1. Diversity in the



	<p>STEM workforce varies widely across jobs. By Cary Funk and Kim Parker. As the U.S. has transformed rapidly to an information-based economy, employment in science, technology, engineering and math occupations has grown – outpacing overall job growth.</p> <p><a href="http://www.pewsocialtrends.org">www.pewsocialtrends.org</a></p>
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Blacks and Hispanics are to this day woefully underrepresented in the STEM fields. While the total US workforce is comprised of 11% Blacks and 16% Hispanics, representations of these groups in the STEM fields are 9% and 7% respectively. This disparity could be traced back to education and the disparate promotion of STEM to people of color early in their education. In some cases the opposite is true. In Bridgeport Public Schools, for example, there is but a single 500 plus seat, K-8 magnet school exclusively for the children of Bridgeport (a predominately black and brown city) that is dedicated to science focus. In 2015 there was an attempt to shift the focus from science to that of civic engagement. Had this change been allowed to happen there would have been countless students entering a magnet school of civics, rather than a school of science. One must ask, would the surrounds more affluent school districts attempt such a shift in educational focus? One would think not. It is only in poor, locally underfunded black and brown districts where things like this are likely to occur

### ***Equity***

Attending Bridgeport Public Schools grades K-12, I actually did not always attend my neighborhood school. For grades K-4, I attended McKinley School on the East End of Bridgeport. William Tinkler, an African American male, was principal. I remember Mr. Tinkler mostly for the mantra, “I am somebody. I walk talk. I talk tall. I treat others as they would like to be treated because I am somebody.” I also remember taking ballet and gymnasium at McKinley. I remember that Mr. Tinkler was one of a few black educators in the school, but he was the leader. I remember what my father called “white

flight” as I look at my class pictures, which consisted on black and white children until my third-grade year in 1978 were only one white classmate was left in the class picture and her name was Tina. Tina lived across the street from the school. Tanya and Kelly, two white children who lived on my street did not go to public school. They went to Catholic School. I loved McKinley School and did not there was a difference in regard to school until my family moved to the East Side on Ogden Street Extension.

On the East Side, I actually remember that there were a few more white children on the street but they did not go to public school either. They went to Catholic School – St. Ambrose, which was closer than the school I had to walk to everyday. My new school was Hall School, a small neighborhood school that did not feel like a neighborhood school because it was almost a mile away. Nevertheless, I entered in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and immediately noticed that there were more white children in my classroom. The school was actually diverse, but the divide was obvious. At this time in my life, race was more obvious. I actually think race was obvious most of my childhood because my parent described race at home often. I knew the word “white flight” as a child as early as age 7. Both my parents were raised in the Jim Crow of South Carolina and had come to Bridgeport for a better life. They both worked in the major factories in and around Bridgeport – Sikorsky Aircraft and Jenkins’s Brothers. My parents spoke often about having good health benefits and good schools. I never felt that I did not attend a good school until it was time for middle school. My mother said I could not go to the local school, which as the time was either East Side Middle School or Paul Lawrence Dunbar. My mother heard of fighting while children were walking home, and she did not want me to get hurt. Whether this is true or not, this was my mom’s perception, so she did what many families over 39 years later continue to do. My mom requested a control transfer. She applied for a control transfer to John Winthrop School and Thomas Hooker School. When the transfer was denied, my mom made me write the appeal letter to Assistant Superintendent Al Norwood. I did not want to write the appeal. I wanted to go to middle school with my friends. But no, I needed to be safe, and I needed to get a good education. The perception was that the East Side Middle School and Paul Lawrence Dunbar would not provide a good education, and education was the key to my future, both my parent retorted over and over. I did not understand quite yet the access and

opportunity mantra my parents were purporting. My friends seemed educated. My friends were learning. Yet deep in my parents was a description of racism that schools that contained too many black children were not as good as schools with white children. Equity, access and opportunity to attend “good schools” were marked by going to school with white children. The story of Brown versus the Board of Education was their heartbeat. So I was transferred to Thomas Hooker School. At Thomas Hooker, I attended school with white children. I was not the only black student at the school, but I was with white students, so my school was deemed better in the minds of my parents. Why did I have to get on a bus early in the morning and travel over 2 miles to a different school for what was perceived as a greater equitable opportunity? For some reason, my parents thought that the personal and social circumstances of schooling limited full access and opportunity to reading, writing and arithmetic. And 39 years later, thousands of parents still seek a control transfer as an equitable solution.

### ***Sheff versus O'Neill***

The Sheff vs. O'Neill case in 1989 came about as its purpose was to reduce ‘racial isolation in public schools’ in Connecticut. The case took the issue of school segregation from the Federal to the State level. Sheff aimed to find a solution to the racial disparities that were seen in Hartford Public schools (Clarke & Holmes, 2005), disparities cited, included but were not limited to low test scores, decrepit buildings, old textbooks among other things (de la Torre, 2017). As a result of the prevailing conditions 11 Hartford families along with Elizabeth Horton Sheff sued the state of Connecticut in April 1989. The families alleged that conditions in the Hartford public school system were producing racial isolation and students were being denied access to a quality education as a result (Megan & Kauffman, 2017). The Connecticut Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in July 1996. The ruling stated that the system of education in Hartford was unconstitutional, and as a result, a plan was implemented to address the findings and redress the racial imbalance and other inequities found. The plan included: (1) “a 5-year takeover of Hartford Public Schools, (2) a stronger commitment to early childhood education, (3) the restructuring of the voluntary integration school programs (i.e. magnet schools).” (Kennedy, 2017). As stated previously, prior to the Sheff case, Hartford schools were underperforming, and the system was struggling. Hartford schools in the

late 80's and early 90's reportedly housed some of the worst schools in the state. The families in the case determined that integration of Hartford schools which consisted of mainly Black and Hispanic students, was "the best way to solve this issue" (Taylor, 2017). Integration it was believed would intentionally cause Black and Hispanic students to interact with White students. For this to occur however "Hartford schools would have to improve, to attract suburban and white students."

### ***Magnet Schools***

As a person who is a product of both a magnet middle and high school I had a very limited perspective on what it meant to be in one. As a student, I was taught to believe magnet schools were an oasis, an inclusive learning environment where the city's most capable students congregated around master teachers. After becoming an educator in Bridgeport I began to realize that the opportunities offered at High Horizons Magnet School and Central High School's magnet program were not inordinately different from the one offered at public schools. One difference came in the form of authority and internalized privilege. Students in magnet programs were constantly reminded that it was a privilege to attend a magnet school, and that privilege could be stripped away. The influential difference between a regular school program and a magnet program centers around parent involvement. Parents were active in magnet programs because there are a smaller amount of students that attend the school than a public school. Personally, I feel magnet programs, like any program, are as beneficial as the relationships made within the building.

### ***Voices from the Community***

To capture the voices of members of the community, the Board of Education hosted two forums. One forum was held in May 2018 and the other forum was held June 2019. Both forums used a focus group model for data collection. Data were analyzed using research questions as a guide.

### ***What do you think will enhance our males of color educational success?***

- Mentoring
- After-school activities
- More male teachers of color
- Parent training program, Closing the gap between school and home
- System racism

- Parent involvement
- Understand who is being taught rather than what you are teaching
  - Show love
  - Understand males of color culture
  - Educator emotional regulation
  - Understand the child's stress; know where they come from; know their stories
  - Support system
- Instruction
  - Innovation
  - Creative and innovative thinking
  - Text/literacy materials do not reflect males of color or young male experience
  - Expectation of monolithic black cultural expression
  - Pedagogy
  - Culturally responsive pedagogy
  - Challenge that engages
  - Make learning fun

***What do you think are the most pressing issues facing our young males of color in the educational system?***

- Early Start Care
- High Stakes Testing
- High Administrator and Teacher Turnover
- Suspensions
- Over identification in special education
- Adverse childhood experiences
- Reflection of males of color in content; pedagogy of self
- Exposure to males of color; models of success; places
- Support systems
  - Authority figures to talk “with” and not “at”

***What is the community's responsibility to impact change for our males of color?***

- Parent outreach
- Greater, more consistent influence (e.g., Be more involved with the youth)
- Community policing
- Community partnership
- Sharing human capital
  - Come into school
  - Commit time
  - Creating a brain trust
    - Critical thinking
    - Young people with energy
    - Provide resources and opportunities
- Community schools

- Open schools on Saturdays
- Interest based

### **Call-to-Action – Leading with Intentionality and Heart**

The Ad-Hoc Committee Males of Color recommends to the Board of Education that a formalized and systemic mentoring program be established and maintained for males of color. Additionally, the committee recommends the use of equity audits to address the needs of males of color as outlined in the feedback from the community forums.

#### ***Mentoring***

Countless studies have shown that when young men of color are provided with culturally relevant and rich curricula along with positive male role models of color they are more likely to succeed, within and beyond educational settings. In a 2009 study, *Mentoring urban Black Middle-School Male Students: Implications for Academic Achievement* Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, and Boyd, looked at the role a male-role modeling mentoring initiative played in the academic achievement of African American young men. They determined that exposure to and interactions with successful minority men had the potential to show African American young men that their alternative avenues to success that were outside having to play ball and or rap.

Other studies seek to highlight a moving away from a deficit paradigm mindset approach to young men of color, choosing instead to create a strengths-based model, that seeks to identify and build upon the strengths of young men of color as a way to reinforce positively their existence and that they are seen beyond their build, stature, their dress style and stereotype. Harper (2015), created a visual study of 325 college-bound juniors and seniors who attended 40 public New York City high schools. In his article Harper sought to create an opposing narrative to challenge and upturn the “one-sided mischaracterizations of young men of color and the urban schools that educate them.” He used visual sociology along with critical race methodologies to deconstruct deficit narratives and construct in their place “anti-deficit counter narratives about boys of color and urban education”, (Harper, 2015). A formal mentoring program has the power to equip males of color with the assets needed to navigate the socio-political context of schooling and settings outside of a formal education.

**Commented [1]:** I started an introduction not sure the actual length we want, and some of the information may belong in the Background section however its a launch so to speak.

**Commented [2]:** As comment above

The National Mentoring Partnership published a “Guide to Mentoring Boys and Young Men of Color Sponsored by My Brother’s Keeper Alliance and MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.” An overview of the guide consists of the following:

- “WHY EMPHASIZE MENTORING FOR BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR?”
  - When President Obama launched the My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) Initiative in February 2014, he described some of the ways BYMOC are disproportionately represented in their exposure to several risk factors and challenges: Data shows that boys and young men of color, regardless of socio-economic background, are disproportionately at risk throughout the journey from their youngest years to college and career. For instance, large disparities remain in reading proficiency, with 86 percent of Black boys and 82 percent of Hispanic boys reading below proficiency levels by the fourth grade – compared to 58 percent of White boys reading below proficiency levels. Additionally, the disproportionate number of Black and Hispanic young men who are unemployed or involved in the criminal justice system alone is a perilous drag on state budgets, and undermines family and community stability. These young men are more than six times as likely to be victims of murder than their White peers and account for almost half of the country’s murder victims each year (“Fact Sheet”, 2014).”
- THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH TO MENTORING
  - It is important that mentoring for BYMOC is approached from a strengths-based perspective. While the challenges facing BYMOC have been well documented, much less attention has been given to the strengths of these individuals and their communities. A strengths-based approach to mentoring can positively impact a significant proportion of BYMOC whose life contexts and societal perceptions and experiences may be quite different than other youth. Through strong relationships with mentors, the impact of the challenges BYMOC face can be mitigated and their

strengths and the strengths of their communities, families, and cultures can be drawn on to bolster their potential for success.

- **CRITICAL MENTORING**

- To support BYMOC, it is recommended that programs consider using an approach to mentoring that has been termed “critical mentoring” (Weiston-Serdan, 2015). Critical mentoring is focused on the development of a critical consciousness in mentors and mentees. Critical consciousness is the ability to perceive and understand social, political, and economic oppression; to be able to deal with such issues; and to be ready to take action against oppressive elements of society. Beginning with an understanding of youth context, critical mentoring allows the mentoring relationship to focus on providing mentees with opportunities to reflect, discuss, as well as challenge systems of inequity. This catapults the Photo courtesy of My Brother's Keeper Alliance 6 mentoring process into a realm of transformation and liberation. Critical mentoring yields more extensive conversations about race, gender, class, sexuality, ableism, etc. and offers ways for both mentor and mentee to address how these issues permeate our society and adversely affect BYMOC (Weiston-Serdan, 2015).

- **CONCLUSION**

- In spite of the progress our country has made in advancing the well-being of all populations, American society has in many ways re-segregated itself over the past four decades, creating a deficit in social and economic supports for BYMOC (Putnam, 2015). The negative impacts of re-segregation are felt in numerous realms, including education, the workplace, and public health. Research has shown that residential segregation disproportionately harms Black teenagers and young adults; they suffer significantly higher rates of disconnection than White youths (Lewis & Burd-Sharps, 2015). As a result, the resource of social capital – social support including the community, the family, and other social organizations – has been diminished. Photo courtesy of the Mentoring



Partnership of North Carolina 7 Mentoring can help address these deficits and strengthen the existing assets of youth of color and their communities. More than ever, mentors are in a position to make a significant difference in transforming the dialogue in America and in helping to produce a generation of youth who thrive. Mentors can provide youth with positive experiences in social relationships, which can lead to improvement in other important relationships in their lives (Keller, 2005).

### ***Equity Audit***

An equity audit would address the following recommendations:

- Implicit bias training and race neutral policies
- Teacher and students involved in the audit
- Review of systems and structures
  - Professional development - examines the biases and ideologies; social and structural inequities
  - Hiring practices - adhere to established procedures and policies or examines current procedures and policies
  - Race conscious policy making
  - Curriculum relevant to males of color; African-Studies; Diaspora history

And multiple structures would be used to facilitate the audit and to promote ongoing inclusivity and sharing of the power base:

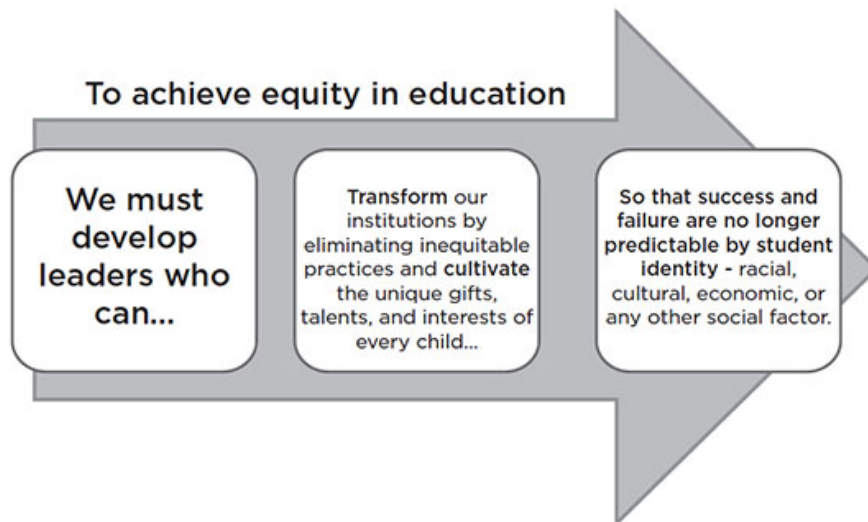
- Teacher summit
- Mentoring
- New teacher orientation
- Book studies
- One forum annually
- Annual BOE retreat
- Parent/community summit

Educational equity as defined by the National Equity Project “means that each child receives what they need to develop their full academic and social potential.”

<https://nationalequityproject.org/resources/featured-resources/educational-equity-a-definition>

The National Equity Project states that “working toward equity in schools involves:

- Ensuring equally high outcomes for all participants in our educational system; removing the predictability of success or failures that currently correlates with any social or cultural factor;
- Interrupting inequitable practices, examining biases, and creating inclusive multicultural school environments for adults and children; and
- Discovering and cultivating the unique gifts, talents and interests that every human possesses.



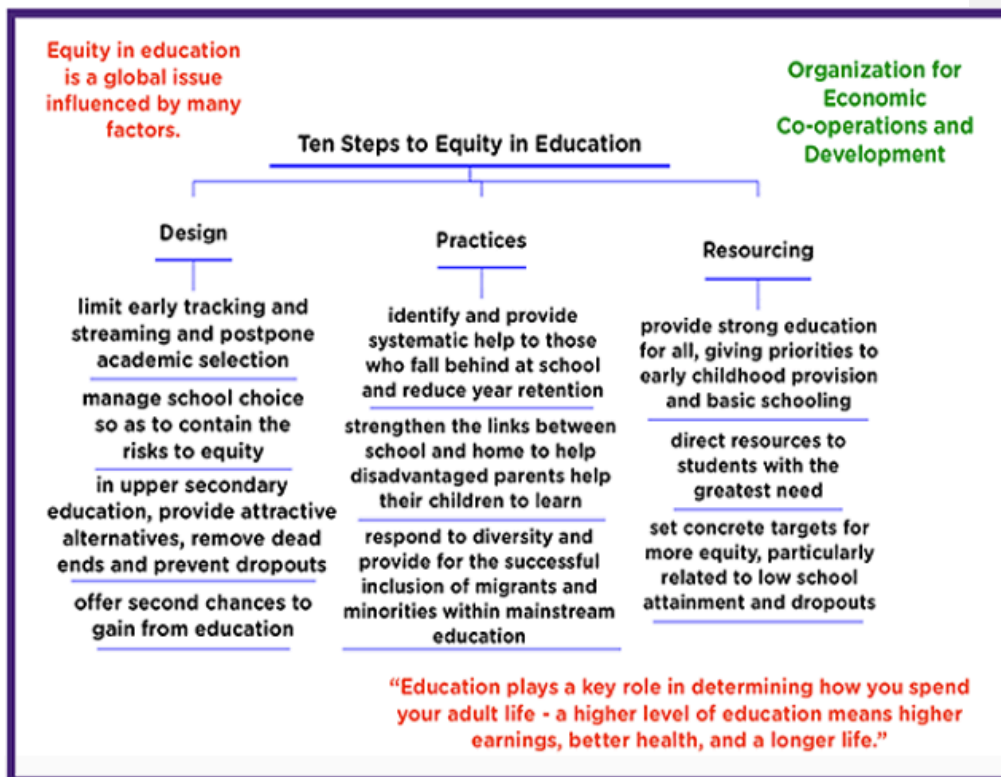
The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) defines two dimensions of equity in education:

- Fairness, which means ensuring that personal and social circumstances do not prevent students from achieving their academic potential.
- Inclusion, which means setting a basic minimum standard for education that is shared by all students regardless of background, personal characteristics, or location.

Achieving these standards requires looking at equity from several different aspects.


- Monetary resources: Is school funding equitable? Do schools serving populations with greater needs have access to the resources they need to effectively serve these students?
- Academic standards: Are all students held to high performance standards? How are standards modified to accommodate students with special needs?
- Academic content and support: Do all students have access to high-quality content that fits their educational needs? What supports are provided for students who need extra help to achieve academic goals? Do all students have highly qualified teachers who are well prepared to meet their needs?







OECD has outlined ten critical steps to equity in education that encompass educational design, practices, and resourcing.







Mass Mentoring Partnership <http://www.massmentors.org/>








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# **Guide to Mentoring Boys and Young Men of Color**

**Sponsored by My Brother's Keeper Alliance and  
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership**



**MY BROTHER'S KEEPER**  
ALLIANCE



**MENTOR**  
THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP



Born out of an understanding about the issues facing both boys and men of color and their surrounding ecosystem, My Brother's Keeper Alliance's (MBKA) vision is to make the American Dream available to all boys and young men of color by eliminating gaps in their opportunities and outcomes.



MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) is the unifying champion for expanding quality youth mentoring relationships in the United States. For more than 25 years, MENTOR has served the mentoring field by providing a public voice; developing and delivering resources to mentoring programs nationwide; and promoting quality for mentoring through evidence-based standards, innovative research, and essential tools. MENTOR has developed and supports a national network of affiliate *Mentoring Partnerships* that provide regional, state, and local leadership and infrastructure necessary to support the expansion of quality mentoring relationships. Together, we engage with the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to ensure that all youth have the support they need through mentoring relationships to succeed at home, school, and, ultimately, work.

MENTOR would like to recognize our partners in this work: the My Brother's Keeper Alliance in particular Seth Henderson, Marisa Renee Lee, and Alex Meadow for their unwavering support. We thank our internal contributors Jennifer Bourgoïn, Mike Garringer, Delia Gorman, Liz Hardy, John McCormick, Brian Sales, and Elizabeth Santiago, as well as researchers and colleagues Dr. Noelle Hurd, Dr. Bernadette Sánchez, Steve Vassor, and Dr. Torie Weiston for their advice and wisdom.



# Guide to Mentoring Boys and Young Men of Color

Sponsored by My Brother's Keeper Alliance and MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership

## OVERVIEW

For more than 25 years, MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) has provided the youth mentoring field with a set of researched-informed and practitioner-approved practices for creating and sustaining positive and impactful mentoring relationships and strong program services. The fourth edition of *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* (*Elements*) represents the current evidence-based standards for running a safe and effective youth mentoring program. This *Guide to Mentoring Boys and Young Men of Color* (*Guide*) serves as a supplement to the *Elements* and includes additional recommended practices focusing on boys and young men of color (BYMOC). The creation of the *Guide* is motivated by a recognition of MENTOR, My Brother's Keeper Alliance (MBKA), practitioners in the field, and researchers specializing in mentorship of youth of color that BYMOC are better served with a targeted set of practices, which represent enhancements of those in the original *Elements*. We call these "recommended practices" in the *Guide*.

These additional recommended practices are emergent, based on recent research and recommendations from researchers and practitioners in the field. Please see the *Methodology* section for more detailed information on the sources informing this guide.

## AUDIENCE

While the core audience for this guide is the cohort of MBKA-affiliated mentoring programs and the work they are doing with BYMOC around the country, other programs and mentors can also benefit from the *Guide*. Individual mentors

will find the section Standard 3: Training especially useful in their work, particularly the part detailing key concepts for working with BYMOC. The practices and resources discussed in this guide will be useful to any mentoring program serving BYMOC and will help them ensure that their services are culturally relevant and effective in changing lives and communities.

## ORGANIZATION

The *Guide* is divided into two parts. Part one offers an overview of an approach to mentoring BYMOC, including a description of a strengths-based and liberatory approach to mentoring called "critical mentoring". This section discusses how this approach can support BYMOC, and concludes with a rationale for this new, emerging set of recommended practices.

Part two includes sections dedicated to each of the six Standards of practice in the fourth edition of the *Elements*. Each of the six sections begins with a description of the original Standard and the rationale for its importance, followed by a list of the additional recommended practices, and a discussion section that explains their theoretical basis and potential application in programs. Please note that recommended practices are identified with the abbreviation "RP" and are followed by the number of the Standard they refer to, as well as the number of the recommended practice itself. Part two also includes references to supporting research and recommended tools, along with *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* checklist.



# Part One: Overview

## WHY EMPHASIZE MENTORING FOR BYMOC?

When President Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Initiative in February 2014, he described some of the ways BYMOC are disproportionately represented in their exposure to several risk factors and challenges:

Data shows that boys and young men of color, regardless of socio-economic background, are disproportionately at risk throughout the journey from their youngest years to college and career. For instance, large disparities remain in reading proficiency, with 86 percent of Black boys and 82 percent of Hispanic boys reading below proficiency levels by the fourth grade – compared to 58 percent of White boys reading below proficiency levels. Additionally, the disproportionate number of Black and Hispanic young men who are unemployed or involved in the criminal justice system alone is a perilous drag on state budgets, and undermines family and community stability. These young men are more than six times as likely to be victims of murder than their White peers and account for almost half of the country's murder victims each year ("Fact Sheet", 2014).

As members of this society and as representatives of mission-driven organizations serving youth, mentoring practitioners cannot ignore the ways in which youth of color, in particular BYMOC, are at a disadvantage because of systemic inequities and racial biases. Systemic disadvantages show up early for BYMOC especially when there are zero tolerance policies in schools and hypervigilant and unbending policing practices that impact BYMOC unequally. These issues can interrupt or completely stall opportunity for our young people. It is important to note that girls and young women of color also face disadvantages that need to be addressed. For the purposes of this guide, we focus on the disparities faced by BYMOC to start because those disparities disproportionately impact

outcomes for BYMOC when compared with other groups. For example, BYMOC are showing negative or stagnant trends relative to others in high school graduation, in college enrollment and completion, and in employment and earnings (Putnam, 2015; Western & Pettit, 2010, as cited by Forward Change Consulting, 2015).

We know that relationships matter. America's Promise's Alliance (2015) recently released *Don't Quit on Me*, a mixed methods study designed to better understand the obstacles confronting young people with a focus on the role that relationships play in their ability to thrive. In high-resourced families and communities, a robust web of relationships occurs organically and often intentionally for young people, and these networks grow and deepen over time. While many youth in communities of color do have access to caring adults and mentors, data suggests that BYMOC are disproportionately "disconnected" from more caring, non-parental adults. One study put the national rate of disconnection at 21.6 percent for Black youth, 20.3 percent for Native Americans, and 16.3 percent for Latinos; significantly higher than for Asian Americans (7.9 percent) or Whites (11.3 percent) (Lewis & Burd-Sharps, 2015). While data only tell one part of the story and we know that many BYMOC do have caring, committed adults in their lives, it is worthwhile to note that many do not have access to a vibrant web of intentional guidance and support at an age when their adult identities, experiences, and skills are developing. Thus, many BYMOC face an uncertain transition to adulthood. Mentoring can be one of their pathways to success, helping them successfully navigate the transition from school to work and from childhood to adulthood.

Overall, research confirms what we know anecdotally, that mentoring works. A number of studies through the years have revealed

a correlation between a young person's involvement in a quality mentoring relationship and positive outcomes in the areas of school, mental health, problem behavior, and health (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008; Jekielek, Moore, & Scarupa, 2002; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). An analysis of mentoring studies conducted by Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa (2002) found that youth in mentoring relationships present with better attitudes and behaviors at school, fewer instances of drug and alcohol use, improved relationships with their parents, and fewer absences from school than their counterparts who were not mentored. A 2011 meta-analysis of 73 mentoring program evaluations conducted between 1999 and 2010 found a host of positive outcomes for mentored youth, including benefits with regard to youth's attitudes, motivation, social/relational skills, academic outcomes, and physical health (DuBois, et al., 2011). The results of this analysis indicated that across these domains, mentoring both prevents negative outcomes and promotes positive ones.

The research specific to mentoring BYMOC suggests that there are several key concepts that can influence the effectiveness of mentoring for these youth, including a strengths-based approach and a critical mentoring approach.



Photo courtesy of My Brother's Keeper Alliance

## THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH TO MENTORING

It is important that mentoring for BYMOC is approached from a strengths-based perspective. While the challenges facing BYMOC have been well documented, much less attention has been given to the strengths of these individuals and their communities. A strengths-based approach to mentoring can positively impact a significant proportion of BYMOC whose life contexts and societal perceptions and experiences may be quite different than other youth. Through strong relationships with mentors, the impact of the challenges BYMOC face can be mitigated and their strengths and the strengths of their communities, families, and cultures can be drawn on to bolster their potential for success. Like schools and other youth-serving institutions, mentoring programs find success through delivering culturally relevant services, developing the strengths of those they serve, and building on the assets of the local community. Identifying, respecting, and building upon the strengths of mentees, as well as their communities and social networks, can go a long way toward supporting mentoring relationships.

## CRITICAL MENTORING

To support BYMOC, it is recommended that programs consider using an approach to mentoring that has been termed "critical mentoring" (Weiston-Serdan, 2015). Critical mentoring is focused on the development of a critical consciousness in mentors and mentees. Critical consciousness is the ability to perceive and understand social, political, and economic oppression; to be able to deal with such issues; and to be ready to take action against oppressive elements of society. Beginning with an understanding of youth context, critical mentoring allows the mentoring relationship to focus on providing mentees with opportunities to reflect, discuss, as well as challenge systems of inequity. This catapults the

mentoring process into a realm of transformation and liberation. Critical mentoring yields more extensive conversations about race, gender, class, sexuality, ableism, etc. and offers ways for both mentor and mentee to address how these issues permeate our society and adversely affect BYMOC (Weiston-Serdan, 2015). The power of this approach is that it can help youth avoid being undermined by these forces, and instead help them thrive in the face of adverse circumstances through personal development and supports that build perseverance. For example, BYMOC who are empowered through an understanding of racism and its impact on their lives have the capacity to engage with individuals and institutions with an expectation of being treated respectfully. They have an understanding of their own strengths and a respect for the achievements of their culture, both of which help them persevere through the challenges they encounter. Programs should consider this approach when serving a significant population of adolescents and young men of color. Because this approach involves abstract concepts that may be challenging developmentally for younger boys, it may not be appropriate for all BYMOC. In the “training” section of this guide, we provide helpful ways to train mentors to work with their mentees toward much needed dialogue and critical consciousness.

As mentors enter into the mentoring relationship, they need to develop an awareness of critical consciousness. Developing critical consciousness requires an understanding of the unique challenges each child or young man faces, which are specific to his culture and environment. The development of this consciousness requires an examination of race, ethnicity, class, and gender issues. This is facilitated through an understanding and development of “cultural competence” or “cultural humility.” The term “cultural competence” has been used to describe an individual’s competency in understanding race and understanding one’s own biases. The term “cultural humility” highlights the notion that one is never done when it comes

to cultural understanding. One doesn’t reach a level of competence and become an expert. Cultural humility supports the notion that we should always be listening, learning, and reflecting. Finally, as mentioned previously, critical mentoring champions a strengths-based approach to mentoring. Each mentee has specific strengths just as each culture and environment in which the mentee lives has particular strengths. Recognizing, drawing on and developing these strengths is a key component of the critical mentoring approach.

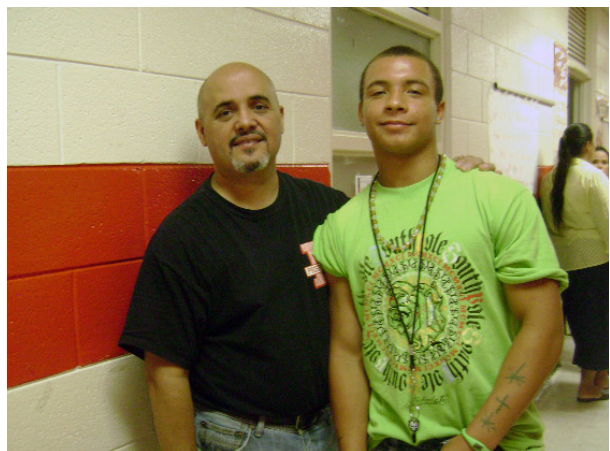


Photo courtesy of the Mentoring Partnership of North Carolina

## CONCLUSION

In spite of the progress our country has made in advancing the well-being of all populations, American society has in many ways re-segregated itself over the past four decades, creating a deficit in social and economic supports for BYMOC (Putnam, 2015). The negative impacts of re-segregation are felt in numerous realms, including education, the workplace, and public health. Research has shown that residential segregation disproportionately harms Black teenagers and young adults; they suffer significantly higher rates of disconnection than White youths (Lewis & Burd-Sharps, 2015). As a result, the resource of social capital – social support including the community, the family, and other social organizations – has been diminished.

Mentoring can help address these deficits and strengthen the existing assets of youth of color and their communities. More than ever, mentors are in a position to make a significant difference in transforming the dialogue in America and in helping to produce a generation of youth who thrive. Mentors can provide youth with positive experiences in social relationships, which can lead to improvement in other important relationships in their lives (Keller, 2005). A mentoring relationship can demonstrate that positive relationships with adults are possible, providing another chance for those youth who may have experienced unsatisfactory relationships with parents or other adults (Olds, Kitzman, Cole, & Robinson, 1997). Overall, the potential impact of mentors in connecting and strengthening mentees' social networks can be significant.

Current research and practice is strongly pointing to a new set of nuanced guidelines for certain populations of our youth within mentoring relationships, such as African American boys and young men. The next sections of this guide explain many recommended practices supported by researchers and programs doing innovative work in this area. Serious attention should be given to this emerging set of practices by any program serving a significant percentage of BYMOC.

## **OUR VISION FOR THIS WORK**

Mentoring does not occur in a vacuum. It takes place in communities that are striving to address issues of race, class, and oppressive systems. Mentoring can and should translate to larger community improvements as part of a more expansive movement toward increased equity and justice in our society. Mentoring programs should embrace this stance and work with others in the community, together advocating for meaningful and systemic social change.

If BYMOC truly are a population with unique needs, and if this really is a critical moment in our history, then it is paramount that this effort

be grounded in proven practices. This guide is an effort to push mentoring programs closer to the cutting edge of research and practice, increasing the rigor of our work with mentors and mentees.



# Part Two: *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*

## STANDARD 1: RECRUITMENT

### Original Standard

“Recruit appropriate mentors and mentees by realistically describing the program’s aims and expected outcomes” (MENTOR, 2015).

Recruiting effective mentors requires finding and stewarding individuals with characteristics and skills that enable them to meet the goals and participation requirements of the program. There are many types of individuals in a community who may be ready and able to build a meaningful mentoring relationship with BYMOC. The practices around recruitment focus on how mentors are identified and welcomed into the vision organizations have for youth.

### Recommended Practices

In addition to the “Benchmarks and Enhancements” provided in the fourth edition of *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* (see Appendix A), we recommend that programs serving BYMOC also consider these practices:

- RP1.1: Target a broad range of mentor characteristics and qualities (e.g., skills, life experiences, attitudes, beliefs, values) to meet the diverse needs of BYMOC.
- RP1.2: Use recruiting messages that support a strengths-based approach to mentoring.
- RP1.3: Review and update recruitment messages to ensure that they will appeal to your target audience of mentors.
- RP1.4: Consider offering group or team mentoring models to appeal to a larger number of men and men of color.
- RP1.5: Make sure that recruitment materials for families and youth are welcoming, clear about program goals and expectations, and culturally relevant and attuned.

### Discussion

The first recommended practice emphasizes the idea that a broad range of mentor characteristics should factor in to decisions to target and bring on mentors, rather than a narrow focus on demographics such as race. These characteristics include mentors’ skills, life experiences, attitudes, beliefs, values, and/or temperament. An assessment must be made of the full range of characteristics of mentors that can positively impact the mentoring relationship. The breakout section below lists a number of these characteristics.

#### Mentor characteristics to consider in recruitment

- Culturally competent/humble
- Skills in providing effective feedback
- Time availability
- Geographic proximity
- Experience in a teaching or advocacy role
- Social justice mindset
- Feelings of care for their community
- Life experiences relevant to mentoring skills

If recruitment of men of color is important for a mentoring program’s model, its recruitment efforts should target institutions and approaches that will reach this population. A useful resource to aid in this effort is the *Black Male Mentoring*

*Handbook* (United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, 2014). Additionally, the *Men in Mentoring Toolkit* and *Recruiting Male Volunteers: A Guide Based on Exploratory Research* provide insights about recruitment strategies for men in general (Mentor Michigan, n.d.; Blackman, 1999). These resources include information on social marketing campaign tools, checklists for message resonance, and other tools and templates for reaching men more successfully.

Specific examples of recruitment strategies that may be culturally relevant for some communities of prospective mentors of color include a one-on-one approach that emphasizes altruistic reasons over personal ones, and developing an image of the mentoring organization as one to which volunteers can create a strong personal attachment. These messages may be more affirming of culturally acceptable reasons for volunteering, and build on the value that is placed on relationships in many communities of color. To accomplish this, an organization might include personal stories of a child supported by the program in its recruitment materials as a way of personalizing the impact mentors can make (CASA, n.d.).

Programs should also attempt to include men of color in reaching out to potential mentors, as a first encounter with someone who is like themselves can be more effective in recruiting a target audience. If this is not possible, it may be helpful to involve individuals who have previously worked with the target audience when crafting recruitment messaging. For example, if an organization consists mainly of women and the target audience is primarily men, including program staff who understand and relate with the target audience can help in creating messages that resonate with potential recruits.

To get the word out, mentoring organizations might participate in community events or groups serving communities of color to increase awareness of mentoring opportunities. These might include cultural, fraternal, and church-

related events or groups (CASA, n.d.). Distributing PSAs to radio stations and ads addressing communities of color in local magazines and newspapers can also be effective. Retailers and local service providers, from beauty shops to dentists' offices, can be asked to distribute recruitment materials to their customers. Finally, another strategy is to enlist the support of role models of color within the community, including sports stars, newscasters, and business leaders. Whatever recruitment strategies are chosen, mentoring organizations should be sure to make use of existing community resources (CASA, n.d.). Conducting outreach projects with other volunteer organizations, soliciting support from business organizations, and linking with other social justice movements, like Black Lives Matter, can maximize both resources and momentum to build support.



Photo courtesy of The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania

While not directly a recruitment strategy, programs may have more success recruiting men of color by offering group or team mentoring models. As is often the case, mentors may be in short supply, but another rationale for this model of mentoring is its effectiveness in building a broader social network and in providing multiple role models and supports for each mentee. Group/team-based mentoring should be activity-based, including recreational opportunities, which can create situations in which positive

peer interactions and perspective-taking can take place in safe and supportive environments.

Because recruitment builds the foundation for mentors' understanding of their role, accurate messaging during this process is essential. In any recruitment effort, the use of messages that support a strengths-based approach is recommended (MENTOR, 2015). At times, mentors may receive messages that support or propagate the idea that they are charged with "saving" a child through their efforts alone (N. Hurd, personal communication, January 11, 2015). We know that it takes more than one person to assist boys and young men on their journeys. In keeping with a strengths-based approach, messaging should emphasize that a key part of a mentor's mission is to assist youth to identify and grow their social networks. Identifying other adults who may be part of a youth's social network strengthens their potential supports within the community. In addition to discovering the strengths within the community, mentors should understand that identifying and building on youths' specific personal strengths is also an important feature of the strengths-based approach to mentoring. Another related potential misunderstanding that may impact recruitment is the idea that mentors are charged with teaching "correct values" from their own cultures (N. Hurd, personal communication, January 11, 2015). It is important for mentors to understand that mentees' cultures have a strong set of values



Photo courtesy of Midlands Mentoring Partnership

that should be drawn and built upon through the mentoring relationship.

The recruitment stage is also when the program starts to build positive relationships with parents, which is essential to a program's success. In terms of messaging to parents, recruitment staff should reflect on and consider how to communicate what a program does and how it fits with parents' needs. Additionally, programs should inform parents that they have a role in making the mentoring relationship work, and make sure that recruitment messages are not critical of parents nor position the mentor as a substitute or corrective to their parenting.

## STANDARD 2: SCREENING

### Original Standard

"Screen prospective mentors to determine if they have the time, commitment, and personal qualities to be a safe and effective mentor, and to screen prospective mentees, and their parents or guardians, about whether they have the time, commitment and desire to be effectively mentored" (MENTOR, 2015).

Screening is important to ensure that mentees are safe, as volunteer-based youth services like mentoring are considered a high-risk context for the occurrence of abuse (Wilson & Breville, 2003). Effective screening is also important to increase the likelihood that the mentoring relationship is a positive experience. The "Benchmarks and Enhancements" of the *Elements* remain critical to continue to implement. However, we will focus here on issues to consider for BYMOC that add nuance to those "Benchmarks and Enhancements."

### Recommended Practices

In addition to the "Benchmarks and Enhancements" provided in the fourth edition of *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*<sup>™</sup> (see Appendix A), we recommend

that programs serving BYMOC also consider these practices:

- RP2.1: Screen for mentor suitability if your program is emphasizing a “critical” mentoring approach.

## Discussion

The *Elements* includes several benchmarks that may be impacted by RP 2.1. Benchmarks B.2.1-B.2.3, for example, recommend establishing criteria for acceptance of mentors, including questions in a written application that assess suitability for mentoring, and conducting a face-to-face interview that includes similar questions (MENTOR, 2015). These are all vehicles through which mentors can be asked questions that help program staff determine their suitability for “conscious” mentoring. For example, what are mentors’ views on race, ethnicity, and culture? Can prospective mentors critically reflect on their selves and their lives, as is necessary within the model of conscious mentoring? Do they have feelings about youth that are compatible with your program values? Do they understand positive youth development or do they seem prescriptive in their approach?

With respect to screening, mentoring programs frequently inquire about background checks and whether allowing individuals who have a criminal record the opportunity to mentor is recommended. MENTOR advocates for screening processes that put the welfare of youth first and foremost. As program staff consider their program’s mission and goals, the youth being served, and the nature of the offenses described in the record of the potential mentor, they may decide that the match is safe and beneficial for the young person. These types of decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis with the safety and security of the youth in mind at all times.

## STANDARD 3: TRAINING

### Original Standard

“Train prospective mentor, mentees, and mentees’ parents (or legal guardians or responsible adult) in the basic knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to build and effective and safe mentoring relationship using culturally appropriate language and tools” (MENTOR, 2015).

This standard is focused on the training of prospective mentors, mentees, and mentees’ parents in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to build effective mentoring relationships. Training is perhaps the most critical area for making a positive impact on the effectiveness of mentoring for BYMOC. This is especially true if mentors will be taking a critical approach, helping youth to navigate challenging issues around race, identity, and social justice. The *Elements* emphasizes the importance of training of mentors in particular, as this “has documented implications for match length, as well as both mentors’ and mentees’ perceptions about the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship” (MENTOR, 2015). These perceptions are likely to influence positive outcomes and impact the continuation of the relationship, suggesting that mentor training has enduring importance for youth outcomes (MENTOR, 2015).

As suggested by the *Elements*, programs should consider designing pre-match training with a general focus on helping mentors learn about two frameworks for developing mentoring relationships: developmental and instrumental approaches (MENTOR, 2015). Both are collaborative and youth-centered, and both emphasize relationship building and goal-directed activities. The two styles differ in how they prioritize the fostering of the growth of the mentor-mentee relationship versus an initial emphasis on goal-directed activities.



The practices recommended below are divided into two categories; those related to the *content* of training, and those related to the way in which training is *delivered*. Resources that include more detail on the content and delivery of training for BYMOC are included at the end of this section.

## Recommended Practices

In addition to the “Benchmarks and Enhancements” provided in the fourth edition of *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* (see Appendix A), we recommend that programs serving BYMOC also consider these practices related to training:

### Content Practices

- RP 3.1: When supporting adolescents and young men of color, use critical mentoring concepts as a basis for basic and advanced training.
- RP 3.2: Basic training for mentors of adolescent and young men of color should include a focus on the concepts of critical consciousness and cultural competence/humility. It should begin with the development of an understanding of how the culture of broader society impacts the mentee’s environment and include a focus on improving mentors’ understanding of the challenges and opportunities of that environment.

### Delivery Practices

- RP 3.3: Provide a minimum of 4 hours of training to incorporate the concepts included in a critical approach to mentoring.
- RP 3.4: Use an interactive, authentic approach to training delivery whenever possible and appropriate.
- RP 3.5: Use community resources to fill gaps in training resources and to support a networked approach to mentoring.

## MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership : “The Essentials” Training

MENTOR offers a training called “The Essentials: A Curriculum for People Who Mentor Young Black Men.” This training was informed by both researchers and practitioners in the field. MENTOR partnered with affiliate Mentoring Partnerships and the Campaign for Black Male Achievement (CBMA) in six cities in order to learn directly from mentors and practitioners effective practices related to mentoring young Black men and boys. More than two hundred mentors attended the CBMA Mentoring Convenings in the summer of 2014. The results of these meetings, together with expert research, were used to inform the design of this training.

### “The Essentials” Objectives:

- Move mentors beyond cultural competence and toward an integration of critical consciousness for both the mentor and the young Black males that they mentor.
- Build the capacity of mentors to meet their mentees where they are, while also embracing existing natural (informal), familial, and societal structures to support the mentor-mentee relationship.
- Gain a greater understanding of key research and approaches to developing a critical consciousness model into their mentoring approach with the young Black males they mentor.

Three modules requiring a total of nine hours training time to cover the following:

1. An examination of cultural competencies, including an exploration of personal views on privilege and race, providing tools for building ethnic/racial pride;
2. The identification of social capital and related empowerment of mentee and family, and the importance of racial identity;
3. An exploration of research-based strategies and approaches that can assist mentors as they embrace a critical consciousness in their work with young Black males.

The modules include detailed instructions and steps for each training activity. The concepts listed on the following page are covered in detail in “The Essentials” training.

## Discussion

### **Content of Mentor Training**

In this section, we look closely at training concepts specific to serving BYMOC. It is recommended that you select the concepts and approaches to training with an eye on your specific population of mentees. For example, it may not be appropriate to emphasize certain concepts with young children or with youth who have had very different racial and cultural experiences, as may be the case with immigrant youth from a number of countries.

While we have attempted to list the concepts in order of importance, you will want to choose to include concepts according to your specific audience, needs, available time, and context of your organization. Recommended Practice 3.2 gives general guidelines on specific concepts to begin basic training that focuses on the critical mentoring approach. Each key concept is explained in some detail in the section below called “Critical Mentoring Concepts,” with an effort to link the concepts for better understanding. It is important to note that nine hours of training or more is required for trainings to assist mentors in developing an understanding of all of these key concepts and begin to apply them (MENTOR, 2014).

### **Critical Mentoring Concepts**

#### *Critical Consciousness*

The foundation on which to build training for those working with BYMOC should be focused on developing a deeper level of self-awareness of mentors’ and mentees’ views on race, privilege, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity (B. Sanchez, personal communication, December 18, 2015). This awareness helps to build mentor’s critical consciousness, as well as their ability to help their mentees become critically aware and able to perceive social, political, and economic oppression, and take action against oppressive elements of society (MENTOR, 2014).

The rationale for this foundation is that in order for mentors to work effectively with mentees, they must first gain an awareness of how their own personal social identities—including race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and other aspects of identity—can impact the mentor-mentee relationship. This self-knowledge greatly enhances mentors’ ability to talk to boys and young men about their challenges. The exploration of self that is involved in this type of training requires that a foundation of trust is first built among trainees and training staff.



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#### *Understanding Mentees’ Environments*

In addition to an exploration of mentors’ self-awareness of their background and beliefs, a second critical component that should be addressed in basic pre-match training is understanding the context of the mentee’s environment. Whichever community is served by a program, mentors need to know that community’s challenges and strengths. Mentors should develop sensitivity to the demands of the environments in which mentees live, work, and obtain an education. Of particular importance is the family of the mentee. Mentors should be aware of the home environments of their mentees, including common challenges, strengths, cultural norms, etc.

### *Cultural Competence/ Cultural Humility:*

Building cultural competence and understanding one's own implicit biases are both part of the development of critical consciousness. Cultural competence is the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively with people of different cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and/or belief systems other than one's own (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). A better term may be "cultural humility," because this implies an understanding that we all must continue to work on our awareness of cultures and the skills involved in cultural interaction, while "competence" implies an end point that can be achieved (B. Sanchez, personal communication, December 18, 2015).

The development of cultural competence begins with understanding one's own racial identity and innate biases, and how these shape one's worldview. It is essential that as mentors enter into their mentoring relationships, they are clear about how they define their own identities, and what kinds of biases and perspectives they are bringing into their relationships. Mentoring training must teach mentors how to avoid making assumptions about individuals based on generalizations or past experiences. Working with each mentee is a new challenge with a specific constellation of characteristics.

Beyond being culturally competent and humble is working to connect and center the experiences of young people in ways that help them to succeed academically, personally, and in relationship to society. Taken from culturally relevant pedagogy, a concept developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings, cultural relevance is about understanding and recognizing the value BYMOC have, and situating their experiences as central to the mentoring relationship (Ladson-Billings, 1995).



Photo courtesy of Midlands Mentoring Partnership

In order to train mentors, mentees, and families effectively, mentoring organizations must do an internal exploration of their own cultural awareness and relevance. Through this internal assessment, organizations should ensure that they know the languages spoken in mentees' communities, that the racial, ethnic, and cultural identities in the community being served are represented in the organization's staff, and that the organization is connected with community institutions, including schools, community centers, churches, and businesses.

### *Implicit Bias*

Implicit biases include the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. They are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control (Staats & Patton, 2013). Because implicit biases are not accessible through introspection, training experiences that seek to unveil these must be very carefully and thoughtfully designed and implemented. Measures to ensure a safe and trusting space must be taken.

For more tools and information about implicit bias, visit Project Implicit at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/faqs.html>

## *Identity*

Racial identity reflects how one has internalized his socialization experiences surrounding race (Helms, 2007). The development of identity in mentees is very important. For example, positive identity has been identified as an extended sense of self embedded within the African American collective, and this sense of self is a protective factor related to identity development (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001). Mentor training should include knowledge and experiences that prepare mentors to help mentees develop healthy identities, including racial identity. Mentors' own racial identity will directly impact their relationships with mentees. Gaining a deeper understanding of their social identity and how it informs their worldview will better enable mentors to model for mentees how a deeper understanding of one's culture produces confidence, pride, and determination (MENTOR, 2014). One example of how this can serve mentees is by helping them respond to racism they encounter in an empowered and effective manner. The development of a healthy ethnic identity in minority youth is more likely to result in positive academic, psychological, and social outcomes (Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). Mentors should also learn how to discuss race and ethnicity with their mentees, an important and challenging skill. They should find ways to create space for these conversations within the context of the activities they take part in with mentees. For additional information about cultivating conversations about race, see the journal article *Race Talk: The Psychology of Racial Dialogues* by Derald Wing Sue (2013).

Other key insights regarding the development of identity in BYMOC come from adolescent rite of passage rituals across many cultures (American Psychological Association, 2008). Aspects of rite of passage rituals can inform how mentors work with mentees, and reinforce research-informed approaches to building resiliency in youth with regard to their cultural identities. These aspects include the identification of ethnic and cultural pride; the introspection that assists

adolescents in identifying where they "fit in"; the reinforcement of a cultural tradition that illustrates a path forward and builds on tangible examples and role models; and the constant encouragement and embracing of members of their community (MENTOR, 2014).

## *Empowerment*

Empowerment is at the heart of many mentoring programs as they support and guide the mentee into becoming self-sufficient, and in many cases unlocking untapped potential (MENTOR, 2015). A 2009 report by the Regional Educational Laboratory at SERVE Center UNC, Greensboro, indicates that Black students experience an increased level of stress that non-Black students do not contend with, due to negative stereotypes about the intellectual ability of their racial group (Aronson, et al., 2009). Also contributing to gaps in educational achievement are low expectations that can undermine children's sense of competency and increase their learned helplessness (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Mentors may also harbor low expectations for families' engagement. An important part of empowering a mentee and his family is assisting them to self-advocate, and equipping them with the tools to understand their existing social capital and to navigate potential barriers to success (MENTOR, 2014).

**Mentor training should include knowledge and experiences that prepare mentors to help mentees develop healthy identities, including racial identity.**

## *Developing Social Capital*

Social capital is defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as "networks together with shared norms, values, and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups" (Healy & Côté, 2001).



Tapping into social capital can help mentees feel connected to their communities and can expose them to a wealth of supportive relationships and resources. Mentors must engage their mentees' families and communities in order to help them utilize the resources available within their social networks. A networked approach to mentoring includes the central idea that it takes more than one person to support a mentee. There are many ways that acknowledging social capital and engaging with mentees' social networks can assist a mentee. For example, mentors can help identify a guide to help their mentee navigate complex institutions, such as schools.

One way in which mentors can assist mentees in developing their social networks is through a social network mapping exercise. This first step will help a mentee and mentor identify individuals who already exist within their network who might fill a current or future role in supporting the mentee. This exploration is the first step of an effective training approach to the development of social capital called "4 E's of Social Capital: Exploration, Expectation, Education, and Empowerment." For more information on this approach to the development of social capital, see "The Essentials: A Curriculum for People Who Mentor Young Black Men" (MENTOR, 2014).

### How to Plan Training

Planning and delivering effective trainings requires skill, but one can only become a better trainer through continual practice and reflection. A good place to start the planning process is with identifying the goals for a training session. What should training participants know and be able to do after the training? After articulating goals, training staff should map activities that take best practices in adult learning into consideration. Here are some steps to consider for planning a training:

1. Identify the goals of the training. Answer the question of what training participants should know and be able to do after the training.
2. Design activities to meet these goals. For example, if the goal is for participants to be able to define and discuss critical mentoring as well as integrate critical mentoring ideas into their mentoring practice, build activities that provide a concrete definition, allow for discussion around the definition and how it applies to what participants already know, and allow time for participants to create a plan for how they might start incorporating critical mentoring ideas into their future mentoring meetings.
3. Ensure that activities take into consideration adult learning principles such as incorporating everyone's prior knowledge through the use of protocols and discussion, ensuring participants have an opportunity to share challenges they are facing related to the topic or share confusion, and allow time for them to reflect upon how new learning can be leveraged to solve their challenges. Provide opportunities for participants to have an emotional connection to what they are learning through the use of stories, cases and scenarios, to name a few.
4. Design an evaluation mechanism that ties back to the goals of training and includes an opportunity for participants to reflect upon what they have learned in relation to the stated goals. Feedback should also include an anonymous instrument such as a survey in order to get the most honest and detailed evaluation from participants.

Finally, have fun! Training should be a fun experience by those who took the time to participate. Don't forget to allow for laughter and a little bit of tangential discussions. Participants will appreciate the training even more.

## ***Training Delivery***

The section above described key concepts that might be covered in training programs for mentors. This section is intended to give guidance on design and delivery of mentor training that incorporates key concepts in critical mentoring and how organizations can incorporate these concepts into mentor trainings in meaningful ways.

## ***Time for Training***

Our recommendation for a minimum of four hours of training is informed by the potential need for a critical approach to mentoring. This approach involves a multitude of complex topics, which take time to understand and to practice. In addition, active learning approaches, which involve hands-on and “minds-on” methods, require more time than those that focus on lecture-type delivery of information. The time required, however, pays off later in knowledge and skills that are much more concrete, memorable, and transferable to real-world situations.

## ***Active/Authentic Learning Approach***

Research in training and education reaching back to the 1960s has increasingly focused on the importance of active learning. Active



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learning is an authentic approach to learning that emphasizes practice in using knowledge and skills within real-world contexts as much as possible. For example, instead of lecturing only on the concepts of critical mentoring, an active learning approach might include real-world scenarios and/or role-playing which put the trainee in situations they might encounter in reality. If a training goal is to help mentors understand mentees' life contexts, an active, authentic approach might ask mentors to analyze example scenarios that depict challenging situations in which mentees find themselves – situations that might be unfamiliar to mentors. Because mentors' upbringings may have occurred in very different environments, they may not be familiar with the challenges of situations that mentees are confronted with regularly. Think, for example, of being confronted by the police on the street at a young age. Through such exercises, mentors can learn how to discuss and guide mentees in how to respond in such situations. The first step in this approach is often an analysis of a complex situation, followed by a debriefing session.

Authentic learning is more motivating than more static learning, such as lecture-based learning, because it is designed to be relevant and engaging for trainees. Motivation and engagement of learners has been shown to be a key element in educational contexts in terms of outcomes (Cabrera, 2013).

## ***Use of Community Resources:***

Community resources can include partnerships with other organizations within a mentoring program's locale, and other social capital including thought leaders within the community who can contribute to knowledge-building. We recommend using such community resources wisely for two reasons. First, organizations may have gaps in their ability to train mentors and mentees. For example, there may be lack of expertise around particular topics important to mentor training. Second, the use of outside

resources is congruent with the idea of a networked approach to mentoring. One person cannot be all things to a child, so in the same way that mentors should help expand their mentees' social networks, programs should collaborate with individuals and organizations in the community who can contribute to their trainings. For example, community leaders, parents, youth, or other partners can be engaged to speak more authentically than organization staff can on specific topics.

## STANDARD 4: MATCHING AND INITIATING

### Original Standard

“Match mentors and mentees, and initiate the mentoring relationship using strategies likely to increase the odds that mentoring relationships will endure and be effective” (MENTOR, 2015).

Getting matches off to a good start helps to establish an effective and enduring mentoring relationship. Program staff and parents play key roles in this stage, so their involvement is important to consider. Involving the family in match selection can be important in creating effective matches and can create a stronger relationship both between the family and the organization and between the mentor and mentee. Cultural differences can be bridged more easily by making a personal connection with families during this time.

### Recommended Practices

In addition to the “Benchmarks and Enhancements” provided in the fourth edition of *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* (see Appendix A), we recommend that programs serving BYMOC also consider these practices:

- RP 4.1: Avoid matching based exclusively upon racial and ethnic background unless this is critical to your mentoring model.
- RP 4.2: Involve mentee’s families in match selection.

- RP 4.3: Consider bridging cultural differences by having a first meeting in mentees’ homes.
- RP 4.4: Consider potential benefits of matching youth with weaker ethnic identities with mentors with stronger ethnic identities to promote positive identity.

### Same-Race vs. Cross-Race Matching

- Research findings on the relative benefits of same-race versus cross-race matches are mixed (Sánchez, Colón, Feuer, Roundfield & Berardi, 2014).
- Mentoring outcomes reflect more than the race and ethnicity match between mentor and mentee.
- Outcomes reflect the ways in which mentors respond to multiple characteristics of the mentee, including aspects of a mentee’s racial identity and cultural values.
- Studies reveal that mentors need to be culturally competent in order to develop a successful cross-race pair (Sánchez, Colón, & Esparza, 2005).
- Without training in specific competencies, the most well-intentioned mentors may make critical errors that negatively impact these relationships (Rhodes, Bogat, Roffman, Edelman, & Galasso, 2002).

### Discussion

This section of the *Elements* emphasizes consideration of the characteristics of the mentor and the mentee when making decisions on matching (MENTOR, 2015). It also notes that research comparing cross-race and same-race matches has found few, if any, differences in the development of relationship quality or in positive outcomes (MENTOR, 2015). It further suggests that matching based on common interests should take precedence over matching based

on race (MENTOR, 2015). Our recommendation in this guide reiterates and further articulates this, stating that programs should avoid matching exclusively based on racial and ethnic background unless this is critical to a particular program's mentoring model. Personality traits of mentors and mentees and their impact on relationship development should be considered rather than a focus solely on race and ethnicity. Research shows, for example, that it is more important to consider racial processes, such as the racial identity of the youth and cultural competency of the mentor, rather than only the mentor's and youth's race or ethnicity (Sánchez, Colón, Feuer, Roundfield, & Berardi, 2014).

One example of a consideration in matching is that of a youth with a weak racial identity; he may benefit from a same-race match when that mentor has a strong racial identity. However, a youth with a strong racial identity may benefit just as much from a cross-race match. That said, certainly, there are many considerations beyond race to take into account when matching.

Families can be extremely helpful in match selection, as they have intimate knowledge of the mentee. Their inclusion can also help to build a more trusting relationship with program staff. To this end, having a first meeting in mentees' homes can help bridge cultural differences. Meeting in the home is more intimate and can be less intimidating and impersonal, which can help facilitate initial relationship-building between the mentor and mentee and his family. Emphasize to parents that they are partners in this work and inform them about how they can work with staff if they have any concerns about the match relationship at any point. Finally, it can be very helpful to prepare both the mentor and youth by sharing information about who they are matched with prior to their first meeting, including racial and cultural information.

## STANDARD 5: MONITORING AND SUPPORT

### Original Standard

"Monitor mentoring relationship milestones and child safety; and support matches through providing ongoing advice, problem-solving, training, and access to resources for the duration of each relationship" (MENTOR, 2015).

The *Elements* emphasizes that much of the work of mentoring programs is dedicated to monitoring and support of mentoring relationships, and thus this element is critical to their success (MENTOR, 2015). As mentoring relationships change, as they naturally will over time, adjustments may be needed. Staff can stay abreast of developments that may present opportunities to improve mentoring relationships. There may be, for example, a newly recognized need for additional training or related support for mentors. Opportunities may arise to enhance the relationship and learning of the mentor-mentee pair through exploration of each one's community and culture, and programs can provide information and suggestions about appropriate activities in this realm. Relationship support may also be needed in response to events or transitions in the mentee's life. For example, programs may consider ways to mitigate the "summer gap" for mentees by suggesting activities or programs they might take part in.



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## Recommended Practices

In addition to the “Benchmarks and Enhancements” provided in the fourth edition of *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* (see Appendix A), we recommend that programs serving BYMOC also consider these practices:

- RP 5.1: During match check-ins, staff should ask specifically about issues that may have come up in mentor-mentee interactions regarding race, ethnicity, class, or language (and offer support as needed).
- RP 5.2: For programs using a critical mentoring approach, consider increasing the volume of ongoing training and support for mentors.
- RP 5.3 Suggest activities that allow mentors and mentees to explore culture, heritage, history, and the background of their communities.
- RP 5.4: For programs that are on a school-year or otherwise cyclical schedule, strongly consider ways for matches to stay in touch during program gaps.

## Discussion

During the monitoring and support phase of the mentoring relationship, program staff should inquire about interactions between mentors and mentees that included issues of race, ethnicity, class, or language. This can uncover issues for which program staff can provide additional support or corrective action. For example, additional training that targets potential weakness in certain aspects of the relationship could be useful, such as finding and utilizing opportunities to discuss race, which can be a difficult skill for many adults to develop.

In terms of the development of additional training for mentors and mentees, the quality of the mentoring relationship may be impacted by race-related issues that are negotiated by mentors and mentees. For example, when considering cross-

race matches, the level of cultural sensitivity of the mentor, the cultural mistrust of the mentee, and feedback provided to the mentee can greatly impact the quality of communications (Sánchez, Colón, & Esparza, 2005). A study of African Americans in late adolescence working with White mentors showed that the closeness and effectiveness of the match could be affected by how feedback from mentors is given to mentees (Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999). Feedback that was critical in nature was interpreted negatively by mentees if not accompanied by comments about: (a) the high standards used by mentors in judging the work, and (b) general praise indicating a belief in the mentee’s ability to meet such standards. This study suggests that an important dilemma for the mentor is how to give useful feedback in a way that is encouraging rather than discouraging.

For programs using a critical mentoring approach, it may be pertinent to increase the volume of ongoing training and support for mentors and staff. The critical approach includes a number of challenging concepts and skills that can require significant exploration and practice in order to effectively and authentically implement them within mentoring relationships. Staff should be culturally competent, building knowledge and skills through training and experience. They should recognize the diversity of their mentors and mentees, understanding that



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these differences do not necessarily indicate deficiencies. This competence will aid in communicating with parents and caregivers, as well as with mentors and mentees. Experience alone is insufficient in attaining this competence.

Consider the use of activities that allow mentors and mentees to explore culture, heritage, history, and the background of their communities. In addition to helping mentees explore their social capital, social-network mapping can be helpful to explore community and family human resources in support of the mentoring relationship, and to better understand the mentee's environment (MENTOR, 2014). Service and leadership opportunities might be explored as an additional support for mentor-mentee pairs engaged in critical mentoring. The inclusion of discussion-starters on race, culture, and identity can greatly assist mentors and mentees in becoming comfortable speaking on these topics rather than avoiding them due to the inherent challenges of these conversations.

Finally, consider strategies for maintaining contact between mentors and mentees during the summer. For example, for programs that are on school-year or other cyclical schedules, consider ways for matches to keep in touch, as summer learning loss impacts BYMOC disproportionately. Without ongoing opportunities to learn essential skills, low-income youth fall behind on key measures of academic achievement at much higher rates than their peers. For example, low-income youth lose more than two months in reading achievement while their middle-class peers make slight gains (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, & Greathouse, 1996). A further potential negative consequence of this disparity is the risk of failing to complete high school or continue on to college (Alexander, Entwistle, & Olson, 2007). Mentors can help offset this loss and also prevent a weakening of the mentoring relationship itself by maintaining a consistent presence.

## STANDARD 6: CLOSURE

### Original Standard

"Facilitate bringing the match to closure in a way that affirms the contributions of the mentor and mentee, and offers them the opportunity to prepare for the closure and assess the experience" (MENTOR, 2015).

In preparing for the closure experience, teaching the mentee how to find other mentors long before the conclusion of the current relationship is very helpful, both as a life skill in expanding one's social network and in making the transition from one mentor to another. The conclusion of the mentoring relationship can sometimes bring about negative emotions on the part of mentees, mentors, or parents or guardians (MENTOR, 2015). Due to the potential for negative consequences of closure on the mentee, it can be important to determine potential reasons for these and identify if changes or additions to programming or procedures can mitigate such impacts in the future.

### Recommended Practices

In addition to the "Benchmarks and Enhancements" provided in the fourth edition of *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* (see Appendix A), we recommend that programs serving BYMOC also consider these practices:

- RP 6.1: Teach the mentee to find other mentors as a planned closure approaches (B.6.5)
- RP 6.2 Assess the role that conflict around race, culture, and class may have played in unexpected match closure via conversations with mentors, parents, and mentees.

### Discussion

Benchmarks 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 of the *Elements* state that programs should "anticipate all the different ways that your matches could end

and close positively in every circumstance” (MENTOR, 2015). Benchmark 6.5 focuses on the management of re-matching. An effective handoff of the mentee to the next mentor is a key element in closing a mentoring relationship. Social-network mapping of caring adults in the mentee’s social network is of major added value for mentoring at any point, but is especially important at closure. Program staff can help with formal initiation of new matches or referrals to other programs. Perhaps the most valuable practice a program can implement is teaching youth skills in finding, asking for, and engaging good mentors. As mentioned elsewhere in this guide, youth need multiple mentors throughout their lives, and consistency of support can be critical for their personal development.

Assessing the role that conflict around race, culture, and class may have played in unexpected match closures can be an opportunity to consider how well a program is preparing participants to navigate the sometimes choppy waters of the mentoring relationship. Speaking with mentors, mentees, and their families about such issues might uncover information useful to further development or adjustments in programming.

## PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

When considering overall program planning and management, it is important to assess the capacity of an organization to engage in this work. A strong infrastructure should include knowledgeable staff, trained in the competencies that will support an organization’s goals (B. Sánchez, personal communication, December 18, 2015). Updated professional development of staff may be needed, particularly if a critical approach to mentoring is desired to support BYMOC. Increased involvement of youth and families can help improve services in many cases as well. Reflection or reassessment on how programs fit within social movements in areas of equity, community building, and social justice can reenergize program services. This can also

highlight ways that mentoring organizations and other community organizations and movements can strengthen one another.

### Recommended Practices

In addition to the “Benchmarks and Enhancements” provided in the fourth edition of *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*<sup>™</sup> (see Appendix A), we recommend that programs serving BYMOC also consider these practices:

- Provide professional development for staff in these key skill areas:
  - Cultural humility and responsiveness;
  - Ability to engage diverse families and communicate effectively with parents and broader networks of support within communities;
  - Implementing effective practices related to mentoring BYMOC.
- Give youth and families a strong voice in how services are designed and delivered.
- Consider how the program fits into a larger movement around equity, community building, and social justice.

### Discussion

Ensure that staff have professional development opportunities to build their skills in cultural humility and responsiveness, in engaging diverse families, and in implementing effective mentoring practices. For organizations that have gaps in areas of necessary expertise, consider engaging the community to assist with program planning, training or other needs. For example, consider inviting community members to take part on an advisory board. These steps will help ensure that organizations are prepared for the challenges of engaging in the work of mentoring BYMOC. Additionally, giving youth and their families a strong voice in the design and delivery of services

can strengthen programs, as well as strengthen the bond of trust between mentoring programs and the communities they serve. It is essential to use this information to inform program planning and as feedback for improvement of program processes and characteristics. Finally, programs should continually reflect about how they fit into larger social movements around equity, community building, and social justice, and on their staff's commitment to these issues, in order to enhance their ability to connect with and positively impact the greater community.

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# Appendices

## APPENDIX A – BENCHMARKS AND ENHANCEMENTS OF THE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE FOR MENTORING™

See attached Checklist of Benchmarks and Enhancements.

## APPENDIX B - GLOSSARY OF TERMS (WITH EXPLANATION OF RELEVANCE TO MENTORING)

**Active Learning Approach:** An approach to teaching and learning that is authentic; that is, which provides learners the opportunity to learn as much as possible within real-world contexts through problem-solving or other active learning approaches.

**Authentic Approach:** An “authentic approach” is one in which the knowledge and skills needed match the type of learning activity as closely as possible. For example, if a training goal is that mentors are able to speak to youth about race, listening to a lecture about how to speak to youth about race is less effective than practicing speaking about race in realistic scenarios mirroring real life. A problem-solving approach fits authentic learning extremely well, as knowledge is situated in authentic contexts (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). For example, scenarios that reflect actual situations that youth might encounter can be grist for analysis of how youth might react in such situations and how mentors might speak to youth about those situations. Reflecting afterwards on the training practice via discussion and/or writing can be very valuable in cementing knowledge and skills in memory and in enabling the transfer of training to real life. The transfer of knowledge and skills to life are stronger when training/learning is authentic. This is not to suggest that conveying information by lecture-type delivery has no place in training. For example, lecture-type delivery of information can be effective in short bursts when introducing unfamiliar concepts.

**BYMOC:** Boys and Young Men of Color.

**Critical Mentoring:** An approach to mentoring that:

- fully acknowledges and addresses race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality when developing the infrastructure of a mentoring program. This includes developing the program’s structure, recruiting mentors, training mentors, supporting mentoring relationships, developing mentoring activities, and identifying target outcomes with an emphasis on these factors;
- is focused on assisting mentors and mentees in cultivating a critical consciousness, as opposed to cultivating assimilation and adaptation;
- places emphasis on the “whole community” and the “whole mentee”, rather than just aspects of the whole;
- builds programs around the needs of the community and its youth;
- promotes and supports partnerships between mentors and mentees in the service of transforming their communities.

Adapted from: *Critical Mentoring: A definition and agenda* (Weiston-Serdan, 2015).

**Critical Consciousness:** The ability to perceive social, political, and economic oppression, and take action against oppressive elements of society. The development of critical consciousness in mentees is a key component to effective mentorship of boys and young men of color.

**Cultural Competence:** The ability to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively with people of different cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, and/or belief systems other than one's own.

**Cultural Humility:** Similar to the definition of cultural competence, but with the understanding that people must continue to work on an understanding of cultures and the skills involved in cultural interaction. In the context of mentoring, as people grow and understands themselves better, they continue to become more skilled culturally and better able to assist mentees with their own development.

**Effective Feedback:** In many realms of life, including work and education, effective, research-based feedback practices are often not understood or used. Within the mentoring relationship, it is important to consider the manner in which feedback is given to mentees, following a positive and behavior-based approach. One study of African Americans in late adolescence working with White mentors showed that the closeness and effectiveness of the match could be affected by how feedback from mentors is given to mentees (Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999). Critical feedback was interpreted negatively by mentees when not accompanied by comments about: (a) the high standards used in judging the work, and (b) general praise indicating a belief in the mentee's ability to meet such standards.

**Empowerment:** The key goal of mentoring is to support and guide mentees into self-sufficiency. One aspect of empowerment is helping the mentee and his family to self-advocate and providing them with ways to map and grow their existing social capital. Helping them navigate complex institutions such as schools is another example of the type of support mentors can provide in this area.

**Identity Development:** The constructs of racial and ethnic identity are complex and difficult to define. They are frequently discussed in terms of social constructions. Racial identity refers to a sense of collective identity based on the perception of a shared common heritage with a particular racial group (Helms, 1993). Ethnic identity is often considered a social construct as well, viewed as an individual's identification with "a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and share segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients" (Yinger, 1976). While youth are exposed to positive cultural traditions and values through religious, familial, neighborhood, and educational communities, they may also filter their identity through negative treatment and media messages received from others because of their race and ethnicity. It has been shown that when youth of color develop a healthy racial and ethnic identity, they are more likely to achieve positive academic, psychological, and social outcomes (Wakefield & Hudley, 2007).

**Implicit Bias:** The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. In the context of mentoring, it is important for mentors to examine their own implicit

biases in pre-match training. This is challenging work and should be performed in safe and open environments by trained staff (Kirwan Institute, n.d.).

**Networked Approach to Mentoring:** This approach is built on the idea that mentees need “a village” to support them in their personal development. A single mentor is insufficient to provide a mentee with the various knowledge, skills, and information to navigate their complex worlds, communities, and institutions. A networked approach assumes that a larger network of individuals is linked to the mentee in a web of social relationships.

**Racial/Ethnic Identity:** A reflection of how a person has internalized their socialization experiences surrounding race and ethnicity (Helms, 2007). This impacts how mentors relate to their mentees. Gaining a deeper understanding of one’s social identity and how it informs one’s worldview allows one to model for the mentee how a deeper understanding of one’s own culture produces confidence, pride and determination.

**Social Capital:** Social capital represents the value of a network of relationships in terms of what it can provide for the individuals in the network. Mentors can help provide valuable connections to mentees. Elements of social capital that impact the mentoring relationship include the amount of time spent together, the youth’s level of trust in their mentor, and communication between parents and mentors (Gaddis, 2012). Social capital within a mentee’s broader network is important to consider and to develop during the mentoring relationship.

**Strengths-Based Approach:** This approach encourages a focus on the strengths of the mentees and their social networks, including their families, friends, churches, organizations, and other actors in their communities. A strengths-based approach is in opposition to a deficit model, which focuses on mentee’s risk factors and the problems that exist for them.

## APPENDIX C - METHODOLOGY

This guidebook is informed by both research on effective practices for mentoring BYMOC and by the best available current implementation suggestions of practitioners and researchers working with this population. The research and resources mentioned in this guide are detailed in the *References* section and these works are cited within the text throughout the *Guide*.

In developing this guidebook, MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership and its contributors engaged in several key activities:

- Reviewed the synthesized research on mentoring practices and outcomes for youth of color and boys in particular.
- Reviewed multiple handbooks and practice manuals related to mentoring BYMOC.
- Interviewed leading researchers in this field, including Dr. Bernadette Sánchez (DePaul University) and Dr. Noelle Hurd (University of Virginia), to better understand the current research and theoretical framework for most effectively mentoring BYMOC.
- Interviewed leading technical assistance providers and practitioners to assess their program-tested recommendations for mentoring BYMOC.
- Reviewed the information collected during the listening sessions with mentors serving BYMOC that informed the development of “The Essentials” training referenced elsewhere in this guide,

We also considered research and recommended practices from other related fields, such as volunteer recruitment and human/adult learning. We feel that this combination of hard research, practitioner wisdom, and relevant theory from other fields provides the most comprehensive look at the nuances of serving BYMOC effectively via mentoring relationships. We encourage readers to use the *References* section to become more familiar with the research and practice guides referenced there, as well as to consider the much larger body of research that informed the original fourth edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*.

### **About the Evidence Base of Research on Mentoring BYMOC**

The current fourth edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* was informed by a review of over 400 research studies and reports on mentoring (and related fields) published between 1990 and 2015. While there has been considerable growth in the research on youth mentoring in the last decade, it is important to remember that the full body of evidence on youth mentoring is still emergent and that there are many potentially effective practices for mentoring that are still largely unexplored or lack conclusive recommendations. For this reason, the *Elements* also incorporates practitioner-tested practices that support program safety and mentoring relationship quality. But in spite of these limitations, the *Elements* represents the most definitive distillation of the research on youth mentoring to date, which is why we encourage My Brother's Keeper programs, and other programs serving BYMOC, to become intimately familiar with the practices and research base in the fourth edition of the *Elements* (MENTOR, 2015).

The evidence base around mentoring BYMOC is, obviously, a narrower slice of this broader mentoring research. Unfortunately, to date there have been very few studies that have specifically examined the differential effects of mentoring based on gender, race, ethnicity, or other factors. The BYMOC population combines two of these variables – gender and race – leaving an even thinner body of research looking specifically at their program participation and outcomes. In fact, a recent National Mentoring Resource Center review of the rigorously-designed research on mentoring for Black males identified fewer than 20 experimentally designed studies that met the evidence qualifications for inclusion. This means that although we know more about mentoring than ever before, our field still lacks definitive research-based evidence about the best strategies for mentoring BYMOC.

It is important to remember, however, that we do have many insights from existing research about how mentoring programs can engage communities of color, design services to be culturally responsive, and arrange their services to best meet the needs of specific groups of youth participants. That is what we have collected in this guide, both in terms of highlighting research-informed practices from the *Elements*, and in developing the additional Recommended Practices that make up the heart of this guide. As noted above, we have supplemented this research base with the best practitioner recommendations and a strong theoretical basis for how to best serve BYMOC through mentoring.

Remaining on the cutting edge of practice, by necessity, requires that we make judicious use of the best of the emerging body of evidence as it becomes available. Our hope is that with the focused attention that mentoring BYMOC is now receiving, thanks to My Brother's Keeper and other initiatives, the coming years will generate even more experimental research on how to best serve these boys and young men.

# Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™

## A CHECKLIST FOR MENTORING PROGRAMS



**MENTOR**  
THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

### STANDARD 1: RECRUITMENT

#### BENCHMARKS

##### MENTOR RECRUITMENT

- ☐ **B.1.1** Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of mentoring in the program.
- ☐ **B.1.2\*** Program utilizes recruitment strategies that build positive attitudes and emotions about mentoring.
- ☐ **B.1.3\*** Program recruits mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the program.
- ☐ **B.1.4\*** Program encourages mentors to assist with recruitment efforts by providing them with resources to ask individuals they know, who meet the eligibility criteria of the program, to be a mentor.
- ☐ **B.1.5\*** Program trains and encourages mentees to identify and recruit appropriate mentors for themselves, when relevant.

##### MENTEE AND PARENT OR GUARDIAN RECRUITMENT

- ☐ **B.1.6\*** Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of being mentored in the program.
- ☐ **B.1.7** Program recruits mentees whose needs best match the services offered by the program.

#### ENHANCEMENTS

##### MENTOR RECRUITMENT

- ☐ **E.1.1\*** Program communicates to mentors about how mentoring and volunteering can benefit them.

- ☐ **E.1.2** Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentors in its program.
- ☐ **E.1.3\*** Program uses multiple strategies to recruit mentors (e.g., direct ask, social media, traditional methods of mass communication, presentations, referrals) on an ongoing basis.

##### MENTEE AND PARENT OR GUARDIAN RECRUITMENT

- ☐ **E.1.4** Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentees in its program.
- ☐ **E.1.5\*** Program encourages mentees to recruit other peers to be mentees whose needs match the services offered by the program, when relevant.

### STANDARD 2: SCREENING

#### BENCHMARKS

##### MENTOR SCREENING

- ☐ **B.2.1\*** Program has established criteria for accepting mentors into the program as well as criteria for disqualifying mentor applicants.
- ☐ **B.2.2** Prospective mentors complete a written application that includes questions designed to help assess their safety and suitability for mentoring a youth.
- ☐ **B.2.3** Program conducts at least one face-to-face interview with each prospective mentor that includes questions designed to help the program assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.
- ☐ **B.2.4** Program conducts a comprehensive criminal background check on prospective

adult mentors, including searching a national criminal records database, along with sex offender and child abuse registries and, when relevant, driving records.

- ☐ **B.2.5** Program conducts reference check interviews with multiple adults who know an applicant (ideally, both personal and professional references) that include questions to help assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.
- ☐ **B.2.6\*** Prospective mentors agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or a minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.
- ☐ **B.2.7\*** Prospective mentors agree in writing to participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentees that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by their mentoring program.

##### MENTEE SCREENING

- ☐ **B.2.8\*** Program has established criteria for accepting youth into the program as well as criteria that would disqualify a potential youth participant.
- ☐ **B.2.9** Parent(s)/guardian(s) complete an application or referral form.
- ☐ **B.2.10** Parent(s)/guardian(s) provide informed permission for their child to participate.
- ☐ **B.2.11\*** Parent(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or the minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

- ☐ **B.2.12** Parents(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing that mentees participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentors that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by the mentoring program.

## ENHANCEMENTS

### MENTOR SCREENING

- ☐ **E.2.1** Program utilizes national, fingerprint-based FBI criminal background checks.
- ☐ **E.2.2\*** Program conducts at least one home visit of each prospective mentor, especially when the match may be meeting in the mentor's home.
- ☐ **E.2.3\*** Program conducts comprehensive criminal background checks on all adults living in the home of prospective mentors, including searches of a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries, when the match may meet in mentors' homes.
- ☐ **E.2.4** School-based programs assess mentors' interest in maintaining contact with their mentees during the summer months (following the close of the academic school year) and offer assistance to matches in maintaining contact.
- ☐ **E.2.5\*** Programs that utilize adult mentors prioritize accepting mentor applicants who are older than college-age.
- ☐ **E.2.6\*** Program uses evidence-based screening tools and practices to identify individuals who have attitudes and beliefs that support safe and effective mentoring relationships.

### MENTEE SCREENING

- ☐ **E.2.7\*** Mentees complete an application (either written or verbally).
- ☐ **E.2.8\*** Mentees provide written assent agreeing to participate in their mentoring program.

## STANDARD 3: TRAINING

### BENCHMARKS

#### MENTOR TRAINING

- ☐ **B.3.1** Program provides a minimum of two hours of pre-match, in-person, mentor training.
- ☐ **B.3.2** Program provides pre-match training for mentors on the following topics:
  - a. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing, being late to meetings, and match termination).
  - b. Mentors' goals and expectations for the mentee, parent or guardian, and the mentoring relationship.
  - c. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles.
  - d. Relationship development and maintenance.
  - e. Ethical and safety issues that may arise related to the mentoring relationship.
  - f. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship.
  - g. Sources of assistance available to support mentors.
  - h. Opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring specific populations of youth (e.g., children with an incarcerated parent, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, youth in foster care, high school dropouts), if relevant.
  - i. Initiating the mentoring relationship.
  - j. Developing an effective, positive relationship with mentee's family, if relevant.
- ☐ **B.3.3\*** Program provides pre-match training for the mentor on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.
  - a. Appropriate physical contact
  - b. Contact with mentoring program (e.g., who to contact, when to contact)
  - c. Relationship monitoring requirements (e.g., response time, frequency, schedule)
  - d. Approved activities
  - e. Mandatory reporting requirements associated with suspected child abuse or neglect, and suicidality and homicidality
  - f. Confidentiality and anonymity
  - g. Digital and social media use
  - h. Overnight visits and out of town travel

- i. Money spent on mentee and mentoring activities
- j. Transportation
- k. Emergency and crisis situation procedures
- l. Health and medical care
- m. Discipline
- n. Substance use
- o. Firearms and weapons
- p. Inclusion of others in match meetings (e.g., siblings, mentee's friends)
- q. Photo and image use
- r. Evaluation and use of data
- s. Grievance procedures
- t. Other program relevant topics
- ☐ **B.3.4** Program uses training practices and materials that are informed by empirical research or are themselves empirically evaluated.

## ENHANCEMENTS

### MENTOR TRAINING

- ☐ **E.3.1** Program provides additional pre-match training opportunities beyond the two-hour, in-person minimum for a total of six hours or more.
- ☐ **E.3.2** Program addresses the following post-match training topics:
  - a. How developmental functioning may affect the mentoring relationship
  - b. How culture, gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, and other demographic characteristics of the mentor and mentee may affect the mentoring relationship
  - c. Topics tailored to the needs and characteristics of the mentee
  - d. Closure procedures
- ☐ **E.3.3** Program uses training to continue to screen mentors for suitability to be a mentor and develops techniques for early trouble-shooting should problems be identified.

### MENTEE TRAINING

- ☐ **E.3.4\*** Program provides training for the mentee on the following topics:
  - a. Purpose of mentoring
  - b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)
  - c. Mentees' goals for mentoring
  - d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles



- e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles
  - f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships
  - g. Initiating the mentoring relationship
  - h. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship
- ☐ **E.3.5\*** Program provides training for the mentee on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

See B.3.3 for the list of policies to address during training.

## PARENT OR GUARDIAN TRAINING

- ☐ **E.3.6\*** Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) (when appropriate) on the following topics:
- a. Purpose of mentoring
  - b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)
  - c. Parents' and mentees' goals for mentoring
  - d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles
  - e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles
  - f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships
  - g. Initiating the mentoring relationship
  - h. Developing an effective, working relationship with your child's mentor
  - i. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship
- ☐ **E.3.7\*** Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

See B.3.3 for the list of policies to address during training.

## STANDARD 4: MATCHING

### BENCHMARKS

- ☐ **B.4.1** Program considers the characteristics of the mentor and mentee (e.g., interests; proximity; availability; age; gender; race; ethnicity; personality; expressed preferences of mentor, mentee,

and parent or guardian; goals; strengths; previous experiences) when making matches.

- ☐ **B.4.2** Program arranges and documents an initial meeting between the mentor and mentee as well as, when relevant, with the parent or guardian.
- ☐ **B.4.3** Program staff member should be on site and/or present during the initial match meeting of the mentor and mentee, and, when relevant, parent or guardian.
- ☐ **B.4.4\*** Mentor, mentee, a program staff member, and, when relevant, the mentee's parent or guardian, meet in person to sign a commitment agreement consenting to the program's rules and requirements (e.g., frequency, intensity and duration of match meetings; roles of each person involved in the mentoring relationship; frequency of contact with program), and risk management policies.
- ### ENHANCEMENTS
- ☐ **E.4.1\*** Programs match mentee with a mentor who is at least three years older than the mentee.
- ☐ **E.4.2\*** Program sponsors a group matching event where prospective mentors and mentees can meet and interact with one another, and provide the program with feedback on match preferences.
- ☐ **E.4.3\*** Program provides an opportunity for the parent(s) or guardian(s) to provide feedback about the mentor selected by the program, prior to the initiation meeting.
- ☐ **E.4.4\*** Initial match meeting occurs at the home of the mentee with the program staff member present, if the mentor will be picking up the mentee at the mentee's home for match meetings.
- ☐ **E.4.5\*** Program staff member prepares mentor for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentor with background information about prospective mentee; remind mentor of confidentiality; discuss potential opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring proposed mentee).
- ☐ **E.4.6\*** Program staff member prepares mentee and his or her parents or guardians for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentee and parent(s) with background

information about selected mentor; discuss any family rules that should be shared with the mentor; discuss what information family members would like to share with the mentor and when).

## STANDARD 5:

## MONITORING AND SUPPORT

### BENCHMARKS

- ☐ **B.5.1** Program contacts mentors and mentees at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.
- ☐ **B.5.2\*** At each mentor monitoring contact, program staff should ask mentors about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentor and mentee using a standardized procedure.
- ☐ **B.5.3\*** At each mentee monitoring contact, program should ask mentees about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.
- ☐ **B.5.4** Program follows evidence-based protocol to elicit more in-depth assessment from mentors and mentees about the quality of their mentoring relationships, and uses scientifically-tested relationship assessment tools.
- ☐ **B.5.5\*** Program contacts a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., parent, guardian, or teacher) at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.
- ☐ **B.5.6\*** At each monitoring contact with a responsible adult in the mentee's life, program asks about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.\*
- ☐ **B.5.7\*** Program regularly assesses all matches to determine if they should be closed or encouraged to continue.

- **B.5.8** Program documents information about each mentor-mentee meeting including, at a minimum, the date, length, and description of activity completed.
- **B.5.9** Program provides mentors with access to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, experienced mentors) to help mentors address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise.
- **B.5.10\*** Program provides mentees and parents or guardians with access or referrals to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, available social service referrals) to help families address needs and challenges as they arise.
- **B.5.11** Program provides one or more opportunities per year for post-match mentor training.
- **B.5.12\*** Program provides mentors with feedback on a regular basis regarding their mentees' outcomes and the impact of mentoring on their mentees to continuously improve mentee outcomes and encourage mentor retention.

## ENHANCEMENTS

- **E.5.1\*** Program conducts a minimum of one in-person monitoring and support meeting per year with mentor, mentee, and when relevant, parent or guardian.
- **E.5.2** Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and/or offers information about activities that matches might wish to participate in together.
- **E.5.3\*** Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and mentees' families.
- **E.5.4** Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at some point during each year of the mentoring relationship, prior to match closure.
- **E.5.5\*** At least once each school or calendar year of the mentoring relationship, program thanks the family or a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., guardian or teacher) and recognizes their contributions in supporting the mentee's engagement in mentoring.

## STANDARD 6: CLOSURE

### BENCHMARKS

- **B.6.1** Program has a procedure to manage anticipated closures, when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.
- **B.6.2** Program has a procedure to manage unanticipated closures, when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.
- **B.6.3\*** Program has a procedure to manage closure when one member of the match is unable or unwilling to engage in the closure process.
- **B.6.4** Program conducts exit interview with mentors and mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians.
- **B.6.5\*** Program has a written policy and procedure, when relevant, for managing rematching.
- **B.6.6\*** Program documents that closure procedures were followed.
- **B.6.7\*** Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentors that includes the following topics of conversation:
  - a. Discussion of mentors' feelings about closure
  - b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant
  - c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship
  - d. Procedure for mentor notifying the mentee and his or her parents, if relevant, far enough in advance of the anticipated closure meeting to provide sufficient time to adequately prepare the mentee for closure
  - e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact
  - f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant
  - g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible
  - h. Discussion of possible rematching, if relevant
- **B.6.8\*** Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians that includes the following topics of conversation:

- a. Discussion of mentees' feelings about closure
- b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant
- c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship
- d. Procedure for notification of mentor, if relevant, about the timing of closure
- e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact
- f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant
- g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible
- h. Discussion of possible rematching, if relevant
- **B.6.9** Program has a written public statement to parents or guardians, if relevant, as well as to mentors and mentees that outline the terms of match closure and the policies for mentor/mentee contact after a match ends (e.g., including contacts using digital or social media).

### ENHANCEMENTS

- **E.6.1** At the conclusion of the agreed upon time period of the mentoring relationship, program explores the opportunity with mentors, mentees, and (when relevant) parents or guardians to continue the match for an additional period of time.
- **E.6.2** Program hosts a final celebration meeting or event for mentors and mentees, when relevant, to mark progress and transition or acknowledge change in the mentoring relationship.
- **E.6.3\*** Program staff provide training and support to mentees and mentors, as well as, when relevant, to parents or guardians, about how mentees can identify and connect with natural mentors in their lives.

*\* Benchmark and Enhancement practices that are marked with an asterisk represent those that are either new or were substantially changed from the Third Edition. Mentoring programs are encouraged to give equal consideration to the implementation of all of the Benchmark practices that are listed under this Standard.*

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## RESEARCH

Our curriculum and coaching model is research-based and we regularly review new studies and peer efforts to improve our effectiveness. Here is key research that informs our current work.

### Complex, Adaptive and Oppressive Systems / Structural Racism

Alexander, Michelle (2012). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press: New York, NY.

DiAngelo, Robin and Michael Eric Dyson (2018). *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Beacon Press: Boston, MA.

Irving, Debby (2014). *Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*. Elephant Room Press: Plano, TX.

Katznelson, Ira (2013). *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America*. W. W. Norton & Company: New York, NY.

Kendi, Ibram X (2017). *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. Bold Type Books: New York, NY.

Lawrence, Keith, et. al, (2009), "Constructing A Racial Theory of Change", Aspen Institute.

Menakem, Resmaa (2017). *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*. Central Recovery Press: Las Vegas, NV.

Okum, Tema (2010). *The Emperor Has No Clothes: Teaching About Race And Racism To People Who Don't Want To Know*. Information Age Publishing: Charlotte, NC.

Painter, Nell Irvin (2011). *The History of White People*. W. W. Norton & Company: New York, NY.

powell, john. (June 2009). "Post-Racialism or Targeted Universalism", *Denver University Law Review*.

powell, john (2012). *Racing To Justice*, Indiana University Press.

powell, john, (2005), "Toward a Structural Racism Framework."

Rothstein, Richard (2018). *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York, NY: Liveright Publishing.

Snowden, David and Kurtz, Cynthia, "The New Dynamics of Strategy", IBM Systems Journal, 2003.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel (2003). *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: And Other Conversations About Race*. Basic Books: New York, NY.

Wheatley, Margarey and Deborah Frieze (2011). *Walk Out Walk On: A Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Oakland, CA.

## **Organizational Development: Coaching and Group Facilitation**

Brown, Tim, (2009). *Change by Design*. Harper Collins Publishers.

Heron, John. (1999). *The Complete Facilitator's Handbook*. Kogen Page Limited.

Heron, John (2001). *Helping the Client: A Creative Practical Guide*. SAGE Publications.

Costa, Arthur, et. al. (2002). *Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools*. Christopher-Gordan Publishers.

Brookfield, Stephen (2004). *The Power of Critical Theory: Liberating adult learning and teaching*. Jossey-Bass.

Weissglass, Julian. (1998). *Ripples of hope: Building relationships for educational change*. Center for Educational Change in Mathematics and Science, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Lipmanowicz, Henri and McCandless, Keith (2013). *The Surprising Power of Liberating Structures: Simple Rules to Unleash A Culture of Innovation*. Liberating Structures Press.

## **Leadership Development**

Heifetz, Ronald, et, al. (2009). *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*. Harvard Business Press.

Knowles, Richard (2002). *The Leadership Dance: Pathways to Extraordinary Organizational Effectiveness*.

Snowden, David and Boone, Mary E. "A Leader's Framework for Decision-Making", *Harvard Business Review*, November 2007.

Wheatley, Margaret (2006). *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Zuieback, Steve (2012). *Leadership Practices for Challenging Times: Principles, Skills and Practices that Work*. [www.stevezuieback.com](http://www.stevezuieback.com).

## Instruction and Culturally Responsive Classrooms

Hammond, Zaretta (2014). *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*. Corwin.

Cushman, Kathleen. (2010). *Fires In the Mind: What Kids Can Tell Us About Motivation and Mastery*. Jossey Bass.

Dweck, Carol. (2007). *Mindsets: The New Psychology of Success*. Ballantine Books. Gay, G. (2000).

Gay, Geneva (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Howard, G. (1999). *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. Teachers College Press.

Irvine, J. J. (1990). *Black students and school failure: Policies, practices, and prescriptions*. Greenwood Press.

Kohl, H. (1995). *'I Won't Learn from You': And Other Thoughts on Creative Maladjustment*. New Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing Over to Canaan: The Journey of New Teachers in Diverse Classrooms*. Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (Summer, 1995). "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy." *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 34, No.3, pp.159-165.

Steele, C. (2009). *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us (Issues of Our Time)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.



<https://nationalequityproject.org/resources/webinars>

## WEBINARS

### Recent Webinars

Please complete this form to access any of the webinars below. Each webinar is 1 hour.

#### **Implicit Bias, Structural Racialization, and Equity**

Increased interest in the topic of implicit bias provides an opportunity to open and deepen important conversations in our organizations and communities about equity, belonging, and ultimately justice. Most work on implicit bias focuses on increasing awareness of individuals in service of changing how they view and treat others. But to lead to meaningful change, an exploration of implicit bias must be situated as part of a much larger conversation about how current inequities in our institutions came to be, how they are held in place, and what our role as leaders is in perpetuating inequities despite our good intentions.

Our success in creating organizations and communities in which everyone has access to the opportunities they need to thrive depends on our willingness to confront the history and impacts of structural racism, learn how implicit bias operates, and take action to interrupt inequitable practices at the interpersonal, institutional and structural level.

#### **Equity 101: Starting the Equity Conversation**

The word “equity” is everywhere these days– but what does it really mean? What if it means something different to me, to my colleagues, and to my community? A crucial part of the “equity conversation” is creating meaningful opportunities for people to connect to why equity matters to them. Connecting to their “why” helps people to individually and collectively define what equity means and looks like in their own context.

Schools, districts and organizations often name “equity goals”. But in order to set — let alone reach — equity goals, you need to create conditions for people to make sense of what equity means, why it’s important, and how to approach it together. Working with equity at the center requires people to authentically bring who they are and their life experiences to the table. This isn’t always easy in a professional setting, but it is a necessary part of getting people ready to lead for equity.

Learn some of the why, what, and how of NEP's over 20 years of experience in initializing equity conversations in service of transforming the life trajectories of historically underserved youth and families. In our view – equity is a process, not just an outcome. Walk away with new insights and some concrete tools for getting the equity conversation started in your context.

## Designing Agendas for Equity Work

Designing meetings for productive discussion and collaboration on equity work requires intentional planning that is responsive to both the emotional and cognitive/intellectual needs of participants. We believe that, when planning adult learning, it's essential to design an experience people will go through together that moves beyond a series of tasks or agenda items. This is particularly true when a group is engaging in conversations focused on issues of equity or other emotionally-charged challenges that arise while working together.

In this webinar, we will offer a framework for participant engagement used by the National Equity Project in professional learning opportunities that support authentic engagement, meaningful collaboration and movement forward on challenging and important work. Join the National Equity Project as we share some of the foundations of designing agendas for equity conversations in service of transforming the life trajectories of historically underserved youth.

## Focal Students: Equity in the Classroom

Moving from “big picture” conversations about equity to effectively changing classroom practices can be a big hurdle for schools and districts. At the National Equity Project, we've supported major shifts in classroom practice and gains for students by working with teachers to take a *focal student approach*: learning deeply from a few students to change practices to impact greater numbers of students. We use our signature Learning Partnership framework – drawing from the work of our colleague Zaretta Hammond ([author of Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain](#)) – to guide this focal student approach.

Learning Partnerships enable educators to build trust with students across differences of identity (race, gender, class, family background, life experience, etc.) and leverage that trust in service of deeper ownership—and ultimately acceleration—of student learning.

Join us to explore:

- What learning conditions have we created that either inhibit or promote student success?
- What kind of relationships increase engagement and ownership of learning for students – especially those who have not been successful in schools and/or have a history of negative experiences?



- Why and how might we use a focal student approach in service of working toward equity?
- What does it mean to build a Learning Partnership between teachers & students? How can we get started in building that partnership?

This webinar is designed for teachers and anyone who supports teacher practice. You'll be introduced to the National Equity Project's Learning Partnership framework, hear some of our experiences with how a focal student approach can be most effective, and receive some practical resources to get you started.

[Complete this form to access any of the webinars above.](#)



## NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

News & publications from and featuring National Equity Project staff, board, and partners.

**5 Steps for Liberating Public Education From Its Deep Racial Bias** | by LaShawn Routé Chatmon and Kathleen Osta

Editorial in *Education Week* on how social emotional learning can build a more-inclusive school community—but only if done well.

### **Hugh Vasquez on *Speak Out* with Tim Wise**

Senior Associate Hugh Vasquez appeared as a guest on anti-racism activist Tim Wise's podcast *Speak Out*. The conversation focused on the role of subconscious bias in perpetuating racial inequities, and how individuals and institutions can begin to undo the impact of these biases and create policies and practices that minimize the damage they can do. In their discussion Hugh and Tim explore the research from the field of brain science and how that research can (and must) inform our strategies for addressing racism in our communities.

### **A Safe Place to Talk About Race: 10 Thought Provoking Interviews**

Senior Associate Hugh Vasquez's interview "When People of Color Turn to Self Hate" is featured in the book and addresses the issue of internalized oppression.

### **Educators Alarmed: Black, Latino High School Students Performing at Academic Levels of 30 Years Ago**

Executive Director LaShawn Routé Chatmon was interviewed for this article, along with Amy Wilkins, vice president for government affairs and communications at the [Education Trust](#); Dominique Apollon, research director of the [Applied Research Center](#); and Pedro Noguera, professor of education at New York University.

### **The Conversation Labs: An Experiment in Funder / Practitioner Dialogues**

Sr. Associate Hugh Vasquez co-authored a report titled "[The Conversation Labs: An Experiment in Funder / Practitioner Dialogues](#)." The report describes a series of dialogues between philanthropic and nonprofit leaders "with no expectations other than to engage in honest conversations about what works and what doesn't." Hugh facilitated the Labs and offers his observations in this report on a rare experiment in collaborative dialogue for social change.

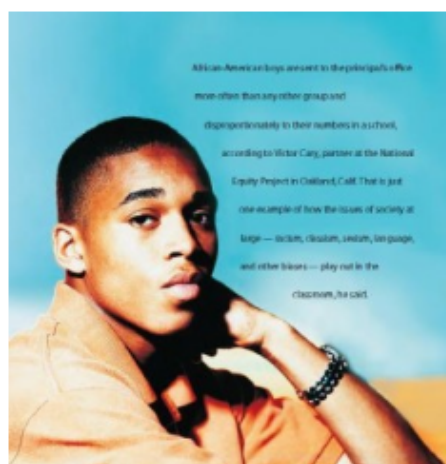
### National Equity Project Recognized as a “Highly Effective Nonprofit”

We are honored that a group of 96 experts identified us as a top nonprofit working in the middle-secondary education field. Only 15 out of over 130 nonprofits reviewed earned the distinction of a Philanthropedia Top Nonprofit. Philanthropedia is a nonprofit organization working to connect donors with some of the highest impact nonprofits in a cause. Unlike other online rating/donor sites, they use experts to identify high-impact nonprofits, and they allow donors to support an entire social cause through an Expert Fund. Visit the [Philanthropedia's website](#) to learn more about how the experts reviewed us, and make a donation to us or to the Bay Area middle-secondary education Expert Fund.

### “Coaches Root Out Deep Bias”, *Journal of Staff Development*

Our coaching model was featured in the August 2010 *Journal of Staff Development*. Victor Cary, Senior Director and Tom Malarkey, Senior Associate, are both featured. The article highlights the work of Kimi Kean, Oakland Unified School District Regional Executive Officer and a longtime National Equity Project partner and her experience with our coaching as principal of Acorn Woodland elementary school. Acorn Woodland was a new small school we helped open in 2000 that has become high-performing school serving low-income students of color.

*“Coaching is about developing your inner capacity. It’s about inquiry. What’s your current reality, what data tells you that, what goal do you have, what’s getting in the way, what do you want to try to make that different? Then, once you try, reflecting on it. What did you produce now? Are you closer to your goal? What’s the next strategy you’ll use? It’s about teaching people how to think and problem solve rather than giving people a prescription.”*



“Coaches Root Out Deep Bias”, *Journal of Staff Development*

### “In The Midst of Transformation: Reflections from the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools.” *Horace*, Vol 23 No. 4. Winter 2007.

Executive Director LaShawn Routé Chatmon was featured in the Winter 2007 issue of *Horace*, The Journal of the Coalition of Essential Schools.



***Unfinished Business: Closing the Racial Achievement Gap in our Schools.*** Pedro Antonio Noguera and Jean Yonemura Wing, Eds. Jossey-Bass, 2006.

In this groundbreaking book, co-editors Pedro Noguera (NEP Advisory Board member) and Jean Wing investigate the dynamics of race and achievement at Berkeley High School, a longtime National Equity Project partner. *Unfinished Business* brings to light the hidden inequities of schools – where cultural attitudes, academic tracking, curricular access, and after-school activities serve as sorting mechanisms that set students on paths of success or failure.

*Unfinished Business* examines the results of the Berkeley High School Diversity Project, a six-year research and organizing project that brought together high school students, parents, teachers, staff, and university researchers to explore how a school and a community can act together to address the racial disparities that exist in academic performance. Our Executive Director LaShawn Routé Chatmon was the Co-Director of the Diversity Project and contributes to the book.

***Working Toward Equity : Resources and Writings from the Teacher Research Collaborative.*** Eds. Linda Friedrich, Carol Tateishi, Tom Malarkey, Elizabeth Radin Simons, and Marty Williams, The National Writing Project, 2006.

Tom Malarkey and former BayCES coach Liz Simons helped edit this book, in collaboration with CES National, the National Writing Project and the Bay Area Writing Project. [Click here to download the complete PDF.](#)

“What is equity? What does it mean to work for equity in schools? What does it mean to make equity central in our work as teacher-researchers? Working Toward Equity explores these and other questions in 13 narratives from a broad spectrum of educators chronicling their real work in classrooms, schools, districts, and professional development organizations. Working Toward Equity grew out of the pursuits of the Teacher Research Collaborative, a three-year collaboration among educators who believe that the power of inquiry can be focused on vital educational goals such as equity.”

***Teaching as Inquiry: Asking Hard Questions to Improve Practice and Student Achievement.*** Alexandra Weinbaum, et al, Eds. Teachers College Press, 2004.

Senior Associate Tom Malarkey and former BayCES coach Liz Simons contribute chapters to this examination of invaluable, research-based guidelines for incorporating inquiry into teacher's instructional practices and student work as part of the ongoing work of schools.

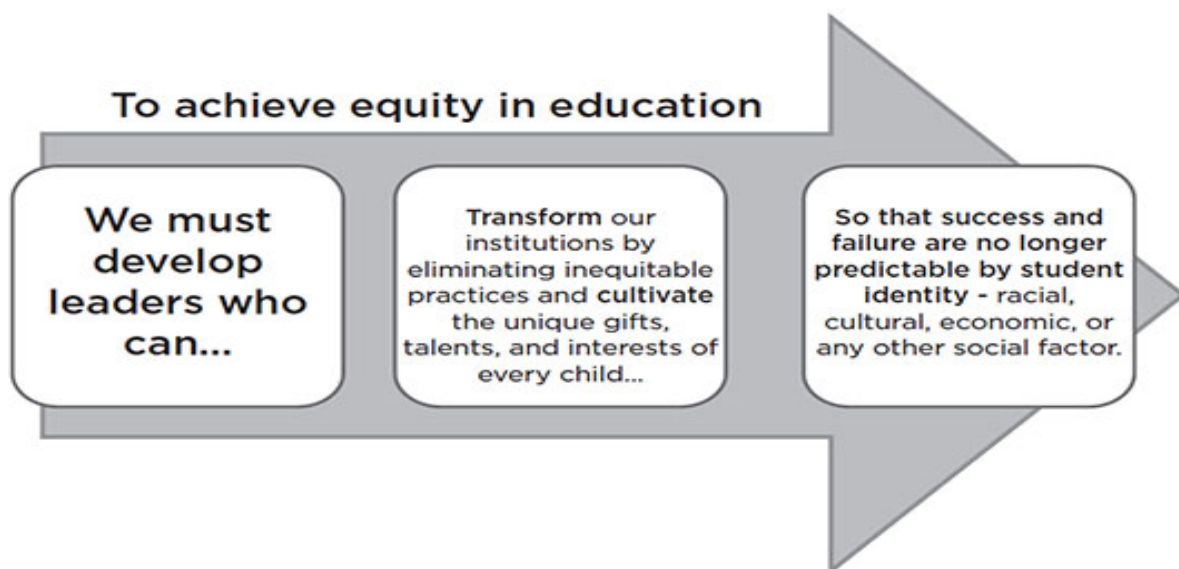
"We see the role of collaborative inquiry as creating a professional community where experts and novices learn together from the examination of cases and the support of effective practice. Together, members of inquiry groups hold themselves and their colleagues accountable by surfacing unexamined assumptions and concepts...and by asking and demanding answers to questions such as, Where are we going? How well are we doing? What have we learned from outside experts, other schools and teachers, and our own experiences? How can we support each other in improving our practice?"



<https://nationalequityproject.org/resources/featured-resources>

## FEATURED RESOURCES

Educational Equity: National Equity Project's Definition



## Additional Resources

- 5 Steps for Liberating Public Education From Its Deep Racial Bias
- Constructivist Listening
- Cultural Synchronization Questions: Building Rapport
- Developing Community Agreements
- Don't Talk About Implicit Bias Without Talking About Structural Racism
- Effects of Oppression on the Learners' Brain
- Implicit Bias and Structural Racialization
- Liberatory Design Card Deck
- Lens of Systemic Oppression