Council’s Males of Color Initiative Advancing in Big-City School Districts

The Fort Worth school system in Texas recently formed a My Brother’s Keeper Task Force to address challenges facing its students of color. Florida’s Broward County school district has partnered with a local college to create a mentoring program for minority males. California’s Long Beach school system plans a Students of Color Town Hall Meeting to provide information on helping to prepare all students for success.

These three school districts and many other big-city school systems around the nation have embraced the Council of the Great City Schools’ call to action following a White House event last summer, when President Obama announced that 60 urban school districts pledged unprecedented support to help boys and young men of color succeed.

The Council led the 60 urban school districts to Washington to support the president’s My Brother’s Keeper initiative, which was launched a year ago to help young males of color reach their full potential.

“We need to include pastors, juvenile services, other elected officials, students, teachers and parents to address this issue,” says Ashley Paz, a board member of the Fort Worth Independent School District, in a news release recently announcing the district’s My Brother’s Keeper Task Force.

A My Brother’s Keeper Summit is scheduled for Feb. 21 in Fort Worth, which will involve community and school district leaders to discuss racial equity, culture and disparity in the school system.

The Fort Worth district reports significant challenges facing its students of color:

• 76 percent of African American students and 80 percent of Hispanic students are economically disadvantaged as compared to 31 percent of white students;

• 41 percent of African American students and 55 percent of Hispanic students were successful in state assessments compared to 75 percent of white students; and

• Suspensions for African American and Hispanic males exceeded 11,000 in 2013-14 compared to 1,600 white male suspensions.

Empowerment Initiative

The District of Columbia Public Schools recently launched a new initiative called Empowering Males of Color, aimed at increasing the success of black and Latino male students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

Over the next three years, the school system plans to dedicate $20 million to help improve the outcomes of its males of color by working with the community, identifying strategies to elevate the student experience, and boosting achievement to prepare males of color for college, careers and life.

Local College Partnership

The Broward County School Board in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., recently partnered with Broward College to support and advance its Mentoring Tomorrow’s Leaders initiative by creating a mentoring program for minority males attending two high schools.

Implementing Programs

A few months after President Obama in July announced that 60 school districts pledged to improve educational outcomes for boys and young men of color, the Council of the Great City Schools held a two-day conference to turn the pledge into reality. Urban school leaders from around the nation converged in Milwaukee to discuss implementing action plans at the conference titled “United to Make a Difference: Improving the Achievement of Young Men of Color.”

Since that October meeting, some 25 big-city school districts have submitted implementation plans to advance the Council’s Males of Color Initiative.

The Council has also partnered with the College Board to publish a brief “how to” guide describing how some of urban school districts have expanded participation in Advanced Placement courses among students of color. The booklet also features data on the aggregate number of students of color who are not taking AP even though they qualify for the courses.

Males of Color Events

More than 200 students in Albuquerque recently discussed student discipline...
and engagement in an event called My Brother’s Keeper Community Challenge Student Summit, hosted by the Albuquerque Public Schools.

The forum engaged youth, community leaders, policymakers and community members in a community conversation aimed at assessing needs, setting priorities, and developing concrete goals to improve social and academic outcomes for young men of color.

In Long Beach, Calif., the school system plans what it calls a Students of Color Town Hall Meeting on Feb. 28. Parents will have an opportunity to attend workshops that will enhance effective parenting skills, and community agencies will be available to provide resources and information.

“The Town Hall meeting is one more way our school district is building upon its nationally recognized efforts to help all students succeed, regardless of color, disability and socioeconomic status,” says Chris Efthychiou, public information director at the Long Beach Unified School District.

### Council of the Great City Schools 2015 Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Human Resources Officers Meeting</td>
<td>February 4-6, 2015</td>
<td>Ft. Lauderdale, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legislative/Policy Conference</td>
<td>March 14-17, 2015</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief Operating Officers Conference</td>
<td>April 21-24, 2015</td>
<td>Las Vegas, NV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bilingual Directors Meeting</td>
<td>May 13-16, 2015</td>
<td>Charlotte, NC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief Information Officers Meeting</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Relations Executives Meeting</td>
<td>July 10-12, 2015</td>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Research Directors’ Meeting</td>
<td>July 15-18, 2015</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Fall Conference</td>
<td>October 7-11, 2015</td>
<td>Long Beach, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief Financial Officers Conference</td>
<td>November 2015</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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