



## Raising Achievement for Males of Color in Cleveland

# Raising Achievement for Males of Color in Cleveland

**R**aising achievement for young men of color in America is a challenge in every big city school district. But in Cleveland, where staff in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District serve the highest population of poor children in the nation, closing the achievement gap is a moral imperative.

Using federal funding to assist at-risk, male students of color in their quest to become a high school graduates, CMSD identified four risk factors that pose a danger to minority males in progressing with their grade-level peers, including:

- Failing two or more core classes in eighth grade
- Being absent more than 20 percent of the school year
- Receiving five or more days of out-of-school suspension
- Being over-age for their grade, an indication of possible retention

Schools with a three-year overall average graduation rate of 80 percent or less were required to have additional supports to close the achievement gap.

## CMSD's Linkage Coordinators

At each CMSD school, "Linkage Coordinators":

- Serve as mentors, life coaches, motivators and advocates for male students of color
- Provide life-changing experiences through exposure events and activities outside the students' neighborhoods
- Guide students through a range of social and emotional developmental interventions in their school and community
- Foster strong working relationships between male students of color and their school administrators, teachers and staff

CMSD provides high-quality professional development for educators and access to culturally relevant pedagogy focused on developing males of color in every way—physically, emotionally and intellectually—from the pivotal ninth-grade year to college and career.

## Cleveland's efforts are working

Data shows that the achievement gap is narrowing; graduation rates for black and Hispanic students have increased.

## At the heart of the strategy is *The Cleveland Plan*

CMSD's customized blueprint for education reform was written into state law at the urging of school and community leaders in 2011. The plan's fundamental purpose is to ensure that every child, in every neighborhood, has access to a quality education.

The following pages break down these efforts by category, particularly as they pertain to raising achievement for males of color.



## Table of contents

Transforming schools, raising graduation rates .....	2
Parent training and engagement .....	3
Talking about race and culture .....	4
Addressing chronic absenteeism .....	5
Revising suspension and discipline policies.....	6
Expanding AP and Gifted and Talented programs.....	7
Developing male educators of color.....	8
Expanding access to college .....	9
Addressing Special Education over-identification .....	10
Expanding PreK.....	11
Bolstering a pipeline of academic success.....	12
Developing data systems for tracking.....	13



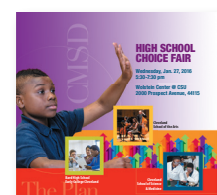


## Transforming schools, raising graduation rates

- CMSD is a portfolio district, with a growing number of models that allow students to choose the best fit. Options include STEM education, performing arts, digital arts, single gender, architecture and design, science and medicine, early-college study and social justice.
- The single-gender schools include Ginn Academy, which is believed to be the only public all-male high school in the country, and two all-male K-8 schools, Kenneth W. Clement Boys' Leadership Academy and Valley View Boys' Leadership Academy.
- Ginn Academy has drawn national attention. The school, which has a predominantly African-American enrollment, has a four-year graduation rate of 84.1 percent, well above the District's record 66.1 percent, and a five-year graduation rate of 94.4 percent.
- Project-based schools provide a hands-on, experiential approach that puts students in charge of their education. An increasing number of high schools feature mastery learning, which lets a student progress at his own pace.
- With the aid of Ford Next Generation Learning, CMSD's five career-technical schools are revamping their programs to increase rigor and meet the needs of the modern workforce. Learn more at [bit.ly/1YaEh5g](http://bit.ly/1YaEh5g)
- Mentors work one-on-one with students as they transition to and move through high school. The Closing the Achievement Gap program makes "linkage coordinators" available to at-risk students in select high schools 24 hours a day. Learn more at [bit.ly/1oV5VXE](http://bit.ly/1oV5VXE)
- The Cleveland Foundation's True2U program currently has 200 mentors for 800 eighth-graders in 23 low-performing schools and within two years will serve 2,400 eighth-graders across all 70 K-8 schools. Learn more at [bit.ly/10VaJBr](http://bit.ly/10VaJBr)
- The CEO's Student Advisory Committee, made up of more than 400 students from 30 high schools, gives students a voice in their education and allows them to provide feedback on their building's academic rigor, safety and support. Learn more at [bit.ly/1ntXx0d](http://bit.ly/1ntXx0d)
- Promise Academy, a charter school established by the District, offers a dropout-recovery program for students ages 16 to 21. Students work online at their own paces.
- The School of One provides individual learning plans for high school students who face barriers in education. Advisors provide personal attention and stay with the same, limited number of students until they graduate.

## Parent training and engagement

- *The Cleveland Plan* requires that parents have meaningful face-to-face contact with their children's teachers at least once a year. Eighty percent of District parents met with teachers last school year. Learn more at [bit.ly/1LEq2DP](http://bit.ly/1LEq2DP)
- Parents are taught to analyze their children's academic data and provide support at home. At some schools, Academic Parent Teacher Teams review student data, set goals for the children and practice activities that can be used to reinforce lessons at home. Learn more at [bit.ly/1nIhNkG](http://bit.ly/1nIhNkG)
- An interactive website provides information on Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee. The website — [bit.ly/1pqiYAU](http://bit.ly/1pqiYAU) — gives parents tools they can use to help their children meet the Guarantee and earn promotion to fourth grade.
- CMSD's Parent University provides parent-training workshops. Parent University's college bus tours expose parents and students to higher education and help them understand admissions, financial aid and support systems. Read the Education Week story at [bit.ly/1q9EXrX](http://bit.ly/1q9EXrX)
- With assistance from the United Way and other agencies, 25 schools offer community wrap-around services that help students and families overcome barriers to success. Examples include housing counseling, emergency food and shelter and social activities that engage and support families. Learn more at [bit.ly/24FXD60](http://bit.ly/24FXD60)
- At an annual High School Choice Fair, families meet with representatives of individual schools and help their children determine which schools are right for them.
- An annual Fathers Walk encourages dads to walk their children to school and become more involved in their education.







## Talking about race and culture

- The District sponsors annual symposiums for black and Hispanic students, creating a forum to discuss issues of concern.
- Facing History New Tech High School concentrates on social justice and human rights, combining the introspective Facing History and Ourselves Curriculum with the technology-based approach of the New Tech Network. The school hosts an annual human rights summit.
- The All-City Musical tackles issues such as race relations, sexuality and gender roles with productions like “Rent” and “Memphis.”
- This year, ninth-graders participated in a “citywide read” of “The Children of Willesden Lane,” the true story of a Jewish teenager who was forced to leave her family and Austria to escape the Nazis. The reading and a one-woman show by the central character’s daughter conveyed the importance of tolerance and holding fast to hope in the bleakest of times.



## Addressing chronic absenteeism

- The “Get 2 School. You Can Make It!” campaign emphasizes the importance of regular school attendance, with schools and community partners led by the Cleveland Browns reinforcing the message and providing incentives to help accomplish the campaign’s goal. Learn more at [get2schoolcleveland.com](http://get2schoolcleveland.com)
- Schools, with the help of attendance liaisons, monitor attendance and follow up with families of students who are off track.
- The Safe Routes to School initiative, which includes the city and other partners, is developing a plan for safety improvements along major corridors where students bike and walk. The ultimate goal is to eliminate barriers that keep children from attending school while also improving their health and focus and the environment. Learn more at [bit.ly/1pqjKhg](http://bit.ly/1pqjKhg)
- The District works with Cleveland Municipal Court on the Redirecting Our Curfew Kids program. The court delivers a strong attendance message and waives fines if students caught violating daytime curfew perform community service and attend a class. Parents must also attend a class and participate in a school meeting.







## Revising suspension and discipline policies



Much of CMSD's work in this area is rooted in a social and emotional learning program that serves as a model for the country. Cleveland is a member of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, a group of eight large urban systems brought together to share best practices.

- The PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) curriculum teaches children in prekindergarten through fifth grade to understand and manage their emotions. Second Step covers grades six through eight. A high school program is under discussion.
- Planning centers, an alternative to suspension, give children a place to reflect meaningfully on their behavior and chart strategies for more appropriate responses.
- Student support teams determine courses of intervention tailored for the individual child.
- Class meetings give students at certain grade levels a forum for airing their concerns and planning steps to improve the school climate.
- Conditions for learning surveys, administered three times a year, measure the extent to which students in a school feel safe and supported.
- The CEO's Student Advisory Committee, made up of more than 400 students from 30 high schools, provides feedback on their schools' academic rigor, safety and support.
- Anti-bullying programs like Not on Our Watch and Working Against Violent Environments are active in schools throughout the District.
- CMSD's efforts to make students feel safe and supported fall under the Humanware Department. Learn more at [bit.ly/1QvSDvh](http://bit.ly/1QvSDvh)

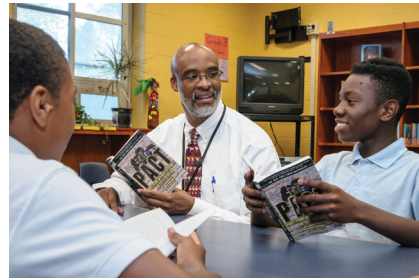


## Expanding AP / Gifted & Talented Programs

- Ten high schools will participate in the National Math and Science Initiative's College Readiness Program, which is designed to move more students, especially those from underserved groups, into advanced placement courses with more rigorous instruction. Students will receive help studying and paying for exams. Learn more at [bit.ly/1YaOXAj](http://bit.ly/1YaOXAj)
- CMSD offers AP classes in 18 schools and 18 subjects, with total enrollment of more than 1,200. Chief Executive Officer Eric Gordon is seeking to increase AP participation and scores.
- The John Hay Campus provides an option for high school students who meet academic criteria. The campus consists of three small schools that partner with institutions in surrounding University Circle and focus, respectively, on science and medicine, architecture and design and an early-college program.
- Six K-8 schools have Gifted and Talented classrooms. Twelve others have pull-out reading and math programs.







## Developing male educators of color

- The District is creating a training program and leadership pipeline for male educators of color. Fellows will participate in a weekend summer institute, attend weekly professional development, receive coaching and complete a capstone project.
- CMSD places special emphasis on hiring male educators of color through the annual Teach Cleveland recruiting campaign.
- The District also has begun working with Profound Gentlemen to increase the number of male educators of color in classrooms.



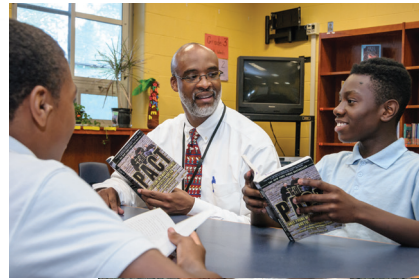
## Expanding access to college



- CMSD belongs to the Higher Education Compact of Greater Cleveland, created to ensure that more District students attend and complete college or other post-secondary education. Learn more at [highereducationcompact.org](http://highereducationcompact.org)
- The compact, which includes colleges and universities, tracks performance and publishes an annual report. Data shows that graduates are better prepared for higher education and are more persistent in obtaining their degrees.
- The District and compact aggressively promote completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and provide guidance, in and outside of school, as students apply for admission and aid. College Now Greater Cleveland staff work directly with students in schools.
- Students in grades six through 12 use Naviance, an online college and career planning tool.
- CMSD serves as an ACT test site, annually administering the exam during school at the District's expense. Eighth-graders take the PSAT.







## Addressing Special Education over-identification

- CMSD is actively working to reduce the number of male students of color who are placed in classrooms exclusively for those who are emotionally disturbed. Students are instead placed in more inclusive classrooms, where, with support they receive the same exposure to the Common Core and focus on career- and college readiness as their peers.
- The District seeks to build a strong foundation for children in language and reading by emphasizing early literacy.
- CMSD works with building leaders and teachers to develop intervention plans that target specific deficits in reading. Teachers receive extensive training and coaching to address deficits.



PRE4CLE



## Expanding PreK

- CMSD is adding high-quality preschool seats throughout the city and seeking to have the sites rated under Ohio's Step Up to Quality system. Twelve sites have undergone review and all have earned the top rating of five stars.
- The District now has more than 1,800 prekindergarten seats, with plans to add eight classrooms spanning eight schools next school year. Classrooms are including special-education students as a way to accelerate development for all children. Learn more about CMSD PreK programs at [bit.ly/1TV9YjN](http://bit.ly/1TV9YjN)
- CMSD is a primary funder and major partner in PRE4CLE, a network of District and private sites formed to make sure that all of Cleveland's 3- and 4-year-olds have access to high-quality preschool.
- The network, which serves more than 4,100 children at more than 100 sites, markets preschool to families and works to help centers obtain state quality certification. A PRE4CLE report shows that in its first year, enrollment in high-quality preschool increased by 10 percent.
- President Obama has praised the network as an outstanding public-private partnership. Learn more about PRE4CLE at [pre4cle.org](http://pre4cle.org)







## Bolstering a pipeline of academic success



- Working with teachers and families, CMSD has placed strong emphasis on early literacy. The goal is to help children read at levels required to meet Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee and earn promotion to fourth grade.
- All schools have adopted a structured 90-minute literacy block in kindergarten through third grade, using research-based strategies and materials.
- In 12 schools, Reading Recovery teachers conduct one-on-one instruction for first-graders who are off track in reading and small-group instruction for third-graders who are off track.
- CMSD offers a free six-week summer reading academy for all children in kindergarten through third grade who are reading below grade level. Learn more about the academy at [bit.ly/1nlllxG](http://bit.ly/1nlllxG)
- District schools follow SpringBoard, a rigorous College Board curriculum designed to prepare students in the sixth through 12th grades for college and career.
- CMSD's Closing the Achievement Gap program offers a summer bridge camp to help eighth-graders successfully make the transition to high school. The camp includes workshops, leadership training and team building.



## Developing data systems for tracking

- The District tracks academic, attendance, behavior and other data on every student, creating an early-warning system for those who are off track.
- CMSD uses a series of assessments to identify students in kindergarten through third grade who are off track in reading — kindergarten readiness assessment for children at that level, NWEA for first through third grades and state assessments for third-graders.
- Teachers create Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans for students who are off track in reading. Teachers work with parents to determine student needs and strategies for intervention.
- Using AIMSweb, the District creates a benchmark in literacy for every student in kindergarten through third grade and monitors progress biweekly. The data is kept in the SchoolNet database, where it is available to all teachers who work with the students.
- CMSD has developed the School Performance and Planning Framework, a District-created report card that provides schools with a more detailed view of their performance. The framework combines measures such as achievement or progress with measures of school culture or building instruction, leadership and operations. It also compares a school's performance on quality metrics against the average performance of schools with similar demographics.







**Eric S. Gordon, Chief Executive Officer**

---

**Board of Education**

---

Denise W. Link  
Board Chair

Louise P. Dempsey, Esq.  
Board Vice Chair

Anne E. Bingham  
Robert M. Heard, Sr.  
Willetta A. Milam  
Shaletha T. Mitchell  
Justin L. Monday, Esq.  
Stephanie Morales  
Lisa Thomas, Ph.D.

Ronald M. Berkman, Ph.D.  
Ex Officio Member

Alex Johnson, Ph.D.  
Ex Officio Member



1111 Superior Avenue E, Suite 1800, Cleveland, OH 44114  
216.838.0000 • [ClevelandMetroSchools.org](http://ClevelandMetroSchools.org)