

Cincinnati Public Schools M.O.R.E. Program Overview

Background

Labeled as a “national catastrophe” by the Council of the Great City Schools, African-American males throughout the nation are historically underperforming academically at troubling rates. In Cincinnati, despite the district’s overall progress in raising academic achievement and graduation rates, our African-American and minority male students are still struggling. Cincinnati Public Schools created the M.O.R.E (Men Organized, Respectful, and Educated) Program in 2011 as a district-wide initiative to support our district’s minority males and to be the driving force behind saving our young men’s lives.



The Vision

To improve the lives of our young men through academic achievement, social and community responsibility, and create values that teach responsibility, respect and encourage self-growth.

The Mission

M.O.R.E. strives to save the lives and expand the minds of our young men both mentally and socially to become the example for generations to follow.

What is M.O.R.E.?

The M.O.R.E. Program nurtures academic success and strong character development among African-American and other at-risk young men from grades 4 - 12 in Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) to promote measurable improvements in academic achievement, grade-level promotion, graduation rates, and college readiness. Each of the 26 M.O.R.E Clubs (15 elementary, and 11 middle/high schools) include after-school programs and monthly and quarterly enrichment opportunities that focus on financial literacy, leadership development, good citizenship, health/wellness, college/career awareness, social skills development, academic support, and more.

M.O.R.E. Program’s District Coordinator

The M.O.R.E. Program District Coordinator is responsible for program development and implementation of new innovative ideas. These ideas will enhance the academic and social growth of the young men in the Cincinnati Public Schools district. The coordinator is responsible for developing yearly goals that will increase growth throughout the program.

Club Activities

The M.O.R.E. Program is intended to be a comprehensive approach to providing fun, thought provoking and “out of the box” experiences for club members. The curriculum is divided into monthly topics, that when put into action, provide a meeting-by-meeting breakdown of activities that engage the students. The monthly topics consist of:

- Social Media Management (October)
- Decision Making (November)
- Critical Thinking (December)
- Emotional Intelligence (January)
- Personal Branding (February)
- Financial Literacy (March)
- Job Readiness (April)
- Year End Review (May)

Each club includes 20 to 25 young male students who meet twice per week for 60 to 90 minutes. Meetings extend beyond academics to emphasize the development of a high character that benefits the district's young men.

M.O.R.E. is divided into three stages: Elementary (grades 4 – 6), Middle (grades 7 – 9), and High School (grades 10 – 12). Each stage has different elements that enhance the program.

The elementary stage consists of:

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| Conflict Resolution | Knowing and Understanding Self |
| Importance of Good Character/Respect | Health and Wellness |
| Self Esteem (Building and maintaining positive self-esteem) | Anti - Bullying |
| Decision Making (Choices) | Importance of Good Grades |
| | Introduction to College |

During this stage of the program, we focus on the social/emotional behaviors of our students while they are still young. In the elementary grades we want to develop character and respect, which will allow students to be more productive in school, leading to better grades. The young men read articles, attend programs, and have presentations based on these components.

The middle stage consists of:

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| Conflict Resolution (Revisit) | Decision Making, Choices (Revisit) |
| Bullying (Revisit) | Learning Style |
| Academic Awareness (Learn about GPA) | College Requirements & Lifestyle |
| Health and Wellness | Social Media Awareness (Do's & Don'ts) |
| Dealing with Adversity | Time Management |

During this stage of the program, we focus on the importance of maintaining good grades (GPA), and reinforcing social/emotional behaviors that the young men learned in the elementary stage. Also, we incorporate lessons on time management, so we can teach students how to balance their time between academics and extracurricular activities.

The high school stage consists of:

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| Importance of GPA (Revisit) | College Requirements & Lifestyle (Revisit) |
| Social Media Awareness (Revisit) | Financial Aid (FAFSA) |
| Career Readiness/Internships | College Visits |
| ➤ How to Dress for an Interview | Preparing for the ACT, SAT |
| ➤ How to Dress for Meeting (Formal) | Health and Wellness |
| ➤ How to Dress for a Meeting (Informal) | Public Speaking |
| ➤ Creating and Building a Resume' | |

During this stage of the program, our students focus primarily on college/career readiness. By this time, our young men are expected to know what it takes to be a great student. High school is when our students truly become “Men” and put themselves in position to be successful once they graduate from high school.

Students must read, discuss, and answer thought-provoking questions about an assigned novel throughout the year. The more students read and discuss their reading, the better they will perform on state and college entry tests. Our students read novels about African-American leaders, development, and history.

We have read the following novels:

- *Letters to a Young Brother: MANifest Your Destiny* - Hill Harper;
- *Home of the Brave* - Katherine Applegate;
- *Miseducation of the Negro* - Carter G. Woodson;
- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* – Fredrick Douglass;
- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* - Alex Haley;
- *The Pact* – Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, Rameck Hunt;
- *To Be Popular or Smart: The Black Peer Group* - Jawanza Kunjufu;
- *Visions for Black Men* – Na'im Akbar;
- *You vs. You: A Student's Guide to Greatness* – LaMarque' Ward;
- *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates* – Wes Moore;
- *Young, Gifted, and Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African – American Students* – Theresa Perry, Claude Steele, Asa Hilliard III.

Weekly study tables allow students to complete academic coursework while fine tuning study skills and working with a tutor. Students are required to complete a monthly grade sheet that not only focuses on how they are performing academically, but also on how they are behaving in the classroom. Grade sheets must be signed by the club advisor, student, and the student's parent(s). Additionally, each club conducts two community service activities throughout the year while developing two community service presentations (one per semester) to be submitted to the M.O.R.E. Coordinator. Previous activities include community cleanups, food and clothing drives, tutoring initiatives, volunteering at homeless shelters, and serving food at community dinners.

Students also participate in monthly outings throughout the year. Participation in these outings is incentive based and requires students to maintain at least a 2.5 GPA, have no behavioral incidents, and complete all required M.O.R.E. assignments. Beginning in 2014, M.O.R.E. students have had the opportunity to participate in a weekend-long summer retreat. The retreat focuses on all pillars of the M.O.R.E. Program (Educated, Articulate, Respected, Organized, Engaged, Ambitious, Responsible and being The Future), and offers an intensive focus on academic achievement through readings, discussions, and financial literacy.

Each club is led by a student President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Chief of Discipline. The club's President also participates in a district-wide leadership group. The CPS Board of Education recognizes students annually for high achievement, including a Club Competition award for overall GPA and the Club with the best community service presentation.

The M.O.R.E. Advisor

Program leadership is provided by a District-wide Coordinator, in partnership with school-based club advisors selected by the school's Principal. Each club advisor facilitates club meetings and serves as a positive ambassador of the M.O.R.E. Program at their school site, as well as across the district. Advisors are expected to provide an engaging atmosphere where students learn and grow socially, conducting a minimum of eight meetings per month, three community service projects each year, and two parent/advisor nights each year. The advisor is also responsible for working with school leadership to identify and recruit males from their school into the program, keeping an accurate record of rosters, club meeting topics, and club meeting attendance.

The advisor also participates in 10 meetings with the M.O.R.E. Coordinator (August, September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April and May) at the Central Office. Advisors are responsible for turning in all weekly M.O.R.E. assignments (book reports, presentations, etc.), grade sheets, attendance sheets, requisition sheets, and all other tasks completed by students.

Each M.O.R.E. advisor receives a \$3,000 stipend to supplement their time and effort. The Central Office, in partnership with the district-wide M.O.R.E. Coordinator, work to provide support to each club for planning and programmatic features, as well as help provide financial and in-class support for club activities. Clubs also receive \$1,500 to aid with student activities for the programmatic year. These funds are used for transportation for field trips, incentives for good behavior, admission for special field trips, and enrichment activities that add to the educational and character development of the students.

Program Goals

The M.O.R.E. Program strives to achieve the following measurable goals:

- Increase reading proficiencies by one grade level;
- Increase student performance in the subjects of math, science and the area of public speaking;
- Increase the number of African American males enrolled in AA and AP classes;
- Assure that each student maintains a 2.5 Grade Point Average;
- Increase academic performance and test scores on the Ohio Achievement Assessment, helping to close the achievement gap as reported on the Ohio Report card;
- Reduce the number of student discipline issues by 50% (Detentions, in-school-suspension, and out-of-school suspensions);
- Strengthen the relationship between the M.O.R.E. Program and the surrounding communities throughout the city of Cincinnati;
- Increase the number of African American males attending college or post-secondary education/training;
- Increase the knowledge of the M.O.R.E. brand throughout the City of Cincinnati.

Data

Each student who is a member of the M.O.R.E. Program is entered into our data system. This system tracks the student's school, name, student ID, grade, attendance, tardy rate, discipline referrals; reading, math, science, social studies, and writing scores (based of Ohio Achievement Assessment and Ohio Graduation Test results); unweighted GPA, weighted GPA, and failing courses; ACT composite score, and SAT verbal, math, writing scores. Data reports are conducted four times a year (at the end of each academic quarter) by the M.O.R.E. Program's district coordinator and sent to Cincinnati Public Schools administration.

Program Accomplishments

Since its launch in 2011, the M.O.R.E. Program has made considerable progress in impacting the lives of young males in the program. According to the 2012-13 M.O.R.E. Initiative Program Evaluation completed by the Research & Evaluation Department of Cincinnati Public Schools, student participants improved on nearly all measures, including attendance, discipline, and academic achievement.

Data comparisons show M.O.R.E. students have an average GPA (unweighted) 0.7 points higher than their African-American peers. In fact, these students are excelling in academics and performing nearly at the same level as the white student subgroup. In all cases, students participating in a greater number of meetings and activities had better outcomes.

The results of the CPS evaluation indicate the program is having a positive impact on student participants. Program outcomes indicate that expanding the program at schools with discipline problems would reduce the total number of discipline referrals. Additionally, students who are fully participating in the program are absent 4.5 fewer days per year overall; therefore, students are gaining, on average, nearly one week of classroom instruction.

White House Representative David Johns visited with M.O.R.E. Men of Shroder High School on April 10, 2014 to chat for more than two hours with a dozen students and their leaders involved in Cincinnati Public Schools' M.O.R.E. program. During the far-ranging discussion, the young men described to Johns the strong impact that M.O.R.E. has on their lives; stating that it offers them role models, keeps the focus on academic work and helps them to think ahead to what they want to do after high school graduation. Johns encouraged the young men to take advantage of every opportunity, whether in person or via the web, to visit different colleges and universities to find the right fit, "to explore who you are and how you want to move through this world."

In summary, improving student services and targeted programming for African American males and other at-risk students has resulted in improved attendance, higher promotion rates, and fewer discipline referrals. Outcome measures indicate the achievement gap is closing for students participating in the M.O.R.E. program. Improving the academic proficiency of the students participating will positively impact the schools hosting the program and ultimately the entire district and community at large.