TASK FORCE ON BLACK AND LATINA YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS
COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls
2024-2025

Task Force Goals

To assist urban public-school systems in improving college and career readiness and the life outcomes of Black and Latina young women and girls by supporting the implementation of evidence-based strategies to educate girls from diverse racial, cultural, national, and linguistic backgrounds.

To improve the learning environment and climate in urban schools by addressing the racism and bias that contributes to the epidemic of violence, harassment, discrimination and bullying that hinders the progress of Black and Latina young women and girls.

To improve access to health information and comprehensive health care, including physical and mental health, to reduce teen pregnancy, premature parenting, and ultimately economic insecurity for Black and Latina young women and girls.

To improve the quality of professional learning that fosters a deeper understanding of educators’ role in dismantling systemic and structural barriers and creating support systems needed for Black and Latina young women and girls’ academic and life-long success.

To ensure data collection, as well as the establishment of accountability and protocols, in order to monitor the progress of Black and Latina young women and girls across their diverse student groups in our member districts.

Task Force Chair

Sharon Contreras, North Carolina A & T State University, College of Education

Task Force Members

Stephanie Elizalde, Dallas Superintendent
Kelly Gonez, Los Angeles School Board
Shavonna Holman, Omaha School Board
Aleesia Johnson, Indianapolis Superintendent
TASK FORCE MEETING
Black and Latina Young Women and Girls Task Force Meeting
March 16, 2024
11:00 am – 12:00 pm
The Mayflower Hotel
1127 Connecticut Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036

Meeting Agenda

I. Introduction of Task Force Chair and Members
   • Dr. Sharon Contreras, North Carolina A&T, College of Education, Taskforce Chair
   • Stephanie Elizalde, Superintendent, Dallas Independent School District
   • Kelly Gonez, Board Member, Los Angeles Unified School District
   • Shavonna Holman, Board Member, Omaha Public School

II. Chair Opening Remarks
   • Dr. Sharon Contreras, North Carolina A&T, College of Education, Taskforce Chair

III. Developing Successful Partnerships and Programs to Impact Black and Latina Girls: Working on Womanhood (WOW) Program Presentation followed by Q/A

   Youth Guidance, Working on Womanhood (WOW) is a school-based, trauma informed group counseling program that uses cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to improve the social-emotional competencies of young women in grades 6-12 exposed to traumatic stressors in high risk and under-resourced communities. Launched in 2011, the school-based program runs throughout the academic year and serves students across several Council member districts including Chicago, Boston, Dallas and Kansas City.
   • Shawn Brown, Executive Director for Youth Guidance Boston (BAM and WOW)
   • Alithea Casimir, Program & Partnership Manager
   • Melinda Vazquez, Replication Curriculum Specialist

IV. Discussion and Closing

CGCS Staff:
Farah Assiraj, Chief of Teaching and Learning
Working On Womanhood (WOW)

Shawn Brown, Executive Director
Alithea Casimir, LICSW Program & Partnership Manager
Melinda Vazquez, LSW candidate, Replication Curriculum Specialist
Youth Guidance Mission & Values

Youth Guidance creates and implements school-based programs that enable children to overcome obstacles, focus on their education and, ultimately, to succeed in school and life.

We believe that no matter what challenges a young person faces, they are more likely to succeed when they have caring adults in their lives.

Core Values
- We believe in the potential of all kids
- We meet kids where they are
- Relationships matter
- Our approach is holistic
- Being our best is an ongoing process
Youth Guidance programs reach about 17,000 students across 200 schools around the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counseling &amp; Prevention</th>
<th>Community &amp; After School</th>
<th>Career Readiness &amp; Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a Man</td>
<td>Full-Service Community schools</td>
<td>Project Prepare (In-School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working On Womanhood</td>
<td>Parent and Family Engagement</td>
<td>Project Prepare Blue (Out-of-School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRIVE</td>
<td>Extended Day Enrichment</td>
<td>@Work (Post-Secondary Support BAM &amp; WOW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based Counseling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scaling to meet the need

In 2017, Youth Guidance expanded BAM from Chicago to serve youth in Boston due to a demand by Boston Public Schools and WOW was launched there a few years later. In 2023-24, BAM and WOW now reach **12,000** students across **10** sites.

- Boston, MA
- Chicago, IL
- Waukegan, IL
- Dallas, TX
- Kansas City, MO and KS
- Los Angeles, CA
- Greater Pittsburgh, PA
- Greater Seattle, WA
- Washington, DC
- London, England
Working on Womanhood (WOW)

WOW is a school-based group counseling and mentoring program that improves the social-emotional and behavioral competencies of students in grades 6-12 who’ve been exposed to traumatic stressors and face social, behavioral, cognitive, or emotional challenges.

**WOW GOALS**

- Increase psychological and social-emotional well-being
- Improve school engagement and academic attainment
- Increase utilization of safe and healthy behaviors
Origins of the WOW program: trauma-informed, school-based counseling model

2011: 1st Launch
6 clinicians serve 200 girls and young women

2015, 2017: Formative Evaluation
Community-based participatory research
Evaluation & Program Planning

2018, 2019: Impact Evaluation
Randomized Control Trial
with Urban Lab from UIC

2023: Impact Report
Final impact report published
OVERVIEW

► **WOW was launched in Chicago in 2011**, as an innovative response to the urgent need to reach girls and young women of color across under-resourced Chicago communities.

► **WOW is a two-year school-based curriculum, delivered through 26 weekly group counseling lessons**, implemented for 7th-12th grade girls and young women, living with high-risk for exposure to trauma.

► **WOW Counselors deliver the weekly curriculum** in a designated classroom, inside the school, during the school-day, in a WOW room that is considered a safe space – free from stigma and judgement.

► **WOW group sessions** include 10-12 young women and each counselor has a case-load of roughly 55 young women, per-school.
WOW Circles

Learning and growth primarily takes place within the Circle:

- Safety and Trust
- Authenticity
- Positive Relationships
- Therapeutic Principles and Clinical Processing
- Dynamic activities from WOW curriculum
- Social-Emotional Skill Development through the exploration of each program’s core values
WORKING ON WOMANHOOD

CORE VALUES

**Self-Awareness**
- I have power.
- I know who I am.
- I accept who I am.
- I inspire others to become who they want to be.

**Emotional Intelligence**
- I am resilient.
- I recognize and use all of my emotions.
- I respond in healthy ways to others’ emotions.

**Healthy Relationships**
- I respect myself and others.
- I maintain healthy boundaries in my relationships.
- I communicate my needs and wants.
- I advocate for myself.

**Visionary Goal-Setting**
- I have goals.
- I am motivated.
- I overcome barriers.
- I work on my goals every day.

**Leadership**
- I am a leader.
- I set goals.
- I am accountable.
- I seek mentors to show me the way.
- I take a role in improving my community.
Theoretical Foundations

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Positive Youth Engagement/Development
- Narrative Therapy
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Strength-based Theory
- Experiential Learning Theory
Curriculum Major Themes

- Values
- Culture
- Coping Skills
- Relationships
TARGET POPULATION

- **WOW Participants**: Referrals are made to WOW by teachers, school administrators, parents, self, peers and clinicians.

- **Risk Factors: Trauma Exposure**
  - physical and verbal abuse
  - low self-esteem
  - suicidal thoughts
  - depression
  - hopelessness
  - feeling alone
  - community violence
WOW Counselors & Training

Counselor Qualifications
• MSW or Master’s in Counseling (License Preferred)
• Group Counseling Experience
• Youth Engagement Experience
• Openness to Self-Examination & Modeling WOW Skills & Values - "The Parallel Process"

Training & Coaching through the WOW Training Academy (WTA)
• Theoretical & Clinical Foundations
• Curriculum Training
• Technical Skills Training
• Site-Based Coaching & Conceptual Feedback
## Implementation & Coaching (Parallel Process)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Value Sessions</th>
<th>Termination</th>
<th>Post Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Re-engage returning students  
Obtain RFA for new students | Introduce program  
Build group cohesion | Identify where participants are at the start of the program | Provide the WOW intervention (Self-Awareness-Leadership)  
Monitor progress at end of each Value | Conclude groups | Identify the progress that they made towards goals of program |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Step 5</th>
<th>Step 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Rapport Building  
August-September | Intro to Coaching Process  
September-October | Coaching Assessment  
October-December | Coaching Plan  
December | Coaching Facilitation  
January-May | Review Coaching  
May-June |
WOW External Research

WOW decreases girls’ PTSD, depression, and anxiety

- PTSD Severity Scores: 22%
- Moderate Trauma-Related Distress: 38%
- Depression: 14%
- Anxiety: 10%

Mattering Matters

97% of WOW students would recommend WOW to a friend

98% of WOW seniors graduated on-time.

50% of WOW participants had higher self-esteem after participating in WOW

95% of WOW students learned resiliency
WOW in Boston

WOW launched in Boston in 2021 and operates on 5 campuses across 3 school districts.

WOW enrolls 250 scholars annually across Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville Public Schools
  • 94% of WOW scholars identify as individuals of color
  • 85% of WOW scholars are low-income

**Baseline Data from SY 2022-23**
At the time of enrollment:
  • 65% of WOW scholars were experiencing clinical social and/or generalized anxiety
  • 54% of WOW scholars were experiencing clinical Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
  • 50% of WOW scholars were experiencing clinical depression
WOW Results in Boston

Among WOW scholars experiencing clinical symptoms at enrollment:

- 69% experienced a reduction in PTSD symptoms
- 67% experienced a reduction in depression symptoms
- 63% experienced a reduction in generalized and/or social anxiety symptoms
- 52% experienced higher self-esteem after participating in WOW
WOW Results in Boston

WOW scholars experience greater school engagement and academic attainment:

- 67% of WOW scholars either maintained a high school attendance rate or improved their school attendance compared to the previous year.
- 96% of WOW scholars were promoted to the next grade level.
- 94% of WOW scholars reported that the program helped them identify ways to improve their school performance.

WOW scholars established positive relationships with their WOW Counselor

- 100% of WOW scholars report that they believe their WOW Counselor cares about them
- 98% of WOW scholars report that they trust their WOW Counselor
- 98% of WOW scholars report that their relationship with their WOW Counselor is important to them
WOW featured in Harvard Public Health magazine

Working on Womanhood: Reducing PTSD among teen girls

February 13, 2024, 1pm ET | Online

Presented jointly with Harvard Public Health magazine as part of the Public Health in Action series
Watch on the Harvard Public Health magazine website or on YouTube.

The United States is failing its teen girls. As they experience record-high levels of violence, sadness, and suicide risk, a program calledWorking on Womanhood (WOW) offers much-needed hope.

Developed by the nonprofit Youth Guidance and evaluated by the University of Chicago Education Lab, this program was found to dramatically reduce anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms among girls in Chicago high schools. The program is designed by Black and Latina women for young Black and Latina girls. Data suggests WOW is both

Watch on the Harvard Public Health magazine website or on YouTube.
I joined WOW to better myself. I joined to be a role model to my family. I never would have guessed that I would have joined a circle of friends – a sisterhood – who would make us the best we can be.”

-WOW STUDENT
WORKING ON WOMANHOOD
YOUTH GUIDANCE

Boston

FEATURES

Working on Womanhood: How a non-profit is giving young women tools to boost their mental health

YOUTH GUIDANCE
GUIDING KIDS TO BRIGHT FUTURES
Kansas City

KiFFY Theme: TOGETHER
Individually we are strong...TOGETHER we are powerful!

TOGETHER we serve...
...2 States
...3 School Districts
...6 Schools
...over 330 WOW students
WOW in the Community

- Kansas City Chiefs Kickoff Luncheon
- 8th Grade Recognition ceremony
- Negro League's Baseball Museum
- Community Service – Harvesters Food Bank
Kansas City Glows

GreenLight Fund and Youth Guidance WOW Kansas City Recognized by KCTV5
Program in Dallas ISD schools aims to reduce the mental strain teen girls are facing
The Working on Womanhood program launched two years ago in Dallas ISD schools, and a recent study found it was effective in treating PTSD, anxiety and
Youth Guidance Chicago

The mental health needs of Black and Hispanic girls often go unmet. This group wraps them in support.
For additional information about Youth Guidance programs:

Shawn Brown
Executive Director, Youth Guidance Boston
Shbrown@youth-guidance.org
A serious natural disaster

Being robbed by threat, force, or weapon

Seeing someone attacked, stabbed, shot at, or hurt badly

A serious accident or injury

Seeing someone in the community get slapped, punched, or beat up

Someone close to you dying suddenly or violently

A stressful or scary medical procedure

Being around war

Seeing someone in your family get slapped, punched, or beat up

Being attacked, stabbed, shot at, or hurt badly
On average, young women attending the high schools in our study have experienced at least two of these adverse events.*

*Due to mandatory reporting requirements, our research team could NOT account for experiences of:
1) being hit or ‘beat up’ by a non-family member, 2) being hit or ‘beat up’ by a family member, 3) sexual abuse, or 4) sexual assault.
Violence affects:

- Mental health
  - PTSD
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Risky behaviors

- Cognitive functioning
  - School engagement
  - Academic performance
  - Attendance
Anxiety

I feel guilty

I worry when I go to bed at night

I worry but I don’t know why

I often worry about something bad happening to me

I get nervous when things do not go the right way for me

Little things bother me

I get nervous
I feel sad

I feel lonely

I feel depressed

I feel like my life is getting worse and worse

I feel like life isn’t worth living

Depression
Implementation Drivers

- Competency Drivers
  - Fidelity
  - Coaching
  - Training
  - Selection

- Organization Drivers
  - Systems Intervention
  - Facilitative Administration
  - Decision Support
  - Data System

- Leadership Drivers
  - Technical
  - Adaptive

Integrated & Compensatory
WOW students started the year with mental health challenges; 2/3 of those at risk improved by the end of the year. SY23

- Baseline rates based on 94 WOW students, from 2 schools, who completed a fall assessment
  - 67 of those students completed a post-test assessment
  - Pre-post match rate: 71%

**AT BASELINE:**
- 95.7% had experienced one or more lifetime traumas
- Average number of lifetime traumas = 4.7 (out of 15)
- 47.3% (of 94 students at baseline) reported suicide ideation/self-harm (“Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way.”) WOW overall average is 26%

### Depression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Clinical Range for Depression at Baseline</th>
<th>% Starting in Clinical who Improved</th>
<th>% Starting in Clinical who moved to sub-clinical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PTSD Symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Clinical Range for Trauma at Baseline</th>
<th>% Starting in Clinical who Improved</th>
<th>% Starting in Clinical who moved to sub-clinical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Generalized Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Clinical Range for Generalized Anxiety at Baseline</th>
<th>% Starting in Clinical who Improved</th>
<th>% Starting in Clinical who moved to sub-clinical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Social Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Clinical Range for Generalized Anxiety at Baseline</th>
<th>% Starting in Clinical who Improved</th>
<th>% Starting in Clinical who moved to sub-clinical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WOW is entering its 13th year of programing across the nation in 5 regions.

“I joined WOW to better myself. I joined to be a role model to my family. I never would have guessed that I would have joined a circle of friends – a sisterhood – who would make us the best we can be.”

WOW Junior, 2018
Youth Guidance looks to community stakeholders for input on local context

School District
• Enabling Context for Implementation
  • Demonstrated need for services
  • Access to students during the school day
  • Appropriate office and program space
  • Collaborative Faculty and Staff
• District Support
  • Support for BAM & WOW during the school day
  • Data sharing agreement
  • Vision for school climate and discipline
  • Agreement to provide funding allocation
    (ask of $1,830 per student)

Public and Philanthropic Sector Leadership
• Formation of a local Advisory Council
  • Public, philanthropic, and corporate leaders committed to building long-term sustainability
• Public and private sector funding commitments to cover local implementation costs