

Overcoming the Past to Create New Possibilities for Academic Achievement Among African American Males

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter seeks to explore the need for the ongoing growth and development of collaborative efforts among institutions seeking to serve underserved and underprepared students, especially African American males, and their stakeholders. The chapter provides a brief historical context of public K-12 education and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The objective is to provide context for today's academic challenges among African American males, subsequently providing alternatives to the current academic framework, revising the "pipeline" structure with an artery mode. This model reflects a holistic education framework that provides a strong cultural and social foundation; continuity in curriculum, education funding, and policy; and engages all constituents of the community, positively benefitting underserved families and students, particularly African American males.

Establishing effective communication and support among minority serving school districts and their stakeholders (colleges, industry, government, service organizations, and non-for-profit) has been essential to the social, economic, and political growth of minority communities. Educational leaders whom are responsible for cultivating these relationships are often applying more art than science when it comes to maintaining them and the benefits they yield. These relationships are essential, if education leaders hope to achieve the overarching mission of public education in underserved communities and more broadly the United States, “to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.” Some may argue, that the U.S. Department of Education has not been impactful, specifically in the area of student achievement, but what about access? Does every child have access to an educational opportunity? If in fact access is not the major concern, what is hindering minority children, specifically, African American males from achieving academically? And what can collaborative approaches among minority serving school districts and their stakeholders do to address the challenges that African American males face. This chapter seeks to examine the pipelines between predominantly African American high-schools and Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCU). The chapter provides a brief historical context of public education and HBCU’s as context for existing relationship and conditions.

FOUNDATIONAL CHALLENGES

The societal challenges faced by African American males are firmly rooted in the American society’s inability to embrace a holistic education model; establishing a strong cultural, social, academic, and economic foundation. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Henry Thoreau embraced “Holistic” education as the development of the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of a child. Acquiring a holistic education among African American males ensures a strong positive framework for American communities broadly, girded with foundational values, eradicating many of the social ills that are rampant in neighborhoods, towns, and cities throughout the United States. Unfortunately, the nation’s schools and communities have failed to scale and/or maintain substantive holistic education models that provide continuity in education policy, funding, curriculum and community engagement that would positively benefit students, particularly, African American males. Hence, producing communities afflicted with mental illness, crime, unemployment, disproportionately high health disparities and teen pregnancy. Many of the approaches used to create an academic pipeline for African American males are siloed and are largely dependent on charismatic

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