Projecting Success:
Reciprocal Relationships and Successful Partnerships

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Changing the trajectory of Black male students may not yet be a national conversation, but it's on the national radar screen. The success of Black males has increasingly become a topic of research, dialogue, debate, and strategic planning. As we engage in the conversation, however, talking with Black male students is a reminder that we're educating kids, not statistics, and that, as one Black student affirms, "The truth doesn't live in numbers. It lives in the person." The challenges facing Black males throughout the educational pipeline have been discussed by researchers in detail. However, missing from this research are discussions from the perspective of researchers, educators, and community members united on how to better support Black males. This case study examines the field placement partnership between Perimeter College and Project Success: 100 Black Men of Atlanta. The case study documents the goals, plans, and outcomes of the three-year partnership.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

100 Black Men of Atlanta is a non-profit organization committed to improving the quality of life of African-Americans in the Atlanta metro area. Founded in 1986 by 23 African-American businessmen and educational leaders who believed that their involvement as mentors could make a difference in the lives of Atlanta's at risk students. Founding member Alonzo Crim, Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools (APS), vision was to start a mentoring and tutoring program focused on black boys in schools with the lowest test scores and highest dropout rate in the entire APS system.

SETTING THE STAGE

Project Success phase I began at Samuel H. Archer Comprehensive High School in September 1986. One homeroom of twenty-seven students was adopted as the first cohort of Project Success. (ibid, pg. 16) Members of the 100 Black Men of Atlanta would commit to mentoring, academic enhancement, leadership training, and a post-secondary tuition assistance guarantee. The program required that it would adopt and maintain a 60 percent male to 40 percent female ratio in the program. 100 percent of that first cohort of students graduated from high school and entered some post-secondary institution, military, or found employment.

CASE DESCRIPTION

The success of 100 BMA with that first cohort of Project Success was very important to the members of the organization and their initial supporters, because it gave the members confidence in their new mentoring model. Now the leadership could turn to their attention to sustainability and fundraising. The business arena was where the members all had expertise and experience. Businesses began to provide much needed financial contributions to support the new tuition assistance program, as well as resources to buttress the growing administration of the organization. Applications for membership in the organization also grew as existing members were certain needed to consider who would make great members to continue the mission of the young organization. Nathaniel R. Goldston III, the founding president of 100 BMA set the precedent, "One of the requirements we have always looked for when recruiting new members was their ability to help in an area that is beneficial to children in the Project Success." (ibid, pg. 43) The current membership was actively engaged in providing after school tutoring support, but more importantly

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