Enhancing Achievement in African American Male Youth

Community Focus Group Input

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9/2011
1. As you may know, African American male youth are lagging behind their counterparts in academic achievement at alarming rates across the country. In your opinion, please explain what you feel are the needs, challenges, and/or barriers that may impact their overall achievement?

2. Specifically, what should Guilford County Schools address in order to improve African American male student achievement?

3. What should Guilford County Schools focus on first to improve African American male student achievement?

4. What types of things are you aware of in your community or in other Communities throughout the nation that are producing positive academic results for African American males?

5. How do we strengthen the school/community partnership to provide an appropriate and effective support network for young African American males to improve academic achievement?
Focus Group Sessions 16, 17 and 18

Protocol
The protocol created by the Center for Creative Leadership was utilized as the model for conducting the additional focus groups. The same five questions were utilized to gain community input:

1. As you may know, African American male youth are lagging behind their counterparts in academic achievement at alarming rates across the country. In your opinion, please explain what you feel are the needs, challenges, and/or barriers that may impact their overall achievement?

2. Specifically, what should Guilford County Schools address in order to improve African American male student achievement? For example, what initiatives, activities, etc. should the schools enhance or implement to support this group of students more effectively?

3. There are more needs and opportunities than available resources. Therefore, given the responses to question #2, how would you rank them in importance? In other words, what should Guilford County Schools focus on first to improve African American male student achievement?

4. What types of things are you aware of in your community or in other Communities throughout the nation that are producing positive academic results for African American males?

5. How do we strengthen the school/community partnership to provide an appropriate and effective support network for young African American males to improve academic achievement?

Sessions
Three focus group sessions were conducted. One Session was conducted in High Point, NC at the Macedonia Center with sixteen participants in attendance. The second session was conducted in Greensboro at New Light Baptist Church. More than fifty persons participated in the focus groups. A third session was conducted at North Carolina A&T State University with thirty-five African American Male Students.

High Point Session
Among the participants in High Point were a number of school administrators, teachers, a counselor and a member of the school board. A School Resource Officer and a counselor from the Juvenile Detention Center were able to offer “law enforcement” perspectives. Other participants included City of High Point leaders and leaders of non-profit organizations that support African American males as a part of their organizational mission. Several people also spoke as parents of students in the Guilford County Schools.
The Greensboro Session
Greensboro also had a number of people from non-profit organizations, Guilford County School Administrators, school board members, educators, parents, community advocates for education, students, and parents.

The size of this group (50+) required it be divided to better facilitate input.

African American Male Summit Session
Guilford County School African American male students attending a Leadership Summit at North Carolina A&T State University participated in a focus group to help us understand Enhancing Academic Achievement. The students were in grades 9-12 and represented eighteen schools.

Overall Reaction to the Session
In all sessions participants found it to be positive that the school system was seeking input that might benefit the academic outcome for African American male youth. There was some concern expressed about the nature of the questions and the implied problem being the African American male youth. Participation was active and time seemed insufficient.

This report represents the views and perspectives collected from three small groups of community advocates for education and Focus Group 18 – Guilford County School African American male students.
1. As you may know, African American male youth are lagging behind their counterparts in academic achievement at alarming rates across the country. In your opinion, please explain what you feel are the needs, challenges, and/or barriers that may impact their overall achievement?

Feedback indicates there is a correlation between the African American male youth’s quality of life, self-image, emotional well-being and academic success.

- **Low Expectations** – Low expectations are systemic. Many adults (parents, teachers, administrators, and community) have accepted substandard performance as the norm... The Pygmalion Effect or self-fulfilling prophecy is a barrier to academic success – you become what you are expected to be.
  
  - Adults in the education process have and exemplify low expectations for African American male youth. “Educators are influencing the student’s self-concept of their ability to achieve.” “Students don’t believe they can achieve based on messages they are receiving.”
  
  - African American youth have low expectations of themselves and of others.
  
  - Self-concept – Environmental dynamics based on the stereotypical images of AA males in schools, communities, media, etc. influence self-image and behaviors.
  
  - Students are marginalized – “It has become the norm to see African American males as the ones that fail. The expectation is that African Americans will not succeed in school.”

- “…conceptualization of success”- Students have a very narrow concept and definition of success. Do they believe they can succeed? “What does it mean to be a successful African American male?”
  
  - African American youth have narrow conceptualizations of success. Options exist but there is not enough exposure to them.
  
  - What does it mean to be a successful African American male outside of athletics and hip-hop? Why does that influence
kids? We need to motivate them for excellence and achievement.

- Need different success models to establish other options for success in life. Begin career awareness earlier.

- **Cultural Challenges or Barriers** –
  - The “system” isn’t culturally sensitive. Differences are not always understood, appreciated or taken into account.
  - The education system is not accommodating the needs of African American (AA) male youth. Contributing to this a limited understanding of the AA male life experience. “It’s like trying to fit a square into a circle.”
  - Bureaucracy limits the ability of teachers to address the kinesthetic way in which a lot of African American student learn. There is little or no space for teachers to think outside the box.
  - The system is not designed to support how African American males learn.
  - Many young men don’t see themselves as part of the school. They view themselves as outsiders.
  - “The system might not be conducive for black males to achieve; the education system might not work at all, and the content of what they are learning is not viewed to be relevant.”

- **Teacher-Student relations** – this is a factored that is believed to have a significant role in student achievement.
  - It is felt that some teachers embody stereotypical perspectives about African American males which are reflected in their behavior and lack of authentic relationships.
  - On the other hand there are educators who believe in the potential of these youth who are encouraging, having positive influence and outcomes.
  - “Teachers often feel trapped. They are given children that are not prepared from previous classes. Teacher can’t do much with children that are not ready.”
  - Students often feel invisible...they are not respected for their knowledge, talents, and skills beyond testing.

- **School – Parent Relationships- involvement** - Many factors were said to impact parental involvement and communication in the educational experience of their children:
  - A parent’s personal experience with the education system and educators, as students, is thought to have an impact on their involvement and trust in the system.
  - Impact of teenage pregnancy on discipline and behavioral...
accountability was cited as a challenge. We must also recognize that at times we are having children having children. Young parents don’t know what to do. How to deal with the school system. Mothers can’t help. Working all the time.

- Work requirements – parents not available to participate in activities that align with the school schedule and locations. Transportation and work schedules may prevent parent’s participation in the PTSA, drop-in visits to the school, parent conferences, volunteering at the schools, etc.

- Fear and intimidation – some parents are feared by educators. Community environments are feared to the point that home visits are not comfortable or not done. Both educators and parents are intimidated which has an impact on communicating in supportive of the student. Some teachers fear African American male students.

- Trust in the system – Lack of trust and respect. Many parents don’t trust the “system(s)” to do what is right or best for their child. “Even parents have a certain sense of distrust towards the school system. In turn African American students don’t see themselves as part of the schools. They consider themselves outsiders.”

**Curriculum and Instruction**

- Academic rigor and relevance must be the standard throughout the District. Rigor and relevance must be monitored and enforced.

- Staff development (teachers, principals, administrators, central office) is critical. Everyone must be onboard. Must admit there is a problem and there are issues that MUST be addressed.

- North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSOS) is not culturally sensitive. We must learn how to request, accept, monitor, and evaluate learning that occurs outside of the classroom.

2. **Specifically, what should Guilford County Schools address in order to improve African American male student Achievement?**

“I don’t think we can focus on just one or two things. We have to look at pieces within the entire gambit of problems.”

- Leadership across the District must recognize that this is a critical social justice and economic issue.
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- Guilford County Schools should form strong community partnerships. There can be mutual benefits in finding unique educational places and opportunities.

- Focus on Staffing – Recruiting – Placement - Hire more African American men and women. Utilize current African American male staff in ways that present them as role models – create creative ways to have them interact with students throughout the system.

- Concentrate on Curriculum and Instruction
  - Develop and implement a curriculum or course of study that truly meets the needs of all students with a concentration on the needs of African American males who are experiencing the largest achievement gap. This would include but is not limited to:
    - Cultural infusion – teach all students accurate and inclusive history- prior to Slavery and inclusive of contributions. “Cultural infusion should be included throughout the curriculum.” They need to know there is an obligation to be an important person in your family and in the community.
    - Allow innovation in the educational process – “Alternative learning styles for African Americans, innovative strategies, explore the results of the research”
    - Differentiation of instruction for different students
    - Guilford County Schools should have a curriculum facilitator dedicated to helping teachers design and deliver instruction that will motivate and engage African American males.
    - Vocational Instruction - Bring back/enhance vocational instruction or create greater opportunities for the preparation of African American males to pursue career options with high school completion. Introduce “vocational programs at lower levels. Kids are funneled to the appropriate schools at the high school level. This is too late.”
    - Better utilization of technology in the classroom
    - “I have learned that African American males can learn in a structured environment. In particular, there is great value in an all-male classroom structure. In male environment, they tend to focus more on their academics and not on peer pressure.”
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- Do a better job of connecting students to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Awareness and exposure must occur early and often.
- More vocational (CTE) courses and opportunities

**NOTE:** the district must do a better job informing the community about CTE opportunities. Must people continue asking about vocational programs? They know about Weaver Center, but are surprised to hear about the numerous options available to students in the schools.

- **Accountability, Standards and Measures** –
  - “Look at the standards. Tests are culturally biased. Are the standards taking into account socioeconomic status?”
  - Put system accountability and measures in place to ensure the school system is responsible for the education of all children
  - Specifically measure and hold teachers and administrators accountable for academic achievement – “You get what you measure.”

- **Continuing Education**
  - **Educators**- Re-educate teachers. They are often 2-steps behind the students. Staff development should emphasize:
    - Diversity, cultural infusion, curriculum integration, communicating with parents and the community, learning styles, building relationships with students and parents, using technology in the classroom, alternative assessment tools and strategies
    - Cultural Competence – to facilitate better instruction, accurate representation of information, cultural connectivity, measurement of success, interpersonal relationships, etc.
    - Increase knowledge of history and modern contributions – “you can’t teach what you don’t know.”
    - Anti-Racism training
    - “Challenge higher education to provide Anti-racism, cultural competency development, to include impact of culture, style and socio-economics in the educational process.”
    - Evaluate our current staff development...what is working...what can be replicated?

- **Parents**
  - Parent Academy – Market the academy and ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of parents.
• Help parents see the benefits of a successful education

• Put in place a parent advocacy process to facilitate improved parent – teacher/administrator communications and relationships.

• **School Factors –**
  • Create a safe environment that is student-centered, anti-discriminatory, values and practices fairness, and inclusiveness for both parents and children
  • Consider the natural factors that students from low-income homes might have and supplement them with resources that support school-based activities
  • Acknowledge the current system, ways and methods, are not effective in the development of African American males academically.

• **Mentoring inside and outside of school building**
  • Peer Mentoring - Establish peer mentoring in all schools at all levels
  • Better utilization of local college and university African American male students as role models and mentors.
  • Adult Role Models and Mentorship Programs
  • Engage religious/spiritual institutions to reinforce or support the education process
    o establish afterschool mentoring and youth development programs
    o establish mentoring or support groups for parents
  • Find unique educational spaces - i.e. barbershops, community centers, etc.
  • Model processes that are currently working – smaller classrooms and established expectations for behavior and outcomes (Middle College and Weaver Academy)

• **Student input**
  • Seek perspective of African American males
  • Round table with African American students...ask for their voice
  • Engaging students about what works....I’ve been in classrooms where the student voice was prominent and it worked.
• **Community**
  - Need community programs that address specific needs. Better utilization of existing community programs. Replicate successful programs
  - How are we connecting students to existing community programs and resources?
  - Churches and church leaders must be an effective resource. Churches and schools can be the center of the community
  - Must engage everyone in the community
  - Improve the relationship between the business community and the education system. We must get business people involved with individual schools.

• **In Addition**
  - Equality does not mean equity. How do we assign resources? Are we effectively appropriating resources where they are needed?
  - Reactions, responses, and solutions to the issues/concerns should not be based on taking a deficit approach. We must do a better job of recognizing the many gifts or our student.
  - “It's all about caring for children. If we change expectations, we change behavior.”
  - We need to make sure the young men understand they have an obligation to improve themselves.

3. **What should Guilford County Schools focus on first to improve African American male student achievement?**
The problem is complex and as a result there is “...a need to focus on more than one thing. Need to see the whole spectrum of the situation that affects African Americans.”

  - Assess and determine the root cause. “How did we get here? Do we really understand the issue(s)?
Must actively recruit and retain more African American male teachers

Improve the relationship between the business community and the education system. We must get business people involved with individual schools

Cultural infusion of history should be included in the curriculum

Assess and evaluate current middle college programs. Can we include more students? Are gender schools an option for grades K-8?

Evaluate staff development program. How are teachers using what they learn?

Establish high expectations for African American Male Academic Excellence as a norm.

Development of Educators and parents

Partnerships
  - Partner with Colleges and Universities to have students mentor and tutor GCS students (Community Service Requirements at the college/university level)
  - Business community, improve the partnership between business and schools

Create culturally inclusive and welcoming educational environments

4. **What types of things are you aware of in your community or in other Communities throughout the nation that are producing positive academic results for African American males?**

- Black Child Development Programs
- Ron Clark
- Harlem Children’s Zone, Geoffrey Canada, founder
- Better use of GCS programs
  - Middle Colleges (smaller class sizes)
  - Weaver Center Programs
  - Parent Academy
- Curriculum infusion, history is extremely important
- National Conference for Community & Justice (NCCJ)
  
  *Anytown* leadership program
5. How do we strengthen the school/community partnership to provide an appropriate and effective support network for young African American males to improve academic achievement?

- More African American faces in schools and the classrooms
- Educate parents and the community
- Have students share ideas with the School Board and Regional Superintendents
- Must reach parents on their level
- Change expectations...change the curriculum...change what we expect of our young people
- Must find more African American role models and volunteers
- Transform the traditional school into a “community school” — one that is open from dawn until dusk, including on weekends and during the summer, and that offers parent, medical, social, and psychological supports as well as academic help, sports, and activities
Focus Group 18 Guilford County Students

The African American Male Summit co-sponsored by the Guilford County Schools was held over two days, September 9-10, 2011 at the North Carolina A&T State University Alumni Foundation Center. One hundred African American Males from across the school system were in attendance.

Program facilitators/planners made provisions for an exchange with approximately 16 parents and for a focus group of 35-45 young men to be assembled (10 youth joined us after the headcount). It should be noted that these young men were self-reflection and energized to provide us with their perspectives on their learning environment. We were given one hour which allowed us time to pose two questions.

Questions:

1. What are the challenges, barriers and needs of African American Males that may impact overall achievement?

2. What should Guilford County Schools address in order to improve African American male student achievement

Input

1. What are the challenges, barriers and needs of African American Males that may impact overall achievement?

- Expectations
  - We are expected to fail
  - We received little positive recognition
  - Negative expectations of us
  - Standards not set high for us

- Challenges
  - Stereotyped and blamed.
  - Prejudice and prejudgment against us.
  - Racism and discrimination from our teachers.
  - No forgiveness
  - We are graded more harshly
  - Little or no help or assistance available to us.
  - Fear of seeking assistance.

- Barriers
  - Low self-confidence.
  - Lack of leadership.
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- **Peer Group Dynamics/Influences**
  - Strong peer influence
  - Inner conflict in our groups
  - We target each other in negative ways
  - We are ostracized because of our swagger
  - We get told that we are either "actin white" or "actin black" (Actin black is equated with ignorance)
  - Fear of success and losing friends when we act contrary from the "norm"
  - We are expected to use dialect and not be articulate

- **Reflecting on ourselves**
  - Dress is a challenge for some of us – style and economics
  - We lack discipline and self-respect (we tend not to respect each other)
  - We wind up doing and acting like people tell us we are
  - We are angry sometimes with our family and our parents and act out as a result in school
  - We lack courage and project a false bravado

2. **What should Guilford County Schools address in order to improve African American male student achievement?**

- **Curriculum and Instruction**
  - Change the face of the AP/Honor programs. Why aren’t we included and encouraged?
  - Recognize and respect different styles of learning
  - Provide classes that engage and excite us
  - Integrate our classrooms. They feel very segregated.
  - Teachers need to be willing to provide the necessary assistance for students to feel clarity when trying to understand what is being taught or asked of them.
  - Ability ranking is insulting to us
  - Improve classroom management.
  - Study Hall – now non-mandatory – what happened to them?
  - Teachers will modify our grades. (Several young men communicated that they felt strongly about this being real for them.)
• **Teacher /Administrator– Student Dynamics**  
  ▪ Diminish teacher insults and humiliation.  
  ▪ The members of the Board of Education and Administrators ought to visit our classes more often and observe how teachers are teaching. To see the reality, do not announce the visit  
  ▪ When we challenge teachers about their behaviors - we get disciplined. Hold teachers accountable  
  ▪ We want and need acknowledgement as individuals and as a group  
  ▪ Acknowledge the success of students of color, especially African American males  
  ▪ Hold us accountable  

• **Support**  
  ▪ Provide increased financial support to our schools.  
  ▪ We need a support structure  
  ▪ Provide more after school activities for students whose GPA is less than 2.5.  
  ▪ Need for more tutoring.  
  ▪ Develop support groups-opportunity for African American Males to come together on a regular basis  
  ▪ More programs like today. They should happen at school.  
  ▪ Keep parents apprised of our performance  

• **Other Needs**  
  ▪ Smart lunch does not afford the opportunities for help that it assumes  
  ▪ Lunch rush creates real problems. We are given 25 minutes.  
  ▪ Better school food.  

  "Listen to us!"
Focus Group 16 – Comments

1. As you may know, African American male youth are lagging behind their counterparts in academic achievement at alarming rates across the country. In your opinion, please explain what you feel are the needs, challenges, and/or barriers that may impact their overall achievement?

- The enrollment criteria that has been imposed for Honors and Advanced Placement courses have made it difficult for African American students to qualify.

- Teachers often feel trapped. They are given children that are not prepared from previous classes. Teachers can’t do much with children that are not ready.

- We must also recognize that at times we are having children having children. Young parents don’t know what to do. How to deal with the school system? Mothers can’t help. Working all the time.

- We must also consider the social and economic injustices many of these families face.

- African American youth have low expectations of themselves and of others.

- The “system” isn’t culturally sensitive. Teachers don’t understand the differences in the culture and don’t appreciate those differences.

- The school culture itself needs adjusting. The problem isn’t the children.

- How these young men are being raised; stereotypes are very influential (i.e. music, TV, movies.) As an example, I saw an awards show that featured a popular artist. He looked ridiculous. He’s viewed as a role model by our youth. That type of appearance should be unacceptable in society.

- Lifestyle choices are unproductive, negative. “We keep each other down.”

- African American youth have narrow conceptualizations of success. Options exist but there is not enough exposure to them.
What does it mean to be a successful African American male outside of athletics and hip-hop? Why does that influence kids? We need to motivate them for excellence and achievement.

- African American males have low expectations due to peer pressure.
- African American male males are not accepted and respected in our schools.
- There is also a sense of fear from some teachers and administrators.
- It has become an acceptable norm that African American males fail.
- African American males lack self-worth.
- We need to teach children there are achievements beyond slavery. They need to know there is an obligation to be an important person in your family and in the community.
- Parents distrust the school district. They don’t see themselves as being part of the school.
- “It’s like trying to fit a square into a circle.
- The system is not designed to support how African American males learn.
- We limit creativity and self-expression by eliminating the kinesthetic ways youth learn.
- It is important that we continue educating our instructors.
- There is a lack of African American male role models in our schools.
- Bring teachers and students together.
- Academic rigor isn’t consistent throughout the district.
- College Prep courses have become basic level courses and are not exposing students to rigorous material.
- I think a lot of it has to do with the product of children having children. There are a lot of women who are having children at a very young age. When you have a child who is raising a child... if you haven’t done the work how can you help your child?
- It is a matter of social justice and economics.
- It takes a village... What can “we” do as a collective?
• I am a product of public schools and a certain level of white privilege. It recently occurred to me that I was deprived of not having known and understood African American history. I think it is important for everyone to know his or her cultural history.

• Cultural infusion of history should be included in the curriculum at all levels.

• The system is not set up to effectively support and education African American males.

• In Detention Centers, I have seen that African American males can learn without the pressures of sexuality. Though I know that resources are limited, why can’t we duplicate something similar?

• I have seen teachers that are outstanding who are not “highly qualified” be replaced with poorer quality teachers.

• I believe in 21st century education. Education doesn't have to be limited to a classroom.

• I think we need to look at innovative approaches to learning earlier. By the time students get to high school, there is a greater challenge.

• Can we support all male classrooms at all grade levels?

• I think one of the problems is that there is not enough money.

• We need to educate the parents as well as the students.

• We can’t always use the illiteracy of the parents as an excuse.

• We should try teaching the way kids want to learn.

• Self-worth plays a major role in their achievement.

• School was different when I went. There was segregation but we were successful. What changed? We survived and we didn’t lose a lot of black men.

• If we change the curriculum are we setting our young men up for failure? Why should our curriculum be any different?

• Now day’s parents aren’t pushing students to achieve.

• The things that kids do now will affect them for the rest of their life.

• Back then the things they did didn’t affect the rest of their life.

• It is so easy to be invisible in the school system. When we were
coming up no matter where we were, we weren’t invisible. And that is where we come into play. When the parents can’t stand up there are others in the community that can stand up.

- There is a lack of respect throughout Guilford County Schools.
- I think we often overreact to what kids do.
- How adults expect them to perform... Expectation of others on them.
- Others expectations have an impact on them
- Understand the differences about them. A system that doesn’t understand them
- Culture about themselves
- Race, Stereotypes, music and the culture
- How they live, is influenced by the music they lived. It is not a productive culture.
- Young people culture. Hip-hop influence, very negative...media is not uplifting.
- Need to do a better job of exposing students to different version of success
- African American males need better tools to help improve self-worth
- Parenting and the views students get at home.
- Low expectations, limited personal aspirations to be educated
- African American youth don’t belief they can achieve academically
- Lumping all African American males in the same group
- Educators are not open to different views or cultural backgrounds
- Educators fear failing...They also fear dealing with African American male students
- It has become the norm to see African American as the ones that fail. The expectation is that African American will not succeed in school.
- Experience...what they need is self-worth.
- Need to teach them achievement beyond slavery.
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- African American needs to understand that they have an obligation to improve themselves. As educator, parents and/or member of the community we need to expose African Americans to some sense of obligation.

- Entertainment versus reality is also an important factor they need to understand

- We need to teach all of the students respect, responsibility, and other personal values

- Even parents have a certain sense of distrust towards the school system. In turn African American students don’t see themselves as part of the school, they consider themselves outsiders.

- At times the difference between the school system and the student is like “fitting a square into a circle”. The system is not designed to help African American.

- Bureaucracy limits the ability of teachers to address the kinesthetic way in which a lot of African American student learn. There is little or no space for teachers to think outside the box. Example, using the football to learn the words for their EOG, this method change things and made it more interactive with the students.

- Another option is to reeducate instructor.

- System is two steps behind students.

- It seems that overall; there is a clear lack of African American role models. In a way it seems that times have also change.

2. **Specifically, what should Guilford County Schools address in order to improve African American male student achievement? For example, what initiatives, activities, etc. should the schools enhance or implement to support this group of students more effectively?**

- I don’t think we can focus on just one or two things. We have to look at pieces within the entire gambit of problems.

- We have to start using existing knowledge and becoming more productive.

- I think we should be careful not to take a deficit approach in addressing African American parents and what they can do.

- Knowledge can take place outside of the schoolhouse.
• Guilford County Schools should form strong community partnerships. There can be mutual benefits in finding unique educational places and opportunities.

• Engage everyone in the community.

• Self worth = a catalyst for achievement.

• There is a need to teach more African American History in our schools.

• Guilford County Schools should have curriculum facilitator dedicated helping teachers design and deliver instruction that will motivate and engage African American males.

• Young people must learn where they come from at an early age. Knowing their history, knowing what their values are...this in turn will help them find out who they really are.

• The curriculum must include history and lessons about self-respect. They must know that the come from a rich continent.

• We need more Culture infusion, civil economics. Knowing about people in history.

• The education system and Guilford County Schools isn’t designed to effectively teach African American males.

• We should have curriculum that is more reflective of the community and African Americans.

• The system needs to be culturally sensitive.

• The system needs to hire people trained to effectively support students with behavior issues.

• I have learned that African American males can learn in a structured environment. In particular, there is great value in an all male classroom structure. In male environment, they tend to focus more on their academics and not on peer pressure.

• Teachers that are outstanding tend to have the respect from students. There is a great value in considering the difference in teaching style.
• 21st century learning is critical. Things have to change. Education is not confined to books.

• More service learning opportunities. Give our young people the chance to give back to the community.

• Educators and system need out of the box thinking. It is Important to allow innovation in teaching.

• Use more technology such an Ipads. The early infusion of technology in the classroom and different ways of learning has a great impact in results.

• More Funding is an issue.

• More research and support in new ways of teaching

• It is necessary to change things outside the school building...educate African American students and parents on the issues. Parents need to see the benefits to brake the cycle.

• Differentiation of instruction for different students.

• Overall teachers, parents and members of the community need to listen to the students.

• An African American male curriculum is important. It seems that in High school African American student just come to class. We need to create more interest about their future and their own personal identity.
3. **There are more needs and opportunities than available resources. Therefore, given the responses to question #2, how would you rank them in importance? In other words, what should Guilford County Schools focus on first to improve African American male student achievement?**

- Build more value in education.
- Everyone needs to raise their expectations.
- We have to be committed to hiring and retaining quality educators.
- There were high expectations within the community. I don’t know that the community is focusing on that message. It takes caring teachers.
- African American boys are feeling as though they are not cared about in the school system.
- Administration has to be receptive to going out into the community.
- It’s time to stop waiting on Guilford County Schools to solve the problem.
- Establish after school programs.
- Solution needs to focus on more than one thing. Need to see the whole spectrum of situation that affects African Americans. Students need to learn at a deeper level, beyond of knowledge. Using the knowledge so they can become more productive. Schools in general give information, yet schools need to teach them how to use the information. Show them the relevance.
- All parents can do something. Education needs more space beyond school. Improve the spaces that help and influence students like barbershop and churches. Consider the value of those places and how they are mutually beneficially connections. Also it is important to see the need for schools to establish stronger partnerships with other organizations.
- We need to bring back the idea of the village to educate a child. The whole community helps in the process of raising and educating children. We must recognize that times have change. We have come
from segregated schools to what we have today. Yet before in the past, the community had their own Art galleries, Museums, what and why have things change

• Need to spark an interest in learning in every child. This will build an expression of identity and self-worth; build a sense of excellence and academic achievement.

• Today is easy for children to be invisible; students don’t feel the need to stand out, before people were not invisible, need to embrace the idea of making sure students are not being invisible.

• It is our responsibility to push them when parents can’t. Other people in the community need to help fill gap.

• Respect is something that needs to be in every social aspect of the student’s life.

• Student should know and have realistic goals. They need to know the value is of a good education. They need to have a “vision what it is at the end of the road.”

• The entire community should raise their expectations on what we want from all students.

• We also need higher quality of educators; the educator is the one that makes a difference.

• In the past, the community had a high expectation, which was the norm. Today, the message is not that strong. We need more respect and support from people in the community.

• It will take all the people working together.

• Also we need to know that changes can’t be that drastic and they will take time.

• Many students have a feeling that the community doesn’t care about them. There is no way to keep your eyes on the prize, when you can’t see it.
4. **What types of things are you aware of in your community or in other Communities throughout the nation that are producing positive academic results for African American males?**

   - National Conference for Community Justice “Anytown”, program that help is well but, we need representation from each school in the district.
   - Peer leadership programs
   - Student Human Relations Commissioners
   - Churches are a center of the community.

5. **How do we strengthen the school/community partnership to provide an appropriate and effective support network for young African American males to improve academic achievement?**

   - Administration and school board need to go outside to the community. We need to help school system by being proactive, need to be more active, partner with community, help Guilford county curriculum, be active not wait.
   - We need to extend the conversation about disproportionality among groups within the student population.
   - We need reach out to all resources. Have an overall message, recognize those resources and tap into them.
   - To talk to our students, invite students to forums like this one. See what African Americans need from their perspective.
   - We cannot treat the problem in isolation. We must consider all aspect that affects African American males today.
   - Have actual role models and actual discussions with African American male students.
   - They need to have diverse group of people to speak to students and maybe the youth would recognize the seriousness of the issues.
   - Forums, sensitivity training, cultural infusion to make it more relevant.
- Listening before not acting...act and not just listen.
- Change the expectations, change curriculum; changing what we expect is the key.
- At the end of the day we need to care about the kids, truly heart felt. We need to win the heart and mind of kids. Teaching them that excelling in school has a purpose
- Hear from and listen to the community
- Change and improvement must be an ongoing process
- More male role models...The role models must be as diverse as the students.
- Not focusing solely on test scores

**Focus Group 17- Comments**

1. As you may know, African American male youth are lagging behind their counterparts in academic achievement at alarming rates across the country. In your opinion, please explain what you feel are the needs, challenges, and/or barriers that may impact their overall achievement?

- The issue at many levels is cultural. Teachers and students need a better understanding of African American culture.
- We need cultural diversity training.
- Being involved can be painful when your child is performing poorly.
- Family support isn’t always there.
- Teachers don’t always understand the importance of positive family relationships.
- In Magnet Schools, traditional students feel left out. There is a battle with parents in class and race. The kids pick up on that.
- PTA people are not friendly.
- Parents that had poor experiences in school think that their children will not succeed either.
Enhancing Achievement in African American Male Youth

- Curriculum doesn’t include relationships.
- Need better follow up with students.
- Having your child in a tutoring program comes with a stigma...there’s something wrong with the child.
- Expand the support groups they have. For example: PTA support, connection between family and school, resources that are offered to students need to be more apparent to students and parents.
- The mistake is lumping all African American males in the same group, same subjects. Considering them as individuals would be a more positive approach.
- African American males don’t have great relationships with their teachers.
- Teachers need better training, especially with students with disabilities like ADHD.
- The lack of positive African American role models.
- The need of a curriculum that reflects African American history.
- Include more career and vocational programs.
- Young people to take charge of their own education. Discuss progress. Need to take them seriously, so they can take their work seriously.
- We analyze the students and not the system.
- Talk to the students so we know what they need.
- We don’t find what students are interested in and then build from there.
- There is an overall lack of hope and vision from African American students. They have no hope so they don’t know what to look for.
- We don’t observe what and where is the achievement gap in order to find a solution.
- Need to identify appropriate tools that would help students achieve.
- Adult expectations are not high enough for the youth.
- Parents need to be more visible, need more father figures; need to be active in the community; parents and community members are not active enough.
- No relevance in our curriculum.
- No teaching of African history.
- Parent education programs don’t address what the parents want to learn.
- Need changes in the way that history is taught, words that are used in the curriculum.
- Since the 1960’s-70’s, children had been misguided.
Enhancing Achievement in African American Male Youth

- African American youth are being robbed of their culture.
- Society lacks expectations. Society and the community need to step up and increase expectations.
- Young people don’t have a sense of accomplishment.
- Boundaries have not been made...teacher and parent relations need to be restated.
- More money invested on education.
- Why is this a relevant issue given the economy? What is happening? Do we have any initiatives?
- Issue also in the way the question is asked. There is nothing wrong with the African American male; the whole idea has become a systemic issue.
- The system is not conducive for black males to achieve.
- Education system doesn’t work for all students. The content of what they are learning is not relevant.
- Separation of gender in the classroom
- Parents are afraid.
- Need more staff development and training.
- What is different for African American males in our schools?
- African American males are competitive. The structure of the school system does not challenge them in the proper way. It’s centered on test scores.
- They don’t have enough people pushing them.
- Not enough African American male teachers.
- Not effectively utilizing college and university minority students as mentors.
- Schools are not a parent friendly place.
- Create programs for young parents.
- Creativity and self expression isn’t rewarded in school.
- Need to take technology and make it work for a visually learned society.
- Our education system is a European designed education system.
- When students question, they are identified as a behavior problem. They cannot question or express themselves.
- We don’t effectively replicate programs that are working.
- The design of the education system is decayed.
- The system was designed for rich white males. It teaches our children how to take tests, not how to think.
- We damage kids when we separate them from one another based on academic abilities. Kid’s helping their peers is also important.
Enhancing Achievement in African American Male Youth

- We have adopted and accepted a European system for our African American males.
- Middle colleges are not accepting students like they used to.

2. Specifically, what should Guilford County Schools address in order to improve African American male student achievement? For example, what initiatives, activities, etc. should the schools enhance or implement to support this group of students more effectively?

- Addressing the different learning styles of African American males. Innovative teaching strategies...explore and utilize the results of the research
- Round table discussions with African American students. Ask for the voice of students.
- Encourage parents to improve their involvement.
- Create an environment for parents to be welcome. Parents that might not be able to attend, schools need to step out of the box to improve relationships with the schools.
- Teach parents how to be involved with the school. Help parents develop the tools to help the kids
- Variety of after school programs for all students.
- It is not a one-size fits all solution. The solutions need to be more complex, considered at all levels
- Better job of evaluating where we are and what needs to be done.
- Look at how teachers are being trained, how we are teaching basic skills and how teachers interact with students.
- Differences in race, culture, and gender should be considered.
- Look at the standards...tests are culturally biased. Are the standards taking into account socioeconomic status?
- Equality does not equal equity. How do we assign resources? Assign the appropriate of resources depending on the need.
- Need outreach counselors and more social workers.
- Accountability for low performing schools. Proof of development, prioritize staff assignment and target where the need is the most.
- Anti-racism training in higher education.
- Training for everyone who is evaluating African American students.
Enhancing Achievement in African American Male Youth

- Peer assistance. Students helping students.
- There is no quick fix. Getting more black teachers in the system. Need more African American males in the classroom.
- More African American leadership.
- Resiliency is important to African American males. We must learn how to tap into this key character trait.
- Bring vocational programs back. Start vocational programs at earlier levels.
- Replicate the programs we have at Weaver Center.
- Recording studios.
- Talk to young black males to find out what they need and want.
- Schools need to do a better job of listening to students.
- Must be able to reach parents on their level.
- Need to create environments of mutual trust.
- Let students share ideas with region superintendents and Board of Education.

3. There are more needs and opportunities than available resources. Therefore, given the responses to question #2, how would you rank them in importance? In other words, what should Guilford County Schools focus on first to improve African American male student achievement?

- Talk to local university students learning to teach. Connect these young people with our students.
- Improve the relationship between the business community and the education system. Get business people help into the schools.
- Curriculum infusion in all subjects, in all grades.
- Admit the current design of the education system is not working.
- Same litmus test for students. Make ALL educators in the system (GCS) accountable to do their jobs.
- Specify how we are going to raise the bar. What is really achievable?
- Constantly remind African American students that they are also special and unique individuals
- More leadership training for teachers and students.
- More resources and vocational programs and preparation.
- More support and assistance for parents
Enhancing Achievement in African American Male Youth

- More dynamic programs that are beyond yearly meetings.
- Youth support forums. Program designed by students for students. Educate themselves about different parts of the community and community issues.
- Better understanding of how we got here and what needs to be changed.
- Create an environment of mutual trust.
- Reading on grade level when completing middle school.
- Better utilization of existing resources.
- Teach parents what they teach the children.
- Bring students and teachers together to discuss the issues.

4. **What types of things are you aware of in your community or in other Communities throughout the nation that are producing positive academic results for African American males?**

- Better use of our own programs
- Curriculum infusion, history is extremely important
- Wider replication of Weaver Center programs
- Geoffrey Canada; Harlem Project
- Ron Clark Academy
- Citizen Schools
- Church programs

5. **How do we strengthen the school/community partnership to provide an appropriate and effective support network for young African American males to improve academic achievement?**

- GCS should admit the system is broken.
- Schools go the community. Bring the school to the parents.
- Parents are encouraged to ask questions.
- Schools need to be more service oriented.
Enhancing Achievement in African American Male Youth

- Less condescending schools.
- Use the “Lost Boys” theory.
- Better prepare the parents.
- Need to have community leader. Who is going to “our” Geoffrey Canada?
- Peer role models.
- True curriculum infusion; follow up with all programs.
- Clearly define the behavior expectation of the adults.
- The entire community must promote and enforce high expectations for all children.
- Business has to step up. There is no business without the schools.
- Improve the partnership between business and schools (i.e. internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, loaned executives)
- More effective teacher training.
- Vocational programs.
- Curriculum infusion training across the district.
- Coordinate with other systems (DSS, Justice, Mental Health, etc) that have an impact on the school system.
### African American Male Leadership Summit Focus Group Tally of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Number of Student(s)</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Academy at Central</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academy at Smith</td>
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<td>11th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews High</td>
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<td>10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley High</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11th</td>
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<td>11th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grimsley</td>
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<td>9th</td>
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<td>High Point Central</td>
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<tr>
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Facilitator Bios:
Michael Prioleau and Mary Kendrick have for years been active in the Guilford County community. They both have passion for finding ways to enhance the educational and life experiences of all students and African American students in particular. Each has many years of experience in teaching, facilitating and working in the community to facilitate change in ways that matter.

Mary Kendrick

- Mary is a motivational speaker; facilitator; executive coach; anti-racism trainer; and an Inclusion and Respect- Organizational and Leadership Coach, Strategist and Consultant
- Her Focus and Purpose is to serve as an advocate for human dignity and social justice by providing leaders with an understanding of their roles and responsibilities in creating cultures and institutions of inclusion and respect
- She is a member of the NC Governor’s Crime Commission Taskforce on the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) with the Juvenile Justice System and represented Guilford County as the DMC coordinator. This initiative included work with all of the Systems in which African American male and female youth are involved that potential contribute to their involvement in the Juvenile Justice System. This included examining the data from the Guilford County School System (suspensions, expulsions, achievement levels, etc.), collecting input from parents, youth, educators and community members, as well as data and input from the Juvenile Justice System, Law Enforcement, Department of Social Services, and Non-profit organizations that support youth. This role also required her to facilitate a collaborative committee of representatives from many of the institutions/organizations across Guilford County that has a vested interest in the youth who are experiencing disproportionality in all of the systems. The work of this group facilitated a change in the reporting and examination of data and follow-up actions in many of the systems
- For 15 years she has designed and facilitated the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce sponsored “Other Voices” program which is a nine-month citywide leadership program and learning experience that examines social justice issues while creating diversity leaders and organizational champions
- Mary has facilitated community-wide focus groups on behalf of the Greensboro Human Relations Department to facilitate dialogue and gather input on the issues of race, socio-economics and other human relations concerns. This has included facilitation of both youth and adult focus groups and training sessions
- She facilitates many types of focus groups and diversity learning experiences for organizations and institutions and trains others to facilitate challenging dialogues
- Further community involvement has included: Human Relations Department Education Committee, Greensboro Mosaic and Impact Greensboro Community Change projects, Guilford Education Alliance Leadership program as
Michael Prioleau

- Michael’s areas of personal and professional interest and expertise include youth development, facilitation, education and training, curriculum integration, and building and sustaining effective community collaborations.

- Michael has been committed to making a difference in the lives of young people.

- After leaving the military, Michael returned to North Carolina and spent 15 years teaching high school and GED classes.

- After teaching high school, Michael managed student programs at Wake Forest University and taught Adult Basic Education, Corporate and Continuing Education, and General Educational Development (GED) courses for Guilford Technical Community College and Forsyth Technical Community College.

- He has spent the last 15 years as an educator, facilitator, trainer, and technical assistance provider on several national, state, and local education and employment/training projects.

- Michael has coordinated and planned training for the State Assistance Teams of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and provided and delivered technical assistance to the Youth Offender Demonstration Project for the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

- He also led a community-based nonprofit agency focused on providing education and leadership opportunities for underserved communities.

- Michael’s community involvement includes working with the following organizations: the High Point Human Relations Council, the Guilford Education Alliance, T.W. Andrews High School Leadership Team, African American Healthy Marriage Summit Planning Committee, Guilford County Disproportionate Minority Contact Committee, Guilford County Schools Achievement Gap Committee, Guilford County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, Guilford County Schools Business Partnership Committee, Impact Greensboro Community Change Project, UNC-G Triad University School Teacher Education Partnership, and Priscilla Lane Waddell International Day Charter School.