Schooling for Resilience: Improving the Life Trajectories of African American and Latino Males

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I. Indicators of Risk

- Facts about Black and Latino males in school
    - More likely to be suspended or expelled
    - More likely to drop-out
    - More likely to be placed in special education
    - More likely to be missing from honors, gifted and advanced placement
    - More likely to be under-represented among school personnel (except as custodians, security guards and disciplinarians)

Correspondence with societal patterns facing Black Men

- Black males are the only segment of the US population with a declining life expectancy
- Adult Black males are more likely to:
    - Be arrested, convicted, incarcerated, and executed
    - Be unemployed and discriminated against in labor market
    - To suffer from colon cancer, heart disease, HIV/AIDS
    - To be murdered or to become a victim of violence (and to be a perpetrator)
    - To be denied the right to vote
    - To be under represented in professional careers, over represented in military, sports and entertainment

Key Question: What can schools do to counter the disproportionate rates of failure among African American and Latino males?

Development Matters

- Boys often mature more slowly than girls
  - Need to focus on developing literacy skills and oral communication
- Non-cognitive traits – social and emotional intelligence, impulse control, grit
- Boys must be engaged to develop character through community service and other forms of social responsibility

Schools Must Take Deliberate Action to Promote Academic Success

Demystify school success:

- Teach study skills, organization
- Model - Show them what excellent work looks like
- Require them to revise and resubmit subpar work

- Use discipline to build character and instill personal responsibility
  - Punitive vs. preventative strategies
  - Teach code switching
    - Speech, dress, demeanor
    - Code of the streets vs. the code of the school

Focus on Culture

❖ Draw upon positive family, peer, community socialization

❖ Develop school traditions, rituals and practices that reinforce positive behavior and affirm importance of learning

❖ Reinforce and teach pro-social values

❖ Infuse information about history and culture into the curriculum and choice of literature

❖ Incorporate positive elements of popular culture

❖ Challenge stereotypes by exposing them to positive role models and new experiences

Promote Active Learning in the Classroom

❖ Increase on-task learning and collaboration

❖ Boys are more likely to learn by doing

❖ Focus on motivation and engagement – allow them to learn through their mistakes

❖ Encourage student voice, personalization in learning and mastery

Students in control of learning, Hollenbeck Middle School, LA

Utilize guiding functions to increase engagement & improve academic outcomes

- ## Self-Efficacy

  (Confidence that one can do what it takes to accomplish the desired outcome)

- ## Self-Regulated Learning

  (Planning, monitoring & assessing ones own learning)

- ## Belief Change

  (From Smartness as Fixed to Smartness as Incremental)

Focus on Teachers and Staff

- Use achievement data to make it clear why change is necessary
  - Set bench marks
  - Analyze patterns
- Hold a retreat with staff to set goals and devise plans on how to achieve them
  - Must find ways to win "buy-in"
- Provide training and utilize effective teachers to model how to relate to parents and build strong relationships with students

Make Learning Meaningful

❖ **Cultural** Relevance

❖ Personal connections, world connections

❖ Subject Matter Connections

❖ Build on prior knowledge, competences and understanding

Effective Practices

- Build strong connections between vulnerable students and caring adults
  - Pro-active mentoring
  - In-school suspension
- Use the arts and technical preparation to motivate and engage students:
  - Integrate the arts into learning activities
  - Ask community artists to present their work to students
- Include family in efforts to support achievement
  - Joint counseling
  - Case work with social workers
  - Make sure parents understand their rights and what they can do to support their children

Close the gap between parents and school

- Engage parents in partnerships to support students based on respect and shared interests

- Initiate contact before problems arise

- Design a variety of activities to engage parents throughout school year for parents

- Hire personnel who have cultural competence and are effective at working with parents

  – Train staff on how to develop trust with parents through respect and empathy

Cultivate Agency:

Influencing the choices that students make

- Focus on future options
- Provide opportunities for community service, activism and leadership development - Urban Arts
  - Utilize community-centered problem-posing curriculum
- Channel the energy, don't crush it
  - Sports, music, art
- Teach boys to understand their emotions and to deal constructively with the anger
  - Emotional intelligence

Build a safety net to support boys of color