

# Advancing the Success of Boys and Men of Color

## The Seven Centers

*The Seven Centers is a consortium of research units that have collectively committed to doing research on boys and men of color. The Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania was led by Shaun R. Harper. The Minority Male Community College Collaborative at San Diego State University is co-led by Frank Harris III and J. Luke Wood. The Morehouse Research Institute at Morehouse College is led by Bryant T. Marks. The Project MALES and the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color at the University of Texas at Austin is co-led by Victor Sáenz and Luis Ponjuan. The Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male at The Ohio State University is led by James L. Moore III. The Black Male Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles is led by Tyrone C. Howard. The Wisconsin's Equity and Inclusion Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is led by Jerlando Jackson.*

**O**n February 27, 2014, President Barack Obama announced a new national initiative called My Brother's Keeper (MBK), which proposed to “address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color” (White House, 2014, para 1).

Evidence has mounted demonstrating how critical education is for success in today's American economy, yet too many males of color are not experiencing optimal outcomes at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels. It is also widely understood that meager educational outcomes hinder the potential for future life successes. With these facts in mind, MBK proposed to concentrate on improving school readiness for early childhood education, grade-level reading proficiency, and rates of high school graduation, college-going, and completion of postsecondary education and training. By concentrating on the aforementioned areas, MBK stands to measurably improve the quality of life for males of color.

Institutions across the United States and throughout the educational pipeline (e.g., elementary, secondary, and postsecondary) have been confronted with innumerable challenges achieving parity in educating males of color compared to their White and Asian male counterparts. For example, only 18 percent of Black male youths are proficient in fourth-grade mathematics compared to 55 percent and 64 percent for their White and Asian peers, and 27 percent and 28 percent for Native American and Latino male youths. Similar trends are also evident in eighth grade mathematics, where only 13% and 21% of Black and Latino young men are at proficiency or above, respectively. Moreover, these educational disparities are evident in other key subject areas, including reading (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2013).

Challenges experienced in the early education stages intensify over time, as evidenced by national high school graduation rates for men of color. According to the Schott Foundation (2012), Black and Latino males graduate from high school at significantly lower rates than their White peers. The four-year graduation rates for Black and Latino males are 52 percent and 58 percent, respectively, and 78 percent for White males. More revealing are the differences across states. For example, in the District of Columbia, only 38 percent of Black males and 46 percent of Latino males graduate from high school. In New York, only 37 percent of Black and Latino males graduate. Other states—including South Carolina, Mississippi, Michigan, Georgia, Florida, Delaware, Alabama, Colorado, and Connecticut—also have graduation rates below 60 percent for Black and Latino males.

For men of color, these negative trends persist at the postsecondary educational level. At four-year colleges, only 33.2 percent of Black males and 44.8 percent of Latino males earn a bachelor's degree within six years—rates strikingly lower than those of their White (57.1 percent) and Asian (64.2 percent) peers (Digest of Education Statistics, 2012). At two-year colleges, only 32.1 percent of Black males and 30.2 percent of Latino males earn a certificate or degree or transfer to a four-year institution within six years; compared to 39.8 percent for White males and 43.4 percent for Asian males (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

**TABLE 3.1** Percentage of boys at proficient or above by grade and subject, 2013

	FOURTH GRADE	ALASKA	HAWAII	EIGHTH GRADE
	MATHEMATICS	MATHEMATICS	READING	READING
White	55	45	41	38
Black	18	13	14	12
Hispanic	28	21	18	17
Asian	64	59	47	43
Native American	27	23	20	16

**SOURCE:** NAEP (2013).

Although often characterized as an at-risk population, boys and men of color possess the intellectual capacity to excel in preK–12 schools and postsecondary contexts when educational policies and practices support their success. Collectively, the contributors to this chapter<sup>1</sup> believe that “every system is perfectly designed to achieve the results it gets” (quote attributed to W. Edward Deming and Paul Batalden). Thus, the existing educational policies and practices that routinely fail to produce positive results for boys and men of color demand scrutiny. MBK represents a major undertaking in that it seeks to diagnose the pitfalls that plague educational achievement among males of color and to comprehensively catalog proven solutions to the problem. This chapter aims to contribute to this effort by proposing specific educational policies and practices to be implemented at the federal level to improve outcomes for boys and men of color at every junction of their education.

The following recommendations are divided into three sections. The first section focuses on educational pipeline recommendations, including policy interventions spanning preschool to doctoral education. The second section focuses specifically on preK–12 policy recommendations, and the last section focuses on postsecondary education policy recommendations, with major emphases on two-year and four-year colleges and universities. The recommendations offered below were derived from internationally and nationally recognized researchers who are leaders of major research centers throughout the United States. These include: The Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education (University of Pennsylvania), Minority Male Community College Collaborative (San Diego State University), Morehouse

<sup>1</sup> The chapter was initially published as a report by the Seven Centers, it is has been slightly modified for use in this publication.

Research Institute (Morehouse College), Project MALES and the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color (University of Texas at Austin), Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male (The Ohio State University), Black Male Institute (University of California, Los Angeles), and Wisconsin's Equity and Inclusion Laboratory (University of Wisconsin-Madison). These researchers have rigorously studied factors that influence educational, social, and occupational opportunities for boys and young men of color. To this end, this chapter reflects their collective ideas, perspectives, and recommendations.

## PIPELINE RECOMMENDATIONS

### CREATE A NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE ON EXEMPLARY STUDIES, PRACTICES, AND POLICIES ON MALES OF COLOR IN EDUCATION

Over the past several decades, practitioners have increasingly recognized the need for greater support of boys and men of color in education through established programs, conferences, symposia, and initiatives designed to improve outcomes throughout the pipeline. Likewise, these intensified efforts have been mirrored in the scholarly community, resulting in the establishment of centers, peer-reviewed journals, and academic conferences focused on issues relevant to males of color in education. These combined efforts have produced effective policies at various levels of governance (i.e., school, district, state, national), as well as innovative practices (e.g., teaching strategies, counseling techniques, evaluation standards) and tools for research, assessment, and evaluation that can inform educational interventions for boys and men of color. However, access to and awareness of these newly developed resources is currently limited; no centralized location exists where such information is maintained, organized, and disseminated. A national clearinghouse or repository featuring exemplary studies, practices, and policies focused on males of color in education would help meet this need. The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences houses the *What Works Clearinghouse*, which features information on effective interventions for the general student population. A similar clearinghouse on educational interventions focused on boys and men of color in education should also be established as either a stand-alone entity or as a combined endeavor with the existing clearinghouse. Promising practices, studies, and policies featured in the repository should be subject to a rigorous review process by a board with extensive research experience and expertise on males of color.

### IMPLEMENT A NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS (NCES) DATASET THAT TRACKS MALES OF COLOR ACROSS PREK-12 AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Social and behavioral science research continues to affirm that even as many boys and men of color successfully navigate preK-12 and postsecondary educational systems,

some continue to face distinct barriers throughout the educational pipeline. These challenges may include but are not limited to poverty, access, single-parent households, and negative stereotypes. A national database (implemented through NCES) could track individuals in the pipeline and identify indicators of their past, current, and future educational status. An NCES data-tracking system would provide insight into enrollment, retention, and graduation trends throughout the educational pipeline, helping to optimize institutional success in society's high-skilled labor economy. The dataset should yield information on undergraduate participation, engagement at the graduate level, and detailed employment plans of boys and men of color. Because NCES currently records demographic information and associated behaviors that impact achievement, persistence, and outcomes in education, a tracking system devoted to this particular population would inform and embolden innovative high-tech educational policy and practice that intentionally and holistically serves this population. This evidence-based practice, rooted in accurate record keeping, would help identify emerging trends in educational progress and enable researchers to identify challenges and opportunities related to educational achievement. These efforts would facilitate research with significant implications for today's preK–16 educational systems and the broader twenty-first-century workforce.

### **REFINE ETHNIC CLASSIFICATIONS COLLECTED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO BETTER ACCOUNT FOR WITHIN-GROUP DIFFERENCES**

The racial classifications currently collected by the U.S. Department of Education are in desperate need of refinement. For example, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports racial demographic data in six categories: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and two or more races. Particularly troubling are the categories for Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander students. Unfortunately, these data hide critical disparities across subpopulations that may otherwise heighten the need for subgroup-specific interventions. For example, Asian/Pacific Islander data currently conceal deleterious outcomes for Pacific Islander and Southeast Asian men (e.g., Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian, and Vietnamese), who have academic experiences and outcomes on par with those of other underserved men of color. As a result, it is recommended that a more expansive classification formula be used, including categories such as: Asian American, Southeast Asian, South Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Sri-Lankan), Pacific Islander, and Filipino. Similar problems are evident with respect to the Hispanic classification, which may mask the needs of the large percentage of students of Mexican/Mexican-American descent, particularly in the Southwest. At a minimum, the Hispanic category should be divided into two groups: Mexican/Mexican American and Latino (excluding Mexican heritage).

## **MANDATE THAT INSTITUTIONS CREATE EQUITY PLANS TO IMPROVE SUCCESS OF BOYS OF COLOR**

Using quantitative and qualitative data derived from periodic self-studies and external evaluations, school districts, colleges, and universities should be required to create equity plans for promoting student success. Equity plans should identify areas for intervention derived from regular analyses of experience and outcome disparities. Plans should identify goals for student access, retention, and completion for student populations in general and by race/ethnicity within gender. Equity plan goals should be accompanied by clearly specified outcomes and resultant courses of action focused on building institutional capacity to better serve student populations, particularly boys and men of color. The plans should also address resourcing strategies and methods for evaluating the success of planned interventions, with benchmarks and mechanisms to monitor performance. All plans should be submitted to the Department of Education for review every two years, with an accountability infrastructure in place to ensure that identified courses of action and evaluation of these actions are performed. Moreover, equity plans should be publicly shared documents that are available and accessible to prospective students and their families.

## **FACILITATE CURRICULAR PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE PIPELINE**

Currently, a lack of alignment and collaboration across successive levels of the pipeline may hinder efforts to effectively serve challenging student populations. Courses taken in high school may not necessarily prepare students for college-level coursework. Similarly, in many locales, community college coursework will enable a student to transfer; however, due to a misalignment in course learning outcomes, transfer students may have to obtain substantially more academic credits than would be expected, had they attended a four-year institution. To address these concerns, the federal government should require school districts, community colleges, and public four-year institutions to partner in designing curricula that create seamless pathways for students to matriculate across each sector. These partnerships should focus specifically on ensuring that students meet academic expectations at each successive level of schooling, adequately covering foundational content at each stage, and particularly prioritizing English and mathematics skills. By providing enhanced opportunities for information and resource sharing, pipeline partnerships are a key strategy for improving outcomes for historically underrepresented boys and men of color. Via partnerships, educators can identify common exit points in the educational pipeline where attrition among boys and men of color frequently occur. Institutions can then work collaboratively to reduce

attrition at those junctures. The federal government can facilitate such partnerships by incentivizing collaborations across institutional types. Given the unique needs of pipeline collaborations across the region, federal grant monies can be directed to state governments to support the implementation of partnership structures.

### **IMPLEMENT INTERVENTIONS TO ENSURE THIRD- AND FOURTH-GRADE-LEVEL PROFICIENCY IN LITERACY FOR MALES OF COLOR**

Literacy matters. The third- and fourth-grade marker is a foundational point in students' academic careers that has direct implications for future achievement. Outcome data presented in Table 3.1 of this report revealed that only 14 percent of Black and 18 percent of Latino males are proficient in reading by fourth grade, while rates for their White peers are 2.5 to 3 times higher (NAEP, 2013). Unfortunately, the longer males of color remain in school, the wider the literacy gap grows. Moreover, students who are not reading at grade level by the time they enter fourth grade are less likely to ever reach grade-level proficiency in reading, are more likely to be referred to special education, and are more likely to drop out of school. Given the importance of early grade-level reading proficiency, schools should provide specific interventions aimed toward students who are not demonstrating reading proficiency by third grade. These interventions should include supplemental learning opportunities with an intense literacy focus in the form of afterschool programs, summer school, literacy sessions, or Saturday academies. School districts and state departments of education should provide incentives for literacy teachers and instructional coaches to participate in such programs, which have advanced in recent years to include rigorous, culturally relevant frameworks that offer promise for diverse student populations, including males of color. Literacy has a direct impact on school outcomes and life chances. School districts should invest considerable financial and human resources to the development of appropriate structures and systems to prevent disproportionate numbers of boys of color from leaving third grade and entering fourth grade without the requisite skills needed to be successful in school and beyond.

### **ADOPT DATA TRACKING SYSTEMS AND SCORECARDS TO IDENTIFY SCHOOLS WITH DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGH SUSPENSION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENT RATES**

Black and Latino male students are most likely to be suspended and expelled in preK–12 schools. They also tend to be grossly overrepresented in special education and underrepresented in gifted and talented programs and other accelerated learning programs. As a preventative measure, school districts should be required



to adopt data systems that track the classrooms, teachers, and schools where levels of suspension are significantly higher. School districts and state departments of education should also be required to investigate whether their current policies contribute to “student push out” becoming commonplace. For example, the Los Angeles Unified School District recently dismantled their “willful defiance” policy, which led to large numbers of Black and Latino males being suspended for extended periods of time. Thus, it is imperative for all school districts to evaluate their current policies and practices to identify those that may be inappropriately used as a conduit for the removal of groups of students from learning communities in schools. It is also recommended that school districts consider the development and implementation of equity scorecards (see Harris, Bensimon, & Bishop, 2010, for example), which would spotlight schools for their success in identifying strategies and pedagogical practices to keep boys of color in the classroom. These scorecards could also include suspension and special education placement data for students, disaggregated by race within gender and socioeconomic categories.

### **FOCUS ON INCREASING MEN OF COLOR TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS**

There is growing concern that the current pool of school teachers and administrators does not mirror the growing racial/ethnic diversity of students. Despite promising programs (e.g., Call Me Mister program at Clemson University) focused on encouraging male college students of color to pursue teaching careers, colleges of education across the nation should do more to attract larger numbers of male students to teaching professions. Young men of color in high school require a critical mass of men of color teachers as positive male role models and mentors to better understand their own identities and to develop plans for college enrollment. Through unique partnerships between local high schools, colleges of education, and other institutions of higher education, potential male teachers of color can learn about the dire need to diversify the teaching profession, consider the benefits of becoming a teacher, and set long-term career goals to advance into educational administration. The federal government, via the Department of Education and the National Science Foundation, should implement demonstration grants that focus on bolstering the pipeline of men of color entering the teaching profession.

### **TIGHTEN ACCREDITATION AND STATE CERTIFICATION STANDARDS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION AND COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Many educational problems that disproportionately affect young men of color (e.g., higher rates of suspension and expulsion) are attributable to a lack of substantive



engagement of these issues in the curricula of programs that prepare teachers for preK–12 schools. The overwhelming majority of preservice teachers in the United States are White women. Teacher preparation programs do not devote enough of their curricula to enhancing the cultural competence of aspiring education professionals. Likewise, most academic training programs that prepare future guidance counselors provide too few courses on race and diversity, and they do not adequately prepare guidance counselors for the complexities of counseling in minimally resourced high schools that enroll students largely from low-income families. In addition, many counselor education programs include just one course on counseling high school students and their families on the vast landscape of postsecondary options. Given these deficits, these programs and the educators they prepare for careers in preK–12 schools warrant more rigorous accreditation and state certification standards. Accreditors and state licensing entities should demand greater evidence of efforts to vigorously engage aspiring professionals in meaningfully complex exercises that awaken and disrupt their assumptions about students and communities of color. Current state policies and certification standards do too little to ensure that highly qualified teachers and counseling professionals are prepared to effectively educate young men of color and other diverse student populations and families.

## PREK–12 RECOMMENDATIONS

### IMPLEMENT SUSTAINED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURES FOR EFFECTIVELY WORKING WITH BOYS OF COLOR

Students of color are disproportionately concentrated in schools with underqualified and less experienced teachers. In contrast, certified teachers with greater levels of experience are more likely to teach in predominantly White and affluent schools. The limited number of qualified teachers who do teach in majority-minority schools are retained at lower rates, and they often transition to schools with greater resources that can provide enhanced job security. Given these dynamics, the least capable teachers too often teach students that demand the most qualified teachers. In addition to these challenges, preK–12 educators tend to be disproportionately White and female, people who often struggle to connect with young boys of color personally and pedagogically. These teachers may inadvertently perpetuate social messages that school is not a domain suited for boys of color. A professional development infrastructure is needed to train teachers to work more effectively with boys of color. Districts and departments of education should be mandated to develop sustained professional development structures that assist practitioners in developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to effectively work with boys of

color. Professional development activities should focus on the practical implementation of promising practices that enable teachers to better understand, work with, and support boys of color.

### **DEVELOP HIGH SCHOOL POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT IMPROVE MALE OF COLOR PARTICIPATION IN ADVANCED ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

Extant research highlights the benefits that accrue to high school students who enroll in college preparatory coursework. However, national data reveal that few high school males of color enroll and complete dual-enrollment college courses, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, honors courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, and other types of college preparatory courses. Ample evidence has shown that students who engage in college preparatory coursework are more likely to enroll in college and to navigate the transition to college more smoothly; they are better prepared for academic expectations in college. While many high schools offer advanced coursework, high schools need to do more to encourage historically underrepresented students (particularly male students of color) to enroll in these courses. One strategy is to mandate reporting of completion rates and access ratios to advanced coursework, disaggregated by race/ethnicity within gender. Schools with enrollment in advanced coursework that fall below a specified threshold proportionate to their overall demographics should be identified for program improvement. For some male students of color, their participation in these types of academic courses may serve as a catalyst for their improved academic motivation to attend and succeed in college.

### **POSTSECONDARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **REQUIRE ALL INSTITUTIONS TO IMPLEMENT AN INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL EARLY ALERT SYSTEM**

Many colleges and universities have support services (e.g., academic advising, counseling, tutoring, financial aid, etc.) that can curb challenges that inhibit student success in college. However, few institutions have mechanisms in place that can readily connect these resources to students when they are needed. Early alert systems have been identified as an important strategy to remedy this problem. These systems enable college personnel to identify and intervene with students who demonstrate warning patterns (e.g., low test scores, absenteeism, missing assignments) associated with premature school departure. In optimal circumstances, early alert systems detect concerns *early* in an academic semester/quarter, allowing time for appropriate interventions to occur before final course marks are

significantly impacted. For instance, if a student misses several classes in a row, an automatic alert would be generated as soon as attendance records are updated by faculty members. In these cases, students would receive electronic communications informing them that they are required to meet with an intervention specialist (e.g., academic adviser or college counselor) immediately. If students fail to report to the intervention specialist by the specified timeframe, a follow-up is made by telephone. The specialists work individually with students to identify the root cause(s) of the challenges they face (e.g., academic, personal, institutional), providing guidance and referrals to key campus resources that can assist students. Unfortunately, early alert systems are almost uniformly underutilized and targeted primarily toward students in select areas (e.g., small retention programs, athletics). The federal government should require all Title IV degree-granting institutions to implement institutional-level early alert systems with associated standards of practice. Moreover, mandated training should be routinized to facilitate better utilization of the early alert system among campus personnel who provide and respond to referrals.

#### **DISAGGREGATE STUDENT RIGHT-TO-KNOW DATA BY RACE/ETHNICITY WITHIN GENDER**

In November 1990, Congress passed the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act, requiring all Title IV institutions to disclose completion and graduation rates for current and prospective students. Specifically, colleges and universities must report completion and graduation rates for certificate- or degree-seeking full-time students. Student Right-to-Know data are essential for enabling the public to hold institutions of higher education accountable for student outcomes and allowing prospective students to make more informed decisions about where to attend college. However, the aggregate data mask disparities across racial/ethnic and gender groups, particularly among men of color. For that reason, Student Right-to-Know data should be disaggregated by race/ethnicity within gender. For Title IV institutions, disaggregated data by race and gender are already available for student athletes (per the Student Athlete Right-to-Know). Data for the general student population should be similarly available. This approach would provide prospective students and the general public a more nuanced understanding of how colleges and universities foster differential outcomes by student backgrounds. The act is flawed in that it focuses specifically on full-time students—even as men of color overwhelmingly attend institutions such as community colleges and for-profit colleges part-time. Thus, the law could be strengthened by specifying that rates for part-time students also be reported. Altogether, these revisions to the act would assuredly stand to benefit men and other subgroups experiencing deleterious outcomes.

### **MANDATE THAT INSTITUTIONS CONDUCT A SELF-STUDY OF STUDENT EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES WITH DATA DISAGGREGATED BY RACE WITHIN GENDER**

Federal agencies already require that all institutions of higher education track the academic achievement and graduation rates of their students. However, many institutions have a limited understanding of specific personal (e.g., socioeconomic status, work ethic, self-efficacy), in-college (e.g., student leadership, joining a fraternity, studying abroad), and institutional factors (e.g., freshmen orientation, number of required years of on-campus living, advisement system) that foster success. While analyses of national datasets of college students can yield interesting results regarding predictive factors, these studies should serve as a guide rather than a prescription of colleges and universities. National studies include a diverse set of schools and often aggregate data may mask wide variation within the dataset. For instance, the impact of living on campus in rural Iowa may differ from the impact of living on campus in Washington, DC. It is imperative that each institution understand the impact of various factors on its campus. Furthermore, many institutions do not consider the extent to which factors that foster college success vary by race and gender. Institutions of higher learning should examine these factors specifically among segments of the student body that do not reach their full academic potential. According to national statistics, males of color, often Black and Latino males, are not performing as well as members of other racial/gender groups despite the potential to do so. If institutions truly wish to understand and facilitate the success of all their students, then they have a moral obligation to investigate and scale up what works for males of color and scale down what does not. Regular self-studies should be conducted that document student experiences and outcomes with data disaggregated by race within gender. Whenever possible, this assessment should incorporate a combination of research methods (e.g., surveys, focus groups, archival research, and interviews) that allow for the authentic voices of males of color to be heard. The use of mixed methods will also add confidence to the results. Ultimately, high-quality self-studies allow institutions to improve their selection and support of males of color; therefore, these practices should be integral to the operations of institutions of higher learning.

### **REQUIRE FEDERALLY DESIGNATED MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS TO INCLUDE “SERVING HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED STUDENTS” IN THEIR STRATEGIC PLAN WITH STATED STUDENT SUCCESS GOALS**

Many postsecondary male students of color are enrolled in minority-serving institutions (MSIs). Some of these institutions, namely tribal colleges and historically

Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), have historically maintained a mission to specifically serve populations of color. However, a large contingent of MSIs receive that designation based solely on the percentage of their respective student populations who are students of color. The MSI designation allows institutions to qualify for federal grants as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Service Institutions (AANAPISIs), and predominantly Black institutions (PBIs). The scholarly community has leveled criticism that some of these institutions are minority enrolling, but not necessarily minority serving. Specifically, some MSIs have striking outcome gaps for students of color and, in particular, for men of color. These outcome gaps raise concerns about whether funding from the federal government intended to serve historically underrepresented students in these institutions actually reach the intended student populations. In light of these concerns, the federal government should require that all federally designated MSIs include the statement “serving historically underserved students” or similar phrases (e.g., “serving men of color,” “serving Latino students,” “serving Asian Americans”) in their strategic plan. Moreover, the federal designation should also require institutions to set specific student success goals and associated benchmarks for achievement within their strategic plans, along with mechanisms to monitor performance toward identified targets. These modifications will help ensure that institutions with an MSI designation are actually serving the needs of the student populations they are designed to support.

## CONCLUSION

Providing boys and men of color with viable educational advancement opportunities is a matter of both social and economic importance. For many young men of color, earning a college degree can change the course of their lives and the generations that follow. The policy recommendations proposed herein are reflective of the innovative and collaborative efforts that must be taken across the preK–20 pipeline to redress the inequities that have hampered educational opportunities—and ultimately life opportunities—for boys and men of color.

While these efforts aim specifically to improve educational outcomes for boys and men of color, it should be noted that these recommendations also stand to positively impact outcomes for other underrepresented and underserved students. Moreover, the proposed recommendations do not focus solely on remediating student deficits, but instead address institutional and systemic problems that enable outcome disparities to persist. To this end, it is essential to build on the capacity and effectiveness of educators who have a direct impact on the experiences of boys and men of color within schools and classrooms. Likewise, decision making and practice at all levels should be informed by data and

knowledge derived from rigorous research and assessment. Finally, given the complexity of challenges facing males of color, and the interdependent nature of social and educational systems, efforts to improve educational outcomes for boys and men of color must be collaborative, entailing sustained partnerships with school districts, community partners, researchers, colleges and universities, policymakers, and other key stakeholders. Readers are encouraged to read the full report at (<http://weilab.wceruw.org/CBCFALC/Boys%20and%20Men%20of%20Color%20Policy%20Brief.pdf>).

*Having read through the data on the “state” of the White woman teacher and Black boy student, we want to give you a chance to hear from a Black boy who is in school right now, ten-year-old Solomon Smart.*

## **Vignette: Two Black Boys**

*Solomon Smart*

**“Boys, for the tenth time, stop horsing around and sit down!”**

Dear white teacher, I really like school and I am happy to come here every day. Sometimes I get too excited to see and talk to my friends that I don’t always listen. Please be patient with us. We are good kids and want to obey the rules. We are also boys and it’s hard for us to sit in this room all day without goofing off. We want to learn. Please help us.

**“Can you please get your mother to sign this sheet? I can’t give you full credit until your mother signs your packet.”**

Dear white teacher, I’m sorry my mom hasn’t been signing my homework packet. She is really tired from working a lot. I try to make sure to help my brother and do my homework. Sometimes my grandmother or my dad can sign, if they come over. Sometimes when I wake my mother before she’s up, I’ll get in trouble and she will get mad at my brother and me.

**White Teacher:** “In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue . . .”

**Me: (*raises hand*)** “If there were people already here, why does it say he *discovered* America? Weren’t the Native Americans here?”