



TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: Ken Wagner 

SUBJECT: My Brother's Keeper

DATE: May 11, 2015

AUTHORIZATION(S): 

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

The Board will be presented with an overview of the “My Brother’s Keeper” initiative for discussion and determination of next steps.

Reason(s) for Consideration

Implementation of Policy.

Background Information

“That’s what ‘My Brother’s Keeper’ is all about. Helping more of our young people stay on track. Providing the support they need to think more broadly about their future. Building on what works – when it works, in those critical life-changing moments.”

- President Barack Obama, February 27, 2014

In February 2014, as part of his plan to make 2014 a year of action focused on expanding opportunity for all Americans, the President unveiled the “My Brother’s Keeper” (MBK) initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. As part of the initiative’s launch, the President also established the My Brother’s Keeper Task Force to review public and private sector programs, policies, and strategies and determine ways the federal government can better support these efforts, and how to better involve State and local officials, the private sector, and the philanthropic community.

There are over two million Black males in the U.S. with a college degree, many of whom have made significant contributions in business, science, education and the arts

(Schott Report, 2015). Yet in the face of these contributions, there still remain systemic challenges that create outcomes far below those we should desire for any person.

Today, too many Black and Latino males do not reach their full potential in our schools. A number of reports and studies, including the Council of the Great City Schools' report—*A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools*—indicate that too often our schools have not served these students well. There is now broad consensus that the nation's public schools need to vastly improve the quality of education these students need in order to succeed in college and careers.

Black and Latino students have and continue to experience a pattern of inequality in our nation's schools. According to data from the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, Black and Latino students are suspended and expelled at much higher rates than White students and attend schools with less-experienced teachers. Many also attend schools that do not offer advanced math and science courses.

Young males in particular are at a disadvantage. Black and Latino males are less likely to graduate from high school than White males, but also less likely than Black or Latino females. And in elementary school, they already fall far behind their White counterparts in reading skills: According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 14 percent of Black males and 18 percent of Latino males scored proficient or above on the fourth-grade reading tests in 2013, compared with 42 percent of White males and 21 percent of both Black and Latino females.

In September 2014, President Obama issued a challenge to cities, towns, counties and tribes across the country to become "MBK Communities." This challenge represents a call to action for all members of our communities, and mayors in particular, as they often sit at the intersection of many of the vital forces and structural components needed to enact sustainable change through policy, programs, and partnerships.

The MBK Community Challenge encourages communities (cities, rural municipalities, and tribal nations) to implement a coherent cradle-to-college-and-career strategy for improving the life outcomes of all young people to ensure that they can reach their full potential, regardless of who they are, where they come from, or the circumstances into which they are born.

My Brother's Keeper is focused on six milestones:

- **Getting a Healthy Start and Entering School Ready to Learn**

All children should have a healthy start and enter school ready – cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally.

- **Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade**

All children should be reading at grade level by age 8 – the age at which reading to learn becomes essential.

- **Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career**

Every American child should have the option to attend postsecondary

education and receive the education and training needed for quality jobs of today and tomorrow.

- **Completing postsecondary education or training**

Tuition dollars spent on postsecondary education must result in successful program completion and the creation of life-long opportunity.

- **Successfully Entering the Workforce**

Anyone who wants a job should be able to get a job that allows them to support themselves and their families.

- **Keeping Kids on Track and Giving Them Second Chances**

All children should be safe from violent crime; and individuals who are confined should receive the education, training and treatment they need for a second chance.

The My Brother's Keeper initiative will also address the needs of Asian-American and Native American males.

These milestones are consistent with the priorities of the New York State education reform agenda.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Department establish a workgroup to articulate the alignment between MBK and the New York State reform agenda and report back to the Board this summer with recommendations.

Attachment

Currently, 60 of the nation's largest school districts have joined the MBK initiative to improve the educational futures of young Black and Latino boys, beginning in preschool and extending through high school graduation.

The school districts, which represent about 40 percent of all Black and Latino boys living below the poverty line, have committed to expand quality preschool access; track data on Black and Latino boys so educators can intervene as soon as signs of struggle emerge; increase the number of boys of color who take gifted, honors or Advanced Placement courses and exams; work to reduce the number of minority boys who are suspended or expelled; and increase graduation rates among Black and Latino boys.

Council of Great City School District – Member Districts

- Albuquerque Public Schools
- Anchorage School District
- Atlanta Public Schools
- Austin Independent School District
- Baltimore City Public Schools
- Birmingham City Schools
- Boston Public Schools
- Bridgeport Public Schools
- Broward County Public Schools
- Buffalo Public Schools
- Charleston County School District
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- Chicago Public Schools
- Cincinnati Public Schools
- Clark County School District
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District
- Columbus City Schools
- Dallas Independent School District
- Dayton Public Schools
- Denver Public Schools
- Des Moines Public Schools
- Jefferson County Public Schools
- Kansas City Public Schools
- Long Beach Unified School District
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
- Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- Milwaukee Public Schools
- Minneapolis Public Schools
- New Orleans Public Schools
- New York City Department of Education
- Newark Public Schools
- Norfolk Public Schools
- Oakland Unified School District
- Oklahoma City Public Schools
- Omaha Public Schools
- Orange County Public Schools
- The School District of Palm Beach County
- The School District of

- Detroit Public Schools
- District of Columbia Public Schools
- Duval County Public Schools
- East Baton Rouge Parish School System
- El Paso Independent School District
- Fort Worth Independent School District
- Fresno Unified School District
- Guilford County Schools
- Hawaii State Department of Education
- Hillsborough County School District
- Houston Independent School District
- Indianapolis Public Schools
- Jackson Public Schools
- Philadelphia
- Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Portland Public Schools
- Providence Public School District
- Richmond Public Schools
- Rochester City School District
- Sacramento City Unified School District
- San Diego Unified School District
- San Francisco Unified School District
- Santa Ana Unified School District
- Seattle Public Schools
- Shelby County Schools (formerly Memphis City Schools)
- St. Louis Public Schools
- St. Paul Public Schools
- Toledo Public Schools
- Wichita Public Schools

References

A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools, The Council of Great City Schools, August 27, 2012

Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males, 2015

My Brother's Keeper Task Force: Report to the President, May 2014