



COALITION OF SCHOOLS EDUCATING BOYS OF COLOR

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2013  
School Awards  
*Celebration*

April 26, 2013 • 6:30 pm

*Hyatt Regency*  
*Chicago*



COSEBOC School Awards sponsored by:







## OPENING REMARKS by MASTER OF CEREMONY

**David Miller**, *Co-Founder & Chief Visionary*  
*Officer of the Urban Leadership Institute, Baltimore, MD*

## WELCOME

**Ron Walker**, *Executive Director*  
*Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color*

## INVOCATION

## DINNER

## SCHOOL AWARDS PRESENTATION

### Best Academy

Minneapolis, Minnesota (*Eric Mahmoud, Executive Director*)

### Devonshire Elementary School

Charlotte, North Carolina (*Suzanne Gimenez, Principal*)

### Merrillville High School

Merrillville, Indiana (*Michael Krutz, Principal*)

### Salk Elementary School

Merrillville, Indiana (*Kara Bonin, Principal*)

### Thurgood Marshall Academy

Washington, D.C. (*Alexandra Pardo, Executive Director*)

## INTRODUCTION of KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**Rhonda Bryant**, *Policy Coordinator*  
*Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color*

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**David Johns**, *Executive Director*,  
*White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans*



## CLOSING

## BEST ACADEMY

Eric Mahmoud, Executive Director

**B**est Academy's students learn and develop in an environment that promotes self-respect, self-determination and respect for the African world community. Best Academy acknowledges that "It takes a village to raise a child" and sets an expectation that everyone will contribute to the harmony and holistic well-being of the school community. The students are surrounded with the message that they are competent, capable and smart. The uniforms and code of conduct in the school reinforce these concepts as well.

Over the past three years Best Academy has developed the components of an effective "gap-closing" educational framework. This "gap-closing" framework is depicted by a graphic with three concentric rings. The focus areas which comprise Ring 1 are Planning, Teaching, Assessment/ Reflection. Teachers will "backwards" plan based on state standards, internal standards, as well as standards from grade levels above the teacher's current grade. Furthermore, Best Academy teachers have developed an instructional monitoring system in order to frequently assess student achievement. Best Academy considers student learning problems a school-wide matter, not just a teacher responsibility. The focus of Ring 2 is Instructional Leadership. The school works to ensure that the most effective teaching practices are implemented in the classroom so that the teacher can ultimately maximize learning. Ring 3 focuses on School Leadership. Best Academy has a collaboratively developed vision, inspiration, and set of high expectations for the entire educational institution. The school leadership team ensures that each of the components of the framework are tightly linked to student achievement.

Best Academy implements several programs that complement their "gap closing framework." Best Academy also developed a Social Fathers program to support the academic, moral and social development of the boys. Positive male leaders mentor and support the boys both in class and in social settings. This supports the "belief gap", hence the success of the mission is beyond academics. Best Academy was ranked number one in schools serving low-income students in the state of Minnesota, based not only on its proficiency, but also the growth of its students and the school's ability to close the achievement gap. 82% of Best Academy's boys scored proficient in reading and 83% of boys proficient in math. Best Academy East (all immigrant students) increased an incredible 40 percentile points (34% - 74%) in math over last year. Best Academy (all programs) increased math achievement from 61% to 77%. ■



## DEVONSHIRE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Suzanne Gimenez, Principal

**D**evonshire Elementary used to rank among the lowest in its school system and was on the state's low performing list. In 2008, Devonshire Elementary began a turnaround effort. Four years later, achievement at this high poverty school continues to soar. In 2008, only 41.5% of students were at or above grade level in math. Today, 93.1% of students are achieving at or above grade level in math. The school's literacy scores jumped from has 43.9% to 64.4% scoring at or above grade level. 98% of its students are of color with the majority of students being males of color. At Devonshire, students are provided with rigorous and relevant learning activities which are made accessible for all through strategies such as differentiated learning tasks and learning products, small group instruction, flexible grouping, single gender classrooms, technology integration (iPads), interdisciplinary connections, and inquiry-based learning tasks. Members of the professional learning community collaborate daily to ensure both vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum stems and to design high-yield lessons focused on student engagement and high-scope learning outcomes. Devonshire offers single-gender classrooms where boys learn with strategies that complement their learning styles. Building relationships with students and establishing an environment that is safe and nurturing has contributed to their academic success.

The school culture is the heartbeat of the social-emotional development of male students of color. The school day begins with a pledge that students repeat each morning: I will be respectful, I will be responsible and I am ready to learn. An adult is always at the front door to greet each one of the students and to make them feel welcome. Teachers stand in the hallways and greet students as they enter the classroom door, interact with students as they check their homework and provide after school tutoring. A school wide discipline policy sent a clear message that all students were expected to behave appropriately and to do their very best every day. As a result, students believe that staff care about them, have high expectations and want to offer their best instructional strategies for them to be successful. There is no longer a need for a Behavioral Modification Technician to handle inappropriate behaviors. As part of an effort to promote buy-in, teachers and staff collaboratively developed a vision statement which they review on a regular basis.

Parent perception of the school prior to the turn-around effort was mixed at best. Devonshire found, initially, that it was a struggle to convince all parents that school was a positive place and that their children were capable success. As a result of its efforts to open lines of communication and positively involve parents as partners in their children's schooling, the parent attitude has shifted from one of skepticism of both Devonshire and of school in general, to one of praise and support. Feedback supports the claim that parents feel trusting of Devonshire's approach and feel that their students benefit from school. ■



# MERRILLVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Michael Krutz, Principal

**M**errillville High School has experienced a dramatic demographic shift in the last 15 years from having less than 14% minority and only 6% free and reduced lunch eligible students to 84% and 53% respectively. Years ago, following a racial incident, parents were brought together for dialogue. In that dialogue, diversity was recognized as a strength and henceforth referred to as 'The Merrillville Advantage'. Economic disadvantage was not seen as an excuse. Failure would not be an option. Success would be the only option.

Academic successes are due in part to successful programs such as Freshman Academy, the trimester schedule which allows for more credit opportunities for male students of color over their high school matriculation, the 'failure is not an option' motto, credit and homework recovery initiatives, and mentoring of freshmen by upperclassmen. There is an emphasis on college and careers through the development of career planning and presentations on careers by adult business, construction trades and other professionals. This has all led to a 90% graduation rate and an "A" rating by the State evaluation system – making MHS the only 'A' rated minority-majority large high school in the state.

Merrillville impresses upon its students the importance of resiliency and accountability through powerful and pervasive positive messaging. Upon entering Merrillville High School one of the first things that you notice are the posters and signage on the walls, reflecting the climate and culture of the school. Students can see themselves in the posters of recent alumni and the universities they attend or military branch they serve. MHS messages throughout the building, along with inspirational "Pass It On" posters students have created from their own life experiences, impress upon students the importance of resiliency and that success is the only option. The principal talks to students every day about split second decisions having long-lasting effects. The superintendent speaks to students about how important it is that they are being prepared for the real world of diverse race, culture, religion and economics. Students at MHS walk the halls with an unrelenting belief that they can make good decisions and achieve at high levels.

The Merrillville *Positive Behavior Interventions & Support* program was implemented to break the discipline gap barrier by teaching expectations and promoting equity. A *PBIS* team implements interventions which serve to reduce behaviors such as fighting and verbal altercations, tardiness and truancy, drug and alcohol use. Emphasis is placed on in-school intervention rather than out-of-school suspension. The *GOTCHA* program recognizes and rewards random acts of positive behavior while the *Check & Connect* program is a mentoring intervention designed to help their most at-risk minority males reconnect through tutoring and counseling, reducing the odds that they turn to delinquent behavior or drop-out of school. ■



## SALK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Kara Bonin, *Principal*

Over the past 15 years there has been a dramatic demographic change in the **Merrillville Schools**. The school system went from less than 20% minority and 10% free-reduced lunch students to 80% minority and 60% free-reduced lunch students. Salk's demographics reflect this shift. Additionally, Salk experienced nearly a 30% increase in enrolment from 2005 to 2012. As a result of these changes, student needs became more diverse. Diversity training became an increasingly important part of understanding of their new population, including the creation of Study Circles to continue the diversity dialogue and training. Salk also hired a more diverse staff to better reflect student demographics.

Through its use of innovative Balanced Literacy and Inquiry Math frameworks, Salk has achieved academic excellence over the past three years and is continuing to improve. Its focus on professional development and a "no excuses" motto ensure student success. In 2010, 87% of male students of color and 90% of all students passed the state ELA test. In 2011, 95% of male students of color and 95% of all students passed the ELA test. In 2012, 95% of male students of color and 88% of all male students passed the ELA test. Furthermore, Salk's male students of color have outperformed the percentage of all proficient students in the state of Indiana every year since 2010.

Character Education posters, library books and the music and art programs reflect student demographics. The *I'm Thumbody Special* program is designed to help children develop a strong concept of his or her own self-worth by focusing on individual differences and respect for others. Through a partnership with *S.T.A.N.D. (Socially Together and Naturally Diverse)*, the high school club whose members read character education books and perform skits for bullying awareness month.

Salk Elementary is designed to teach positive choice making through positive behavior support and interventions. Bi-weekly behavior data identifies areas of concern and Salk responds with its use of 1) an effective universal intervention 2) the *H.U.G. (Hello, Update, Goodbye)* mentoring program and 3) wrap-around services. Positive supports are an important part of the school culture such as *Salk Stash* rewards, monthly *Caught Being Good* coins, and school-wide celebrations that recognize students with zero behavior referrals.

Salk instills its students with an awareness of the importance of community service. With its Student Council at the helm, the Salk community has donated over 1500 jars peanut butter to local food banks in two years, put together care packages for soldiers, collected mittens and coats for donation, gathered food for Thanksgiving meals, used money from a bake sale to purchase holiday gifts, fundraised for Hurricane Sandy, staged a successful Jump-a-thon for a Children's Hospital, buddy read to primary students, and planted flowers to beautify the school. ■



## THURGOOD MARSHALL ACADEMY

Alexandra Pardo, *Executive Director*

**T**hurgood Marshall Academy (TMA), located in Washington, DC's historic Anacostia neighborhood, was founded on US Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall's belief that all children have the right to a first-class education. TMA's mission is to prepare students to succeed in college and to actively engage in our democratic society. As a result of its successful programming, TMA's male students have outperformed their counterparts from D.C. public and charter schools by a margin of nearly 20% on state standardized tests. Since the school's inception, 100% of all eight cohorts of graduating seniors have been accepted to college. Eighty-five percent of males from the last three graduating classes are still enrolled in college today. Students at TMA have received prestigious scholarships in recognition of their commitment to academics and after-school activities: in 2011, two male students received the Stephen J. Trachtenberg Scholarship, providing both students full tuition to The George Washington University. They are the only two male students from a D.C. public charter school to have earned this distinction.

TMA understands the importance of a cultural education manifested in academic enrichment programming for its student population, which is 100% African-American. Celebrating Our Roots, a teacher-created program, infuses personal identity and academics. Using an interdisciplinary approach, which includes visual and performing arts and history, Celebrating Our Roots is a conduit for student engagement in their cultural history through the replication of historical movements. The event highlights the importance of modern African-American culture in a way that students can relate to and comprehend, enabling the students create their own cultural narratives. TMA's faculty and staff believe that students need to experience what they learn in class in order to connect these lessons to their interests and daily lives. Students come to see themselves as conductors of culture through the expression of the body, art, and sound. When students realize their role in shaping culture, they will develop a sense of pride and importance in themselves. Celebrating Our Roots continues to grow and evolve: over 100 students have participated in the event through music, dance, and spoken word performances. Themes covered by TMA include: Celebrating Our Roots: Africa; A Hip Hop Retrospective; and The Harlem Renaissance: Remixed and Reimagined. To complete TMA's approach to educating the whole student, TMA created a Portfolio Assessment Program, is a system of self-assessment, goal-setting, and accountability through which students develop interpersonal, public speaking, and academic skills. The program requires all students to set personal goals for academic and civic achievement and uphold these high expectations. To complement internal supports, TMA has partnered with The DC College Success Program's HERO (Higher Education Readiness Opportunity) program, which works to increase college readiness for African-American and Latino males in the District by providing males with an additional college advisor. Additionally, TMA offers a mentor program for all 10th grade students, and a special Advisory for males exhibiting high-risk behaviors, both created to assist in fulfilling TMA's mission. ■





**2012 COSEBOC**  
School Awards



**Bedford Academy High School**  
Brooklyn, New York

**The Eagle Academy for Young Men**  
Bronx, New York

**Fenway High School**  
Boston, Massachusetts

**Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice**  
Brooklyn, New York



## DAVID JOHNS



**D**avid J. Johns is Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans. Johns formerly served as Senior Education Policy Advisor to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP), chaired by Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa). Prior to working for Chairman Harkin, Johns had the distinct honor of serving under the leadership of Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA). In this capacity, Johns was the lead aide responsible for policy and programs involving early childhood education, women and children, and workforce development. His policy portfolio included issues affecting low-income and minority students; immigrants and English language learners; native populations; education technology; literacy; parent and community engagement, and neglected youth and foster children. Johns also served as a Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Fellow in the office of Congressman Charles B. Rangel (D-NY).

Johns has been recognized by the EnVest fund as a special “40Under40” honoree, by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People as a “Power 40” honoree, and by Ebony Magazine as one of its “30 Top Leaders Under 30.” Johns has presented at and spoken before more than 200 workshops at national education and policy conferences since 2005. Johns is a graduate of Columbia University, where he majored in English, Creative Writing and African American Studies. Johns also has a Masters degree in Sociology and Education Policy from Teachers College, Columbia University. Johns’ commitment to eliminating barriers for low-income and minority populations began while teaching elementary school in New York City. ■





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Shawn Dove, Campaign Manager



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THE CAMPAIGN FOR BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT CONGRATULATES:

# Best Academy Merrillville High School Salk Elementary School Thurgood Marshall Academy Devonshire Elementary School

For building successful learning communities for young men of color.

The Open Society Foundations' Campaign for Black Male Achievement addresses the exclusion of large numbers of black men and boys from economic, social, educational, and political life in the United States. The Campaign's educational equity portfolio focuses on projects that help ensure black boys have the opportunity to excel academically, prepare for college, and learn skills essential to earning a living wage.



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