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Greetings Friends,

Today there is greater awareness around the disparities in health, welfare, employment, and education relating to boys and young men of color. And it seems as if the nation finally grasps the implications of the stubborn achievement gap and its relationship to our status in the global competition. If the United States wishes to retain its position in the world, we can ill afford to leave *any* boy or young man of color behind.

The Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color is at the forefront of the effort to affirmatively develop and educate boys of color, and it is the intent of *The Vanguard* to reflect this fact. Each issue will provide our readers with examples, models, and promising practices of people and places that are cracking the code and cutting the Gordian Knot.

This edition of *The Vanguard* focuses on the action taken by one of our newest member districts to improve African-American male achievement. Led by Superintendent Tony Smith, the Oakland Unified School District is enacting a courageous plan that in my opinion is a district-wide version of the Harlem Children's Zone.

Additionally, the current issue will provide you with a glimpse of a new COSEBOC assessment tool prior to its launch, as well as details of a new COSEBOC program set to begin in Philadelphia.



The Vanguard is also the home of news from our member schools. This fall many of our members opened new state of the art facilities to better meet the needs of their students. Additionally, one of our members is offering friends of COSEBOC an exciting professional development opportunity.

As this little organization "that will" continues to grow, please join us a member and work with us in the mission to save our sons.

Sincerely,

Ron Walker
Executive Director
Coalition of Schools Educating Boys
of Color

Feature Article

As an offensive lineman at the University of California, it was Tony Smith's job to clear obstacles so that his teammates could cross the goal line and score. And though he hung up his football cleats many years ago, Smith continues to play this role as Superintendent of the Oakland Unified School District. He is implementing a comprehensive plan in his district that helps black male students succeed while also addressing the obstacles—both in and out of the classroom—that cause them to fail.

Like many districts across the country, black male students in Oakland are struggling. The situation is exasperated by the district's high crime and poverty rate, as well as a shortfall in the budget caused by California's fiscal crisis. In terms of academic achievement, 79 percent of the district's white 3rd grade students are reading at grade level while only 28 percent of its black students are. Nearly 52 percent of white students graduate college ready while of the black students who graduate, only 31.9 percent are college ready. Outside of the classroom, things are just as bleak for black males. Of the over 500 students arrested this past year, 75 percent of them are black.

While acknowledging that "it is crucial to have high quality instruction in every classroom so that every kid in every



Superintendent Tony Smith

zip code and of every race has the knowledge and skills for the workforce of the future," Smith believes that a district facing the types of challenges that Oakland faces needs to go a step further. "We are focused on more than academics; for the school environment to really change we must be a full service district."

Smith's plan for the district calls for a new collaborative approach where schools not only provide education, but are "hubs" for health (physical and mental) and other services. The model is based upon one Smith employed in his previous position as Superintendent of Emeryville, California.

"Our school system will be centered on the needs of the child, making sure they get to and from school safely and that there is calm and respect in the school building. From the classroom out, students need to know that there are adults who care about them," says Smith.

In Emeryville, schools partnered with local organizations and businesses to better serve not only students, but their parents. As a result of this partnership, nurses and social workers from local universities (California State University and the Wright Institute in Berkeley respectively) helped meet

the needs of students and their families; students obtained prestigious internships at companies like Pixar; and efforts are underway to create a Center for Community Life that provide health services for the elderly, crime prevention initiatives, and a project to curtail teenage pregnancy.

All of these efforts led to positive developments inside Emeryville's classrooms. This past year, Emeryville posted the largest gains in test scores of any district in Alameda County. And while Emeryville is a much smaller district than Oakland, Smith is confident that the reforms enacted there can be transferred and scaled up.

To ensure that black male students receive the benefits of the full service community school model, Oakland is launching a Department of African American Male Achievement (AAMA). The goal of this new department is described in the district's plan: "AAMA endeavors for full system change that will create long-lasting positive results in academic achievement and social well-being and success."

Over the next few years, AAMA will analyze district data and develop a comprehensive communications plan to bring city-wide attention to the crisis facing black male students as well as the new department; conduct an in-depth examination and audit of the various departments within the school district to determine their impact (both positive and negative) on black male students; develop inter-departmental recommendations, models, and best practices to ensure that all parts of the district are working to improve the condition and

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Mr. Smith Goes to Oakland (continued)

outcomes for black male students; and create an Institute of Best Practices and Effective Models.

The district has set very high standards for what they hope AAMA will achieve by 2016. Among the benchmarks set include: a significant reduction in the achievement gap between black and white students, a doubling of the graduation rate of black students, a 75 percent increase in attendance for black students, and reducing the disproportionate suspensions and arrests black male students face.

Smith is well aware of the challenges he faces in helping Oakland turnaround and accomplish these goals; but he also knows that just like in his gridiron days, that a sustained effort can overcome any obstacle.

“The biggest lesson from football was to be disciplined and to work relentlessly to cross the finish line. I can be daunted by the scale, scope, and depth of the issues I face, but as my coaches used to tell me ‘pound the rock, you never know when it will crack.’”

<http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/>

Sankofa Passages

COSEBOC has recently been contracted by the School Reform Commission of Philadelphia to launch an innovative new program that helps meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of at-risk African-American and Latino high school students. This new program, Sankofa Passages, will reach 220 students at six schools in the city’s Alternative Education District.

The program derives its name from the West African saying “it is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot.” It focuses on restoring the concept of rites of passage—a transition of a person from one stage of awareness to a more enlightened and evolved state of consciousness—to urban communities where young people often fail to make a positive transition to adulthood.

In Sankofa Passages, educators and other responsible adults will help students develop healthy identities that are both aligned with their culture and constructive for their communities. The interdisciplinary program will intertwine academics with other activities that enable young men to address a wide range of themes including manhood, virtues, ethics, identity, and mental health.

Sankofa is part of Philadelphia’s 444 Program, an initiative designed for students who are experiencing academic problems because of suspensions, expulsions, attendance, or social adjustment in a regular school setting. The 444 program provides students with basic education that prepares them to participate academically, socially, emotionally, and financially in the 21st century.

Teachers of Color Magazine



The Fall issue of *Teachers of Color Magazine* features an article about COSEBOC’s *Standards and Promising Practices for Schools Educating Boys of Color*. This tool aids educators who work with this population of students.

Read the article:
<http://www.teachersofcolor.com/2010/10/teachers-of-color-magazine-fall-2010-issue/>

Download the *Standards*:
http://www.coseboc.org/pdfs/COSEBOC_Standards.pdf

New Facilities

Across the country, a number of our members have opened new facilities:

On September 8th, Eagle Academy for Young Men opened a new state of the art facility in the Bronx. The opening was covered on local TV and featured elected officials and celebrities including Governor David Patterson and Russell Simmons. Eagle was developed in partnership with One Hundred Black Men, Inc. in 2004. To learn more about the school and its mission, see the spring 2010 issue of *The Vanguard* or visit <http://www.eagleny.org/>.

The Boston Renaissance Charter Public School opened a new \$39 million school in Hyde Park on October 18th. Over 100 guests, including Boston Mayor Thomas Menino were in attendance. Among the school's new offerings are a health center and a course in Mandarin Chinese. The school was founded in 1995 and has 1,100 students from pre-k to 6th grade. Visit <http://www.br cps.org/>

This fall marked the opening of the third school in Chicago's Urban Prep Academies network. Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men—South Shore Campus has a freshman class of 135 students, and a mission to provide a comprehensive, high-quality college preparatory education to its young men that results in graduates succeeding in college. Urban Prep's schools are the only all-boys public schools in the state of Illinois. Visit <http://www.urbanprep.org/>

Professional Development Opportunities

South Carolina has the greatest number of schools with single-gender programs in the country. The state-level coordinator for these programs, David Chadwell, has offered to share his state's expertise with educators both in and out of South Carolina. To see available professional development opportunities and resources, please visit: <http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/Innovation-and-Support/Public-School-Choice-and-Innovation/SingleGender/Index.html> or contact David directly (dchadwel@ed.sc.gov).



SAVE THE DATE

April 28–30 • 2011

in Philadelphia

The Fifth Annual Gathering of Leaders:

Boy, Don't You Turn Back:
The Power of Resilience

The theme for the 5th Gathering will draw from a selected line from *Mother to Son*. The theme is *Boy, Don't You Turn Back: The Power of Resilience*. Resilience is a quality that our sons must have if they are to negotiate and confront the challenges that face them from day to day. Resilient boys and young men of color are more likely to achieve their goals and fulfill their hopes and dreams.

 John S. and James L.
Knight Foundation
Informed and engaged communities.

For more information and to register: www.COSEBOC.org

Middle School Principal

An Innovative School District seeks a visionary leader for a middle school on the “Rise” to Greatness

The Sausalito Marin City Schools is seeking a middle school principal who believes that all students can achieve academic excellence regardless of their circumstance. Martin Luther King Jr. Academy is located in the communities of Sausalito Marin City, California and serves a small, diverse student body. The new leader should have experience working collaboratively with staff in Professional learning Communities using the DuFour model and a desire to continue to build on the standards aligned, data driven instructional model that is moving our entire district forward.

For additional information contact Dr. Debra A Bradley, Superintendent at dbradley@marin.k12.ca.us.

Urban Strategies Council

Urban Strategies Council (the Council) is a community building support and advocacy organization located in Oakland, California. Founded as a non-profit organization in 1987, the Council’s mission is to eliminate persistent poverty by working with partners to transform low-income neighborhoods into vibrant, healthy communities.

The Council has launched the African American Male Achievement (AAMA) initiative to dramatically increase the academic and social success of African American male children and youth in Oakland. AAMA is the inaugural initiative of Thriving Students, a comprehensive five year plan to redesign Oakland Unified School District into a Full Service Community Schools District.

The program currently has three openings, the details of which are described on their website: <http://www.urbanstrategies.org/>.

The *Research Associate* position requires someone with a combination of training, skills and experience in research design, database management, data analysis and synthesis, developing training tools, facilitation, education outcome/performance indicators and working with residents to communicate complicated data in a clear manner. (part time)

The *Program Associate* will collect, organize, analyze, build a data base for accessing the information and communicate information about programs and practices that get results for African American males. (part time)

The *Special Assistant* will report to the Executive Director of AAMA and provide administrative, research, and operational support to meet the program’s goals.

To apply, submit a resume and cover letter highlighting your qualifications for the position, including salary requirement. Applications should be submitted to admindir@urbanstrategies.org with the appropriate job title in the subject line by December 1, 2010.

Contact Us

We hoped you enjoyed this issue of *The Vanguard*! We welcome your comments and content, feel free to contact us.

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