Black Scholar Experience Working Group

Black Male Initiative Final Report

NOBLE

OBJECTIVES

> The Black Scholar Experience Working Group was created to address our gaps in understanding of the experience of Black boys* and to inform future policies and potential supports for our Black students, most immediately, our Black boys.

The Black Scholar Experience Working Group was tasked with the following:

- Fully understand, as best as possible, the experiences of our Black boys and the factors that undergird their experience.

- Identify and recommend current best practices around the experience of Black boys at our campuses (socially and academically).

- Identify policies currently impeding and/or targeting our Black boys and recommend policy changes accordingly.

- Discuss and recommend an implementation timeline, including moves to make immediately, moves to phase in over time, and the launching of possible pilots to learn more around identified impactful yet complex issues.

- Identify and recommend baseline data, goal setting and assessment of student retention and experience of Black boys.

CORE BELIEFS

In order to fully execute this work, our group fully believes that:

- Anti-racism and equity have to be core to all that we do at Noble even if it means dismantling systems that are rooted in tradition and good intentions but lead to racist and inequitable outcomes.

- That the voice of our students, especially our Black boys, should be central to the changes and recommendations that are created from this group.

- As Noble strives to continue to do what is right by our students and families and as we embark on this journey of anti-racist work, doing what is right, more than what is comfortable, is our guiding force.

- We want to ensure our Black boys have access to the same curriculum and tools at every campus. This directly impacts postsecondary access and choice and we need to remove any barriers to success.

- To become an anti-racist organization, we need to become anti-racist people first. We believe anti-racism should be productive and impactful and not performative.

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* The use of the term "Black boys" to describe our students is intentional in this report. Oftentimes, Black boys are forced into adulthood and this term is an attempt to honor their innocence.

BLACK SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE WORKING GROUP 2020

Name	Campus	Position
Delaina Martin	Bulls	Teacher
Brian Riddick	Butler	Principal
Richard Mosley	GCCP	Dean of Students
LaShaun Crosby	DRW	Director of College Programs
Cicele Bennett	Golder	Dean of Students
Tierionna Pinkston	NST	Instructional Leadership Coach
Emmanuel Jackson	Muchin	College Counselor/Instructor
Kemba Kelly	Noble Street	Teacher
Jason Ronai	NST	Director of HFA
Amber Johnson	NST	Noble Forward Recruiter
Eric Smith	Pritzker	Teacher
Quincy Hudson	Rauner	College Counselor/Teacher
Rashad Davis	Rowe-Clark	Senior IT Lead
Nichelle Washignton	UIC	Culture Team Member
Christina Ginardi	NST	Director of Academics
Chelsea Emond	Bulls	Dean of Specialized Services
Janine Franklin	NST	Director of Student Culture and Support
Nicholas Jones	NST	Manager of Student Culture and Support

BLACK SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE WORKING GROUP 2020
Student Participants

Name	Campus
George Beecham (Alumni)	Bulls/Noble Alumni Association
Abdoullaye Doucoure (Alumni)	Baker
Martrell Wright (Alumni)	Johnson
Anthony Wright (Alumni)	UIC
Alan Wright (Alumni)	GCCP
Michael Dunlap	GCCP
Emmanuel Guah	GCCP
Tavion Pates	GCCP
Kentrall Smith	GCCP
Sebastian Stewart	GCCP
Jarius Booze	Golder
Garvin Randy	Golder
Jaylen Moore	Muchin
Seth Hilton	Muchin
Clarence Atkins	Noble Street

| CORE BELIEFS

- **Black boys are overrepresented in exclusionary and punitive discipline measures including Out of School Suspension, In-School Suspension, detentions, and demerits at Noble.**

- **Black boys have the lowest GPA, test scores, and representation in honors and AP courses at Noble.**

- **Black boys have the lowest acceptance rate to colleges, especially 4 year colleges, at Noble.**
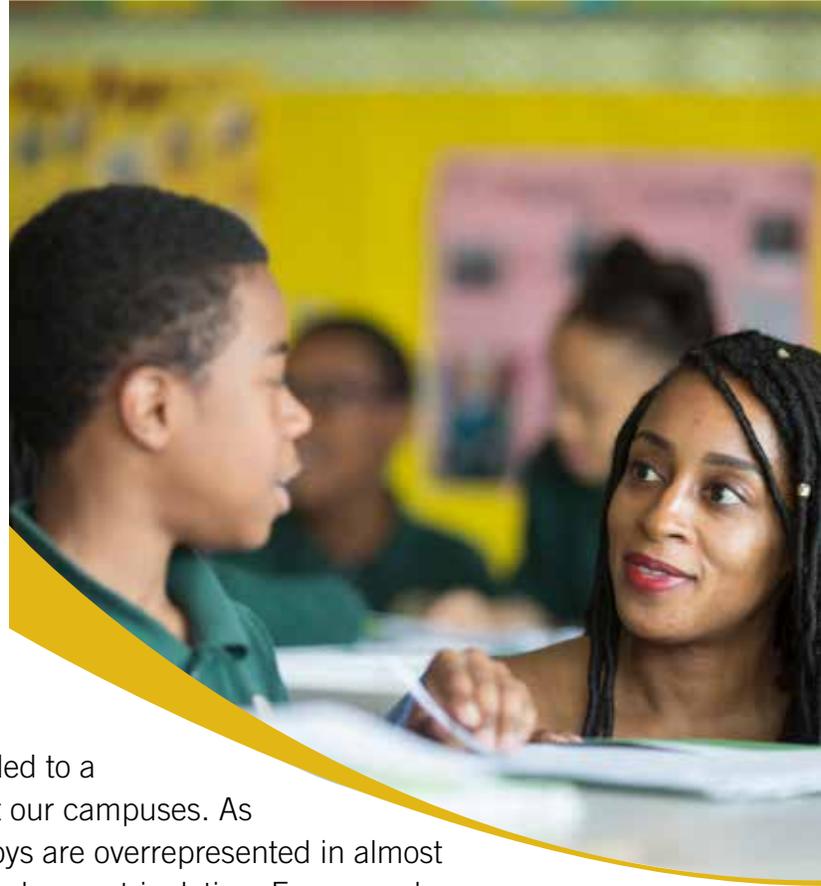
Collectively, Black boys at Noble have been impacted by biased policies and practices that have led to a uniquely, often negative, experience while enrolled at our campuses. As demonstrated by the few data points above, Black boys are overrepresented in almost every negative data point from discipline to postsecondary matriculation. For example:

- **In SY19, 40% of students that did not promote were Black boys**

- **In SY20, Black boys were twice as likely to receive a detention or be expelled at Noble**

- **In SY20, 41% of expulsions were Black boys**

- **In SY20, Black boys with an IEP were 2-3 times more likely to receive an Out of School Suspension**

- **Out of all Fall 2019 college matriculations, approximately 22% of Black boys did not matriculate to a postsecondary pathway (highest percent in the network)**

The reality that our Black boys' experience, as demonstrated by the data, leads to a lack of connection to their campus (at best) or leaving Noble altogether (at worst) necessitates a critical look into the nuances of how our schools support and teach our Black boys. With regard to student retention, our Black boys are a group, that oftentimes due to a negative experience at their campus, have left Noble at a rate of 18.7% (SY20) . This is the highest rate of attrition of any student demographic group and has been so for at least the last 9 years. As an organization striving to become antiracist, it is integral to ensure that we are identifying the systems, policies, practices, and mindsets that lead to inequitable outcomes for our Black boys as well as acknowledge the harm former racist policies have had on them. The Black Scholar Experience Working Group committed almost 4 months of research, data review, and analysis of Noble systems, policies, practices, and outcomes for Black boys in hopes of recommending strategies and new policies to address these inequities.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND SCHOOL CULTURE

School culture was a key lever in discussion around how to improve the experience of Black boys. The following resolutions are directly tied to enhancing the experience of Black boys and ideally will most immediately impact their experience at our campuses. These resolutions were proposed with the hope that inclusion and affirmation of Black boys' full authentic selves would enhance their experience and were directly created with their feedback in mind.

Resolution #1 and #2: Noble 9th Grade Kickoff and Summer Bridge Programs

The group believes it would be advantageous to employ creative and intentional programming that will directly impact all of our students' experiences but also provide an opportunity for our Black boys to build community, through affinity, across the network and at their campuses. With that said, our first resolution would be to implement a 9th grade kick off across Noble to build relationships between students, families and the communities we serve. Additionally, the kick-off would support transparency regarding the culture and vision of Noble and allow staff across the organization to build trust between students and families. Building on the power of community, we also recommend each campus create and implement a Summer Bridge Program where students can build a sense of community with their specific campus, as a subset of programming under the 9th grade kickoff. The foci of Summer Bridge Programming should be on inclusion, relationship-building between students and staff, and anti-racist programming. It is our hope that these programs include:

- **A diverse planning committee that receives a stipend for their work as not to create additional labor for our staff of color**
- **Representation from current students and parents in the planning process**
- **Collaboration with relevant community organizations**
- **Network guidance on parameters and format of the programs to ensure an equitable experience across all campuses**

We know that targeted programming that focuses on all students, like the 9th grade kick-off and Summer Bridge Program, will ultimately enhance the experience for our Black boys. We also want to ensure we are intentional in our efforts to increase their participation in these types of programs. With that being said, we propose to use the 9th Grade Kickoff and Summer Bridge Programs as vehicles to provide affinity-based programming for our Black boys. Given resolution #3 (to be discussed next), these opportunities should also be vehicles to provide tracks of programming for Black boys including:

- **A Black Male Affinity Group Kickoff as a part of the 9th Grade Kickoff (see recommendation #3)**
- **Campus-based programming such as panels on issues pertinent to Black males, fireside chats with Black boys and male teachers, partnerships with external organizations that focus on programming to support Black boys should be included as a part of Summer Bridge Programs.**

Resolution #3: Noble Network Black Male Affinity Group

A key lever for many of our Black boys is finding a sense of community that understands their unique needs and experiences in addition to seeing positive and accurate representations of Black men. Given the overrepresentation of Black boys in exclusionary discipline, there's an opportunity, along with dismantling these oppressive systems, to build a strengths-based program for all Noble Black boys to participate in. This program should be one that is:

- **Culturally relevant and is inclusive of the traditions, heritage, history, and practices of Black culture.**
- **Focuses on identity development, mentorship, and community building.**
- **Highlights the strengths and assets of Black boys and men and the communities from which they come.**

Additionally, a part of this programming should include a focus on successful transitions to postsecondary pathways. As indicated through our matriculation data as well as anecdotal experiences from some of our students, many students feel unprepared as Black young men to exit Noble and begin their postsecondary journey specifically as it pertains to navigating predominantly white spaces and racism.

Resolution #4: Staff Diversity

Numerous research studies have shown that the presence of diverse teachers, specifically Black male educators not only positively impacts all students, but improves drop out rates, disciplinary issues, test scores, and perception of schooling (as it relates to feeling included in the process of schooling) for Black boys. With that said, the group would like to note that an intentional effort around hiring more qualified Black male classroom teachers, deans, instructional leaders, and principals has the potential to significantly impact the experiences of our Black boys over time. The group also believes, regardless of campus demographics, this initiative is important for all campuses and can positively impact all students regardless of background.

- **While the group acknowledges that this is a long term goal, we do believe that we should develop strategic growth benchmarks each year to ensure that the amount of Black male staff correlates to the amount of Black boys we have enrolled at Noble While this will take more research and strategic planning, we believe it's imperative enough to prioritize.**

| STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND ACADEMICS

Resolution #5-#8:

It was clear from analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data that undergird the experience of our Black boys that our group would be remiss to not critically think about how to improve outcomes for our boys beyond programming and school culture. It is imperative to not only ensure all students are academically successful but also have access to the tools needed to thrive academically at our campuses as well as have choice regarding their postsecondary pathway. While academics can be viewed as an objective component of schooling, if policies lead to inequitable outcomes, we need to unpack the "why" and rethink our systems and processes. The group's resolution regarding academic policies and practices are as follows:

5. **The data around Black boys' representation in Honors and AP courses at Noble is relatively low. With that said, the group suggests campuses chose one of the following practices for incoming 9th graders:**

   a. If campuses choose to test 9th-graders to determine academic placement (i.e., academic vs. honors vs. AP tracks), they must offer diagnostic testing (with testing accommodations) during the school year (i.e., first week of school) or

   b. If campuses choose to not use 9th-grade diagnostic testing, they can use earned honors. Earned honors would mean that core academic classes all use the same curriculum, and 'honors' is determined by student performance on assessments/assignments/specific metrics.

6. **Standardize the process to join honors and AP classes for 10-12th grades across the network and reiterate importance/process through advisory. While campuses may facilitate this process differently, a set of network norms and minimums should be created to ensure equitable access for all. We recognize that honors and AP courses are directly correlated to postsecondary access and our Black boys are also more likely to not be placed in these classes sometimes due to systems/exposure beyond their control.**

7. **Mandate wide-spread culturally responsive teaching with network-led structures to support campuses on training to do this teaching (support can happen through existing professional development schedules)**

   a. In order to ensure equitable implementation of this model, the group proposes that each instructional leader provides campus based training beyond the quarterly gatherings. Additionally, network specific expectations around CRST and the inclusion of CRST in Pal strategic plans will support the integrity of implementation of CRST.

8. **Advisory is a core component of Noble that many students enjoy. Given the vast difference in implementation of advisory, the group proposes a central curriculum and structure for advisory is developed for campuses to use that includes a committee of diverse backgrounds, including men of color. Additionally, this curriculum should include a set of criteria and metrics of success for advisors and be inclusive of supporting advisees with IEP/504s.**

   a. To ensure this work can happen with fidelity, we also propose that a Manager of Student Experience in the Department of Student Culture and Supports (see resolution #11) is created to support advisory development, coach current advisors, and develop metrics of success for this role. While this may take more time to implement, we propose the first step be to focus on a core advisory curriculum and structure.

I STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND DISCIPLINE

Resolutions #9- #11

Discipline is a critical component of equity for Black boys at Noble. In order to decrease the overrepresentation of Black boys in exclusionary discipline measures as well as dismantle systems that allows those disparities to occur, the working group recommends the following:

9. **Remove all subjective demerit categories (e.g., disrespect to adult, disrespect to student, off-task, disruptive behavior, etc) immediately. After further review of our current demerit system we also propose that we do away with demerits altogether due to the varying nature of implementation, subjectiveness of demerits, foundation in control and compliance, and deficit-based approach to behavior.**

10. **We recommend that demerits are completely removed as soon as possible. Until then, we recommend a demerit appeal process is implemented at every campus and the system is clearly defined and is accessible to all students and families.**

11. **Change the current safe and supported audit to align with our Anti-racist framework as well as CRST. While there is value in accountability at our campuses, it is important that the tool we use aligns with our goal as an organization of becoming anti-racist. With that said, we propose:**
    a. Removal of the word audit (which can elicit negative connotations) and creating a network tool that is embedded in feedback and growth. A diverse, cross-functional committee can assist in developing a new system that is grounded in anti-racism and CRST.

Resolutions #12 and #13: Network Support and Assessment

We recognize these resolutions are just a first step in a series of iterations to get our student experience right for Black boys. As stated earlier, we recommend the hiring of a Manager of Student Experience (resolution #12) to oversee student experience, student experience assessment and data tracking, affinity and 9th grade programming, as well as advisory development and support. Moreover, we suggest the following assessment tools and data points to measure our success in enhancing the experience of our Black boys.

13. **Student Retention and Experience Score: a score by campus that includes student retention numbers and quantifies qualitative student experience data by demographic.**