

Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color

Five Schools Earn National Recognition for Establishing Winning Formulas to Help Boys and Young Men of Color Thrive in the Classroom

COSEBOC's Award Schools recognized for proven success in closing the achievement gap among boys of color

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Chicago – At its annual meeting in Chicago this week, the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color will announce five new recipients of the COSEBOC School Award, which recognizes and rewards schools that have a proven track record of effective pre K–12 education of male students of color.

COSEBOC is a national network of schools and highly-respected educators, researchers, policy-makers and advocates focused on sharing and promoting promising approaches and initiatives that improve education at schools with significant populations of young men of color.

This year's award schools are **Best Academy** in Minneapolis; **Devonshire Elementary School** in Charlotte, NC; **Thurgood Marshall Academy** in Washington DC; and **Merrillville High School** and **Salk Elementary**, both in Merrillville, Indiana (Summaries of each school can be found below).

“Identifying schools that have developed effective, creative and sustainable approaches and sharing those successes with other educators is the cornerstone of the work we do at COSEBOC,” said Ron Walker, Executive Director, COSEBOC. “The COSEBOC School Awards are proof and evidence of the fact that there are educational environments that work extremely well for boys and young men of color.”

Through extensive research, COSEBOC has determined that the most effective schools combine a culture of high-quality instruction, whole school community engagement and high expectations, with a focus on social and emotional development, helping students develop their personal identities through a connection to their cultural and historical legacies, and instilling in students the responsibility to serve their communities.



The awards will be bestowed to school leaders at COSEBOC's 7th Annual Gathering of Leaders in Chicago this week, where teachers and students from each school will share their winning formulas for success with Gathering attendees. Along with the recognition, each school will receive a \$10,000 grant. The COSEBOC School Awards are supported by the Campaign for Black Male Achievement, Open Society Foundations.

The schools were selected based on a rigorous, three-stage selection process, the COSEBOC School Award's blue ribbon panel determined that these five schools were successful in engaging and educating male students of color based on traditional measures of success, including test scores, graduation rates and college attendance.

"These five schools are unrepentant in their belief that students can succeed and soar to great achievement levels. Each is led by a principal who is determined to build great schools. Most importantly, they know that great schools are not an accident," said Walker.

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Following are summaries of the COSEBOC Award Schools and additional information about how they have developed proven strategies to narrow the achievement gap among young men and boys of color.

Best Academy Minneapolis, Minnesota

Best Academy has succeeded in creating an environment that promotes academic success, self-respect, and self-determination for its male students of color in grades K to 8. As a result, 82% of Best Academy's boys scored proficient in reading and 83% of boys proficient in math. It has accomplished this by developing and implementing the components of a "gap-closing" educational framework. This gap-closing framework is part of a collaboratively developed vision, inspiration, and set of high expectations for the entire educational institution.

Best Academy acknowledges that "It takes a village to raise a child" and sets an expectation that everyone will contribute to the well being of the entire school community. While teachers are encouraged to backwards plan and frequently assess student performance, Best Academy considers student-



learning problems a school-wide matter, not just a teacher responsibility. The school leadership team also works to ensure that the components of its gap-closing framework are tightly linked to student achievement.

Devonshire Elementary School Charlotte, North Carolina

In 2008, Devonshire Elementary ranked among the lowest performing schools in its district and in the state. Since it began a turnaround effort five years ago, achievement at this high poverty school has soared. 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.

Devonshire's 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 through strategies that compliment their learning styles and build relationships with other students in a safe and nurturing environment.

Merrillville High School Merrillville, Indiana

Over the last few years, MHS has experienced a dramatic demographic shift in its student population – from 14% student of color and 6% receiving free and reduced lunch to 84% and 53% respectively. As a result of this demographic shift and a racial incident, parents, school leaders, and community members came together for dialogue about diversity. The outcome of this dialogue was a community-wide recognition that Merrillville's diversity was, in fact, its strength and declared it "The Merrillville Advantage".



Student academic success at MHS has resulted from programs such as a trimester schedule, which allows for more credit opportunities for male students of color over their high school matriculation, a ‘Failure is not an option’ motto, credit and homework recovery initiatives, and mentoring of freshmen by upperclassmen. Merrillville impresses upon 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.

Salk Elementary School Merrillville, Indiana

Over the past 15 years, Salk Elementary has experienced a dramatic demographic change and a significant increase in enrollment – resulting in more diverse student needs. Diversity training and dialogue became an increasingly important part of understanding of their new population. This training included the creation of corporation Study Circles.

Salk’s academic success is in part due to its use of innovative Balanced Literacy and Inquiry Math frameworks. Its focus on professional development and a “no excuses” motto ensure also student success. Salk Elementary is designed to teach positive choice making through positive behavior support and interventions. Salk instills its students with an awareness of the importance of community service by being “Bucket Fillers” and through its extensive opportunities for participation in community service projects.

Thurgood Marshall Academy Washington DC

Thurgood Marshall Academy’s mission is to prepare students to succeed in college and to actively engage in our democratic society. TMA’s male students have outperformed their counterparts from DC public and charter schools by a margin of nearly 20% on state and national standardized test. Since the school’s inception, 100% of all eight cohorts of graduating seniors have been accepted to college.



To complete TMA's approach to educating the whole student, TMA created a Portfolio Assessment Program, 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. Celebrating Our Roots, a teacher-created program, which includes visual and performing arts and history, is a conduit for student engagement in their cultural history through the replication of historical movements. Over 100 students have participated in the event through music, dance, and spoken word performances. Themes covered include: Celebrating Our Roots: Africa; A Hip Hop Retrospective; and The Harlem Renaissance: Remixed and Reimagined.

About COSEBOC

The mission of the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC) is to connect, inspire, support and strengthen school leaders dedicated to the social, emotional and academic development of boys and young men of color.

COSEBOC is a networked learning community of educators, researchers, policymakers and caring adults that support school leaders with high quality professional development so they can realize this vision of making success an attainable goal for every male student of color. For more information about COSEBOC including membership, professional development opportunities or to view Standards and Promising Practices for Schools Educating Boys of Color, visit www.coseboc.org.

NOTE: Officials from COSEBOC or any of the COSEBOC School Award recipients are available for comment. Further, b-roll of each school is also available.

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