

BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT and

SUMMER LEARNING

Children's Educational Achievement Is the Foundation for Our Nation's Future

- Our nation's vitality depends on the **talents and ingenuity** of each successive generation. The United States will need 60 percent of its population to possess a postsecondary degree or credential by 2025 to remain globally competitive.¹
- Educational achievement is built on positive experiences that occur both within school and out of school. Grade-level reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a **strong predictor of future success**, including high school graduation, advanced education, employment outcomes, and successful adulthood.² Early reading proficiency depends upon effective schools that nurture children's potential. It also depends on children's ability to retain what they've learned in school and become further enriched during the summers when they are outside the classroom.
- Yet, all children experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. Because their summer opportunities are different, children in low-income families lose more than two months in reading achievement, while their middle-class peers make slight gains. About two-thirds of the ninth-grade achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by **unequal access to summer learning opportunities** during the elementary school years.^{3,4} Because the reading gap in elementary school is particularly large for Black males, and because Black families are disproportionately lower-income, summer learning losses compound these young boys' academic challenges and threaten their academic success.⁵
- As we seek to raise the academic success rate for all children, we must take **specific steps** to ensure that contributors to the longstanding reading gaps in third-grade reading proficiency, experienced most profoundly by Black males, are addressed. Our **shared fate** as a nation requires the promise of *all* young

The composition of the category "Black males" is complex. We include US-born African Americans as well as those of the African diaspora who have settled in the US, when data and research make that distinction possible. National origin, class, geographic location, and other variables may need to be taken into account when shaping effective strategies.

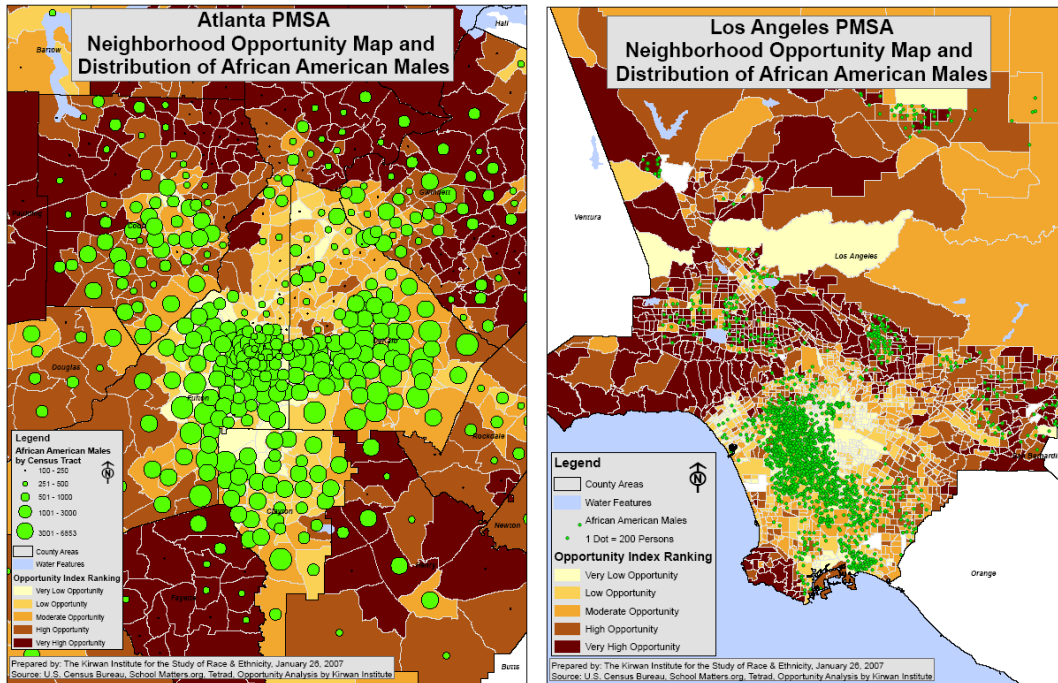
people to be realized. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is partnering with the Campaign for Black Male Achievement in recognition that advancing early reading success requires an understanding of the different strategies that different groups of children may need in order to realize their potential.

For guidance to frame communications about racial inequities, please refer to the Race Matters Institute's "How to Talk about Race" tool: <http://www.aecf.org/~media/PublicationFiles/MORE%20Newsletter%20Toolkit%20Starter%20Version5228PK%20for%20adobe.pdf>.

“Racialized” Obstacles Compromise Black Children’s Summer Learning

“Racialized” means that (1) the obstacles to summer learning disproportionately affect Black families and children, both male and female, and often other communities of color, and (2) these obstacles are the results of institutional policies, practices, and perceptions that maintain inequity. The items below are illustrative. Readers are encouraged to identify specific institutional and structural obstacles that exist in your locale. The section following this one focuses on racialized obstacles that are specific to Black males.

- **Access to supportive community resources.** The community you live in shouldn't compromise your chances for summer learning – but it does. Differences in community-based resources for young children work to dampen the potential of some while enhancing the prospects for others. Since 2000, places of concentrated poverty and low opportunity have increased 25 percent, and growing shares of poor people live in them. This is especially the case for Black families,⁶ who experience extreme racial segregation across income groups. Enriching summer learning experiences that may be disproportionately needed to promote Black boys' success are not as readily available within under-resourced Black communities. To be sure, majority Black neighborhoods are indeed diverse,⁷ yet at all income levels residents in predominantly Black neighborhoods enjoy fewer amenities than their White counterparts. Further, White families with low incomes are less likely to live in low-income neighborhoods. Libraries in lower-income neighborhoods tend to have shorter hours, less staff and programs, and smaller collection size.⁸ Children who are middle-class have 10 places to buy books in their neighborhoods for every one place located in a low-income neighborhood.⁹



Illustrative “Opportunity Maps” from the Kirwan Institute that illustrate the limited opportunities available in places with high African American male populations.

http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/docs/publications/AAMaleInitiative_KelloggReport_April2008.pdf

- **Access to summer learning opportunities.** Black children and other children of color fall behind in reading during the summer months because of quantitative differences in their access to learning resources, such as books, and qualitative differences in their summer reading experiences.¹⁰ Many Black families and other families of color don’t have the resources to send their children to camps that combine academics with activities, or have the money/transportation to get children to the library or other learning sites that can contribute to continuing education during the summer. Car ownership varies by race. One in four Black households (24 percent) does not own a car, compared to one in 14 White households (7 percent).¹¹ To the extent that housing is segregated, families of color without cars will live in communities where neighbors are less likely to own a car, too.¹²

For guidance to identify barriers that produce racial inequities, please refer to the Race Matters Institute’s “What’s Race Got to Do with It?” tool: <http://www.aecf.org/~media/PublicationFiles/MORE%20Newsletter%20Toolkit%20Star%20Version5228PK%20for%20adobe.pdf>.

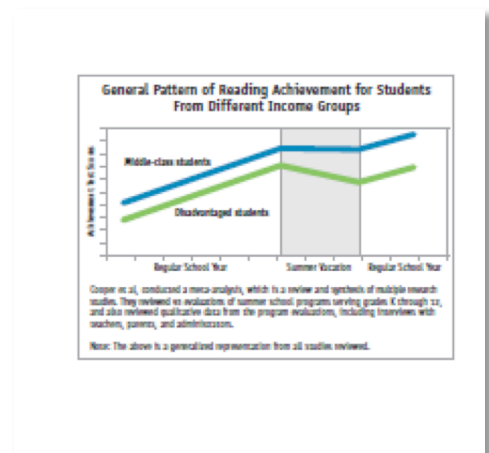
Some Racialized Obstacles Are Gender-Specific to Black Males

Both Black females and males encounter identifiable racialized obstacles to realizing their potential. They also experience racialized obstacles that are specific to their genders. The items below are illustrative. Readers are encouraged to identify specific obstacles in your locale that negatively affect Black males.

- **Under-appreciation for Black boys' learning styles and cultural assets.** The opportunity for movement and interaction better facilitates the learning and social styles of African-American boys, while one that disallows such activity will unduly penalize them.¹³ Yet, considerable early learning operates from a model that expects and reinforces independent learning, limited peer interaction, quiet receptivity as someone talks, emphasis on words and facts over context and known-answer over challenging questions.¹⁴
- **Lowered expectations imposed on Black boys.** Research documents teachers' lowered expectations for Black male students, regardless of their actual academic performance. These lowered expectations are coupled with many teachers' expressed lack of self-confidence to teach Black male students. Such teacher attitudes contribute to how Black males themselves come to view and actually experience their own academic prospects.¹⁵ To the extent that such lowered expectations filter over into summer learning experiences, Black boys will not get the summer learning reinforcement they need.
- **Limited access to Black male teacher role models.** Black boys have very limited likelihood of seeing and learning from Black male teachers. White females predominate in the teaching profession. The large gap between the proportion of Black male teachers (1.8 percent) to the Black male student population (7.4 percent) is second only to the gap between Latino male teachers and students.¹⁶ Yet, research shows that students are more likely to perform better in schools where same-demographic role models are present.¹⁷ To the extent that these demographics also reflect the adults who lead summer learning experiences, Black boys will not likely get the summer learning reinforcement they need.

Inequities Compromise Summer Learning for Many Young Black Males

Without an intentional focus on summer enrichment, students from families with lower incomes are particularly vulnerable to summer learning loss, as the chart here reflects. While they concluded the school year behind their middle class peers, they return even further behind. And even when their classroom learning trajectory has the same slope, a larger gap remains. Because Black students disproportionately come from families with lower incomes and live in under-resourced neighborhoods, this trajectory all too often describes their summer experience.



Source: National Summer Learning Association,
http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/CB94AEC5-9C97-496F-B230-1BECDFC2DF8B/Research_Brief_04_-

The items below are illustrative to demonstrate that intentional efforts can advance Black male summer learning. Readers are encouraged to identify additional strategies that can be utilized in your locale.

- **When Black children have books that they've selected, they read!** A Florida program called Annual Book Fairs provides randomly assigned students in high-poverty elementary schools serving majority Black and Hispanic students with books to read over the summer, for three consecutive summers starting at the end of first or second grade. The goal is to prevent summer learning loss. In the spring of each school year, students attend the fair, located in their school building, where they can order from among 400-600 books in a variety of genres. At each fair, students pick 12 books to keep as their own, which are delivered to them on the final day of school. At the end of three years, students receiving the books scored 35-40 percent of a grade level higher than those who had not on the state's reading test. Cost per student over the three-year period was about \$200.¹⁸
- **Well-designed summer opportunities improve Black boys' reading skills.** Read to Achieve Summer Literacy Day Camp, designed to prevent summer reading loss among economically disadvantaged first graders, produced significant improvements in reading measures for African American and Hispanic students at 3- and 9-month follow-ups. Camp literacy activities were led by experienced, credentialed elementary school teachers working with small class sizes, using reading activities that are exploratory and creative, so that children could experience reading instruction in a context that was different from school.¹⁹ Harlem RBI, a free, full-day youth enrichment program, combines baseball, teamwork and literacy education for low-income students who are primarily African American and Latino. An illustrative annual evaluation documents that 85 percent of the youth improved their reading comprehension skills; 86 percent improved their reading scores or kept them constant, showing no summer learning loss; and 95 percent self-reported that the program helped them like reading more.²⁰
- **Quality practices for summer programs have been identified.** Research points to the importance of individualized instruction, parental involvement, and small class sizes. For voluntary summer learning programs, providers need to adopt targeted strategies to build enrollment and maximize attendance among enrollees, such as notifying parents early before they make other plans for the summer, offering engaging enrichment activities, providing transportation, and offering full-day programs, which better suit the needs of working families.²¹
- **Peer networks can be nurtured for learning reinforcement.** One study asked Black boys in elementary school who helps them be a "good student" and how these acquaintances provide this support. Friends, siblings, and cousins accounted for slightly more than one-third of the boys' identified support networks around learning. Collective summer learning and enrichment activities for peer support systems – beyond individual opportunities – should be explored as a way to nurture a broader system of academic reinforcement for Black boys by simultaneously enriching those to whom they often turn for school-related guidance.²²
- **Many local stakeholders have a role to play to close racial gaps in summer learning opportunities.** Beyond the classroom setting, attention must be given to improving the vitality of distressed neighborhoods, which burden families of color

disproportionately and which contribute to curtailed academic development through lack of access to enriching settings like libraries and museums. Organizations that provide mentoring for Black boys should focus on their particular need for reading reinforcement during the summer. Athletic coaches could find ways to incorporate reading activities alongside physical exercise, as Harlem RBI noted above has done so effectively.

For guidance to improve chances that policies and practices will reduce racial disparities, please refer to the Race Matters Institute's "Racial Equity Impact Analysis" tool: <http://www.aecf.org/~media/PublicationFiles/MORE%20Newsletter%20Toolkit%20Starter%20Version5228PK%20for%20adobe.pdf>.

This document was developed by JustPartners, Inc., through the Race Matters Institute, www.racemattersinstitute.org.

With support from the Campaign for Black Male Achievement and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

¹ National Opportunity to Learn Campaign, PowerPoint presentation prepared by the Schott Foundation for Public Education, slide 5.

² *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf, accessed 11.15.12.

³ National Summer Learning Association, <http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/CB94AEC5-9C97-496F-B230-1BECDFC2DF8B/EveryChildMemorable.pdf>, accessed 6.7.13.

⁴ National Summer Learning Association, http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/CB94AEC5-9C97-496F-B230-1BECDFC2DF8B/Research_Brief_02_-_Alexander.pdf, accessed 6.7.13.

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2009 Reading Assessment*. An unpublished report noted by Child Trends indicates that when family SES and home environment are controlled for, race is not explanatory for existing disparities (http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2009_07_10_FR_DisparitiesEL.pdf). However, insofar as these factors are disproportionately challenging for specific families of color, these outcomes remain "racialized."

⁶ D.T. Lichter et al., *The Geography of Exclusion: Race, Segregation, and Concentrated Poverty*, National Poverty Center, May 2011, <http://npc.umich.edu/publications/u/2011-16%20NPC%20Working%20Paper.pdf>, accessed 11.30.12.

-
- ⁷ M.L. Owens and D.J. Wright, *The Diversity of Majority Black Neighborhoods*, http://www.rockinst.org/pdf/cities_and_neighborhoods/1998-the_diversity_of_majority-black_neighborhoods.pdf, accessed 6.7.13.
- ⁸ http://scienceindex.com/stories/1055932/Disparities_in_public_libraries_service_levels_based_on_neighborhood_income_and_urbanization_levels_A_nationwide_study.html, accessed 6.7.13.
- ⁹ <http://www.slj.com/2013/06/curriculum-connections/summer-reading-and-the-rich-poor-achievement-gap-an-educator-responds-to-questions/>, accessed 6.7.13.
- ¹⁰ http://maec.ceee.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/MAEC_Kim_Summer%20Reads_2010.pdf, accessed 1.8.12.
- ¹¹ M. Lui, *Stalling the Dream: Racial Gaps in the Car Culture*, Black Commentator, January 19, 2006, http://www.blackcommentator.com/167/167_quest_lui_auto_bias.html, accessed 11.16.12.
- ¹² A. Berube et al., *Socioeconomic Differences in Household Automobile Ownership Rates: Implications for Evacuation Policy*, <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~raphael/BerubeDeakenRaphael.pdf>, accessed 11.16.12.
- ¹³ <http://www.coseboc.org/sites/coseboc.org/files/assets/The%20Early%20Years%20to%20the%20Early%20Grades.Pree-K%20to%20Third%20through%20a%20Cultural%20Lens.pdf>, accessed 6.10.13.
- ¹⁴ <http://www.education.com/reference/article/culture-school/>, accessed 6.10.13.
- ¹⁵ M. Lynn et al., "Examining Teachers' Beliefs About African American Male Students in a Low-Performing High School in an African American School District," *Teachers College Record*, January 2010: 289–330, <http://www.blackmaleinstitute.org/pdf/scholarly/Marvin%20Lynn--Black%20male%20attitudes.pdf>, accessed 5.31.13.
- ¹⁶ I.A. Toldson and C. W. Lewis, *Challenge the Status Quo: Academic Success Among School-Age African American Males*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc, 2012., <http://www.cbcfinc.org/oUploadedFiles/CTSQ.pdf>, accessed 5.30.13.
- ¹⁷ American Values Institute, *Transforming Perception: Black Men and Boys*, http://perception.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/BMR2_EXEC_HI_RES.pdf, accessed 5.30.13.
- ¹⁸ <http://evidencebasedprograms.org/1366-2/annual-books-fairs-in-high-poverty-elementary-schools-near-top-tier>, accessed 6.7.13.
- ¹⁹ <http://www.childtrends.org/Lifecourse/programs/readcamp.htm>, accessed 1.8.12.
- ²⁰ Harlem RBI, Inc., The Reading and Enrichment Academy for Learning Summer Program, *2006 REAL Kids Report*.
- ²¹ RAND Corporation, 2011, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1120.sum.pdf, accessed 6.7.13.
- ²² http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/news/coverStories/2009/supporting_african_american_boys_in_school.php, accessed 6.10.13.