

TRANSFORMING THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF YOUNG MEN OF COLOR

WORKBOOK

FOREWORD

The companion workbook activities are meant to challenge your perspectives and practices so that you can create an environment that affirms and supports young men of color. These self-reflection and group activities can facilitate conversations around race, ethnicity, culture, gender and English language status. As you move through the activities in the workbook, keep an open mind and commit to engaging with other educators in order to build a web of culturally relevant social and academic supports and resources. Most important, challenge yourself to act — to create strategies to influence and develop school policies, and to transform practices to better support the educational experience of young men of color.

ADDRESSING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

After reading the articles in *Transforming the Educational Experience of Young Men of Color: School Counseling Series*, answer these critical questions on your own or with a group.

1. Why do you think the young men of color represented in the journal seek
 - a. Ways of finding/identifying “who they are”? A sense of self?
 - b. A sense of pride about their heritage/history?
 - c. Alternative ways of expressing themselves and/or their emotions?

2. How does negative stereotyping affect the educational outcomes of young men of color? Does it affect their
 - a. Access to rigorous course work in school? Advanced Placement® courses? Honors classes?
 - b. Opportunities to gain critical information about careers and college?
 - c. Ability to graduate from high school or college?
 - d. Ability to get a job?
 - e. Ability to attain leadership roles in school and/or in the community?

3. Code switching is a term frequently used to describe how individuals modify their behavior from what is considered to be appropriate in their own culture to behavior that is perceived to be more socially acceptable by another culture. With regard to code switching
 - a. Why must young men of color master this skill?
 - b. What are the possible consequences if they do not?
 - c. What opportunities have you had to witness this behavior? Can you describe what the student gained or lost?

CONSIDERING CHALLENGING CONTEXTS

How can we address the challenging environments highlighted within *Transforming the Educational Experience of Young Men of Color: School Counseling Series* appropriately to ensure the progress and success of all students, especially young men of color? Read the issues presented below and, as a group, discuss and brainstorm ways to address them.

1. The enrollment in advanced classes or programs (e.g., AP, Calculus, Honors, IB, Physics, GATE, National Honor Society) does not mirror the demographics of the school population.
2. There are more males than females in Special Education classes — and the majority are young men of color.
3. Disproportionate numbers of young men of color are suspended from school for insubordination.
4. The majority of students taking Algebra I in grades 10 and above are young men of color.
5. When teacher recommendations are removed as a prerequisite for participating in rigorous classes, the class demographics change.
6. When young men of color surpass expectations and succeed in higher level rigorous courses, educators attribute this success to cheating or to an aberration.

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT VOICES

Read the excerpts taken from essays and poems written by young men of color. Notice how the young men describe themselves, their feelings and experiences in their school. As you read, answer the reflection questions below. You may want to complete the questions alone or as a group so you can have a deeper discussion about these stories and challenges. Additional excerpts can be found throughout the *Transforming the Educational Experience of Young Men of Color: School Counseling Journal Series*.

Reflection Questions

1. How would you describe the feelings expressed in the excerpts?
2. Which statements are most compelling? Why?
3. What effects do you think these experiences have on the students' schooling?
4. Have you ever felt like you were discriminated against (e.g., age, gender, religion)?
 - How would you describe how you felt in the situation (e.g., angry, powerless, oppressed)?
 - What steps did you take to manage your feelings and deal with the situation?
5. Are there young men of color in your school or district who you think share your views, feelings and/or experiences? Or share those expressed by the students?
6. What steps would you take to create a student-centered environment that would support young men of color?
7. How would you advocate for these young men of color in your school and district?

“What hurts me the most is when we focus negatively on African Americans and we see unfair criminal action. Education for me, as a man of color, is different in many ways, such as when you get in trouble; you have a higher discipline action than other races. Another is, I think many teachers expect that black men will fail, so they don’t give them the same opportunities as others to make up work.”

Anthony B., High School

“My mother was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. My father was born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. When they were both teenagers, they crossed the border to the U.S. separately. They settled in Boston, Mass. This was where they met and had a baby, my oldest sister. Then, two years later, they had a brown-skinned child, which was me. Years have passed, and now I have a younger sister and two younger brothers.

It is hard being a teenager of color in school. I have been in many difficult situations. For example, in sixth grade, on the way to lunch, a student popped a cap gun.

When the dean turned around, he looked at me and said “You! Come here!” He brought me into an empty room, where I was searched for caps. I was sobbing because I was in trouble for something I didn’t do. Once they didn’t find anything on me, they let me go to lunch, but I was still crying.”

Jose P., High School

“As I began to work my way through my education, I realized that things are a lot tougher than they seem. Dealing with school was one thing, but dealing with school along with racial prejudice makes it far worse. There were countless times in my school career where fellow classmates would poke fun at me for being Asian. They would mock my culture, disrespect my aspirations, encourage my failure and even belittle my humanity.”

Truong W., High School

“As an African American student, my race never really had an effect on me until I was in middle school. My parents always reminded me of the importance of education, so I would focus on excelling in school. By the time I was in middle school, though, I — as well as others — noticed that I was the only African American in many of my honors classes. At first this realization made me feel slightly uncomfortable. I always had mixed feelings about the remarks that were made about my academic ability, given my race. Many students and teachers would say how they are impressed by my effort and how well I do in school, and at first I was not fazed by it, I actually was motivated to keep doing better because of it, but by eighth grade I became annoyed by the constant reminder that I was a rarity — that students of color tended not to do so well in school.”

Rawlings T., High School

BUILDING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Through collaborative partnerships — with nonprofits, community agencies, faith-based organizations, higher education professionals, legislators and policymakers — counselors can help to create an environment that is responsive and adaptive to the needs of young men of color. Complete the checklist below to see how ready you are to meet the challenges of creating these partnerships.

Circle one:

- | | | | |
|-----|----|----------|---|
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 1. I am comfortable working with diverse groups of people. |
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 2. I am comfortable thinking creatively about new types of collaborative partnerships. |
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 3. I am confident when working with community partners on the issues facing young men of color. |
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 4. I believe that young men of color have positive assets and skills to contribute to the community. |
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 5. I have a strong focus on issues facing young men of color. |
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 6. I take action to create collaborative partnerships. |
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 7. I believe that community involvement is important for young men of color to be successful. |
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 8. I am not discouraged easily. |
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 9. I believe that an important part of my responsibilities is to ensure that young men of color are adequately prepared and successful in college and in their careers. |
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 10. I am optimistic about creating collaborative partnerships. |
| Yes | No | Somewhat | 11. I understand that community work takes time and that progress is not always predictable. |

Review your answers and reflect on ways to improve your ability to create collaborative partnerships in your community.

APPRECIATING FAMILY HISTORY

Race, ethnicity, cultural origins and historical background are significant factors in determining how a young man of color defines who he is and how he relates to the broader world. In this activity, you are going to create a Family Treasure Box* that describes your personal and family history. This activity is recommended for groups of three or more.

Step 1

Gather small photos, newspaper clippings and personal mementos — objects that best describe your family’s heritage, race, ethnicity, cultural background and history. As you collect these items, reflect on and discuss the meaning of each item with your family members or with friends prior to sharing with the group to get a richer family history. Place all of the items and notes on their significance into a box.

Step 2

When sharing with the group, use these questions to lead the discussion:

- How would you describe your childhood, adolescence and adulthood?
- How do these items symbolize significant events, rituals and traditions in your family?
- How do these items define who you are today?
- Do these items define your identity? If so, how? If not, why?
- How can this activity be used to help young men of color define their identities?
- How do young men of color use their racial, ethnic and cultural origins or historical background to affirm, build and develop their sense of community?

*Adapted from ehow.com, Family Tree Activity

CREATING A STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In the article “A Social Justice Framework for Counseling Young Men of Color,” Dr. Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy describes the social justice framework approach to school counseling as including: 1) counseling and intervention planning; 2) collecting and using data; and 3) connecting schools, families and communities.

After reading the article, use the framework to consider student-centered learning environments by completing the activity below with a group of three or more.

Step 1

Give each member of the group at least two or three puzzle pieces. Individually, think critically about how you would create a school environment that would be inclusive of all students. On the puzzle pieces, write some interventions that incorporate the social justice-based approach.

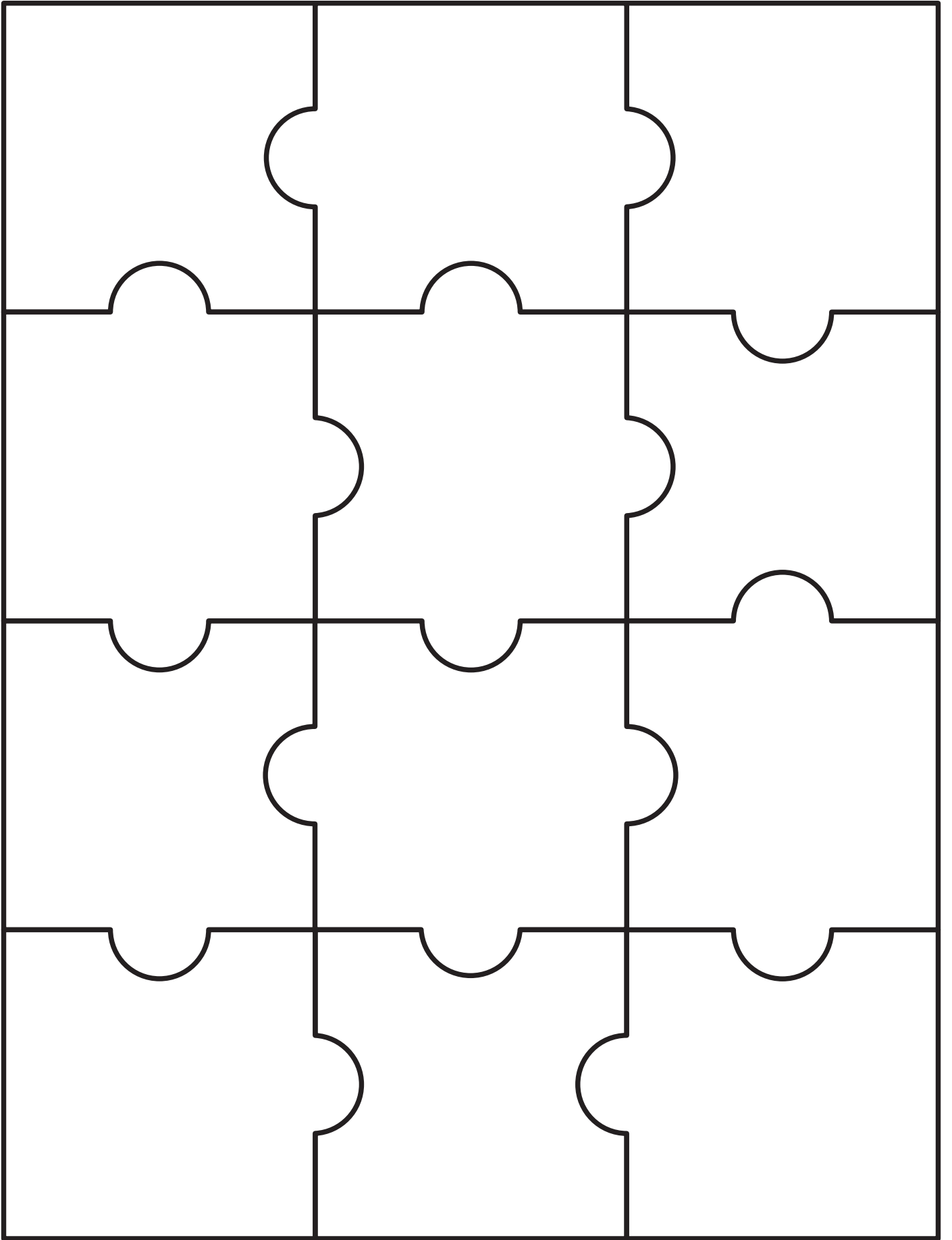
Step 2

As a group, put the puzzle together and review the responses. Compare and discuss the interventions written on each of the puzzle pieces.

Step 3

Complete the following questions:

- Did this activity give everyone a voice? Highlight the differences and similarities in approaches?
- What might the advantages be to including strategies and interventions from diverse team members when supporting young men of color?
- Can you identify nontraditional strategies and interventions?



SUPPORTING YOUNG MEN OF COLOR AND THEIR FAMILIES

Evaluate the success of your school counseling program by using the following rankings: 1 – Not present in my school counseling program, to 5 – Present in my school counseling program.

Not present in my school counseling program		Present in my school counseling program			
1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	1. Empowering and supporting young men of color to define themselves.
					Opportunities for young men of color to define success and link it to their college and career aspirations.
1	2	3	4	5	Awareness of various stereotypes and myths associated with young men of color.
1	2	3	4	5	Print literature and activities that foster a positive self-image.
1	2	3	4	5	Lesson plans or small-group activities that enable young men of color to express themselves in ways that are abstract, creative and entrepreneurial.
					2. Empowering and supporting young men of color to establish, value and maintain community.
1	2	3	4	5	Activities and opportunities to build a sense of community at the school.
1	2	3	4	5	Academic activities and college and career exploration activities (e.g., print literature, communication, apparel, celebrations and traditions) that are culturally relevant to young men of color.
1	2	3	4	5	Activities that use local and national figures, holidays and events that are important to young men of color and their families.
1	2	3	4	5	Events and activities that draw on or acknowledge the importance of established family and community structures of young men of color.
					3. Encouraging young men of color to build and develop pride in their customs, culture, traditions and nationality.
1	2	3	4	5	Activities that provide opportunities for young men of color to discover their values/beliefs in the context of their community, in order to make informed decisions as young adults.
1	2	3	4	5	Assistance for young men of color to understand the unique value and benefit they contribute within their community.

Not present
in my school
counseling
program

Present in
my school
counseling
program

1 2 3 4 5

4. Nurturing skills and confidence to overcome challenges.

Identification of interpersonal and institutional policies and practices that do not support equitable opportunities for young men of color.

1 2 3 4 5

Opportunities to build and enhance skills to overcome challenges related to race, ethnicity and culture.

5. Increasing awareness and knowledge of the benefits of education and financial responsibility.

1 2 3 4 5

Activities and opportunities to promote the benefits of education among young men of color.

1 2 3 4 5

Financial advising workshops to increase college going and future financial prosperity.

1 2 3 4 5

Role models and mentors that empower young men of color and their families to enhance their financial literacy skills.

After completing the evaluation, reflect on how you could improve or change your existing program so that it meets the needs of young men of color and their families.

BUILDING A DESIRED EDUCATION PIPELINE

The traditional education pipeline — sequentially progressing through elementary, middle and high school, and college and beyond — does not always work for young men of color, whose paths may vary. Throughout the journal series, authors discuss nontraditional methods of engaging young men of color, such as art, music, summer programs, and male-focused clubs and organizations. Complete the steps below and think about how you can change or enhance the traditional pipeline to better meet the needs of the young men of color in your school, district and community.

Step 1: Describe the Existing Pipeline

- a. Describe the traditional K–12th-grade pipeline in your school, district and community for young men of color.
- b. Describe the educators’ dispositions, attitudes and behaviors in your school and district that are supportive and those that hinder college and career readiness for young men of color.
- c. Identify and describe policies, structures and practices that hinder the progress of young men of color through elementary, middle and high school to college and beyond.

Step 2: Describe a Desired Pipeline

- a. Describe what a desired pipeline would look like to enable young men of color to be successful in elementary, middle and high school, and college and beyond in your school, district and community.
- b. Describe the educators in your school, district and community who have the ability to make changes in the structures that promote the college and career readiness of young men of color.
- c. Identify and describe the policies, structures and practices that would promote the progress of young men of color through elementary, middle and high school to college and beyond.

Step 3: Compare the Pipelines

- a. Is the existing pipeline the same as the desired pipeline?
- b. How can the existing pipeline be changed to be closer to the desired pipeline?

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For further information, visit nosca.collegeboard.org.

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