

Michigan State University University-Community Partnerships

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Michigan State University: Promoting Academic Success

The Promoting Academic Success (PAS) research initiative is a collaborative partnership between Michigan State University's (MSU's) Office of University Outreach and Engagement; MSU faculty; the Lansing School District, Lansing, MI; the City of Lansing; and Capital Area Michigan Works! Workforce Investment Act Program. Promoting Academic Success began as part of a collaborative university research project led by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The initiative is designed to improve the academic and social outcomes of African American, Latino, and American Indian boys ages 4 to 10. Through a collaborative partnership, the PAS initiative addresses the documented achievement gaps of underrepresented minority males as they progress through middle school and high school.

The initiative works through three key components: professional development for teachers, extended school learning opportunities for students, and an intergenerational mentoring program. For the professional development component, teachers and principals met regularly with a faculty member from the MSU College of Education to discuss: cultivating relationships with boys of color, using culturally relevant pedagogy and practice, and strengthening relationships with parents and community members. For three consecutive summers, the initiative conducted a summer learning camp, where the young boys were exposed to evidence-based best practices in kinesthetic learning, authentic literacy, and a balanced literacy approach. The intergenerational mentoring program employed minority male college students to mentor and supervise minority male high school students, who in turn mentored the young boys in the summer school and after-school program.

Findings from the research conducted over the course of the 4-year project indicate that young boys receiving interventions made greater academic gains than a comparison group. Based on these findings, a sustainability plan was established to

continue program components. In the year following the conclusion of the PAS initiative, various program components were sustained. An administrative/classroom teacher team provided continued professional development to their colleagues. The school district planned and offered another summer program modeled after PAS. MSU's Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement conducted the mentoring program in concert with the district and city partners.

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