

# MILESTONE 3

## GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL READY FOR COLLEGE

### Lead Stakeholders:

Arnoldo Gonzalez – 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project  
Linda Amica-Roberts, Ph.D – Miami-Dade County Public Schools  
Kareem J. Coney – Florida Memorial University

### Indicators:

Data should be separated by gender, race and ethnicity.

- High school graduation rate
- Percentage of students with no out-of-school suspension during the year
- Chronic absenteeism: grades 6-12

### Background:

Low levels of high school graduation and disconnected youth are some of the obstacles faced by Miami-Dade's teenagers, thus decreasing their chances of enrolling in college and avoiding criminal activity.

**More than 20,000 Miami-Dade teens, ages 15 to 19, were not enrolled in school in 2014. Of this total, 26.7% were blacks or African-American, 63.6% Latino and 11% white.**

Approximately 20,260 of Miami-Dade teens ages 15 to 19 years old were not enrolled in school in 2014. Of this total, 26.7% were blacks, 63.6% Latino and 11% white<sup>11</sup>.

Parental guidance and the presence of role models are key elements to keep young men on track during their teenage years.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools was one of 10 school districts selected to launch the MBK initiative to improve the outcomes for youth in underserved communities. The MBK School Success Mentor Initiative is part of the Obama administration's Every Student, Every Day

Initiative to promote school success and safety by reducing chronic absenteeism in the nation's public schools. Chronic absenteeism is a nationwide challenge with devastating consequences for more than five to seven million students, and in low-income communities, the impact is even more prevalent<sup>12</sup>.

### MBK Challenges:

- Providing mentoring services to young men of color from cradle to college and career.
- Engage faith-based, community-based organizations and Miami-Dade County Public Schools to facilitate an "Adopt a School Initiative" while also providing mentoring services.

### Overarching Principles:

- Parent engagement from cradle to career
- Positive youth engagement to ensure youth involvement

### **MBK Actions for Transformation:**

- 1) Develop a one-stop mentoring referral system through collaboration with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami, Take Stock in Children, Florida Memorial University's Black Male College Explorers and other mentoring programs to provide much needed guidance to young men of color.
  - a. School and community model resources — Miami-Dade County Public Schools recruited mentors by expanding partnerships with existing community resources, school personnel and school partners.
  - b. Mentor trainings — School sites participated in MBK mentor training for faculty, staff, external partners and community-based organizations. Participants are presented with various mentoring models to help facilitate a smooth and effective mentor-mentee connection.
  - c. Ongoing support — Miami-Dade County Public Schools has developed and implemented a digital diary for students and their mentors to share their meeting experiences. This tool is used to collect qualitative data to assess the impact of mentoring and serves as a blueprint for continuous improvement.
  - d. Three middle schools were selected to pilot the MBK initiative. The school principals were required to attend an MBK informational meeting to discuss implementation procedures and expectations.
  - e. Mentees will maintain or improve their grades. This objective will be measured through the review of report cards before the mentees enter the program, and upon completion.
  - f. Mentees will maintain or improve in school behavioral evaluations (i.e., decrease the number of absences, suspension or behavioral referrals). This objective will be measured through the review of school behavioral records.
  - g. Mentees will graduate or be promoted to the next grade level in school. This objective will be measured through promotion and graduation records.
- 2) Use of data to identify students — Early warning indicators (attendance, behavior, academic performance) were used to identify students who fit the chronically absent profile.
  - a. Data analysis — Schools implementing MBK conducted weekly success meetings with school partners and leadership to analyze trends and schoolwide prevention strategies.
- 3) School administrators' responsibilities:
  - a. Created a list of at-risk 6th and 9th graders identified as chronically absent in the first half of the year, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education (students who have missed 10 or more days, excused or unexcused).
  - b. Select success mentors using internal school staff, student mentors or external mentors, such as community-based organizations.
  - c. Matched all students on the target list with a mentor.
  - d. Established and documented program best practices, submitted monthly to the U.S. Department of Education.
  - e. Documented mentor-mentee meetings using the online digital diary after every meeting.
  - f. Monitored and submitted monthly attendance data reports on the students participating in the initiative.

- 4) Miami-Dade County Public Schools district administration responsibilities:
  - a. Scheduled meetings to provide information and training for principals and success mentors.
  - b. Worked with schools to select appropriate dates and times for principal-led weekly Student Success Team Meetings (the group reviewed chronic absenteeism data and intervention strategies).
  - c. Worked with schools to organize "Meet Your Mentor" events to introduce students and mentors to the initiative.
- 5) Support and enhance educational mentoring services through the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project "Mentoring through Writing Curriculum." Participants will attain the following:
  - a. 90% of the mentees will maintain or improve their grades. This will be measured by the review of report cards before and after participation.
  - b. 85% of the mentees will maintain or improve in school behavioral evaluations (i.e., decrease absences, suspension or behavioral referrals). This will be measured by reviewing school behavioral records.
  - c. 90% of the mentees will graduate or be promoted to the next grade level in school. This will be measured by promotions and graduation records.
- 6) Stakeholders and mentors are essential to help identify the challenges that contribute to a student's absenteeism. They serve as connectors in the process to support student success.
- 7) MBK mentors-mentees, their families and all stakeholders are valuable components of a healthy and productive economic future. The MBK Mentoring Initiative is the catalyst needed to help students understand that with the support of dedicated mentors, change is possible.
- 8) Establish a collaborative relationship between Miami-Dade County Public Schools and local clergy to support youth and families in their communities.
  - a. The goal is to provide summer and after school care services within challenged communities in which the families have basic needs. The 93rd Street Community Baptist Church is working collaboratively with the Miami-Dade County Public Schools superintendent on achieving this goal.
  - b. At-risk schools have been identified within the targeted demographic areas.
  - c. Coordination has begun to identify members of the Seaboard Baptist Association – a collective group of churches working together for a common cause under the leadership of Pastor Carl Johnson – to support targeted schools by hosting and facilitating programs for qualified participants.
  - d. The 93rd Street Community Baptist Church is being mentored on developing and implementing the necessary infrastructure to submit a proposal, as part of its competitive solicitation process for after school and summer programs, to the Children's Trust.