

Study finds expanded opportunities for black and latino young men in NYC high schools

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The first year of New York City's Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), which is designed to boost college and career readiness among Black and Latino male students, has led to a notable expansion of supports in participating schools, according to a new study by the Research Alliance for New York City Schools.

The study's authors examined 38 of 40 schools where New York City's Department of Education (DOE) is implementing the initiative. They concluded that "while participating schools and the DOE's ESI team both encountered challenges, there are many encouraging signs from our fieldwork. It is clear that schools have made a number of important changes that hold promise for improving college readiness among Black and Latino [young men](#)."

The report by the Research Alliance, housed at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, follows the announcement of the White House's "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, which is aimed at bolstering opportunities for boys and young men of color.

The study's authors, led by Adriana Villavicencio, say that while "it is too soon to know if ESI is having an impact on student outcomes," the report can "help ESI schools and the NYC Department of Education as they refine programming and district-level support through the remainder of the initiative."

"More broadly," they add, "these early implementation findings and recommendations can inform efforts in other schools and districts working to better engage young men of color."

Based on more than 100 interviews with educators in ESI schools, the report found:

- A substantial expansion of college supports, not only in terms of adding programs, but also in terms of shifting the [school](#) culture to be more explicitly college focused, beginning in the 9th grade;
- The raising of academic standards and benchmarks and an increase in opportunities for students to take more rigorous coursework; and

- Improvements in relationships between students and their peers as well as between students and teachers.

The researchers also found that the DOE provided an array of resources, including funding, workshops, planning meetings, and information about potential partners, to help schools expand or develop programs as part of the initiative. However, "some schools raised concerns about delays in funding, which largely stemmed from having to revise and resubmit their work plans. Others expressed dissatisfaction over not being able to work with existing external partners who were not on the approved vendor list."

The report makes a number of recommendations for schools and the district about how ESI might be strengthened and enriched in subsequent years. These include: rethinking the process for approving vendors, focusing on the cohesiveness of programs within schools, and structuring more time for ESI principals to learn from one another.

In 2011, the New York City Mayor's Office, in partnership with the Campaign for Black Male Achievement of the Open Society Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies, began the Young Men's Initiative (YMI), a city-wide effort to improve outcomes for Black and Latino young men in the areas of education, health, employment, and criminal justice. YMI's core education component—ESI—is a "research and development" effort designed to meet two related goals: increase college and career readiness among Black and Latino male [students](#) in participating schools, and identify and disseminate effective strategies that might be replicated in other NYC schools and possibly other districts.

Data for the report were gathered beginning in the summer prior to the 2012-2013 school year, but primarily entailed visits to 38 ESI schools in the spring of 2013. Two of the 40 ESI schools were not included in the

analysis because they were relocated or closed for a length of time due to Hurricane Sandy. The Research Alliance's evaluation of ESI will continue through 2016, examining the initiative's ongoing implementation in all 40 schools, as well as its impact on a range of student outcomes.

More information: The report, "Promising Opportunities for Black and Latino Young Men," is available online:

[steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_al ... /esi_year1_April2014](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_al.../esi_year1_April2014)

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