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School board to consider partnership to boost success of black male students

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The Beaufort County Board of Education meets at 6 p.m. Tuesday in County Council Chambers in the county administration building, 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort

Beaufort County's public schools could cement a partnership with a local nonprofit organization today that will become part of a strategy for improving the academic performance of black males and students in low-income neighborhoods.

Board of Education Chairman Fred Washington Jr. said a formal agreement with Neighborhood Outreach Connection, a community-development group already operating on Hilton Head Island and in Bluffton, will come before the board tonight.

"This is the kind of partnership that I want to highlight and I want to see more of," Washington said.

The outreach group's chairman, Narendra Sharma, spoke to the board about a partnership Jan. 8, a day after members received a report from an independent consultant that indicated the academic performance of black males lags every other subgroup in the district.

In response, board members voted to make raising academic achievement – particularly that of black male students – its top instructional priority.

Washington told other board members that organizations like the outreach program will help the district solve the problem, and he hopes this partnership will be the first among many the district builds.

"They're helping us provide beyond what we're capable of doing," he said.

Sharma agreed.

"The schools can't do it by themselves," he said. "That's the reality."

The neighborhood outreach focuses on fighting poverty by bringing support directly into low-income neighborhoods consisting primarily of black and Hispanic families. Its outreach programs include workforce development, health, and education, such as tutoring programs.

The organization has centers at The Oaks Apartments on Hilton Head and at Bluffton House Apartments. It also has agreements to offer tutoring at Hilton Head's Sandalwood Terrace Apartments and Bluffton's Simmons Cay Apartments, Sharma said.

He hopes to raise enough money to expand this year to other neighborhoods, such as Shady Glen Mobile Home Park in Bluffton, Woodhaven Apartments on Hilton Head and the Sheldon area of northern Beaufort County. The organization is funded through grants and donations from individuals and businesses.

Sharma said a partnership with the district will allow the program to bring the school curriculum directly into neighborhoods at a low cost. The district has the organizational structure, knowledge and human capital to make that possible, and the outreach group has facilities and social capital.

"We have a presence in low-income neighborhoods," Sharma said. "We have developed trust and relationships."

The outreach group will manage program centers, recruit families to participate and find tutors and volunteers. The school district will help identify students who need extra help, train tutors and ensure what's being taught matches what children are learning in school.

The district would lend the group surplus books, computer software, technology or other supplies needed to ensure students have access to updated resources outside school. Some of this is already happening. Hilton Head IB Elementary, for example, has loaned computers to the group. Washington said outlining each group's role in a formal agreement will provide accountability.

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Comment header for eagleswng, Yesterday 08:50 PM

If throwing money at the situation would solve it, then we wouldn't have any problems. People who believe the government exist solely to hand out MY money (yes, the neighbors to your right and left who have jobs are the ones paying for these stupid programs), not the government. The government doesn't make money. It takes it from hard working Americans and uses it to create a social class of dependent lazy "takers" who have little to do but whine they don't feel they are getting enough of their neighbors hard earned dollars. Why don't some of you do us a favor and stop looking for a teet to nurse off of and get a job and become a part of the solution instead of part of the problem? Maybe if lazy "taker" parents actually PRACTICE some responsibility in the home, then MAYBE the kids will see what initiative, personal accountability and being self-responsible looks like and maybe try it for themselves?

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Comment header for scga15585, Yesterday 07:39 PM

BLK97, maybe if you stopped acting like people "owe" you something merely because of the color of your skin, you'd realize that we're in 2011, not 1865.

How are you going to be mad at the government and rant on here about them not doing enough? These kids all have the same, fair chance at an education as Asians, Hispanics, Whites, Native Americans, etc. The only difference is that they CHOOSE not to better themselves. They all have it in their heads that they're gonna be the next Lil Wayne or 50 Cent.

I was friends with TWO black males in high school, and not only did they both receive ACADEMIC scholarships to Syracuse University, but they are very successful businessmen today. How did they get there? Through the love and support of their close knit family. They weren't rich and didn't receive hand outs, they WORKED HARD.

Something I'm sure you've never done a day in your life.

1 person liked this.

Comment header for BIK97, Yesterday 11:41 PM

You hit the nail on the head, when you said your two blk friends had love and support from a close knit family. Most of these kids, we are talking about are from single or no family support. This is why i'm doing all i can do to help.

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Comment header for OnePMC, Yesterday 07:36 PM

...



OnePMC Yesterday 07:34 PM

It may work with the ignorant but not with the stupid! You know who you are!



anon250 Yesterday 11:13 AM

No matter what is done, achievement is not going to happen unless the person is willing to be responsible, go to school and study and the parents are willing to become active participants in their child's life. Poverty is not an excuse. Being poor doesn't prevent someone from doing well in school. What does is laziness, not going to school, acting up in school, disrespect for all others, gang wanabees, etc. One needs to want to change for it to happen.

butterfly420 liked this



NotmeYou Yesterday 05:45 PM

Well stated



Happy Yesterday 10:11 AM

So how come no one is screaming that this program is racist? Oh, never mind, I see. It is helping "the screamers"

butterfly420 liked this



Blk97 Yesterday 09:15 AM

We need more money. The government should help more!!! Don't you get it?

chill48 liked this



dilligas Yesterday 09:36 PM

Why are you always so angry Blk97? If it's not throwing money away on worthless programs that don't make a difference to kids who could care less, it's taking guns out of the hands of law abiding citizens to prevent them from defending themselves against home invaders. If we did it your way, everyone would sit out life waiting for the government check in their mailbox only to have a gang banger with an illegal gun take it from them before they could cash it. I don't know about you, but that's not the kind of society I want for my kids...



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