

## The Problem

Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) recognized that Black and Latino boys and young men were consistently below their peers in student achievement data. Understanding these boys and young men face unique challenges in school, career, and life, MPS established Black and Latino Male Achievement (BLMA) in October 2017. Conversations with approximately 1,000 young Black and Latino men since the inception of the program emphasize the urgent need for mentorship, guidance, and multiple platforms.



## The Solution

BLMA is a department in MPS. "Having a dedicated team for our work demonstrates that our district values what our community says they need and cares about our boys," said Nate Deans, Director – BLMA.

12 Guiding Principles co-created by students and staff set a foundation for BLMA's work. The principals outline expectations in academic success, brotherhood, community, cultural dignity, fatherhood, financial literacy, historical understanding, leadership development, love, self-care, socio-political awareness, and understanding manhood.

## BLMA programs

- **BLMA Manhood Development Academy** – an elective for credit course offered in five MPS schools. The course explores what it means for Black and Latino students to live by the 12 Guiding Principles. One goal of the course is to create a teacher pipeline for Black and Brown educators. Evaluation shows that students are twice as likely to attend the course than other classes.
- **BLMA Buddies** – works with 4th and 5th grade male students of color to promote Black and Latino male mentorship and leadership. The program explores six of the 12 guiding principles: brotherhood, community, love, academic success, cultural dignity, and self-care

and is in 18 elementary schools. The program is school led with coaching provided by BLMA staff. One school group visited Milwaukee City Hall to talk to representatives about reckless driving, an issue the students identified as important.

- **Mentoring** – BLMA brings Black and Latino male community mentors into high schools every month for honest conversations about real life matters and applying the 12 Guiding Principles. The program intentionally brings together a cross section of youth and is in 12 high schools.
- **SEL (Social Emotional Learning) Power Circles Pilot** – takes high school students into middle schools as mentors with the objective to build positive relationships, self and social awareness, manage emotions, and make responsible decisions.

## Results

"Overall there is joy in spaces where BLMA programming is and we hear that things are happening in these spaces that aren't happening elsewhere," Deans said. "Our student representatives talk about how impactful the programs have been and that they feel connected to others."

Deans and his team look forward to moving BLMA's programs district-wide. "We are doing what the program set out to do – touch the lives Black and Latino male students in meaningful ways," he said.