

Introduction

In 2006, the Florida Legislature created the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (section 16.615 F.S.). The purpose of the Council is to “make a systematic study of conditions affecting black men and boys.”

For 2008, the Council identified five targeted areas of study: black males in career academies; training and recruitment of black male teachers, and cultural competency for all teachers; disciplinary outcomes; Juvenile Justice Education for black males; after school care system for black males; and summer school funding.

For additional information, see the Council’s homepage at <http://www.cssbmb.com/>.

The current report addresses the academic performance of black males enrolled in career academies. Career academies refer to small, schools within a school, comprising a subset of students and teachers who work together as a team over a two-, three-, or four-year span. A career academy includes the following essential elements: a small learning community; a college-prep curriculum with a career theme; and partnerships with employers, the community, and higher education.

The following Florida Department of Education Web site provides a summary of career academies in Florida and links to additional resources: http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/careeracademies/ca_home.asp.

Summary

This report compares black males enrolled in career academies, grades 9-12, in 2006-07 to the corresponding black male population in traditional secondary schools. Black males participating in career academies had more satisfactory outcomes than black males enrolled in traditional secondary schools in relation to grade point average (GPA), number of absences, completing secondary education with a standard diploma, and continuing into postsecondary education.

Recommendation

Continue investigating the short-term and long-term influence career academy participation has on black males’ social and economic development and the relationship to other Council areas of interest.

Methods

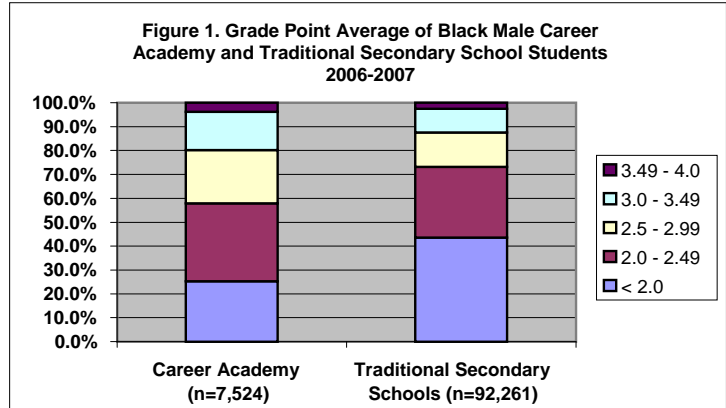
Analyses were conducted on 7,524 black males enrolled in career academies during the 2005-2006 reporting year and 92,261 black males enrolled in traditional secondary schools during that same reporting period.

Findings

Black males enrolled in career academies had a higher GPA than black males in traditional secondary schools.

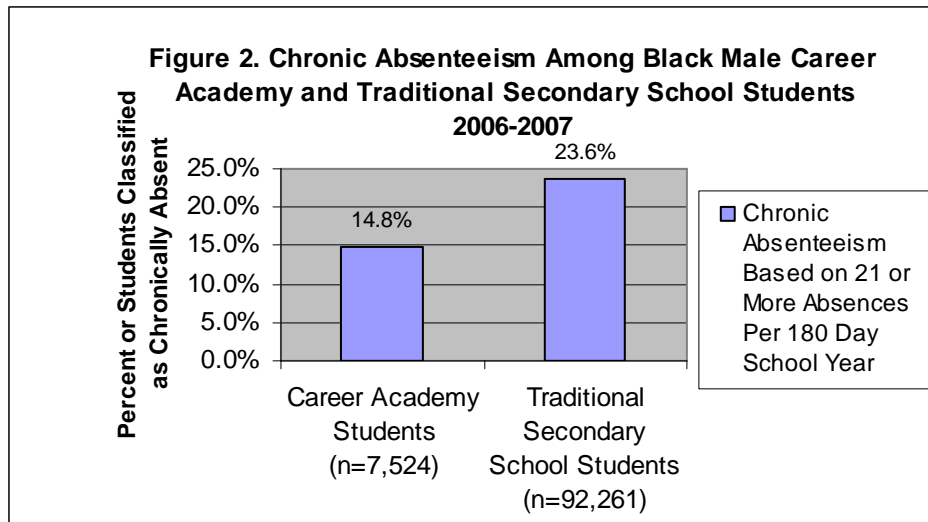
The mean GPA for career academy students was 2.30 and the mean GPA of traditional school students was 1.93.

Figure 1 shows the grade point average (GPA) of black males enrolled in career academies and black males enrolled in traditional secondary schools. Forty-two percent (42.3%) of black males enrolled in career academies had a GPA of 2.5 or above, and 20% had a GPA of 3.0 or above. Among black males enrolled in traditional secondary schools, 27.3% had a GPA of 2.5 or above and 12.7% had a GPA of 3.0 or above.



Black males enrolled in career academies had a lower chronic absenteeism rate than black males in traditional secondary schools.

The Florida Department of Education School Indicators Report defines chronic absenteeism as 21-or-more absences per 180 day school year. Figure 2 shows the percentage of black male career academy and traditional secondary school students classified as chronically absent based on that same definition. Among black male career academy students, 14.8 percent (n= 1,113) were classified as chronically absent. Among black male students enrolled in traditional secondary schools, the chronic absenteeism rate was 23.6 percent (n=21,715).



Black males enrolled in grade 12 at career academies during 2005-06 had higher rates of standard diploma completion and transition to postsecondary education than black males enrolled in traditional secondary schools.

Of the 1,673 grade-12 black male career academy students, **1,249 (74.7%)** completed with a standard high school diploma, while **9,934 (57.1%)** of the 17,393 black males in grade 12 at traditional schools completed with a standard diploma.

Of the same 1,673 career academy black male students in grade 12, **762 (45.6%)** continued into postsecondary education, while **6,015 (34.6%)** of the 17,393 black males in grade 12 at the traditional high schools continued into postsecondary education.

Conclusion

The five outcome measures reported here suggest that black male students enrolled in career academies are more likely to perform better academically, have better attendance, and are more likely to complete with a standard diploma and continue into postsecondary education than black males enrolled in traditional secondary schools. While these measures alone do not address the many other challenges facing black males in Florida and the rest of the country, it does appear that attending a career academy may improve black male academic performance to some degree. Of course, much more thorough research is required to assess any long-term benefits of career academy participation.