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TITLE: "Manhood, Scholarship, Perseverance, Uplift" and elementary students: An example of school and community collaboration

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ABSTRACT

The Maya Angelou Institute for the Improvement of Child and Family Education, a community based comprehensive action research center of child and family development in a continuing campus-community collaboration implemented a pilot project to close the academic and social performance gap for third - fifth grade students at Rowland Hill Latham Elementary school. This pilot is intended to serve as a blueprint for the district and the state.

The targeted school community demonstrated success over the last nine years in closing the minority academic and social development gap as indicated by its U.S. Department of Education status as a Blue Ribbon school. For example, in 1999, the first year of the North Carolina ABC accountability program, Latham students' proficiency scores were 50.5 percent. According to the North Carolina Department of Instruction, the 120 students eligible to participate in the state end-of-grade tests were expected to score in the recognition category of low-performing (40-50% proficiency). With intensive tutoring from a local fraternity, proficiency scores this year are 82.8 percent, making Latham Elementary School a "School of Distinction", as recognized by the North Carolina State Board of Education.

Given its status as an "Equity-Plus" elementary School (schools in which 75 percent of the student enrollment is on free or reduced lunch), Latham also became the first Equity-Plus school in the district to achieve the distinctive status. Furthermore, given the increase in scores from 2001 (65.5 percent) to 2002 (82.8 percent), Latham school students out-performed all other schools in the district. In addition, Latham received statewide recognition as one of twenty-five schools in the state with the highest growth.

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of Equity Plus elementary schools and the families served by them?
2. What are the characteristics of the community organization/fraternity (Omega Psi Phi, Inc.)?
3. What is the relationship between the reading and math scores on the end-of-grade test and tutoring by the community organization volunteers?

The methodology for the study included:

1. The post hoc analysis of student, school records, and community organization records (research question #1)
2. Interviews with the tutors from the community organization (research question #2)
3. Analysis of student performance by tutors and interviews with tutors, teachers, and administrators (research question #3).

The expected outcomes for this partnership effort were as follows:

- 1. Increased volunteerism for tutoring of students who are not performing at grade level**
- 2. Students demonstrated increased performance at 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades on the North Carolina End of Grade Test**
- 3. Students demonstrated increased appropriate social development via decrease in inappropriate behavior**