



History. Tradition. Community.



Michael Walker, Director of The Office of Black Male Student Achievement (OBMSA), leads the Minneapolis Public School District's (MPS) efforts to eliminate the achievement gap between black male students and their MPS peers. The Office of Black Male Student Achievement is a new department created specifically to address the needs of the largest demographic group within MPS. It represents an equitable approach to tackling the challenges that exist for the school district's black male students.

Walker has over 15 years of career experience in youth development and helping black youth achieve success. From 1998 to 2006, Walker served as community outreach program and youth development director at the YMCA of Greater St. Paul and Minneapolis, where he developed programs for social, academic, athletic and employment skills for youth. He served as coordinator of the Black Achievers Program, an academic achievement and career development initiative for middle school and high school youth and teens. While acquiring his master's degree in counseling, Walker interned at Roosevelt High School. There he was encouraged to apply for a job as a career and college coordinator for AchieveMpls at Roosevelt High School. He served in this role from 2006 to 2009. Walker obtained his administrative license from St. Cloud State University and served as Roosevelt High School's dean of students and later as an assistant principal.

Before Walker became director of the Office of Black Male Student Achievement and before developing or implementing any programming for the newly created office, he took to the streets to learn from the community the challenges young black males encountered in the Minneapolis Public School District. Michael visited Minneapolis barber shops, hair salons, churches, and community organizations interviewing MPS alumni and parents concerning the experience of young black males in the school district.

Walker developed B.L.A.C.K. (Building Lives Acquiring Cultural Knowledge) a curriculum that works to empower students. The curriculum introduces students to the complexity of the black male experience by exploring the everyday reality of black men in the United States. The curriculum exposes students to the experience of black male labor force participation and employment outcomes; deconstructs representations of black masculinity in popular culture; explores academic dilemmas associated with primary and secondary educational pursuits; and uncovers issues connected with law, incarceration, and criminal justice. Walker and his team have witnessed promising developments in OBMSA participants. Today he continues to undertake what many consider an intimidating challenge with strength, compassion, and courage.

Walker is a product of North Minneapolis and attended Roosevelt High School. He and his wife have four children, two of whom are school-age and attend MPS schools.

Beacons of Leadership

My mother is the most inspirational person in my life. She has always believed in me and encouraged me through all endeavors. My mother taught me to be confident in decision making, but to remain respectful of all thoughts, perspectives, and opinions. My mother, who is my sounding board for advice, always gives honest critique. She's the person who keeps me going.

Most Rewarding Work Experience

The Office of Black Male Student Achievement is a new and developing organization. As I chart the path for this organization I'm blessed to work in conjunction and partnership with the young black males I'm entrusted to serve. The young men are present in every aspect of program development. I am intentional about keeping their voice at the forefront of my work.

Advice for Aspiring Educators

This is not a job. This is something you have to be passionate about. As an educator, you are going to lead from 30 to maybe 150 students each day. You must be able to see them each as unique individuals. While content is an important aspect of education, authentic relationship building is critical. Once you form trusting relationship with students, you can teach them anything.

All children want to learn. As educators, we must determine what it is that motivates our students, tap into it, and let learning happen for everyone. Build authentic relationships with students and their families- and be the best educator possible.

Hometown

- North Minneapolis, Minnesota

Education

- Minnesota State University – B. A.
- University of Wisconsin-River Falls- Masters in Counseling
- St. Cloud State University- Administrative License