

Black Achievers

The YMCA Black Achievers program is a national college readiness program designed to help African-American and other teens of color set and pursue high educational and career goals. Through academic support, career exploration and mentoring, YMCA Black Achievers programs help youth raise their academic standards, develop a positive sense of self, build character, explore diverse college and career options, and meet and interact with professionals of color who serve as role models to inspire them to greater heights.

BACKGROUND

Begun in Houston, TX in 1967 to provide African American teens with a positive sense of self and aspirations for professional careers in the workforce, the purpose of YMCA Black Achievers is ***"to help teens of color set and pursue high educational and career goals resulting in graduation and acceptance to an institution of higher learning."*** The name "Black Achievers" represents and describes the program's historical origin and mission. However, today, the YMCA Black Achievers program is like the national movement, multi-racial and gender balanced. To present the diversity of participants, many YMCAs have incorporated "Hispanic" into their program title to engender a more welcoming and inclusive message in their community. Black Achievers programs meet weekly or bi-weekly throughout the year at local YMCAs, high school or college campuses all over the country. Through academic support, career exploration, and mentoring, this initiative helps young people of color reach their goals.

VISION

To be the recognized premier college & career readiness program for youth of color with a focus on African American & Hispanic youth through dedicated & committed engagement by volunteer leaders.

PURPOSE

The central purpose of the YMCA Black Achievers Program is to help African American/Hispanic and other young people of color set and pursue high educational and career goals resulting in graduation and acceptance to an institution of higher learning.

OBJECTIVES

- To raise academic standards of youth of color
- To assist youth of color in gaining acceptance to institutions of higher learning
- To expose youth of color to diverse career options
- To provide minority adult role models to inspire youth of color to set and achieve personal and professional goals
- To help youth of color develop a positive sense of self
- To build character and develop positive assets in youth of color
- To create channels for continuing community involvement by business and industry

How the Program Works

YMCA Black Achievers is built on the notion that community and corporate involvement are critical to building networks and opportunities for youth. To that end, the program centers on the relationship established between volunteer mentors and youth during career clusters. Clusters are workshops dedicated to specific areas of professional interest. Youth participants and mentors, who are experts in their fields, complete projects that are designed to provide students

an opportunity to explore their career interests through real-life application of skills. Possible career clusters include:

Administration Services
Arts & Entertainment
Business
Communication
Computer Technology
Education

Engineering
Health/Medical
Human/Social Science
Law/Government
Research/Technical Science
Vocational and Technical

The YMCA Black Achievers Program faces educational disparity head-on by equipping teens with skills and competencies needed to gain acceptance to and graduation from institutions of higher learning, eventually leading to successful entry into the workforce. The following are key program components:

- **Tutoring.** Volunteer and adult leaders monitor students' academic progress while helping to increase understanding and performance in key areas like math and English.
- **SAT/ACT Preparation.** Programs are geared toward introducing students to materials and test formats used in college entrance exams. Students take practice tests and receive tips to build confidence on test day.
- **College Tours.** Teens tour campuses during and are introduced to the concept of choosing a school based upon its excellence, emphasis in particular fields of study, location, or other factors. Participants meet with college students to learn about the experience of campus life.
- **Financial Aid Workshops.** Workshops are offered to orient high school juniors and seniors toward accessing available scholarships, grants, and loans.
- **College Fairs.** Representatives from local, state, and regional colleges and universities are invited to promote their programs to student groups and their parents.