

Empowering  
African-  
American  
Males



M Y C H A L W Y N N

# Empowering African- American Males

TEACHING, PARENTING, & MENTORING  
SUCCESSFUL BLACK MALES

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RISING SUN  
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# EMPOWERING AFRICAN- AMERICAN MALES

TEACHING, PARENTING, & MENTORING SUCCESSFUL BLACK MALES

Formerly titled: *Empowering African-American Males to Succeed: A Ten-Step Approach for Parents and Teachers*

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# Acknowledgments

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My wife, Nina, who has always been there to protect our sons from the many challenges, obstacles, and pitfalls which claim the spirits of Black males each school day.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all the teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators, friends, family, and mentors who have contributed to the growth, development, nurturing, and maturation of our sons. Nowhere is it more evident, “It takes a village to raise a child,” than in raising and nurturing a Black male from boyhood to manhood.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my mother, father, family, and community, who nurtured, prayed for, guided, and protected me. I recognize too, Mr. Roberts, my fifth- and sixth-grade teacher, at Edmund Burke Elementary School, who inspired learning; Dr. Cheryl Gholar, my high school job placement counselor, at Du Sable High School, who held out hope for my future; and Mrs. Ernestine Whiting, Dean Roland Latham, Harvette Emmett, and the professors at Northeastern University, who helped me defy the odds in becoming the first college graduate in my family. I also thank my former and present pastors, Dr. Frederick K.C. Price, Dr. Creflo A. Dollar, and the Reverend Kenneth Marcus, all of whom have nurtured my spirit and led me into a deeper understanding of God’s Word and his expectations of me as a husband, father, and believer.

# Dedication

To my wife, for her patience, understanding, and support, and to our sons, Mychal-David and Jalani, who represent the promise and potential of Black males.

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## About the Author

Mychal Wynn brings the issues pertaining to Black male achievement to the forefront of educational, community, and household discussions. From his humble beginnings in rural Pike County, Alabama, to the second-grade teacher who told his mother, “I doubt if he will ever make it beyond elementary school;” to becoming an internationally-acclaimed author and educational consultant; his life experiences provide insight into, and an understanding of, the challenges confronting Black student achievement in general, and Black male achievement in particular.

Despite numerous office referrals, suspensions throughout elementary and middle school, and being expelled from Chicago’s De La Salle Catholic High School, Mychal Wynn, graduated with honors from Boston’s Northeastern University; co-founded, together with his wife, Rising Sun Publishing; and has written over sixteen books which explore issues ranging from school improvement and parental involvement to closing the student achievement gap and paving the way for increasing the number of Black males matriculating into college.

At the original publication of this book under the title, *Empowering African-American Males to Succeed: A Ten-Step Approach for Parents and Teachers* (1992), his older son was four years old. He is now sixteen, and together with his younger brother (ten years old), their academic success, standardized test scores, and personal achievement represent the promise and potential of Black males. For over two decades, Mr. Wynn has been an advocate for children—provoking discussion, providing training, and publishing books and materials which provide insight, strategies, and solutions to the myriad of problems hindering Black male achievement from primary through postsecondary school.

He, his wife, Nina, and their two sons, Mychal-David and Jalani (both of whom attend public schools), reside in Georgia.

## Foreword

When the *Empowering African-American Males Succeed: A Ten-Step Approach for Parents and Teachers* book and workbook were published in 1992, I wholly anticipated they would be adopted by every urban school district in America and regularly referred to by classroom teachers, who, throughout the country, were struggling in their efforts to help Black males become academically and socially successful. In 1992, my wife and I had one son, who was four years old and attending preschool at the First Lutheran Church in Carson, California. At home she and I were doing with him everything outlined in the book. Our older son is now sixteen years old and in the eleventh grade at North Springs High School in Atlanta, Georgia. My wife and I have another son, currently ten years old and in the fifth grade. Their academic achievement and social development are the result of the strategies outlined in the original book, additional strategies contained within this book, and relationships with coaches, teachers, principals, pastors, and mentors who have provided their much-needed web of protection. However, they are the exceptions rather than the rule as Black males in public education continue to be disproportionately placed into special education, disproportionately suspended from school, disproportionately dropping out of school, and virtually at the bottom of the academic achievement gap in every category (i.e., reading, writing, math, and science).

In Nathan and Julia Hare's book, *Bringing the Black Boy to Manhood: The Passage*, they note:

*The Black race is like an unsteady palace, gigantic and ornate, teetering at its base while people gather around with cranes and complex machinery. The people squeal and squelch and prop the palace up, feverishly, pompously, working to repair it at its cracks and wobbly ceiling, when all the while the problem of the building's unsteadiness is a few missing bricks and broken mortar from its now all but invisible foundation.*

Enabling and empowering Black males requires a few missing bricks (mission, vision, climate & culture, curriculum & content, instruction, and assessment) and renewed mortar (strong relationships, effective collaboration, focus, and direction). In my hope to better assist teachers and serve parents,

I have revised the original book and workbook, providing more strategies, expanding the activities, and providing current census and achievement data. Together, they represent integral components of a larger vision of developing personal empowerment, college aspirations, college planning, and inspiring young men to look beyond their current circumstances to future possibilities. While I have used my family's experiences to illustrate points, I empathize with the added struggles of the many single-parent households raising Black males. However, if single-parents are successful in forming a web of protection and support in response to their unique struggles, I believe that they can replicate our successes.

The most difficult task facing educators, parents, and mentors of Black males in the United States, Bermuda, the Caribbean, Canada, Europe, and Africa is to expand their focus beyond intervention and prevention programs to conceptualizing and implementing empowerment processes. Increasing reading and math scores is not a lofty enough aspiration. Envisioning a young man becoming an entrepreneur; CEO of Merrill Lynch, AOL Time Warner, or American Express; neurosurgeon, research scientist, or head of government provides a framework for learning how to do (i.e., run things) rather than how to get by (i.e., achieve proficiency).

The original version of this book outlined ten building blocks dealing with the critical areas required to build stronger relationships with Black males as part of the transformation of their thinking from excuses to empowerment and from low-performance to high academic achievement. The information contained within those building blocks has been woven into the six components as presented in the book, *Increasing Student Achievement: Volume I, Vision: Mission, Vision, Climate & Culture, Curriculum & Content, Instruction, and Assessment* (see illustration). The components are dealt with from the perspective of overall school improvement through the systemic changes, cultural shift, operational teams, and research needed to pave the way to higher achievement levels for all students. Here, the components are dealt with from the perspective of the unique needs of Black males and their families as part of a holistic set of strategies directed at closing the achievement gap and successfully empowering Black males to move through the K-12 educational system into postsecondary institutions.

Mychal Wynn

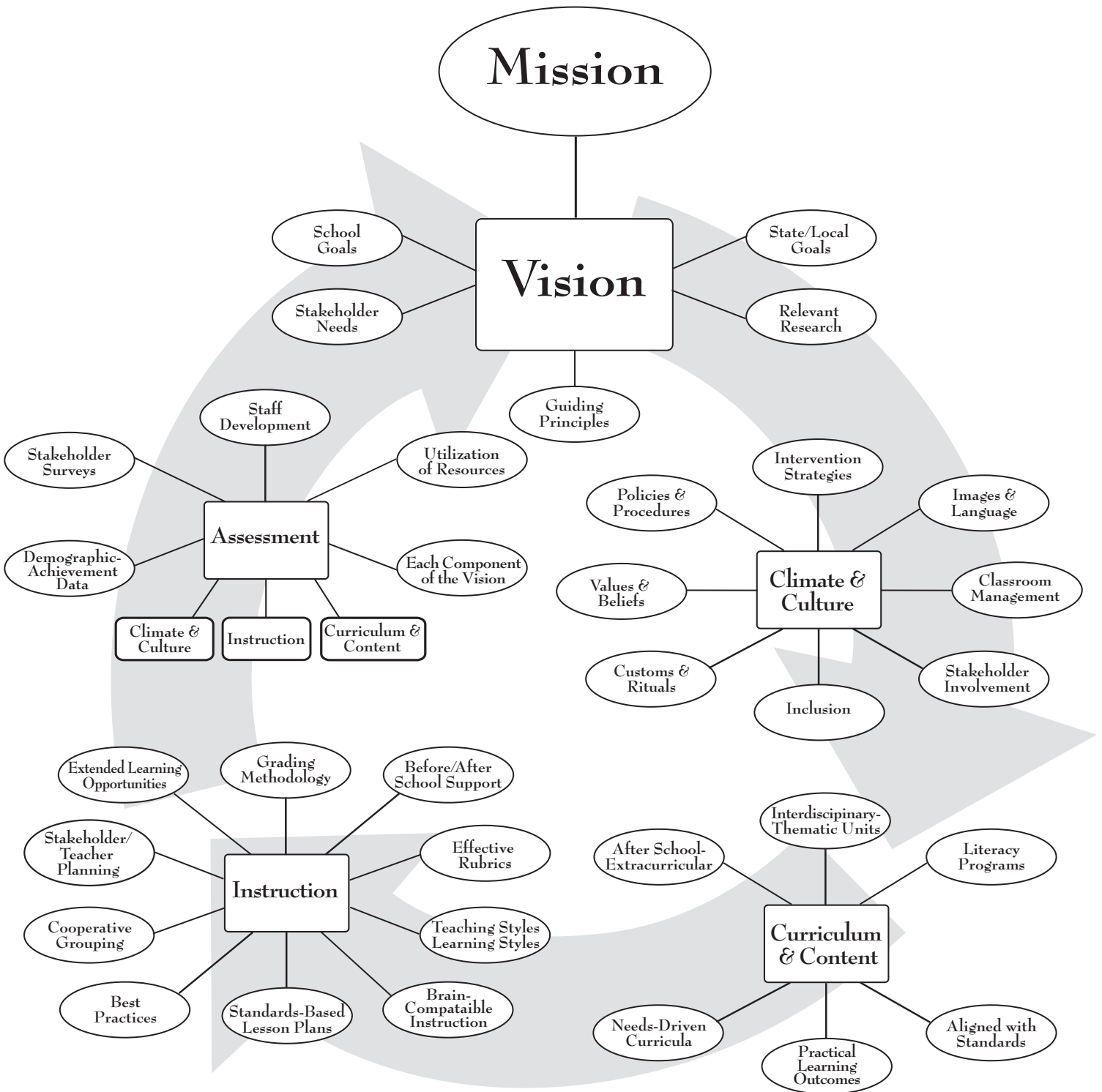


Illustration taken from, *Increasing Student Achievement: Volume I, Vision* (page 5)

## How to use this book

This book and the accompanying workbook have been designed to be used as working manuals for parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, coaches, program directors, intervention specialists, mentors, and consultants. As such, they are highly suited to support workshops, staff development sessions, book clubs, and parenting seminars. Depending on your respective role (e.g., parent or teacher), you may be in a position to apply the strategies directly to the teaching and child-rearing of Black males. As a superintendent, principal, or program director, you may be in a position to sensitize parents, teachers, mentors, coaches, and school counselors to the information in hopes of enhancing their relationships with Black males and better understanding the needs of families, thereby paving the way to higher academic achievement and fewer discipline problems. Coaches, counselors, and mentors will expand their knowledge and understanding of the unique issues confronting Black males and their families as they navigate their way through an oftentimes confusing primary-through-postsecondary educational system.

The book raises as many questions as it provides insight—beginning with defining your role, conceptualizing your mission, and clarifying your vision. As an adult stakeholder, you are challenged with answering the questions, “If not me, who? If not now, when?” As much as possible, the author and editor, both Black men (one a Black American, the other, a Black Bermudian), have attempted to depersonalize the issues. However, both are fathers who have worked diligently to overcome the very issues outlined within this book to ensure the academic, social, spiritual, and emotional nurturing of their children. The editor, Dr. Glenn Bascome (a public school teacher), and his wife have seen their two children graduate from college—their daughter is a public school teacher with a Master’s degree and their twenty-five-year-old son expects to complete his doctorate in physiotherapy in 2006. The author, Mychal Wynn, and his wife continue to encounter the issues raised in this book as their sons are currently in high school and elementary school.

This book sets forth a process, as outlined in the book *Increasing Student Achievement: Volume I, Vision*, where each Chapter builds upon strategies set forth in each preceding Chapter. To facilitate individual use and stimulate

group discussions I have set apart data, research studies, and major points by bullets and numerical lists. Effective teachers and presenters tell you what they're going to tell you; tell you; and then tell you what they told you. As such, readers may find it helpful to review the *Key Points* prior to beginning each Chapter and reviewing them again at the end of each Chapter. Activities designed to further operationalize the ideas and strategies set forth in each Chapter can be found in the *workbook*.

While this book has been written to specifically address the issues relating to Black males, you will find the approach used and strategies provided relate to all children. Whether you are a parent, teacher, coach, counselor, principal, or mentor, you must become a role player in influencing change within your school community. Becoming an advocate for children will require that you no longer wait for new leadership, new programs, or new research. You must become the catalyst to move ideas and strategies beyond discussions to being operationalized.

The “Web of Protection” illustrated in Chapter four, *Curriculum & Content*, will help each role player to understand the importance of communication and collaboration. Strong relationships between role players are paramount to protecting Black males from the many issues threatening their lives and contributing to their lack of academic achievement, unemployment, and high rates of incarceration.

Finally, while this book will explore many of the most plaguing issues, the following books are recommended as additional resources to assist your efforts in developing a comprehensive set of strategies designed to identify a young man's gifts, inspire his dreams, and provide him with a primary-through-postsecondary plan:

- *Ten Steps to Helping Your Child Succeed in School*
- *A Middle School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams*
- *A High School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams*
- *Follow Your Dreams: Lessons That I Learned in School*
- *The Eagles who Thought They were Chickens*

*We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do this. Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far.*

— *Ron Edmonds*



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