



The racial achievement gap in Greater Pittsburgh schools is wide, and it translates later into similar discrepancies in employment. For the past three years, the Career Literacy for African American Youth Program (CLAAY) has worked with high school students to improve their performance and future. Created by Duquesne University's Institute for Economic Transformation, CLAAY targets what the program calls "the invisible middle," students who are neither problem students nor obvious achievers.

"When you look at the Census data from 2000, you see that the African American population is extremely under-represented in the regional workforce," said Barry Maciak, executive director of the Institute.

Using tutors and mentors, CLAAY equips high school students with educational supplements, understanding and life skills, said Vernon Tipton, director of CLAAY. "These are kids who don't have problems with discipline or attendance. We try to give them the fundamentals in reading, writing and math so that they'll be able to read and

write at the level needed for higher education and any job they might want."

The tutors are usually college students, and the mentors are professionals, a group especially well represented by local law firms. Until the 2005-2006 school year, CLAAY operated in five high schools in Pittsburgh and three regional high schools.

A grant from The Pittsburgh Foundation has enabled the program to expand into all 10 city high schools. There are now 260 students involved.

Initially funded by The Heinz Endowments, the expansion of CLAAY was made possible by a two-year \$264,100 grant from several Pittsburgh Foundation funds: the William O. and Ruth Theis Grunnagle Fund, the Howard K. and Alison M. Walter Fund, the Samuel and Carrie Arnold Weinhaus Memorial Fund, the W. Alfred Turner Memorial Fund and the C. H. Snyder Fund.

"Test scores are going up," Tipton said. "And we believe we've been responsible for 80 or more of our students going on to higher education."

Mentor Oscar Worthy teaches 10th grader Brandon Hall at Carrick High School. The Career Literacy for African American Youth Program targets the "invisible middle," students who are neither problems nor obvious achievers.

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Annual Report 2005
Page 24