



CONNECT TO GREATNESS

RISING SONS: ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE THROUGH CONNECT TO GREATNESS



A CASE STUDY

Connect to Greatness Boys to Men Leadership Academy Academic Year: 2024–2025

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I. Executive Summary

Connect to Greatness is a nonprofit organization grounded in the belief that Black boys are brilliant, capable, and deserving of intentional investment. Its mission is to empower and inspire Black/African American male students to become leaders and agents of change in their communities and beyond.

Through culturally responsive mentorship, consistent engagement, and skill-building programs spanning elementary through high school, Connect to Greatness provides safe, affirming spaces where Black boys are seen, supported, and challenged to grow.

This case study highlights the measurable impact of the Boys to Men Leadership Academy on academic performance and student well-being, with a focused analysis of a cohort of 17 participants during the 2024–2025 program year. It is intended for district stakeholders, funders, community leaders, and educational partners dedicated to advancing outcomes for Black male students.

Key Outcomes:

- **17 Black male students across grades 5–11 from Palm Beach County participated consistently in programming.**
- **100% scored Level 4 and/or Level 5 on Florida FAST or End-of-Course (EOC) assessments.**
- **Over half maintained a GPA above 3.0; several increased their GPA by more than 1.0.**
- **100% had fewer than 10 absences.**
- **100% had no more than two behavior referrals.**

These outcomes signify more than academic achievement—they represent meaningful progress toward emotional well-being, positive identity formation, and sustained school engagement. These young men are more than data points; they exemplify what’s possible when strategic investment is paired with relational, culturally responsive support. Their success strengthens not only their individual trajectories but also the overall vitality of their schools, families, and communities.



II. Background and Context

Across the United States, Black boys continue to be among the most underserved populations in public education, facing systemic barriers such as disproportionate disciplinary practices and lowered academic expectations. In Palm Beach County, while ongoing efforts aim to address these inequities, significant gaps in achievement and opportunity remain.

Connect to Greatness was founded on a steadfast belief in the potential of Black boys and the urgent need for a culturally responsive, affirming, and consistent support system. Its flagship initiative, the Boys to Men Leadership Academy, was created to meet that need—offering holistic support that affirms identity, cultivates agency, and drives academic success.

Developed in response to community demand and rooted in evidence-based practices in mentoring and social-emotional learning, the Academy now serves students across elementary, middle, and high school levels. The program features weekly sessions centered on leadership development, connection, belonging, and academic empowerment—facilitated by trusted adults and culturally aligned mentors. This model ensures that each student is supported by a strong peer network and a dedicated coach who walks alongside him throughout his educational journey.

The 17 students featured in this case study represent all levels of the program. Together, they illustrate the transformative impact of intentional programming, meaningful relationships, and high expectations.

III. Educational Impact: Connecting District Success to Research-Driven Practice

In the 2024–2025 school year, Palm Beach County Schools reported strong districtwide gains in academic performance. According to publicly released data, the district saw a 5-point increase in ELA proficiency on the Florida FAST assessments and significant improvements in Algebra 1 EOC scores across multiple schools. These achievements signal meaningful progress in the district’s pursuit of excellence and equity.

This case study offers evidence that strategically designed, culturally responsive interventions grounded in research can accelerate district-wide achievement—especially for students who have historically been left behind.

The district’s broader academic gains—such as a 5-point increase in FAST ELA proficiency and a significant rise in Algebra 1 EOC performance—are directly tied to student-level



transformations. Our 17 high-performing C2G participants represent a critical sub-group making gains at or above the district average, demonstrating the effectiveness of culturally affirming mentorship and programmatic support in closing opportunity gaps.

These outcomes are not accidental. They are the result of the intentional application of findings from Dr. Cassandra Corbin-Thaddies's dissertation research, *Becoming High Academic Achievers: What Are the Supporting Factors for African American/Black Male Students That Make the Difference?* Her study on high-achieving Black male students highlights the critical roles of connection, identity development, mentoring, and high expectations as foundational practices. This alignment between research and implementation positions Connect to Greatness as both a strategic partner and a driver of equitable results within the public education system.

IV. The Cohort: Who Are The 17 Students?

The 17 students featured in this case study span grades 5–11 and represent a cross-section of public schools in Palm Beach County. They participated in one of three Connect to Greatness program tiers:

- **Lunchbox Talks:** A school-based initiative for elementary boys (Grades 4–5) that uses short, interactive sessions during lunch periods to build confidence, identity, and community.
- **Emerging Leaders:** A middle school program (Grades 6–8) focused on building academic identity, emotional intelligence, and leadership skills through weekly group sessions.
- **Connecting Future Leaders (CFL):** A high school program (Grades 9–12) that supports male students with academic planning, college and career readiness, and mentoring relationships that elevate agency and accountability.

All students in this case study were:

- Recommended by school staff or enrolled based on previous participation
- Supported by a Connect to Greatness coach
- Participants in group and/or 1:1 mentoring sessions
- Monitored for academic, attendance, and behavioral outcomes throughout the school year

This cohort represents the diverse experiences of Black male students in public education—from those enrolled in magnet programs to others navigating behavioral challenges or academic gaps. What unites them is a shared commitment to personal



growth, meaningful connections with trusted adults, and a deep belief in their own capacity for excellence.

Each student profile featured in this report provides a concise overview of their academic progress, character, behavior, attendance, and contributions to the program.

V. Program Design and Support Strategies

The success of the 17 students highlighted in this case study is a direct result of the intentional design and implementation of the Connect to Greatness model. The Boys to Men Leadership Academy offers a multi-tiered, developmentally appropriate framework that serves students across three distinct program levels:

- Lunchbox Talks (Grades 4–5)
- Emerging Leaders (Grades 6–8)
- Connecting Future Leaders (Grades 9–12)

While each tier delivers content specifically tailored to the developmental needs of its participants, several core design elements remain consistent across all levels of the program:

Mentorship

Connect to Greatness employs a group mentoring model as its core approach, where students participate in weekly sessions alongside their peers. Each student also chooses a personal coach for individualized one-on-one support, providing tailored encouragement and accountability. Coaches serve as thought partners, set high expectations, and foster both academic and social-emotional growth.

Consistent Weekly Engagement

Students engage in regular weekly sessions, conducted either during the school day or in community-based evening settings. These sessions focus on skill development, identity affirmation, and leadership cultivation. Coaches utilize real-time student feedback and academic data to adapt content and customize support.

CASEL-Aligned Social-Emotional Learning Integration

The program embeds the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) core competencies—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—within group discussions, reflective exercises, and ongoing progress monitoring.



Academic Monitoring and Check-Ins

Student grades, attendance, and assessment results are tracked throughout the academic year. Coaches leverage this data during regular check-ins to celebrate achievements, identify areas for growth, and collaboratively set goals.

Family Engagement

Families are recognized as essential partners in student development. Initiatives such as Women of Boys and Men of Greatness provide workshops, support circles, and leadership opportunities for caregivers, fostering a shared commitment to student success.

Community Connections

The program incorporates site visits, field trips, and guest speakers to expose students to new experiences and connect them with local leaders. These opportunities broaden perspectives, enhance relevance, and reinforce the message that Black boys are valued, needed, and deserving of opportunity.

Together, these strategies function synergistically to create a protective and empowering ecosystem around each student—one that nurtures and sustains their brilliance over time.

VI. Academic Excellence Defined

Defining Academic Excellence

At Connect to Greatness, academic excellence is measured not only by achievement but also by growth, effort, and resilience. For the purposes of this case study, three key indicators were used to assess academic excellence:

1. Standardized Assessment Performance

Students' results on the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) and End-of-Course (EOC) exams in core subjects served as a primary measure of academic progress. While Level 3 denotes grade-level proficiency according to state standards, our program sets a higher expectation—encouraging students to strive for Levels 4 and 5 as benchmarks of mastery and excellence. Specifically:

- **Level 4** indicates that a student has exceeded grade-level standards, demonstrating advanced mastery of skills and knowledge necessary for success in subsequent coursework.

- **Level 5** indicates the highest achievement level, signifies superior mastery. For students in grades 6–8 and 11, it reflects advanced progress toward college readiness.

2. **Grade Point Average (GPA)**

Students who maintained a GPA of 3.0 or higher across both semesters, or who achieved an increase of at least 0.5 points from the first to the second semester, were recognized for consistent academic momentum and progress.

3. **Attendance and Behavior**

Students with fewer than 10 absences during the school year and no more than two behavioral referrals demonstrated personal accountability and engagement—both critical indicators of academic and socio-emotional development.

Using this comprehensive framework, 100% of the students profiled in this case study met the criteria for academic excellence. Their achievements exemplify the impact of providing the right environment, supportive relationships, and a strong belief in their potential.

VII. Evidence of Impact

The data presented in this case study highlights the measurable academic and behavioral outcomes achieved by the 17 students in the Connect to Greatness program during the 2024–2025 school year. While each student’s journey is distinct, four key themes emerged:

1. **Academic Growth Across Grade Levels**

- 100% of the students achieved Level 4 or Level 5 on FAST or EOC assessments in at least one subject area.
- Seven students earned a GPA of 3.5 or higher, with multiple students attaining a perfect 4.0.
- Students entering the year with GPAs below 2.5 demonstrated significant improvement, with some increasing by more than a full grade point.
- 100% of students were promoted to the next grade level.

2. Outstanding Standardized Testing Performance

- One elementary student attained Level 5s across all tested subjects (ELA, Math, Science), one middle school student achieved Level 5s in all assessed subjects (Math, Civics, Science), and one high school student earned Level 5s across all tested subjects (Biology, ELA, Writing), reflecting exceptional mastery.
- Middle school students performed strongly on Civics, Math, and Science FAST assessments.
- High school students demonstrated robust results on Biology, U.S. History, and Algebra EOC exams, with some advancing from Level 2 to Level 4 within a single academic year.

3. Consistent Attendance and Engagement

- Each of the 17 students were successful in maintaining attendance rates that met or exceeded district benchmarks, with fewer than 10 absences annually.
- Every student participated in weekly Connect to Greatness sessions - whether during the school day or evening community programs - maintaining consistent engagement throughout the year.

4. Positive Behavior and Leadership Development

- Sixteen of the 17 students had no behavioral referrals during the year.
- The student who received referrals was supported through mentorship and restorative conversations that encouraged personal growth.
- Several students took on leadership roles by serving as peer mentors, assisting with group facilitation, or initiating leadership initiatives within their schools and communities.

VIII. Connection to Research and Rising Sons

The success of this cohort reflects the core findings of Dr. Cassondra Corbin-Thaddies's research on high-achieving Black male students—work that inspired both this case study and her recent book, *Rising Sons: Empowering Black Male Students for Academic Excellence*. Her research highlights the transformative impact of relationships, mentoring,



identity development, and community-centered approaches in fostering both academic and personal growth among Black boys.

Every element of the Connect to Greatness program—weekly mentoring, culturally relevant social-emotional learning, family engagement, and academic monitoring—aligns closely with the principles and recommendations outlined in Dr. Corbin-Thaddies’s work. Students were equipped not only with academic skills but also received affirmation, attentive support, and celebration, establishing a strong foundation for sustained success.

This case study provides compelling evidence that when theory and practice converge through intentionality, equity, and cultural responsiveness, Black boys thrive.

"The brilliance is already in them. We're just clearing the path for it to rise."
— Paraphrased from the vision and scholarship of Dr. Cassandra Corbin-Thaddies

IX. Lessons Learned and Key Success Factors

As Connect to Greatness reflects on the academic progress and personal development of its 2024–2025 cohort, several key insights and success factors have emerged—each contributing to the program’s impact and future direction:

1. Connection as the Foundation

Academic engagement is built on a foundation of emotional safety and trusted relationships. Consistent interactions with caring coaches, paired with environments where students’ voices were respected and heard, created the conditions for meaningful growth. Students who initially hesitated to engage evolved into some of the program’s most enthusiastic and vocal contributors.

2. Structure as a Catalyst for Transformation

A reliable and predictable framework—featuring weekly sessions, academic monitoring, goal setting, and SEL development—established behavioral consistency and emotional stability. Clear expectations empowered students to show up, engage fully, and understand the support available to them. This structure reduced confusion and strengthened commitment.



3. The Power of Culturally Responsive Mentorship

When students see themselves reflected in their mentors and the stories shared within group discussions, they begin to see success as both attainable and expected. The cohort did not thrive despite their identities, but because those identities were affirmed, celebrated, and positioned as strengths.

4. Families as Essential Partners

Students whose caregivers participated in *Women of Boys, Men of Greatness*, or other family engagement touchpoints demonstrated stronger motivation and sustained involvement. Caregivers also reported increased confidence in advocating for their sons and navigating school systems, reinforcing the value of family-school-community collaboration.

5. Growth in All Its Forms

While several students achieved notable academic gains, others made equally significant strides in areas such as attendance, leadership, self-confidence, and resilience. By adopting a holistic, asset-based definition of success, *Connect to Greatness* was able to meet each student where they were and support their individual path forward.

These insights will continue to guide the ongoing refinement of *Connect to Greatness* programming. They also provide actionable direction for educators, funders, and school leaders dedicated to advancing equity and excellence for Black boys—ensuring they are not only supported, but seen, valued, and empowered to thrive.

X. Implications for Stakeholders

The data and personal narratives presented in this case study affirm a clear and powerful truth: when Black boys are seen, supported, and believed in, they thrive. But this level of impact is not accidental—it is the result of intentional design, dedicated relationships, and strategic investment. To sustain and scale this work, every stakeholder group has a vital role to play:

For Schools and District Leaders

The growth demonstrated by these 17 students illustrates what's possible when culturally responsive mentoring is integrated into the fabric of the educational experience. Schools should consider formal partnerships with *Connect to Greatness* to expand the reach and deepen the impact of this model across campuses.

Investing in mentoring is not an optional add-on; it is an essential strategy for advancing academic achievement, student engagement, and equity. Funding this



work reflects a commitment to student voice, personalized support, and community-rooted solutions. These are not volunteer-led enrichment sessions—they are high-impact, professionalized services aligned with district equity goals and contributing to measurable outcomes. Sustained financial support from schools and districts is critical to expanding and maintaining this impact system-wide.

For Community Stakeholders and Advocates

Whether you're a nonprofit partner, business leader, faith leader, or parent, your involvement matters. Community-rooted organizations like *Connect to Greatness* are the critical bridge between home, school, and opportunity. Financial and moral support from the broader community helps maintain the safety net that surrounds and uplifts these young leaders.

This work is not a side project—it is a professional, outcomes-based initiative that warrants broad community backing. Supporting it ensures that every Black male student has access to the mentorship, affirmation, and opportunities he deserves.

At a time when districts and communities are searching for proven, equity-centered solutions, *Connect to Greatness* offers both evidence and inspiration. The question is no longer whether this work makes a difference—it's who will step up to ensure it continues.

XI. Student Profiles: Stories of Excellence

Each of the following narratives illustrates the transformative power of the Connect to Greatness model. These profiles bring to life the numbers and outcomes described in this report by highlighting the lived experiences, challenges, and successes of 17 Black male students who participated in the program during the 2024–2025 school year as told in part by their coaches.

(Note: All student names are pseudonyms. Each profile includes the student's grade, school, and city.)

Malik (Student #1, 9th Grade – Boynton Beach High School, Boynton Beach)

Malik participated in weekly 90-minute sessions through the Connect to Greatness program. As an incoming 9th grader, he was working to find his rhythm and had previously faced challenges with consistency. This year, he demonstrated solid academic growth—earning a Level 4 in Biology and improving his GPA from 2.1 to 2.3. He maintained strong attendance, missing fewer than 10 days, and had zero discipline referrals. Malik has shown a growing commitment to his education and has become more willing to engage with his coach and peers, especially in settings where he feels safe and encouraged.



Isaiah (Student #2, 11th Grade – Atlantic High School, Delray Beach)

Isaiah started off as a shy kid with no personal confidence. After getting comfortable with the coaches and other mentees, a tremendous difference in his demeanor became evident. With the guidance and support of Connect to Greatness, Isaiah joined the school band and the Black Student Union (BSU), where he went on to win the Mr. BSU competition on campus. He earned a Level 4 on his U.S. History exam and maintained a GPA of 3.0 in the first semester and 2.75 in the second semester. With less than 10 absences and no behavior referrals, Isaiah consistently showed up ready to learn. He is now more dialed in academically and looks forward to continued growth. His quiet focus, emerging leadership, and resilience have set an example for others in the program.

Jalen (Student #3, 11th Grade – Atlantic High School, Delray Beach)

Jalen, an upperclassman in the CFL program, showed significant personal growth this year. Attending weekly 90-minute sessions, he moved from a Level 2 to Level 4 in U.S. History. His GPA also increased from 2.0 to 3.0. Jalen admits that during 9th and 10th grade, he lacked direction and was a bit lazy academically. He also shared that taking his medication sometimes made him feel out of it, which affected his focus. However, he knew that if he wanted to play in the band in college, he had to pick it up academically—and he did just that. His renewed determination was evident not only in his EOC exam performance but also in his improved GPA for his junior year. Jalen now speaks confidently about pursuing college and mentoring younger C2G participants, embracing his growth with maturity and purpose.

Amir (Student #4, 11th Grade – Atlantic High School, Delray Beach)

Amir scored a Level 4 on the U.S. History EOC and improved his GPA from 2.66 to 3.0. With strong attendance and zero discipline issues, he remained a committed participant in the program's weekly sessions. Amir is one of our most inspirational students—no matter what personal adversity he may be facing at home, he always shows up with a smile and finds ways to make others laugh. His optimism and resilience are contagious. Amir has set his sights on college and is driven by a desire to make his family proud. Through his community service work, he secured a job with Community Greening, where he enjoys spending time outdoors and contributing to the improvement of his community and others throughout the area. His growth reflects a maturing focus on his goals and the power of consistent effort combined with purpose.

Elijah (Student #5, 11th Grade – South Tech High School, Boynton Beach)

Elijah maintained a strong academic trajectory, scoring Level 4 on the U.S. History EOC and raising his GPA from 3.44 to 4.0. With excellent attendance and no referrals, he exemplified how self-discipline and support can produce outstanding results. Elijah has a passion for electronics and gaming—not just playing video games, but creating new



content for games and systems. His strong academic performance reflects his deep commitment to reaching the college of his choice, where he plans to pursue these interests further. He is poised to thrive in his senior year and beyond.

Xavier (Student #6, 7th Grade – W. Boynton Middle School, Boynton Beach)

Xavier is a bright and creative 7th grader who often felt unchallenged in his school environment. As part of the Connect to Greatness program, he attended weekly 90-minute sessions that encouraged curiosity and voice. Xavier experienced behavioral challenges this year and received two discipline referrals, which were addressed and supported through mentoring. Despite these setbacks, he demonstrated academic excellence—earning a Level 5 in math, civics, and science—and maintained a GPA of 2.65 in the first semester and 2.55 in the second. With strong attendance, he began to channel his energy into leadership and academic inquiry, seeing his intellectual spark as a strength, not a disruption.

Trevon (Student #7, 9th Grade – Atlantic High School, Delray Beach)

Trevon achieved a Level 4 on his ELA Reading FAST assessment while maintaining a GPA above 3.7 across both semesters. His fewer than ten absences and stellar behavior record demonstrate that he is ready for the rigors of high school. Trevon is our freshman sensation—he started off his 9th grade year the right way. He has a passion for photography and owns his own camera, using it to run a small business photographing other student-athletes. He also serves as a tutor through the National Honor Society, where he encourages his teammates to prioritize academics. His consistency, leadership, and strong literacy skills lay the foundation for future academic and entrepreneurial success.

Kameron (Student #8, 9th Grade – Santaluces High School, Boynton Beach)

Kameron earned a Level 5 on his FAST assessments across Biology, ELA, and Writing—demonstrating academic excellence in multiple subjects. His GPA held steady at 3.42 and 3.0, with fewer than 10 absences and no discipline referrals. Kameron, lovingly known as our little Chef Boy, is an amazing student who embraces academic challenges with a positive attitude. While he admits that math is not his strongest subject, he consistently gives his best effort and never backs down from the work. Kameron has emerged as a well-rounded scholar with great potential and determination, ready to tackle advanced coursework ahead.



Zion (Student #9, 10th Grade – Boca High School, Boca Raton)

Zion is a quiet, soft-spoken student whose love for his family drives his every move. When asked why school matters to him, he shares that his greatest goal is to make his mother proud. His commitment shows in both his consistent attendance—fewer than 10 absences—and strong academic performance, with a GPA holding steady above 3.2 across both semesters. Zion earned a Level 4 in ELA and a Level 3 in Biology on his state assessments, reflecting a solid academic foundation and continued growth. A dedicated participant in the 90-minute weekly CFL sessions throughout the year, Zion showed up, stayed focused, and remained free of any behavior referrals. With his reliability and heartfelt motivation, he is poised to continue rising in the years ahead.

Darius (Student #10, 7th Grade – Somerset Canyon Middle School, Boynton Beach)

Darius earned a Level 4 on his Math FAST assessment and demonstrated consistent academic effort throughout the year. His GPA improved from 2.5 to 2.65. With perfect attendance and no behavior referrals, Darius stands out as a dependable student who is beginning to build confidence in his academic strengths.

Micah (Student #11, 7th Grade – Plumosa Middle School, Delray Beach)

Micah achieved a Level 4 in Math and maintained a strong 3.5 GPA across both semesters. He had fewer than 10 absences and no behavioral issues. Micah is developing into a thoughtful learner with a growing sense of self-efficacy. Known for asking a lot of questions in less than a minute, his nonstop curiosity reflects a genuine eagerness to learn and understand the world around him. He’s also highly competitive when it comes to grades—a trait that fuels his focus and drives him toward achieving his academic goals. His steady performance is a reflection of internal motivation and the external support he receives from the program and his mentors.

Nasir (Student #12, 10th Grade – Boynton Beach High School, Boynton Beach)

Nasir scored a Level 4 on his ELA FAST assessment and maintained a GPA of 3.66 in the first semester and 3.5 in the second. With excellent attendance and no behavior referrals, he continues to prove himself as a responsible and focused student. He has the best personality to be around—an old soul with a calm wisdom beyond his years. Nasir understands that education is his ticket to success and embraces that responsibility with quiet determination. He qualified for the prestigious “Worlds” competition in robotics this past summer, a testament to both his intellect and dedication. Whether in the classroom or on the team, Nasir gives his all and continues to work hard in everything he does.



Aiden (Student #13, 5th Grade – Freedom Shores Elementary, Boynton Beach)

Aiden consistently attended his 45-minute weekly sessions and demonstrated both academic strength and strong character. He earned a Level 5 in ELA and a Level 4 in Math on the FAST assessments, reflecting balanced academic performance. While the GPA was not recorded, his attendance was strong—fewer than 10 absences—and he had no behavior referrals. According to his coach, Aiden is a bright young man who shines when given responsibility. He often stepped up to support his peers and modeled maturity in group sessions, building confidence in his voice and leadership potential.

Marcus (Student #14, 5th Grade – Freedom Shores Elementary, Boynton Beach)

Marcus showed growth across disciplines, achieving a Level 4 in ELA and a Level 5 in Science on the FAST assessments. With regular attendance and no behavior referrals, Marcus remained a positive presence in his weekly sessions. His coach describes him as thoughtful, respectful, and highly engaged. During the year, Marcus began to express a stronger sense of curiosity in science and asked more questions in group discussions. His ability to stay focused and contribute respectfully made him a steady example for his peers.

Caleb (Student #15, 5th Grade – Freedom Shores Elementary, Boynton Beach)

Caleb earned a perfect Level 5 in all tested areas—ELA, Math, and Science—on the FAST assessments. While GPA data wasn't available, Caleb had strong attendance and no behavior referrals, fully engaging in the 45-minute weekly sessions. Caleb's coach noted that Caleb brought both academic excellence and emotional intelligence into every space he entered. He is often the first to support another student and has shown budding leadership qualities that shine in both structured and informal settings. His presence elevates the room.

Andre (Student #16, 8th Grade – South Tech Prep, Boynton Beach)

Andre maintained a GPA of 3.5 across both semesters and earned a Level 5 on his FAST assessments in Math and ELA. Attending weekly 90-minute sessions through Connect to Greatness, he demonstrated consistency, curiosity, and a willingness to grow. With fewer than 10 absences and no discipline referrals, Andre remained engaged and reflective throughout the year. His coach described him as one of the few boys who consistently came to sessions ready to participate and push his thinking. His ability to express himself and seek deeper understanding made him a powerful voice in his cohort—and a promising leader for high school and beyond.

Jayceon (Student #17, 8th Grade – Carver Middle School, Delray Beach)

Jayceon showed consistent academic effort this year, achieving a Level 4 on both his Science assessment and the Algebra EOC. His GPA held steady at 4.0 for both semesters, and he maintained excellent attendance with fewer than 10 absences and no discipline referrals. He participated in weekly 90-minute sessions, where he became known for his maturity and reflective contributions. His coach shared that Jayceon always modeled excellence and leadership, often initiating thoughtful discussions and mentoring younger peers. His quiet confidence and commitment to growth made him a standout student in both academic and social spaces.

The complete dataset supporting this report is available in the spreadsheet linked below.

[Connect to Greatness 24-25 Academic Achievement Data](#)



bit.ly/C2G2425DATA

XII. Conclusion: A Call to Sustain the Rise

This case study is more than a record of achievement—it is a vision for what can be realized when Black boys are supported with intentionality, respect, and belief. The progress and brilliance demonstrated by these 17 students offer undeniable proof: when the right relationships, structures, and supports are in place, Black boys thrive at the highest levels. They are not outliers—they are examples of what becomes possible when belief is matched with action.

Connect to Greatness invites school districts, funders, and community partners to join us in deepening and expanding this impact. Sustaining these outcomes demands more than celebration—it requires strategic alignment, long-term investment, and a collective commitment to making excellence for Black boys not just an aspiration, but a standard.

Let us move forward together—clearing the path for brilliance to rise, and ensuring this work becomes not a moment, but a lasting movement.



Appendix A: Letter of Support from Dr. Mary Ann DuPont

The following letter was submitted by Dr. DuPont, a valued community partner and advocate for Connect to Greatness. It provides external validation of the program's impact and alignment with broader community goals.

Dear Dr. Cassandra Corbin-Thaddies and Andre Thaddies,

In today's increasingly complex and demanding social and political climate, it is profoundly uplifting to witness the unwavering dedication of individuals committed to equity, excellence, and the advancement of Black Boys. The recent 8th Annual Connect to Greatness (C2G) Graduation Ceremony, held on June 14, 2025, at the Women's Club of Boynton Beach, was a shining example of such commitment in action.

Please accept my heartfelt gratitude—and kindly extend it to everyone who played a role in planning and executing this remarkable event. The Board of Directors, Sponsors, the C2G Team, Mentors and Coaches, Community and School Partners, Vendors, Investors, and, most importantly, the Black Boys and their mothers—each contributed to what was, without question, one of the most impactful and inspiring graduation ceremonies I have ever had the honor of attending.

Every aspect of the event reflected intentionality, collaboration, and a deep commitment to excellence. From the Cohorts' red-carpet procession and the moving invocation, to the elegant table centerpieces creatively incorporating banned books, to the powerful keynote addresses and the thoughtful, well-articulated panel discussion featuring confident and prepared young Black males—each element spoke volumes about your shared leadership and purpose.

The Scholarship Ceremony was a particularly joyful and affirming moment, spotlighting Black Boys who achieved exceptional results (scoring above level 3) on their Progress Monitoring Assessments (PMA) and End-of-Course (EOC) exams. Their success—and their embrace of the mantra “Level 3 is not for me; Level 5 is where I thrive”—is a powerful testament to their belief in their own potential and to the guidance and support they have received through C2G. A special congratulations is in order for the two Black male students who achieved perfect scores of 5 across the board.

As founders of this vital organization, I was especially moved by Dr. Corbin-Thaddies' presentation of the C2G Mission and Vision. Her call for more research into the success stories of Black Boys who excel academically and aspire to lead is both timely and essential. It reminded me of a keynote address I once heard by bestselling author Brad Meltzer, who beautifully articulated that legacy is not what we leave behind—but what we leave within others through our actions, our kindness, and our commitment to creating meaningful change.

I remain deeply grateful to both of you for your leadership and for the tireless efforts of the C2G Team. The passion, purpose, and perseverance you bring to your work is nothing short of extraordinary. Your commitment is a beacon of hope and a catalyst for real and lasting

transformation—not just in the lives of the Black Boys you serve, but in the broader community and generations to come. Your legacy lives on in every young leader you uplift—and in every person, like me, who is inspired by the powerful work you do.

With deepest appreciation and respect,

Dr. Mary Ann DuPont, Community Partner (Student/Parent Advocate)



APPENDIX B: Acronyms

BSU – Black Student Union

C2G – Connect to Greatness

CASEL – Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

CFL – Connecting Future Leaders

EOC – End-of-Course Assessments

FAST – Florida Assessment of Student Thinking

FAST ELA – Florida Assessment of Student Thinking in English Language Arts

FSA ELA - Florida Standards Assessment in English Language Arts

GPA – Grade Point Average

SEL - Social and Emotional Learning