



## **Emanuel vows to expand promising program that combines math tutoring and mentoring**

By Fran Spielman | January 27, 2014 4:09 pm

Mayor Rahm Emanuel vowed Monday to expand to 1,000 students a program that produced eye-popping results by combining “math tutoring on steroids” with sports-based mentoring for troubled teens.

In just eight months, 106 participating freshmen and sophomores at Harper H.S. learned in math what the average American high school student takes three years to learn, according to a report published by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

The students were chronic absentees on track to become drop-outs, having missed an average of five weeks of school. They were in the 22nd percentile in math test scores the previous school year.

But, with an hour of remedial work each day during the 2012-13 school year from tutors working with no more than two students at a time, they managed to close more than half of the average gap in math test scores between white and black students.

They also flunked two fewer courses than students who did not participate. Their likelihood of being “on track” for graduation rose by nearly one-half.

Last year, the Chicago Sun-Times reported that school misconduct, absenteeism and course failures all plummeted among students participating in the program that combines math tutoring and the mentoring program, which is called Becoming a Man – Sports Edition, or BAM, which is run by a Chicago nonprofit agency called Youth Guidance.

The tutoring is modeled on the MATCH Education charter schools in Boston. MATCH-style math tutoring had already proven effective in the Houston public schools and in other school systems.

Emanuel discussed the promising results during a roundtable discussion Monday at a facility at 1615 West Chicago Ave. operated by the city’s Department of Family and Support Services.

“We have been led to believe that teenaged boys—particularly teenaged boys of color—by the time they get to high school, it may be too late. If I was to re-brand the story here, I would call it simply, ‘It’s not

too late,' which is very, very powerful for the city of Chicago," said Dr. Tim Knowles of the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute.

Emanuel said he's so thrilled with the results in cracking, what he called "the hardest nut of urban education," he's determined to expand the program from 700 students in 12 high schools to 1,000 students.

"You never have to give up on kids. You may have to figure out a different way of doing it. But, what this shows is, don't ever throw the towel in on the kids. If you figure out another way to speak to them [and] educate them to who they are, you can get them to graduation day," Emanuel said.

"We're going to get to 1,000 and, if it stays as promising, we're going to keep growing this so we can reach all of these kids who are at risk....We can actually get kids to graduation day: the hardest population: young men of color. Get 'em to graduation day [and] out of trouble."

If future studies produce similar results in closing 60 percent of the racial divide in math, the mayor said he will have "a case" to appeal to U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, a former Chicago Public Schools CEO, to "re-program" federal education funds for an even bigger expansion instead of asking foundations to bankroll it.

"A lot of times on other issues, it's, 'Where are you going to find the new money?' But, actually there are dollars dedicated, but not dollars being used very smartly with this type of effect," the mayor said.

"The reason I talked to all of the foundations when we met [recently] at McCormick Place was, 'Get us up to a level where they won't see this as an aberration, but it's consistent two years in a row with a wide spectrum of kids,' then say, 'We'd like to....re-program these federal dollars.'...You don't need more money. You just need the money spent smartly."

Ald. Latasha Thomas (17th), chairman of the City Council's Education Committee, said the \$4,400-per-student cost of the tutoring and counseling program pales by comparison to the cost of discouraged student who drops out and ultimately ends up in prison.

"The need for college education is paramount. The need for at least an associate's degree is required for most jobs now—jobs that will get you out of poverty. Jobs like working at Ford or factory jobs. They want you to have concepts of math. That's necessary in modern technology," Thomas said.

"If we have a group of young black men, men of color who don't have these concepts, they are going to fall. And we'll watch them fall unless we can teach them....MATCH and BAM are engaging and teaching our black men. They're giving them the confidence to keep moving forward....There's not many black men in college campuses. I see this improving that statistics."