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EDUCATION PROFILE

An A for the Effort: How the NYC Men Teach Program is Bringing Diversity into the Classroom

BY DR. CLAUDIA V. SCHRADER

Zero. That's the number of male teachers I had during my primary and elementary school years. By the time I got to middle school, the number rose to three and during my high school years, I was fortunate to have five male teachers. In general, the majority of my male teachers were men of color. I know this is not the norm; many students can go through each of these periods without having a male teacher, much less one of color. Not surprising, in my graduate program where I was training to be an educator, there were few men and none of them were men of color. In the ensuing years as an educator and teacher, I came to understand more and more the importance of having diverse teachers in the classroom.

Six years ago, New York City's Young Men's Initiative, the Department of Education, City University of New York (CUNY), the Cen-

ter for Economic Opportunity, and Teach for America, launched New York City's Men Teach Movement (NYC Men Teach), a new initiative to put an additional 1,000 men of color in NYC public schools as teachers within three years. At the time, less than 10 percent of public-school teachers were men of color. Today, the program has exceeded the 1,000th mark more than twice and continues to grow.

Every CUNY campus that has an education curriculum has a NYC Men Teach program. At Kingsborough Community College (KCC), the NYC Men Teach program began five years ago, providing academic and financial support to its participants. KCC program director of NYC Men Teach Eric Conte said the program initially set out to get participants in the door as teachers but has evolved to keep them in a teaching career.

"We were seeing some of



New KCC Student Anthony Moulrier, left, a psychology major and a participant in the NYC Men Teach program, talks with the KCC program director of NYC Men Teach, Eric Conte.

the educators quit within the first three years. So now, our program has extended to offering dedicated support even beyond their four-year degree and beyond their master's degree. We will stick with them through their first-

and second-year of teaching. Some of our students remain with us and become leaders in the program after getting their graduate degree."

Financial support extends to assisting program participants to obtain paid internships and providing money for tests, certification exams, books and tutors.

Although KCC graduates can't be hired as lead teachers (must hold a bachelor's degree), our NYC Men Teach program supports them on their journey with transfer assistance to a four-year college.

At KCC, the NYC Men Teach program is a model of effective education. They are collaborative, as evidence by their involvement at a number of college-wide initiatives like our upcoming LGBTQ History month celebrations. They promote student leadership through their NYC Men Teach student ambassadors program. Student ambas-

sadors give voice to the program by not just being passive participants but active stakeholders that help to shape it. Most importantly, because they understand that schools are one of the first spaces in which children experience diversity in all its forms, despite its name, the NYC Men Teach program, events and its meetings are open to everyone, without regard to race, gender, national origin, or any other characteristics.

With programs like NYC Men Teach, the days where male teachers of color are few and far between in classrooms across the city will be a thing of the past.

Dr. Claudia V. Schrader is president of Kingsborough Community College (KCC), a 70-acre academic oasis in beautiful Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn. Information and application for the Fall 2021 NYC Men Teach is available at <https://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/academicdepartments/behscience/education/nyc-menteach.html>.