



# THE GENTLEMEN'S LEAGUE

The Gentlemen's League is an all-male mentorship program that creates opportunities for boys of color to have positive, joyful, affirming experiences that lead to lives of achievement.

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## OVERVIEW

The Gentlemen's League is a transformative initiative dedicated to creating new pathways to life success for boys of color in grades 3-12. By connecting them to mentors who look like them, the program is better able to support boys of color in their individuality and their social-emotional development. Recognizing the importance of representation, The Gentlemen's League also focuses on increasing adult males of color in K-12 schools so that there is a greater likelihood that boys of color will have positive role models who can relate to their experiences and help them stay out of the school-to-prison pipeline.

The Gentlemen's League operates with three core objectives: to educate, empower, and enrich boys of color. It educates through mentorship; workshops covering topics such as etiquette, conflict resolution, and financial literacy; tutoring for academic support and exam preparation; and book clubs fostering literacy and character development. The program empowers through an Ambassador Program where students take on leadership roles and set an example for their peers. Lastly, the program enriches through service learning, field trips, and extracurricular activities.



The Gentlemen's League mentoring program offers a unique opportunity for schools committed to rethinking traditional supports and improving outcomes for boys of color, particularly Black and Latinx boys. Emphasizing integrity, excellence, brotherhood, and joy, The Gentlemen's League works to help boys of color feel seen, heard, and deeply known as they learn to reclaim their power. Through these intentional efforts, the program seeks to support a cradle-to-career pipeline for participants. The Gentlemen's League currently partners with nine schools in Memphis to foster personal growth and success in school. [▶School-Based Mentoring Model](#)

## What Makes This Model Innovative?



### Whole-Child Focus

The Gentlemen’s League believes that mentors must provide personalized guidance and social and emotional support to foster holistic growth in boys of color, not only addressing academic needs but also nurturing character, joy, resilience, and well-being.



### Affirmation of Self & Others

The mentoring vision at The Gentlemen’s League focuses on helping boys of color develop a positive narrative for themselves and their path in life. This mentorship is built on personalized encouragement and the celebration of cultural identity.



### Connection & Community

Through a positive and supportive relationship with their mentors, boys of color in The Gentlemen's League find a sense of belonging with peers and adults who have similar lived experiences within the same local community contexts.

## DESIGN

### Goals

The Gentlemen’s League aims to improve the life outcomes of boys of color by developing character and fostering community.

<b>Excellence</b>	Students gain knowledge and skills through hard work, persistence, and resilience. They earn success because of continual practice.
<b>Fellowship</b>	Students come to know themselves as individuals and how they are connected to other people. They take responsibility for creating a community in which all members feel safe and comfortable expressing their true selves.
<b>Integrity</b>	Student actions are guided by honesty, morals, and fairness. They accept responsibility for their actions and have a personal sense of what is right and wrong.
<b>Joy</b>	Students grow to find delight and happiness in learning and personal discovery. This manifests in the form of smiles and laughter.

## Experience

The Gentlemen’s League mentoring program is structured by three verbs that guide its work: educate, empower, and enrich. Within this context, boys of color are engaged with mentors who are positive role models who look like them and ensure that they are seen, heard, and known. [▶ Why The Gentlemen's League Is Needed](#) [▶ Crafting a Successful Mentor Model](#)

Students enter The Gentlemen’s League by being referred by teachers or staff at the school who believe they would be a good fit for the program. Parents can also apply to enroll their sons in the opportunity. Once an application is submitted, students are admitted to the program on a first-come first-served basis or wait-listed depending on the school’s capacity. The goal is to support as many Black and Latinx boys as possible, so The Gentlemen’s League sometimes recruits mentors from the larger community.

While the focus of The Gentlemen’s League is in-school mentoring for Black and Latinx boys, the program does not turn any boys away based on race. White and Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) boys have participated in The Gentlemen’s League program working with mentors who are the race of the predominant group at their school.

## Mentoring

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To help students develop a mindset of excellence, they receive critical guidance from both adult and peer mentors. Adult mentors are typically members of the school faculty, working in a 1:8 (mentor:mentee) ratio. Adult mentors are always men of color, but, when necessary, community-based mentors are engaged. All mentors receive training from The Gentlemen’s League staff with the opportunity to customize their approach.



By design, mentoring helps students build connections to their mentor and to other students in the program. This fellowship often evolves into brotherhood and a sense of community that helps students succeed in school. Students can rely on their mentors for support, ranging from advice on how to handle social-emotional issues to resources that open doors to postsecondary opportunities to academic tutoring. Tutoring is one of the mainstays at schools that partner with The Gentlemen’s League and typically happens after school to support student goal setting, monitor progress, and provide feedback based on observations from teachers and parents.

Mentoring occurs in a few different formats—one-on-one, small group, and peer—to ensure that mentees receive personalized attention and support while also cultivating camaraderie and collective growth among groups.

- One-on-one mentoring: Mentors consistently check in with students individually to build relationships and provide them with any specific support they may need in pursuit of their goals. These check-ins may happen during homeroom, class time (if the mentor teaches one of their mentees), or at some other time during or after the school day. A
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part of the value of in-school mentoring is that students know their mentor is in the building.

- Small group mentoring: The majority of all mentoring sessions happen in small groups because most schools do not have enough male mentors of color. These small group meetings often take place at lunch and can also happen after school or during the monthly workshops.
  - Peer mentoring: Peer mentoring offers students a chance to be in a community with classmates. Peer mentors receive some basic training for their roles in working with younger students at their school. In elementary school, 5th graders mentor 3rd and 4th graders. In middle school, 8th graders mentor 6th and 7th graders. In high school, older students mentor younger students. These sessions take place during the monthly workshops and are a platform for students to connect with and receive advice from an older student who has recently had some of the same lived experiences.
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## Workshops

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Once a month, students attend an after-school workshop that is organized by the site coordinator and geared toward a specific grade band. The curriculum for workshops is developed by The Gentlemen’s League and focused on social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies. In these workshops, students learn about topics that will benefit them both personally and professionally. Session topics include etiquette, dressing for success, self-image, conflict resolution, building healthy relationships, financial literacy, and leadership development. [📄 Self-Awareness Workshop Curriculum](#)



Each year, students also have the opportunity to participate in Blackout Weekend, a conference for boys of color that school partners plan together and attend. This brings together student leaders and community members in an environment designed to provide thought, insight, discussion, and resources. Students attend workshop sessions about justice, leadership, career pathways, and identity. The weekend concludes with a banquet at which a student is recognized as “Gentleman of the Year.”

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## Service Learning and Field Trips

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Each quarter, students participate in field trips and service learning as a part of The Gentlemen’s League’s efforts to expose them to the larger world. On selected school days or during spring break, students go on field trips to expand their view of the world through direct experiences that are not a part of their day-to-day lives. Field trips may take students to regional cultural institutions or colleges with the goal of positively impacting personal development and motivation in school.



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To learn more about the needs of the community and their capacity for serving others, students in the program participate in service learning during school. Through interactions with people in homeless shelters, food banks, and philanthropic service organizations, students not only gain more social awareness but also develop essential skills for being responsible and empathetic citizens—gentlemen with a sense of civic duty who know the value of actively contributing to the well-being of their community. Both service learning and field trips are cohort experiences across school partners.

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## Extracurricular Opportunities

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The Gentlemen’s League supports a variety of optional engagement opportunities for students to support holistic personal development and community building. Many schools participate in The Gentlemen’s League basketball program, but most offer activities on an à la carte basis.

Examples of some of the programming offered by schools include:

- Step Teams: Students practice the art of stepping for self-expression and teamwork.
  - Book Clubs: Students read and discuss books to enhance their literacy skills.
  - Ambassador Programs: Students take on leadership roles and represent their school.
  - Dress-Up Days: Students wear ties to promote a professional atmosphere at school.
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## Supporting Structures

The Gentlemen’s League mentoring model is highly adaptable. Depending on the context, implementation may require shifts in school culture, adult roles, and schedules.

### Schools leverage The Gentlemen’s League’s workshop curriculum that centers on social-emotional learning (SEL).



#### CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT

A cornerstone of the holistic approach of The Gentlemen's League is SEL. The emphasis on SEL begins by connecting the boys of color in the program with male mentors who look like them and share similar life experiences. These relationships, along with daily check-ins and monthly workshops, help to nurture a sense of belonging and self-efficacy for participants.

Schools seeking partnership with The Gentlemen’s League must recognize the importance of whole-child development and follow a tailored SEL workshop curriculum that is provided to them. This curriculum helps to foster the emotional intelligence, resilience, and interpersonal skills that supports academic and personal success for boys of color.

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**Building a community and culture that understands the importance of motivating and supporting boys of color is essential to The Gentlemen’s League mentoring model.**



Building a community and a culture that know the significance of supporting boys of color is crucial for the successful implementation of a mentoring model tailored to their needs. Such a community serves as a foundation of understanding, empathy, and advocacy, creating an environment where the unique challenges faced by boys of color are acknowledged and addressed. In such an environment, mentors are more effective because they can focus on guiding and supporting their mentees rather than having to rationalize the program to critics.

**SCHOOL COMMUNITY  
& CULTURE**

In The Gentlemen’s League, student motivation to achieve academic excellence is strengthened by positive reinforcement through a well-structured incentive program. At the end of each quarter, student attendance, grade point average (GPA), and behavior are assessed and successful growth within these metrics is rewarded. This creates a tangible and celebratory link between a student’s efforts and acknowledgment of their achievements. Program incentives range from professional basketball tickets and gaming events to special lunches and gift cards.

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**There must be at least one male educator of color on staff at a school that adopts The Gentlemen’s League model.**



**ADULT ROLES, HIRING,  
& LEARNING**

The capacity to support and implement The Gentlemen’s League mentoring model for boys of color depends on the presence of male educators of color at the school. The more male educators of color there are at a school, the more boys of color can be supported in the program. When a 1:8 mentor-to-mentee ratio cannot be supported with existing school staff, the program must limit participation or find community-based mentors.

Each school also needs to identify a site coordinator who receives training and support from The Gentlemen’s League. The coordinator can be anyone who wants to support the program, usually a teacher at the school who can also serve as a mentor. They work with a site administrator, often an assistant principal, to organize and manage various programs.

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**Schools need to make sure there is time for mentoring and other programming either during the school day or after school.**



Schools must dedicate time in their schedule for The Gentlemen’s League programming either during the school day or after school. Schools that run the program during the school day often do so during “club time” (i.e., electives) so boys do not miss any core instruction.

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## SCHEDULE & USE OF TIME

Most schools choose to run core programming like mentoring, tutoring, and workshops after school, while field trips and service learning occur on days that are dedicated to those purposes.

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## SPACE & FACILITIES

**Schools must provide a space where mentoring and workshops can be held without interruption.**

Schools need to provide mentors with a space where they can work with students for 90 minutes uninterrupted. The designated space must be kept private for the duration of the mentoring or workshop so boys feel safe to raise and discuss challenging issues. Ideally, this space is consistent throughout the year so that it is easier for students to feel familiarity and develop a sense of community.

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## BUDGET & OPERATIONS

**The Gentlemen's League manages all logistics of programming, but schools allocate funding.**

Running The Gentlemen's League mentoring program requires funding to cover expenses including site coordinator stipends, transportation, and meals for students during events. The Gentlemen's League works with schools directly to identify incentives like gift cards and early release passes to use as compensation for mentors during the school year.

The Gentlemen's League is currently building out its capacity to work with schools to identify and secure funding for mentoring, whether it is grant funding or budget allocation. All school partners are expected to participate in fundraisers organized by The Gentlemen's League.

As a part of its partnership, The Gentlemen's League manages all the logistics of its in-school mentoring program. The organization oversees workshops and field trips (including transportation) and site coordinators promote workshops and organize service learning.

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## COMMUNICATIONS

**The Gentlemen's League works with schools to communicate a culture of support for boys of color.**

Schools that partner with The Gentlemen's League must create a more positive narrative about boys of color. The Gentlemen's League reviews school communication materials to ensure that depictions of boys of color are accurate and culturally responsible. As a response to the media's (mis)representations of people of color and Black and Latinx men in particular, The Gentlemen's League works with partner schools as a

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storyteller to communicate and create an accurate, positive narrative about boys of color and education.

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### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

**To ensure the efficacy of The Gentlemen’s League, schools administer surveys to stakeholder groups twice a year.**

Schools that participate are required to administer the beginning-of-year and end-of-year surveys about The Gentlemen’s League and its impact. These surveys are sent to all stakeholder groups and survey results are shared with school administration.

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## IMPLEMENTATION

### Supports Offered

[The Gentlemen’s League](#) offers the following supports to help implement its approach.

#### School Partnerships

*Cost Associated*



The Gentlemen’s League school partnerships include:

- Program co-design tailored to context
- Workshops with a focus on identity, privilege, and cultural competence to help staff unpack biases and stereotypes
- Tools and resources on how to support boys of color
- Coaching for staff
- Access to program data reports

School partners must be purpose-aligned, equity-focused, and willing to challenge existing systems in order to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. The cost of this support is included in formal partnerships that require a year-long commitment.

#### [Express Interest](#)

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#### Consulting

*Free, Cost Associated*



The Gentlemen’s League offers consulting, coaching, and implementation outside of its service regions to support schools that want to adopt a school-based mentoring program.

#### [Express Interest](#)

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## Reach

9

Schools

1,140

Students

97%

Students  
Identify as  
BIPOC

98%

Students FRL  
Eligible

## Impact

Students are positive about their participation in The Gentlemen's League. [2023 Annual Report](#)  
End-of-year surveys in 2022–2023 show students agree with the following statements:

- 87% – I enjoyed having a mentor at my school.
- 86% – My mentor got to know me this year.
- 93% – I enjoyed the workshops and sessions this year.
- 92% – I would encourage other people to join The Gentlemen's League.
- 87% – My mentor helped me make better academic choices.
- 87% – My mentor helped to improve my behavior.
- 80% – My mentor encouraged me to improve my attendance.

Students' sense of fellowship, connection, and motivation increases as a result of participating in The Gentlemen's League. Surveys taken at the beginning and end of the 2022–2023 school year show increases in the number of students who agree with the following statements:

- 15% increase – I feel comfortable at this school.
- 15% increase – Other students at school have shown they care about me.
- 16% increase – There are adults at my school who I've talked to if I've had a problem.
- 18% increase – Goal setting increased my motivation and accountability to do well in school.

2022–2023 data for students in The Gentlemen's League across all nine partner schools reflect improvement in academics, behavior, and attendance:

- The average GPA for students improved from 3.01 to 3.12.
- The average number of behavior infractions for students improved from 0.4 to 0.2.
- The average number of absences for students improved from 2.3 to 1.9.

Parents of students participating in The Gentlemen's League are seeing the positive impact of programming. Across all nine partner schools in the 2022–2023 school year, 89% of parents agreed that The Gentlemen's League had a positive impact on their son(s).

- “My son became more vocal and expressive this year as a result of being involved in The Gentlemen’s League.”
- “[The Gentlemen’s League] helped [my son] get to know other peers outside of his school activities and also to develop a stronger sense of pride for his community.”
- “[The Gentlemen’s League] gave [my son] a sense of belonging and fellowship.”

## Contact

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# RESOURCES



School-Based Mentoring Model

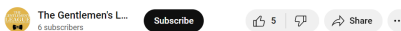


### [School-Based Mentoring Model](#)

A video explaining The Gentlemen’s League mentoring model.



Why The Gentlemen's League is Needed



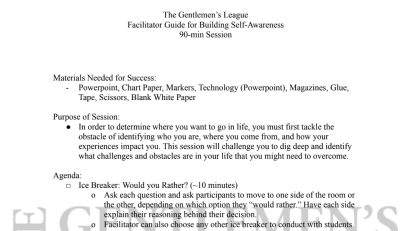
### [Why The Gentlemen's League Is Needed](#)

A video explaining the relevance of The Gentlemen’s League.



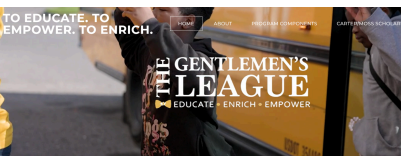
### [Crafting a Successful Mentor Model](#)

An explanation of the elements that make The Gentlemen’s League a positive experience for participants.



### [Self-Awareness Workshop Curriculum](#)

A sample of the curriculum used in workshops.



### [The Gentlemen's League](#)

The website for The Gentlemen’s League.



### [The Gentlemen's League Annual Report](#)

#### [2023 Annual Report](#)

Information about the work of The Gentlemen’s League in 2023.