

# A SEAT AT THE TABLE:

## African American Youth's Perceptions of K-12 Education

*A Seat at the Table* examines the perspectives of low-income African American youth on their educational aspirations, barriers to achievement and priorities. The report offers meaningful commentary on students' educational environment and recommendations for improvement. Below are a few key findings. To view the full report, please visit: [UNCF.org/aseatatthetable](http://UNCF.org/aseatatthetable) #UNCFk12



66%

### EDUCATION PRIORITIES

66 percent of low-income African American youth indicated that success in school was the priority most significant to them.

57%

### BARRIERS TO ACHIEVEMENT

57 percent of youth explained that the high cost of higher education was a significant barrier to enrolling in or completing college and one in five youths said they did not understand how to pay for college at all.

70%

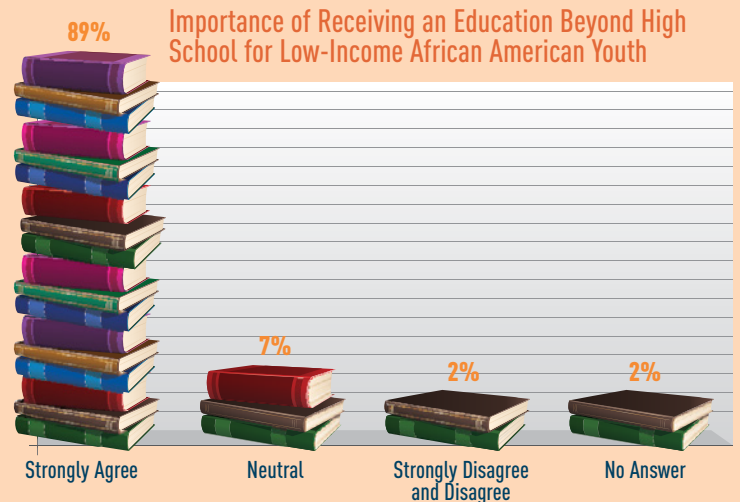
### LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

70 percent of African American youth agreed that there is an adult at their school who follows their progress and cares about their success.

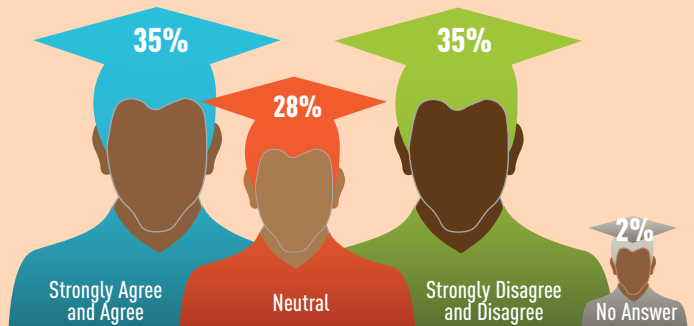
36%

### DISCIPLINE

36 percent of youth received an out-of-school suspension, 16 percent had been arrested by the police and eight percent were expelled at some point during high school.



### Low-Income African American Youth's Perception of Race Limiting their Opportunities



## CALL TO ACTION

- 1. Reduce barriers to college by increasing access to guidance counselors, investing in school and university partnerships and creating awareness about the value of HBCUs.**
- 2. Address widespread student discipline issues in schools through transparent data systems, restorative justice and cultural competency training.**
- 3. Challenge the deficit narrative about the educational aspirations of low-income African American youth.**
- 4. Improve school-based practices and partnerships to increase African American youth achievement.**

**Footnote on methodology:** *A Seat at the Table* utilizes data from *The Inner City Truth 3 (ICT3)* survey. ICT3 is the third iteration of a national survey of 1,700 low-income African American and Latino youth and young adults, ages 16-20. Participants were surveyed in the following cities in 2013: Los Angeles, Long Beach, Oakland, Richmond (CA), Philadelphia, Chicago and Atlanta. Census tracts identified participants with average household income under \$40,000. For this report, the sample was limited to African Americans. A total of 797 participants were included for analysis.



# UNCF'S MANIFESTO—WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

We believe that if students are academically prepared for college, **we can radically change the story of what's possible**—not just for African American students but for the African American community as a whole. UNCF is passionately invested in **transforming dreams of college into reality and we will continue to push until all students who want to go to college are afforded that opportunity.**

For our students to be college ready, **we need to ensure that their K-12 educational experience is preparing them to excel in college and beyond.** As a result, we believe **students must:**

- **Attend a quality school** that offers a rigorous college preparatory curriculum and enables them to graduate at a college-ready level. We believe that free, safe, high-quality school options should be available and accessible to all students in every neighborhood.
- **Have effective teachers** in each of their classes who guide them through challenging course work, building the academic and social skills needed to ensure they are successful in college, career and life.
- **Understand how to navigate critical decisions along their K-16 journey**, such as selecting quality schools, understanding their full breadth of choices, learning how to secure financial support for college, and positioning themselves for college and career success.
- **Receive guidance and mentoring** from an adult who can help them navigate the complex college-going process and provide them with the support along the way.
- Understand how, along with their parents and communities, to **hold their school and teachers accountable** for providing a high-quality education.
- **Be immersed in a college-going culture**, where college is not an exception, but an expectation coupled with the belief that all students have the aptitude to reach this goal.

