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Teen And Police Service Academy Expands to Columbus, Ohio

Independence High School in Columbus Becomes Third City in Nation to Implement Academy Aimed at Reducing Social Distance between Youth and Law Enforcement

COLUMBUS, Ohio – March 17, 2014 – The nation’s third Teen and Police Service Academy (TAPS) launched last month at Independence High School (IHS) in Columbus, Ohio. The Columbus Department of Public Safety partnered with Columbus City Schools to launch the program at IHS. The innovative curriculum, provided by TAPS Academy, is geared toward strengthening the relationship between at-risk youth and law enforcement. Houston, Miami and Ponce, Puerto Rico are also home to TAPS Academy locations.

TAPS Academy was created in Fall 2011 from a Department of Justice office grant, when Houston Police Department Chief Charles McClelland, Jr. challenged his staff to find ways to reach the most at-risk youth. Houston Assistant Chief Brian Lumpkin and Dr. Everette B. Penn, criminologist at University of Houston-Clear Lake, wrote the grant that created the TAPS Academy. Dr. Penn now serves as the director.

Over the past two years, TAPS Academy has been successful in narrowing the social distance between youth and police. The Academy was brought to Columbus by the Department of Public Safety due to the impact it has had on students and law enforcement in Houston.

“Our initial goal for TAPS Academy involves connecting teens to police, authority, and their school environment, therefore responding to the School-to-Prison Pipeline,” said Dr. Penn. “In Houston, the Houston Independent School District grants one credit toward graduation for students who complete the curriculum. More than 30 students have already moved closer towards a diploma by doing this. We’re excited to see what lies ahead in Columbus.”

More than 38 students from IHS are participating in TAPS Academy Columbus. Officer Rita Green of the Columbus Police Department commented, “Our students have already begun to open up to us about some of their struggles.” She went on to say, “We are anticipating a positive experience for all involved in achieving our TAPS goals.”

Momentum and enthusiasm about TAPS Academy is increasing as other high school and juvenile facilities across the nation are showing interest in the program. More information about TAPS Academy can be found at TAPSAcademy.org or Facebook.com/TAPSAcademy.

About TAPS Academy

TAPS Academy is an 11-week curriculum based program funded by the Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office. TAPS Academy's goal of reducing the social distance between at-risk youth and law enforcement is being accomplished through learning, interaction and discussion between at-risk youth and local law enforcement personnel. Through this program, TAPS students and law enforcement personnel gain valuable insight about each other and the issues they face on a daily basis.

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