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## Most Leon County middle schools to continue the formerly named 'Black Male Discovery Project'

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The district-wide program that's infused character building, tutoring and intense goal development to boys, who have been held back in school or failed the FCAT, has a new name.

The Black Male Discovery Project is now the Booker T. Washington Success Academy.

Leon County Schools first launched the pilot program at Swift Creek Middle School in 2006, and it grew to all middle schools last year in an effort to decrease the number of over-aged middle schoolers and the dismal graduation rate among black males in Leon County.

While eight of middle schools, including the new Montford Middle School and the Ghazvini Learning Center, will carry on the program's mission, Raa Middle will have a one-time pilot program called Positive Proof Mentoring.

Cobb Middle will have two remedial teachers doing much of the same kind of efforts as the success academy because it can't afford a separate teacher for the academy. And they are one of four schools to have the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program this year, which encourages in-between performing students toward more advanced classes and it allows them to begin seriously about of college.

"It's always the principal's prerogative in the final decision," said Larry Thompson, who created the program at Swift Creek and is now the district's special-projects coordinator. "It's nothing that we consider a negative."

He said last year's efforts to get on the district-wide level was mostly geared toward character building and exposing the boys to more technology. Each school approached it differently, but some schools had the boys recite a "Gentleman's Pledge" that included a commitment to be respectful to others, do their best in school and change bad habits that could halt their progress.

This year, Thompson said they wanted to add another layer of importance to the program by emphasizing the academic component. And the name change will help other boys, regardless of race, feel like they have a place to share their struggles and goals.

"We felt the need to change the name to more clearly communicate the academic focus of intervention," said Thompson, who said he wants all at-risk boys to feel welcome.

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