

Spotlight on... Sam Mendenhall, Co-Chair of Winston & Strawn's Black Lawyers Network Affinity Group

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Education is one of [Winston for Good's pillars](#), and we are pleased to spotlight Partner Sam Mendenhall's involvement in [Perspectives Charter Schools](#), a college prep and life skills curriculum for diverse students in urban Chicago neighborhoods.

What is the mission of Perspectives Charter Schools?

Perspectives has five campuses in urban Chicago neighborhoods that serve 2,200 primarily African-American and Hispanic students in grades 6-12, providing a rigorous college prep and life skills curriculum. Perspectives students are guided by the school's 26 principles of A Disciplined Life® to help them develop positive self-perception, healthy relationships, and the tools for productivity.

What is your role in Perspectives and how long have you been involved?

Since 2013, I have taught seventh and/or eighth-graders at Perspectives' Joslin campus through a partnership with the Constitutional Rights Foundation's "Lawyers in the Classroom." I visit the school throughout the year and teach the students about the Constitution, the three branches of government, and the role laws play in an organized society. I also bring the students to Winston & Strawn, where they do a mock trial program using the principles we learned during the school year. In addition, I am routinely asked to serve as the commencement speaker for Perspectives High School graduations.



What inspired you to get involved in Perspectives?

I became involved in the program as a way to give back. I was born and raised in Chicago public housing, and went to Chicago Public Schools. Upon graduating from high school, I joined the United States Army to serve my country and to earn money to pay my way through college and law school on the GI Bill. Every level of success I have obtained is because of the opportunities I had to get a quality education.

I see a younger version of myself in a lot of the Perspectives students. They are hungry for a quality education, and see it as a way to transform their lives and environment. Many of them have the same potential I had when I was their age, and just need someone to help bring it out of them. They are diamonds that just need a little polishing. I try to reach back and inspire as many youth as possible by stressing going to college and letting them know that it's not where you start, but where you finish. Education is the greatest equalizer in the world.

In what ways has Winston contributed to Perspectives' mission and goals?

Firm Chairman [Tom Fitzgerald](#) has championed Winston's commitment to Perspectives, which includes a generous multi-year financial sponsorship. The firm is also an annual sponsor of Perspectives' *Shine On Gala*.

2 Min Read

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