

“Change the world, don’t let the world change you.”

AMEN RAHH SR.



Make It HAPPEN!



Before Reading

Think about your own goals. Do you want to play soccer or make music? All of these activities take time and practice.

During Reading

During reading, review the highlighted vocab words. While learning about Principal Rahh, understand how he got to where he is today. What **skills** has he shown that have helped his **career**? In each chapter, the Make It Happen! activity will help you, too, build skills to reach your own goals.

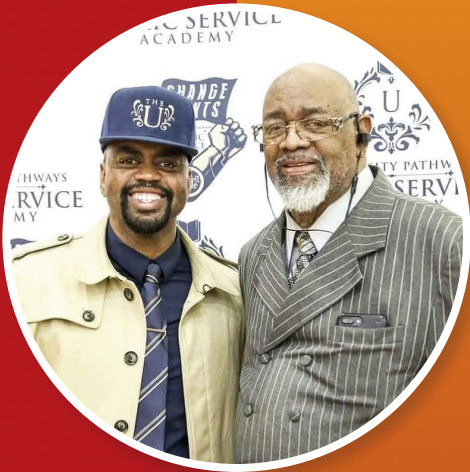
After Reading

Look in the back of the book for questions and activities to help you think about Principal Rahh's story. Share these with a friend, parent, or teacher.

Also, talk about the skills you need to reach your goals.

skill: the ability to do something that comes from training, experience, or practice

career: a job or profession that someone does for a long time



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A man with a beard and sunglasses, wearing a dark plaid suit jacket, a white shirt, and a maroon tie, is speaking at a clear acrylic podium. He is gesturing with his right hand. Behind him are large red, black, and blue balloons. The background shows an outdoor setting with a blue fence and trees.

Early Life

Opening The U had been a huge project. But it would make positive changes in the community.

A man stands in the middle of a school hallway. He takes a deep breath. Everything he sees, he made happen through hard work.

The building held the classrooms he had imagined. The walls and the classroom are his. He had hired the staff. They were all part of his dream.

A bell rings. Students pour into the hallway. As they see him, they reach out. He hands out fist bumps and high fives. He greets each student by name. The students are **confident**. They know they can change their lives. They know their principal will support them.

Amen Rahh founded a school known as “The U.” But he did not start out at the top. He had big dreams that grew.



The U was Amen Rahh’s dream. With dedication, hard work, and confidence, he was able to make his dream happen.



confident: feeling or believing that you can rely on someone or something to succeed

Big Dreams

Amen Rahh grew up in Compton, California. He and his siblings spent afternoons playing baseball and football. They chased each other through yards during games of tag. Life in Compton was challenging. But Amen's parents taught him to dream big. Amen's mom loved learning new skills. His dad taught classes at local colleges. But Amen did not want to teach. He wanted to be a pro football player. Or maybe a rapper or a gangster.

"In Compton, we were taught to pick up a ball or pick up a mic to try to change your **circumstances**," Amen remembered. School no longer interested Amen. He began rapping. But he often felt alone. His rap name was Solo.

Amen moved to a school in nearby Long Beach. Right away, he stuck out from the crowd. The other students



Amen's parents made every moment a teaching moment.



circumstances:
the conditions of
someone's life that
make it the way it is

made **judgments** about Compton. They thought they knew all about the people who lived there. Amen never felt like he belonged. He began to believe that success was impossible.

judgments: opinions formed about someone or something

Make It! HAPPEN! Build Confidence

Not everyone is good at everything, but everyone is good at something! Setting goals can help you build confidence and feel successful.

- Believe in yourself!
- List your strengths. What areas are you good at? What areas do you still need to work on?
- Be prepared! Learn how to take notes in class. Make flash cards to study. Finish your homework. Review what you have just learned. The more you practice, the more confident you will become.
- Set a goal! Make it a realistic goal, but do not be afraid to push yourself.

After you create your goal, get started right away. Keep track of your progress. Do not be afraid to adjust your goal. And ask for help if you need it!

A young Black man stands in the foreground, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a black zip-up jacket over a blue t-shirt with a white graphic. He has a black bag strap over his right shoulder. In the background, a light blue car is parked, and another person is visible inside the driver's seat, looking out. The scene is outdoors with a concrete wall and some greenery in the distance.

First Steps of the Journey

Amen faced challenges and life changes throughout high school.

Although school was hard, Amen excelled on the football field. He planned to play in college. But an injury cost him a football **scholarship**. Getting ahead seemed hopeless.

But some good teachers believed in Amen. Mrs.

Van Dine pushed him to want to be more. She encouraged Amen to finish high school and go to college. Her positive messages made an impact. They gave Amen hope.

Amen went to college. He studied Black history. He learned about African people and their **culture**. Amen began to believe that he could do great things. He worked as a teaching assistant to pay for college. Soon, Amen realized that he wanted to be a teacher.



Understanding Black history is a way to learn more about the United States and the people who live there.



scholarship: a grant or payment awarded to support a student's education

culture: the way of life for a group or community of people

Creating Change

Amen wanted to help young people.

He wanted to

inspire students as Mrs. Van Dine had done for him. “I just fell in love with [teaching], and I guess it was just in my blood the whole time, but I was just resisting it.”

But Amen saw a problem. Some school leaders did not connect with students. These students were from Amen’s neighborhood. He knew them all. And he did not want them to be forgotten. Anyone who was different was seen as a poor student or a bad kid. Amen wanted to change that.

As a teacher, Amen could help the kids in his classroom. But as a principal, he could help the whole school. Amen began to help principals and students connect. They needed to see and



inspire: make someone feel like they want to, and can, do something

respect each other. Amen was doing important work.

respect: a feeling of deep admiration

Soon, leaders from the school district came to him. They were opening a new school in Watts. This neighborhood is right next to Compton. The school district needed Amen.

Make It!
HAPPEN!

Imagine Your Future

What do you want to be when you grow up? Use your imagination and think about your future.

- What do you like to do? Do you like helping people? Maybe you like building things with your hands. Make a list of what you are good at.
- Imagine yourself in the future. What are some of your goals? Do you have big dreams? Find pictures that show those dreams in real life.
- How can you help make your dreams come true? Are there classes you can take? Could you join a school club or activity? Maybe you could learn a new skill.
- Make a timeline. Start with where you are now. End it with an event in your future. Then, add points in between. What do you need to accomplish to get to your end goal?