

Advisory Committee for Racial Equity Recommendations (draft)

"Until the last line in the Pledge of Allegiance is literal, America has work to do."

—John D. Marshall, Chief Equity Officer, Jefferson County Public Schools

Submitted by:

Introduction

The Advisory Committee for Racial Equity (ACRE) was designed to assist in bringing the Racial Equity Policy to fruition. The committee is tasked with supporting the Jefferson County Public School (JCPS) District, advocating for the change, and questioning practices that (appear to) impede racial progress. This report is respectfully submitted and, indeed more than all, under the circumstances, has been reasonably discussed, inspected, and vetted.

History of the Racial Equity Policy in JCPS

On May 8, 2018, the Jefferson County Board of Education (JCBE) approved Board Policy 09.131–District Commitment to Racial Educational Equity. The policy requires the district to “prepare and submit to the Board for approval, a System-wide Racial Educational Equity Plan that contains strategies for achieving and maintaining racial educational equity for all students.” The plan was developed through a collaborative process led by the Chief Equity Officer. Each JCPS division developed an Equity Plan to address the five directives established in the policy:

1. Diversity in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
2. School Culture and Climate
3. Programmatic Access
4. Staffing and Classroom Diversity
5. Central Office Commitment to Racial Educational Equity

It is the role of ACRE and Chief Equity Officer to submit recommendations to the Superintendent and the JCBE based on the monitoring and observations of efforts to execute the plans developed by JCPS divisions and schools. The council’s membership is a diverse body of JCPS parents, teachers, staff members, administrators, and community members who are dedicated and passionate about the racial equity success of JCPS. The recommendations from the advisory council are a reflection of consistent engagement with JCPS schools, families, and divisions throughout the calendar year.

Recommendations

ACRE has compiled a list of recommendations that align the tenets of the [Racial Equity Policy](#). We wholeheartedly believe that the recommendations submitted are sound, serious, and will contribute to the improvement of systematic structures in education—particularly JCPS—that marginalize Black and Brown and other students of color.

Diversity in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

- Each school should have clear steps that have accountability and measurement on what they will do to decrease achievement gaps.
- Create uniformity in knowing what a good lesson design is needs to be made clearer.
 - Interest: There have been lessons and units that are racist and insensitive to Black students. A level of monitoring these lessons needs to be established over time.
 - Diversity, Equity, and Poverty should have staff dedicated to assisting the curriculum staff in eventually getting a sound P–12 framework.
- Diversity, Equity, and Poverty need to be present and lead the “spend” of \$12 million dedicated to Racial Equity from the tax referendum.
- Create a dashboard or build out the [Equity Scorecard](#) that details the month-to-month efforts and measurements to accelerate students who are not on grade level in reading and math.
 - Interest: The district has presented accelerated plans as an idea. Some schools appear to be using them. All schools are not.
 - Every child should have a tangible and detailed plan.

- o Interest: The community is not aware of the acceleration plans. Nor is it made clear that there is a clear connection to the Racial Equity Policy.
- Connect the Learning Hubs to the students whose accelerated plans detail a need.
 - o To make this a reality, the following provisions are needed:
 - Transportation
 - Food
 - Certified teachers
 - Incentive pay
- Provide accredited classes that have a focus on Pan-Africanism and/or World Views.
 - o Example: Students have an option to take traditional Sophomore English, or they could take World Literature and still receive the needed course credit for graduation.
- Create an opportunity for community support and accountability through the community centers as well as community and faith-based organizations.
- Design, monitor, and share (**with the community**) how every subject/course applies to anti-racism and is culturally responsive.
 - o Interest: Many educators are embracing cultural competence and can speak to the work of the district—particularly the Equity Institutes, Implicit Bias modules, book studies, and the Speaker Series. The committee believes that an articulated attachment to the daily work of the teacher, administrator, etc. needs to be public and visible in every classroom.
- Provide more cultural competency training and ways to evaluate whether the teachers are using the training in their teaching practice.
- [The Equity Monitoring Progress Tool](#) (EMPT) needs to become even more of a driver in the day-to-day work of school leadership teams.
- The JCBE needs to revisit the School-Based Decision Making (SBDM) authority. We are in favor of SBDMs; however, the scope of what they are authorized to do seems unclear.
 - o Interest: There is confusion as to why the SBDM Committee controls curriculum and choices of books.
 - o The overall curriculum in Jefferson County Public Schools needs to change.
- Train and prepare all teachers to teach African-American history.
 - o We understand that this is also a higher education issue and charge.
- Make African-American history and multiculturalism part of the K–12 curriculum and class schedule next winter during schedule development, set to launch in the fall of 2021.
- Increase course offerings at the Academy @ Shawnee, with more high-demand curricular offerings and student interest programs to make it the model 21st-century high school for an urban public school district.
- Ensure that every high school offers all of the Advanced Placement (AP) classes.
 - o Interest: East End schools have all of, or close to all of, the AP courses while the Academy @ Shawnee has very few.
- Assessments such as the ESAT is used to measure multiple forms of intelligence – this has to be a priority or else we continue to perpetuate the stereotype that intelligence equates to content knowledge memorization

Recognition(s):

1. The Black Experience Institute has immeasurable promise.
2. The curriculum addenda completed in Social Studies classes is valuable.
3. [The Affirming Racial Equity \(ARE\) Tool](#) is making a difference in schools that are using the tool.
4. Dr. Pollio was significant in ensuring that the Academy @ Shawnee and Fairdale High School made their minority participation goals.

Programmatic Access

- Provide expanded services and trained staff for the Gifted and Talented Program to better serve Black and Brown students.
- Beyond identifying Gifted and Talented students of color, the committee suggests that in many East End and magnet schools, programs have designated classes and credentialed teachers to lead such a class. All schools and children need that level of attention and Gifted and Talented staff.
 - Pull out time and special attention are not adequate. Classes, just like in predominantly white schools, are needed.
- More access for all members of the community to meet with the Cabinet and Superintendent or less access and audience for certain members of the community.
 - Interest: Certain groups claim to speak for the Black community and appear to have an agenda that is short-sighted and limited. It appears that top-level Black and other city leaders of color have access to Dr. Pollio and the Cabinet. As such, that is commendable and appreciated; however, JCPS families should have access to leadership regardless of agency and/or title. A monthly or quarterly town-hall-style meeting with Dr. Pollio and the Cabinet should be considered.
- Students who are “labeled” with Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD) should have a plan and a program that addresses the behaviors and seeks to have the child equipped with coping skills and tools to not be “in EBD” for their entire school career.
 - Interest: Once a Black child is labeled EBD, they are typically in EBD classrooms for the remainder of their career. Further, the students who are twice exceptional appear to not have access to classes that build upon their gifts.
- Approve the W.E.B. DuBois Academy and Grace James Academy of Excellence to be K–12.
- A5 schools should have equitable access to quality resources, colleges, careers, and activities.

Recognition(s):

1: The identification of Gifted and Talented numbers has increased. *caveat

2: The district has increased participation in Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) contracts and awards in capital projects.

School Culture and Climate

- Improve diagnosing and supporting student behavior. Invest in and develop an approach for schools that are less punitive and more therapeutic.
 - Interest: Disproportionality is a constant in JCPS. The over-identification of Black students in Exceptional Childhood Education (ECE) is alarming. Schools with less than 25 percent of Black students have more Black students in ECE than white students. This seems to systemically counter the work of the policy.
- Create an A5 program for twice gifted students.
 - Interest: With the advent of W.E.B. DuBois Academy and the Grace James Academy of Excellence, JCPS is seeing success in schools with intentional focus on Black students. Although the number of students qualifying for the school may be small, Black students who are gifted and simultaneously have learning or behavioral challenges seem to be overlooked.
- Every tenet of the new JCPS strategic plan needs to have a clear statement on connectivity to racial equity.
- *Whiteness, white fragility, white supremacy*, and other words that assist in explaining why JCPS has a Racial Equity Policy should be added to Diversity, Equity, and Poverty website/glossary.
- A concerted and more holistic narrative about the successes of Black students needs to be shared frequently and intentionally.
 - Interest: As where JCPS has admitted to and has started to address the systemic racism inside the school system, there are Blacks and other students of color that are “doing

well” in spite of the admitted racism. A counter narrative that is not completely deficient needs to be shared.

- JCPS should (only) hire counselors who understand racial trauma and help students look at the systemic ills of society.
 - Interest: The counseling and mental health support that JCPS offers, although somewhat adequate, seems to be shallow when addressing racial trauma and systemic racism. Blacks and other students of color need counseling that is not oppressive or blaming and exposes the external inequities that are causing internal trauma.
 - Example: Micro-credentialing staff who receive training from local and national experts on “white supremacy” and trauma.

Recognition(s):

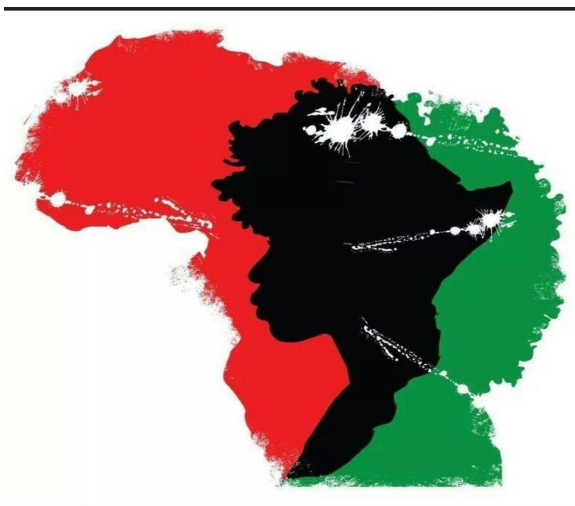
1. Dr. Pollio has been adamant about, and the committee has supported, the tax referendum—as it proves to improve school culture, climate, access, and opportunities for Black students.
2. Mandatory Implicit Bias training was a sound initial start to the school year as it relates to racial equity.
3. The Data and Assessment team provides data that are clear and speaks to the need to continue to improve as it relates to racial equity.

Staffing Diversity

- Refill the Chief of Schools position with a person of color.
- Revisitation of all union contracts
 - Filter all staffing clauses, policies, and practices through the Racial Equity Analysis Protocol (REAP).
 - Human Resources should host a Community Conversation about how the hiring and terminating process works.
 - All of which should connect to Racial Equity Plan
 - Employee Relations should host a Community Conversation about their roles and responsibilities
 - All of which should connect to Racial Equity
- Create an intentional program to develop and hire more Black and Brown counselors and assistant principals.
 - Interest: There are currently zero Latino/Latina principals in JCPS.
- Create clear pathways for foreign-certified professionals to obtain local teaching credentials to diversify, support, and improve workforce support to our school.
 - Interest: Highly certified and experienced educators from other countries with credentials are having to acquire additional certificates and training(s).

Recognition(s):

1. The Teachers of Color Celebration is a yearly jovial and appreciated event.
2. Human Resources conditionally hired students from Kentucky State University.
3. From January of 2020 to October 12 of 2020, 60 percent of the principals hired are African American.



“We will not punt on Racial Equity. This is the work.” Dr. Pollio

Central Office Commitment

- Have standing training and discourse with the JCBE and Cabinet-level leadership that focuses on systemic governance barriers that are stunting the closure of the achievement gap.
 - o The outcome will be a clear identification of root cause analysis with governance addressing the cause.
- Central Office provides an ongoing public spend analysis on what the district is spending directly on racial equity.
 - o Interest: Community is unclear on the flow of spend with the revenue allocated to JCPS (e.g., taxes, Title I, Title II, etc.).
 - o Tech-equity is a need; however, spending on racial needs to be more than technology.
- Host quarterly or annual implicit bias, diversity, and inclusion training for JCBE members.
- Definitive roles and responsibilities for the divisions need to be made public, as it relates to Racial Equity.
 - o Interest: The Superintendent adequately and directly sends ‘interests’ to appropriate departments; however, others have habitually sent concerns to the Diversity, Equity, and Poverty Department that appear to only be sent because it is an issue pertaining to an African-American student, family, or teacher.
 - Note: Community, particularly the Black community, is comfortable calling members of Diversity, Equity, and Poverty. That should not be understated; however, accountability and approachability by all divisions should be expected.
 - o Interest: Diversity, Equity, and Poverty is too thin to bear the load that this division carries. Several occurrences and issues about curriculum, school assignment, and teacher (mis)treatment have been sent to this division.
- Positions in Central Office should be filled with leaders who have a proven and tangible record of advocating, activating, and addressing Racial Equity.
- Create a strategic and yearlong program with Metro Parks and community centers to support students and families in neighborhoods.
 - o Use the satellite office model of school events and programs in community centers of the satellite reside areas.
 - o Consider a Big-Picture-type learning program for Black students.
- Require all cabinet members use the Global Diversity & Inclusion Benchmark accountability

Recognition(s):

1. The Racial Equity Analysis Protocol ([REAP](#)) is a tremendous tool. It appears that JCPS has embraced the utility of the tool.
*Caveat—There are still concerns about compliance for certain REAPs.
2. Each Chief has goals that their department must make. Bi-yearly updates are provided to the JCBE.
3. This is the first time that JCPS has had three Black board members. It is our hope that with such a shift in demographics, the pivot to progress that we believe to be happening hastens and continues with more fervor.
4. The [screening for Equity tool](#) is a sound tool.

Conclusion

The Racial Equity Policy has shown promise. JCPS has taken steps in improving and redressing the harm done to Black and Brown students. Few districts, if any, have such a comprehensive policy. Even further, the policy does not place the burden of change and improvement on the oppressed. Instead, the policy focuses on the oppressor and oppressive systems that marginalize Black and Brown students.

As the policy approaches two years of age, there needs to be an even more fervent focus on teaching and learning. The committee subscribes to the belief that the school system's first obligation is to upend racism via systemic change in curriculum and pedagogy, adult behaviors, systemic policies, and historic and continued disproportionately, as well as practices and habits that (un)intentionally exacerbate racism.

This committee encourages the superintendent to accelerate all efforts that have shown improved outcomes for Black and Brown students. It is also clear that there are necessary unprecedented and unfamiliar steps that must happen if JCPS is to begin to close the achievement gap.

It is recommended that all recommendations be exacted and that accountability be logically and appropriately raised to expedite the racial inequities that JCPS is poised to end.

Appendix:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1trijG_7YWOeRvxi-MzulmBo8awSCQJGCMqg5czB3wJg/edit#gid=1707143640