EDUCATION AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

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The African-American Equity Task Force

In response to the Dr. Bailey report on the factors contributing to the opportunity gap that exists for our African-American students and educators, the DPS Board of Education and Superintendent have commissioned an African-American Equity Task Force. This task force will be led by a Steering Committee and six Working Groups.

The Task Force Steering Committee is charged with the development of an Equity Agreement. This will be a compilation of recommended actions, efforts and resources needed to address the factors that are contributing to the Opportunity Gap for our African American students and educators. The Steering Committee will provide leadership and support to six Working Groups, who will develop recommendations related to the levers of impact that were identified in the Dr. Bailey report and the subsequent open forums. The Steering Committee and Working Groups will be supported by a DPS team and will receive guidance from an Executive Council made up of leaders and elders in the Denver African-American community.

What's Our Process?
The African-American Equity Task Force is working to create equitable access for African-American students, meaningful partnerships with African-American community leaders and parents, and workable policies and documents to build equity in schools.

Working Together
Comprised of internal DPS employees, leaders, external community members, parents and students, The AAETF will be led by a Steering Committee and six subsequent Working Groups. These working groups will be assigned a focus relating to the levers of impact identified in the Dr. Bailey report.

The six levers of impact include:
- **Instructional Practice**: Examine the factors that generate an increase of culturally competent teachers
- **Discipline**: Examine factors impacting disproportionate discipline rates, develop recommendations for alternatives to suspension
- **Access**: Examine factors affecting access for African-American students to high quality schools, programs and classes as well as opportunities that increase achievement for African-American males
- **Human Capital**: Examine factors that will impact greater recruitment and retention, and leadership development of African-American educators
- **Whole Child**: Examine the factors that result in meaningful social-emotional support and relationship building with students and parents
- **Family and Community Engagement**: Examine the factors that will foster more meaningful relationships and engagement with African-American parents and community members
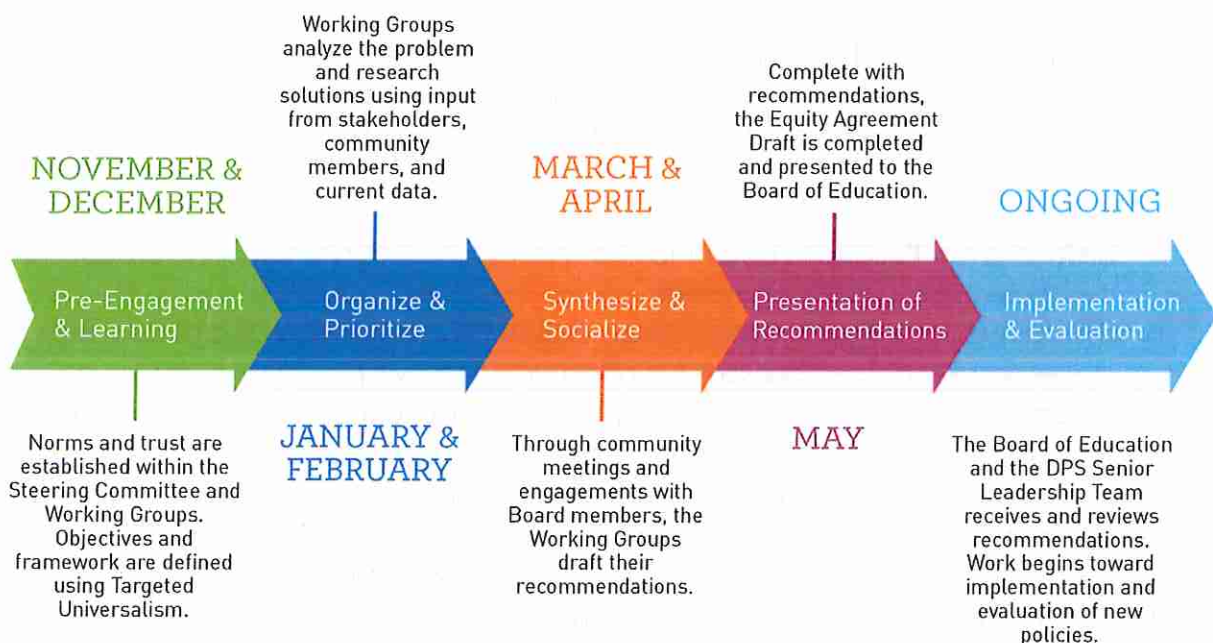
To Reach a Common Goal

The goal of the AAETF is to create a compilation of recommended actions, efforts and resources needed to address the factors that are contributing to the Opportunity Gap for our African-American students and educators. Upon completion, this will be known as the Equity Agreement.

Using an Effective Process

The AAETF will adopt the following process:

1. **Pre-Engagement and Learning:** Norms and trust are established within the Steering Committee and Working Groups. Objectives and framework are defined using Targeted Universalism.
2. **Organize and Prioritize:** Working Groups analyze the problem and research solutions using input from stakeholders, community members and current data.
3. **Synthesize and Socialize** Through input from stakeholders, community meetings and current data, the AAEFT begins to research solutions and drafts the Equity Agreement.
4. **Presentation of Recommendations:** Complete with recommendations, the Equity Agreement draft is completed and presented to the Board of Education.
5. **Implementation and Evaluation:** The Board of Education and the DPS Senior Leadership Team receives and reviews recommendations. Work begins toward implementation and evaluation of new policies.

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

Working Groups analyze the problem and research solutions using input from stakeholders, community members, and current data.

MARCH & APRIL

Complete with recommendations, the Equity Agreement Draft is completed and presented to the Board of Education.

ONGOING

Pre-Engagement & Learning | Organize & Prioritize | Synthesize & Socialize | Presentation of Recommendations | Implementation & Evaluation

Norms and trust are established within the Steering Committee and Working Groups. Objectives and framework are defined using Targeted Universalism.

JANUARY & FEBRUARY

Through community meetings and engagements with Board members, the Working Groups draft their recommendations.

MAY

The Board of Education and the DPS Senior Leadership Team receives and reviews recommendations. Work begins toward implementation and evaluation of new policies.

GAINING GROUND RECOMMENDATIONS

ELIMINATING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION

WHAT INDIVIDUALS CAN DO NOW:

➢ Read to your children or grandchildren every day. Get library cards for each member of your family.

➢ Remind our children of their rich heritage of commitment to education by their ancestors who risked their lives to read and write.

➢ Balance the time your children spend learning vs. playing videos games and watching TV.

➢ Create clean, quiet spaces for your children to do homework.

➢ Arrange enriching family and neighborhood activities for children of all ages: *(For example, take advantage of recreation centers, museums, libraries, educational games, and science fairs.)*

➢ Become involved in your child's school—PTA, school committees. Learn more about effectively navigating the K-20 pipeline. Our schools cannot be improved if African American parents and communities continue to sit on the sidelines with hopes that things will get better. We all know that families are children's first teachers. Families must do their part to get children ready for school. Families implant basic attitude and values about learning, as well as self-discipline and good manners necessary for learning in a group. Families must remain involved with their children.

➢ Hold all leaders and elected officials responsible and demand changes in current policies and practices.

WHAT COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND CHURCHES CAN DO:

➢ Make literacy, math, and science skills a community priority with a sense of urgency.

➢ Continue to broaden the scope and depth of conversations in the community regarding the education of black children in our cities and state.

➢ Work in partnership with state and school district officials to increase the numbers of African American teachers, professors, and staff at all levels of education.

➢ Expose our students to role models in a variety of careers and occupations.

➢ There is a need to change the culture in our community to one that supports academic achievement. We must combat the perverse view among many black youth that serious scholarship is "a white thing." Reward academic excellence.

- ➢ There is a need to monitor closely reforms related to teacher effectiveness and staffing patterns in schools. Parents and community should visit and observe classrooms. Take every opportunity for discourse with the teachers, guidance counselors, principles, etc.

- ➢ Create and support community-based institutions that monitor policies that impact achievement of African American students in Pre-K through 20 education. There is a pressing need to develop the capacity of the African American community to decipher state and local education legislation, policies, and reform efforts and to share this information with community. There is a need for a centralized clearinghouse –parent resource center in our community that can share information on site and through a database on Pre-K- 12 educational options and choices, scholarships and post high school opportunities.

- ➢ Expand the spectrum of community-based programs for black boys and girls. Duplicate and bring to scale those programs that inspire our students to achieve more. Identify and coordinate resources to strengthen educational outcomes for African Americans of all ages. *(Examples: Joint Effort Better Boys Project (Stedman), Bro. Jeff's Black Men in Schools, and the Barber Shop Project)*

- ➢ Engage the philanthropic, business, non-profit and educational communities in a dialogue on African American student achievement and attainment and work to establish partnerships with stakeholders from these sectors.

- ➢ There is a need to increase resources for community-based academic and career counseling for African American students and their families.

- ➢ Partner with educational institutions and private funding programs to increase our student's exposure to hands-on science and math activities through the development of STEM after school and summer programs.

- ➢ Demand that the DPS Board of Education and administration, other school districts, Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) engage in a rigorous and transparent audit of which programs, initiatives, school models, and supports actually produce gains—and which do not. *(Recommendation from, A+ Denver (2013) that makes sense for the entire state.)*

- ➢ In higher education, engage African American faculty, staff and students in Colorado's public and private institutions in a critical dialogue regarding issues impacting African American students' access and success. Bring this wealth of talent, knowledge and resources to strengthen the educational pipeline by providing better communication and a network of professionals to create stronger pathways and support.

- ➢ Encourage community members/ leaders, organizations, and college students to become more actively engaged in the school policy conversations –Show up at Board of Education meetings, monitoring local education news, participate in local policy discussions, engage elected officials through letters, emails and personal contact and hold them accountable.

- ➢ Develop, educate, motivate and mobilize a critical mass of individuals and organizations who can serve as advocates for improving educational outcomes for African American students at all levels.

WHAT LEADERS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS CAN DO:

➤ Restore adequate funding to Colorado's K-12 and higher education systems. Guarantee that all children have access to appropriate and sufficient facilities, curriculum resources and materials.

➤ Invest in child and parental development. Expand access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education. *(Example: Denver Pre-School Program)*

➤ Develop a universal, well-rounded, and comprehensive curriculum. Ensure that all areas and all levels of curriculum reflect the rich history and culture of people of African descent. Ensure an education in which students truly amass knowledge and preparedness for the next level of school and life.

➤ Adequately train and compensate professional staff. Our teachers must be trustworthy, competent, diverse, culturally-sensitive and hold high expectations for all children. Hold the state's teacher preparation programs to a higher standard for increasing the pool of African American teachers.

➤ Develop effective policies and programs to address the crisis in the recruitment and retention of African American teachers.

➤ Expand and fund community-based programs that increase exposure to hands-on science and math activities through the development of STEM after school and summer programs. *(Examples: SEEK –Summer Engineering Experience for Kids, Colorado Assoc. of Black Engineers and Professional Scientist's (CABPES) programs)*

➤ Support policies and programs to address college affordability issues for African American students.

➤ There is a critical need for more effective and targeted outreach regarding programs and resources to assist students and families in navigating the educational pipeline from Pre-K – graduate school. Provide information and training for parents to assist them in knowing their rights, understanding the data related to testing, and how to monitor the academic progress of their students.

➤ Provide more information to students and families about programs to support students in making the transition from high school to college. *(Examples: pre-collegiate programs throughout the state at various higher education institutions).Ensure that African American communities statewide are included in these efforts.*

➤ Keep youth in school and reduce risks for involvement in juvenile justice and criminal justice systems by reducing school expulsions and suspensions, and offering alternatives to incarceration including school-based teen courts, peer mediation programming, and restorative justice programming.

THE ANATOMY OF INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION

HOW THE OPPORTUNITY GAP IS CONSTRUCTED

- **Poverty and Lack of Social Supports**
- **Limited Early Learning opportunities**
- **Resegregation and Unequal Schooling**
- **Unequal Access to Qualified Teachers**
- **Lack of Access to High-Quality Curriculum**
- **Dysfunctional Learning Environments**

The ineffective education of African-American children is evidenced by:

- ❖ Continued academic achievement gap
- ❖ Disproportionate low academic achievement
- ❖ Under involvement in school activities other than sports
- ❖ Under representation in programs for the gifted
- ❖ Overrepresentation in special education programs
- ❖ Disproportionate discipline referrals, resulting in suspension and expulsion
- ❖ Over-representation in the juvenile justice system.
- ❖ Digital divide
- ❖ Low graduation rates
- ❖ Low entry to higher education
- ❖ Under-representation in programs that prepare African-American students for the world of work
- ❖ Under-representation in gateway courses to college

Other conditions of the system also contribute to this ineffectiveness:

- ❖ Lack of cultural competency among most educators and administrators
- ❖ Staff members who communicate low expectations for behavior, and academic achievement of African-American children
- ❖ Staff members who fear African-American children and their parents, guardians, and colleagues and subsequently avoid interacting with them
- ❖ Staff members who destroy the hopes and generate feelings that adult opportunities for success are limited
- ❖ A belief system that perpetuates inferiority created by bias reports, publications, materials, and media portrayal
- ❖ Institutional racism
- ❖ Eurocentric paradigm that leaves little room to engage educational materials and pedagogy that use various worldviews, languages, cultural norms, learning styles, and multiple intelligences
- ❖ Educators who deal with African-American students from a deficit model