**Racial Imbalance Advisory Council Meeting**

**Monday, October 2, 2023**

9:30-11:00am

Online Remote Participation (Zoom)

**Councilmembers in attendance:** Raul Fernandez, Ed.D.; Cleonie Mainvielle; Darlene Spencer; Lamikco T. Magee, M.Ed., J.D.; Lateefah Franck; Laurie Hunter, Ph.D.; Matt Brunell, J.D.; Monica Roberts; Renée Heywood; Jessica S. Samuel, Ph.D.

**Welcome & Introductions**

* Councilmembers and DESE staff shared their preferred name, pronoun(s), job title & role, length of time they have been on the council, and a hope they have for the council; some of which include:
  + having public conversations around race, class, education, and additional aspects that DEI encompasses;
  + uplifting all students so that the expectation is for all students to thrive and being at the forefront for all students in Massachusetts;
  + being at the forefront of equity and access because students will meet high expectations when they are provided the opportunity to do so;
  + drawing from personal family engagement experiences; and
  + supporting historically underserved students so that they can be seen.

**RIAC Context**

* A task for the upcoming meetings will be to review the 1965 Racial Imbalance Act and 1975 amendment.
* Meetings will include an opportunity for public comment so council members should encourage public participation by sharing meeting information with their personal and professional networks beginning the next meeting on November 3rd, which will by hybrid.
* The chair is seeking to run effective and efficient meetings. As such, respectful discussion is encouraged. As a norm, councilmembers should utilize the hand signal and/or use the chat if they would like to contribute to the conversation if there are multiple people speaking. To ensure equity in voice, the chair may ask for individual input.
* RIAC operated throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, but council priorities did shift. For instance, the council was identified to review the application process of a $100M HVAC grant in FY23. This was clearly connected to race at the height of the pandemic. That said, there has been a struggle with the charge, despite having been derived from prior annual reports, in the past year and many conversations were had around the purpose of the council. The work of this council is centered on race and segregation. In the past, RIAC has reviewed data on access for students and educator diversity. Moving forward, the council will focus on reports DESE has done around racial imbalance. As a council, we will be dedicated to equity and access by being focused and aligned on our purpose.

**DESE’s Educational Vision & Catalog of Aligned Supports**

* Background: Following the Commissioner’s Our Way Forward report, the Department saw that there needed to be more alignment between the variety of programs and initiatives offered by the different centers and offices within DESE. Last year, a working group began updating the Department’s Educational Vision using the Racial Equity Decision-making Tool and engaged various stakeholders to provide input on the vision which was then used by the Commissioner’s leadership cabinet to draft strategic objectives and priority focus areas.
* RIAC members provided the following feedback on DESE’s Educational Vision goal, student learning experience, and strategic objectives:
  + A relationship tracker is helpful because it encourages school staff and administration to connect with students on a human level. Belongingness is a pillar of DEI work. In my building, students attend an advisory, each led by an adult, so that there is at least one staff member they see on a regular basis.
  + In the context of diversifying the teaching staff, schools and districts need to move beyond the nepotism and cronyism- which is difficult when everyone is pushing for their own space. All need to feel community and ownership in learning environments.
  + We need to know the individualized supports students require and have it available when requested. It’s important to know how a student is doing compared to the benchmark because excelling means seeing who they are as a person.
  + Districts have to be held accountable to bridging the divide and performance gaps between white students and students from historically marginalized communities. The issue is that the missing link is creating that sense of belonging because right now, they are only held professionally to academic outcomes of students.
  + Superintendents have been wanting DESE to provide directive and protection when it comes to DEIB initiatives. All would benefit from having directive even through support isn’t necessarily consistent.
  + It’s a symptomatic failure that there is a class of students deemed gifted and talented because they are essentially tracked to receive more guidance and opportunities. Their excellence is only guaranteed because of the additional support structures that should be available to all students.
  + DESE should continue to work with schools and districts to promote antiracism because it’s a high bar and there is a wide variety of policy to be examined.
* This meeting is the start of more conversation and dialogue because it’s all about relationships. There are folks on the DEIB spectrum; some are being made aware for the first time and others have occupied the activism space for a while now. The Educational Vision was first a call out as we’ll continue to cultivate the work. One of the strategic principles is accelerated learning beyond proficiency- it’s not layered in yet but is coming. The plan is to rollout an incremental sequenced plan grounded in the Educational Vision.

**Closing & Next Steps**

* RIAC to begin public comment in the upcoming meeting.
* DESE liaison to share RIA laws with council chair in preparation for the November meeting.
* If possible, RIAC members should watch The Busing Battleground documentary on PBS and encourage members of the public to attend RIAC meetings.
* Next meeting: Friday, November 3rd (hybrid- location TBD)