**Racial Imbalance Advisory Council (RIAC)**

**Monday, March 24, 2025**

9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Online Remote Participation (Zoom)

**Council Members in Attendance:** Matt Brunell, J.D.; Jorge Fanjul, M.P.M., M.A.; Renée Heywood, Ph.D.; Laurie Hunter, M.Ed., Ed.D.; Julia Jarquin; Josephine M. Kim, Ph.D., LMHC, NCC; José Lugo, M.A.; Marieme Ngom; Monica Roberts; Darlene Spencer

**Council Members Not in Attendance:** Lateefah Franck, M.Ed.; Lamikco T. Magee, M.Ed., J.D., Ph.D.

**General Council Business**

* The February 2025 Meeting Minutes were approved with one abstention due to absence.

**Community Investment to Address Racial Isolation**

* Dr. Andre Perry, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Community Uplift at the Brookings Institution, revealed that Black neighborhoods were disproportionately devalued, even when various factors were controlled for. He found that wealth, rather than education, predicted access to quality education, with higher-income areas and greater homeownership associated with better outcomes. His work emphasized the importance of directly investing in communities through initiatives like neighborhood-based scholarships, immersive STEM programs such as STEM NOLA, and university partnerships with K-12 schools. He also demonstrated that connecting school systems to workforce development and embedding learning in real-world, community-based contexts produced stronger outcomes than focusing solely on teacher development. These strategies helped create wealth-generating environments that positively impacted educational quality and student success.
* Discussion
	+ Looking at who is in front of students: are you seeing that educator diversity is having a factor in positive impacts on students?
		- Perry: While teacher diversity has value, its impact is often overstated; having Black or Brown teachers doesn't inherently improve outcomes but can offer important cultural insight. Diversity initiatives are more effective when schools hire educators from within the community rather than bringing in diverse teachers from outside. This is a broader workforce issue but programs which invest in and retain local talent tend to have a greater and more lasting impact on schools and communities.
	+ Have you found in your research states altering requirements for teachers? If so, to what effect?
		- Perry: Traditional credentialing requirements often do not predict teacher effectiveness and can create barriers for talented candidates, especially those from low-income backgrounds due to the cost and student debt. Teaching is a practice-based profession, and preservice teachers benefit more from early, consistent classroom experience with strong supervision than from excessive theoretical coursework, which is what preparation programs tend to focus on.
		- Perry advocated for alternative certification pathways in every district and state, provided they include robust oversight and evaluation.
			* Massachusetts' Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP) offers a paid, tuition-free training with a two-year in-school residency under successful mentor teachers. grants directly to communities and they recruit the candidates. Candidates must be recruited based on the diversity gaps in a school district. RTAP will work in partnership with educational prep providers to ensure professors and mentors are working on building teacher effectiveness through mastering culturally and linguistically sustaining practices.
	+ 80% of a student’s year is going to be spent outside of school, and yet only 1.7% of funding goes to out of school time. At the state level, MA funds at about $14k per pupil for out of school time. Have you seen in your work systems that have made that commitment to out of school time funding and partnership with community programming that you could lift up for us?
		- Perry: Many communities relied on the federal 21st Century After School Program for support and that voucher programs for out-of-school time could offer innovative funding solutions. While my work often focused on in-school programming due to its manageability, most factors influencing wealth and student success exist outside of school. Over time, I've moved away from direct involvement in community school programs, since schools alone can and could not address every need—strong, well-functioning communities are also essential.
	+ Charter school and college partnership model in Louisiana - what did this look like?
		- Perry: Universities traditionally partnered with affiliated lab schools and professional development schools, which were effective when teacher candidates were actively placed in classrooms—such as pairing two student teachers with a single class to support learning. Success was also stronger when schools were located near the university, allowing high school teachers, particularly in math and science, to align instruction with college expectations. However, challenges arose when university faculty refused to grant credit for coursework completed at affiliated early college high schools, limiting the effectiveness of these partnerships. Colleges and universities have a responsibility to improve conditions in communities. Put your talent into schools that are proximate to you.
		- DESE: 21st after school programming is supposed to do just this through allowing teachers to be creative in delivering a small number of standards in a different way, then eventually bringing this practice to the regular classroom. At Bridgewater State this model was part of summer programming with teachers in K-12 working with professors.

**Family Opinions on Racial Imbalance Efforts - Lessons from New Jersey**

* Dr. Dan Cassino, Professor at Fairleigh Dickinson University, noted New Jersey, one of the most segregated states in the U.S., has over 500 small municipalities—many originally established to uphold segregation—each with its own school district. Polls revealed that many residents do not believe segregation exists in the state, which poses a major barrier to addressing it. Perceptions of segregation varied by race and region, with African Americans and residents of northern NJ more likely to recognize it. People tended to redefine what "integration" meant when discussing their own communities, often downplaying segregation to avoid discomfort—a form of motivated reasoning. This denial made it difficult to build momentum for change. While strong local control over schools—due to their influence on property values—complicated reform efforts, polling showed the highest support for regional magnet schools, moderate support for merging districts (40%), and lower support for transfer models (30%). Support for all measures was higher among people of color.
* Discussion
	+ A council member named “motivated reasoning” as a key takeaway.
	+ You did not include busing in the polling. Was this because it tested so low?
		- Cassino tested the idea of busing in Newark area. Older voters were much more likely to reject busing.
	+ Would there be expectations of numbers of students of color required in these proposed magnet schools?
		- Cassino: Yes and no. While quota systems would likely be unconstitutional in New Jersey, targeted recruitment from underrepresented areas is possible. Affluent district students were less likely to opt into integrated schools, while Black and Hispanic students from under-resourced areas were more inclined to attend. The goal was for school demographics to reflect the state's overall population, but there was concern about focusing solely on racial diversity instead of broader, intersectional inclusion. The council could look to Boston exam school policies for guidance. Cassino noted that class and zip code-based measures, often used by universities, were more publicly accepted, as economic integration was seen positively-rich and poor students learning together. Many in NJ acknowledged class-based segregation and supported integration when framed as expanding opportunity. However, support varied among immigrant groups, with MENA, Indian American, and Chinese American residents showing less support, while Hispanic residents were more supportive.
	+ Are there any parallels between your presentation and Dr. Perry’s presentation that would be inroads the council can consider?
		- Cassino: Like Dr. Perry said, this is an issue beyond what can be fixed in schools. The issue of school segregation in NJ is driven by residential segregation, so this cannot all be fixed inside the schools. This is tied to real estate.

**Closing**

* Next Meeting: Monday, 5/05 from 9:30 – 11:00am
	+ (tentative) Mike Moriarty to present on 3rd Grade Literacy Rates & Racial Segregation in MA
	+ Matt Deninger to attend
* Next Steps
	+ Work on 24-25 RIAC recommendations
		- Monica is looking at key takeaways from other state education departments.
		- Matt: Data access and transparency for the public is an area the council will provide recommendations on.
		- Monica and Laurie: Changing the definition of racial integration
		- Jorge and Renee: Education diversity through pipelines and retention
		- Laurie, Meka, and Dr. Kim: Budget and funding to address racial integration
	+ DESE work on hearing back from other states & getting presenters for the May meeting