**Racial Imbalance Advisory Council (RIAC)**

**Friday, May 23, 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.; Laurie Hunter, M.Ed., Ed.D.; 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.; Renée Heywood, Ph.D.; Julia Jarquin; Lamikco T. Magee, M.Ed., J.D., Ph.D.

**Welcome & General Council Business**

* The March 2025 meeting minutes were approved with no abstentions.

**Following up on 23-24 RIAC Annual Report Recommendations Regarding Data**

* Erica Gonzales, Associate Commissioner for Data and Accountability, and Matt Deninger, Chief Strategy and Research Officer, of DESE’s research team presented on a relaunch process to reimagine data websites, including Profiles, the Education-to-Career (E2C) Data Hub, School and District Report Cards, data dashboards, and more.
* DESE recognizes that there are a lot of tools which may not be meeting people’s needs. Some tools are also outdated. Therefore, the team is in the process of updating and streamlining the current tools to make them more user-friendly and accessible to users with diverse needs. DESE is working with an external vendor on this initiative, Eagle Hill Consulting. They are gathering feedback from internal and external users on how people use the suite of tools. There is a survey open until June 1. They will also be creating focus groups.
* Questions/comments from councilmembers:
  + It would be good to ask specifically for what people want. What efforts has DESE engaged in to get feedback from families/caregivers?
    - DESE: memos to DESE staff to share with their stakeholders, Commissioner’s Weekly Update, social media posts, broad ask to numerous external organizations, information shared with all advisory councils. Eagle Hill consultants have also engaged with families at various community events.
  + Even if we step outside of racial and socio-economic classification, it’s important for people to see the disparities that exist and be able to access those on their own without requesting data from DESE. The Council would like racial imbalance data to be more accessible.
  + Translating the survey into multiple languages would be beneficial and it’s not a difficult task. How has DESE pushed the survey to diverse communities?
    - DESE: The Department has shared the survey with diverse groups and would love to connect with other groups recommended by RIAC members. RIAC members can share groups with DESE to pass along.
  + It would be beneficial to also provide interpretation for focus groups.
  + Family resource centers are good resources. The funding sector would be interested in providing feedback. They use DESE data as part of grant funding process. She will follow up with her network.

**Continued Council Discussion: 24-25 RIAC Annual Report**

* Superintendent’s Checklist – for FY25-26, all superintendents will be asked to assess their district’s racial imbalance based on analysis of student data. They will be required to share this information with their school committees.
  + The council may offer a follow up recommendation for the upcoming year so that the checklist item may be amended to be more specific and comprehensive. One of the challenges is that DESE only has authority to enforce what is explicitly stated in legislation.
* The council chair provided research updates on meetings had with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) and state meetings with Connecticut, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Washington.
  + DESE will continue to connect with these states.
* Councilmembers divided up portions of the draft annual report to develop prior to the 6/2 meeting. Below are additional recommendations to include.
  + - In addition to reporting, districts should be required to engage with their Native students/families.
      * DESE: The state Diversity Bill mandates each district to have a diversity director. In light of this, each district should be mandated to share the data with their school committees and develop a charge based on the data.
    - Districts want to understand how to do the work; guidance would be helpful.
      * DESE: The Department’s “DESE Coherence Guide” includes guidance of what school districts need to implement. The tools have been created. How do we get superintendents to use them?
    - DEI directors are not surviving budget cuts. DESE should give explicit instructions.

**Closing**

* No public comment
* Next Steps
  + Next Meeting: Monday, June 2, 2025, from 9:30 – 11:00am
  + Final Meeting: Monday, June 16, 2025, from 9:30 – 11:00am
  + Council members to receive 2025-2026 membership status confirmation emails after the Memorial Day holiday-responses due Friday, 6/13
  + DESE
    - Resend the data survey to council members
    - Follow up with RIAC members regarding groups for data survey and then share the information with Erica’s team
    - Share DESE Coherence Guide with council members