**Racial Imbalance Advisory Council Meeting**

**Friday, November 3, 2023**

12:00-1:30pm

Hybrid: 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148 (In-person) & Online Remote Participation (Zoom)

**Council Members in Attendance:** Cleonie Mainvielle; Darlene Spencer; Julia Jarquin; Lamikco T. Magee, M.Ed., J.D.; Laurie Hunter, Ph.D.; Marieme Ngom; Matt Brunell, J.D.; Monica Roberts; Raul Fernandez, Ed.D.; Renée Heywood, Ph.D.; Jessica S. Samuel, Ph.D.

**Council Members in Not Attendance:** Lateefah Franck

**Welcome & Agenda Overview**

* October meeting minutes are approved with 1 abstention due to absence.

**Vision Setting Discussion**

* What is going to be RIAC’s measure of what a segregated school is? What will the council’s definition be for intensely segregated schools?
  + The School Integration in Massachusetts: Racial Diversity and State Accountability Report from Dr. Jack Schneider, University of Massachusetts Lowell utilizes the following identifies:
    - Intensely segregated non-white schools= 90%+ BIPOC
    - Segregated non-white schools= 71%-89% BIPOC
    - Racially diverse schools= 70%+ BIPOC & 25%+ white
    - Segregated white schools: 71%-89% white
    - Intensely segregated white schools= 90%+ white
  + The Massachusetts General Laws, Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 37D includes the following definitions:
    - Racial imbalance= schools with 50%+ nonwhite students
    - Racial balance= schools with 30-50% nonwhite students
    - Racial isolation= schools with <30% nonwhite students
  + The general law percentages are based in the Racial Imbalance Act of 1965 (which was revised in the 70s) and so would be considered outdated considering the number of BIPOC individuals there are now in Massachusetts compared to nearly six decades ago so RIAC should use metrics that reflect current times. Looking at these ranges in the Racial Imbalance Act of 1965, it is difficult to determine that these metrics feel accurate given the current demographics of the state.
  + The racially diverse schools metric in Dr. Schneider’s report was adapted from a Century Foundation statistic that did not originally include the 25%+ of white students to account for the systemic power and access.
  + BIPOC students account for 44% of students in Massachusetts today compared to 10% of teachers who are BIPOC and 13% of educators who are BIPOC.
  + The council will review both resources and will develop a scale for RIAC along with a justification for combining the data. For instance, the general law metrics do not include an intensely segregated definition.
  + Keep an open mind at the research we are going to be looking at because it may look different district to district. We will need to think beyond how some schools fall short but also what might be working better in terms of English language learner support, social emotional support, and parent engagement. It is not necessarily the case that white schools are automatically advantaged.
* What are the things that we think is important for RIAC to focus on this year? What is the impact you would like RIAC to have?
  + Not just who goes to school where but also the racial disparities in instruction, pedagogy, building quality, and instruction in intensely segregated schools.
    - Classroom resources for students need to be age and culturally appropriate.
    - Understand the heart and mind piece of diversifying the educator workforce and the impact BIPOC teachers have on BIPOC students academically but also SEL-wise.
  + Identify the financial roadblocks that schools/districts experience when attempting to diversify their workforce and how immigration visas play a role in hiring challenges.
    - Superintendents need a process, checklist, and/or guide to use when it comes to hiring.
  + How to include parent engagement and how to give them tools and resources so that their voices are included and elevated? This is an opportunity to hold a joint meeting with the Family Engagement Advisory Council.
  + Explore the diversity within gifted and talented programs and what the pathway of access for all students looks like.
  + Reviewing instructional content to determine what are schools allowing/not allowing students to learn with a focus on minoritized communities and naming what RIAC expects schools & districts to be doing. Furthermore, how can the Department offer safeguards around what we determine to be necessary and what tools and protections for teachers and schools are needed to do so?
  + There should be more cover for superintendents and administrators who take on DEIB initiatives because they are taking bullets and need backup. This has been a consistent ask. For example, if DESE were to mandate books, it could cut out the litigious portion of a book ban. Schools are looking for teeth from DESE when it comes to diverse texts and curriculum; they are seeking support beyond just providing approved materials.
  + In light of the affirmative action decision, how does it translate down to HR practices? What is DESE’s role in mandating diversity? There are certain bills in the legislature that would require DESE to do what is being requested so why isn’t the Department doing it? Is it a resource issue? Is it something else?
    - For context, Massachusetts is a local control state so DESE mandates have to go through unions and local revisions. Because of local control, DESE cannot just issue mandates but can provide strategies and suggestions. At the end of the day, communities decide how the suggestions are carried out.
    - Ultimately, this council should understand the full scope of DESE’s work since there are several boards and organizations doing parallel work and we should avoid duplicating efforts. Whatever the goal we land on will be, we should have measurable outcomes & milestones. RIAC should be in its own lane to be recognized as an important and separate resource.
    - Going back to the last month’s educational vision, this is something the council is going to have to wrestle with. Is there some way considering this context that DESE can take a firmer role or stance despite its lack of ability to enforce mandates?
  + What if the underlying condition for integration is making housing affordable since the rising cost of housing contributes to segregation. Can DESE do more to incentivize school choice? Create new and different types of schools? What are the conditions that will allow for integration?
    - Charter schools are overwhelmingly segregated. Should the council look at their BIPOC student data since they seem to be set up as segregated schools. Are charters fueling segregated schools?
* What would be helpful to know? What are some resources that we can draw on (either from DESE and/or beyond)?
  + Under DESE’s data and accountability page, there are many reports. RIAC can review these in December. The council chair will get information to councilmembers around how these resources can be a shared document between councilmembers.
  + The council should also examine how superintendents and administrators are hired.
  + It would be great to have a heat map of the state showing students’ geographic location, by race & ethnicity.

**Closing & Next Steps**

* Closing
  + Individuals wishing to offer public comment in the future are limited to 3 minutes (which cannot be transferred to another member of the public) and are able to ask questions even though answers may not be guaranteed. Members of the public may also email the DESE liaison if there is written comment they would like to offer.
  + Many events celebrating the 50th anniversary of Boston’s desegregation mandate are taking place this month so the council chair will be sharing resources.
  + Council members are encouraged to share relevant DEIB-related events they host.
    - Renee has a DEI event: taking over HS and holding a DEIB pd day for teachers and staff; 100+ presenters and 75+ workshops; 8 popup restaurants and 8 food trucks; holding student panel who have been learning about DEIB and will be leading their own workshop.
    - Darlene and Laurie were featured for holding a workshop on how to integrate settled refugee families.
    - Jessica’s organization holds webinar panel series on the state of education in one of the US territories with the upcoming session focused on US Virgin Islands.
* Next steps
  + DESE Liaison to share prework ahead of the next meeting for councilmembers to review both data categorizations and bring data requests to the upcoming meeting.
  + DESE Liaison to share MassInsight/Wheelock report (to be released later this month) & to share Dr. Elizabeth Setren’s report on the impact of the METCO program (once it is publicly available).
  + DESE to share available data on diversification statistics; particularly if there is information around the average span of time superintendents occupy their positions, by race & ethnicity or at least between BIPOC and white individuals; a heat map of school/district segregation that shows where students are located geographically; as well as the average salary for superintendents.
  + Next meeting: Monday, December 4th from 10:00-11:30am