**Racial Imbalance Advisory Council (RIAC)**

**Monday, October 7, 2024**

9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Online Remote Participation (Zoom)

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

**Council Members Not in Attendance**: Matt Brunell, J.D.

1. **General Council Business**
   1. June 2024 and July 2024 meeting minutes were approved with one abstention (due to absence)
2. **BESE Advisory Council Structures & 24-25 RIAC Charge Presentation**
   1. The DESE liaison provided an overview of the following:
      1. Councilmember Responsibilities
      2. Annual Report Process, Timeline, and Requirements
      3. DESE/BESE Purview and Roles
      4. Open Meeting Law & Public Records Requests
   2. DESE followed up with its legal team over the summer to address the June RIAC meeting questions regarding racial imbalance. In the decade since the racial integration law was passed, the Supreme Court has limited what school districts can do related to race (*Parents Involved in Community Schools vs. Seattle School District*). Therefore, DESE has had to revise their messaging around programming.
      1. RIAC members discussed whether the council should focus on opportunity gaps as a proxy and proposed looking at data collection and access with a focus on language, SES, and other data which can be used as a proxy.
      2. Council members may want to revisit the definition of racial imbalance- both legal and what was proposed in last year’s council report.
   3. The council’s 24-25 charge is to:
      1. Determine what other state departments of education are effectively addressing regarding racial imbalance in public schools through policies, programs, and practices; and how are they collaborating with other state agencies and/or entities to mitigate imbalance and/or address educational inequities?
      2. Identify specific policy recommendations, particularly from the 2024 RIAC report, that can be made related to DESE’s educational vision that would benefit from such policies, programs, and practices; and,
      3. Provide additional programmatic recommendations, as it deems necessary, to fulfill the goals established by the Board and align with the Department’s Educational Vision and Strategic Objectives.
   4. RIAC 23-24 recommendations were reviewed and discussion followed:
      1. Is there enough time this year to change the definition of racial integration and follow through on the recommendations from the annual report?
         1. Council chair shared that the council did develop an alternate definition and discussed what is/isn’t possible under DESE purview. The Council will need to discuss what is possible and balance that with what is practical to accomplish in one council year.
         2. Each 23-24 RIAC recommendation was reviewed by senior DESE staff and noted whether the recommendation was within the purview of DESE/EOE since government offices cannot engage in or support lobbying efforts.
   5. The council’s 24-25 recommendations should also include follow-through on the seven DESE/EOE-applicable items included in the prior council report. The council specifically wants to carry forward:
      1. Data access and transparency for the public
      2. Addressing roadblocks to integration: funding, politics, and implementation hurdles
      3. Educator diversity and include a focus on retention (e.g. early college pathways and teacher prep programs; onboarding and welcoming efforts that sustain and retain; and potential partnership pipelines across teacher prep programs)
      4. Affordable housing accessibility
      5. Other models to incentivize schools and communities to opt into racial segregation programs.
3. **Outlining 24-25 RIAC Meeting Goals & Scope**
   1. Council members shared focus area(s) and/or topic(s) they would like to integrate into the discovery process that will take place during the four meetings that take place between January through May, and in the recommendations. Members want to produce short term and long term recommendations to enable DESE to address areas that can be quickly remediated and plan for efforts that require more time, coordination, or resourcing.
      1. RIAC would like to continue to work with DESE for data collection. Think of how the council collects data and how this data can help to bring forth better outcomes with consideration to data access and transparency for the public.
      2. Race is a major factor in student success – how does the council continue to elevate it?
      3. Would like to look more at funding – it's unfortunate that students need to go to other districts to get a good education. How do we balance resources?
      4. Politics is also a barrier.
      5. How can we consider sovereign nations to advance opportunity gaps when there is no formal relationship between them and the state?
      6. How are other states addressing affordable housing?
      7. What are other states doing to diversify their teacher workforce? Discussion followed on different pipelines/programs and how DESE can support these initiatives. This includes focusing on students at HBCUs.
      8. Only 4% of graduating high school students overall are going into education, and far fewer students of color. What is hindering students from choosing education as their career path? How can we focus on programming for high school students to promote educational careers?
      9. What internal changes need to happen to welcome, sustain and retain educators of color?
      10. The school districts that are privileged need to lean into this work.
      11. The council would like to get additional stakeholder voices.
      12. What are other states doing to diversify their teacher workforce? Discussion followed on different pipelines/programs and how DESE can support these initiatives. This includes focusing on students at HBCUs.
   2. The chair noted that four overarching categories would be overlayed to prioritize other states with racial imbalance laws to bring before RIAC: Inter-agency collaboration to address barriers to racial balance (e.g. housing, local politics), track record/evidence of effectiveness, initiatives that increase educator diversity and retention inclusive of pathway and pipeline programs, initiatives that incentivize school and community opt in or foster programs that increase racial balance.
4. **Closing & Next Steps**
   1. RIAC chair provided an acknowledgement to former council members who disagreed with their characterization in the most recent council report. At the council’s July meeting, all members voted to keep the report as it was for submission to the Board and Commissioner. The chair will be following up with the mentioned group privately.
   2. Public Comment
      1. Dr. Raul Fernandez, former RIAC Chair, noted that the *Parents Involved in Community Schools vs. Seattle School District* does allow the council to consider what can be done to achieve greater equity and balance in the school system without explicitly referencing race. Cases in New Jersey and Minnesota may also be helpful as the Council looks at the issue of racial imbalance.
   3. Develop a more comprehensive list of states with racial imbalance laws and do an overlay with the 23-24 recommendations to prioritize for RIAC meetings and presentations in the coming months.
   4. Next Steps
      1. Next Meeting: Monday, 11/18 from 9:30 – 11:00am
         1. Overview of Educational Vision
         2. Discussion with 1-2 state departments of education from states with racial imbalance laws
      2. DESE liaison to post meeting deck to RIAC website and to share meeting materials via email and follow up with DESE staff regarding racial imbalance laws for other states and for potential presenters, if available. To follow up with council chair regarding response prior to next council meeting.