**Racial Imbalance Advisory Council (RIAC)**

**Monday, November 18, 2024**

9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Online Remote Participation (Zoom)

**Council Members in Attendance:** Monica Roberts (chair), Matt Brunell, J.D.; 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.; Cleonie Mainvielle, MSW; Marieme Ngom; Monica Roberts; Darlene Spencer

**Council Members Not in Attendance:** none

**General Council Business**

* October 2024 meeting minutes were unanimously approved with one abstention due to absence.

**Overview of States with Racial Imbalance Laws & Member Support with Next Steps**

* The council identified members to support outreach and information gathering. RIAC will engage with the identified state departments of education to more deeply understand:
  + Effectiveness of their racial imbalance laws and efforts
  + Inter-agency and/or entity collaboration to mitigate racial imbalance
  + Evidence of effectiveness
  + Strategies for educator diversity and retention as well as incentives for school and district efforts to increase racial balance.
* The chair will reach out to begin the research process and to keep notes on a spreadsheet. Several council members volunteered to do research as follows:
  + New Jersey- Matt
  + Minnesota- Monica
  + Connecticut-Renee
  + Washington- Meka
  + Jose & Laurie noted that they can support efforts
* Given the current sociopolitical context, what are some inter and intra-related elements of racial imbalance that fall within DESE’s purview and can be leveraged as a proxy for racial imbalance How is DESE measuring success for state boards?
  + RIAC can come up with its own metrics since DESE doesn’t collect this data.
* Considering the current socio-political context, are there other data points that could serve as a proxy in looking at racial imbalance? What data is DESE using?
  + Possible proxy: SES (free/reduced lunch); household income; languages spoken in the home/ELL services; geographical location
  + States that successfully combat legal challenges

**Educational Vision Presentation on Strategic Objective 3: Cultivating a Diverse & Effective Workforce & Overview of DESE Efforts Related to FY23-24 RIAC Report**

* Diverse individuals experience barriers to entering the workforce such as MTELS and staying in the workforce, ultimately producing negative implications for sustaining the pipeline, retaining a diverse workforce, and their continued professional development.
* To achieve the goals of DESE’s educational vision, the focus needs to be on Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices. Research supports this: effective experience in the field is necessary for success and we need leaders to be allies in this work. DESE wants culturally responsive practices, high quality materials, and diverse representation that reflects the student body in the classroom.
* A council member asked about the percentage of principals and assistant principals of color. DESE will follow up with the data. Currently, there are 165 principals of color in the state.
* A council member asked about whether DESE uses the data from exit interviews and how entrance/exit interviews could be used to gain more information to meet the goals. DESE has been asked by the legislature to investigate why teachers leave the field. DESE will partner with a research group to implement a study on this topic. DESE invited a RIAC member to volunteer to be part of the bidding process.
* A council member asked if there is any work being done with young people in specific districts. Getting students specific support varies but sometimes it does the required job. DESE-sponsored GYO high school programs are scheduled to begin SY26-27, pending funding, though there are various pilots taking place across the state that include mentorship, affinity space, and training.
* A council member asked about whether DESE tracks the number of school committee members who identify as people of color. The answer is no. However, there is an interest from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to form an affinity group for MASC members of color. A council member asked if there are already any groups in place. DESE will look into this.
* A council member asked if there are alternate pathways to licensure.
* A council member shared that this is an impressive list of initiatives.

**FY23-24 RIAC Recommendations Carrying Over to FY24-25**

* DESE presented on the specific efforts and strategies it is using to address the 2023-2024 RIAC annual report recommendations that will carry forward to this year with a priority on:
  + DESE should use widely available tools to make its data more accessible to the public
  + Identify pathways to robust, sustained outcomes in segregated non-white schools.
* Regarding diversity in the student body, CSI is working with DESE’s Center for Instructional Support; Education Preparation Providers will be required to have standards on equity and cultural responsiveness.
* Seeking better communication to districts around grants accountability.
* A council member does not like the PALs assessment and is happy that it is being updated.
* Have slide with RIAC recommendations and DESE aligned programs be referenced at the start of each meeting to get progress checks.
* Many of the recommendations that were brought forth last year were centered on DEI. Continuing to wonder—there is pride in the work the Department has done but what can be done structurally as so many students are concentrated in schools that are racially and structurally segregated?
  + DESE in agreement that this is a great idea; Chair pushed for this accountability.
* Question re: DESE’s working definitions - by “teachers,” do we mean content-teaching classroom teachers, and by “educators,” do we mean any personnel in student-facing roles in a school? The terms refer to anyone who works directly with students.
* RIAC member shared that not all people of color share the same equity lens and can sometimes cause harm. Are the initiatives also serving just BIPOC staff who need additional training?
  + Yes-MASS training for superintendents for color; Partners in Equity Leadership Conference from the Center for Strategic Initiatives; Influence 100 program.
* Some of the initiatives require the people on the ground to effectively implement the programs. How are they being monitored?
  + DESE is providing support and training to DESE employees on equity work so they can support equity in the field. This includes monthly site visits in the field, the requirement that all departments use the Racial Equity Decision-Making Tool, the use of data dashboards to review work/goals, and internal diversity training. Many of these initiatives are directly related to the input from RIAC.
* A council member asked about the data on the diversity of DESE staff. Karen Sampson Johnson, DESE’s DEI Director, will share this data at the next meeting.
* A council member asked how DESE is preparing to continue considering potential policy changes coming with the change in federal administration?
  + DESE is putting together a committee to support the work internally and externally. There is support from the Acting Commissioner, Secretary of Education, and Governor.

**Closing**

* Next Meeting: Monday, 1/13 from 9:30 – 11:00am
* Next Steps
  + For DESE
    - Share percentage of principals and assistant principals of color
    - Darcy to review MASC data on race and ethnicity demographics and follow up with the Commissioner’s office to see if DESE can collect this information
    - Share presentation deck & include chart in agenda and in slides moving forward
    - Karen to present on the diversity of DESE staff & internal DEI efforts
  + For the Council
    - Seeking to meet in person 1x this year