**Racial Imbalance Advisory Council (RIAC)**

**Monday, January 13, 2025**

9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Online Remote Participation (Zoom)

**Council Members in Attendance:** 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; Monica Roberts; Darlene Spencer

**Council Members not in Attendance:** Matt Brunell, J.D.; Jorge Fanjul, M.P.M., M.A.

**General Council Business**

* The November 2024 meeting minutes were approved with one abstention.

**Following up on the 23-24 RIAC Annual Report Recommendation: Identify pathways to robust, sustained outcomes in segregated non-white schools.**

* Claire Abbott, Director of the Office of Educator Effectiveness, gave a presentation on how DESE is positioning the pilot Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP), which falls under Strategic Objective #3 of DESE’s Educational Vision, to prioritize communities that are racially imbalanced. Lakia Baymon, DESE’s RTAP Coordinator, spoke about the Department’s efforts to promote the program and interest from districts.
* How many districts have expressed interest in applying?
  + Thirteen to date
* A Council member expressed concern that teacher of colors experience turnover at rates greater than the norm of the profession. How will the program provide targeted support for the dominant culture in a district which presents a barrier to teachers of color?
  + The Diversity Bill will be discussed at further length later this meeting.
  + Mentors will also be receiving support and trained to be a social justice leader, so they can support their apprentice and create a supportive culture.
  + DESE is being very selective of RTAP grant districts. They need to demonstrate that they are fostering culturally and linguistically responsive practices in their schools/districts. DESE doesn’t want to leave anything to chance to ensure that applicants can thrive in the districts they’re working in.
* A concern was expressed about “building the airplane as you’re flying it.” Who will be designing and facilitating the training? What type of training will the mentors receive? Where will we find anti-racist mentors, especially as it takes time to develop anti-racist awareness and skills?
  + DESE is being very selective in choosing a vendor for the trainings. The vendor will need to have a solid background in anti-racist practices. Mentors will be attending a summer institute focused on culturally and linguistically responsive practices. The vendor will also be developing a guidebook. Expectations and accountability will be very high for districts and vendors.
  + Funding for the program comes from 9408 and Title I. These districts have more diverse educators, so it’s DESE’s hope this will help with a qualified mentor pool.
* How will the smaller districts assume the large overhead involved in this work? A Council member elevated the work of the *Joy and Justice in Schools* program which could provide some support for the smaller districts. How do we develop at DESE a place-based protocol in which the indigenous people of this region are considered and involved in the mentoring process?
  + <https://www.collaborative.org/consulting/social-justice-and-equity-consulting/>
  + One of the things that DESE is working on is to put in place a Native American coordinator to address these issues. Hopefully, funding will be available this July.
  + As applicants are applying to RTAP, DESE must be careful about sharing information publicly to ensure the application process is equitable.
  + DESE is encouraging groups of districts to apply, recognizing that the program can place a heavy lift on individual, smaller districts.
* In addition to community colleges, will other institutions including those with master’s programs, be part of RTAP in the future? For example, school counseling programs.
  + Absolutely. DESE is starting off with areas that have had the highest shortages.
  + When a district applies, they can document their specific shortage areas.
  + Districts can also tap into funds through other agencies, particularly state and federal departments of labor.
  + Teaching has recently been included in the group of professions that are recognized as having shortages & needing support with developing a pipeline.
  + Districts are required to have a partnership with an approved ed prep provider to ensure that the cost of classes is affordable.
  + Comments from the chat noted that there is a critical need for counselors of color, bilingual counselors and support staff have been laid off due to budget issues as the enrollment of bilingual students surges, and that counseling students who need to work to pay for college may not be able to complete daytime practicum placements as they conflict with the work day.
* Districts that are predominantly white also need the opportunities provided by RTAP. How can we ensure that these districts also participate?
  + This is a great question, and funding is currently an issue. This could be a helpful recommendation from RIAC. DESE is trying to expand funding as much as possible.
  + RIAC student member shared that her predominantly white district is reducing METCO students due to budget cuts and therefore, there will be only one to two students of color per school. This is an example of a district which needs support.

**Following up on the 23-24 RIAC Annual Report Recommendation: DESE should collect more detailed data which may reveal even more disparities.**

* Darcy Fernandes, Senior Associate Commissioner, provided a brief overview of the Mass Leads Economic Development Bill.
* DESE has touched about one third of the districts in Massachusetts with teacher diversification grant funds.
* DESE spoke about alternative pathways to certification, as the MTEL is a barrier to teacher diversification. This is now mandated by the Bill which states that DESE needs to waive one MTEL exam. DESE is developing an alternative pathway. The work will be informed by a five-year pilot on alternatives to the MTEL.
* Cambridge tried to get better racial and economic diversity among students. Now it has one of the most segregated schools in the state.
  + <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2025/01/05/metro/school-choice-cambridge-low-income-students-integration/>
* What is the timeline? How will districts be supported?
  + DESE will be working with MASS and MASC to ensure people’s voices are heard/included.

**Council Discussion: States with Racial Imbalance Laws**

* Conversations with states have been a bit challenging due to RIAC not being a state agency.
  + New Jersey is in the middle of a state challenge, so they are not at liberty to have discussions with RIAC.
  + Council chair had discussions with Minnesota on a range of topics. Lots of money is being spent by the state on a variety of initiatives, for example transportation for magnet schools. Their reporting structure allows more sharing between state agencies.
  + Connecticut –they are seeking alternative ways to address racial imbalance. A lot of the law is focused on in-district balance. For example, Fairfield was asked to redistrict.
  + A Council member has asked DESE for contacts in Washington State.
  + There seems to be a retreat on looking at race as there are challenges in several states, including all those listed above. Using income may not be effective.
  + Council chair had an effective conversation with Andre Perry from the Brookings Institute. He proposed that rather than moving students out of their home districts, it’s much more effective to invest in the community to create after-school opportunities for students in their own communities. She has asked him to attend a future RIAC meeting.

**Closing**

* Next Meeting: Monday, 2/10 from 9:30-11:00 a.m.
* Next Steps
  + For DESE:
    - Share RTAP presentation deck and Economic Development Bill deck
    - Post November meeting minutes
  + For the Council:
    - Presentation on DESE’s culturally and linguistically responsive staff trainings postponed until next meeting due to time constraints so the next meeting will follow up on the 23-24 RIAC Annual Report Recommendation: DESE and BESE should seek to clarify and strengthen their oversight responsibilities.
    - Council chair to email DESE questions so they can reach out to Washington State Education Department.