**Racial Imbalance Advisory Council (RIAC)**

**Monday, February 10, 2025**

9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Online Remote Participation (Zoom)

**Council Members in Attendance:** Monica Roberts; 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.; Josephine M. Kim, Ph.D., LMHC, NCC; José Lugo, M.A.; Darlene Spencer

**Council Members Not in Attendance:** Julia Jarquin; Marieme Ngom; Lamikco T. Magee, M.Ed., J.D., Ph.D.

**General Council Business**

* The January 2024 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 provided a brief overview of available data resources.
* A lot of data is collected in a variety of ways, mostly due to state and federal regulations, including School & District Profiles (largest resource), school & district report cards (tailored to federal requirements), and dashboards (specific, generally orientated to a certain goal).
* DESE has a data hub which enables the downloading of multiple years of data and includes data stories which present data by providing background information and context. The data hub is updated regularly. It provides data to a wider audience.
* DESE is currently taking a deep look at all its data reporting structures and will be seeking input from all stakeholders.
* The council chair encouraged all RIAC members to look at DESE data sources.
* Discussion:
	+ Are questions generated by A.I. or humans?
		- They are generated by humans.
	+ How close do you think DESE current data offerings are to what the council was hoping to achieve?
		- Unclear- DESE is seeking to understand what the council was hoping for and learning about the intent of the recommendations.
	+ There has been a challenge for school districts to obtain data from third parties like National Clearinghouse.
		- Most data comes from schools and districts. One council member encouraged DESE to look at Clearinghouse data because it’s inaccurate.
	+ Erica & Matt gave a good general overview & emphasized community feedback. The council would like to have a dashboard now- this isn’t something that would take an exorbitant amount of time. We want to push this in our annual report so that DESE can see the value of this information. For instance, the y-axis should include timing and wages; the x-axis should be the selected metric
* Councilmembers were asked to identify recommendations that should be included in the 24-25 annual report and noted the following:
	+ The advances in access have been great. Specifically, for RIAC, the heart of the recommendation was to have greater availability in having visualizations where we could see the racial impacts on a variety of metrics and to see this over time. One of the significant challenges, in terms of access to data, is that while there is great information for individual schools and overall state data, the information across time at the community level is lacking. We want to be able to see this information over a period of time. For instance, on the school choice piece, it’s helpful to understand the experiences of students to determine whether school choice is a valid and successful desegregation option.
		- DESE asked the council member to write up specific data recommendations to help the DESE data team. DESE also clarified that they don’t have access to all the information requested.
	+ One council member would like to keep the data dashboard recommendation; RIAC should continue to push for this information so performance according to segregation can be tracked over time. DESE should be able to move more quickly.
	+ Maybe then, RIAC can explore how to gather this information from other sources.

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

* Charge #1/3: Determine how other state departments of education are effectively addressing regarding racial imbalance in public schools through policies, programs, and practices and how they are collaborating with other state agencies and/or entities to mitigate imbalance and/or address educational inequities.
* Charge #2/3: Identify specific policy recommendations, particularly from the 2024 RIAC report, that can be made related to DESE’s educational vision which would benefit from such policies, programs, and practices.
* Charge #3/3: Provide additional programmatic recommendations, as deemed necessary, to fulfill the goals established by the Board and align with the Department’s Educational Vision and Strategic Objectives.
	+ DESE will reach out to other states to help facilitate this as best as they can.
	+ RIAC chair proposed creating a draft with the information learned so far.
	+ To include in the 24-25 recommendations, as overlays:
		- Data access and transparency for the public
		- Address the roadblocks to an integrated approach – funding, politics, and implementation challenges
		- Educator diversity through pipeline development
		- Educator diversity through retention efforts
	+ New topics to consider including in the recommendations:
		- Change the definition of racial integration – Monica will work on this with Andre Perry
		- Increased funding - question about budget for METCO moving forward – related to increasing districts and seats within existing districts
		- Sovereign nations – centering native students’ success and using the tools to benefit ALL students. This is an approach to consider, especially considering the current political landscape. Supporting sovereign nations is different from DEI. There are frameworks/methodologies which already exist which provide success to all students. How do we use/understand that the right of sovereignty isn’t a DEI conversation, but a different experience?
* Darcy Fernandes offered to present work in March on teacher diversification.
* Laurie Hunter pointed out that much of our work is legislated and we should keep this in mind in our communications in the current political climate. Also keep in mind how to counter resistance.
* Those council members who are working with other states should use the information already found to begin drafting some recommendations for DESE.

**Closing**

* Next Meeting: Monday, 3/24 from 9:30 – 11:00am
	+ Dr. Andre Perry, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Community Uplift at the Brookings Institution, to present
* Literature Shared
	+ Vygotsky and Indigenous Cultures: Centuries of Language Centered Learning
	+ A summary of Montana Indian Education Framework
* Next Steps
	+ DESE to reach out to other states to inquire how they are addressing racial imbalance & the Department of Housing to see if they can attend a future meeting.
	+ Jorge Fanjul to reach out to Mass Inc. to see if they can attend a future meeting.
	+ Other models to incentivize privileged schools – Laurie Hunter and Lateefah Franck will look into this topic to share in May.