



ELIMINATE RACISM

Research, Data, and Best Practice Strategies

The Rockford Public Schools will be transformed when the disparities between Students of Color and white students are addressed. While these disparities exist in many urban schools districts in the United States of America, Eliminate Racism Education Action Team believes that the Rockford Public Schools can begin to address these issues by increasing the number of Teachers of Color, especially African-American and Latino, ensuring that policies and resources are equitable, based on the needs of the students and by increasing the numbers of Students of Color in advanced level classes. The strategies in this report were developed after studying the academic, discipline and demographic data of the Rockford Public Schools and researching best-practices.

February 20, 2019

Presented by the Education Action Team of Eliminate Racism

Call to Eliminate Racism in Rockford

Vision: Rockford is a community where everyone feels valued.

Mission: Eliminate Racism in Rockford

Eliminate Racism Education Action Team Mission: To be passionate advocates of equity-driven policies and practices in the Rockford Public Schools (RPS 205) so that all students will be prepared for social and academic success.

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Preface

In July 2017, thirteen people gathered to view *Racial Taboo*, a video capturing peoples' views on race and racism. This gathering was sponsored by the Institute for the Oneness of Humanity. Another, more public, gathering was subsequently organized to view the video *Hidden Colors: The Rules of Racism*. After each viewing, attendees discussed the issues raised by the videos and how these issues are relevant to Rockford.

From these gatherings and discussions was born the seeds for the Eliminate Racism Initiative, an effort coordinated and led by Reverend Kenneth and Marilyn Board and Ann and Dick Rundall.

The Eliminate Racism Initiative is a grass-roots, volunteer-driven effort to identify and address racial issues in the Rockford area. Its mission is to create a community in which all residents are equally valued.

The Initiative has four areas of discovery and solution: Education, Criminal Justice, Relationships, and Economic Development. These areas became the four Eliminate Racism Action Teams. Each Team began meeting in August 2018.

What follows is the report of the Education Action Team.

Introduction

Many comment on the value of education. Some spoke thousands of years ago: "What greater gift can we offer the republic than to teach and instruct our youth? (Cicero)"; some one hundred years ago: ""To educate a man is to unfit him to be a slave (Frederick Douglass)"; some less than ten years ago: "The beautiful thing about learning is nobody can take it away from you (B.B. King)."

Many who speak of education mention its value as preparation for a future life, both for an individual and for a republic. Access to knowledge promotes an educated public and strengthens both the egalitarianism and economy of the country.

Sadly, the history of public education is one of espoused beliefs and unequal realities.

Within the first twenty years of the founding of the original thirteen colonies, schools were opened, with the Boston Latin School being the first, begun in 1635. These early public schools did not focus on academic subjects such as math or reading but rather on virtues such as family, religion, and community.

These early public schools were not equitable in either curriculum or access. In their earliest inception, girls were usually only taught to read. Especially in the South, people of color had little or no access during the 1600s and the early 1700s, as education remained primarily for only affluent families who could afford to hire private tutors to educate their children.

It was only during Reconstruction that public education became more widespread in the South.

In the 18th century, Common Schools emerged, educating students of all ages in one room with one teacher. Yet these schools were still not free as parents paid tuition, provided housing for the school teacher, or contributed other commodities in exchange for their children being allowed to attend the school.

By 1900, thirty-one states had compulsory school attendance for students from ages 8-14. By 1918, every state required students to complete elementary school.

In the early twentieth century, John Dewey recognized the potential of an education to help each child reach her full promise and be prepared to actively participate in a democratic society. And yet, despite this lofty notion of the value of a public education, the United States continued to operate an unequal school system. The 1954 Supreme Court Ruling *Brown vs. Board of Education* outlawed the “separate but equal” approach to public education but yet many regions of the United States continued to provide disparate and inequitable public education to their students.

The Supreme Court’s 1968 decision in *Green v. County School Board* acknowledged the lack of progress toward equity in the years following *Brown v. Board* and required school boards to develop plans for equity that promised “to realistically work now” to dismantle by “root and branch” the inequity that continued to exist.

The history of public education in Rockford is not different from that of the United States: there have been times of progress toward equity and innovation, punctuated by law suits declaring that the district remains unequal in its programs and resources.

And yet there is still a road available to create a school district that values each child and strives to educate her to her fullest potential.

The Eliminate Racism’s Education Action Team has spent the last five months investigating three discrete topics of inequity within the school district, including conducting research into current issues of inequity, the ways in which other school districts across the country have addressed and resolved such issues, and recommendations for solving them.

Within the Action Team, three groups formed. Group One had as its goal to increase by 20% the percentage of People of Color – especially African-American and Hispanic --in all levels of RPS205 (administration, staff, and board members) by the 2020-2021 school year. By the 2025-2026 school year, this percentage is to rise to match the percentage of African-American and Hispanic students within the system.

Group Two had as its goal the assurance that RPS205 policies and resources – staff, supplies, technology, etc – are distributed equitably, based on the needs of students in the school and measured by the state required assessment data and the district discipline data. This goal shall be met by the 2020-2021 school year.

Group Three had as its goal that Students of Color – especially African-American and Hispanic – would be encouraged to enroll in and be enrolled in Honors and AP classes and would receive the support they need to be academically successful. By the 2020-2021 school year, Students of Color enrollment will have increased by 25% within these advanced curricular programs; these students will have received a final grade of “C” or better.

This report represents the findings of these groups and their hope for a future of an equity-driven public school district, for as Malcolm X said, “Without education, you are not going anywhere in this world.”

Education Action Team Goal One:

To increase to 20% People of Color - especially African-American and Hispanic - in all levels of RPS205: administration, faculty, staff, and board members by the 2020-2021 school year. By the 2025-2026 school year, have percentages of African- American and Hispanic administration, staff, and board members match the percentage of African-American and Hispanic students within the system.

Research indicates that minority students do better contemporaneously in school – and likely in the long run as well – when they are exposed to teachers of their same race or ethnicity. As a consequence, the underrepresentation of minority teachers relative to the proportion of minority school-aged students could be having the effect of limiting minority students’ educational success. David Figlio

Section One: The Issue.

Increasingly, research is demonstrating the importance of a diverse teaching body, especially for Students of Color. In “Diversifying the Classroom: Examining the Teacher Pipeline,” Lindsay, Blom, and Tilsley use data from the American Community Survey to demonstrate that in 2015 just over half of American children aged five to seventeen were white, but nearly eighty percent of young teachers (whom they define as individuals aged twenty-five to thirty-four, with a bachelor’s degree, and teaching at the prekindergarten through high school level) were white; black students comprise around thirteen percent of all school-aged children but black teachers represent only around eight percent of all young teachers; and Hispanic students comprise around twenty-four percent of all school-aged children but Hispanic teachers represent only around nine percent of all young teachers.

These racial divisions between who leads classrooms and who fills them have implications for long-term success among Students of Color. Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, and Papageorge report that if a black male student has at least one black teacher in the third, fourth, or fifth grade, he is significantly less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to aspire to attend a four-year. These effects are especially pronounced for economically disadvantaged black male students. For instance, the report finds that a disadvantaged black male’s exposure to at least one black teacher in elementary school reduces his probability of dropping out of high school by nearly forty percent. This estimated effect is not just statistically significant, but also highly educationally relevant.

Thus, the diversity of the teaching staff in any district can be a predictor of the success of Students of Color.

Section Two: The Evidence.

Demographics by Ethnicity: Appendix A

Overall Hiring Totals: RPS205 personnel stats provided by RPS Human Resource Department.

Race	#	%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2	0.10
Asian	26	1.31%
Black or African American	82	4.14%
Hawaiian/other Pacific Island	2	0.10%
Hispanic or Latino	62	3.13%
Two or more Races	81	4.09%
White	1726	87.13%
Grand Total	1981	
Deficit		12.73%

Statistical Analysis of **Administration** Hires by Race/Actual Number/Percentage of Whole

Race	#	%
White	232	90.3%
Black	10	3.89%
Hispanic/Latino	5	1.95%
Other	10	3.89%
Total	257	
Deficit		14.1%

Statistical Analysis of **Paraprofessional** hiring by Race/Actual Number/Percentage of Whole

Race	#	%
White	293	74.55%
Black	58	14.8%
Hispanic/Latino	23	5.85%
Other	19	4.83%
Total	393	
Deficit		0%

Statistical Analysis of **Transportation** hires by race/totals/percentage of whole

Race	#	%
White	167	58.4%
Black	92	32.2%
Hispanic/Latino	16	5.6%
Asian/Other	11	3.8%
Total	286	
Deficit		0%

B. 2017 RPS205 **Teacher** Demographics (information provided by board member Tim Rollins)

By Ethnicity: White 85.7%, Black 4.2%, Hispanic 3.2%

By Gender: Male 25.6%, Female 74.4%

By Ethnicity/School/Deficit:

School	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Total	Deficit
Auburn	90.4	4.4	1.8	3.5	114	12.1%
East	84.3	4.34	10.9	7.8	115	14.8%
Guilford	85.7	0.9	5.4	8.0	112	13.7
Jefferson	84.2	6.1	1.8	4.4	114	12.1
Roosevelt	89.1	8.7	0	2.2	46	11.3
Barbour	47.2	0	33.3	19.4	36	0
Bloom	88.5	3.9	0	7.7	26	16.2
Brookview	92.9	3.6	0	3.6	28	16.4
Carlson	81.0	4.8	0	14.3	21	15.2
Cherry Valley	86.5	5.4	0	8.1	37	14.6
C. Harrison	86	14.3	0	0	7	14.6
Conklin	90.9	4.5	4.5	0	22	11
Dennis ECE	84.6	7.7	7.7	7.7	13	4.6
Eisenhower	84.5	7	5.2	14.3	58	7.8
Ellis	71.9	21.9	0	6.3	32	0
Fairview	91.3	4.3	0	4.3	23	15.7
Flinn	98.3	1.7	0	0	60	18.3
Froberg	87	8.7	0	4.3	23	11.3
Gregory	87.5	0	4.2	8.3	24	15.8
Haskell	84.2	10.5	5.26	0	19	4.2
Kennedy	88.2	5.9	0	0	34	14.1
Kishwaukee	89.5	0	0	10.5	19	20
Lathrop	56.5	0	17.4	26.1	23	2.6
Lewis Lemon	88	4	0	8	25	16
Lincoln	90.9	2	0	5.5	55	16.4
Johnson	88	4	0	8	25	16
McIntosh	95.8	0	0	4.2	24	20
Montessori	94.3	2.9	2.9	0	35	143
Nashold	91.3	4.4	0	4.35	24	20
Nelson	91.7	0	0	8.33	24	20
RESA	81.9	8.3	5.6	4.2	72	16.1
Riverdahl	94.9	0	2.8	2.8	39	17.2
Rolling Green	89.7	5.1	5.1	0	39	9.8
Spring Creek	96.8	0	0	0	31	20
Summerdale	95	5	0	0	20	15
Marshall	98	0	0	2	50	20
Washington	71	0	16.1	12.9	31	3.9
Welsh	93	0	0	2	29	20
West	89.6	9	1.5	0	67	9.5
West View	85	0	3.9	11.5	26	16.1
Whitehead	79.4	0	2.9	17.6	34	17.1
Wilson	88.9	0	0	11.1	9	20

Section Three: The Discussion.

With few exceptions, RPS205 primarily hires majority white employees, from administration to teaching staff to support staff. Individual school employee statistics support this conclusion.

To help promote academic success among its Students of Color, RPS205 must develop and execute a hiring strategy specifically to hire Teachers of Color.

The same challenges that RPS205 faces in hiring People of Color as teachers have been addressed and analyzed by urban school districts throughout the United States, including districts within Illinois. Many of these districts suggest approaches to recruiting and hiring Teachers of Color that they adapted and implemented in their recruiting and hiring practices.

Among these strategies, several emerged repeatedly, including

- Forming partnerships with and recruiting Teachers of Color from local and surrounding colleges and universities.
- Forming a partnership with and recruiting Teachers of Color from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- Taking an active part in the *Grow Your Own Teachers Illinois* (GYO) training program.
- Forming a middle school and high school mentoring training program for students who express interest in becoming a teacher.
- Express interest in possible People of Color recruits and the assets they would bring to the District that they have.
- Offer incentives to new recruits.
- Within a comprehensive recruitment strategy, develop and execute a marketing plan that establishes Rockford as a desirable place to live and teach.

Section Four: The Recommended Strategies

While there currently is exceptional competition to hire People of Color nationally for administrative and teaching positions within public schools, RPS205 could significantly increase its diverse hiring demographics by (1) developing and executing programs that encourage current Students of Color to consider careers in education within RPS205 and support them in their higher education pursuits and (2) developing and executing a comprehensive hiring strategy to attract People of Color to the district.

Such strategies have been implemented by school districts across the country and these recruitment strategies can be adopted and modified to fit the unique needs of RPS205.

- 1. Develop a proactive, focused and persistent RPS recruitment and retention policy for People of Color, including necessary incentives/needs, housing, mentoring, 11 month contracts and appropriate liaisons with other People of Color, teachers, administration and community leaders. This policy must be personal as well as web and social-media based. Establish Rockford as a desirable place to live and teach for African-American and Hispanic teachers. Develop a social/emotional support system for Teachers of Color.**
- 2. Expand all available Grow Your Own/Pathway Programs, forming an elementary, middle school and high school mentoring/training program for students, especially African-American and Latino, who express interest in becoming teachers. Paraprofessionals or other non-certified Staff of Color already working in the district and recommended by their administrator should be prime candidates for scholarships, internships and paid student teaching experience. A cohort for Parents of Color could also be developed.**
- 3. RPS Human Resources Department works closely with the National Equity Project to develop a recruiting and support strategy including preparation for the states required teachers' exam. Re-develop the Diversity Council and include recruiting and support strategies of People of Color as part of their mission.**
- 4. Develop and execute a REA Teachers' Union Agreement that addresses the overwhelming need to increase the percentages of People of Color across RPS205.**
- 5. Recognize an immediate need for persistence in developing strong relationships with local and regional colleges and universities, and HBCUs (Historical Black Colleges and Universities) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) with "connectors" who can assist RPS205 in locating and recruiting People of Color, most especially as teachers and administrative staff. This should include paid internships and scholarships.**
- 6. Form relationships/partnerships with local service organizations and churches who have primarily People of Color as their membership. Develop a social/emotional support system for Teachers of Color. Establish Rockford as a desirable place to live and teach for African-Americans and Hispanic teachers.**

Education Team Goal Two:

To ensure that RPS205 policies and resources, including teachers, counselors, supplies, and technology, are equitable, based on the needs of students in the school and measured by the state required assessment data and the district discipline data. This goal shall be met by 2020-2021 school year.

Educational outcomes for minority children are much more a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, including skilled teachers and quality curriculum, than they are a function of race. (Linda Darling-Hammond, "Unequal Opportunity: Race and Education," [Brookings](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/unequal-opportunity-race-and-education/) Institute, Sunday, March 1, 1998 <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/unequal-opportunity-race-and-education/>)

Section One: The Issues.

Goal Two Issue One:

District dollars and policies are not focused on student achievement for lowest performing students who are often Students of Color (especially African-Americans and Hispanic students).

Section Two: The Evidence:

According to the narrative sent to the State of Illinois by Rockford Public Schools, this is how \$8.6 million new dollars were utilized. (2018)
Fill in the revenue gap to support our employee labor agreements, employee benefit plans, supplies, materials and continued initiatives of the District.
Implementation of a data warehouse to create a common repository for data elements from the various disparate student information systems utilized throughout the district. This effort is crucial to support the measuring and statistical analysis of student achievement as it relates to both state and district level goals and standards. The district has a significantly large population of students that are classified as either low income or an English learner. These metrics will assist in measuring achievement in those target groups to strategically plan for improvement.
Invest in a curriculum redesign and they are currently in year four of a five year for K-12 classrooms.
Assistant Principals, Instructional Coaches were added to support the schools.
2 Strategic Process Auditors were added to support the schools. They make sure the data is accurate.
Special education students are supported with assistive technology.
Therapeutic day schools are utilized to fulfill our legal obligation to provide a free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities.
Montessori's 10 year Expansion Plan
Gifted Program's Steering Committee
Running Start Program: Helps students get an Associate Degree from RVC while they are still in high school.
2 nd Cohort of our undergraduate pathway program where 20 teachers are starting an Urban Education Master's program.
Furniture to enhance our student's experience in the classroom and to create a flexible environment.

Base-line Data:

- Elementary School Data: Appendix B
- Middle School Data: Appendix C
- High School Data: Appendix D
- Academic Disparity: Appendix E
- Discipline Disparity: Appendix F

Equity Audit

- Staff Version: Appendix G
- Student Version: Appendix H

Section Three: The Discussion

“SB1947 is a new research-based school funding formula that works equitably for all students across Illinois.” “The new formula ties school funding to 27 evidence-based best practices shown to enhance student achievement in the classroom and provides a unique Adequacy Target for each district based on its demographics.” Adequacy means the financial target to provide an adequate education to all students. “The greater the student need in a district, the higher its Adequacy Target. New dollars go to the neediest districts first”. (Evidence-based Funding For Student Success Act, (2017) as cited by #Fixed The Formula, www.fundingthefuture.org). RPS 205 received \$8.6 million new dollars for the 2018-19 school year. We cannot expect change, if we are doing the same things we did in the past. Money matters and so do school resources. How money is spent makes a difference. Have we targeted the neediest students with new initiatives?

We are pleased to see that the district is changing the way allocation dollars are distributed to the schools for the 2019-2020 school year. It appears that the poverty level schools are benefitting. Please refer to the Allocation Chart 2020: Appendix I

Section Four: The Recommended Strategies

- 1. Develop a new Funding Formula for RPS that targets lowest performing students and include grant \$\$ in this formula.**

Funding for low-income students makes a significant difference! *Quarterly Journal of Economics* published a Harvard study in 2016 that stated that, “Our event study and instrumental variables models reveal that increased per pupil spending induced by SFRs” (School Finance Reforms) “increased the educational attainment and improved the adult labor market outcomes of low-income children. Although we find small effects for children from affluent families, for low-income children, a 10% increase in per pupil spending each year for all 12 years of public school is associated with 0.46 additional years of completed education. 9.6% higher earnings, and a 6.1 percentage point reduction in the annual incidence of adult poverty. The results imply that a 25% increase in per pupil spending throughout one’s school years could eliminate the average attainment gaps between children from low-income.” (Kirabo, Johnson, Rucker, Persico, 2016, p. 157) “The increases for instruction and support services (which includes expenditures to hire more teachers and/or increase teacher salary along with

funds to hire more guidance counselors and social workers) are consistent with the large, positive effects for those from low-income families.” (Kirabo, Johnson, Rucker, Persico, 2016, p. 209)

In another study it was found that: “Districts that increased spending due to reforms see reductions in student-teacher ratios. This has been found to benefit students in general, with large effects for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. (e.g., Krueger and Whitmore, 2001; Bloom and Unterman, 2013)” (Kirabo, Johnson, Rucker, Persico, 2016, p. 209) “...the results suggest that the positive effects are driven, at least in part, by some combination of reductions in class size, having more adults per student in schools, increases in instructional time, and increases in teacher salary that may have helped attract and retain a more highly qualified teaching workforce.” .” (Kirabo, Johnson, Rucker, Persico, 2016, p. 211)

Therefore, it appears that increased funding for low-income children really does make a difference and could have a long-term effect on the health of our community in Rockford, Illinois. “For children from low-income families, increasing per pupil spending yields large improvements in educational attainment, wages, family income, and reductions in the annual incidence of adult poverty. All of these effects are statistically significant and are robust to a rich set of controls for confounding policies and trends. For children from nonpoor families, we find smaller effects of increased school spending on subsequent educational attainment and family income in adulthood. The results make important contributions to the human capital literature and highlight how improved access to school resources can profoundly shape the life outcomes of economically disadvantaged children, and thereby significantly reduce the intergenerational transmission of poverty” (Kirabo, Johnson, Rucker, Persico, 2016, p. 212).

2. Implement Community Schools based on the specific needs of each of our lowest-performing schools.

We found that LeBron James’s school in Akron, Ohio and Geoffrey Canada’s school in Harlem Children’ Zone are examples of schools that have used research-based strategies to implement support for families in the neediest schools after planning carefully with parents, staff and community. “Community schools represent a place-based school improvement strategy in which schools partner with community agencies and local government to provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and the community development, and community engagement. Many operate year-round, from morning to evening, and serve both children and adults. Although the approach is appropriate for students of all backgrounds, many community schools serve neighborhoods where poverty and racism erect barriers to learning, and where families have few resources to supplement what typical schools provide. Community schools vary in the programs they offer and the way they operate, depending on their local context. However, four features-or pillars-appear in most community schools:

- 1) Integrated student supports
- 2) Expanded learning time and opportunities
- 3) Family and community engagement
- 4) Collaborative leadership and practice” (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017, p. 1)

“We conclude from our review that the evidence-based about well-implemented community schools and their component parts provide a strong warrant about their potential contribution to school improvement.” (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017, p. 18)

3. Put more financial resources into multi-classroom leaders.

According to the Rockford Register Star, “Kishwaukee kindergartners tops in academic growth”, October 30, 2018 :

“The kindergartners at Kishwaukee pulled off something many teachers did not think was possible—they scored in the 99th percentile for academic growth on the Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Progress, or MAP test which students took three times throughout the school year.”

“As a multi-classroom leader, she’s responsible for all of Kishwaukee’s kindergartners along with her teaching partners...”

“It gives us a lower student to teacher ratio. We have three teachers to two classrooms. It gives us flexibility to pull small groups and give students more support where they need or more of a challenge if they need that.”

In a research study of multi-classroom leaders that focused on an initiative called Opportunity Culture Schools, “Teachers who have demonstrated effectiveness with student learning are named “multi-classroom leaders”—a role that means they lead a teaching team, provide on-the-job coaching to their teachers, and still do some teaching themselves. These multi-classroom leaders are accountable for the results of all students on the team, and they earn extra money for this work...” (Will, 2018, p.1) A research study from Backes of the American Institutes for Research and Michael Hansen of Brookings used rigorous econometric methods to study student growth in Opportunity Culture schools.” “The study covered about 15,000 students and about 300 teachers, looking at three years of data for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, both in North Carolina, and two years for the Syracuse (NY) City School District. About 90 percent of Opportunity Culture schools were eligible for Title 1 based on the percentage of low-income students.” Students in classrooms of team teachers led by “multi-classroom leaders” showed sizeable academic gains.” (Backes, & Hansen, 2018, p. 1)

4. Conduct an internal Equity Audit to inform financial/policy decisions.

Attached is a sample equity audit that could be used with both students and staff which is from the following book: [Building Equity: Policies and Practices to Empower All Learners](#). by Dominique Smith, Nancy Frey, Ian Pumpian, & Douglas Fisher, ASCD, 2017, p. 192-199. After a school administers this survey, they can use the results to have conversations about their school and equity and to determine what resources they need to improve equity in their school.

Goal 2 Issue Two:

District dollars and policies are not focused on student social competency as measured by the district’s discipline data which shows disparities between white students and Students of Color (especially African-Americans and Hispanic students).

Goal 2 Issue Two Evidence:

Issue Two Discussion:

The research is very clear: “Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students are more likely to experience exclusionary discipline than their white counterparts are” (Ford, 2015, p. 44). “For example, various studies have found that Students of Color are more likely to be reprimanded for subjective offenses not specified by the school ...on the basis of a judgment call of a teacher or administrator. In contrast, white students’ punishments are more likely to be for objective offenses for which the school requires a categorical sanction (drugs, weapons, obscene language, and so on). Students of Color—black students in particular—are more likely than white students to be referred to the office or suspended, even when the misbehaviors are similar. This is not just disproportionate representation; it is differential treatment by the system” (Ford, 2015, p. 44). When assessing why egregious racial discipline gaps exist, schools and school systems need a root-cause analysis—a thorough diagnosis of the origin of the problem. Initiatives to close racial disparities will likely prove impotent unless we honestly ask where the dysfunction is coming from”. Emerging research suggests that one major root of the disparities is implicit racial bias—unconscious attitudes about groups of people that influence our behavior and decision making. (Ford, 2015, p. 45)

We need to ask what is the purpose of suspensions and expulsions, really? Are they to make the adults more comfortable or are they to help teach students to become productive members of the community? We also need to ask about the connection between school discipline and the criminal justice system? Is this just part of the school-to-prison pipeline?

Issue Two Recommended Strategies:

- 5. The Discipline Code and the culture of the schools should focus on positive behavior interventions and support, social/emotional strategies and restorative justice policies and resources that provide ways for students to learn to become contributing members of our community. The community should create advocacy groups to support children and parents who need assistance.**

In the Rockford Public Schools, the Discipline Code is created to be primarily punitive and needs resources imbedded in its policies in order to provide much more counseling and social work support so students improve their actions and attitudes and are on track to become successful both academically and socially. Other school districts across the country are also coming to this conclusion. “A knee-jerk reaction for minor offenses, suspending and expelling students, this is not the business we should be in,” said Robert W. Runcie, the Broward County Schools superintendent... We are not accepting that we need to have hundreds of students getting arrested and getting records that impact their lifelong chances to get a job, go into the military, get financial aid.” (Alvarez, 2013, P.2)

It is important to analyze the data and identify the issue and then conduct a root cause analysis. This all takes time. It is important to have deep conversations in order to determine the root causes of the discipline disparities. In *Addressing the Root Causes of Disparities in School Discipline: An Educator’s Action Planning Guide*, it defines a process of identifying the root causes of disparities in school discipline and then creating an action plan to make changes based on those root causes. (Osher, 2015) This process could be helpful for Rockford to dig deep and define the root causes of discipline disparities

in the schools. "...research suggests that zero-tolerance policies have counterproductive effects both on the disciplined students and on the schools that exclude them. First, out-of-school suspensions and expulsions "push" students out of school in ways that contribute to increased dropout rates and delinquency. Excluding students from school actually can reinforce their negative behaviors. Being excluded from school is associated with future discipline problems, lower grades, higher drop-out-risk, and an increased risk of delinquency and incarceration." (Meek, 2009, p. 159-60)

When making changes it is important to do so carefully. "The Denver School-Based Restorative Practices partnership has developed a multi-year implementation plan that could serve as a guide. They are a coalition of racial justice, education, labor and community groups working to ensure widespread and high-quality implementation of restorative practices in Denver Public Schools and beyond." It addresses the importance of the principal commitment, staff buy-in, professional development and the need for a coordinator and a time-line for implementation. (Denver)

A sample Code of Conduct that is focused on Restorative Practices was developed by The Delaware Met and could be used as a starting point or a framework for re-inventing the Rockford Public Schools Discipline Code of Conduct. Other examples can be found through Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis, MN, Greenbush/Middle River School District, MN, Chicago Public Schools, IL to name just a few of many school districts that have already moved in this direction. Policies are part of systemic racism and we must ask if one of the root causes of the disparities in school discipline could be the punitive nature of our current discipline code. Is it sending a message and creating a culture of punishment rather than a culture of learning and support to the administrators and teachers? How would the culture of our schools improve for Students of Color and for all our students if the message administrators were reading every day as they deal with discipline issues that there was a mandatory program for intervention and assistance that included counseling before a student could be suspended out of school? Is the Rockford Public School's Discipline Code part of the school to prison pipeline? The culture starts at the top so let's change the message that is coming from the top!

6. Create a trauma-sensitive school improvement initiative. Provide more social/emotional support to students through therapeutic counselors and social workers and behavior specialists.

Children of color and children living in poverty have two potential sources of induced trauma. "Building trauma-sensitive schools ensures that our students have the best possible support system to address stress and adverse childhood experiences that can impact their education and, ultimately, the overall quality of their lives," (Argue-Mason 2018) "Research that establishes a link between trauma and children's academic and social failures provides educators with a new paradigm for interpreting students' misbehavior." (Craig, 2016, p. 5)

In a study related to "Adverse Childhood Experiences" (ACE) they found that "28% were physically abused as children; 21% were sexually abused; 27% lived in households where substance abuse occurred; and 13% lived in homes where the mother was treated violently." These students come to school too overwhelmed to learn. Their neurological systems are besieged by their responses to adverse experiences, as high levels of stress hormones over prolonged periods cause chemically toxic effects on regions of their brains that deal with problem-solving and decision-making. Educators see ACEs manifest in negative and disruptive behavior, but often this is a result of students functioning in a constant state of hypervigilance to danger or perceived threat. ACEs and their consequent effects on brain functioning may provoke a trauma response that causes students to "fight." (engage in violence or aggression),

“take flight” (absenteeism, dropouts), or “freeze” (shut down, withdraw).” “Research has shown that students who experience three or more ACEs score lower than their peers on standardized texts; are 2.5 times more likely to fail a grade; are placed in special education more frequently; and are more likely to be suspended and expelled.” (Public School Forum Study for North Carolina, 2016, p 13-14).

- 7. Provide a sufficient amount of job-embedded professional development in implicit/unintentional bias, positive behavior interventions and support, social and emotional learning strategies, and restorative justice practices for administrators, teachers, para-professionals and other staff members in order that we address the challenges of equity facing public education in Rockford.**

“...the most insidious and pervasive form of racism operates on an institutional level, through systems that treat people as superior or inferior in ways that produce outcomes stratified by race. Institutional racism doesn’t require any individual culprits with malicious intent. Instead, it reflects prevailing attitudes that tell us who is intelligent and who is simple-minded, who is up to no good and who is well-intentioned, who deserves a break and who deserves to be made an example of. Implicit racial bias explains why, in today’s society where scarcely anybody would admit openly to being racist, we still have racialized outcomes that stack up in predictable ways.” (Ford, 2015, p. 45) “But implicit bias training done in conjunction with positive behavior interventions and support, social and emotional learning strategies, and restorative justice practices could prove a powerful approach to eliminating racial disparity in discipline. (Ford, 2015, p. 45-46) What does effective professional development look like? Extensive search of the literature found the following features: Content focused, active learning, collaboration, uses models of effective practice, coaching and expert support, feedback and reflection, sustained duration and is job-embedded. (Darling-Hammand, 2017, p. 5-17)

Education Action Team Goal Three:

Students of Color – especially African-American and Hispanic – will be encouraged to enroll in and be enrolled in Honor* and AP (Advanced Placement) classes and will receive the support they need to be academically successful. By 2020-2021 school year, Students of Color enrollment will have increased by 25% within these advanced curricular programs; these students will have received a final grade of “C” or better.

*Based on evidence and research available the group ultimately focused its attention on AP classes only.

“The expansion of college readiness is a significant priority among educational leaders and policymakers given its importance to the U.S. economy. [But] because current inequities of college-going outcomes vary along the lines of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status... circumstances call for an expansion of college going, particularly among traditionally underserved populations.” ([Suneal Kolluri](#), Advanced Placement: The Dual Challenge of Equal Access and Effectiveness, Review of Educational Research, Volume: 88 issue: 5

<https://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/eVvTYW2kvlCtcDjUzhWu/full>)

Section One: The Issue.

Research shows that minority students are underrepresented in high-level classes such as Advanced Placement courses and gifted programs (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Whiting & Ford, 2009). Enrollment in such classes brings significant benefits to students, including reduced college tuition costs (Flores & Gomez, 2011), a greater likelihood of attending college (Flowers, 2008; Klopfenstein, 2004), and higher amounts of human capital, which can be exchanged for opportunities such as better jobs and salaries (Flowers, 2008). Thus, the racial enrollment disparity is an important issue for all school districts to address.

Students of Color – particularly African-American and Hispanic students – are underrepresented in RPS205 AP courses, resulting in unequal access to the benefits of these courses.

Our goal is to work and collaborate with the Rockford School District and its leadership team; it is our hope that these research findings and recommendations provide district administrators with tools that have helped school districts nation-wide increase enrollment of Students of Color in AP and advanced classes.

Section Two: The Evidence.

RPS 205 Findings:

Data sources include conversations with school leaders past and present, peer-reviewed education journal articles, and data the Rockford Public School district has provided for us during our six months of research.

Students of Color in AP Classes in RPS 205

Information gathered from RPS website or from RPS personnel includes the following:

of AP classes offered:

Auburn	20
East	13

Guilford 17

Jefferson 15

Students enrolled in AP classes from 2011 to 2019:

2011

126 African-Americans

122 Hispanic or Latino

434 White

2018

204 African-Americans

386 Hispanic or Latino

661 White

% of scores gaining college credit, 3-5. (students may take more than 1 AP class)

2011

158 5.2%, African-American

209 11.4%, Hispanic or Latino

785 61.1%, White

2018

169 2.8% African-American

623 15% Hispanic or Latino

1,197 63.9% white

Recruitment strategy is to review the academic data and one-on-one meetings to encourage enrollment.

Jefferson HS actively recruits students for AP classes. AP teachers make pitches in honors classes, but they also visit all classes. AP students also talk to students in all classes. AP students also talk to RISA students about AP.

District teacher demographics by ethnicity

86% white

3.9% black

3.3% Hispanic

1.3% Asian

0.1% American Indian

4.4% two or more ethnicities

0.1% Pacific islander

0.9% not reported

District teacher demographics by gender

73.7% Female

26.3% Male

The following data was found on the Illinois School Report Card 2018 and shows the # and % of white, African-American and Hispanic students at each Rockford high school who enrolled in AP classes during the 2017-18 school year plus district-wide totals. It also shows the number of exams taken and the number exams passed and the % of exams taken at each high school.

School	All AP	White AP	African-American AP	Hispanic AP	#Exam/#pass	% Pass
Auburn	592	274 46%	121 20%	93 16%	1945/1156	59
East	191	127 66%	0 0	64 34%	392/60	15
Guilford	421	212 50%	52 12%	90 21%	994/325	33
Jefferson	294	82 28%	29 10%	156 53%	531/68	13
District	1574	710 45%	231 15%	411 26%	3862/1623	42

AP prep summer camp operated in the past, dependent on a grant. The majority of the students signing up were affiliated with the Gifted Program and not first time students, those who organized the camp at that time intended to serve. RPS is now brainstorming support for this program and hopes to begin again in summer 2019.

At Jefferson HS, students are offered 3 tutoring sessions and one test prep session (the teachers are paid extra for these).

Jefferson HS principal pays teachers to attend training necessary to teach AP and for at least one 1-day refresher course. He offers teachers who build good relationships with students the chance to teach AP.

Section Three: Discussion.

- Students of Color are under-represented in the AP program nationwide and the college board seeks to increase the number of under presented students participating in AP courses
- Successful recruiting of Students of Solor for enrollment in AP Courses and attainment of higher scores happens when individual schools and district-wide administrators decide to effect changes that better promote equity education and equal opportunities for all students.
- Deficit thinking seems to be a factor in limiting enrollment in AP Courses. Symptoms of the deficit thinking paradigm are: IQ-based evaluation, negative teacher bias, little teacher diversity training, and lack of administrative will to enact change. Solutions to this paradigm are acknowledging and eliminating test bias, improving AP teacher instruction, utilizing multicultural preparation for educators with on-going evaluation, and developing and executing a racial equality plan and an ongoing evaluation of underrepresentation.
- Lack of rigorous curricular infrastructure needed for successful participation in AP courses contributes to the enrollment gap for minority students.

- Family income of the student is the single largest factor causing the AP enrollment gap for minority students.
- Having people of color in positions of authority, including teachers, is important for minority student success.

Section Four: Recommended Strategies

1. There must be a district-wide Students of Color AP recruitment strategy.

As far as we can determine, recruitment of Students of Color to AP classes varies from school to school; this lack of a comprehensive district-wide strategy allows for tremendous variation in enrollment between schools and fails to communicate the importance of including So Students of Color AP classes. Research shows that Students of Color enroll in AP classes when given the opportunity (Hallett and Venegas). A district-wide recruiting strategy would provide schools with recruitment strategies that can be easily implemented as well as communicate that this is an important initiative that school administration expects each school to implement.

Additionally, a district-wide recruitment strategy ensures that Students of Color have the opportunity to reap the rewards of participation in AP classes. These rewards include higher scores on college entrance exams, a higher GPA, increased likelihood of college enrollment, and increased income post-college (Flowers, Klopfenstein). These are not insignificant markers of academic success. This recruitment strategy must be innovative and include administrator and teacher referrals, parent requests, presentations by Students of Color who are currently enrolled in AP classes, and student self-selection.

In addition, the recruitment strategy must include presentations to middle school students so that SoC have an equitable chance at success in AP classes. Indeed, recruitment might best be included in elementary schools (Whiting and Ford).

2. There must be a district-wide strategy for helping parents of Students of Color to understand the benefits of AP classes for their children.

It is important for parents to play a central role in the recruiting of their children into AP and gifted programs. Parents should have the information and tools needed to insist that educators inform them of the means by which their students can gain entry into advanced education programs. Such information places parents in a better position to assist in the recruitment process. (Henfield, Moore, and Wood)

Research has proven the value, both academic and financial, of participation in AP classes for Students of Color. RPS205 must develop and implement recruitment strategies, district-wide, that communicate this value to parents, most importantly providing information and counsel that parents are able to easily access.

While college-educated parents are already aware of the value of an AP curriculum, recent immigrants and low-income parents may believe that their children are not college-bound and/or that college is not an option for their children (Klopfenstein). Indeed, research demonstrates that family income is the single most important factor behind the lack of Students of Color AP participation (Klopfenstein).

For many parents, navigating a school administration hierarchy may be difficult or intimidating. They may not realize/understand that they can advocate for their students and push for their students to be enrolled in AP classes. Thus, the district should provide advocacy skills training to parents so that parents can understand the school system and determine to whom they should speak regarding AP enrollment (Taliaferro and DeCuir-Gunby)

Districts that have been successful in recruiting/enrolling student of color in AP programs have instituted AP Parent Night as well as AP teacher meet and greets for both students and parents (Flores). This training must be provided in venues and at times that parents can access.

It is important that a parental recruitment strategy educates and informs families about the existence, importance, and benefits of advanced curriculum coursework; about the characteristics and needs of students who enroll in AP classes; and about how to challenge and engage their students at home.

- 3. There must be a district-wide AP teacher recruitment strategy that establishes criteria for teachers most likely to succeed in AP classes with a diverse student population, most importantly including Students of Color. This strategy should identify teachers who are culturally-sensitive and have strong relationship-building skills and then support these teachers through a variety of methods, including professional development opportunities.**

Teachers who lead AP classes that include Students of Color must be given the tools necessary for them to work proactively with school counselors, principals, and parents to communicate the tangible benefits of advanced curricular programs (Henfield, Moore, and Wood).

These teachers must also be provided with information regarding the experiences of Students of Color in classrooms, including the feeling of “whiteness as giftedness,” which increases Students of Color perception of being an outsider in AP classes.

Professional development workshops and college coursework are needed to prepare AP teachers to understand and work competently with the underserved Students of Color population so that teacher bias, expectations, and stereotypes are examined. These workshops and coursework can prepare AP teachers of Students of Color to identify the cultural and socio-economic issues faced by Students of Color, and best practices for working with the families of Students of Color enrolled in AP classes. This training can best prepare teachers to be the most effective at recruiting and retaining Students of Color for AP classes. (Whiting and Ford)

4. There must be a district-wide AP support strategy for Students of Color that acknowledges and meets the unique constraints the students face, including academic and socio-economic.

Ironically, an AP program's culture can be particularly beneficial to Students of Color in order to increase their exposure to a culture of learning (Klopfenstein). This makes their enrollment more important than ever.

Potential roadblocks to Students of Color participation in AP courses include students need to work after school, diminished access to a culture of learning that results in low expectations for attending college, lack of academic preparation to perform college level work, and absence of individual mentoring and positive academic role models (Klopfenstein). These roadblocks make academic support all the more important to Students of Color.

Academic support strategies can include funds for AP tutoring by teachers and older AP students (particularly Students of Color), and training AP teachers to best provide academic support. These strategies must acknowledge that not all Students of Color are able to attend after-school tutoring and should be broadly conceived to meet the constraints of these schedules.

There is strong evidence that a district-wide AP Coordinator can help develop support programs that meaningfully provide avenues of success for Students of Color in AP classes. Such a coordinator can develop unique small group or individual tutoring programs that meet the typical time, location, and attendance constraints of Students of Color, thereby ensuring that these resources are utilized to their fullest potential (Flores and Gomez). School counselors can also be asked to collaborate on building tutoring/retention programs (Henfield, Moore, and Wood).

These programs of support are both essential to and effective in helping Students of Color increase their confidence and self-efficacy in school and other academic settings. Older Students of Color who have been successful in AP classes can also be used in tutoring settings, allowing younger Students of Color in AP classes to see students "like them" be regarded as "scholars" (Whiting and Ford).

Individual and group tutoring and counseling can be used to help Students of Color adjust to AP-level coursework and provide support in topics such as study and test-taking skills (Whiting and Ford).

5. RPS205 should develop community-based involvement/support for Students of Color AP enrollment.

Research has demonstrated that mentoring programs between Students of Color enrolled in AP programs and people of color help ensure these students' academic success. Community partners, including the business community and nonprofit organizations, provide external support. This support could include sponsorship funds, tutors for advanced courses, and mentors (Taliaferro and DeCuir-Gunby).

These mentoring programs are especially important for Students of Color who are in need of mentors who can demonstrate the benefits of a rigorous high school curriculum for college and future work preparation. Business and community leaders can partner with schools to provide funding for programs that both promote AP teacher training/preparation and incentives for student achievement (Klopfenstein).

One model for community-based programs is the American Excellence Association. A flagship program of a civil rights/social justice organization, the Association sought to recognize the importance of SoC academic achievement and to nurture an academic environment in which Students of Color actively participate. The Association's main goal was leadership development of Students of Color.

Membership in the Association was based on a 3.0 grade point average for 2 consecutive grading periods and sponsorship by an adult who would serve as a mentor. Sustained academic success and completion of community service projects were required for continued membership (Taliaferro and DeCuir-Gunby).

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Appendices