

# Desegregation Advisory Committee

2019-2020 Annual Report

Desegregation Advisory Committee	1
Introduction	3
Chair's Comments	5
Findings of the DAC	8
I. FACULTY	8
II. DISCIPLINE	10
III. EQUITABLE ACCESS	11
IV. STUDENT ASSIGNMENT	12
V. TRANSPORTATION	13
VI. FACILITIES	13
VII. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES	14

# Introduction

The DAC convened for the 2019-2020 school year. The members are as follows:

- Shatika Armstrong
- Lance Cooper— Chair
- Shanikka Daily-Cole
- Donald Ford
- Loshanda Mitchell
- Amy Quinones
- Nancy Tredaway Stuart
- Lakeshia Wheeler
- Ella Burch- Student
- Alyssa Poe- Student
- Amel Jackson- Student
- Milton Moore- Student

The DAC members for 2020-2021 were also involved in the creation of this report. The members are as follows:

- Karessa Acosta-Lee
- Mariah Beachboard
- Ayoka Billions
- Lance Cooper— Chair
- Shanikka Daily-Cole
- Christopher Gregory
- Brain Randall
- Nancy Tredaway Stuart
- Lakeshia Wheeler
- Ellie Crane- Student
- Kydarra Pope- Student
- Amel Jackson- Student
- Joy Kim- Student
- Elise Walker-Student

## Chair's Comments

Thank you for this opportunity to provide a report on the DAC and our work in 2019-2020. Obviously, the 2019-2020 DAC was an unusual time for everyone due to the pandemic and shutdown during the spring, and it did make an impact on our ability to create a timely and complete report. I would like to thank the DOJ and HCS legal teams for their open communication during the past year. They were all very helpful in talking through different options and transitioning between the different members of the committees. The decision was made that it would be best to complete this limited version of the annual report, with more details to follow shortly in the 2020-21 annual report.

In March of 2020, we were close to finishing our public feeder pattern meetings and beginning researching and writing reports when the stay at home order was issued. Our last committee meeting was March 11, 2020. The pandemic, shutdown, and initial uncertainty basically created a postponement of any further work until a new committee was formed in the fall of 2020. Current members were given the opportunity to continue their terms on the DAC for an additional year, but there were many members who had work or family situations change because of COVID and were unable to continue. We appreciate their hard work through the 19-20 year, and appreciate our new committee members for 20-21. Many of the new members helped complete this 19-20 report.

In 2020, we were able to have most of our community feedback meetings and many were better attended than the previous year. We were able to get data from the school system, but our report is limited in some ways by not being able to complete our public meetings in 2020, and not being able to continue as a committee after March.

In lieu of a full report, we have created this brief report for the record, with the intention of having a full report for 2020-2021, that may include trends from the past two years.

I would like to take a moment to discuss the DAC's findings for this year from my perspective as the chair. Overall, there have been very positive trends. Transportation just received unitary status. We see a significant improvement in the hiring of black principals and administrators. New facilities have finished construction. We've also seen improvement in Student Assignment due to M2M transfers and Magnet Schools. Over the course of my work with the DAC, I've been thankful for the district's quick response to issues

that we've found through community feedback, and their openness in communicating with us. From my perspective, they seem to be taking the consent order seriously, and working to meet the requirements. All of these point toward positive momentum for the district.

There are two areas of concern for me personally regarding the data for 19-20 and what I have seen while serving on the DAC for now the past three years. The first is the lack of overall improvement in Student Discipline. Unfortunately, black students are disproportionately disciplined at higher rates across the district. This trend hasn't seen any significant improvement since the Consent Order was issued. We did discuss this with the district during our last meeting before the shutdown, and they said there are new measures being put in place to help with this. This will be something that I hope to see trend in a positive direction, and will report on again and in more detail in our 2020-2021 report.

The second concern is the lack of participation in Honors and AP classes by black students. In this area, I believe there was a significant moment that has created an opportunity for improvement that I would like to make sure is noted. I would also like it noted that this discussion is a perfect example of why it is important to have students serving on the DAC. The students on the 2020-21 were exceptional, and they were a great benefit to the the committee in a number of different areas.

A meeting was held with Superintendent Finley and several members of her team that were responsible for each green factor in February of 2020. It was very beneficial to get a status update before we had our feeder pattern meetings, to hear how they were addressing each factor, and a feeling of how far along they believed each factor had progressed in recent years. We did spend a portion of the meeting specifically discussing the disparity in honors and AP enrollment in classes between races. Although all students seemed to be treated equally, there seemed to be something that was affecting black students in a different way when it came to enrolling in AP and honors classes. The students on the DAC were able to speak directly into why this is happening, which included counselors describing how hard the classes would be and seeming to discourage everyone from taking these classes. This was even more discouraging for black students who might not already see others like them taking the class. They felt they could take an easier class and get a better grade, even though they were prime candidates for AP classes. I personally saw an example of that just a few weeks later when my 5th grade son, who is a white and in the gifted program, came home and only signed up for one honors class for the next

year. When I asked him why, he said that the counselor was making it out to be really hard. I can imagine it would have been even more discouraging had he not seen others who looked like him in the honors classes. During the meeting with the district, we all recognized that the students had insight that neither the parents or the administration had. I would like to commend Superintendent Finley as she recognized this too, and immediately invited the students to speak to all of her principals at their next district meeting. Several students attended and were able to provide insight and perspective to all the principals, and I was told it was really well received. At the end of the DAC's meeting with Ms. Finley and her team, we discussed creating a few focus group meetings made up of parents, students, and teachers that could talk through the two green factors that need the most work- discipline and equitable access (specifically enrollment). We believed this could help create a better understanding of what might be causing issues, as well as solutions for improving them. Unfortunately, within the next two weeks the stay at home orders were in place and the school system was entering crisis planning for finishing the school year.

This year in 2021, we did learn of some new initiatives that were put in place last summer as a result of that February meeting. Those will be discussed in more detail in the 20-21 report, but it was encouraging to see the district take a proactive approach to this problem.

Overall, as the DAC chair, I have seen a lot of positive trends toward providing an equitable education for students. There are definitely some areas that need work, and some concentration by the district, but I am encouraged by the district's responsiveness overall. This was definitely a difficult year to serve on a committee who's primary work would have started right when shutdown orders were in place. I believe with this report we are still able to give insight to trends taking place in the district, and I appreciate the work that was done across two different committees to complete this report.

In this report, we try to summarize only the data and feedback we received for the 2019-2020 report. We have seen improvements in some areas in 2020-2021, but we will try to save those comments for that year's annual report.

# Findings of the DAC

## I. FACULTY

A review of the data from the 18-19 school year shows significant improvement in some areas of faculty.

### **Areas of improvement:**

Of note, major improvement was made in the area of hiring of Certified Principals.

### **Certified Principals**

2017-2018: Certified Principals 28% Black 59% White

2018-2019: Certified Principals 43% Black 49% White

It appears the care taken in growing the talent pool and providing training for administrators is resulting in a more equitable ratio of certified principals.

It has been happily noted that special training was given to assistant principals in the topic of equity. We hope this kind of training will be made available to all staff.

### **Areas where improvement is still needed:**

#### **Pay incentive:**

16-17: 17% Black, 74% white

17-18: 10% Black, 88%white

18-19: 15% Black, 85% white

Of note is the increase in pay incentives to Black teachers in 18-19. Still, there is a noticeable difference between pay incentives for White teachers vs. Black teachers. In 2017-2018, Black teachers made up 28% of the workforce, while only 10% of the pay incentive recipients are Black. In 2018-2019, Black teachers make up 27% of the workforce but are only 15% of the pay incentive recipients.

### **Areas that are unchanged:**

#### **Singleton Ratio**

What is the demographic of students?

2017-2018: 40% Black, 39% White, 22% Other

2018-2019: 39% Black, 38% White, 23% Other



What is the demographic of teachers?

2017-2018: 28% Black, 69% White, 3% Other

2018-2019: 27%Black, 70% White, 3% Other

In 2018-2019, the percentage ratio of Black students to Black teachers in the entire district was 39:27. Per the Consent Order, the acceptable range is +/- 15 points. The difference between the Black student population and the Black teacher population is 12 percentage points. The Singleton Ratio has remained unchanged from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019.

## **OTHER NOTES:**

### **Exigent Circumstances**

“Exigent circumstances” refers to sudden absence of Teacher Screening Committee members. Teacher Screening Committees were instituted to ensure that candidates underwent unbiased screening processes.

However, in 17-18, 100% of persons who did not show because of exigent circumstances were Black. The total number of interviews missed was 9. One individual on the committee missed a total of 4 interviews.

In 18-19, 57% were Black, 14% White, and 20% Other. This would appear to be an improvement. However, the two individuals who listed themselves as “other” race than white were unable to attend interviews because they were “tied up at school.” One individual who is Black missed a total of 3 interviews.

This raises the question of burden placed on members of non-white races. Are there enough teachers of other races to even place on the teacher screening committees to prevent further implicit bias in hiring? How are teachers asked to make room with their other responsibilities so they can serve on the committees? How does serving interfere with their paid duties? Can more support be given so that they are more able to make it to the interviews?

While fewer interviews were affected this year than last year, more individuals missed this year than last year. This implies that whatever problems occurred seem to be occurring to more committee members.

### **Candidates for Hire**

The district provides detailed Candidate Lists for each year, per the Consent Order. However, the spreadsheets provided by the district contain a significant number of duplicate entries in which everything from name, date of application, position, and school were listed identically, numerous times. In order for the data to be parsed, this requires a significant time and energy burden for DAC committee members. A review of reporting methods is in order. As of right now, what is

reported by the district is a list of applications (sometimes in duplicate or triplicate) rather than a useful list of candidates.

## **Community Feedback**

There seems to be a misconception regarding the Consent Order among stakeholders at Highlands Elementary. Some believe that the Consent Order requires the teacher's racial ratio for a particular school to match that school's student ratio. However, the Consent Order technically requires the ratios to be in range with District-wide ratios. The optics may seem overwhelmingly inequitable if one does not fully understand the Consent Order. Efforts to increase teachers' knowledge regarding the Consent Order may be helpful.

Stakeholders at Highlands Elementary also expressed concern about lack of qualified staff (P.E. teacher) for an extended period of time, in addition to low morale and a feeling of disconnection between staff and administration. There is also a perceived lack of equitable recruitment in staff.

There has also been concern regarding administration at Williams Middle School unfairly biasing teachers against a student. We suggest implicit bias training be given to all administrators, on a regular basis.

There is concern regarding teachers' access to locked drop boxes. Because of where they are placed, teachers are concerned that they do not have true confidentiality if they place complaints in the box.

## **II. DISCIPLINE**

This is an area where we still have not seen significant improvement since the consent order was issued.

Black students represent 38% of the total student population across Huntsville City Schools.

Black students are still being disciplined at significantly higher rates than white students

This year's data shows that Black students are:

- 3 times more likely to receive a BLOOM ODR than a white student 1950 (total Black student referrals) vs 570 (total white student referrals)
- More than 3 times more likely to receive ISS than a white student 2033 (total # of Black students receiving ISS) vs 666 (total # of white student receiving ISS)

- More than 4 times more likely to receive OSS than a white student 1553 (total # of Black students receiving OSS) vs 328 (total # of white student receiving OSS)
- More than 5 times more likely to receive an alternative school referral than a white student 152 (total # of Black students receiving alternative school referral) vs 29 (total # of white student receiving alternative school referral)
- Nearly 4 times more likely to have an incident referred to law enforcement than a white student 200 (total # of Black students having an incident referred to law enforcement) vs 51 (total # of white students having an incident referred to law enforcement)

### **III. EQUITABLE ACCESS**

As in previous years, the DAC analyzed the data provided and focused on 4 areas: (1) that Black students have equitable access to opportunities for advanced and honors level courses, (2) Black students are encouraged and academically prepared to satisfactorily perform in the academic rigor involved with the advanced and honors classes.

#### **Equitable Access**

AP course offering/participation is not equitable across all schools. For example, Grissom has 28 AP with at least 1 student participation vs Columbia with 6 AP classes with at least 1 student, and 13 AP classes with at least 1 student participating at Jemison.

In terms of AP courses available, Columbia offers less AP courses but additional IB courses. However, analyzing the data at the enrollment level of school and race, far less Black students are enrolled in AP/IB courses vs their white peers. The total number of Black students participating in AP/IB courses for the year 2018-2019 is 856 20% vs 2691 61%.

In terms of satisfactory performance there is a large gap in proficiency. In review of the data across the district focusing on student competence at passing at least 1 AP course. We see that only 10% of black student in AP courses are passing vs 51% of white students passing AP courses across the district.

It was brought to our attention during the 2019-2020 school year from students that the AP and Honors courses are not encouraged by the staff but actually discouraged. Furthermore, black students are not represented in the AP course classroom and staff making the retention of black students in AP courses less likely.

#### **Achievement Gap**

It appears that the academic achievement gap is still very present (note 2018-2019 Scantron reading & math grades 3-8). It is concerning that across the entire school district that only 26% of black students are proficient in reading/24% in math. This means that 3 out of 4 Black student

across the district are not proficient in reading and math. This gap is further magnified when compared to White peers, whereas proficiency is 70% in Reading and 66% in Math.

## **Summary**

In summary, our analysis indicates that the District was not trending toward accomplishing its goal. We understand that closing the achievement gap is a long term goal, but there are processes that can be implemented now to have a meaningful impact on the goal. We hope that some of the new processes we learned of in 2021 will have made a significant impact on these numbers, and we look forward to seeing new year's data.

## **IV. STUDENT ASSIGNMENT**

### **1. Demographics**

Achieving the goal of balanced demographics across schools are challenging. The most recent data reviewed by the DAC showed that the District's students are 38 percent Black, 38 percent White, and 23 percent Other. Several schools have a disproportionately high Black population: Chapman MS (66%), Dawson Elementary (75%), Martin Luther King, Jr (75%), Lakewood (72%), Highlands Elementary (75%), Jemison High (74%), Lakewood Elementary (72%), Lee High (64%), McNair Jr. High (77%), Montview Elementary (73%), Rolling Hills Elementary (73%), and Sonnie Hereford Elementary (67%). The schools showing predominantly White populations are: Goldsmith Schiffman ES (77%), Hampton Cove ES (79%), Hampton Cove Middle School (79%), Monte Sano Elementary (82%) and Mountain Gap P-8 (71%).

### **2. M-to-M Transfers**

The DAC is pleased to note that the District continued the advertisement of the M-to-M options through various media during the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, however, due to changes in the school year for Covid-19, the advertising efforts were difficult to fully measure.

The number of applications for M-to-M transfers was 629 which was an increase from prior years and with the number of transfers offered and accepted. The most popular first-choice elementary schools were the same as the previous year: Blossomwood Elementary, Hampton Cove Elementary, and Jones Valley Elementary. The most popular first-choice middle schools were also the same as the previous year: Huntsville Junior High, Hampton Cove Middle School, and Challenger Middle School.

During the year the following occurred:

- 22 denied due to lack of space (decrease from prior years)
- 1 denied due to ineligibility (around the same as prior years)

- 116 offered and declined (decrease over prior years)
- 489 offered and accepted (increase over prior years)

### **3. Magnet Programs**

Magnet school is at or very near target enrollment goals set out in the Consent Order (+/- 15 percent of total enrollment demographics). Enrollment of Black students is slightly higher for Columbia High School MYP, Lee Create and Performing Arts – Dance, -Vocal Performance, and -Technical Theatre.

The DAC received a complaint regarding the lack of available transportation for Magnet students to go back to their home schools for sports participation.

The DAC recommends that the District work to inform parents of the available options and limitations in regards to what is feasible for the school system to provide and support for the magnet programs. We would also encourage administrators and teachers at magnet schools to articulate the purpose of their programs and the options and limitations of participating.

## **V. TRANSPORTATION**

The DAC was excited that the district received unitary status during the 19-20 school year based on 18-19 school data. We continue to monitor this factor, especially community feedback that might not otherwise show up in a data set.

## **VI. FACILITIES**

HCS completed all of its new construction projects in accordance with the Consent Order. Consent Order was limited in scope pertaining to the maintenance and improvement of existing facilities. Additional transparency regarding Facilities Maintenance and Operations should occur. District should identify the number of request they receive per school, average ticket resolution time, and the cost associated with maintenance.

Just before the stay at home orders during our meeting with the Superintendent and her staff, the district did share with us their thoughts on long term goals depending on finances, and we believe they have a good strategy in place. The district has been responsive to complaints that filter to the DAC, but it is hard for us to know exactly what are lingering maintenance issues, and how long they take to address, without community feedback. Facilities will continue to be something the DAC will need to monitor, especially with the rapid growth in the Huntsville area.

## VII. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Overall, there seems to be a trend toward more equitable access to clubs across the schools, especially at the High School level. There are still a few concerns, but we feel these could be improved with intentionality.

Math Club is the one required club at every elementary school. At most of the majority white elementary schools, there is a larger gap for participation rates for Math Club white and black elementary students. As clubs are often great tools for development of social skills and confidence for future placement in Honors and AP classes, we would like the district to take note of this, and provide training for these particular schools to help proactively recruit black students. We are not sure of the root cause of this issue- it could be an after school activity and related to bus routes, it could be because of lack of intentional recruiting of students, or it could be because new black students don't see others like them in the clubs already. We would encourage the district to actively seek to discover the cause in each school and think creatively for a solution- such as an online club meeting for those that might be limited by transportation.

### Participation Rates:

Farley Black 6% to White 50%

Goldsmith Black 6% to White 84%

Hampton Cove Black 4% to White 38%

Jones Valley Black 4% to White 19%

Monte Sano Black 3% to White 19%

Mt Gap Black 0% to White 15%

Weatherly Black 5% to White 17%

Also note at the elementary level, Highlands (only AM Art), McDonnell (no clubs other than Match), Lakewood (Green Power) seem to be lacking in opportunities other than Math Club, but this could be an example of how a "club" is defined by different schools.