



## **Portland Public Schools Racial Educational Equity Policy**

Spring 2011

The Board of Education for Portland Public Schools is committed to the success of every student in each of our schools. The mission of Portland Public Schools is that by the end of elementary, middle, and high school, every student by name will meet or exceed academic standards and will be fully prepared to make productive life decisions. We believe that every student has the potential to achieve, and it is the responsibility of our school district to give each student the opportunity and support to meet his or her highest potential.

In light of this mission and our beliefs, Portland Public Schools' historic, persistent achievement gap between White students and students of color is unacceptable. While efforts have been made to address the inequities between White students and students of color, these efforts have been largely unsuccessful. Closing the achievement gap while raising achievement for all students is the top priority of the Board of Education, the Superintendent and all district staff. Race must cease to be a reliable predictor of student achievement and success.<sup>1</sup>

In Portland Public Schools, for every year that we have data, White students have clearly outperformed Black, Hispanic and Native American students on state assessments in every subject at every grade level. White students consistently graduate at higher percentages than students of color, while students of color are disciplined far more frequently than White students. These disparities are unacceptable and are directly at odds with our belief that all students can achieve.

The responsibility for the disparities among our young people rests with adults, not the children. We are aware that student achievement data from school districts across the country reveal similar patterns, and that complex societal and historical factors contribute to the inequities our students face. Nonetheless, rather than perpetuating disparities, Portland Public Schools must address and overcome this inequity and institutional racism, providing all students with the support and opportunity to succeed.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this policy, "race" is defined as "A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups." Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*. (2007).

Portland Public Schools will significantly change its practices in order to achieve and maintain racial equity in education. Educational equity means raising the achievement of all students while (1) narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students and (2) eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.<sup>2</sup> The concept of educational equity goes beyond formal equality -- where all students are treated the same -- to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, have the opportunity to benefit equally. Educational equity benefits all students, and our entire community. Students of all races shall graduate from PPS ready to succeed in a racially and culturally diverse local, national and global community. To achieve educational equity, PPS will provide additional and differentiated resources to support the success of all students, including students of color.

In order to achieve racial equity for our students, the Board establishes the following goals:

- A. The District shall provide every student with equitable access to high quality and culturally relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities and other educational resources, even when this means differentiating resources to accomplish this goal.
- B. The District shall create multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of our diverse students, and shall actively encourage, support and expect high academic achievement for students from all racial groups.
- C. The District shall recruit, employ, support and retain racially and linguistically diverse and culturally competent administrative, instructional and support personnel, and shall provide professional development to strengthen employees' knowledge and skills for eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in achievement. Additionally, in alignment with the Oregon Minority Teacher Act, the District shall actively strive to have our teacher and administrator workforce reflect the diversity of our student body.
- D. The District shall remedy the practices, including assessment, that lead to the over-representation of students of color in areas such as special education and discipline, and the under-representation in programs such as talented and gifted and Advanced Placement.
- E. All staff and students shall be given the opportunity to understand racial identity, and the impact of their own racial identity on themselves and others.
- F. The District shall welcome and empower families, including underrepresented families of color (including those whose first language may not be English) as essential partners in their student's education, school planning and District decision-making. The District shall create welcoming environments that reflect and support the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population and community. In addition, the District will include other partners who have demonstrated culturally-specific expertise -- including government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, and the community in general -- in meeting our educational outcomes.

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<sup>2</sup> Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton *Courageous Conversations About Race*, p. 46 (2006)

The Board will hold the Superintendent and central and school leadership staff accountable for making measurable progress in meeting the goals. Every Portland Public Schools employee is responsible for the success and achievement of all students. The Board recognizes that these are long term goals that require significant work and resources to implement across all schools. As such, the Board directs the Superintendent to develop action plans with clear accountability and metrics, and including prioritizing staffing and budget allocations, which will result in measurable results on a yearly basis towards achieving the above goals. Such action plans shall identify specific staff leads on all key work, and include clear procedures for district schools and staff. The Superintendent will present the Board with a plan to implement goals A through F within three months of adoption of this policy. Thereafter, the Superintendent will report on progress towards these goals at least twice a year, and will provide the Board with updated action plans each year.

References: “The State of Black Oregon: (The Urban League of Portland 2009); “Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Report” (Coalition of Communities of Color/Portland State University 2010); The Economic Cost of the Achievement Gap (Chalkboard Project 2010); The Hispanic/White Achievement Gap in Oregon (Chalkboard Project 2009); A Deeper Look at the Black-White Achievement Gap in Multnomah County (Chalkboard Project 2009); ORS 342.433.