



Greater Expectations, Greater Opportunities: The Right to an Excellent Education

Report of the 2017-2018 Joint Task Force on
Educational Equity for Prince George's County Public Schools

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TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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INTRODUCTION

In our quest for a better society, the sole equalizing tool for success is the access to a fulfilling, vibrant, and meaningful education. In Prince George's County, we humbly and eagerly accepted our role in achieving this quest many years ago with the passage of our Strategic Plan – "The Promise of Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS)."

While this promise to our students, families, and key stakeholders was well-intended, it is clear that more work remains to be done. For evidence, we need only look to shortcomings in the allocation of academic and social services for students, the diversity of our staff and their development as professionals, the engagement and inclusion of all families and the funding of core programs and school-level budgets. For better and for worse, these reflect our system-wide values.

With the hope of making PGCPS a model educational equity, the Board of Education's Committee on Board Development and Governance established in April 2017 a task force to examine gaps in student achievement and recommend strategies to move our system toward our strategic plan goals.

Over a one-year course, the Joint Task Force on Educational Equity for PGCPS discussed areas related to educational equity and their potential benefits to our system. While our recommendations are backed by academic research, the task force recognizes the ever-changing landscape of education. This document should be fluid to fit the needs of PGCPS.

It should also be noted that this task force ran its course alongside the statewide Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, commonly known as the Kirwan Commission. In January 2018, the Commission released its preliminary report recommendations. Many of the Kirwan Commission

recommendations – from early childhood education and community schools to diverse staff recruitment and weighted funding for specified student groups – are reflected in our own recommendations.

On behalf of the task force members, we submit this report acknowledging that we must be balanced, not equal, in our allocation of human, academic, and financial resources; we must understand that equity must be approached in an urgent manner. In many cases, accountability is a stronger factor of equitable academic success than money.

We look forward to our stakeholders' input and consideration as we continue this important discussion around educational equity with our system.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Joint Task Force on Educational Equity for Prince George’s County Public Schools was established in April 2017 by the Board of Education’s Standing Committee on Board Development and Governance. The 10-member task force was to include an equal number of Board Members and Administration staff, appointed by the Board Chair and Chief Executive Officer, respectively.

Board Members

K. Alexander Wallace, District 7
Carolyn Boston, Board Vice Chair, District 6
Lupi Quinteros-Grady, District 2
Dinora A. Hernandez, District 3
David Murray, District 1

Administration Staff Members

Christian Rhodes, Chief, Strategic and External Affairs
Nora Morales, Diversity Officer
Gladys Whitehead, Ph.D., Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Tomas Rivera, Diversity Recruitment Executive Coordinator
Lisa Price, PMP, CGPM, BSP, Performance Officer (April 2017-June 2017)

Our Task and Findings

The charge for the task force was to “recommend changes to and/or the development of Board policy and Administrative procedures that would incorporate equity into the Strategic Plan.” After consultation at the June 2017 Board of Education retreat, three main pillars of educational equity were established:

Educational Equity and Our People

- A diverse, culturally responsive, strategically allocated, supported and developed workforce
- Intentional, unapologetic, and equitable family and community engagement with an emphasis on providing wraparound services

Educational Equity and Our Academic Resources

- Equitable access to and appropriate allocation of high-quality instructional staff, programs, services and materials

OUR STUDENTS

7% White, Asian or Other

31% Hispanic

62% African American

STUDENT NEEDS

11% Special Education

16% English Language Learners

64% FARMs

Educational Equity and Our Budgetary Resource Allocation

- Funding our schools, staff and programs with an equity lens

Defining Educational Equity in Prince George's County Public Schools

The members of the task force first defined what an equitable education meant to our school system, recognizing the existing achievement levels and gaps:

“Educational equity in Prince George’s County Public Schools is having adequate and appropriate access for each student, regardless of socioeconomic status, language of origin, or special needs, to ensure a high-quality education that empowers all students and contributes to thriving communities.”

Through this definition, the task force began its work of examining educational equity gaps and drafting recommendations with presentations from business, nonprofit and research partners that shed light on removing barriers to a high-quality education:

- Kajeet – Digital Divide and the Technological Gap
- The Literacy Lab – in-classroom PreK-3 tutoring and Male Mentorship
- The Hanover Group – Evaluating research previously conducted for PGCPs on topics such as budget allocations, staffing and academic program quality

There were also presentations by Lisa Price, PGCPs Performance Officer, and Tomas Rivera, Diversity Recruitment Executive Coordinator, on baseline data to guide the task force’s work and the work of the Human Resources Department and the recommendations of the Diverse Workforce Task Force.

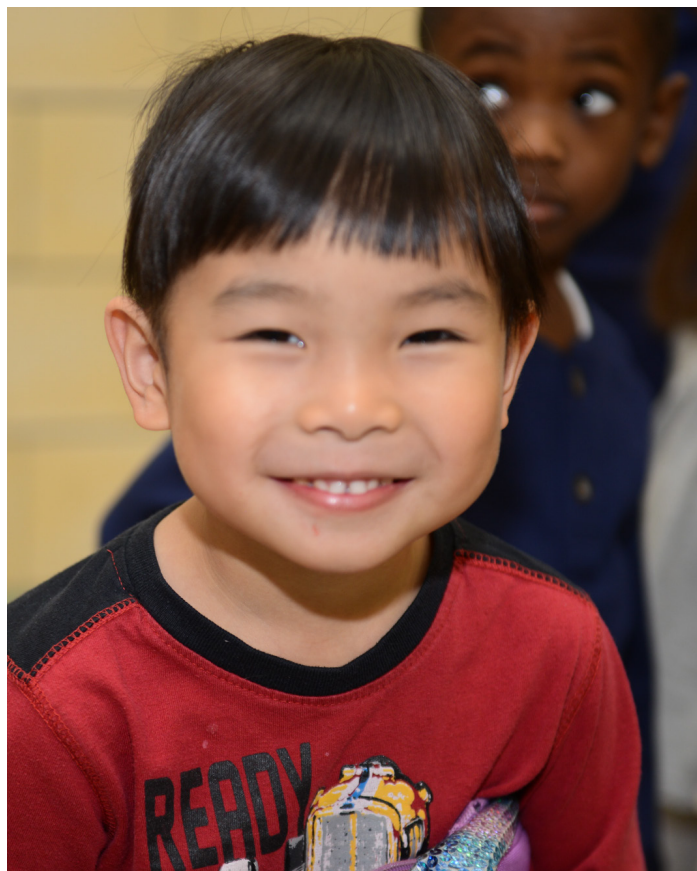


RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Educational Equity and Our People

Recommendation #1: The Administration shall establish criteria to provide high-needs schools with additional resources and positions (i.e., social workers, parental engagement assistants, English for Speakers of Other Languages teachers, etc.) that will be classified as Locked+ positions. These additional resources and/or positions will help to bridge achievement gaps and address the unique school needs.

- The Administration shall determine the criteria by which schools may receive additional supports.
- The Administration shall, in consultation with the school community, establish a core set of needed positions and/or resources that will increase student achievement.



The Board of Education shall establish a Strategic Staffing Policy to increase the proportion of high-performing staff and National Board Certified Teachers within high-needs schools, high-staff turnover schools, or schools that historically have been staffed disproportionately by provisionally-certified, out-of-field, underperforming staff. In addition, we recognize that a component of a high-performing workforce requires equitable investment in professional development strategies that contribute to excellence in instruction and teacher retention. The Board of Education shall also properly monitor data regarding student access to effective teachers and administrators.

Recommendation #2: As our student demographics grow more culturally diverse, our workforce must diversify and become more culturally competent. The Administration is charged with formulating partnerships with minority-serving institutions of higher education, local colleges and universities, and professional organizations that cultivate culturally competent educators.

The Board of Education shall advocate for:

- Statutes that require higher education institutions to offer courses to address culturally responsive leadership and instructional practices, Growth Mindset, English Language Learners and families, and effective family engagement.
- Scholarship funding to encourage males to pursue early childhood, primary, and intermediate level education.
- Full funding for the Teaching Fellows in Maryland scholarship created in 2014 by the Maryland General Assembly.
- Mandatory employee training in cultural proficiency.

Recommendation #3: Expand the “grow your own” educator program to include a weighted job application for PGCPs alumni.

■ Educational Equity and Our Academic Resources

Recommendation #1: Establish a Community Schools Board Policy/Administrative Procedure that follows a nationally recognized and implemented framework.

Recommendation #2: Establish a policy that defines digital equity in education which identifies how to close the educational digital divide in PGCPs. The policy will develop and implement a plan to address the digital divide as it relates to access to educational technologies with an emphasis on students from families with economic challenges. The goal is to ensure that students have access to adequate technology in school and at home.

Recommendation #3: Conduct an equity analysis of speciality programs, charter schools, and lottery admissions to use in the formulation of recommendations to improve equity, such as weighted criteria for student applications from certain demographics.

Recommendation #4: Enhance our before/after school and summer enrichment programs to increase learning opportunities for at-risk students.

Recommendation #5: Consider the consolidation and strategic location of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to create magnet CTE high schools across the county. This may require the establishment of Career and Technology Academies (CAT Academies), similar to the work conducted by Anne Arundel County Public Schools, for the Northern and Southern regions of the county.

Recommendation #6: Examine the viability of extending the school day and academic year in consultation with labor partners, similar to the efforts accomplished by the District of Columbia Public Schools.

Recommendation #7: Advocate for funding and partnerships to increase the supply of licensed childcare providers in strategically identified areas throughout the county.

Recommendation #8: Study the viability of distance learning, as well as collaboration with regional higher education partners, to increase the number of eligible students in dual enrollment programs by eliminating financial and logistical challenges.

Recommendation #9: Support the administration of Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests to English Language Learners in their native language.

Recommendation #10: Advocate against citizenship requirements for Career and Technical Education program state-based licenses. Many immigrant students matriculate through Career and Technical Education programs in planning to gain industry certifications and licenses, unaware of the citizenship requirement.

Recommendation #11: Study the feasibility of an expedited graduation track for over-age/under-credited students (students who enroll into the system two or more years above their grade-level age range).



Educational Equity and Our Budgetary Resource Allocation

Recommendation #1: The Board of Education should charge the administration to study and develop recommendations to enhance, change, or replace the current Student-Based Budget model to support the district's Equity Plan.

Recommendation #2: The Administration should create a funding system for schools that receive an administrative established percentage of English Language Learners throughout the school year, during non-traditional registration periods.

Recommendation #3: The Administration shall, on an annual basis, conduct an administrative review and analysis of the equitable funding of certain student

demographics and related academic achievement and how those identified demographics have improved in academic achievement due to the funding allocation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIDENTIFIED PILLAR

Through the course of the presentations, discussions, and formulation of the aforementioned recommendations, there were a few substantive recommendations that were put forth and discussed that fell outside of the three identified pillars. The following recommendations are largely administrative, but are woven into the core of our work under the three identified pillars.

Recommendation #1: Rewrite and consolidate Board Policies and Administrative Procedures on Equity and Culturally Responsive Schools and Central Offices. In the policy, define characteristics of what an "at-risk" student is and what "adverse childhood experiences" (ACEs) are.

Recommendation #2: Establish an administrative position to develop and oversee the implementation of the school system's equity plan and regulate and critique submitted Equity Implementation Plans for all relative administrative departments. The Administration should rename the Office of Diversity to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Recommendation #3: Departmental managers shall be charged with developing Equity Implementation Plans (EIPs), under the approved Board of Education definition for educational equity, to be submitted to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Recommendation #4: Advocate for funding in the fiscal year 2020 budget to partner with a research firm that can further analyze educational equity in PGCPs and assist with the rollout of the task force recommendations.



"All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin."

John F. Kennedy
President of the United States of America, 1961

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