

Fairfax County Public Schools Antiracist Policy Demands

Framework

Free and Antiracist Minds is an antiracist, abolitionist, nonprofit organization consisting of educators, parents, students, and administrators. We approach our work from a transformative framework, with the recognition that all knowledge and language are socio-political constructs and never neutral. We live in a nation and society founded upon white supremacy, which is embedded in each of its institutions, including education. We seek to examine systems and information through a critical lens, with the goal of empowering people and liberating them from the power imbalances placed upon them by their various identities of race, gender, sexuality, class, mental ability, and physical ability; being antiracist is therefore not limited to race alone. Oppression does not occur linearly or within a binary; therefore we must dismantle oppressive structures with an intersectional approach, including but not limited to: critical theory, critical race theory, feminist theory, queer theory and DisCrit theory. The nature of abolitionist work is to transform racist, carceral institutions to liberatory spaces, rooted in critical love for all humanity. Educational institutions must utilize liberatory and critical pedagogies that empower their students to become critically conscious citizens of the world. If we do nothing to interrupt the oppressive structures of these institutions, we are complicit in the inequity and injustice that jeopardizes the mental and social well being of BIPOC students and their futures. There is much work that needs to be done, and it starts with antiracist policy goals that legitimize and legalize a truly equitable approach to education.

Purpose of Antiracist Policy

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) has been and continues to be a racist school system. The purpose of this document is to provide information on how the FCPS School Board can create an antiracist policy, rooted in transformative changes,

that allows BIPOC students, teachers, and families to thrive in school. In order to effect transformative change, the antiracist policy will support the proactive and expeditious dismantling of the pervasive, multi-leveled racism that exists within FCPS practices, activities, procedures, protocols, curriculum, and pedagogy that impacts all students, faculty, and staff with significantly higher dangers for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ folx.

Background

The past few years have welcomed a much-needed push toward equity in FCPS. The One Fairfax policy that the School Board adopted in 2017 “...commits both boards to consider equity in decision-making and in the development and delivery of future policies, programs, and services. One Fairfax offers a framework—or “lens”— for the county and schools to look intentionally, comprehensively, and systemically at barriers that may be creating gaps in opportunity.”

The Department of Instructional Services has begun efforts to implement a culturally responsive curriculum in the social studies department; however, the minimal funding allocated to these efforts is impeding the wide sweeping and swift antiracist intervention that the entirety of our FCPS curriculum requires. To be most impactful and meaningful, policy must also explicitly incorporate the principles of antiracism and acknowledge that racism in America is systemically embedded throughout its mainstream institutions. There is a need to examine racism’s presence in all pedagogy and curriculum, as well as all aspects of educational systems. Literature shows that curricular racism and cultural hegemony have a deleterious impact on student psychosocial well-being, as well as learning and academic outcomes, and that implementing the principles of antiracism, which are similar to those of critical and/or emancipatory pedagogy, is of great benefit to these same outcomes. An antiracist policy is a vital component in FCPS’s ability to carry out both FCPS Strategic Plan Goal #1 (Student Success) and Goal #2 (Caring Culture).

Essential Outcomes of Free and Antiracist Mind's Antiracist Policy

Structure & Advocacy

FCPS takes institutional responsibility to disrupt and dismantle its current hierarchical structure at the district, regional, and school levels. Shared leadership, distributed power, flat structures, and other democratic systems that include and center students and their families in a meaningful way are put in place instead of oligarchies like the current principal/assistant principals structure.

- **The county moves away from a centralized governing body.** School communities (school pyramids, staff, families, and students) are given more power to make decisions for their schools. This allows for schools to become community-based schools that are able to provide specialized services for students and their families. Systems are put into place to ensure that affluent parents of white students do not power grab or opportunity hoard, and instead, decisions are made amongst representatives of all students.
- **The School Board and Central Office become supporting bodies for school based decision-making groups.** The School Board and Central Office equitably distribute resources and funding to the school communities and their decision-making groups so that all students have access to quality, rigorous education, resources, and influence.
- **Students, families, and the community are included in decision-making groups.** This includes the formation and distribution of budgets, creation of curriculum, disciplinary processes, hiring, and so forth.
- **All School Board decisions will be made in collaboration with diverse community groups through multilingual engagement with families and through proven-effective nontraditional methods of communication.** School Board, schools, and staff will prioritize methods that center relationship-building. This includes a proportionate or even majority collaboration with students/families/community partners from underrepresented races, ethnicities,

languages, sexual and gender identities, and socio-economic backgrounds. School board members will make decisions with these students, families, and community members.

- **FCPS acts as an advocacy entity within the county and state for better housing, employment, and healthcare for students and families.** The school district does not exist in a vacuum and will take a stance to ensure interrelated structures are also antiracist.
- **FCPS makes reparations.** FCPS seeks and follows through on opportunities to repair loss to the BIPOC communities caused by FCPS actions, current or past. Reparations are made for stolen property, labor, opportunity, in collaboration with leaders from the harmed communities.

Curriculum, Pedagogy, Instruction

Decolonizing the curriculum is grounded in the pursuit of BIPOC liberation, criticality, excellence, and joy (Muhammad, 2020). A liberatory curriculum includes facets of important equity-minded instructional practices including multicultural education, culturally-responsive pedagogy, and social justice education.

- **FCPS will immediately review and rewrite curriculum so that it is antiracist and decolonial.** Transformation in the curriculum will be achieved when the revision process includes each discipline and antiracist curriculum redesign that is not limited to anti-bias curriculum.
- **Curriculum will reflect people of color and their contributions, humanity, and joy, and will do so in deeply meaningful ways.** Intersectional narratives address issues of gender, sexuality, ability, and class among others. These narratives are not additive but centered in the curriculum of all subjects and all grade levels.
- **Curriculum is grounded in social justice** and works to
 - Expose the social political context that students experience

- Raise students' consciousness about inequity in everyday social, environmental, economic, and political situations
- Educate and encourage students to use their voices, experiences, and personal joy to affect change in their community
- Create opportunities for students to enact social and political change
- **Curriculum is co-constructed with students to leverage their funds of knowledge, experiences, culture, language, and personal history.** Curriculum and assessment are not constructed around eugenics-based state and national assessments.
- **The county's schools will implement instruction that is grounded in progressive educational pedagogy** including concept-based inquiry, constructivist pedagogy, and project-based learning.
- **Curriculum and instruction centers students' linguistic practices as language learners and emerging bilinguals.** Teachers' pedagogical practices honor students' translinguaging and multiple literacies in the process of unlearning ideas about the supremacy of the English language.

Process:

- Fairfax County will hire experts in the field of social justice and abolitionist education as well as teacher organizers to lead this work.
- Current county leadership will be trained on antiracism, abolition, and their role and responsibility in dismantling systemic oppression within schools.
- All teachers will/have received training on concept-based inquiry.
- All teachers will receive training on abolitionist social-emotional learning.
- All teachers will receive training on the school to prison pipeline, and ways to dismantle it.
- All teachers will have knowledge on coursework on the history of and from BIPOC.
- End all state and county standardized and high-stakes testing.

- Provide more information regarding open enrollment course selection to families in FCPS, making International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses available and encouraged for every student, while also providing additional supports like free tutoring to support their success in these courses.
- Eliminate whole-group tracking of students (i.e. Level IV Advanced Academic Program) into separate classrooms and provide rigorous curriculum in every classroom.

School Resource Officers (SROs) & Discipline

Any collaboration between the police and schools creates racist outcomes for BIPOC students. No BIPOC child is disposable and schools should work towards disrupting systems that perpetuate criminalization. Below are descriptions of some practices and policies that support removing policing from within our schools.

- **No relationships or agreements between FCPS and FCPD or other policing entities.** The presence of police in schools inherently criminalizes students. Official relationships between the school and the police force manifest in a direct school-to-prison pipeline for students, especially for BIPOC students.
- **No students speak to police without a parent or guardian present.** Schools will not support the criminalization of students. Students should never be put in the position where they speak to police on school grounds without a family member or guardian present.
- **Schools no longer will use security forces.** School security officers act as in-school police and mirror many of the violent behaviors policing fosters. Authoritative and punitive measures are removed from schools.
- **The racist history of policing is integrated into the PreK-12 curriculum and is also taught in staff/administration/central office training and professional development.** The origins of the police are rooted in white supremacy and have been used as a tool of the State in order to oppress, control, and criminalize

BIPOC and poor people. An antiracist educational system teaches an accurate history of policing in America.

Beyond the scope of police, we also know that our schools have adopted policing measures without the police and these racist practices should also be abolished. Schools should leverage liberatory practices rather than punitive measures to create harmonious classroom environments. Below are several examples of policies and practices that can be used within the classroom, at the school level, and district wide.

- **Schools address their own policing and stop oppressive practices.** Policing occurs in schools even when the police are not present through racist policies and practices that oppress students of color. Educational policies and practices that mirror policing should be abolished. This includes dress codes, hair requirements, character education programs, limiting language, positive behavior interventions and supports, and more.
- **Abolish punitive disciplinary practices, including the Hearings Office.** Remove all punitive or disciplinary practices that isolate and spirit murder (the denial of inclusion, protection, safety, nurturance, and acceptance because of fixed, yet fluid and moldable, structures of racism) (Love, 2016, p.2) of BIPOC children. In addition, student discipline records are expunged, all students are allowed to use their base school as their graduating school on their transcripts, and other discipline practices that limit the future of students are removed.
- **Transformative Justice is used to amend conflict and prevent further harm.** Transformative Justice goes to the root of problems so that individuals can become whole again in a way that does not create more trauma and/or harm (brown & Mingus, 2020). Schools use Transformative Justice and are led by experienced professionals in the practice.
- **Mental health and Social Emotional Learning is valued over disciplinary measures.** Abolitionist Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is infused into

curriculum, daily personal/classroom rituals, restorative justice circles, and racial justice initiatives.

- **Schools are held accountable.** Schools take every measure possible to prevent the criminalization of students. However, if students are placed in criminal systems as a result of school policies and practices, schools will support those students emotionally, financially, and educationally. Reparations are made for children of color stolen by the school-to-prison pipeline.

Abolitionist Social Emotional Learning

Abolitionist (SEL) supports relationship building and communication within educational spaces. It is a type of learning where knowledge of oppressive systems is coupled with social emotional practices. Abolitionist SEL is not an isolated lesson. It is a way of being that informs all aspects of teaching, learning, and relationship building with students, families, and communities.

- **Trainings are frequent and provided by professionals.** Teachers, administrators, and other staff are regularly trained in abolitionist SEL by practiced experts in the field.
- **Schools integrate Abolitionist SEL rituals and routines.** Schools welcome the full range of emotions and provide tools to support students in processing and asking for support. Schools should have specific funding and intentionally normalize these practices rather than resort to disciplinary measures.
- **SEL that is intentionally antiracist.** Culturally-affirming SEL relates students back to their ancestry while recognizing and addressing trauma. SEL devoid of culturally-affirming practices and understandings is not SEL at all.
- **The community is at the center of the work.** Pay teachers, parents and community members to develop and implement Abolitionist SEL models.

HR & Personnel

FCPS must be antiracist in its recruitment, hiring and retention practices and policies. There must also be extensive and ongoing antiracist education, therapy, and training at every level of staff in school and administrative buildings. The qualifications and certifications for hiring staff should be reviewed before any new hires occur to ensure that they are antiracist and are not creating barriers to suitable applicants from entering the candidate pool. There will be extensive efforts made to capture input and feedback from staff and students on the climate in which they work and learn.

The population of hiring panels must be a comprehensive and far reaching effort to produce a panel representative of the school community, both staff and families, in terms of cultural/ethnic background, educational services, and perspective. Substantial efforts must be made to capture students' perspective on this decision as well, including the participation of families, students, and community members. Implicit and explicit biases among panelists that could potentially impact candidates will be made transparent and discussed prior to interviews.

Substantial efforts should be made to attract BIPOC candidates within and outside of Fairfax County, especially those with experience with antiracist teaching practices, a social justice oriented outlook to teaching, and a commitment to abolitionist teaching. There must be more than one candidate for each position. When this does not occur, there must be a review of the recruitment and selection process to examine possible deficiencies, and if additional candidates are not produced, additional recruitment should be made. Active and sustained engagement must be developed with the career services offices of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, institutions with a curricular focus on abolitionist teaching practices, critical race theory, and social justice education, and with career services offices and

cultural affinity groups at predominantly white institutions, including but not limited to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ student groups.

Retention

In order to retain BIPOC teachers, FCPS will implement the following best practices:

- Support BIPOC teachers with coaching around antiracist teaching, and other robust professional, academic, and emotional support in navigating white supremacist school cultures (The Education Trust-West, 2020).
- Provide formal and informal opportunities for mentorship between veteran and new BIPOC teachers who share critical identities, and compensate mentor teachers (The Education Trust-West, 2020).
- Empower and invest in teachers' professional growth by offering professional learning, covering conference and travel costs, and providing a path to career advancement into administration and educational leadership opportunities (The Education Trust-West, 2020).
- Collect and disaggregate race-specific data on turnover rates, job satisfaction, and the support teachers need to stay in the classroom (The Education Trust-West, 2020).
- Free, radical self/collective care and therapy for BIPOC educators and support staff who (ATN, 2020).
- Free, antiracist therapy for white educators and support staff (ATN, 2020).

Community Socialization

All students, parents, and staff will have access to this antiracist policy.

Initially:

- This policy will be prominently placed in multiple locations in all FCPS buildings. A summary of the policy and its purpose will be included at the top of this

placement. It will also be professionally translated into all languages (not just Google translated).

- The policy will be included in the student handbook and start of school year materials.
- The FCPS website, and each school website, will include a prominent homepage call-to-action to “Learn about FCPS’ Antiracist Policy”.

The following items will be performed annually, at minimum:

- This policy will be reviewed to see if any updates are needed for improvement.
- Multiple forms of communication in multiple languages dedicated to the policy and understanding its implications should be sent to all parents, students, and staff.
- All current FCPS staff must be informed about and participate in mandatory professional development on the antiracist policy, its timeline for operationalization, and a broad overview of what it means to apply it to the school system.
- This presentation will become a part of new staff onboarding.
- All FCPS students will read it and have a classroom discussion about it, which should include defining it and their role in promoting it.
- Performance standards surrounding the antiracist policy will be put in place for all staff evaluations.

Reporting

All students, parents, and staff will be informed of the process and have access to the channels for reporting racism at all levels, which will not rely solely on administration.

- Each school will produce and publish an annual report of the discrimination, harrasment, and biased incidents that occurred and the actions that were taken.

- FCPS will follow up with those who have gone through the reporting process to gather feedback and learn ways to better support and center the needs of those harmed.
- All reports of racism are acknowledged and responded to within 5 business days with a path or plan towards timely resolution.
- A specialized investigative body will lead investigations of reports.
- Disciplinary action will be taken against employees with confirmed report/s of racism.
- Individuals will have the option of having an advocate accompany them through the process. FCPS will make a third party advocate available in all other circumstances.
- The identity of students, staff, and families will remain confidential when they report racism.

Glossary

Abolition/Abolish- The rejection of specific ways of knowing while activating scholarship with a sense of urgency for the future; the liberation of humanism (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cq2aBZLudAkRv3LdLmNUICcDsFtUIqK/view>)

Antiracist- One who supports policies or actions that dismantle a system of institutionalized and legal control that empowers and benefits one racial group while oppressing and disadvantaging other racial groups.

Bias- A personal and sometimes unreasoned prejudice (retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bias>)

BIPOC- Black, Indigenous, People of Color

Racism- A system of legal and institutional control that benefits one racial group with power and privilege while disadvantaging another racial group or groups, regardless of individual actions or intentions.

Restorative Justice- A set of practices that aim to heal damage caused and restore a relationship

SEL- Social Emotional Learning that advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation (retrieved from <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>)

Spirit-murdering- “The denial of inclusion, protection, safety, nurturance, and acceptance because of fixed, yet fluid and moldable, structures of racism” (Love, 2013)

Transformative Justice- Addresses the root system of the harm so that the harm is no longer possible; a way of responding to violence and harm that does not cause more violence and harm (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-BOFz5TXo>)

Translanguaging- “The act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to

maximize communicative potential” (retrieved from <https://ealjournal.org/2016/07/26/what-is-translanguaging/>)

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