

Midlothians for Change

Advancing Racial Equity in Midlothian ISD

The City of Midlothian and the Midlothian Independent School District (Midlothian ISD) is positioned to champion change by leveraging a critical asset – our community. The experiences shared at the June 15, 2020 Midlothian ISD Board meeting reflected a long-standing culture of inequality, racism, and exclusion. Our students and families are hungry for change. Midlothians are ready for change.

We, Midlothians for Change, appreciate Dr. Ledbetter's swift response to the families who spoke out at the board meeting. We hope you continue your commitment to inclusivity as the district decides how to close racial academic achievement gaps and create an equitable experience for all students.

The decision-making process also needs to change, otherwise we will continue to see inequities. When making decisions, the district needs to be asking:

1. Are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color affected by this change "at the table?"
2. How will any proposed change affect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color?
3. How will any proposed change be perceived by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color?
4. Does the proposed change worsen or ignore existing disparities?

We don't believe the Diversity Council should be the vehicle for change. That was not its intended purpose, nor is the council inclusive of the community. This is a formative moment for the district, and there is an opportunity to intentionally think about how the district can share power and decision making with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

We, Midlothians for Change, understand the problems facing our school district. The recommendations that follow are key sets of recommendations on specific changes the Midlothian ISD should adopt if it is committed to racial equity. The recommendations are submitted in order of importance.

We request that all recommendations be considered and acted upon with all intentional speed. For those items not selected, we ask for a written response disclosing the reason(s). For those items selected, along with their subcomponents, we request a timeframe is provided for anticipated completion. Furthermore, we ask the recommendations are part of the performance measures for the district and district staff (paid performance).

We stand ready to assist in facilitating these recommendations. We appreciate the willingness to submit this as an agenda item at the July 20, 2020 Midlothian ISD School Board meeting. As we install and complete these recommendations, we look forward to standing with you and saying that we are MISD proud!

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Recommendations

- 1) **Work with an anti-bias anti-racism (ABAR) vendor to thoroughly review existing policies and practices and assess how they perpetuate racism, sexism or any other discriminatory actions.**
 - a) Examine the student code of conduct (i.e. language regarding the prohibition of head wraps and durags) and revise.
 - b) Racially motivated incidents involving students and/or personnel should receive the same degree of monitoring and reporting as bullying. Parents and students should understand concrete steps to take and the process should include a component of restorative justice and clear accountability.
 - c) Examine how student discipline is meted. African American students in MISD are suspended at twice the rate as their White peers.¹ Provide an annual report on student discipline data.
 - d) Assess teacher recruitment and retention strategies.
 - i) Publish an annual report that addresses the health of the teacher workforce using key indicators and historical data, outlines how MISD will proactively cultivate a pipeline that increases the racial diversity of its teachers².
 - ii) Identify techniques MISD will deploy to create a climate that retains teachers that identify as BIPOC.
 - iii) Answer the following questions within the report
 - (1) Are “new hires” sourced by the same MISD teachers or administrators?
 - (2) Does the district proactively develop partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions (MSI’s)³ and recruit clinical teachers for field placements?
 - (3) Is there intentionality in designing high-quality experiences?
 - (4) Does the district recruit these clinical teachers to return to MISD as the teacher of record?
 - (5) Does the district recruit from alternative certification programs that tend to graduate more diverse teacher candidates?
 - (6) Are novice teachers that identify as BIPOC more likely to stay or leave MISD in those first few years?

¹ Per the PEIMS Discipline Data for 2018-2019, 26.91% of African American students are suspended, as are 16.9% of Hispanic students and 13.47% White students. .

² Per the 2018-19 TAPR, White teachers comprise 89% of the workforce even though only 65% of students are white. African American teachers represent 3.5% of the workforce while 7.5% of students are African American. Hispanic teachers make up 6.6% of educators and 21% of students are Hispanic.

³ MSIs are institutions of higher education that serve minority populations. These include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AAPISIs).

2) Institute ongoing anti-bias anti-racism (ABAR) training for all Midlothian ISD teachers, staff, parents, and members of the community and do so in partnership with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

- a) The third-party vendor contracted to deliver this training must 1) include ABAR facilitators that are BIPOC, and 2) have a track record of working in this space for numerous years.
- b) The creation of the RFP and vetting of a third-party vendor should be transparent and include members of the community, and specifically IBPOC.
- c) ABAR training must be mandatory, made available annually, if not more frequently, and administered prior to the start of the school year. Educators and staff should be awarded professional development hours as this training is critical in ensuring they are adequately equipped to meet the academic and SEL needs of a diverse set of students.
- d) Work with the third-party vendor to establish benchmarks that are monitored and publicly reported and create direct links to teaching and learning outcomes.
- e) Identify concrete ways to integrate ABAR work into the MISD Diversity Council, which largely comprises MISD staff and excludes the broader community.⁴

3) The Diversity Council, in partnership with students and parents, co-design climates and cultures that champion anti-bias anti-racist practices and foster trust with students and parents.

- a) Work with the ABAR third-party vendor to design a survey and conduct focus groups that assess how students, parents, alumni, and teachers that identify as BIPOC/LGBTQ have experienced MISD.
 - i) Include parent volunteers to assist with selection of third-party vendor.
 - ii) Do campuses espouse a narrative that perpetuates racism, sexism or any other discriminatory actions (i.e. elementary school Thanksgiving program that perpetuated gender stereotypes and included an element of partisan politics by assigning the role of Donald Trump to a child who wore a MAGA hat)?
- b) Support the creation of student-run affinity groups on all campuses.
- c) Offer targeted resources to student-run affinity groups (i.e. Black Student Union at MHS) and support students by posting anti-discrimination, bullying and harassment policies in high traffic areas (i.e. lunchroom, student lounges etc.).
- d) Create a space for all students to meaningfully engage in this work by creating community with them (i.e. Diversity Council liaison) and instituting programs such as “No Place for Hate”.
- e) Support teachers through training to ensure they understand Whistleblower Protection and protection from reprisal/retaliation.

⁴ District’s existing take on cultural proficiency: 1) Valuing diversity and practicing cultural intelligence, 2) Having the capacity for cultural self-assessment, 3) Managing the dynamics of difference, and 4) Having institutionalized cultural knowledge.

- i) Ensure posting of whistle protection policy, anti-discrimination and harassment prevention including hostile work environment (HWE) policies in high traffic areas (i.e. school office, teacher lounge etc.).

4) Work with an ABAR vendor to thoroughly review curriculum, examine instructional practices, and assess how they perpetuate racism, sexism or any other discriminatory actions.

- a) Leverage ABAR tools to evaluate curriculum, assessment practices, whole-class reading selections, and classroom management and teaching strategies.
 - i) Do teachers engage in culturally and linguistically responsive instruction that affirms and validates BIPOC?
 - ii) Does existing curriculum accurately portray definitive moments in our nation's history (i.e. the Confederacy and postbellum south, the Native American experience in the U.S. etc.)?
 - iii) Do educators infuse a different perspective into historical events already taught?
- b) Integrate courses at all levels exposing all students to a diversity of thought (i.e. African American History⁵, African American Literature, Civil Rights History that addresses slavery, immigration and the role of immigrants, women's suffrage movement, LGBTQ liberation, etc.).
- c) Diverse literature (available in the classroom and in each school library) and films that analyze critical contributions BIPOC/LGBTQ have made in the United States, the valuable contributions made by these communities, and how they have acted as agents of change in our history (i.e. not just the story of slavery). This literature should also include books authored by BIPOC and include protagonists that look like and represent BIPOC.
 - i) MISD create a fund that invites teachers to apply for grants in order to fill their classrooms with diverse literature and resources?

5) Disaggregate and monitor student data by race and ethnicity.

- a) Examine student achievement data, identify existing gaps, and develop concrete strategies to close those gaps (i.e. identification of GT students, enrollment in dual credit, Pre-AP, and AP classes, SAT prep, etc.).⁶
- b) Are there barriers in place that minimize BIPOC enrollment and success?
- c) Examine student involvement in district extracurricular activities and how students are recruited (i.e. Destination Imagination teams are often led by parents which means parents with access to resources are most likely to get involved).
 - i) Offer targeted resources to support students that identify as BIPOC.

⁵ MISD's Board of Trustees can decide to offer a new statewide African American History course offered as an elective at all high schools in the state of Texas.

⁶ Per the 2018-19 TAPR, while 75.6% of African American students tested for the SAT/ACT only 32.3% were "at/above criterion." Roughly 68% of White students tested and 64% met the "at/above criterion" designation.

Conclusion

We have the ability to write our story in history. The time to foster change and build long-lasting legacies is not now, but right now. Change is difficult, burdensome, gut-wrenching, exhausting but not impossible.

We, Midlothians for Change, are dedicated to transforming Midlothian ISD into the best school district not just in the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex, but in the nation. By instituting inclusive practices; installing inclusive frameworks and curriculum; allowing 3rd party constructive feedback to facilitate necessary change; addressing and removing all bias and discriminatory practices with prejudice; modeling top-down servant leadership accountability; and embracing community partnerships “MISD Proud” will not be just a t-shirt slogan, but the standard against all other school districts are measured.

We are in this together. We will hold each other accountable. We will not depend on the few to help institute and enforce change on the many. We stand ready to partner with you, to bring solution-driven, change management to Midlothian ISD. We look forward to your response.

Regards,

Midlothians for Change