Leading on Racism: Using Your Board Leadership to Move the Needle
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1

Who is Dr. Akbar
- Vice President, Akron Board of Education
- Assistant Dean for Academic Diversity at Kent State University
- Ph.D. – Cultural Foundations of Education (Culture & Race/Sociology of Education and Ed Policy)
- M.A. – Educational Leadership
- B.S. – History and English for Secondary Education (7-12th Grade)

2

Role of a Board
- Set educational goals and educational policies
- Allocates resources within the school district
- Evaluate the overall performance of the school district
- Set a vision for the district

3
What is Racism?

- Policies & Practices
- Curriculum, Books and History
- Hiring
- School Boundaries

Where Racism hides in plain sight
- Staff Bias
- Suspensions and Discipline
- Special Ed, Gifted and AP/Honors Selection
- Exclusion of Family and Community members in processes

Hiring and Promotions
- Job Descriptions
- Screening process (who makes it out of the pool?)
- Teacher evaluation process
- What is considered qualified?
- What is considered in the promotion process?
Research shows more diverse schools are less likely to have Gifted and Talented programs and/or Advanced Placement courses. More Black boys are in Special Education courses across the nation than any other group.

Research shows that schools with Advanced Placement courses typically are less diverse than their student population.

Gifted and Talented programs have shown historically to exclude students of color typically by using only one singular diagnostic measure (which were not developed using diverse samples).
Curriculum – Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

- What is being assigned and read?
- What is being taught? Whose history?
- Does the curriculum include examples of the history and culture of the student population?
- State Standards and Strands
- Maximizing the state graduation seals program to create more culturally relevant learning options

Why Now?

- National momentum.
- It’s the right thing to do.
- Silence is complicit.
- Our students have waited long enough.

Righting Wrongs!

“I can’t believe what you say, because I see what you do.”
- James Baldwin
Declare Racism is a Public Health Crisis, national emergency in your district.

Condemnation Statements without direct explicit actions is not enough.

Evaluate and/or change areas where racism hides.

Be willing to have the hard conversation.

Propose an equity policy and specifically address racism and racial inequities.

Propose a Chief Diversity Officer focused on equity and inclusion.

Set equity goals in the Superintendent and Treasurer’s yearly goals.

Develop an equity and diversity committee for your Board.

Analyze data on hiring and suspensions disaggregated by race and curriculum policies to include culturally relevant material requirements.

Require all suppliers and vendors meet state MBE goals (15% minimum).
Debunking Myths

- REQUEST THE DATA – USE THE DATA to prove you need to move forward.
- Look at your data – some schools do this. The data will likely show great disparities.
- Ask your partners what do. The data will likely show great disparities.
- Review who the school directories is and who made them (this may also who does the testing). (Ownership or in employment)
- Ask for data on how building to building level spending.
- Look at where special programs are located – see if more success related programs in less diverse schools vs. "bunching" students (more percentage in schools with more diversity)
- Hire a consultant to do a climate assessment – this data could be helpful in determining need and next steps.

Debunking Myths/Pushing Back

- State Standards does not make room for adding culturally relevant materials (THE BIGGEST MYTH).
- We don't have many problems here.
- Our hiring practices are fair and just.
- We already do implicit bias training so we do not need to do anything else.
  - This is more than adding more PD – this about looking at the system
- REQUEST THE DATA – see it in plain sight (Disaggregated)
- Who applied – Who was offered interview – Who was hired disaggregated by race.
- Student discipline – who was suspended – what were they suspended for – who was arrested in the school/what was the offense.

Ohio State Standards and Strands to use

- Language Arts K-8 Standards 2017 (Ask key details of a text or book (does not specific which text), describe connections between two events or ideas in a text, determining themes)
- Language Arts High School 2017 (Analyze how two or more texts similar themes build knowledge, evaluate author's differing perspectives on the same historical event or issue).
Biased: Uncovering The hidden pre-judices that shape our lives
(Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt, 2020)

White Fragility: Why it’s so hard for white people to talk about racism
(Dr. Robin DiAngelo, 2018)