Opportunity and Access

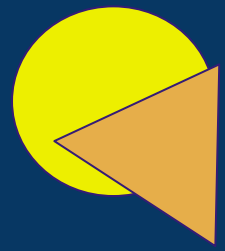
# School District Racial Equity Update

FROM SYMBOLIC COMMITMENTS TO STRUCTURAL CHANGE

1. Builds staff capacity through training, coaching, equity, focus.
    a. District Menu of Supports: O&A Trainings (CRT, implicit bias, behavior disparities, LGBTQ+), personnel, and resources
    b. Improved capacity to respond to student issues of equity and achievement

2. Creates opportunities of students, families, and community voice
    a. Examples
    b. Results

3. Helps schools and departments align strategies with district racial equity goals and expectations.
    a. O&A CSIP Goal/Objectives; OACC visits; cross-departmental collaborations
    b. Aligned accountability systems; shared accountability for growth and achievement



4. Tracks equity indicators, achievement gaps, access measures, and disproportionality data to monitor progress.
    a. O&A CSIP Goal/Objectives; O&A Scorecard
    b. Shared accountability; heightened awareness across schools and central office departments

5. Use equity tools to assess impact of policy, programs, and procedures.
    a. O&A CSIP Goal/Objectives; O&A Scorecard
    b. Shared accountability; heightened awareness across schools and central office departments

6. Identifies and address barriers that limit equitable access participation in programs and services
    a. O&A CSIP Domain 4 Objective; ADIA
    b. Granular focus on specific student groups based on data

## 1. Lack of Direct Evaluative & Supervisory Authority

**Limitation**

Opportunity and Access lacks hiring, supervisory, and evaluation authority over other departments. Findings often remain recommendations that can be delayed or ignored.

**Recommended Solution**

Institute Superintendent-Mandated Equity Co-Evaluations. Embed attendance, equity, and access metrics into annual performance reviews and contract renewals for department leaders.

## 2. Qualitative Blind Spots

Attendance and discipline data are lagging indicators and may miss student belonging, informal exclusion, and emerging barriers.

Create an Early-Warning Equity & Access Dashboard with leading indicators, climate audits, and family/student listening sessions.

## 3. Unfunded Mandates & Lack of Reallocation Power

**Limitation**

Monitoring identifies resource gaps, but the department lacks authority to redirect funding or adjust budgets.

**Recommended Solution**

Require Opportunity & Access Impact Statements and formal review/sign-off during budget development and major operational decisions.

## 4. Policy-to-Practice Gaps & Performative Compliance

Departments may complete compliance activities without changing practices, culture, or student outcomes.

Measure implementation fidelity and outcome shifts, supported by coaching, site visits, and public accountability reporting.

# Understanding Student Absenteeism

Five systemic dynamics — and district responses that expand opportunity, support, and belonging.

DISTRICT STRATEGY & PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

# Reframe the attendance challenge

**Chronic absenteeism is not just an attendance problem. It can signal unmet needs, exclusionary responses, and a school experience that does not feel supportive or relevant.**

### REMOVE BARRIERS

Connect families to essential resources and reliable transportation.

### RESPOND WITH SUPPORT

Replace punishment-first approaches with early, restorative intervention.

### BUILD BELONGING

Strengthen mental-health supports, culturally responsive learning, and student voice.

**Strategic question: What conditions make it easier, and more meaningful, for students to attend every day?**

# Five dynamics shape attendance

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | **Unequal basic resources** | Housing, food, transportation, healthcare |
| 02 | **Punitive responses** | Consequences without root-cause problem-solving |
| 03 | **Myth of individual apathy** | Blaming families instead of examining systems |
| 04 | **Limited in-school supports** | Gaps in mental-health and wraparound capacity |
| 05 | **School-climate disengagement** | Low belonging, relevance, or cultural affirmation |

**The dynamics overlap; effective responses need to address both student needs and institutional conditions.**

# 1. Unequal distribution of basic resources

### WHAT'S HAPPENING

Housing instability, food insecurity, unreliable transportation, and limited healthcare can make daily attendance difficult.

### DISTRICT RESPONSE

Create family resource hubs; coordinate housing, food, and mobile health connections; partner on transit solutions.

### CAPACITY TO BUILD

Use community school coordinators to map local assets and connect families to support networks.

## Research lens

Heather McGhee — The Sum of Us: systemic disinvestment in public goods can leave communities without the foundations that support consistent attendance.

Potential district consideration noted in source: ADIA as a means of addressing inequities.

# 2. The trap of punitive responses

### THE RISK

Truancy tickets, legal warnings, and academic penalties may punish the symptom without identifying why a student is absent.

### SHIFT THE RESPONSE

Use multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), restorative practices, and trauma-informed care.

### MAKE IT ROUTINE

Create school-based early-warning teams for empathetic outreach, problem-solving, and follow-through.

## Research lens

Dr. Monique Morris — Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools highlights how punitive systems can disproportionately isolate marginalized youth.

Training examples: restorative practice and relational accountability; trauma-informed classroom management. Source also raises reviewing PBIS/behavior response systems and consulting relevant district teams.

# 3. The myth of individual apathy

### REFRAME THE STORY

Treat chronic absence as an opportunity gap, not a moral failing or proof that families do not care.

### MAKE SYSTEMS VISIBLE

Pair attendance data with transparent reporting on funding, staffing, facilities, and resource allocation.

### SHARE DECISION-MAKING

Give impacted families and youth formal advisory roles in district policy design.

## Research lens

Dr. Karida L. Brown — The Battle for the Black Mind: historical and cultural frameworks help explain how institutions shift blame away from structural inequities.

Training examples: dismantling deficit ideologies; data-driven equity literacy. Suggested owners in source include Pupil Personnel, ARSI, and Family Engagement.

# 4. Lack of comprehensive in-school supports

### STAFF FOR NEED

Set equitable staffing floors for social workers, psychologists, and counselors, prioritizing high-need schools.

### BRING CARE CLOSER

Explore school-based telehealth and wellness centers to address health needs before they lead to repeated absences.

### BUILD STAFF SKILL

Provide ongoing, paid professional learning on stress, trauma, mental health, and warm handoffs to clinicians.

## Research lens

Dr. Bettina Love — We Want to Do More Than Survive calls for resource-rich schools that provide wraparound care and social support.

Training examples: MTSS for attendance architecture; early Mental Health First Aid for educators; TIC and racial-trauma training. Staffing ownership is unresolved in the source ("Dwan??").

# 5. Disengagement driven by school climate

### MAKE LEARNING RELEVANT

Audit curriculum for cultural responsiveness, student identity, history, voice, and joy.

### STRENGTHEN BELONGING

Invest in inclusive climates, restorative practices, SEL, and psychological safety.

### EXPAND PATHWAYS

Develop career/technical, arts-integrated, magnet, alternative, and project-based options.

## Research lenses

Dr. Shawn Ginwright — healing-centered engagement and belonging.

Dr. Gholdy Muhammad — Cultivating Genius and the five equity pursuits: Identity, Skill, Intellect, Criticality, and Joy.

Training examples: culturally responsive and affirming pedagogy; healing-centered engagement; Cultivating Genius. Source notes potential policy constraints (SB1) and identifies Academy Schools of Louisville and district contacts as possible partners.

# Professional learning aligned to the five dynamics

| DYNAMIC | TRAINING / PRACTICE | POTENTIAL AUDIENCE / OWNERS |
|---|---|---|
| **Basic resources** | Community asset mapping; family resource navigation | Community school coordinators; family support teams |
| **Punitive responses** | Restorative practice; trauma-informed management | School leaders; attendance/behavior teams |
| **Apathy myth** | Deficit ideology; data-driven equity literacy | Administrators; Pupil Personnel; ARSI; Family Engagement |
| **In-school supports** | MTSS for attendance; Mental Health First Aid; TIC/racial trauma | Educators; counselors; mental-health teams |
| **School climate** | Culturally responsive pedagogy; healing-centered engagement; Cultivating Genius | School leaders; curriculum teams; Academy partners |

Owners and training examples are drawn from the source and should be confirmed before implementation.

# A practical district implementation sequence

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **LISTEN & MAP** | Analyze attendance patterns alongside student/family voice, transportation, resource access, and school climate. |
| 2 | **ALIGN OWNERS** | Confirm accountable departments, school-level teams, community partners, and unresolved assignments. |
| 3 | **BUILD CAPACITY** | Sequence training in MTSS, restorative practice, trauma-informed support, equity literacy, and culturally responsive teaching. |
| 4 | **PILOT & LEARN** | Pilot coordinated interventions in high-need clusters; review reach, student experience, and implementation barriers. |
| 5 | **TRACK & ADAPT** | Monitor attendance and leading indicators such as resource connections, belonging, support access, and family partnership. |

This sequence is a proposed synthesis of the source material, not a pre-existing district-approved plan.

# Measure progress without blaming students

### ATTENDANCE OUTCOMES

Chronic absence rates; repeat absence patterns; attendance by school and student group.

### OPPORTUNITY INDICATORS

Access to transportation, resource referrals, mental-health supports, and relevant learning pathways.

### EXPERIENCE & EQUITY

Student/family feedback; belonging and safety; staffing distribution; transparent resource allocation.

## Implementation guardrails

- Use data to locate barriers and improve supports,  not to label families as apathetic.
- Disaggregate results to reveal unequal access and avoid hiding gaps in district averages.
- Pair quantitative measures with student and family voice; confirm privacy and data-governance requirements.

# From enforcing attendance to expanding the conditions for attendance via Racial Equity Policy.

Students are more likely to show up when basic needs are addressed, responses are supportive, services are accessible, and school feels relevant, safe, and affirming.

**Next step: validate ownership, resource commitments, and measures with district and community partners.**

# What changes when equity becomes a measurable obligation?

### LOOK BEYOND THE MESSAGE

Public statements and celebrations can signal commitment.

Training and advisory groups can build awareness.

But neither guarantees fair access, resources, or outcomes.

### TEST THE SYSTEM

Who gets access to advanced learning?

How are money, staffing, and discipline distributed?

Are results reviewed by race, income, school, and student group?

CONTRADICTION 01

# Equity promises, but gate keeping advanced learning

THE RHETORIC

“Excellence for all” and equity task forces promise to close opportunity gaps.

THE REALITY

Subjective recommendations, test cutoffs, and rigid prerequisites can restrict access to gifted, honors, and AP courses. Black, Brown, and low-income students may be underrepresented in advanced classes and overrepresented in remedial or disciplinary tracks.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Audit enrollment and eligibility by race and income; expand open access, multiple measures, and supports that help students succeed in rigorous courses.

CONTRADICTION 02

# Diversity messaging without structural accountability

THE RHETORIC

Heritage-month events, public equity branding, and advisory committees signal inclusion.

THE REALITY

When decisions affect feeder patterns, experienced-teacher distribution, capital funding, or discipline, leadership may yield to organized political pressure. Equity risks becoming symbolic rather than a basis for allocating resources.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Publish equity impact analyses for major decisions, document community input, and report how feedback changes budgets and policy.

CONTRADICTION 03

# Training substituted for policy reform

THE RHETORIC

Implicit-bias and culturally responsive teaching workshops are presented as solutions.

THE REALITY

Professional learning alone cannot change zero-tolerance rules, subjective dress codes, or punitive grading systems that may disproportionately harm students of color.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Pair training with policy audits, discipline and grading reviews, clear implementation owners, and outcome measures.

CONTRADICTION 04

# School choice that sorts instead of integrates

THE RHETORIC

Magnet programs, open enrollment, and charter options are framed as family empowerment.

THE REALITY

Without accessible transportation, fair admissions, and proactive outreach, families with more time and social capital can navigate the system more easily, while neighborhood schools risk further concentration of need.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Track who applies, is admitted, enrolls, and stays; improve transportation and outreach; review admissions rules and resource equity across schools.

CONTRADICTION 05

# Colorblindness used to dismiss disparities

THE RHETORIC

Leaders say policies treat every student the same, regardless of background.

THE REALITY

Uniform rules can preserve unequal conditions when leaders ignore differences in suspension, special education placement, graduation, and funding patterns.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Review disaggregated data alongside context; investigate disparities, identify policy drivers, and publish corrective actions and timelines.

CONTRADICTION 06

# Centralized control, limited community power

THE RHETORIC

Town halls and listening sessions are presented as evidence of local voice.

THE REALITY

Top-down pacing guides, curricula, and compliance mandates can leave families and educators with little influence—especially in schools serving high concentrations of students of color.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Give school communities meaningful decision rights, explain non-adopted recommendations, and allow evidence-based adaptation to local needs.

CONTRADICTION 07

# Consultants without lasting internal change

THE RHETORIC

High-profile consultants and keynote speakers are hired to energize equity work.

THE REALITY

Without internal audits, accountable owners, and recurring public reporting, the work can end when the contract does—leaving budgets, hiring, and policy untouched.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Tie contracts to measurable deliverables and knowledge transfer; assign internal leaders, timelines, and public progress reviews.

CONTRADICTION 08

# Punishing trauma-related behavior in the name of order

THE RHETORIC

Trauma-informed care and social-emotional learning are promoted publicly.

THE REALITY

Suspensions, expulsions, and law-enforcement referrals may remain default responses to behavior shaped by stress, trauma, or unmet needs. SEL can become compliance-focused rather than supportive.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Use restorative and supportive responses where appropriate; review discipline by student group, reduce exclusionary practices, and expand access to counselors and other supports.

CONTRADICTION 09

# Aggregate scores hide unequal outcomes

THE RHETORIC

District-wide test scores and graduation rates are used to announce progress.

THE REALITY

Overall gains can coexist with persistent gaps between racial groups, income groups, schools, and student populations.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Publish disaggregated dashboards for achievement, growth, access, attendance, discipline, and graduation; set targets and report progress annually.

CONTRADICTION 10

# Heroic individuals asked to compensate for system failures

THE RHETORIC

Exceptional teachers and principals are praised for “beating the odds.”

THE REALITY

Celebrating individual effort can obscure chronic under-resourcing and make success depend on personal sacrifice instead of reliable institutional support.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Set equitable staffing and funding standards, protect planning time, invest in proven supports, and evaluate whether every school has the capacity to deliver.

# Make equity visible in decisions—and outcomes.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | ACCESS | Who gets into advanced courses and high-opportunity programs? |
| 02 | RESOURCES | How are funding, staffing, facilities, and supports distributed? |
| 03 | EXPERIENCE | Who is excluded, disciplined, overlooked, or heard? |
| 04 | OUTCOMES | Which groups benefit—and which gaps persist over time? |

*A credible equity agenda sets public targets, assigns responsibility, funds the work, and reports results.*

# Five commitments districts can put on the record

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **PUBLISH** | A recurring equity dashboard with disaggregated data and clear definitions. |
| 2 | **AUDIT** | Admissions, course access, discipline, grading, staffing, facilities, and budgets. |
| 3 | **ASSIGN** | A named owner and timeline to every corrective action. |
| 4 | **FUND** | The supports and staffing required to close documented opportunity gaps. |
| 5 | **REPORT** | Progress publicly, explain setbacks, and revise policies when evidence demands it. |

***Equity is not just what a district says. It is what its systems consistently deliver.***

# Director — William Bunton

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | RACIAL EQUITY RESOURCES | Maintains the Opportunity and Access Resource Site |
| 2 | ACCOUNTABILITY TO EQUITABLE OUTCOMES | Supports schools in the development and achievement of their O&A CSIP Goal/Objectives; facilitates OACC visits |
| 3 | DISTRICT SUPPORT | Responds to school support requests via Office Hours, support schools with strategies to address behavior and attendance, providing professional development and coaching as it relates to culturally responsive school leadership |
| 4 | CROSS-DEPARTMENT COLLABORATIONS | Works collaboratively with other departments to maintain shared accountability to the expectations of the Racial Equity Policy |
| 5 | REAL MEETINGS | Organize and facilitate critical conversations around race, equity, inclusion, bias elimination, and student engagement, and opportunity and access data |
| 6 | MENTORING | Monthly school visit to support removal of barriers to accessing post-secondary education |

# Assistant Director — Greg Vann

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | AFTER SCHOOL & SUMMER PROGRAMMING | Coordinates high-quality enrichment and summer learning opportunities district-wide. |
| 2 | COLLEGE ACCESS | Expands post-secondary preparation through college test prep district-wide. |
| 3 | OST PARTNERSHIPS | Builds strategic community alliances to expand out-of-school time resources. |
| 4 | STUDENT BELONGING | Drives district-wide initiatives fostering inclusive environments and student engagement through Black & Hispanic Student Unions. |
| 5 | MENTORING | Monthly school and partner site visits to support removal of barriers to accessing post-secondary education. |

***Empowering students through accessible programming, strategic partnerships, and direct mentorship.***

# O&A Specialist — Dr. Rachel Klein

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS | Maintains suite of Opportunity and Access Tool (OAT) tools and resources; provides training across the year |
| 2 | ACCOUNTABILITY TO EQUITABLE OUTCOMES | Supports schools in achieving their O&A CSIP Goal/Objectives; facilitates OACC visits |
| 3 | SCHOOL “TRIAGE” | Responds to school support requests via Office Hours |
| 4 | CROSS-DEPARTMENT COLLABORATIONS | Works collaboratively with other departments to maintain shared accountability to the expectations of the Racial Equity Policy |
| 5 | REAL MEETINGS | Engages with district leaders in critical conversations around race, equity, inclusion, bias elimination, and student engagement |
| 6 | MENTORING | Monthly school visit to support removal of barriers to accessing post-secondary education |

***Empowering schools through equitable toolkits, collaborative leadership, and targeted support.***

# Associate Satellite Office — Abdul Sharif

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Community Resources** | Coordinates meeting space in the Satellite Office for Central Office Administrators to meet with students and families that may not have transportation to VanHoose. |
| 2 | **After-School Programs** | Coordinates the after-school chess academy, DESTINED Dance program, and Community Cooks program for JCPS students and families at the Satellite Office. |
| 3 | **OST PARTNERSHIPS** | Facilitating  partnerships with the Kappa League, The Zeta Youth Affiliates, and Inside the Lines to provide after-school hour programing for JCPS students. |
| 4 | **Highlighting student and staff achievements** | Design, create and distribute monthly Envision Equity newsletter. This e-newsletter highlights students and staff achievements and provides a welcoming space for student voice. |
| 5 | **MENTORING** | Coordinates weekly student meetings at the Satellite Office with mentors from The Zeta Youth Affiliates, the Kappa League and  Inside the Lines Training Programing. |