

Equity Policy and Platform

In Spring 2018, Teachers' Democracy Project (TDP) partnered with Baltimore Movement of Rank-and-File Educators (BMORE) members, a parent from the Parent Community Advisory Board (PCAB), a community advocate, and TDP staff to produce an equity policy which we hope will create a framework for what the district might adopt. As a part of this work we came up with a platform that we think encompasses the equity areas that concern parents, teachers and many allied organizations.

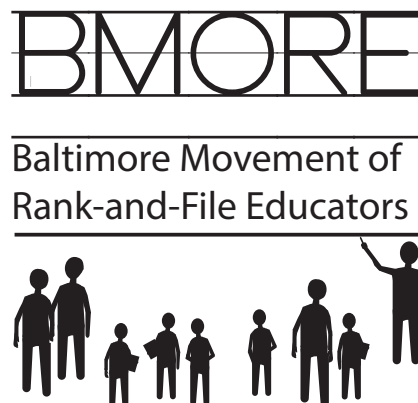
Team members included:

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The platform incorporated feedback from:

Helen Atkinson, TDP Advisor
Lawrence Brown, Morgan State University
Julia Dibussolo, Arts Everyday
Keysha Goodwin, Paraprofessional, BMORE
Pat Halle, Disability Rights Advocate
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The Schools Baltimore Deserves

All Baltimore City Schools Need:

Curriculum and teaching that's relevant to students lives and meets the learning needs of all

To ensure that students are engaged We want students to be engaged and to feel like learning is relevant to their lives. We expect a focus on experiential and culturally responsive teaching and curriculum, the hiring and retention of homegrown teachers and teachers to have training and access to materials and supplies to meet the learning needs of youth with disabilities and English language learners. We support the demand for better teaching/learning conditions which includes time allotted for teachers to be able to plan, collaborate, and provide special assistance to students as needed.

Healthy school culture through Restorative Practices

To ensure that schools create a positive sense of community, we expect implementation of Restorative Practices. These are a set of practices that improve how young people (and adults) are treated in schools by focusing on building relationships and helping the school community to treat conflict as an opportunity for growth.

Sustainable Community Schools & wrap around services

We expect all schools to be community schools where the community determines their needs and how those needs are met. These schools should be places where stakeholders have access to the supports and services they need. This could include health services, enrichment classes and after school programs that help support the development of the whole child and equitably include students with disabilities.

Parents, community, teachers and students as vital voices in schools

We expect schools to be places where parents, guardians, teachers, students and school community leaders are valued and work collaboratively and democratically to improve schools. This should be evident all the way from how schools are held accountable, the degree to which all stakeholders are sought out and respected in decision making, to how visitors are greeted and how guardians are included and communicated with.

Equitable funding for Maryland's public schools

The per pupil amount allocated to each student needs to surpass MD states standards of "adequacy" and include reparations for systemic and racist disinvestment. We support the Kirwan Commission's proposal that in order to attract and retain quality teachers, they need significantly more time for professional responsibilities such as receiving mentoring, collaborative planning, connecting with parents and tutoring young people who need support.



Curriculum & teaching that's relevant to students lives and meets the learning needs of all

The Need:

Students need to be engaged and feel that learning is relevant to their lives. Teachers need time to build relationships, know their students and prepare relevant curriculum. All Students need access to high level courses and teachers who are trained and have access to materials and supplies to support the learning needs of students of all abilities and language backgrounds.

What we want:

Curriculum

- The narratives, perspectives and scholarship of experts who come from students' cultures and social contexts need to be incorporated in the classroom.
- The development of project based, experiential, arts-infused and student-informed curriculum that incorporates diverse, relevant and rich materials.
- Consistent opportunities for civic engagement and community action that are tied into the curriculum.
- Student-led processes that enable students to shape classroom pedagogy.

Training

- Training, mentoring, and coaching for teachers and administrators on quality culturally responsive teaching strategies. Mandatory culturally responsive PD must be modified to fit the teacher experience.
- Preparedness for addressing instances of serious trauma in addition to how to access community resources to address trauma.
- Training, mentoring and coaching for teachers on universal design for learning and other ways to support students with different learning needs.
- Training, mentoring and coaching for teachers so they can safely and effectively support positive behavior.

Recruitment

- Limitations on alternative certification contracts including requirements for hiring Baltimore residents, and teachers of color.
- Design a set of recruitment pathways that attract and retain Black and Brown educators.
- Prioritize recruitment at HBCUs and other institutions that incorporate culturally responsive principles and practices in their teacher education curricula.
- Prioritize and offer early contracts at hiring fairs focused on Black and Brown candidates.
- Provide Baltimore City School graduates financial or other incentives for becoming teachers in the system.
- Implement a program to move high school students, paraprofessionals and committed Baltimore residents with a Bachelor's degree into teaching positions
- Provide experienced, fully certified teachers with incentives to come back to the classroom.



Curriculum & teaching that's relevant to students lives and meets the learning needs of all, cont'd

Certification

- Eliminate PRAXIS and other standardized tests as gatekeepers for determining the most suitable candidates for our classrooms.
- New teacher induction programs that: allow time for reflection and coursework as part of the normal work week, include effective and intensive mentoring, and assess teacher candidates over time, based on multiple measures (not just test-scores) of classroom performance, cultural competence, and potential for growth.
- Communication with local institutions of Higher Education regarding coursework for provisional teachers to make sure that the classes offered toward certification are relevant and significant to teachers who are already in the classroom and include classroom-based support.

Improvements to Teaching Conditions

- Reduction of teachers' paid time spent teaching so teachers have more time for professional responsibilities such as receiving mentoring, collaborative planning, connecting with parents and tutoring young people who need support.
- Placement of full-time mentors in schools that have the highest teacher turnover rates and the most difficult teaching conditions. This mentoring program could be based on the past successful programs such as the Blum Mentoring Program that was shut down in 2005. Sources of mentors could include retired educators.
- Work with the teachers union on targeted and strategic reach outs to teachers who are vulnerable to leaving the district, determining what is causing them to want to leave, and troubleshoot possible individualized solutions.

Access

Alternative school choice program for English Language Learners or other accommodation such as tests being translated to other languages.

What is required to get there?

- Review of existing processes for certification, training and recruitment.
- Locally determine the cost of:
 - Training
 - Pipeline programs
 - Teacher mentoring
 - Time for other professional duties

Healthy school culture through Restorative Practices



The Need

Restorative Practices are a way to improve how young people are treated in schools by focusing on building relationships and helping the school community to treat conflict as an opportunity for growth.

What we want

Though RP is voluntary, we eventually want RP embedded in every school. We also need a new or revised policy, regulation or set of guidelines that specifically define and guide RP work in the district.

In order to foster effectiveness and monitor the work in the public sphere, we need to create an inclusive RP learning community that meets monthly and consists of teachers, parents, students, administrators, partners, practitioners and advocates. The group will:

- Share best practices and problem solve challenges
- Ensure effective communication strategies about RP exist between principals, teachers, parents and students.
- Work with the new Kirwan Commission guidelines on teacher professionalism to redefine teacher roles with regard to RP
- Define the tiers of restorative practices in schools so that it is clear what exactly schools are implementing (not for punitive purposes but to understand where schools are and what they need).
- Review handbooks and materials that are designed to inform parents, teachers, students and administrators.
- Create a system for access to user-friendly information online- RP resources should include a whole school approach, a partial community building approach, what an individual teacher can do, a process for getting parents on board and student-led processes.
- Participate in the assessment of progress through school based circles, reflections and check-ins.
- Revise 5-year plan as needed
- Participate in the creation of RP policy
- Review reports on the existing rubric being used to monitor RP
- School schedules reflect a focus on RP and social emotional development

What is required to get there?

Eventually, each school needs \$100,000 to cover the cost of a full-time RP coordinator x 143 non charter schools= 14.3 Million

Community schools and wrap around supports

The Need

We expect every student to have access to wrap around supports and after school programs. In current school year 2017-18 there are 49 fully operating community schools in Baltimore City. There are over 100 remaining to be served. There is also a need for community schools to follow best practices that have been identified nationally, including having a robust needs and assets assessment with 4 stakeholder groups (parents, students, teachers and community) and a community council that problem solves what strategies and services will fill the needs of young people as well as the community.

What we want

- A reconsideration of the methodology for distribution of funds to accommodate smaller community, black-led vendors who provide services, and who are currently excluded from consideration.
- Community School providers need to be vetted by members of the neighborhood community.
- Community school coordinators should play a more active role in bringing in community partners, and coordinating with teachers around supports for children and families, not just providing after school programs
- Funding for community schools should be brought back into the public domain underneath city schools.
- Community schools should play a role in engaging community in leadership training and helping community members to develop skills needed to run their own programs.
- The selection and evaluation process for community schools should use authentic circles (with trained facilitation) in order to engage the community on an equal level with providers and funders.

What is required to get there?

The average cost to implement a community school and an out of school time program is \$90,000 plus 18% administrative costs. Roughly 30M for all of Baltimore City Schools.



Parents, community, teachers and students as vital voices in schools

The Need

Transformative and robust community engagement is needed. The District must recognize parents as key stakeholders and mandate that every department establish methods to demonstrate their effective parent engagement approach. The problems in communities are inextricably linked with the problems in schools and require effective collaboration between parents, teachers, students and school community leaders to fix. Transformative community engagement is needed so that parents, teachers, students and school community leaders can work collaboratively and democratically to improve schools. District communication to families should reflect this two-way approach to relationship building.

*We use the term “community” to refer to all stakeholders: teachers, parents, students and community members.

What we want

Communication

- Families need personalized communication whenever possible. Information should come through a variety of forms (texts, calls, brochures, flyers, handbooks as well as through information sessions). They need information on:
- Curriculum, instruction and how to support students’ learning outside of the classroom through activities and trips.
- Budget timelines, the district budget and individual school budgets.
- Information should include things like Restorative Practices guidance, Information on behavior plans, student and parent rights related to discipline, School Family Councils, Title 1 information, etc.



Collaborative planning and problem solving

- Comprehensive Community involvement- We want a process for community, parents and students to lead and participate in reflecting on budget, school effectiveness and planning for improvement. This could mean revising School Family Councils to function more like a charter board or with parent, community and student bodies having a role in school effectiveness reviews and school improvement plans so they can make recommendations on how schools can better serve them and their children.
- Inclusion of parent outreach and joint problem solving as part of teacher duties
- A plan for how public discussions, engagement around policy and equity areas happen.
- A communication plan that better reaches parents, teachers and students.
- An articulated public school by school plan for how parents can engage.
- Revamping the purpose of PCAB so that parents can define their own agenda to bring to the board and CEO.

Student led processes

We’d like to see:

Student led IEP meetings

More opportunities for youth leadership and peer-to-peer education.

We want to see student governments expanded and a robust city-wide student union

Spaces for student feedback on everything from curriculum to school lunches

Equitable funding for Maryland's public schools

The Need

It is important that we ensure that Maryland equitably funds its public schools, providing funding that moves beyond remedial services, but that compensate for years of systemic neglect. Comprehensive funding and support is needed to address systemic inequities, particularly amongst Black students in Baltimore City. The per pupil cost needs to not just meet MD states standards of “adequacy” but to include reparations for systemic and racist disinvestment. Traditional schools also need the ability to get the same financial autonomy as charter schools.

“Although Maryland has the highest weight in the country for low-income students in its funding formula, the State spends 4.9% less money (state and local) on poor school districts than on wealthy ones, making it the State with the fifteenth most regressive funding system in the nation. By contrast, Massachusetts spends 7.3% more money on students in low-income districts.” -Kirwan Commission

What we want

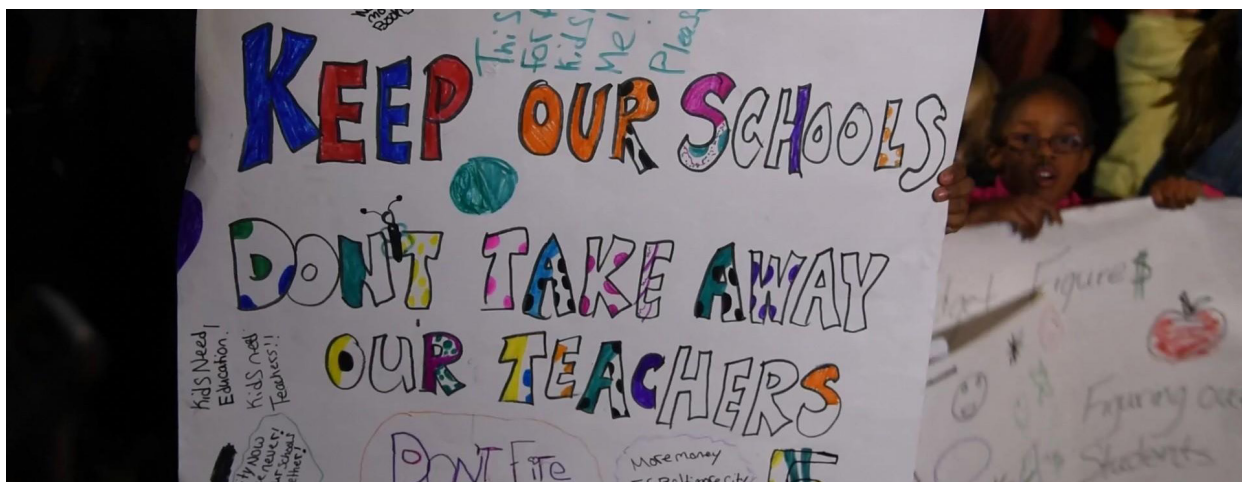
State Level

The Kirwan Commission's recommendation that Black students receive reparations for the \$3 billion dollars of historical underfunding of Baltimore City should be supported. In addition, Delegate Mary Washington's casino lockbox bill, which ensures a restoration of the promised casino funds, should also be a legislative priority.

The Kirwan Commission's recommendation that the level of teacher professionalism and salaries be significantly increased and brought in line with the most successful states and foreign countries is vital to the success of all the listed equity areas. While this recommendation is being made across the state, it is likely that reducing classroom teaching responsibilities to 50%, and the other elements of this recommendation, will have the greatest impact in schools where students need intensive coordination of adult support.

Local Level

- There is a need to ensure that future Fair Student Funding development addresses structural barriers to achievement such as redlining, neighborhoods, etc.
- There needs to be a priority list for the capital budget for infrastructure based on current need and historical neglect.
- There needs to be racial equity block grants that the school system can apply for.



Equity Policy

In order to support these school needs, we are calling for an explicit equity policy to be developed by the Board of School Commissioners. In other cities where there is an equity policy, racial disparities are the focus. In Baltimore the student population is 80% Black and 10% Brown which means the points of inequity are focused less on racial disparities than they are on the residue of overarching racist policy: oppressive discipline systems, lack of access for English Language Learners, and lack of community access to decision-making. This policy should mandate a shift in the equity areas we've identified. Shifts should be observable through the annual collection and publication of certain data sets and a process for public review of the data.

Recommended Data Sets and Reports

Reverse Black teacher decline

- What is the ratio of Black teachers that come through alternative certification programs vs. traditional?
- Are Black teachers in the most challenged (high Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs)/ priority/special ed) schools
- What is the relationship between race, Praxis (test for teacher certification) scores and high performance evaluation and teacher retention?
- Data collected on why teachers leave and where they go?
- Longitudinal data on retention rates for alternative certification programs vs. traditional
- Are alternatively certified teachers in the most challenged schools?
- Racial breakdown of teachers and students in charters vs. traditional schools
- Summary of efforts to recruit and retain Black faculty

Adequately prepare and support all teachers

- Report on the effectiveness of the existing teacher mentoring program?
- A public list of the Professional Development (PD) sessions offered and required of teachers having to do with cultural responsiveness.

Adequate support for the implementation of Restorative Practices

- A list of Restorative Practices trainings completed at the district level and in schools
- Reflections from RP schools
- The creation of a learning community
- School schedules include time for RP and social emotional development
- Clarity on the gap between the need for individualized services and district capacity to meet the need

Community Schools

Status of community schools and wrap around services to include: a report from the community schools advisory committee, evidence of the existence of community councils that guide the CS strategy. Efforts to build capacity for community control of CS funding

Community Based Accountability and Decision Making

- A list of all tests that students take at each school, the amount of time spent preparing for and taking standardized tests.
- Summary of effort made to eliminate redundancy in testing.
- Public list of community participants as evidence of effective SFC's
- A summary of public forums and learning communities

Equity Policy cont'd

Charter impact on enrollment and extending the same freedoms for traditional schools

- A report on the cost and impact of new charter schools on enrollment and closures in surrounding neighborhood schools
- A report on how charters have shared their lessons learned with traditional schools highlighting lessons learned about effectively including students with disabilities.
- A report on how traditional schools have been afforded the same benefits that charters have (able to use comprehensive, school-wide alternative/innovative curriculum models. Opt out of district assessments, Carry over funding from one year to the next, Pay for actual salaries and benefits instead of the district average amount (with protections for veteran teachers)

Equal Access

- Report on Implementation of the Arts Education Strategic Plan
- What % of schools have music
- What % have visual arts
- How many arts teachers there are
- What schools have special programs (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Ingenuity Programs, etc.)
- What high schools have ELL students?
- Equity in calculating composite scores for ESOL and Special Ed.
- A plan to address class size

Financial Disparities

- Financial reports that detail the amount of Title 1 money allocated to each school
- Data regarding charter school operator and facilities costs
- Impact of the new per pupil calculation; and an updated priority list for the capital budget for infrastructure.