Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap

Committee Recommendations

Presented to
County Executive Steuart Pittman
& Superintendent George Arlotto

– November 6, 2020 –

Contents

Executive Summary

County Executive Pittman and Superintendent Arlotto created The Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Achievement Gap to address persistent disparities in academic performance between White and Black students. They assigned Dr. Jennifer Purcell, former Chief of Staff, and Mrs. Monique Jackson, Deputy Superintendent of Schools, to oversee the initiative and assemble a core planning team.

More than 200 participants attended a Community Launch meeting on September 23, 2019, and the data collected during the meeting resulted in the creation of five subcommittees to address social determinants of education, systemic racism, discipline, family life, and curriculum. Each subcommittee chair invited community members, parents, and content experts to participate in their meetings and activities. The subcommittees' final reports are located in the Appendix.

Early in the process, members of the Joint Initiative decided to substitute the word "Opportunity" for "Achievement" in the title, recognizing the gap in metrics is not related to innate ability. Poverty, income inequality, unsafe housing, poor nutrition, and inadequate health care are contributing factors and, for Black students, structural and systemic racism perpetuate these inequities. Opportunity Gap Committee (OGC) members recognized that the county's most vulnerable students are caught in the gap even before they enter school, and recommended strategies to increase opportunities and remove barriers to success for these students.

The full committee met five times over the course of 12 months, with subcommittees meeting more frequently. The committee provided a mid-term progress report during a second community meeting in February 2020. Just one month later, the coronavirus pandemic shuttered government buildings, requiring subcommittee work to continue virtually. COVID-19 exacerbated many of the current causes of the opportunity gap and reconfirmed the committee's emphasis on the essential roles of the school system, other government agencies, community residents and families working in collaboration to improve outcomes for those students caught in the gap.

Recommendations are reported in two sections. The first section is a distillation of the five committee reports into four priority recommendations the OGC believes will have the greatest impact on student opportunity and achievement. The committee advocates strongly that these four recommendations be adopted and implemented by June 30, 2021. These specific recommendations appear in multiple subcommittee reports; require collaboration among individuals and entities; target structural and systemic contributors to opportunity gaps; and insure accountability and sustainability.

The second section presents a complete list of subcommittee recommendations. There are a total of 14 subcommittee goals and 78 specific strategies. Each strategy is labeled with symbols representing AACPS, Anne Arundel County Government, and the local community / family to demonstrate how multiple systems and individuals must work together to achieve many of the recommendations.

There is overlap among the subcommittee recommendations and those presented in the October 2020 Mental Health Task Force Summary Report.

The OCG members thank County Executive Pittman and Superintendent Arlotto for their leadership and commitment to improving the outcomes for students with the least opportunity for success.

Early in the process, members of the Joint Initiative decided to substitute the word 'Opportunity' for 'Achievement' in the title, in recognition that the gap in metrics is not related to innate ability.

Background

The Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Achievement Gap was created to address persistent disparities in academic performance between White students and Black students. The resultant gap has long been attributed to a constellation of conditions common to the lowest income neighborhoods in the county, including poverty, income inequality, unsafe housing, poor nutrition, and inadequate health care. For Black students, structural and systemic racism perpetuates these inequities.

One of the earliest decisions by members of the Joint Initiative was to substitute the word "Opportunity" for "Achievement" in our title. That term will be used consistently throughout this document in recognition of the fact that denial of opportunity, not lack of effort or innate talent, is to blame for the gap in academic success between groups of students. This inequality of opportunity, related to race and income, begins with lack of prenatal care, the negative effects of low birthweight and poor nutrition, and is compounded by unsafe housing, inadequate transportation, and neighborhood violence. Children who have suffered the cumulative effect of inequity and racism, including specific traumas known as *Adverse Childhood Experiences* (ACES), are least ready to learn when they start school at the prekindergarten and kindergarten levels. That gap in readiness widens as the children move through the school system.

Over the last 20 years, there have been several attempts to address the documented opportunity gap affecting some of our Anne Arundel County Public Schools students and the structural racism in which that gap is rooted.

- In 2004, the local NAACP chapter filed multiple complaints against county public schools, including a complaint filed with the Office for Civil Rights that resulted in an outlined plan to close the achievement gap between Black and White students in the county.

- In 2005, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed between the NAACP, et al. and county public schools, in lieu of continuing lawsuits against the Board of Education (Appendix A).

- In 2011, the local NAACP filed another complaint alleging Black students and teachers were subject to disparate treatment and that Black students were disproportionately suspended or expelled. The complaint referenced the former plan which they claimed had not changed the numbers, or the educational opportunities, for Black students.

- In 2014, the NAACP claimed the 2005 MOA had been breached by the Board of Education when the Office of Equity and Human Relations (OEHR) was dissolved by the county school system and several Black employees lost their jobs.

Over time, the baseline for the MOA has shifted: specific courses cited in the Agreement no longer apply. Improvement has been made in many areas and appears to have reached a plateau. The very nature of how education and other school-related services are delivered, including pedagogy and curriculum, has changed dramatically in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and those changes have made it difficult to predict how education will look in the future.

Opportunity gaps begin long before students enter the school system, and many of the structural and systemic problems are societal. Therefore, AACPS, Anne Arundel County Government, community organizations, and residents of the County must all be part of the solution.

**Children who have suffered the cumulative effect of inequality and racism...
are least ready to learn when they start school at the kindergarten level.**

What the Data Show

The opportunity gap can begin before birth, especially for Black children. According to the Arundel County Department of Health's Report of Community Health Indicators, May 2019, Black women have poorer health outcomes than White women in the following areas:

Who Receives First Trimester Prenatal Care

| Black Women | 60.8% |
| White Women | 74.5% |
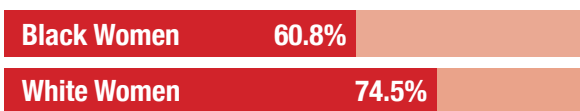
Percent of Pre-Term Infants

| 12.1% | Black Babies |
| 9.3% | White Babies |

Infant Mortality Rate

7.9 per 1,000
Black Babies

2.8 per 1,000
White Babies

Percent of Low Birthweight Infants

| 12.3% | Black Babies |
| 6.5% | White Babies |

Low birth weight infants run the risk of developing health issues, hyperactivity disorders and developmental issues, especially those developmental issues related to school achievement (Brown, 2018).

The data above demonstrate that barriers to opportunity exist for African-American children before they even walk through the school door. The data underscore that the kindergarten readiness data for the 2019 school year shows 55 percent of White students are ready for school, while only 34 percent of African-American students are ready (AACPS, 2019). This readiness gap fuels the opportunity gap which widens as African-American children move through school.

The data below are a snapshot of disparities that exist in AACPS. It is important to note, when viewing percentages, African Americans make up 21.1% of the school population, Latinx[1] students comprise 17.1%, and just over half of all students are White (51.3%).

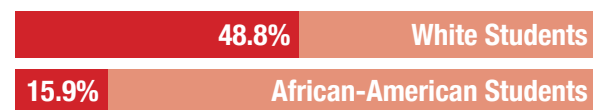### 2019 Academic Achievement Students Scoring Proficient
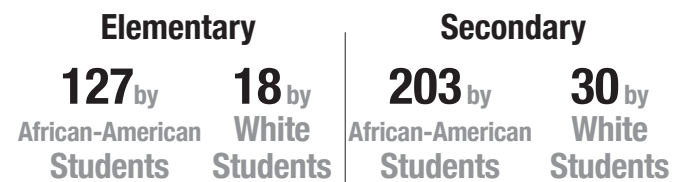
8th Grade English Language Arts

| 60.8% | White Students |
| 28.8% | African-American Students |

8th Grade Mathematics
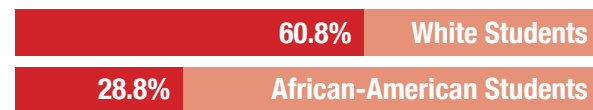
| 19% | White Students |
| 5.0% | African-American Students |

Algebra I (Graduation Requirement)

| 48.8% | White Students |
| 15.9% | African-American Students |

2018 Discipline Data
Number of Discipline Referrals Received

Elementary		**Secondary**	
127 by African-American Students	**18** by White Students	**203** by African-American Students	**30** by White Students

2018 Rate of Student Suspensions

| 33.1% (1,473) | White Students |
| 45.3% (2,045) | African-American Students |

2017–2018 Graduation Rate

These figures do not take into account students who may have dropped out by 9th or 10th grade.

| White Students | 92.1% |
| African-American Students | 86.4% |

Impact of COVID-19

The disparities highlighted in the data above have been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Low income communities throughout the county, disproportionately African-American and Latinx, have borne the brunt of the virus in terms of its immediate health impact, the lack of resources to adequately respond, and the profound and unequal economic damage. According to the Anne Arundel County Department of Health (2020):

- The Latinx population accounts for 27 percent of the county's COVID cases. They account for only 8 percent of the county's population.

- African-American residents account for 27 percent of county deaths from COVID but they represent only 17 percent of the county's population.

Additionally, children in low income, disproportionately African-American and Latinx county neighborhoods are:

- less likely to have had internet access at the beginning of the pandemic;

- less likely to have had access to quality child care during the pandemic; and

- more likely to have suffered trauma as a result of financial difficulties, including loss of housing, both before and during the pandemic.

[1] We honor language and naming of racial groups and recognize that not all people of Latin, Hispanic, and Spanish decent identify as Latinx. We have decided to use Latinx as it is the most inclusive and tolerant nomenclature.

Opportunity gaps begin long before students enter the school system, and many of the structural and systemic problems are societal. Therefore, AACPS, Anne Arundel County Government, community organizations, and residents of the County must all be part of the solution.

Process

County Executive Pittman and Superintendent Arlotto assigned oversight of the *Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap* to former Chief of Staff Dr. Jennifer Purcell, and Deputy Superintendent Mrs. Monique Jackson, respectively. They assembled a core planning team to develop the initiative's overall timeline and process. This planning team included Dr. Maisha Gillins, Dr. Heidi O'Gilvie, and Dr. Pam Brown.

Representatives from several agencies and organizations were invited to participate on the Opportunity Gap Committee (OGC):

The OGC requested community input throughout the process; the first during a formal launch event at Arundel High School.

The OGC's Community Launch meeting was held on September 23, 2019. More than 200 participants attended. After welcoming remarks, a historical overview, and data presentations by AACPS and the Partnership for Children, Youth and Families, attendees relocated to 10 classrooms to participate in a facilitated small group activity designed to collect responses to the following questions:

- What key issues presented tonight do you believe have the greatest impact on the achievement gap?
- What questions still need to be addressed or what next steps should the committee consider?
- What can we do collectively to eliminate the achievement gap?

The activity resulted in over 400 qualitative comments, which were categorized by the OGC and used to inform the creation of five working subcommittees:
- Curriculum
- Discipline
- Family Life
- Social Determinants of Education
- Systemic Racism

Each subcommittee was charged with writing specific goals and a list of potential strategies to reach those goals based on data and best practices. Facilitators asked the members to consider costs of implementation and how to measure outcomes, but did not instruct them to limit recommendations based on those criteria. This report lists all recommendations the members believe will move Anne Arundel County toward eliminating opportunity gaps.

Representatives from the following agencies and organizations were invited to participate on the Opportunity Gap Committee:

- Anne Arundel County Public Schools
- Anne Arundel County Public Library
- Anne Arundel Community College
- Anne Arundel Medical Center
- ARC of the Chesapeake
- Baltimore Washington Medical Center
- Caucus of African-American Leaders
- Centro De Ayuda
- City of Annapolis
- Community Action Agency
- County Executive's Office
- Concerned Citizens for Successful Students
- Economic Development Corporation
- Department of Health
- Housing Authority
- Department of Juvenile Services
- Mental Health Agency
- NAACP
- Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families
- Police Department
- Public Defender's Office
- Department of Recreation and Parks
- State's Attorney's Office
- Department of Transportation
- Workforce Development Corporation

Participating members are listed in Appendix B.

Meeting Dates:

September 23, 2019
Community Meeting

October 7, 2019
OGC Meeting

November 18, 2019
OGC Meeting

December 30, 2019
OGC Meeting

February 6, 2020
Community Meeting

February 24, 2020
OGC Meeting

March 13, 2020
COVID Emergency Declaration

April 28, 2020
Subcommittee Lead Meeting

June 16, 2020
Subcommittee Lead Meeting

July 23, 2020
Subcommittee Lead Meeting

August 2020
Subcommittee Drafts Submitted

September 2020
Preliminary Report Drafted

October 12, 2020
Report Subcommittee Meeting

October 22, 2020
OGC Meeting

November 6, 2020
Report Delivered to County Executive and Superintendent

November 30, 2020
Community Meeting (tentative)

The OGC met monthly from October 2019 to December 2019, then hosted a community meeting on February 6, 2020, to share their progress to date with the public. The OCG met again on February 24, 2020. Subcommittees continued to meet virtually after county buildings closed for the COVID-19 pandemic, although the rate of work slowed due to competing responsibilities. In many cases, subcommittees invited community members, parents, and content experts to participate in their meetings and activities.

Subcommittee leads began meeting online throughout the spring and sent draft recommendations to the planning team in August 2020. Drs. Purcell and Brown prepared a preliminary draft of the report, which was reviewed by the Report Subcommittee and later presented to the OGC for feedback. The final OGC meeting was October 22, 2020.

The OGC recognizes that current efforts toward eliminating the gaps did not stop while the group was completing its research. Therefore, some recommendations may already be at the beginning stages.

Each subcommittee was charged with writing specific goals and a list of potential strategies to reach those goals based on data and best practices.

Recommendations

Recommendations are reported in two sections. The first section is a distillation of the five subcommittee reports into four priority recommendations the OGC believes will have the greatest impact on student opportunity and achievement. These specific recommendations appeared in multiple subcommittee reports, and stood out because they required collaboration between the school system, the county and the local community; targeted structural and systemic contributors to opportunity gaps; and insured accountability and sustainability.

The committee advocates strongly that these four recommendations be adopted and implemented by June 30, 2021.

The second section presents the complete subcommittee recommendations in table format, to highlight goals and related strategies for quick reference.

To be clear, these recommendations are not intended solely for AACPS. The opportunity gap begins long before a child enters the school system and is tied to social determinants impacted by multiple systems. As a result, each recommendation is labeled with symbols representing AACPS, Anne Arundel County, and the community/family. In many cases, fulfilling one recommendation will require multiple systems and individuals to work together more than the school system or county alone.

Detailed descriptions of the research and rationale supporting the recommendations, when available, are included in the full subcommittee reports located in Appendix C.

The committee recognizes there is overlap among the subcommittee recommendations, which highlights the complexity of both causes and solutions to the opportunity gap. It also signals the importance of a particular issue and validates the work of other subcommittees. In this case, the OGC not only identified overlap within its own subcommittees, but also within the recommendations of a parallel initiative to address the mental health needs of youth in Anne Arundel County. A list of similar recommendations between the Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap and the Mental Health Task Force is located at the end of Section II.

In many cases, fulfilling one recommendation will require multiple systems and individuals to work together more than the school system or county alone.

SECTION I: Priority Recommendations

Priority Recommendation #1:

Establish and empower an independent coalition of stakeholders, including those with lived experience of the issues, to provide ongoing review and oversight of structural and systemic racism that contributes to the opportunity gap in AACPS and the County, and to recommend changes to address equity issues in academics and discipline.

The coalition shall comprise equal representation from all stakeholder communities.

Barriers to participation for vulnerable residents must be identified and addressed.

The arrangement for mutual accountability, power sharing, decision making authority, and reporting responsibility between AACPS, the County, and the coalition needs to be formally defined and agreed to.

The coalition would be responsible for:

- defining and tracking metrics, in collaboration with AACPS and county representatives, that reflect the negative impacts of systemic racism on the opportunity gap;

- providing recommendations to AACPS and to Anne Arundel County Government;

- reviewing progress quarterly, scheduling and conducting public forums, serving as a resource to the Superintendent and the Board of Education, and coordinating with other AACPS and Anne Arundel County equity bodies as necessary.

To ensure long-term commitment and sustainability, the OGC recommends the coalition's mission and authority be codified. In the interim, the committee supports creating a document equivalent to a Stakeholder / AACPS / Anne Arundel County Memorandum of Agreement by June 30, 2021.

Priority Recommendation #2

Engage government agencies and community partners to mitigate the effects of social determinants of education in low income communities, thereby increasing readiness for school and achievement throughout school.

Work with community partners to inventory all programs for children ages 0–5, identify gaps, and increase the number of proactive support services if needed.

Use varied communication strategies to provide comprehensive outreach to all residents.

Improve access to libraries and child development support programs for low income families.

Prioritize addressing transportation issues as a significant barrier.

Address trauma related to poverty and systemic racism.

Examine the various decision or intercept points where disparity occurs in the implementation of discipline inside and outside of school. Where available, implement community based restorative practices to decrease the disproportionality.

Priority Recommendation #3

Increase transparency and accountability by improving the public's ability to locate, read, and interpret available reports on progress toward opportunity gap goals.

The coalition, described above, shall be responsible for defining and tracking metrics on an agreed upon time schedule.

All data should be disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

The County and AACPS would broadcast related information, reports, and community input opportunities through their communication resources, including but not limited to the County and AACPS television stations, websites, social media, and community newsletters.

Opportunity gap metrics, designed to be easily accessed and understood, should be posted on the county's Open Arundel website.

Priority Recommendation #4:

Establish a practice within the Board of Education, the AACPS Central Office, the Anne Arundel County Government, and the Anne Arundel County Council of preparing a documented equity analysis to accompany all proposed policies and decisions.

Policies and decisions include, but are not limited to, regulations, executive orders, legislation, budget recommendations, and curriculum review.

An equity analysis should stand with equal weight with legal and financial analyses.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education's (MABE) (2018) 5-question "*Looking through the Equity Lens*" tool, if used thoughtfully, will illuminate many perspectives. This tool could serve all legislative, executive, and operational units.

Include equity officers in all processes.

Curriculum

Goal	Strategies
Demonstrate equitable access and enrollment in all AACPS programs and curriculum. Partner(s) involved: AACPS AACo Community	1. Ensure equitable access to technology for e-learning and family services, including technology training, assistance, and support for teachers, students, and their families to succeed in these programs by achieving 1 to 1 computers, high-speed internet access by partnering with community resources, (21st Century non-profit, grants, local businesses, internet providers), accessories (headphones), and training for caregivers. 2. Ensure application and selection processes reduce barriers to programs. 3. Share collected disaggregated data on an easily accessible website. 4. Reduce entrance limitations to CAT South and CAT North. 5. Promote technology education to increase workforce readiness upon graduation. 6. Increase collaboration with AACC and access for students. 7. Increase the number of students who take college classes while in high school. 8. Increase collaboration between AACPS and non-profits to provide mentoring, family partnerships, and additional curricular and career opportunities.

Goal	Strategies
Intentionally incorporate relevant historical, social, and cultural perspectives in the AACPS formal curriculum.	1. Analyze all curricula using an equity rubric. 2. Review curriculum with a culturally responsive lens reflecting all types of diversity and diverse perspectives, and revise as necessary. 3. Institute a less rigid curriculum that allows teachers to modify lessons based on what is going on in the world. 4. Use teacher, family, and student feedback to improve curriculum. 5. Include an equity representative during curriculum workshops.

Curriculum, continued

Goal	Strategy
Continuously assess strengths and areas of need of current curriculum practices and materials, revise practices that may be inequitable, and report students success data quarterly.	1. Acknowledge the critical role of quality curricula and vet the curriculum to determine if it is meeting its goals.
	2. Evaluate curriculum using an equity lens for all student populations. Use disaggregated data to determine where inequities may exist and make changes to curriculum and assessment.
	3. Utilize quality circles to identify improvement opportunities.
	4. Identify, using benchmarks, and support all struggling readers starting in Kindergarten using targeted interventions.
	5. Grade the curriculum between regular and AP by reevaluating the honors curriculum, so it does not inhibit academic excellence.
	6. Provide professional development for teachers on effective assessments, peer review of rubrics, and grading practices.
	7. Improve teacher inter-rater reliability on student assessments.
	8. Use teacher, family, and student feedback to improve curriculum.
	9. Invest in a learning management system, with professional development, that includes student supports such as screen reader, closed captioning, etc.
	10. Consult with online learning specialists if continuing online education. Develop consistency of presentation, including recorded video presentations and set opportunities to meet online. Allow students to use multiple modes to demonstrate understanding, provide feedback, and offer opportunities for reteaching/retesting.

Goal	Strategy
Increase access to and equitable representation in traditional and nontraditional after school activities at all levels, in partnership with the county and utilizing existing resources, to broaden student interest and experiences.	1. Complete a cost analysis to add middle school sports, music, and other extracurricular programs.
	2. Determine the "why" if there is not equitable enrollment in extra-curricular programs.
	3. Inventory equity of playground equipment and sports/ recreation facilities.
	4. Create outdoor classroom space, prioritizing Title 1 schools.
	5. Increase equitable access to nontraditional activities such as environmental activities, water access or maritime programs, agricultural programs, and the arts.

Curriculum, continued

Goal	Strategy
Demonstrate ability of school leaders / administrators, staff, and teachers to build effective relationships and overcome implicit bias measured by yearly professional practice rubrics, school climate survey data, and attitude surveys. Partner(s) involved: AACPS AACo Community	1. Continue professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching, implicit bias, anti-racism, anti-oppressive behaviors towards students, and relationship development with students and families.
	2. Build capacity of teachers and administrators to be able to discuss and facilitate discussions on racism and other oppressions, and privilege.
	3. Purposely build relationships among students and families at schools.
	4. Implement community-sponsored events to celebrate our culture and diversity.
	5. Provide equity training to PTAs.
	6. Evaluate teacher and administrator attitudes towards bias and need for change.
	7. Add a statement to job descriptions and evaluations that administrators are responsible for acting as instructional coaches modeling successful equity practices.
	8. Implement differentiated coaching on effective teaching at all levels (new and veteran teachers), including assessing in the moment and giving feedback.
	9. Create a clear model of what excellence looks like.
	10. Use administrator, teacher, family, and student feedback to improve practices.
	11. Continue to build the capacity of teachers to understand trauma-informed restorative practices.
	12. Collaborate with non-profits and other public entities to discuss and share ideas to reduce bias and end systemic inequities.

Curriculum, continued

Goal	Strategy	
Through concerted county effort in partnership with AACPS, improve kindergarten readiness of all students (birth to K) within 3 years.	1. Work with the community to inventory all programs for birth to K children and identify gaps and areas to improve.	
	2. Consider recommendations of the Social Determinants of Education subcommittee.	
	3. Improve access to library programs and child development supports.	
	4. Improve access to early intervention services, including expansion of staff and resources.	

Goal	Strategy	
Attract more teachers, administrators, and staff to Anne Arundel County so that by 2030 our faculty and staff represent the diversity of our students.	1. Create a New Pipeline through AACo Scholarships for Teachers within 1 year.	
	2. Top performing students should be inspired to become teachers. 15% enrollment increase in teacher preparation courses.	
	3. Create a mentoring program for students through collaboration with nonprofits.	
	4. Provide support for leaders to hire equity-minded people by using an interviewing checklist.	
	5. Build high retention supportive pathways into teaching.*	
	6. Provide competitive compensation.*	
	7. Improve school teaching conditions through improved school leadership.*	

* Excerpted from Learning Policy Institute, 2018.

Discipline

Goal	Strategies
Reduce the racial disparity (disproportionate representation of Black students) in Anne Arundel County Public Schools discipline data, at every level, by 2022. Partner(s) involved: AACPS AACo Community	1. Review community-based reportable offenses and amend regulations to be consistent with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) model policy. **Twelve specific changes are listed in the Discipline Subcommittee's Report (Appendix C)**
	2. Evaluate the Code of Conduct to ensure it prioritizes the use of restorative approaches and limits the use of exclusionary discipline as an option of last resort.
	3. Create a comprehensive system of restorative approaches to include community programming already available.
	4. Examine the role of School Resource Officers in schools through student surveys and revision of the Memorandum of Understanding with AACPD to exclude engagement in disciplinary matters that are prescribed in the Code of Conduct and within the purview of the school administration.
	5. Conduct routine analysis of disaggregated discipline data and post results on the AACPS website quarterly.

Family Life

Goal	Strategies
Support inclusive family engagement in all schools.	1. Collect ideas and information from all stakeholders.
	2. Encourage idea sharing in PTAs and other parent groups.
	3. Work with PTAs/PTOs on ways to become more inclusive and diverse.
	4. Work with AACPS to ensure each school's School Improvement Team goals are easily accessible on school websites so that parents, community members, and PTA/PTOs can support the goals.

Social Determinants of Education

Goal	Strategies	
Increase the number of proactive support services in Anne Arundel County for youth ages 0–5.	1. Develop and implement an early identification (screening tool) for 0–5 year olds to help identify newborns, infants, toddlers and preschoolers who have a strong potential for moderate to high ACE scores.	
	2. Provide wrap around services in Community Schools.	
	3. Expand AACDH's Residents Access to a Coalition of Health (REACH) Program from 300 to 400 spaces.	
	4. Expand *Infants and Toddlers* and *Child Find* to include those who have a diagnosis or experience 20% delay from 25% delay.	
	5. Add behavioral specialists to the Child Find program.	
	6. Expand early childhood behavioral intervention (AACPS/Thrive) from 35 spaces to 50.	
	7. Expand timing of high school sports physicals from June 1 – August 10th, to within one year of the start of a sport to increase the number of high school students having their annual well exam with their pediatrician.	

Goal	Strategies	
Increase number of students "kindergarten ready" and decrease number of students experiencing the "summer slide."	1. Enhance literacy exposure by bringing the library to vulnerable populations 0–13 years old. Prioritize subsidized residential communities with high rates of transportation and/or language barriers.	
	2. Establish trust with unlicensed childcare providers to offer support without triggering punitive issues.	

Goal	Strategies	
Improve collaboration & communication among agencies.	1. Develop and implement universal inter-agency consent form.	
	2. Provide culturally-sensitive communications from support services.	

Social Determinants of Education, continued

Goal	Strategies	
Increase awareness of and access to support services. Partner(s) involved: AACPS AACo Community	1. Provide transportation vouchers for Child Find families with transportation barriers.	
	2. Ensure that pediatricians are aware of Healthy Anne Arundel's behavioral health toolkit for providers.	
	3. Develop and share a bilingual resource packet, website and (Networkofcare.org) text service for parents to be shared at delivery, pediatricians' offices, FQHCs, WIC, etc.	
	4. Share pertinent information about support programs. Any online resource should list screening criteria and bilingual capabilities.	
	5. Link to county resource website using a QR Code on printed county materials. (Rec & Parks, Dept. of Aging, AACPS handbook/code of conduct) Make these available through the county phone line.	
	6. Promote Network of Care with providers, families, public housing managers, caseworkers, etc.	

Systemic Racism

Goal	Strategies	
Create permanent processes that address the societal problem of systemic racism in AACPS and the County.	1. Establish and empower a coalition of stakeholders to provide ongoing oversight of systemic racism issues in AACPS and to recommend changes to address issues and accomplish improvements.	
	2. Establish a practice within the Board of Education, the AACPS Central Office, the Anne Arundel County Government, and the Anne Arundel County Council of preparing a documented equity analysis to accompany all proposed policies, regulations, executive orders, legislation, and budget recommendations or decisions.	

Overlap with Mental Health Task Force Recommendations

The Mental Health Task Force (MHTF) began its work a few months prior to the OGC and many individuals served on both initiatives. The joint nature of the work also stemmed from the fact that issues surrounding the mental health of children are just as complex as the opportunity gap, and that no one agency can be responsible for the solution. Again, overlap among the initiatives can signal the importance of a particular issue and validates the work of each group.

The MHTF presented its final report to the Board of Education on Wednesday, October 7, 2020.

The following recommendations, listed in the MHTF report, are the same or very similar to those produced by the Opportunity Gap Committee. The first list matches the OGC's priority recommendations. The second list includes recommendations identified by subcommittees.

MHTF Recommendations that Match the Opportunity Gap Priority Recommendations

- Apply the "equity lens" within each subcommittee for all policies, procedures, and practices.
- Use data to manage, monitor, and track all efforts.
- Develop additional Restorative Practices.

MHTF Recommendations Similar to Those in the Opportunity Gap Subcommittee Reports

- Incorporate culturally responsive teaching models in schools.
- Expand use of the Community School model.
- Develop practices for fair and equitable discipline based on best practices.
- Provide early social-emotional support for children who may be at-risk for generational trauma.
- Include transportation in all programming to ensure individuals in poverty can access needed services and resources.
- Develop resources to support navigation through eligibility and services for low and very low-income families.
- Embed local community organizations within schools or formally connect them to schools.
- Provide information about post-secondary options other than college.

Conclusion

The data demonstrate that the opportunity gap is pervasive, but the problem is not unsurmountable. With communication and collaboration among AACPS, county government agencies and community partners, students who might have found themselves starting off on the wrong foot, due to circumstances out of their control, can have the resources and supports necessary to succeed.

Early intervention, collaboration, accountability, and equity are key.

The OGC recognizes that many recommendations may not be achievable in the current fiscal climate, and that even in the best budget years will still take a commitment of time and hard work to achieve. However, members of the committee feel strongly about taking initial steps toward the four priority recommendations now and are willing to be part of the process.

The process to get to this point was far different than expected, but the coronavirus pandemic only highlighted the extent of the disparities that exist. It caused the committee to look at the issues from a new perspective and reminded them of the complexity of the issues and solutions.

In the end, the process was a rewarding experience and the committee is grateful for the opportunity to engage in work that is so critically important to our students, our residents, and our county.

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Early intervention, collaboration, accountability, and equity are key.

Appendices

Appendix A:
2005 Mediated Agreement Between AACPS and AACo NAACP, et al

Appendix B:
Opportunity Gap Committee Membership

Appendix C:
Subcommittee Reports

2005 Mediated Agreement Between AACPS and AACo NAACP, et al

Mediated Agreement Between

the

Anne Arundel County (MD) Public School System

and the

Anne Arundel County NAACP, et al.

ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Dated as of Wednesday September 7, 2005

MEDIATED AGREEMENT BETWEEN the
Anne Arundel County (MD) Public School System
and the
Anne Arundel County NAACP, et al
(Complaint #03041169 filed with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights on May 17, 2004)

This agreement, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), is consistent with the United States Department of Justice, Community Relations Services (CRS) congressional mandate as detailed in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000g). CRS provides assistance to communities and persons therein in resolving disputes, disagreements, or difficulties related to conflicts and tensions based on race, national origin, and color.

This MOA is the result of several meetings between representatives of the Anne Arundel County Public School (AACPS) system, including its Superintendent, and the Complainant group, which includes, among many other groups and individuals, the Anne Arundel County NAACP.

The express intent of the parties to this MOA is to establish goals for the improvement of educational and academic attainment among African American students in order to reach parity with other students in the AACPS system.

Any party shall construe nothing in this Agreement as an admission of any wrongdoing. Nothing in this Agreement is due to duress, coercion, or undue influence. All parties have voluntarily agreed to participate in this MOA in the spirit of community reconciliation, requesting the services of CRS.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY NAACP, ET AL (COMPLAINANTS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS, COMPLAINT # 03041169)

AND

THE ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

AND

THE OFFICE OF THE ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

DATED AS OF September 7, 2005

THIS MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ("MOA") is entered into this 7th day of September, 2005, by and among the Anne Arundel County Board of Education ("Board"), the office of the Anne Arundel County School Superintendent ("Superintendent") and the complainants listed in Complaint #03041169 filed May 17, 2004 with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights ("OCR") (the "Complainants").

1. **WHEREAS**, On May 17, 2004, the Complainants, comprising more than 20 parents and concerned citizens and groups, including the Anne Arundel County NAACP, filed a discrimination claim with OCR charging that the Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) system has categorically denied and limited educational opportunities for African American students; and

2. **WHEREAS**, the Complainants specifically charged that AACPS' own data as well as a plethora of anecdotal examples from students and parents reveal that African American students are (a) less likely to participate in gifted and talented ("GT") programs, Honors classes, and advanced placement ("AP") classes, (b) more likely to be expelled or suspended from school or referred to alternative school programs, (c) experience less educational success due to, among other factors, lower expectations demonstrated by teachers, guidance counselors and administrators' lack of encouragement, (d) more likely to be assigned to special education than their white counterparts, and (e) substantially less likely to graduate from high school, all of which contribute to the denial and limitation of educational and future employment opportunities for African American students; and

3. **WHEREAS**, in response to the complaint, the Superintendent, on behalf of the Board, requested mediation of the issues cited in the OCR complaint; and

4. **WHEREAS**, the Superintendent's request for mediation does not constitute an admission, adjudication, or finding on the merits of the OCR complaint; and

5. **WHEREAS**, OCR officials recommended to the Complainants that they consider mediation of the OCR complaint with the Superintendent on behalf of the Board, which mediation would be overseen by officials from the Department of Justice ("DOJ"); and

6. **WHEREAS**, in lieu of litigation at this time, the Complainants agreed to a process of mediation involving representatives of the Complainants, the Superintendent and staff on behalf of the Board, and DOJ officials and resource persons in an effort to cooperatively resolve the Complaint, however, nothing herein shall limit, preclude, restrict, or in any way whatsoever affect the right of any party to take action in any administrative, judicial or legislative forum, or in any other place or way, to protect or exercise its rights or challenge the actions of any party to this MOA; and

7. **WHEREAS**, the parties agree that the development of a cooperative plan to

successfully address the problems affecting African American students in the AACPS system is the most expedient and effective way to drastically improve the academic conditions of African American students and thus resolve the concerns raised in the OCR complaint; and

8.   **WHEREAS**, the parties acknowledge that the success of this process is dependent on the participation of other interested and essential entities ("Stakeholders") and therefore agree to use diligent and good-faith efforts to keep Stakeholders informed and engaged in the MOA's terms as necessary and as possible through formal or informal cooperative/partnership agreements or memoranda of understanding. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to governmental agencies, community-based organizations and service providers, churches, and individuals; and

9.   **WHEREAS**, the parties have specifically invited the Teacher's Association of Anne Arundel County ("TAAAC"), the Anne Arundel County Executive, the Chairman of the Anne Arundel County Council, the Anne Arundel County Legislative Delegation, R.E.S.P.E.C.T., Inc., the Anne Arundel County NAACP, the United Black Clergy and other essential entities to participate as key Stakeholders in the review of and consultation on strategies for closing the educational achievement gap between the academic standards set by the state and national departments of education and African American and other students, and to concur with the spirit of this MOA now or at anytime during the term of this MOA; and

10.   **WHEREAS**, the parties recognize that the conditions in the AACPS system leading to the vast educational disparities between students based on race are not a recent or one-time occurrence but have developed and institutionalized overtime; and that any resolution of such disparities will require (1) a concerted and targeted effort to de-institutionalize such conditions, (2) a re-tooling of the school system whereby all students are treated fairly and equally in the delivery of educational opportunities, and (3) a re-institutionalizing of the re-designed system, which the parties recognize must survive the existing Board, Superintendent and local political leadership so that parents can have a reasonable expectation that their children will succeed; and

11.   **WHEREAS**, the parties recognize the significant progress made by the Superintendent and the Board of Education in the last two years in accelerating academic achievement for all students and closing the gap between the achievement of African American students and all other students; and

12.   **WHEREAS**, the parties further recognize the magnitude of the plan to improve the educational attainment of African American students commensurate with the educational attainment of students in the AACPS system presents issues of prioritizing, funding, organization**, community collaboration** and coordination; the parties therefore, desire to use diligent and good-faith efforts to heighten the priority, zealously seek full funding, **involve parents in** and appropriately organize and coordinate the plan of action contemplated by the Superintendent and the Board in achieving the benchmarks and goals set out in this MOA; and

13.   **WHEREAS**, the parties are committed to complete their respective tasks and <u>seek to</u> achieve the goals outlined in this MOA by June 2007 using the 2002-2003 school year as the baseline for measurement;

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing and of the mutual covenants and agreements hereinafter set forth, the parties agree to the following stipulations:

STIPULATIONS

I.   Adopt goals for the Anne Arundel County Public Schools in the areas of (a) Academic Achievement, (b) Safe and Orderly Environments, and (c) Community Collaboration: By no later than June 2007 the Board and the Superintendent shall diligently seek to achieve the following academic and safety goals for African American students:

A.   <u>Academic Achievement</u>.

1.   Eighty-five percent (85%) of African American students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 will perform at the "proficient" level in reading, mathematics, and writing, as defined by the Maryland State Department of Education in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act, in order to reach parity with the Superintendent's goals for all students.

2.   Forty-five percent (45%) of African American students will successfully complete Algebra I by the end of the eighth grade, in order to reach parity with the Superintendent's goals for all students.

3.   Twenty percent (20%) of African American students will compete in regional, state, and or co-curricular competitions by the end of the eleventh grade, in order to reach parity with the Superintendent's goals for all students.

4.   Forty percent (40%) of African American students will have completed at least one Advanced Placement ("AP") course, and seventy percent (70%) of those students will perform at level 3 or better on AP examinations by graduation, in order to reach parity with the Superintendent's goals for all students.

5.   Ten percent (10%) of African American high school seniors will have earned one or more International Baccalaureate ("IB") certificates and seventy percent (70%) of those students will earn an IB diploma, in order to reach parity with the Superintendent's goals for all students.

6.   Seventy-five (75%) of African American high school seniors will have taken the SAT by the end of their senior year, and average scores will increase by five percent (5%) over baseline (2002-2003 school year), in order to reach parity with the Superintendent's goals for all students.

7.   Ninety percent (90%) of African American students will graduate with a Maryland high school diploma, in order to reach parity with the Superintendent's goals for all students.

8.   Special Education:

(a)   Ninety percent (90%) of African American special education students who are seniors will earn a Maryland high school diploma.

(b)   Determine whether there are disparities in the identification and/or diagnosis of African American students as special education eligible as compared to the identification and/or diagnosis of students in other racial categories as special education eligible; and determine whether there is appropriate and adequate delivery of service; and determine whether there is consistent application and compliance with the laws relative to special education designation and services.

(c)   Ensure consistent application of federal, state and local laws, policies and regulations, and eliminate and/or avoid misdiagnosis and/or misidentification of African American students for special education eligibility.

(d)   Establish benchmarks in cooperation with the Advisory Committee for reporting special education outcomes.

9.   Alternative Schools:

(a)   African American students currently enrolled in alternative schools will meet the same academic goals established for all students in all schools as described in Sections 1-8 above and will be returned to regular schools according to school policy.

(b)   Ensure consistent application of federal, state and local laws, policies and regulations, relative to assigning alternative placement of African American students in alternative schools for disciplinary reasons.

10.   Drop Out/Withdrawals:

(a)   Ensure consistent application of federal, state and local laws, policies and regulations related to attendance, drop out and withdrawals.

(b)   Significantly reduce the disproportionately high drop out/ withdrawal rate among African American students at the individual school level.

(c)   Significantly increase student retention among African American students at-risk of dropping out of or withdrawing from school

B.   Safe and Orderly Environments.

1.   Determine whether there are racial disparities in imposing disciplinary measures (suspensions, extended suspensions and expulsions) upon students.

2.   Ensure consistent application of federal, state and local laws, policies and regulations, relative to student discipline and reporting racial incidents.

3.   Establish benchmarks in cooperation with the Advisory Committee for reporting discipline data and outcomes.

4.   Reduce the number of racial incidents at all schools by establishing and staffing a system for documenting, investigating, reviewing and resolving racially motivated student/student and student/ teacher/staff complaints.

C.   Community Collaboration. The Board, the Superintendent, and the Complainants agree to either collectively or independently:

1.   Seek the support, and commitment of the Anne Arundel County Council, the Anne Arundel County Executive, the Teacher's Association of Anne Arundel County, R.E.S.P.E.C.T., the Anne Arundel County NAACP, the United Black Clergy and other community organizations either through concurrence with this MOA or the adoption of policies, mission statements, support letters, partnership agreements or via any other instrument or vehicle that would help memorialize and institutionalize the desired outcomes contemplated in this MOA.

2.   With the input of the Advisory Committee, as defined below, embed into the Bridge to Excellence program the goals of this MOA and any new strategies designed to enable the Superintendent and the Board to achieve these goals.

3.   Conduct a concerted and continuous grass roots student/parent/ community/teacher education and advocacy campaign to support the achievement of these goals.

II.   Institute accountability measures by: (a) tracking and regularly reporting progress to the parties, Stakeholders, and the public at large; (b) forming an Advisory Committee selected by the parties ("Advisory Committee") for regular review to determine whether the Superintendent and Board's plan is effective, whether a course correction is necessary, and whether an extension or termination of the MOA is warranted; and (c) holding public forums for review and input by the public at large.

A.   Tracking and Reporting.

1.   The Superintendent shall design instruments for (a) ascertaining the academic and disciplinary status of students by race and (b) collecting and tracking academic placement and identification decisions and methodologies (AP, GT, IB, Honors, Special Education, non-college bound categories, such as Diversified Occupations) by teachers and disciplinary decisions (referrals to the office, suspensions, expulsions, transfers to alternative school programs) by teachers. The Superintendent shall share his/her findings with the Advisory Committee, Stakeholders and school officials for collaborative review, investigation and correction, where warranted.

2.   Twice per year the Superintendent and the Board shall report on the progress, outcomes, and any mid-course corrections required to achieve the benchmarks and goals. Such reports shall be made public via public forums, mass print and television media, and the AACPS system's cable program and its internet website.

B.   Advisory Committee to Superintendent.

1.   The Advisory Committee will be established jointly by the parties and will consist of six (6) members, three (3) of which will be appointed by the Complainants and three (3) by the Superintendent/Board. (Criteria: AACPS representatives should be members of the Superintendent's Executive management staff/ cabinet with major programmatic responsibilities. The community representatives must represent various geographic areas of the county, be well respected and connected with a number of community organizations or education stakeholders. They must commit for at least one year of service to the Advisory Committee.)

2.   The Advisory Committee will review each progress report prepared by the Superintendent to monitor the performance toward achieving benchmarks and milestones to ensure that goals and stated outcomes are being met.

3.   The Advisory Committee shall also be responsible for setting up the public forums and for serving as a resource to the Superintendent and the Board of Education for strategy development and course correction.
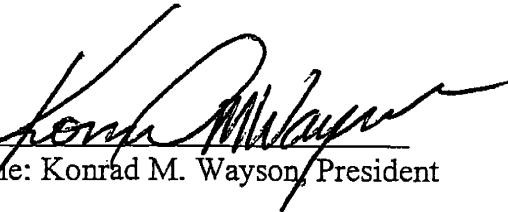
C.   Public Forums.

The scheduling of the two annual public forums will be determined by the Parties. The parties intend tentatively to schedule the forums in the August/September and January/February time frames.
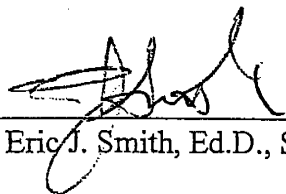
Execution of this MOA below by the parties evidences that the parties intend to be bound by this MOA as of the date first set forth above and intend to carry out its terms diligently and in good faith.
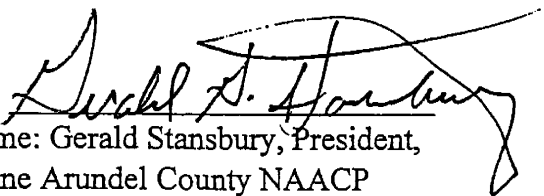
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION
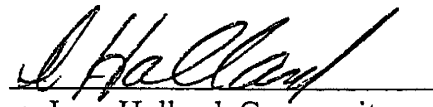
By: _____
Name: Konrad M. Wayson, President

OFFICE OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

By: _____
Name: Eric J. Smith, Ed.D., Superintendent
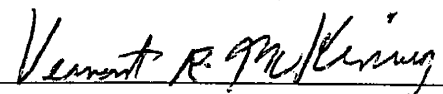
COMPLAINANTS,
COMPLAINT# 03041169,
filed w/ U.S. Department of
Education, Office for Civil Rights

By: _____
Name: Gerald Stansbury, President,
Anne Arundel County NAACP

By: _____
Name: Irma Holland, Community
Representative

WITNESS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
COMMUNITY RELATIONS SERVICE

By: _____
Name: Vermont P. McKinney, Regional Director,
        Mid-Atlantic Region III

Opportunity Gap Committee
Membership and Acknowledgments

Membership

Chief Timothy Altomare (until 8/1/20)
AACo Police Department

Tammy Anderson
Recreation and Parks

Kim Atkinson
Juvenile Services

Skip Auld
AA County Public Libraries

Sgt. Erin Brandt
AACo Police Department

Pamela Brown
AA County Partnership for Children, Youth and Families

Raquel Brown
Anne Arundel County Community Action Agency

Paridhi Cherry
AACPS Student

Kirsten Clark
Centro D'Ayuda

Mary Dadone
NAACP

Jessica Daigle
State's Attorney's Office

Anita Dewling
Economic Development Corp

Ellen GoodmanDuffy
AA County Public Defender

Jessica Farrar
Luminis Health at AAMC

Maisha Gillins
AACPS

Catherine Gray
AA County Mental Health Agency

Sonia Hamlin
University of Maryland BWMC

Laticia Hicks
NAACP

Rosalind Hill
Department of Social Services

Chief Edward Jackson
Annapolis Police Department

Monique Jackson
AACPS

Thornell Jones
Caucus of African American Leaders

Nilesh Kalyanaraman
Department of Health

Milena Kornyl
Workforce Development Corp

Christine Larsen
The ARC, Central Chesapeake

Bridget McLaughlin
Housing Authority, City of Annapolis

Adrienne Mickler
Mental Health Agency

Heidi O'Gilvie
AACPS

Felicia Patterson
AA Community College

Rhonda Pindell-Charles
Annapolis City Council

Captain Fred Plitt
AACo Police Department

Allison Pickard
County Council

Jennifer Purcell
County Executive's Office

Hillary Raftovich
Annapolis Mayor's Office

Lisa Shore
Council of PTAs Representative

Karen Siska
Department of Health

Ryan Voeglin
AACPS

Charlotte Wallace
Luminis Health at AAMC

Janice Watley
AA Community College

Acknowledgments

The Opportunity Gap Committee wishes to thank County Executive Pittman and Superintendent Arlotto for their commitment to eliminating the opportunity gap and for recognizing the need to collaborate on this critical task that starts long before a child enters school.

Mrs. Jackson and Dr. Purcell are grateful to Deanna Natarian and Connie Fuller for administrative support; Dr. Heidi O'Gilvie and Dr. Maisha Gillins for participating in planning sessions, facilitating the committee meetings, and reminding us to have a sense of humor; Dr. Pam Brown for presenting at the first community meeting, participating in planning sessions, and assisting with our preliminary draft, Ellen Goodman Duffy and Dr. Angela Bell for significant editing, and the AACPS print and design staff for formatting the final report.

We wish to thank the committee members for taking on one more task in their already very busy schedules, especially to those who worked double-duty by also serving on the Mental Health Task Force. Your expertise was invaluable.

The community meetings would not have been possible without the support of AACPS facilitators: Jasmine Coleman, Chris DeGuzman, Bill Goodman, Kris Hanks, Anna Harding, Lorenzo Hughes, David Kauffman, Zipporah Miller, Richard Rogers, Cathy Steen, Miesha Walker, Katara West, and Brian Whitley.

The following AACPS staff joined the subcommittees to lend their expertise early in the process: Shelley Davenport, Veronica Samayoa, Matt Schlegel, Katara West. Thank you.

We also acknowledge the following people for volunteering their time to work with the subcommittees during this process. These participants brought differing perspectives, important insights, information on best practices and a true desire to support all students.

- Isha Alston
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- Christa Bellanca
- Jen Corbin
- Issac Colbert
- Cpl. Jose Crus-Miranda
- Corinne Emerson
- Darlene Gamble
- Julie Grignon, Ph.D.
- Uju Inya-Agha, Ph.D.
- Tanesha Meade
- Owen Monroe
- Rev. Dr. Ronald Owens
- Timmeka Perkins
- Candace Place
- Jeanne Saum
- Katherine Sheahan
- Erin Snell, Ph.D., M.P.A.
- Tyjuan Thompson
- Rev. Jose Torres

Subcommittee Reports

Each subcommittee prepared and submitted separate reports. The reports are included here in their entirety with no changes to the content. They have been reformatted for general consistency.

Curriculum

Subcommittee members: Paridhi Cherry, Thornell Jones, Jennifer Purcell, Janice Watley
Adjunct members: Angela Bell, Corinne Emerson, Julie Grignon, Tanesha Meade, Owen Monroe, Candace Place, Jeanne Saum, Katherine Sheahan, Erin Snell, Katara West

The Curriculum Committee consists of stakeholders from Anne Arundel County leadership, AACPS, AACC, NAACP, ACT, Charting Careers non-profit organization, and community members. We each bring our experiences and desires to collaboratively support initiatives which will eliminate the opportunity gap in Anne Arundel County. The seven goals we have identified also contain a list of recommendation strategies and resources, which are meant to be a menu from which to choose. Additional resources, including rubrics, research, and reports are available online at *https://sites.google.com/view/joint-initiative-to-reduce-the/home*.

Overarching Goal

Demonstrate ongoing adherence to a decision-making process through an equity lens. Utilize resources that already exist in the county. This lens should be adhered to by the County and the Board of Education down to classroom-level decisions as demonstrated by quarterly departmental equity response reports, climate survey response rate and results, school improvement plans, and ongoing MABE card training. The Office of Equity should be consulted in all key district / school decisions.

Goal 1:
Demonstrate equitable access and enrollment in all AACPS programs and curriculum

Curriculum / programs include, but are not limited to: technology, magnet, STEM/STEAM, AVID, dual enrollment, honors, AP, gifted and talented, special education, National Honor Society and other academic based societies. AACPS, AACC, and partner nonprofits should collect disaggregated data and share on the equity, or another easily accessible, web page sharing quarterly progress of bimonthly assessment.

- Ensure equitable access to technology for e-learning and family services, including technology training, assistance, and support for teachers, students, and their families. Provide a computer to every student, high-speed internet access by partnering with community resources (Century 21 non-profit, grants, local businesses, internet providers), accessories (headphones), and training for caregivers.

- Ensure application and selection processes reduce barriers to programs.
- Share collected disaggregated data on the equity webpage.
- Reduce entrance limitations to CAT South and CAT North.
- Promote technology education to increase workforce readiness upon graduation.
- Increase collaboration with AACC and promote programs to students.
- Increase the number of students who take college classes while in high school.
- Increase collaboration between AACPS and non-profits to provide mentoring, family partnerships, and additional curricular and career opportunities.

Goal 2:
Intentionally incorporate relevant historical, social, and cultural perspectives in the AACPS formal curriculum (not just in a course).

Partner with other county and community organizations to create meaningful connections that honor similarities and differences of student cultures while thinking critically about history/culture and nurturing the joy of learning (including class, outside of class, and through traditional and nontraditional learning opportunities). This would be demonstrated by teachers collecting reflections from students on coursework, and teachers reflecting on their courses, completing a culturally responsive rubric, and reporting on strengths and areas to improve beginning Summer 2021, and continuing the program each summer.

- Analyze, through peer review, all curricula using an equity rubric.
- Review curriculum (created using Universal Design for Learning) with a culturally responsive lens reflecting all types of diversity and diverse perspectives, and revise as necessary (using a rubric and a checklist completed by experts).
- Institute a less rigid curriculum so that teachers can modify lessons based on what is going on in the world.
- Use teacher, family, and student feedback to improve curriculum (Deming model).
- Include an equity representative during curriculum workshops.

Curriculum, continued

Goal 3:
Continuously assess strengths and weaknesses of current curriculum practices and materials to identify and revise practices that may be inequitable and may cause students to give up and or fail.

This can be demonstrated by student success data per course/teacher, which is used to support revisions, and share those revisions beginning Summer 2020 with reports shared quarterly.

- Acknowledge the critical role of quality curricula and vet the curriculum to determine if it is meeting its goals.

- Evaluate curriculum using an equity lens for all student populations. Use disaggregated data to determine where inequities may exist and make changes to curriculum and assessment.

- Utilize quality circles (Deming model) to identify improvement opportunities.

- Identify, using benchmarks, and support all struggling readers starting in Kindergarten using targeted interventions.

- Grade the curriculum between regular and AP by reevaluating the honors curriculum, so it does not inhibit academic excellence.

- Provide professional development for teachers on effective assessments (rubrics, feedback for students); peer review of rubrics; and grading practices.

- Improve teacher inter-rater reliability on student assessments.

- Use teacher, family, and student feedback to improve curriculum.

- Invest in a learning management system, with professional development, that includes student supports such as screen reader, closed captioning, etc.

- Consult with online learning specialists if continuing online education. Develop consistency of presentation, including recorded video presentations and set opportunities to meet online. Allow students to use multiple modes to demonstrate understanding, provide feedback, and offer opportunities for reteaching/retesting.

Goal 4:
Increase access to and equitable representation in traditional and nontraditional after school activities at all levels.

- In partnership with the county and utilizing existing county resources, equitable access can broaden student interest and experiences as demonstrated with a yearly inventory of all extra-curricular activities, access, resources, and participation data.

Non-traditional programs include, but are not limited to, environmental activities, water access or maritime programs, agricultural programs, and the arts. Traditional programs under consideration include recreational sports at every middle and high school.

- Enrich extra-curricular activities to increase equitable water access and maritime programs.

- Complete a cost-analysis to add middle school sports, music programs.

- Determine the "why" if there is not equitable enrollment in extra-curricular programs.

- Inventory equity of playground equipment and sports/recreation facilities.

- Consider creating outdoor classroom space, prioritizing Title 1 schools.

Goal 5:
Demonstrate ability of school leaders/administrators, staff, and teachers to build effective relationships and overcome implicit bias.

Biases are gained over decades. Personal and institutional bias is radically reduced by staff with commitments to affect change in personal and instructional attitudes and behavior toward race, ethnicity, and diversity. This can be measured by yearly professional practice rubrics, school climate survey data, and leader/administrator, staff, and teacher attitude surveys.

- Continue professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching, implicit bias, anti-racism, anti-oppressive behaviors towards students, and relationship development with students and families.

- Build capacity of teachers and administrators to be able to discuss and facilitate discussions on racism and other oppressions, and privilege. Examples include restorative circles, Speaking Up by TeachingTolerance.org, Inter-group Dialogue, and Coming to the Table.

- Purposely build relationships among students and families at schools.

- Implement community-sponsored events to celebrate our culture and diversity to build relationships.

- Provide equity training to PTAs.

- Evaluate teacher and administrator attitudes towards bias and need for change and measure growth by change.

- Add to job descriptions and evaluations that administrators are responsible for acting as instructional coaches modeling successful equity practices.

- Implement differentiated coaching on effective teaching at all levels (new and veteran teachers), including assessing in the moment and giving feedback.

- Create a clear model of what excellence looks like.

- Use administrator, teacher, family, and student feedback to improve practices.

- Continue to build the capacity of teachers to understand trauma-informed restorative practices.

- Collaborate with non-profits and other public entities to discuss and share ideas to reduce bias and end systemic inequities.

Curriculum, continued

Goal 6:
Through concerted county effort in partnership with AACPS, improve kindergarten readiness of all students (birth to K) within 3 years as demonstrated by qualitative and quantitative data provided by AACPS and partner county organizations.

- Follow recommendations by the social determinants of education subcommittee.
- Improve access to libraries, library programs, and child development support to accelerate interest in science and keep curiosity alive.
- Work with the community to inventory all programs for birth to K children and identify gaps and areas to improve.
- Improve access to early intervention services, including expansion of staff and resources.

Goal 7:
Attract more teachers, administrators, and staff who look like our students to Anne Arundel County.

This can be demonstrated by incremental increase (in numbers) by demographic data of students, teachers, administrators, and staff provided by AACPS each year so that by 2030 our faculty and staff represent our students.

- Create a new pipeline through AACo Scholarships for Teachers within 1 year.
- Inspire top performing students to become teachers with a goal of increasing enrollment in teacher preparation courses by 15%.
- Create a mentoring program for students through non-profit collaboration.
- Provide support for leaders to hire equity-minded people by using an interviewing checklist.
  - Build high retention supportive pathways into teaching:*
    - Create a partnership with AACC Department of Education,
    - Partner with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and/or other institutions,
    - Develop Grow Your Own programs that recruit teacher candidates from nontraditional populations (e.g., high school students, paraprofessionals, and after-school program staff) who are more likely to reflect local diversity, and
    - Offer ongoing mentorship, tutoring, exam stipends, job placement services, and other supports.

- Provide a competitive compensation package:*
  - Institute scholarship and loan forgiveness programs,
  - Provide funding for teacher residencies,
  - Shift hiring timelines earlier,
  - Partner with local teacher preparation programs to coordinate student teaching placements and vet candidates for hire before they graduate,
  - Create diverse hiring committees, and
  - Offer comprehensive induction to support beginning teachers of color in their first years of teaching.
- Improve school teaching conditions through improved school leadership:*
  - Invest in evidence-based school improvement strategies to improve instructional quality and supports for students, including school-wide professional development focusing on whole child development through community partnerships, and
  - Provide ongoing professional learning opportunities for school leaders to develop the skills to support teachers effectively.

*Excerpted from *Learning Policy Institute, 2018*.

Discipline

Subcommittee Members: Pam Brown, Georgia Noone Sherrod, Ellen Goodman Duffy, Latica Hicks, Charlotte Wallace
Adjunct members: Darlene Gamble, TyJuan Thompson, Issac Colbert

The data shared with the Discipline Committee shows that AACPS disciplinary policies and their implementation (including community offenses, in-school arrests, suspension and so on) are disproportionately administered and help to widen the opportunity gap for African American students.

Goal

Reduce the racial disparity (disproportionate representation of Black students) in Anne Arundel County Public Schools discipline data, at every level, by 2022.

1. Review community-based reportable offenses.

According to Anne Arundel County Public Schools Regulation JCC-RAK (2019), reportable offenses are defined as crimes committed in the community, rather than on public school property "involving violence, weapons, controlled dangerous substances, crimes against other, crimes against property, crimes against public administration, and theft and related crimes" (p. 1). Principals who determine a student poses a threat to themselves, others or the educational process based on a reportable offense, may recommend their removal to the Office of Safe and Orderly Schools. During the 2018–2019 school year, principals recommended and the Office of Safe and Orderly Schools removed 111 students from county schools for a broad range of unproven allegations within the above definition (Anne Arundel County Public Defender's Office, 2020) . Those students were, with few exceptions, placed on home teaching until their charges were resolved. The gap in their in-school education lasted anywhere from one to eight months. Although Anne Arundel County Schools is required to provide alternative education, some students never receive those services and those who do often report that in-home school is inferior to in-school education. Students who live in high crime areas are sometimes excluded from the home school program because teachers refuse to go to their homes. Notably, none of these removals are considered suspensions or expulsions, and therefore are not included in the suspension data. In addition, because of the broad definition of reportable offenses included in county regulations, reportable offenses that occur at school are sometimes lumped together with those that occur in the community, and are also excluded from the suspension data.

The school system could not provide the committee with disaggregated data on community offenses. However, African American youth are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system in Anne Arundel County; therefore, it is reasonable to infer that they are disproportionately represented among those who commit reportable offenses.

Strategy to reduce disproportionate impact of community based reportable offenses.

We recommend AACPS amend their regulations consistent with the MSDE[1] model policy, including the following specific changes:

- Expand the definition of reportable offense to specify that it occurs in the community and not on school property, so that reportable offenses that occur on school property cannot be excluded from suspension data.
- Require an immediate Student Support Team (school psychologist, school counselor, pupil personnel worker, and health services staff) meeting upon learning of a student's arrest for a community based reportable offense;
- Require that the legal guardian and student be notified of and invited to participate in the Student Support Team meeting;
- Prohibit anyone from asking the student about the offense itself without counsel present;
- Require the necessary school personnel be invited to and participate in the Student Support Team meeting for any student with a 504 or IEP;
- Require the Student Support Team to make every effort to prevent the removal of the student from their regular school program by providing behavioral supports, counseling, increased supervision, or other services;
- Only permit the removal of a student from their regular school program if the Student Support Team determines that the student's presence in school poses an imminent threat of harm to other students or staff;
- Require the Student Support Team, if it determines that the student presents an imminent threat of harm to other students or staff, to develop a plan to provide comparable education services and appropriate behavioral support services to promote a successful return to the regular educational program;
- Enforce the requirement that implementation of an educational plan, if needed, be accomplished within 5 days of the student's removal;
- Simplify and expedite the process for appeal and review of the Student Support Team decision to exclude a student from their regular education program.
- Develop a protocol for real time communication between the juvenile justice system and the Office of Safe and Orderly Schools regarding the resolution of the intake, petition and adjudication processes.
- Require annual public reporting of data regarding the disposition of students with a community offense including the length of any removal from a student's regular education program, race, ethnicity, gender, disability status of the student and student's educational placement.

Discipline, continued

2. Review of Code of Conduct

We understand that the AACPS Code of Conduct was reviewed in 2020, but we would recommend the review process include input from all stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. Multiple opportunities should be offered for public input. The review should evaluate the Code of Conduct to ensure that it prioritizes the use of restorative approaches and limits the use of exclusionary discipline and uses it as an option of last resort after all other options are exhausted. All aspects of the code of conduct should be viewed through a race and equity lens so that policies will not perpetuate the disproportionate use of disciplinary practices on students of color. The code, as it stands, is open to interpretation. Training is needed for principals and assistant principals to ensure consistent and equitable interpretation and implementation.

3. Review of restorative justice practices

Restorative justice practices, such as community conferencing, are known to disproportionately divert Black students who would otherwise be subject to disciplinary measures. Although the Anne Arundel County Conflict Resolution Center and the Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth and Families offers mediation and community conferencing, Anne Arundel County Public Schools do not use mediation to resolve conflicts between a staff member and a student and infrequently and inconsistently use community conferencing in general. Although Community Conferencing is in the Code of Conduct it is an option only and cannot be used in lieu of suspension. Another restorative practice, Circles, is operated internally in elementary schools, but is not available to middle and high school students.

Strategy to reduce disproportionate use of disciplinary measures by creating a comprehensive system of restorative approaches.

We recommend AACPS develop a broad continuum of restorative approaches to promote a positive school climate and address problematic student behavior. Consistent with existing law, the AACPS policy on restorative approaches should state that the primary purpose of any disciplinary measure is rehabilitative, restorative and educational. AACPS should seek technical assistance from the State Board of Education for use of restorative approaches. The AACPS should delineate a multi-year plan for the adoption, implementation and continual monitoring of proactive restorative approaches. This plan should include student, family and community engagement in restorative approaches. All strictly disciplinary practices should only be used as a last resort, after every effort has been made to maintain students in their regular education program.

We recommend all individuals who interact with AACPS students be required to attend ongoing training in restorative approaches, implicit bias, and cultural competency annually. AACPS should develop an internal infrastructure to provide training, coaching, mentoring, and monitoring to all schools to successfully implement restorative approaches as well as develop community partnerships to support restorative approaches.

We recommend a routine review and analysis of all discipline data. This review should include development of specific remediation measures to address the disproportionate application of discipline methods to students of color. AACPS should enforce racially equitable practices. If an individual or school is identified as disproportionately disciplining students of color, consideration should be given to additional training on restorative approaches, implicit bias, and cultural competency.

4. Examine the role of School Resource Officers (SRO) in schools

For the 2017–2018 school year, referrals to SROs resulted in 770 citations at a dozen county high schools; 62 percent of those citations were to Black students .[3] Whatever the root causes of this disproportionality, the data demands the school system revisit the role of SROs in schools.

Strategy to reduce the disproportionate criminalization of Black students by re-evaluating and re-defining the role of SROs in schools.

We recommend the school system survey the student body regarding their relationship with SROs to identify their perceived role relative to students. The results can be used to re-define their role. We further recommend review of the existing MOU between AACPS and AACPD. AACPS has a robust code of conduct and process for addressing school discipline. SROs should not engage in matters of school discipline, which are prescribed by the code of conduct and within the purview of the school administration. SROs responsibilities should be limited to those matters that create a risk of imminent harm to the physical safety of students and staff on school property.

We recommend that the MOU include the following principles:

- A School Administrator or Official or a School Safety Coordinator shall not direct a school resource officer to enforce discipline-related school policies, rules, regulations or procedures;
- A School Resource Officer may not unilaterally enforce discipline-related school policies, rules, regulations or procedures, and
- A School Resource Officer shall not participate in the routine school discipline of a student.

Discipline, continued

5. Disaggregate all discipline data and share on AACPS website quarterly

In response to a recent request for community offense data, the Board of Education responded that the data is not disaggregated by race. Given the over-representation of African American youth at every level of discipline, all discipline data should be made publicly available by posting quarterly on the AACPS website. Data reports should include disaggregated data by race, ethnicity, gender, disability status (IEP/504), age, eligibility for free or reduced price meals or an equivalent measure of socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, type of discipline, and school. The data should be presented in downloadable format understandable to students, parents and other members of the community.

6. Create an independent community body that monitors community based reportable offenses, school discipline and policing, and reports its findings directly to the Board of Education.

There is currently no school sanctioned, independent body monitoring disproportionate discipline in AACPS. The school board should appoint such a body from the community, with a formal application process, and vote on the appointment and tenure of each member. This body should report on the discipline data, quarterly, to the school board.

[1] Model Policy Bulletin on School Use of Reportable Offenses, Maryland State Department of Educations, Division of School, Family and Student Support, December 2013

[2] Handcuffs in Hallways: The State of Policing in Chicago Schools, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, February 2017.

[3] Students at majority-black Meade High 3 times as likely to face arrest in school than the rest of Anne Arundel, Capital Gazette, September 5, 2019.

Family Life

Subcommittee members: Shelley Davenport, Chief Edward Jackson, Bridget McLaughlin, Rhonda Pindell-Charles, Rev. Dr. Ronald Owens, Lisa Shore, Matt Schlegel
Adjunct members: Andre Dillard

Goal
Support inclusive family engagement in schools

Objective 1: Collect ideas
Invite the Office of School and Family Partnership to this committee.

- Reach out to the County Council of PTA's (AACCPTA), the Parent Involvement Advisory Council, and the AACPS Office of School and Family Partnerships. The Office of School and Family Partnerships has a revised one-page document listing programs and initiatives.
- Identify gaps in these offerings. How can we hear from the parents about what is missing and/or what they would like to see offered?
- Learn about the unique needs of children whose parents are incarcerated. How can we meet these needs? Who else in the community is working to meet these needs? AACPS does not collect information on whether students have an incarcerated parent.
- Explore and map which schools have PTAs and which have PTOs to see if there are equity issues.
- Investigate PTA after-school programs and offerings to see if there are equity issues within and between schools.

Objective 2: Encourage idea sharing in PTAS and other parent groups

- Create clusters of PTAs to share information.
- Promote PTA/PTO/Parent group resource sharing.
- Help schools offer diverse and creative opportunities for families to engage.
- Meet parents and families where they are.
- Facilitate on-line resource sharing and/or meetings.
- Reach out to Annapolis Education Commission for ideas/ input.
- Share best practices from the community school framework so that other schools can incorporate them.
- Share best practices from principals for communication and family engagement ideas.
- Encourage PTAs to set goals, then fundraise to meet the goals instead of just fundraising.

Objective 3: Work with PTAs/PTOs on ways to become more inclusive and diverse

- Offer training to AACCPTA, CAC, Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC), and local PTAs/PTOs on implicit bias, diversity, inclusion.
- Ask parents and students for their ideas on how PTAs and schools can improve.
- Help PTA/PTO membership be representative of the school's demographics.
- Encourage a variety of ways for families to access school and parent group information (such as electronic access).
- Help parent groups find alternative ways to engage parents and communities—such as livestreaming meetings, outreach ideas, communication strategies.
- Revise and distribute the welcoming checklist (self-assessment tool) from AACPS Parent Involvement Advisory Committee.
- Share information on National PTA standards for family partnerships (from *www.pta.org*).
- PTA's process for building successful partnerships starts with the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and consists of three steps:
- Raising awareness about the power of family and community involvement.
- Taking action to cultivate involvement through specific programs and practices.
- Celebrating success as your school sees increased involvement and its impact.
  - Standard 1: Welcoming All Families into the School Community
  - Standard 2: Communicating Effectively
  - Standard 3: Supporting Student Success
  - Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child
  - Standard 5: Sharing Power
  - Standard 6: Collaborating with Community

Family Life, continued

Goal:
Encourage Communication and Transparency

- Work with AACPS to get each school's School Improvement Team goals easily accessible on schools' websites so that parents, community members, and PTA/PTOs can support the goals.
- Include and affirm the voices of students, families, and communities.

Other questions:

How can we continue to build partnerships between families and schools for all families?

Is parent engagement equitable throughout our school system? If not, how can we improve this?

How can we improve the diversity/perception of PTA and other parent groups?

Are there studies/resources/research relevant to family life as it relates to the achievement gap?

Should our committee explore early literacy—or is this work being done by other committees?

How can we support parenting skills—especially as related to academic achievement?

How can we look at this from a strength-based mindset rather than a deficit mindset?

Social Determinants of Education

Subcommittee members: Tim Altomare, Tammy Anderson, Erin Brandt, Jessica Farrar, Catherine Gray, Adrienne Mickler, Veronica Samayoa-Lara, Karen Siska-Creel, Ryan Voeglin, Charlotte Wallace

Adjunct members / Guests: Isha Alston, Christa Bellanca, Jen Corbin, Cpl. Jose Crus-Miranda, Timmeka Perkins, Rev. Jose Torres

Many of our children are in crisis (A crisis is defined by the individuals and family and those can include behavioral, emotional, economic, environmental and health crises.) It is hard to learn when in crisis. When grades start slipping it is easier to be disruptive or absent than make up the work. Early intervention is a priority to minimizing long-term issues.

Poor academic opportunities are related to three primary areas: systemic poverty, trauma and lack of resources.[1,2,3,4]

Goal #1:
Increase the number of proactive support services in Anne Arundel County for ages 0–5 years old.

Issue:
Currently newborns through preschoolers are not connected to services until their family is near or in crisis. .

Research:
- 0–6 years old is the most critical time for brain development.
- From 2012–2018, there has been a 40% increase in early children (0–5 y/o) served in the public health Mental Health System.[5]
- Toddlers and children with behavioral related issues do not qualify for AACPS Child Find.
- Research demonstrates a direct correlation with the number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and…
  – Education (poor academic achievement, learning disabilities, dropout rates, etc.)
    - In 2017, in AACPS, only 5% of English Learners (ELL), 1% of Special Education Services (SPED), and 19% of Free and Reduced Price Meal (FARMs) kindergarteners demonstrated readiness. [6]
    - In 2018, in AACPS, only 49% of English Learners (ELL), 67% of Special Education Services (SPED), and 82% of Free and Reduced Price (FARMs) graduated in four years.[7] (Unable to locate dropout data)
  – Behavioral (substance misuse/abuse, smoking, etc.)
  – Cognitive (lower IQ scores, learning disabilities, trouble focusing, etc.)
  – Social (difficulty trusting, risk taking, etc.)
  – Emotional (irritable, depression, etc.)
  – Physiological (cardiovascular disease, diabetes, life expectancy, etc.)[8]

Recommendations
#1A—Implement an early identification (screening tool) for 0–5 year olds to help identify newborns, infants, toddlers and preschoolers who have a strong potential for moderate to high ACE scores.[9] Screenings can take place after delivery, AACo services (Healthy Start, WIC, etc.) and at yearly well exams. A referral would be prompted if high risk. For example: A teenage mother, with poorly managed mental health concerns, who screens toxic positive would initiate a referral. Most risk factors are notable at birth. Wrap around support can begin before the newborn experiences any trauma.

#1B—Provide wrap around services in Community Schools

#1C—Expand REACH Program from 300 to 400 spaces.

#1D. Expand Infants and Toddlers and Child Find to include those who have a diagnosis or experience 20% delay from 25% delay.

#1E—Add behavioral specialists to the Child Find program.

#1F—Expand Early Childhood Behavioral Intervention (AACPS/Thrive) from 35 spaces to 50.

#1G—Expand timing of high school sports physicals from June 1–August 10th, to within one year of the start of a sport to increase the number of high school students having their annual well exam with their pediatrician.

Goal #2:
Increase number of students "kindergarten ready" and decrease number of students experiencing the "summer slide."

Issue
The vast majority of our children are not kindergarten ready putting individuals and teachers at a disadvantage.

Research:
While a significant increase from 2016 to 2017 in kindergarten readiness for all but whites, AACPS kindergarten readiness levels remain subpar at 25% Hispanic, 35%African American, 48% Multi-racial, 51% White.[10]

Recommendations:
#2A—Enhanced literacy exposure by bringing the library to vulnerable populations 0–13 years old. Priority will be to subsidized residential communities with high rates of transportation and/or language barriers.

#2B—Establish trust with unlicensed childcare providers to offer support without triggering punitive issues.

Social Determinants of Education, continued

Goal #3:
Improved Collaboration & Communication among agencies

Issue:

Anne Arundel County has many supportive services. However, coordination and communication among agencies is lacking.

Recommendations:

#3A—Develop and implement universal inter-agency consent form.

#3B—Provide culturally sensitive communications from support services.

Goal #4:
Increase awareness of and access to support services.

Issue

Individuals, caregivers and community gatekeepers are unaware of services available and how to access them.

Research

Since 2014, AACPS has had a 60% increase in Hispanic students.[11] Many county support services have not expanded bilingual capabilities.

Recommendation:

#4A—Provide transportation vouchers for Child Find families with transpiration barriers.

#4B—Ensure that pediatricians are aware of Healthy Anne Arundel's behavioral health toolkit for providers.

#4C—Develop and share a bilingual resource packet, website (Networkofcare.org), text service for parents to be shared at delivery, pediatricians' offices, FQHCs, WIC, etc.

#4D—Share pertinent information about support programs. Any online resource should list screening criteria and if bilingual capabilities. (For example, DSS should list income level to qualify for childcare scholarships.)

#4E—Link to county resource website (QR Code) from printed county materials. (Rec & Parks, Dept. of Aging, AACPS handbook/code of conduct) Make available through county phone line.

#4F—Promote Network of Care with providers, families, public housing managers, caseworkers, etc.

[1] Shonkoff, J., Garner, A. (2012, January). The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. Pediatrics, 129(1) doi: *http://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011–2663*.

[2] Reuell, P. (2019, May). Unpacking the power of poverty. The Harvard Gazette. Found at *https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/05/harvard-study-shows-exactly-how-poverty-impacts-childrens-success/*

[3] Duncombe, C. (2017, October). Unequal opportunities: fewer resources, worse outcomes for students in schools with concentrations of poverty. The Commonwealth Institute. Found at *https://www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org/2017/10/26/unequal-opportunities-fewer-resources-worse-outcomes-for-students-in-schools-with-concentrated-poverty/*

[4] Jacob, B., & Ryan, J. (2018, March). How life outside of a school affects student performance in school. Brookings. Found at *https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-life-outside-of-a-school-affects-student-performance-in-school/*

[5] Anne Arundel County Department of Health. Anne Arundel County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) 2019. Found at *https://www.aahealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CHNA2019.pdf*

[6] MSDE's Kindergarten Readiness by Student Services, 2017–2018 data.

[7] MSDE's Graduation Rate in 4 year Cohort by student services, 2017–2018 data.

[8] Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Edwards, Koss, Marks, et al. (May 1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 14(4), 245–258.

[9] Schulman, M. & Maul, A. (2019, February). Screening for adverse childhood experiences and trauma. Center for Health Care Strategies; Trauma Informed Care. Found at *https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/TA-Tool-Screening-for-ACEs-and-Trauma_020619.pdf*

[10] MSDE's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment 2017–2018 data.

[11] MSDE's AACPS Enrollment by Ethnicity, 2014–2019 data.

Systemic Racism

Subcommittee members: Skip Auld, Pamela Brown, Kirsten Clark, Issac Colbert III, Mary Dadone, Laticia Hicks, Thornell Jones

Systemic racism is a root cause problem that manifests inequitable negative effects in all aspects of life in Anne Arundel County. In the school system, the inequitable negative effects include lower grades, higher truancy and drop-out rates, and more frequent and harsher discipline. This Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap is recommending many well-researched corrections to the current manifestations of systemic racism in Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

The last time the community and AACPS worked together in such coordination was in creating and then working on the 2005 Mediated Agreement Between the Anne Arundel County (MD) Public School System and the Anne Arundel County NAACP, et al.[1] (Memorandum of Agreement) That joint effort resulted in improvements in many of the wrongs cited in the Mediated Agreement; other disparities remained. The most recent PAARC scores for Anne Arundel County and the most recent Maryland Hate/Bias Report show that the problem and its manifestations remain.

Over time, the baseline for the Memorandum of Agreement has shifted: specific courses cited in that Agreement no longer apply, improvement has been made in many areas and appears to have reached a plateau, the very nature of how education and other school-related services are delivered, including pedagogy and curriculum have shifted under COVID-19 and are likely to remain shifted in an as-yet unknown way.

The specific manifestations of the problem shift. The academic system shifts. The problem of systemic racism remains, bringing new challenges for each academic cohort in each season. Therefore, the recommendations from the Systemic Racism Subcommittee of the Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap focus not on specific solutions to current negative effects but rather on an ongoing process to find and address ongoing and shifting negative effects of systemic racism.

We intend these recommendations to become permanent features of AACP and Anne Arundel County governance. Because this problem is societal, it is not limited to the school system. Therefore, the following recommendations extend to the entire community and to the Anne Arundel County government.

Goal #1:
Establish and empower a coalition of stakeholders, to include community representatives, students, AACPS representatives, and representatives from Anne Arundel County offices and agencies, to provide ongoing oversight of systemic racism issues in AACPS and to recommend changes to address issues and accomplish improvements.

The arrangement for mutual accountability, power sharing, decision making authority, and reporting responsibility between AACPS and the coalition needs to be formally defined and agreed to.

- Establish a coalition of representatives with equal representation from all stakeholder communities, to include students of all ages and student groups, parents across the diversity spectrum, and community support organizations as well as faculty and staff of AACPS.

- Assign the coalition responsibility for defining and tracking metrics that reflect the negative impacts of systemic racism and for providing recommendations to AACPS and to Anne Arundel County Government to combat both the negative effects and the underlying systemic racism.

- Empower and fund this coalition as necessary to enable ongoing interaction with the affected communities. This interaction may involve multiple forums and venues and going into the communities. Provide authority and funding as needed to remove access barriers, including providing childcare, removing language barriers, and ensuring both virtual connectivity and transportation as needed.

- The coalition shall also be responsible for the following:
  - Reviewing AACPS reports, including a quarterly report from the superintendent about progress against goals, and providing public feedback on the report within one month of publication of the Superintendent's Report..
  - Scheduling and conducting public forums no less frequently than twice a year
  - Serving as a resource to the Superintendent and the Board of Education for strategy development and course correction.
  - Coordinating with other AACPS and Anne Arundel County equity bodies, including advisory bodies and commissions, as necessary.

- Codify this stakeholder coalition and their mission and authority through something equivalent to a Stakeholder/AACPS/Anne Arundel County Memorandum of Agreement by June 30, 2021.

- Ensure training and access to information as needed to enable the stakeholder coalition to engage with the community and with the data with both understanding and depth.

Systemic Racism, continued

- The stakeholder coalition shall provide via AACPS and County communication resources and via the local newspapers, with data performance goals and metrics collected at the end of each semester and reported no later than a month after the end of each semester. The first report shall be no later than the end of the first semester of the 2020/2021 academic year.
- Use County and AACPS communications resources, including the County and AACPS television stations, to broadcast this information and these forums.

Goal #2:
Establish a practice within the Board of Education, the AACPS Central Office, the Anne Arundel County Government, and the Anne Arundel County Council of preparing a documented equity analysis to accompany all proposed policies, regulations, executive orders, legislation, and budget recommendations or decisions.

- Experience within AACPS and on the Board of Education has shown that different persons see through equity issues differently. The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) has documented a 5-question "Looking through the Equity Lens" tool that, if used thoughtfully, illuminates many perspectives.
- The effect of systemic racism that exists outside the schools amplifies the opportunity gap within the schools.
- We therefore recommend that AACPS Central Office, the Anne Arundel County Board of Education, and all branches of Anne Arundel County government implement an Equity Lens and provide a documented equity lens analysis for all proposals and decisions. Such an equity analysis would stand with equal weight with a legal analysis and a financial analysis. The MABE equity lens is a generic tool and could serve all legislative, executive, and operational units.

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[1] Complaint #03041169 filed with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights on May 17, 2004

Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap

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