



Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

For Immediate Release:

CONTACT: Lora Rakowski, lora.rakowski@maryland.gov

Maryland State Board of Education Releases New Resource Guide for Educators: Transforming the Culture of Maryland’s Schools for Black Boys

Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys Provides Insight and Actions to Eliminate Achievement Gap

BALTIMORE, MD (April 27, 2021) – Today the Maryland State Board of Education took bold steps to address the achievement gap experienced by Black boys in Maryland schools with the release of *Transforming the Culture of Maryland’s Schools for Black Boys*, for Maryland educators. Led by the Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys comprised of regional and State education experts, the Task Force closely examined the disparities in the academic experience of Black male students and proposed actionable, evidence-based recommendations and strategies to enhance outcomes. The resource guide for educators defines the critical need to focus on Black boys as a student group, highlighting three key areas: social, emotional and behavioral supports; recruitment and training of skilled, competent teachers and administrators; and curricula and instruction.

“Our Black boys are intelligent and capable. Like all other children, they want to learn and be successful. Yet, this will not happen if as a state education system we fail to educate them in ways that affirm their learning differences, attend to their social-emotional needs, appreciate their culture, set high expectations, and respect them as unique individuals,” said Task Chair Vermelle Greene, Ph.D. “Our Black boys are in crisis and they urgently need our help. We must take action now and rectify the hindrances that prevent them from reaching their full God-given potential.”

For more than 30 years, Maryland has been engaged in efforts to examine the experiences and achievement of Black males, yet stark disparities in outcomes prevail. The report cites data over the course of several years that show Black male students as the lowest scoring racial/gender group in the Math and Reading/ Language Arts areas of the PARCC Test, while simultaneously having the highest suspension and expulsion rate. The data also reveals that Black young men have the lowest graduation rate in comparison to Black young women and other student groups.

“We must approach equity with urgency so that all children can realize the promise of public education,” said State Superintendent of Schools Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D. “The importance of educational equity and excellence is highlighted in the Maryland State Department of Education logo, but it is and must continue to be exemplified in our work. We have a call to action to work together to tackle the inequities and systemic racial barriers that persist for our Black students.”

To answer that call, The Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys was convened in July 2020 and met through March 2021. Based on information and feedback gathered over the eight-month period, each study group developed a total of 16 key recommendations for the State Board’s consideration. Forming three work groups, the Task Force group sought national and local best practices to inform actionable recommendations and solutions to any potential barriers. Each work group addressed one of the following focus areas: social, emotional and behavioral supports; recruiting and training skilled competent teachers and administrators; and curricula and instruction. Examples of the evidence-based recommendations

include: de-escalation and intervention training for all school staff, providing financial incentives to recruit and retain diverse teachers and administrators, and encouraging individual co-ed schools to create single-gender classes across grades or for selected subjects.

“The Task Force’s report provides a roadmap to ensure that the principles of equity are fully ingrained within an education system that delivers results for all students, including young Black male students,” said Maryland State Board of Education President Clarence Crawford. “Despite current best efforts, there has been a perpetuation and acceptance of low academic performance for Black boys, as well as disproportionately harsher discipline consequences. The Task Force’s report begins the process to implement, monitor and evaluate effective strategies that empower Black male students for success in school and in life.”

Following the presentation of the report at today’s Maryland State Board of Education meeting for consideration and adoption, the Task Force will use feedback to refine and finalize the recommendations outlined; and to support and guide the next steps in engaging the MSDE, local school systems, and other stakeholders in successful implementation and monitoring. Several local school systems have expressed interest in piloting the guide including: Anne Arundel, Prince George's, Howard, Kent, Calvert, Queen Anne's, Charles, and Baltimore counties.

View the new resource [Transforming the Culture of Maryland’s Schools for Black Boys](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2021/0427/MSDETransformCultureforBlackBoys.pdf) guide at this link:
<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2021/0427/MSDETransformCultureforBlackBoys.pdf>

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