

**ANC3/4G TASK FORCE ON RACISM
EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH WORK GROUP REPORT
NOVEMBER 13, 2020**

Executive Summary

In an increasingly prosperous, gentrifying and unequal city and region, race-based Education and Mental Health challenges and disparities in DC exist and persists across neighborhoods despite some recent pre-pandemic progress. In our Chevy Chase neighborhood, the relatively high median household income and cost of housing limit *internal* disparities, but position us at the privileged end of disparities *between* our community and others across DC. We must work to help change this current situation. In keeping with the Task Force's objective to focus on substantive issues and propose realistic steps that the Commission can take, the Education and Mental Health Work Group (see Appendix B for members) propose action on five key issues to reduce this race-based imbalance.

We recommend the following:

- **Equalizing community-driven school financing** by establishing a new ANC3/4G wide organization/ mechanism* to reduce the gap in the overall additional community-driven funding per pupil for DCPS schools outside ANC3/4G boundaries and organize volunteers to help the PTOs of such schools organize and fund-raise more effectively.
- **Deepening racial justice curriculum and learning** in Lafayette Elementary School to help local children begin their lives and academic journeys in DC better informed about racism and better equipped to normalize antiracist views and behaviors.
- **Fostering greater community engagement to promote equity across all DCPS schools** by establishing a standing ANC3/4G education equity committee* that will consult city-wide with equity advocates and prepare public quarterly reports highlighting recommendations for advancing equity in DCPS.
- **Encouraging efforts to close educational technology gaps** by supporting Lafayette Elementary School efforts to ensure all students are online, engaged and supported, and contributing to more urgent advocacy* for a more comprehensive DCPS approach to sustainably close education technology gaps, including advocacy to the DC Council for city-wide broadband-for-all.
- **Expanding evidence-based social-emotional learning (SEL) programs in DCPS schools** by sharing information with the new DCPS Chancellor and State Board of Education about the approach and results of the evaluated SEL program at Lafayette Elementary School and other evidence-based SEL programs, and advocating that DCPS launch a pilot program to expand SEL programs in DCPS schools.

NOTE: 1) Our focus in this report is limited to traditional DCPS neighborhood schools, not charter schools, private schools or private voucher programs, which benefit from external financing advantages and levels of selectivity and specialized management. 2) We suggest that the three recommendations that propose follow-up actions through standing mechanisms (marked above with asterisks*) fall under the umbrella of the Racial Justice Task Force being proposed in the overall report.

Recommendation 1 - EQUALIZING COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SCHOOL FINANCING

Goal: To achieve a more equitable distribution of community-driven financing by addressing existing and longstanding funding disparities among school communities within the DCPS system.

The availability of additional resources and school control of those resources has been shown to have a direct impact on student academic achievement.

According to a study published in 2018 by the Learning Policy Institute (Baker, Bruce), three main conclusions were developed:

1. On balance, in direct tests of the relationship between financial resources and student outcomes, money matters for student outcomes.
2. Schooling resources that cost money, including smaller class sizes and salaries for expert teachers, are positively associated with student outcomes.
3. Sustained improvements to the level and distribution of funding across local public school districts lead to improvements in the level and distribution of student outcomes, such as test scores and graduation rates.

It further states that other recent studies invariably find a positive, statistically significant relationship between student achievement gains and financial inputs. This inequity perpetuates why schools in lower reported SES level areas typically lag behind schools in higher reported SES level areas in student achievement and outcomes. It is results such as these that need to be examined and rectified.

Objective: To reduce the gap in the overall additional community-driven financing per pupil in DCPS by 50% within 2 years

Major financial disparities that are outside and in addition to the normal DCPS school funding formulas exist among schools that directly affect a child's education. Many of these disparities are brought about through the volunteer efforts by parent student-teacher organizations in schools across DC. In many cases some of these organizations are able to raise enough money to pay for "extras" that most schools simply cannot afford. In many cases these "extras" do not even enter into the realm of potential expenditures due to the more pronounced rudimentary operational needs that more well-heeled schools might take for granted. These extras include: after-school programs, part or full-time teachers for enrichment classes, equipment including technology assets, the development of unique curriculum opportunities and alternative books to accompany those courses.

One example (and far from the most egregious), for the school year 2017-18, (Jazyanka, 2018) reported that Alice Deal Middle School raised approximately \$225,000 through parent donations and other fundraising activities. That money paid for things like scholarships for eighth-graders going on international trips, classroom technology, teacher grants and training, parent workshops and the annual school musical. The article further reported that "during the 2016-17

school year, the Lafayette Elementary Home & School Association (HSA) raised about \$270,000 to pay for teacher supplies, additions to its library collection, art programs, family fun nights, science events, and both its community service and mindfulness programs.” While this situation exists in schools such as these cited, some school organizations at other DC public schools have annual budgets that do not exceed \$100, and others do not even have an organization due to lack of volunteers based on job constraints and other critical life factors. Parents have a right to raise money to provide enhancements to supplement what their neighborhood public schools provide; however, given the wide discrepancies between resource-rich schools in the greater Chevy Chase DC area and those in other parts of the city, we have the opportunity and obligation to equitably share our resources to help alleviate the inequities stemming from the income-based divisions among schools communities.

Even though DCPS funding formulas take into account many factors and programs including: Enrollment-Based Funds, Specialty Funds, Per-Pupil Funding Minimum, Stabilization Funds, Special Education, English Language Learners, At-Risk Funds, Grant Funds, and Security Funds (see <https://dcpsbudget.ourdcschools.org/>) the economic disparities of schools and thus their outcomes remain great. What can we as a neighborhood do to change this situation? As a start, the Lafayette HSA recently surveyed their membership to ascertain if they were in agreement with a resolution that would allocate 10% (approximately \$15,000) of all funds raised during their annual fundraising campaign to be donated to the DC Public Education Fund (DC Ed Fund). The resolution (the Lafayette Fundraising Equity Pledge) passed 138-18 (see <https://www.lafayettehsa.org/trashed/>).

Activities: The Education and Mental Health Work Group has identified the following activities as realistic steps toward providing residents of Chevy Chase DC and adjacent neighborhoods a means to help actively alter the current inequitable landscape in community-driven DC Public School financing

Although the Lafayette Fundraising Equity Pledge is a positive start, more needs to be done. Money should be raised knowing that a substantial designated percentage will go to other schools within DCPS. This could be done either on an individual school basis or as a cumulative group of schools (e.g. Wilson H.S. complete feeder system). Monies raised would be collectively shared based on an agreed upon formula with no restrictions placed on receiving schools on how that money could be spent; in other words, those funds would be under total school control. It should not be funneled through a third party entity (e.g. DC Ed Fund).

- A new ANC3/4G wide organization should be created that would raise money for the specific purpose of providing financial resources to schools outside of the ANC3/4G boundaries.

- A new ANC3/4G wide organization should be created to initially provide volunteer resources to help fundraise for schools outside Chevy Chase and immediately adjacent neighborhoods that would be under the total auspices of that school’s PTO leadership and organization. This could be modified in ensuing years to include different capacity building activities to improve and enhance a PTO’s ability to better achieve its mission, serving its students.

Recommendation 2 - DEEPENING RACIAL JUSTICE CURRICULUM AND LEARNING

Goal: To ensure that anti-racism is a more central theme of DCPS and Lafayette Elementary School social studies and civics curriculum and instruction

(NOTE: This section was proposed and initially drafted by a current Wilson High School student who is the only youth member of the Task Force on Racism. Working Group members added to and edited the initial draft.)

In the midst of a national reckoning on systemic racism throughout our society, DCPS and Lafayette Elementary School can and must do more to highlight Black history and structural racism within DC and wider US social studies curriculum, and to prioritize principles of anti-racism in civics education and the formation of school culture.

The current DCPS Social Studies curriculum focuses on DC history in grade three, refers to African-American experiences in units on the region, periods of US history, and, for example, Black History month activities.^{1 2} A new effort underway to revise the curriculum to further prioritize local racial history, African-American experiences and anti-racist principles is a promising vehicle for further progress.³ How do we encourage and monitor this effort?

This is especially urgent in our neighborhood, where our children grow up largely isolated from the historical majority Black experiences of racism and segregation in DC, and with a limited understanding of race-based privilege. The original primary school in our neighborhood which stood on Connecticut Avenue where the Community Center is now located, was a white’s only segregated school, and when the current Lafayette Elementary School and park were built in 1928, they displaced a settlement of African American families, and the school itself was for whites only until the 1954 Brown decision to desegregate the schools.⁴ Due to the legacy of

¹ <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/social-studies>

² https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/DCPS-horiz-soc_studies.pdf

³ <https://thedcline.org/2019/12/03/dcps-targets-white-racial-bias-in-social-studies-education-standards-as-state-board-launches-rewrite/>

⁴ <https://www.historicchevychasedc.org/category/lafayette-pointer-project/>

racial segregation of communities and housing in the district, the vast majority of families in the LES catchment area in our neighborhood are white. Over the years, enrollment of Black students in Lafayette Elementary School has depended on out-of-boundary enrollments and has varied considerably, and attention within the school to the Black history, culture and lived experience which is central to the identity of our city has also varied, according to testimony of past students and parents in our working group.

On the other hand, new efforts at Lafayette Elementary School have recently been made to deepen and sharpen a racial justice focus through staff and HSA/parent joint efforts. For example, the school:

- Sponsored an annual Black Lives Matter week of action;
- Offered learning and advocacy opportunities during Black History Month;
- held an assembly about how the land for the school was obtained at the expense of Black land owners;
- developed a partnership with the Relay Graduate School for Inclusive School Practices and Courageous Conversations to help its teachers be more culturally relevant educators.
- sponsored a Community Conversation on Race and Equity
- created an HSA Diversity and Inclusion effort, including a Diversity and Inclusion Book Club
- Lafayette's summer reading guide (attached) includes a diverse group of books, including many that feature Black protagonists and Black history lessons, including *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History*, which is one of the books the section recommends.
- Incorporated “lessons on social justice” including anti-bias and anti-racism for grades 3-5 in the Peace education program.
- And, following an attempt to teach about slavery through a role play drama that raised concerns about type-casting students in stereotypical roles, the staff, parents and HSA engaged in a series of reflections to generate guiding lessons learned.

How can we support Lafayette Elementary School to take further institutionalized steps to serve as a solid example of an anti-racist community of students, teachers, parents and community allies? Is there more that can be done to equip Lafayette teachers to address this complex issue in safe and supportive ways?

Objective: To strengthen and accelerate Lafayette Elementary School and DCPS efforts to emphasize African-American experiences and anti-racism in the entire Social Studies and civic curriculum

Activities: We have identified the following realistic steps that the commission can take to achieve our objective

At Lafayette Elementary School:

- Meet with the HSA, principal and staff to review current efforts underway and share proposals below
- Suggest adding more Black history and anti-racism theme books in required reading lists for all Lafayette Elementary School grades as part of the school’s reading program
- Encourage the school and HSA to support more professional development for all school staff in culturally responsive and anti-racist teaching

At the DCPS level:

- Reach out to the DCPS social studies revision taskforce and staff to strongly encourage:
 - Design and piloting of specific programs that address the needs of students in predominantly white neighborhoods and schools to learn about racism and anti-racism and to practice anti-racism in their schools and communities
 - Development of program activities that bring school communities from different DC neighborhoods together to do joint activities in each other’s neighborhoods and learn together.

We have included links regarding specific book recommendations as well as sources for teachers and administrators to use for themselves.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/parenting/kids-books-racism-protest.html>

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/18pOK3roiwPQ9WF7D2wA0o7Ktr8KwAJeZfn-o6O8T_Y/mobilepresent?fbclid=IwAR3DdOXVnNABQtJM0YddkpWiMOPAH6TUZcSI4WhDireFiWtxAnxpyLNOBAG&slide=id.p

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/getting-started-culturally-responsive-teaching>

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/antiracist-work-in-schools-are-you-in-it-for-the-long-haul>

In addition to the books listed in the first two sources, we recommend books such as Anti-Racist Baby, by Ibram X. Kendi, Intersection Allies: We Make Room for All, by Chelsea Johnson and Carolyn Choi, and Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History, by Vashti Harrison.

Recommendation 3 - FOSTERING GREATER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO PROMOTE EQUITY ACROSS ALL DCPS SCHOOLS

Goal: Establish a coordinated, community-based effort across the city to achieve educational equity among all schools in the District of Columbia.

ANC3/4G should serve to increase, encourage, and channel community involvement and advocacy for education equity. The ANC should regularly advocate and open itself to recommendations that support schools in both our ANC, Ward 3, and throughout the city. The ANC should concern itself with the educational needs of schools in DCPS across the city in order to ensure equity.

A quote from a joint [piece](#) written by Ward 3 SBOE representative Ruth Wattenberg, and Ward 8 SBOE representative Markus Batchelor, expresses the goal succinctly:

“You focus on trying to address an educational inequity, bring the voices of the people who are most directly impacted into the conversation,” says CCSR founder Tony Bryk, who is regarded as a superhero of school research. It doesn’t mean endorsing “every idea you might hear, but it does mean in some form or other taking these voices into account. Listening is at the core of improvement.”

To make real change, ANC3/4G must reach outside itself, Ward 3, and to address inequality within Washington DC schools.

Objective: Create a permanent, standing ANC3/4G education equity committee to investigate, communicate and advocate in support of an equitable education landscape for all children in Washington, DC.

We are our brothers and our sister’s keeper. As a city this is even more true. The societal issues that emerge out of an inequal education system will at some point impact us all. We have a responsibility for the entire education system of Washington DC; we should advocate for our community schools and schools everywhere in DC as well.

Activities:

1. Consult with individuals and groups from across the city on achieving an equitable education landscape in DCPS, including but not limited to
 - a. ANC residents
 - b. school networks within our ANC and Ward, such as Ward 3 Wilson Feeder Network: <https://www.w3ednet.com/>
 - c. local education groups from all wards, such as Coalition for DC Public Schools and Communities: <http://www.c4dcpublicschools.org/>
 - d. other ANC commissioners
 - e. the State Board of Education, particularly in Wards with at-risk schools <https://sboe.dc.gov/page/roles>
 - f. DCPS Community Actions Team_: <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/community-action-team>
2. Based on the community-wide consultations, prepare and publically release quarterly reports with recommendations on achieving an equitable DCPS education landscape.
3. Propose that DCPS consider joining larger efforts to directly address urban housing and education desegregation such as the new Century Foundation Bridges Collaborative <https://production-tcf.imgix.net/app/uploads/2020/05/27070119/Bridges-Collaborative.Updated.June2020.pdf> which brings school districts and social justice organizations together to foster affordable housing and education equity corrections to systemic racism.

Recommendation 4 - ENCOURAGING EFFORTS TO CLOSE EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY GAPS

Goal: Sustainably close the technology gap among DCPS students/families.

Issue Background: In the current pandemic virtual learning environment, many DCPS students do not have access to broadband and technical devices and family experience/support for working online, which exacerbates and widens the educational disparities between students and their families in different neighborhoods in the city.

This digital access equation is not so simple: to learn effectively online, every student needs a funded reliable internet connection and an online-enabled device; adequate digital literacy to navigate the online work assigned; sufficient family support to solve connectivity problems and ensure online engagement. Family differences in income, English proficiency, basic literacy, digital literacy levels, learning space and family support for the learner all complicate efforts to ensure equal access and participation.

What is the technology gap in DC and what is being done to address this across the city during the pandemic shutdown? According to the State of the Digital Divide in DC report from 2015 on the Connect.dc.gov website, the household broadband adoption rate citywide was approximately 75%, but like in other cities, adoption is strongly correlated with income and education levels. In Wards 5-7-8 the average broadband adoption rate was less than 65% while in other wards it was over 85%. The Washington Teachers Union survey of DCPS teachers in April 2020 revealed that only around half of students logged on to online lessons regularly in the spring lockdown.⁵ In July 2020, the Hill Rag reported that a new independent study showed that 27% of black and 25% of Latino DC PS students did not have internet access at home or devices compared to just 5% of white students.⁶ In June, DCPS distributed internet-enabled 10,000 tablets and laptops and 4,000 hotspots to DCPS students, and purchased 21,000 additional enabled devices in order to ensure every student would have a device and access for the new school year. The DC Education Equity Fund <https://www.dcedequity.org/> reported raising \$2m for student technology in the spring, distributed half of that directly to public and charter schools in the summer, and is holding \$600,000 in reserve to cover gaps that might emerge as the fall school year began.

How does this play out in Chevy Chase DC? What more can be done in our community and beyond to close the gap permanently?

Objective: To facilitate measures in Chevy Chase that contribute to closing the short-term pandemic-related technology gap for all Lafayette, Deal and Wilson students in our area, and

⁵ <https://www.hillrag.com/2020/07/22/dc-has-second-highest-racial-gap-in-student-connectivity-study/>

⁶ <https://www.hillrag.com/2020/09/02/the-deepening-digital-divide/>

to contribute to DCPS citywide efforts to permanently close learning-technology gaps for students of all DCPS schools.

Activities:

In Chevy Chase DC with our schools:

- Provide opportunities for students/parents in our neighborhood experiencing technology access problems to share what obstacles limit access and what remedies they suggest.
- Produce a short report outlining current technology gaps and current gap-closing activities underway in Lafayette, Deal, and Wilson, including how our local schools engage with local foundations and nonprofits focused on the digital divide issue and how these meet and do not meet local student needs.
- Engage the school leadership and HSAs of local schools in discussions about how to move from pandemic response to a sustainable assurance that all students enrolled in our local schools have full working access to learning technology as needed to fully participate in school.

With DCPS across the District:

- Consider funding a research firm, empowering an on-going Racial Justice taskforce or working with other ANCs to help produce a synthesis report within 6 months for submission to the DCPS about the current technology gap situation, remedies underway, and promising efforts to build on. Topics could include:
 - the status of current digital divide efforts underway in DCPS and its local schools – what is underway now; what needs to be done to make these sustainable and included in DCPS budget/program plans going forward?
 - the status of corporate and philanthropic support for a city-wide DCPS Ed Tech effort. What are the results thus far? Which gaps remain?
 - the status of the DC Education Equity Fund digital divide effort? How was it targeted and who benefited? How are our schools linked to this effort?
 - successful responses in other localities to learn about additional things DCPS could do, especially cities that have moved toward universal broadband coverage as a baseline or norm citywide.
- Follow up the report above with engagement, perhaps through an on-going Racial Justice Taskforce, with DCPS and the DC Council to take further steps to move toward universal broadband access in our city, and a commitment to ensure all DCPS schools have a plan to ensure all students are digitally connected and enabled to learn.

Recommendation 5 – EXPANDING EVIDENCE-BASED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) PROGRAMS IN DCPS SCHOOLS

Goal: To close the racial divide that exists with respect to social emotional learning (SEL)

To be successful in school, students need to be taught more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. Social and emotional skills are critical to academic success, as well as to developing healthy relationships and successfully navigating our increasingly complex world. Research demonstrates that these skills can be successfully taught in schools.⁷ In addition, mindfulness—the ability to focus on the present moment—can enhance students’ academic performance and mental health.⁸

All children benefit from SEL, but Black and Latino children face unique social and emotional challenges posed by structural racism, disparities in health care access, and disproportionate rates of trauma and poverty,^{9,10} which makes SEL education particularly important in schools that serve communities of color.

Objective: To provide more Black and Latino children in DC with an SEL education

Lafayette Elementary School, located in the Chevy Chase neighborhood which ANC3/4G serves, has a unique evidence-based social-emotional learning curriculum called “Peace of Mind.” The program was developed by a Lafayette teacher and it teaches children mindfulness practices and conflict resolution skills. Minds Inc. evaluated the program at Lafayette in 2016 and found that the vast majority of teachers and students found that it improved student mindfulness, conflict resolution skills and readiness to learn.¹¹ For many years, POM was sponsored entirely by the Lafayette Home and School Association at a cost of roughly \$60,000 per year, which includes the salary of the teacher who developed the program. Today, the HSA splits the costs of the program with DCPS and budgeted \$33,813 for the program during the 2019-20 school

⁷ Stephanie M. Jones and Emily J. Doolittle, “Social and Emotional Learning: Introducing the Issue.” *The Future of Children: Princeton/Brookings*, Vol 27, No. 1, Spring 2017.

<https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/FOC-Spring-Vol27-No1-Compiled-Future-of-Children-spring-2017.pdf> (accessed September 29, 2020).

⁸ Ann Trafton, “Two studies reveal benefits of mindfulness for middle school students.” *MIT News*, August 26, 2019. <https://news.mit.edu/2019/mindfulness-mental-health-benefits-students-0826> (accessed September 15, 2020).

⁹ Mental Health America, *Black and African American Communities and Mental Health*. <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/black-and-african-american-communities-and-mental-health> (accessed September 8, 2020).

¹⁰ Alegria M, Vallas M, Pumariega AJ. *Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Pediatric Mental Health*. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 2010;19(4):759-774.

[doi:10.1016/j.chc.2010.07.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chc.2010.07.001)

¹¹ Peace of Mind Fact Sheet. <https://teachpeaceofmind.org/peace-of-mind-fact-sheet/> (accessed September 15, 2020).

year.¹² The cost of implementing POM at other schools with existing school staff range from \$1,445 per classroom to \$2,475 for training and materials.¹³

During the 2017-18 school year, as part of a pilot program, Peace of Mind was expanded to three additional DCPS schools, including two Title I schools. An evaluation of these pilot results demonstrated that teachers and students were very enthusiastic about the program. It also found that young students in the Early Childhood component of the program improved in their abilities to regulate their emotions more than those in a control classroom, although the difference was not statistically significant. The pilot program did not have the same success with older students (grades 3-5), whose emotional regulation remained relatively the same, although the evaluation notes that these results should be “taken with a grain of salt” due to the small sample size. In addition, the report notes that the program is likely to be more successful when implemented as a robust whole-school model over multiple years.¹⁴

ANC3/4G would like to see an evidence-based SEL program implemented District-wide. Importantly, while we note that Peace of Mind has worked successfully at Lafayette and elsewhere, each individual school needs to find an SEL program that works for their school and that can be tailored to be culturally relevant to the community *it* serves. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a non-profit that evaluates evidence-based SEL programs, and can serve as a resource about other SEL options.¹⁵

Barriers to achieving this objective include lack of funding and lack of bandwidth on the part of school administrators who are currently overwhelmed by the logistics of operating school virtually and preparing to reopen schools in person.

Activities: We have identified the following realistic steps that the Commission can take to achieve our objective:

- Write to Chancellor Lewis Ferebee and urge DCPS to evaluate the feasibility of launching a pilot program to implement evidence-based and culturally-relevant SEL programs in its schools, including studying CASEL-approved programs for their relevance to DCPS.
- Testify before the State Board of Education about the SEL program at Lafayette.

¹² Lafayette HSA 2019-20 Budget. <https://www.lafayettehsa.org/hsa/budget/> (accessed October 12, 2020).

¹³ Peace of Mind Cost Estimates. <https://teachpeaceofmind.org/site/wp-content/uploads/Peace-of-Mind-Cost-Estimates-Sept-7-2020-Sheet1.pdf> (accessed October 19, 2020).

¹⁴ Executive Summary, New Peace of Mind Schools Pilot Study Results 2018. <https://teachpeaceofmind.org/evaluation/> (accessed October 12, 2020).

¹⁵ The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, <https://casel.org/> (accessed October 20, 2020).

Appendix A: Bibliography - Equalizing Community-Driven School Financing

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Appendix B: Work Group Members

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