



## Cory Elementary School Black Excellence Plan

### Background on the Black Excellence Resolution in DPS

In 2019, the DPS Board of Education voted to pass the Black Excellence Resolution, officially embracing the excellence of Black and African-American students and prioritizing and targeting their academic achievement.

In 2018, Black or African-American students represented 13% of the Denver Public Schools student population, but experienced disproportionality of access to high quality learning. Black students were (are) disproportionately overrepresented in discipline statistics and special education programming while being underrepresented in rigorous classes including Advanced Placement, honors and gifted and talented programming.

- 28% of out of school suspensions in 2017-18 were experienced by Black or African-American students;
- 16.5% of students identified with a disability in 2017-18 were Black or AfricanAmerican;
- 10% of students enrolled in rigorous high schools courses in 2017-18 were Black or African-American;
- 67% of Black or African-American students graduated on time while 78% of their white peers graduated on time;
- Only 2% of the Black or African-American students identified with a disability were on grade level as compared to 21% of their white peers;
- Additionally DPS Black and African-American students are least likely to report that their Whole Child needs are met with 58% reporting they feel safe and 77% reporting that they feel supported on our annual Whole Child Survey as compared to 67% and 82% of their white peers respectively.

Based on these statistics and other research, it is clear that practices in DPS have created an unbalanced picture that overemphasizes the deficits of Black children, families and communities, instead of celebrating them for the unique gifts they bring with them into schools.

Upon the passing of the DPS Black Excellence Resolution, Board Member Happy Haynes noted, “We stand on the shoulders of a lot of people in our community, who have each taken their turn to push this very heavy boulder up the hill. And tonight, we have a lot of people joining us. It’s still an uphill journey, and it’s not going to be easy. But I feel the weight lifted from the fact that so many others have joined us.”

In response to the DPS Black Excellence Resolution, Cory is dedicated to ensuring that all Black students thrive by design and not by accident. Black students at Cory will thrive based on the following commitments:

- Training staff in implicit and explicit bias, racism training, microaggression training, anti-racist training, etc. by engaging in The Equity Experience
- Curriculum/lesson equity audits to help understand what we are doing well to advance equity at Cory and learn where we have gaps and have opportunities for improvement and change
- Prioritizing the success and empowerment of our Black students

Reflecting on the past actions of staff Cory Elementary School, we have determined the following root causes have led to the current state of our Black students:

- Inconsistent expectations for Black students in classrooms
- Lack of culturally responsive strategies for our Black students to overcome academic and behavioral challenges
- Lack of consistency and trust between Black students and teachers
- No practical training or coaching in applying trauma-informed and CRE practices
- Discipline data reflects a lack of teacher skill set and training with CRE instruction (this is not a checklist, but an entire mindset change/shift)

## **2021-2022**

**In the 2021-2022 school year, we had 53 total students that identified as Black (4% students) or as having multiple races (9%).**

Our journey began as a staff in August of 2021. We started this school year with a Black Excellence kick-off session and invited Troy Alexander as a guest speaker for our staff. He spoke to our staff about his experience as a Black student, in a predominantly white school. Our staff were able to engage in a question and answer session with Troy; which led to our staff developing individual action steps aligned to teaching and leading for Black Excellence. This is how we began our journey of leading for Black Excellence.

In the fall of 2021, we engaged our community in our Black Excellence work through our Collaborative School Committee and Parent Teacher Association. We worked to diversify the voices on these committees and intentionally recruited Black members for our CSC committee. Through the conversations with our CSC, we realized that in order to develop a strong Black Excellence plan to support our Black families, we needed to hear from our Black families through a Climate Survey.

In November of 2021, the Cory Equity Committee was developed. This committee was initiated by our Cory staff member; Amber Bourgeois. The team consisted of staff and parents in the community. The team met regularly to talk about Black excellence, equity, generate ideas and unpack

how things were going at Cory. We also invited our Culturally Responsive Education partner, Troy Alexander. This team started to plan, develop and lead initiatives that address equity issues at Cory.

Next steps for this committee will be to continue monthly meetings that focus on creating more equitable experiences for our Cory community. We will have a representative from this committee serve on the CSC and the PTS. We will have a joint CSC Equity Committee meeting in the fall and in the spring.

### **2021/2022 Cory Equity Committee [decks/agenda](#) & [meeting minutes](#)**

Next Step: Our Librarian will work to revamp our Cory school library and ensure that teachers have training on how to analyze children's books in their classroom libraries for racial and cultural appropriateness.

Our work at Cory is well underway and we are incredibly proud of the work that we have done and the growth that our staff has made. Although we have made progress, we know there is still a lot of work to be done! One of our biggest action steps for the 2022-2023 school year is that all of our staff will engage in the DPS Equity Experience Modules year 2.

### **2022-2023**

This year, parents engaged in an equity series in which parents had opportunities to learn about the Black Excellence work and equity work at Cory. Staff continued working on bias and how to create safe and welcoming spaces to engage each learning to high expectations.

**Session 1** (The Use of Language/Baily Report)

**Session 2** (Building a Shared Why)

**Session 3** (Color Blind vs. Color Brave)

The librarian increased the level of diverse texts in the classroom by adding LGBTQ+ texts and texts that represent our diverse population. We also provided education to our 5th grade students on the [history of hate speech](#) as students were beginning to express hateful language.

### **2023-2024**

We have two overarching goals: 1) to accelerate the academic achievement of our Black students, and 2) to develop and foster trusting relationships with our Black families to ensure that all children feel safe, known, and that they belong at Cory. This work will continue into the 2023-2024 school year. All 4 goals align to 2 goals in our Unified Improvement Plan

We will achieve these goals through FOUR action steps:

- 1. We will create an individual plan for all students who identify as Black or multi-racial in order to foster a sense of belonging, connection, safety, and feeling known.**

- a. Additional Resources: Learning Inventories for [Primary](#) and [Intermediate](#) students or [student profiles](#)**

- b. Next step: We will talk with our families of color to gather information on how we are doing and what we could do moving forward to better support our Black students and families.**

2. **We will integrate Black Excellence work into our pedagogical practices by:**
  - a. Building relationships with our black students and identifying a significant adult (or two!) for each Black child in the school.
  - b. Planning for high levels of engagement and monitoring attendance of our Black students.
  - c. Disaggregate our data trackers and progress monitoring tools to be able to quickly and clearly monitor our Black students' success.
  - d. Engaging in a book study around the 4 Pivots
  
3. **Our staff members will engage in learning about anti-racism and teaching for equity, and we will continue our own self-reflection and introspection on our journey toward anti-racist teaching.**
  - As part of our SEL instruction with students, Cory will teach one of the 4 domains of the Social Justice Standards and Random Acts of Kindness. Following this scope and sequence: [TSEAL Scope & Sequence](#).
  - Other social justice / anti-racism Book Lists for read-alouds with students:
    - <https://www.weareteachers.com/books-about-social-justice/>
    - <https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/>
  - Classroom books represent the cultures of the classroom
  - Family portraits are displayed in the hallway honoring culture and identity.
  - Student Data stories- to target and look at the whole child and supports needed
  - Embed Hate Language into TSEAL presentations
  -
  
4. **Our staff/students/community members will engage in learning about anti-racism and teaching for equity, and we will continue our own self-reflection and introspection on our journey toward anti-racist teaching.**
  - a. As part of our SEL instruction with students, Cory will teach one of the 4 domains of the Social Justice Standards and Random Acts of Kindness. Following this scope and sequence: [TSEAL Scope & Sequence](#).
    - i. Other social justice / anti-racism Book Lists for read-alouds with students:
      1. <https://www.weareteachers.com/books-about-social-justice/>
      2. <https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/>
  - b. Classroom books represent the cultures of the classroom
  - c. Family portraits are displayed in the hallway honoring culture and identity.
  - d. School walls have diverse figures that represent our students.
  - e. Bullying and Restorative Justice parent education nights
    - i. Recorded and shared with text for other languages
  - f. Student Data stories- to target and look at the whole child and supports needed

- g. Embed Hate Language into TSEAL presentations through our scope and sequence
  - h. Lessons honor and celebrate culture and reflects students in the classroom through curricular resources
  - i. Students will engage in an equity experience so they understand identity (personal, social, race) using the text *The Antiracist Kid*. Parents will be sent the information and deck to support students at home
    - i. Monthly apart of TSEAL with RJ Friday's
    - ii. January/Feb:
      - 1. Lesson 1: Self-Identity- what do you identify as
      - 2. Mask identity project
    - iii. March/April
      - 1. Lesson 2: Honoring Diversity (school diversity)
      - 2. Bias lessons
    - iv. May
      - 1. Belonging lessons
    - v. One book one Cory: Finally Seen
      - 1. Use the book for the whole school to engage in students about equity. The text is *Ways to Make Sunshine*. This whole school reading will engage students on topics of race and equity for the month of Jan and Feb.
- 5. Our staff members will engage in a bias assessment this school year. Teachers will engage in mindset training this year to bring awareness to equity and how we interact with students. This training will occur in Feb./March.**
- a. Next school year, teachers will engage in an in-depth PD to focus on restorative practices.

**More Resources:**

CRE and Black Excellence Resources document compiled by Alexis Matter.

Resources for adult learning about anti-racism used in 2021-22 School Year:

- b. Equity Experience Year 1!

- c. Symposium for Black Excellence for Gifted and Talented

Resources for adult learning about anti-racism for 2022-23 School Year:

- d. The DPS Equity Experience - Year 2
- e. ILT Book Study: Trusting Observations/Creating Productive Cultures in Schools
- f. Staff Book Study- The Anatomy of Peace
- g. Deep and Difficult Conversations - a resource to support when engaging in difficult conversations
- h. Talking About Race - Sentence stems to initiate conversations about race