

# DEMANDS of the NAACP YOUTH COALITION for SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS (2018-2019)

## What is the NAACP Youth Coalition (N-YC)?

Too often in Seattle Public Schools, the voices of youth are excluded and the response to racism is inaction. No longer. The N-YC unites many of the anti-racist youth groups across Seattle high schools into one coalition that demands a seat at the table.

As Shirley Chisholm once said, “If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.” We are youth with representation at high schools across the district -- and a load of folding chairs. It’s time not just for the youth to be at the table but for anti-racism to be at the top of the agenda.

*Here are our demands:*

## 1. Supporting Black Lives Matter at School Actions

Last year, the Seattle School Board, for the first time, passed a [resolution](#) in support of the Black Lives Matter at School movement, in its second year. In contrast, during the movement’s first year, the district refused to publically declare that “Black Lives Matter.”

While this resolution represented progress, it expired last year, though the egregious racial disparities in Seattle Public Schools persist today. The demands of this year’s #BlackLivesMatterAtSchool action include:

- End zero tolerance policies
- Mandate Black history and ethnic studies
- Hire more Black teachers
- Fund counselors not cops

We demand that Seattle Public Schools support this important movement, this year and in the future.

*In brief, we demand that the district’s support of the #BlackLivesMatterAtSchool actions continue indefinitely.*

## 2. Expansion of Ethnic Studies

Most classroom curriculum comes from a white male perspective -- a sanitized, sugarcoated version of history -- leaving students of color unaware of their heritage and white students ignorant to the history of oppression that continues into today. Without a proper knowledge base, it is impossible to have productive conversations about the issues that affect our minority populations, making students of color feel unwelcome in our schools. On top of this, we have little to no exposure to the opportunities that await us in the workforce, leading us to be a continued minority in secondary education and many careers. To counter this, Seattle Public Schools must take the following measures to improve our curriculums:

- Initiate conversations about race early on (in preschool and elementary school);
- Offer ethnic studies in all public schools and make it a graduation requirement;
- Re-evaluate history and literature curriculums, making sure all classes, including advanced classes, increase the use of texts from multiple perspectives and cultures that represent the true history of events, not the Eurocentric perspective;
- Protect and raise awareness among staff and students about programs like Proyecto Saber that are geared toward students of color;
- Provide updated tests and readings that are relevant to students;
- Much like the Family Life and Sexual Health program, have a designated week in elementary and middle schools for students to gain exposure to people of color in different professions as well as promote college readiness; and
- Get feedback from youth on the current curricula and on future ethnic studies curricula.

*In brief, we demand that the district improve its curriculums, including mandatory ethnic studies, to better serve all students.*

## 3. Increase of Voice of Youth, Especially Youth of Color

Voices of students of color should be included in decision making, at all levels, without administrators laying all the responsibility (and all the labor) on the students of color. To counter this, we demand that the district:

- Establish student representation on the superintendent search & interview committee (with student reps earning credit toward graduation);
- Elect student representatives to the School Board;
- Institute a streamlined, transparent process of reporting race-related incidents, with clear, appropriate consequences and restorative practices;
- Make changes to ensure that teacher tenure doesn't protect racist behaviors in teachers;
- Hire students of color to review and revise the student handbook;
- Collect racial identity data that accurately represents people who have more than one ethnicity in their identity;
- Create a committee that includes students, staff, and administrators to redesign discipline practices and district policy;
- Respond to communications with youth of color in an urgent manner;
- Create a system for students to give feedback on teachers' racial literacy; and
- Have regular meetings between the NAACP Youth Coalition and School Board directors.

*In brief, we demand that the district increase opportunities to integrate voices of students of color into its decision-making processes.*

#### **4. Occupied Rainier Beach High School Renovation**

Rainier Beach was built in 1959. While it has had minor upgrades -- a performing arts center in 1998 and a library in 2001 -- it has never benefited from a major renovation. Students of Rainier Beach, a school with one of the highest free and reduced meal rates in the district and with a student body nearly entirely of color, have been protesting poor learning conditions for years. We demand that this renovation:

- Be occupied;
- Include students on the design team; and
- Include efforts to register more people to vote, as the renovation depends on the passage of the levy in February of 2019.

*In brief, we demand that the district prioritize the occupied renovation of Rainier Beach.*

#### **5. Increased Access to Opportunities and Mental Health Services**

Many youth of privilege have access to connections that lead to opportunities. Not all students have these connections so to be equitable, we must prioritize bringing such opportunities to youth of color. Consequently, Seattle Public Schools must undertake the following measures:

- Provide much more access to mental health services, including access to therapists of Color;
- Provide more information on opportunities available, like internships and summer programs, to those with less access to the opportunities;
- Make college and career opportunities more accessible to students of color via a main page on SPS's website or links in the Source;
- Make College Access Now! (CAN!) consistent in all high schools;
- Provide more support to youth of color / low-income youth for college access earlier on in school;
- Assign college and career counselors in a more equitable way, with more funding going to schools where fewer students currently go on to college;
- Create/support programs, like teaching academies, that encourage students of color to become educators, especially educators of ethnic studies;
- Earmark district funding for scholars of color, creating a pipeline for students of color into higher education (which is what Seattle Young People's Project and UW's DREAM project try to do to fill the gaps created by Seattle Public Schools);
- Hire more counselors of color; and
- To better support students of color, partner:
  - with Young Women Empowered's April Career Day and foster similar opportunities for men of color;
  - with local businesses to increase scholarship opportunities;
  - with local businesses to foster entrepreneurship and increase internship, mentorship, and job connections.

*In brief, we demand that the district fund post-secondary opportunities in an equitable way.*

## **6. Overhaul Discipline Practices**

Discipline practices that negatively impact students of color have plagued the district for decades now. Even with an end to suspensions in elementary schools, unjust disparities persist. Such practices funnel students into the school-to-prison pipeline.

In contrast, restorative justice practices have proven to be more effective in addressing discipline issues. Instead of focusing on discipline, the district needs to connect students in need with support, case managers, and mentors.

Additionally, students who are targets of racism (especially on social media) must be protected by SPS. Thus, SPS needs to:

- Increase penalties for white students harassing of students of color and treat them as seriously as sexual harassment and bullying behaviors;
- Focus on students in need with support, mentorship, and case managers instead of disciplining;
- Create a process with a concrete timeline for students to submit formal complaints against racist teachers;
- Ensure that schools investigate when youth of color file complaints;
- Make changes to ensure that teacher tenure doesn't protect racist behavior in teachers;
- Train teachers in restorative justice practices; and
- Track data to learn if teachers are disproportionately disciplining students with marginalized identities.

*In brief, we demand that the district overhaul its discipline practices, implementing restorative justice districtwide.*

## **7. Mandatory Staff Training on Issues of Race and Equity**

Based on the issues raised above, it's clear that the staff in Seattle Public Schools is not sufficiently trained on issues of race and racism. Too many staff members are ill-equipped to work with colleagues of color, support a healthy learning environment for students of color, and create positive relationships with families of color. Trust and an open line of communication among teachers, students, and families must be established. Consequently, Seattle Public Schools must undertake the following measures:

- All schools must have Race & Equity Teams, with accountability measures;
- All school must display the Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity Policy, 0030;
- Explore solutions tailored to each school – conduct quarterly surveys so that Race & Equity Teams can create meaningful professional development that fits the distinct needs of each school;
- Train teachers and staff at all levels of Seattle Public Schools (P-12 teachers, support staff, administrators, and John Stanford Center staff) in anti-racist concepts and strategies. Training topics should include:
  - facilitating productive conversations about race;
  - sensitivity around language;
  - culturally responsive teaching;
  - accommodations for all religions, languages, holidays -- not just Christian ones -- such as prayer accommodations for Muslim students, no testing during Ramadan, and much more;
  - cultural appropriation;
  - putting an end to harmful stereotyping of students and families of color;
  - racial harassment; and
  - restorative justice.
- Increase accountability for staff on issues of race and racism;
- Ensure staff with the least understanding of issues of race and equity are part of Race & Equity Teams. Too often, the staff that least need the support of a Race & Equity Team are the only ones on a school's Race & Equity Team; and
- Ensure staff do not unfairly penalize students learning English as a second language.

*In brief, we demand that the district prioritize training staff of all schools, as well as central office staff, on issues of race, equity, and racism, even if schools fail to apply for a Race & Equity Team.*

## **8. Hiring and Retaining More Staff of Color**

The demographics of the educators in Washington simply do not reflect the demographics of the students.

Seattle is not so different. Consequently, Seattle Public Schools must undertake the following measures:

- Hire more culturally competent staff of color, especially young men of color, and compensate them equitably;
- Hire more bilingual staff to better serve our ELL students and families;
- Incentivize the teaching career for youth of color by creating internships, scholarships, and programs that encourage and facilitate the exploration of the teaching profession;
- Bring back the Teaching Academy;
- Increase outreach to and build relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and
- Support teachers of color once they are hired, given that they, like students of color, are disproportionately disciplined.

*In brief, we demand that the district prioritize hiring more staff of color in all buildings regardless of demographics.*

## **SUMMARY of the DEMANDS**

The NAACP Youth Coalition demands that the Seattle Public School district:

- *support the #BlackLivesMatterAtSchool actions indefinitely.*
- *improve its curriculums, including mandatory Ethnic Studies, to better serve all students;*
- *increase opportunities to integrate voices of students of color into its decision-making processes;*
- *prioritize the occupied renovation of Rainier Beach High School;*
- *fund post-secondary opportunities in an equitable way;*
- *improve its discipline practices, implementing restorative justice districtwide;*
- *prioritize training staff of all schools as well as central office staff on issues of race, equity, and racism, even if schools fail to apply for to Race & Equity Teams; and*
- *prioritize hiring and retaining more staff of color in all buildings regardless of demographics.*

N-YC demands met so far by Seattle Public Schools:

- *publicly declare that Black Lives Matter, as well as the lives of other students of color, and encourage participation districtwide in the #BlackLivesMatterAtSchool week of action on February 5-9, 2018.*

### **NAACP Youth Coalition Leadership**

Emma Fedore, Aneesa Roidad (Ballard); Jubi Younkings, Emrys Foster, Kiyoshi Sakauye (Center School); Mia Dabney, Rena Mateja, Mitchell Moss, Devyonna Williams, Viviana Williams (Cleveland); LeVera Brown, Jaedyn Thomas (Franklin); Luci Romnan (Ingraham); Cece Chan (Nathan Hale); Aminah Adams, Thomas Foster, Israel Presley, Demetrius Rogers (Rainier Beach); Nabbil Hassan (Sealth); Arwen Blazier, Erica Ijeoma (West Seattle); Gian Nicholo Rosario (University of Washington)