



FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

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February 8, 2023

Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker
CT Department of Education
450 Columbus Boulevard
Hartford, CT 06103-1841

Dear Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker,

This is to provide an update on Fairfield Public Schools' Racial Imbalance Plan, as requested at the November 2, 2022 State Board of Education meeting. We continue to make progress on the components of our plan as outlined below.

The district continues to become increasingly diverse. In the last ten years, the percentage of Fairfield Public School students who identify in categories other than "Caucasian" has increased from 19.1 % in October 2012 to 26.72 % in October 2021.

McKinley Elementary School continues to become increasingly diverse, notably due to increases in students identifying as "Hispanic or Latino" and "Black or African American." In the last ten years, the percentage of McKinley Elementary School students who identify in categories other than "White" has increased from 43.18% in October 2013, to 55.45% in October 2022. In that time the percent of students who identify as "Hispanic or Latino" have increased by half, from 20.45% to 30.68%. The percent of students who identify as "Black or African American" has increased by two-thirds, from 5.91% to 10.00%.

Race/Ethnicity information is collected for all students upon registration, using this two-part question required by the State of CT (which follows U.S. Department of Education guidance and regulations): 1) Is the student Hispanic/Latino (Yes/No); 2) What is the student's race (choose all that apply): a. American Indian or Alaskan Native; b. Asian; c. Black or African American; d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; e. White.

Racial balance is calculated as variance between the minority enrollment of a specific school and the district minority enrollment average. The threshold for racial imbalance is +/- 25% from the district average for the relevant grades (i.e., PK-5 schools are compared only against schools with PK-5, middle schools are compared against other middle schools.) The threshold for "impending racial imbalance" is +/- 15% - 24% from the district average.

One strategy that the district has implemented to attempt to rectify the racial imbalance at McKinley Elementary School is allowing school choice for families in elementary school. School choice has had a negative impact on racial balance in at McKinley School as it has caused more non-Caucasian families to opt to attend McKinley who otherwise would have attended another elementary school. of schools. Fairfield Public Schools has fully committed to a district-wide redistricting plan to address both the immediate racial imbalance at McKinley School but also to provide a more equitable distribution of enrollment across our schools. The Board of Education is committed to implementing a long-term solution to the current racial imbalance at McKinley.

There are many factors that contribute to the current demographic enrollment at McKinley Elementary School. These include current housing and development, affordability, and the positive climate and culture that students and families experience at McKinley School. I cannot stress enough how much I have heard from families about how the school's culture has contributed to them seeking to move into the district specifically to enroll their children at McKinley. Families do not see a racially imbalanced school but rather an inclusive school community where their children are learning and growing.

The timeline below is a chronological account of the actions taken to date by the Fairfield Board of Education to begin the process of redistricting:

November 2, 2022: Fairfield Board Finance Committee: Costs/savings estimates from closing an elementary school, as discussed in September

November 15, 2022: Fairfield Board Discussion of Updated Facilities Planning Principles from 2010

November 29, 2022: Fairfield Board First Reading of Revised Facilities Planning Document

December 13, 2022: Fairfield Board adopts revised Facilities Planning Document. Review of 2019 Charge to Milone and MacBroom (SLAM) and Discussion of Updates, Timeline and Associated Budget

December 15, 2022: Fairfield Board holds in-person Community Conversation regarding racial balance, academic excellence, and facility utilization.

December 21, 2022: Board Facilities Committee follow up on seating needs capacity for special programming and ECC, review of November enrollment and capacity data report from SLAM.

January 4, 2023: Fairfield Board held a Facility Planning Workshop. Review of Specialized Programming Request, First Reading of 2023 Board of Education Charge to Consultant, Timeline related to Facilities.

January 5, 2023: Fairfield Board holds virtual Community Conversation regarding racial balance, academic excellence, and facility utilization.

January 10, 2023: Fairfield Board meeting: Discussion on facilities capital planning, Board follow up questions and amendments on the draft charge from January 4th. The Board voted to postpone the vote on the charge to the consultant to the January 24, 2023, Board meeting.

January 24, 2023: Fairfield Board Meeting: Board adopts charge to the consultant to assist in identifying redistricting scenarios to balance elementary school utilization and resolve racial imbalance.

Looking forward, the district and Board of Education will carefully analyze the recommendations of the SLAM group once they submit their initial report, continue progress on planning our equity trainings, school climate initiatives, and ongoing community engagement.

Our next update to you will be provided by May 2, 2023. Please feel free to contact with me questions on our progress or any of the details above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael J. Testani". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Michael J. Testani
Superintendent of Schools

*c: Board of Education
Laura Anastasio, CSDE Legal and Governmental Affairs*

MT:mb