

3/3/2021 Report Out

In a prior report out, we shared our concern for students' academic and holistic wellbeing that are learning across the different models of remote, hybrid, and in-person. National news outlets highlighted learning gaps especially impacting the most vulnerable students. These news sources cited data coming from various school systems - which led us to wonder about the data gathered for our own school district.

- [Failing Grade Spike in Virginia's Largest School System as Learning Gap Emerges](#)
- [Nationwide Online Learning is Failing the Most Vulnerable Students](#)
- [See minutes from 12/10/20](#) for specifics.

The following questions were forwarded to Superintendent Urbina-Medina:

- *Which students have been absent?*
- *What are the patterns (demographics) of students who are failing or doing poorly?*
- *What's the data on the children who are being brought to the attention of the people who track attendance and what is the follow up on that?*
- *What is the protocol for tracking students/how can the school district beyond their main teacher support outreach to check on students who have been MIA?*
- *How do lateness, or schedule changes (meetings on an asynchronous day), or absences due to doctor's appointments, etc... impact grading? What is the communication protocol for students/parents in these situations?*
- *What are the special education dropout rates? Or rates of participation?*
- *What is the ENL dropout rate? And participation rates within classes?*
- *How are we assessing the mental health for students and staff? Based on these assessments, how can the district budget for the needs anticipated for 2021-22.*
- *What are plans for addressing the unevenness of impact for students' academic success and mental health?*

Shifting from the uneven impacts of the coronavirus on our students learning, we also want to address Black History Month within the New Paltz Central School District. REIAC believes there was a lost opportunity this year for the NPCSD to model anti-racist teaching and pedagogy through a district-wide engagement of Black History Month. We believe that leadership needs to come from the top - which starts at the BOE and works down through the district and leadership at each building. Currently, from the shared experience of our student members, it rests with the individual teacher how much they will engage with Black History in the classroom - and that can depend greatly on their experience, knowledge or comfort level with teaching this history in their classroom. While Black History shouldn't be confined only to February (we would certainly encourage its engagement through the academic year), we do feel it's important as a community to develop curriculum and a culture of critical engagement with Black History during Black History Month.

This leads me to the district's long-term commitment to anti-racism and developing cultural competency within the administration, faculty and staff across the district. Years ago the district committed to a process and started working with a company, *Generation Ready*, to begin this

work. Two or so years into their work with our district, *Generation Ready* folded and we don't have a back up plan for going forward. Granted, from what we were able to see from what *Generation Ready* was developing, they were not able to meet the needs of our district as their process did not address the issues around culture, race, identity, or power in substantive ways. However, REIAC strongly believes that our district is stalled in our work of developing our faculty, staff and administration's ability to effectively and collectively educate our students in ways that recognizes the diverse identities and values they bring to school each day, and through engaging with the diverse American histories that are often neglected in our educational spaces. Thus, we strongly urge the BOE to prioritize recommitting to the project of developing our district's capacity for this work through working with a different institute/program. REIAC would be happy to provide some recommendations.

Further, we believe that the district can start on this work on a smaller scale while the larger project gets underway - through actively encouraging (and financially backing) BOE members, district administration, faculty and staff participation in the Undoing Racism workshops hosted by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. We recognize that some faculty may feel ill equipped to fully support an educational engagement with black history, Latinx history, Asian history, indigenous histories - but the only way we can get to the point where we can guide our children through understanding our diverse Multicultural America is to do the work. REIAC recommends that the BOE and district leadership actively support and encourage our faculty and staff to start this journey.

I want to thank Superintendent Urbina-Medina for attending a few of the events on the SUNY New Paltz campus (via Zoom) this last week for the Black Lives Matter at School week of events. Further, I would also like to thank BOE member Diana Armstead for her work co-organizing two panels along with SUNY New Paltz faculty. Those panels co-sponsored by REIAC, featured the Concerned Parents of New Paltz group, as well as the work of Tracy Hunter-Givens and Peter Hayman - who facilitate local and national Undoing Racism workshops.

And lastly, REIAC would like to request a meeting with Superintendent Urbina Medina to discuss REIAC's charge and how we can be more effective and more collaborative with the district. Further, we invite all building principals to come to our REIAC meetings - we would really appreciate the opportunity to engaging in dialogue with you.