



Dear McKinley Families and Staff,

I know this is a long note, but I want to be sure that you have factual information directly from me concerning the Fairfield Amended Racial Imbalance presentation to the Connecticut State Board of Education.

I felt privileged to represent McKinley and Fairfield at the meeting yesterday concerning our Fairfield Amendment to the Racial Imbalance Plan. I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the McKinley PTA who wrote an eloquent letter for submission which generated more than 400 collective signatures in support of our current plan. Two of your terrific McKinley families were in attendance in Hartford and provided public comment at the meeting. In addition, it should not go unnoticed that the bipartisan support from Senator Hwang, Representative Devlin, Representative McCarthy Vahey, and Representative Kupchick provided a sense of unity supporting our wonderful school system and the diverse international education which takes place at McKinley.

To provide a contextual background for families who may be new to Fairfield, or Connecticut, school systems are expected to maintain a minority balance at all schools which closely mirrors the minority balance of the school district as a whole. The threshold for compliance to this law written in 1969 is defined in State Board of Education Regulations as not exceeding 25 percentage points more or less than the comparable proportion for the school district. McKinley's official minority percentage as reported at the end of 2015-2016 school year was 47.90%. The school district as a whole was reported to have 20.70% of the student population in K-12 reporting as minorities. Hence, the difference between the school district and McKinley was 27.20% which put us out of compliance by 2.2%. The school district was required to provide an updated Racial Imbalance Plan as a result of this 2.2% difference.

McKinley was first identified as racially imbalanced by the Connecticut Board of Education in April 2007. For a decade, the school district has consistently worked to comply with our submitted and approved plans. While the plans have not resulted in significant shifts in the percentage, the plan has made a difference and our percentage would be higher without our on-going efforts.

On Wednesday the Connecticut Board of Education had three options: 1) approve the plan, 2) not approve the plan, 3) approve the plan with conditions. The Fairfield Racial Imbalance Plan was approved "with conditions." The next submission to the Connecticut Board of Education must occur within the next 120 days and it is simply put a calendar of activities to come. The Ct. BoE is asking that Fairfield revise the amended plan to include "additional measures" and "an

action plan with a detailed timetable for meeting interim progress benchmarks." In our last plan submission, the school district shared that over the long-term, additional steps will need to be considered. The two items listed were a magnet program at McKinley and Redistricting. While these options will be explored, it is important to note there is no requirement that they be implemented. We must perform due diligence to examine all options which will "eliminate racial imbalance and prevent its recurrence in the school district."

It is likely that our timetable will include concrete check points such as completing an enrollment assessment on or before October 1st, 2017, to determine the impact of moving the preschool program from Dwight Elementary to Stratfield Elementary. It will also include benchmark dates for community surveys and conversations. In our previous plans over the past ten years we have formed working groups, hosted PTA Information Nights, surveyed the community, and worked through an inclusive process. While previously these meetings and surveys were not documented in a checklist format and reported directly to the Connecticut Board of Education, they were taking place. We are now being asked to document and share specifics about our actions.

I am looking forward to working with our families, staff, and community on this important task. McKinley is an international school with more than 27 languages derived from all corners of the world, and Fairfield knows that our McKinley families love their wonderful school.

Regards,

Toni Jones, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools