

Resolution No. 6130

Resolution in Support of Re-Centering the PPS Student Experience Through Supportive and Affirming People, Culture, and Climate

Recitals

- A. Public education is the bedrock of American democracy as it provides opportunities for everyone to transcend their circumstances. As the public educational system for almost 50,000 students, Portland Public Schools (PPS) is the steward of this city's future and is responsible for providing a well-rounded, community-centered education that allows every student to achieve their fullest potential and thrive into adulthood.
- B. In 2011, the PPS Board of Education adopted PPS's Racial Educational Equity Policy, which states, "The Board of Education for Portland Public Schools is committed to the success of every student in each of our schools. The mission of Portland Public Schools is that by the end of elementary, middle, and high school, every student by name will meet or exceed academic standards and will be fully prepared to make productive life decisions. We believe that every student has the potential to achieve, and it is the responsibility of our school district to give each student the opportunity and support to meet his or her highest potential."
- C. In 2019, thousands of students, families, staff, partners, and members of the community helped Portland Public Schools formalize an ambitious vision for that education. It summons PPS to transform into a system grounded in our core value of racial equity and social justice that would equip students to "lead change and improve the world" by nurturing both their intellectual curiosity and their humanity in supportive, engaging learning environments. Since its adoption by the Board in June 2019, that community-driven vision of "Portland Public Schools reimagined" has guided the district's efforts to improve its performance in service to our students and families.
- D. As elected representatives in our community, the Board of Education is the steward of our collective vision. We acknowledge that our district's persistent failure to serve Black students betrays our aspirations.
- E. Our collective responsibility is to uphold our commitment to center the experience of students in everything we do, to interrogate our decisions through a racial equity and social justice lens, to build authentic, collaborative partnerships with our students, our families, our employees, and the larger community. We must lead with integrity and boldness to fulfill this community's vision of what PPS can and should be.
- F. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us at this moment of national reckoning to clarify where we stand and what we intend to do. We affirm that Black Lives Matter. We choose to be a community that not only expresses, but also lives a commitment to every person's fundamental right to human dignity. We believe that students, families, and communities have a right to respect, safety, and full access to schools that prepare students to be agents of change in their own lives and in the world. We commit to eliminating the racism and oppression embedded in PPS and rebuilding it as an educational system that affirms positive identities, nurtures a sense of belonging, and promotes a joy of learning. We will act to make schools welcoming learning environments that employ practices that are developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and aligned with the principles of restorative justice.
- G. We support the Superintendent's overarching strategic framework of targeted universalism: pursuing universal goals through strategies that are targeted, based upon how different groups are situated within structures, culture, and across geographies.

Accordingly, the Board confirms its four goals for universally improving educational outcomes that specifically focus on improving academic growth on student groups that the district has persistently failed: Black and Native American students.

- H. A growing body of research on the impact of the physical and emotional well-being of students on their academic outcomes and personal development, reinforces the notion that PPS has a primary obligation to provide school environments that are healthy, affirming, and conducive to learning. But 18 months of consultation with many hundreds of students in high schools and middle schools revealed that an overwhelming number of students – particularly students of color – expressed a profound sense of insecurity and fear over the presence of armed police in schools, a sentiment toward law enforcement that is generally expressed across the country by Black, Native, and communities of color. We support the Superintendent’s decision to end the presence of School Resource Officers in schools and will work with our community to ensure our students, especially our Black and Native students, attend schools where they feel a strong sense of safety and belonging.
- I. Institutions – especially Portland Public Schools – have a moment, an opportunity to lead, not with race-neutral plans, but with an anti-racist agenda that begins and amplifies an intergenerational healing process among students, their families, and our community.

Resolved

Therefore, be it resolved that the Portland Public Schools Board:

- A. Declares that the lives of Black students and our Black community matter and commits to working with the Superintendent and the Portland community to create the conditions for every student, especially our Black and Indigenous students who experience the greatest challenges, to realize the vision of the Graduate Portrait.
- B. Strongly upholds the Superintendent’s charge to re-center a student’s sense of belonging and safety by encouraging positive relationships and a supportive and affirming culture and climate in every school.
- C. Endorses the Superintendent’s decision to immediately discontinue the regular presence of School Resource Officers on Portland Public Schools school campuses.
- D. Commends the Superintendent and the District’s leadership for its bold commitment to center the lived experiences of our students and apply a racial equity and social justice lens to all decisions and directs the Superintendent to continue the work of building meaningful relationships with our students, families, Racial Equity and Social Justice Community Based Partners, labor leaders, and school-based staff to collectively dismantle systems of oppression that hurt our school communities, especially our students, families, and staff of color.
- E. Directs the Superintendent to provide regular public updates to the School Board on the progress made towards implementing the charge to School District Leaders on June 4, 2020 to create and support affirming school climates, characterized by positive adult-student relationships, students’ sense of belonging, cultural responsiveness, and overall student physical and emotional safety.
- F. Recognizes that the decision to end the SRO program within Portland Public Schools presents an opportunity to reform the relationship between Black, Indigenous, and Communities of Color with law enforcement. Ending the SRO program does not speak to any one specific School Resource Officer, any one incident or issue on school campuses. Instead, it speaks to the systemic racism that has plagued our institutions since their founding. The School Board expresses gratitude to the School Resource Officers who have

worked hard to build deep and positive relationships with our students and encourage the Portland Police Bureau to leverage the types of trainings, supports, and skills of these SROs to help build a strong community-focused police force. Our students, especially our students of color, demand it.

- G. Welcomes Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, the Portland City Council, and the Portland Police Bureau to engage in authentic conversations with our students, school district leaders, leaders of color, and other key stakeholders to develop racial equity aligned actionable steps for reforms in local law enforcement.