

August 21, 2017

Dr. Paul Goren  
Superintendent  
Evanston/Skokie School District 65  
1500 McDaniel Ave  
Evanston, IL 60201

Dr. Goren and District 65 School Board Members;

In October of 2015, a group of concerned citizens requested a School Board meeting to address the under-achievement of Black students in District 65 Schools. We rallied over 300 parents to this meeting to protest the continued under-education of Black students in Evanston. Community members shared over 90 minutes of personal testimony highlighting the generational disparities in Evanston experienced by the Black community. These disparities were confirmed in the *Report on Black Student Achievement in District 65* released in April of 2016.

For the last three years, OPAL has pushed and collaborated with the Board to provide meaningful solutions to the achievement gap and has waited patiently for the Board to address our requests. We appreciate your acceptance of our recommendations that have led to

- the District 65 Racial Equity Policy
- the District's commitment to have all teachers and the entire School Board attend Beyond Diversity Training by 2018
- the District's commitment to produce Quarterly Discipline Reports disaggregated by race and gender.

We also value the District's commitment to community/parent engagement, school climate, and SEED training. However, we would be remiss not to express continued disappointment at other areas which we feel the District has neglected.

In May 2016, you requested a written statement from OPAL outlining areas in which we felt the District could better serve Black and Latinx students; unfortunately, the most important of these requests have not been met. We continue to be concerned about the lack of urgency as we begin a new school year without confidence that our children's educational careers and personal trajectories have been significantly improved.

We desire a partnership with the District to achieve equity in education. In assessing actions by Dr. Goren and the District 65 Board over the last two years, we feel it necessary to reiterate prior requests regarding the hiring of Black teachers and the K-3 Literacy

Framework. In addition, this letter serves as a formal request for a detailed analysis of the programs at the JEH Early Childhood Center.

<b>Area of Concern: Hiring Black Teachers</b>	
<b>OPAL's Previous Efforts</b>	<b>OPAL's Current Request</b>
<p>OPAL had an unproductive meeting with Ms. Davis, Asst. Superintendent of Human Resources in October 2016 to address our hiring concerns.</p> <p>In May 2017, Ms. Davis produced a report showing that D65 has hired only 14 Black teachers over the last three years compared to 23 Latinx and 117 White teachers.</p>	<p>1) Produce <b><i>a public report on the status of OPAL's previous requests for 3 Black teachers at JEH and 10 additional Black teachers in District 65 Schools.</i></b> <u>When:</u> By September 30, 2017.</p> <p>2) Develop, make available to the public, and implement <b><i>a hiring plan and retention process for increasing and sustaining Black teachers throughout District 65.</i></b> <u>When:</u> Develop plan and process, and make public, by September 30, 2017. Implement by December 21, 2017.</p> <p>3) An immediate <b><i>assessment of the current substitute teacher pool to identify Black teachers</i></b> eligible for hire as permanent, full-time teachers. <u>When:</u> September 30, 2017.</p>

<b>Area of Concern: K-3 Literacy</b>	
<b>OPAL's Previous Efforts</b>	<b>OPAL's Current Request</b>
<p>In June 2016, OPAL met with Dr. Beardsley to discuss the literacy rates of Black students. Our objective was to have D65 reintroduce reading as a subject highlighting phonemic learning. Dr. Beardsley introduced the new K-3 Literacy Framework that she explained would track student performance 'in real time' with teacher and student growth measures, ensuring that no student would fall behind.</p>	<p>1) Produce <b><i>a public report on the K-3 Literacy results</i></b> disaggregating student progress by race, grade, and school. <u>When:</u> D65 Board meeting, September 25, 2017</p> <p>2) Produce and make public <b><i>quarterly reports on the K-3 Literacy Program</i></b> including student progress disaggregated by race, grade, and school. <u>When:</u> To start late November 2017</p>

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<b>Area of Concern: JEH Early Childhood Center</b>	
<b>OPAL's Previous Efforts</b>	<b>OPAL's Current Request</b>
<p>In April 2015, in response to a formal community request, D65 produced the Black Student Achievement Report.</p> <p>This report, and reports produced subsequently, show limited gains by students entering Kindergarten from the JEH Early Childhood Center programs.</p>	<p>1) Develop, make available to the public and implement <b><i>a plan that will improve the ISEL test scores of Black &amp; Latinx children enrolled in the JEH Early Childhood Center by 50%.</i></b> <u>When:</u> Develop and make public by September 30, 2017. Improved test scores by the end of the 2019-20 school year.</p> <p>2) Produce and make public <b><i>progress reports on the above request every 6 months.</i></b> <u>When:</u> To start February 2018.</p> <p>3) Produce and make public <b><i>a comprehensive report on all programs run by District 65s Early Childhood Center</i></b> including but not limited to:  - Racial demographics of students  - Student duration in each JEH Program, disaggregated by race  - Educational background and race of teachers  - Educational background and length of time in D65 of all administrators  - Staff job descriptions  - List of curricula used  - ISEL scores over the last 3 years, disaggregated by race  <u>When:</u> March 31, 2018</p> <p>4) Produce and make public <b><i>quarterly reports on JEH Early Childhood Center programs.</i></b> <u>When:</u> To start late November 2017.</p>

We request a response to this letter no later than September 5, 2017.

Respectfully,  
Board of Directors, The Organization for Positive Action and Leadership  
Evanston/North Shore Branch of NAACP, Education Committee  
Bethel AME Church of Evanston