



June 25, 2017

Dr. Scott Brabrand
Superintendent
Fairfax County Public Schools
8115 Gatehouse Rd.
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear Dr. Brabrand:

I am writing to request a follow-on meeting with you, your Human Resources Director and Chief of Staff, and the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) school board leadership to discuss the troubling findings published in a [report](#) by George Mason University (GMU) researchers.¹ As you're aware, the report entitled "Where Are All the Black Teachers? Discrimination in the Teacher Labor Market" demonstrates that African American teacher applicants are being discriminated against by FCPS, and the Fairfax County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) leadership would like to meet with you to understand your plan to this discrimination.

The key finding of the GMU study was that the lack of black teachers being hired was not "supply" problem; and this is a credit to the efforts to recruit more African American teachers into the pool of applicants. In fact, the black candidates often had more experience and academic credentials than their white counterparts, according to the findings. In an increasingly competitive environment, every Fairfax County parent, regardless of race, would be disturbed to discover that FCPS is passing on the most qualified candidates because of biased hiring practices.

To FCPS leadership's credit, they have been willing to maintain an open line of communication on the issue. Shortly after the study was released, I wrote a letter to the FCPS School Board members and Interim Superintendent, Mr. Lockard, expressing our concerns. In response, I along with the leadership MSAOC, and Fairfax Alliance of Black School Educators (FABSE) were invited to participate in a meeting on May 31st with Sandy Evans, Chair of the FCPS School Board, Janie Strauss, Vice Chair, Steve Lockard, and other FCPS leadership to discuss the report and other related concerns. At the conclusion of the meeting FCPS leadership agreed to examine the findings of the forthcoming MSAOC annual report, consider our joint proposal to bring in an outside consultant to oversee hiring, promotion and retention policies, and

¹ Harvard Educational Review, *Where Are All the Black Teachers? Discrimination in the Teacher Labor Market* (Spring 2017) (online at <http://hepgjournals.org/doi/abs/10.17763/1943-5045-87.1.26?code=hepg-site>).

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then schedule a subsequent meeting with us.

Then on June 10th, the Fairfax County NAACP hosted a panel discussion on the topic which was open to our members. The panel included Amielia Mitchell, President of FABSE, and principal of Stone Middle School in Centreville, Janie Strauss, Vice Chair of the FCPS School Board, and Marty Smith, Chief of Staff of FCPS.

In her opening statement, Ms. Strauss confirmed that the GMU study accurately reflected FCPS hiring data, and agreed that more needed to be done to address the discrimination. Mr. Smith mentioned that FCPS was open to adopting one of Fairfax NAACP and MSAOC's demands to task an outside agency to oversee FCPS hiring, promotion, and retention policies and practices. Ms. Mitchell noted that the study opened her eyes as to her own cultural biases, acknowledging that 30% of her students are Hispanic, while only two of her teachers were Hispanic. She is now actively recruiting more Hispanic teachers. "I wasn't intending to discriminate, but it took something like this to make me look at my own school and realize that we weren't representing one of our communities appropriately."

While we sincerely appreciate the open lines of communication between the our organization and the FCPS leadership, unfortunately this communication has not manifested into a subsequent meeting as promised, or tangible actions such as a written plan of action, so it is not clear to us that the issue is receiving the level of attention it deserves. As the new leader for a school district facing several challenges, we want to ensure that this issue receives the priority attention it deserves and would like to meet with you to understand your plans to ensure this discrimination ends as soon as possible.

We have a number of recommendations that we believe would help address the issue, which we have included in this letter to help facilitate future conversations.

Fairfax NAACP recommended solutions

- Commission an outside organization to conduct an audit of the FCPS hiring and retention policies and practices;
 - organization must create biannual reports of their findings;
 - reports must include breakdown by school;
 - and reports must be made publically available within one week of submittal to the School Board
- Implement an annual requirement for at least one full day of training for all FCPS school principals and regional superintendents that includes examining the findings of the GMU study, MSAOC data, recognizing biases, in conjunction with the cultural proficiency training currently conducted.
- Task the FCPS Human Resources office to set a goal and devise a written plan to ensure African American teachers are hired at the same rate as their European, Asian, and Latino

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American counterparts by the end of the 2018-19 school year. If goal is not met the Human Resources office chief shall be held accountable and issued a performance improvement plan that includes the possibility of termination.

- Principals found to demonstrate a pattern of hiring discrimination - defined as clearly showing prejudice towards one race or ethnicity after eliminating qualification factors over a period of three years or more - should be issued a performance improvement plan within the first year of discovery, and reassignment or termination within the second year if the pattern persists
- Put a plan in place to ensure that at least 20 of FCPS 196 principals are African American by 2020-21 school year. This would make the proportion of principals proportionate to the school population.
- Create of a system that allows teachers to anonymously file complaints against principals or administrators when they feel they are being discriminated against. Complaints must go directly to the FCPS Human Resources Director and MSAOC. The HR Director will then be required to investigate and issue a report that is made discoverable by the public.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with you on implementing these recommendations and learning more about your plans to address this topic. Please reach out to me so that we may schedule a mutually convenient time to meet to discuss this issue and these recommendations.

Sincerely,
Kofi Annan
President, Fairfax NAACP
“Because Freedom isn’t Free”