



For Immediate Release: Wednesday, August 3, 2016
Contact BPS Communications Office:
communications@bostonpublicschools.org or 617-635-9265

BPS Office of Equity Completes Extensive Investigation at Boston Latin School

District Releases Racial Climate Audit of School

BOSTON - Wednesday, August 3, 2016 - The Boston Public Schools (BPS) announced today that its Office of Equity has completed a comprehensive investigation of allegations regarding bias-based conduct at the Boston Latin School (BLS). This review examined over 100 newly reported bias-based incidents dating as far back as 2012.

"The Office of Equity has thoroughly examined every concern raised by a BLS student or employee since the issues were brought to our attention in January," BPS Superintendent Tommy Chang said. "We take every concern regarding possible bias seriously. We will continue to focus on supporting BLS students, parents, staff and administrators as we move forward as a community to foster and sustain an environment where all feel valued and can flourish."

This investigation follows an initial review by the Office of Equity that covered a total of seven allegations of inappropriate race-based incidents at BLS brought to the attention of school administrators from November 2014 to January 2016. That previous review, completed on Feb. 18, identified one instance in which the BLS administration took insufficient action. It also issued a series of recommendations, including a racial climate audit at BLS and dialogues on race for the school community.

During this second phase of its work, the Office of Equity examined a total of 115 reports of bias-based conduct at BLS, including 91 complaints describing 81 separate alleged incidents that were documented during a Jan. 22, 2016, meeting held by the BLS student organization, Black Leaders Aspiring for Change and Knowledge (B.L.A.C.K.).

The Equity investigation involved interviews with a total of 134 BLS administrators, teachers, staff, students, and parents, and the review of extensive

documents, including social media posts, text messages, emails, personnel records, and student disciplinary records.

As part of the second stage of its investigation, the Office of Equity:

- Investigated 11 reports of alleged insufficient action by BLS administrators (all prior to January 2016) and concluded that in six of those cases an administrator did not follow district policy by failing to appropriately investigate, document, and/or take steps to prevent recurrences of bias-based conduct.
- Investigated or supervised the investigations of 34 reports of alleged bias-based conduct by permanent or substitute teachers toward students and found that in four of those cases an instructor failed to follow district policy.
- Investigated or supervised the investigation of 39 reports of alleged bias-based conduct by a student towards another student and found that in seven of those cases a student failed to follow district policy.
- Carefully reviewed 31 additional reports but did not launch formal investigations because either the cases lacked critical information - such as the identity of the subject or the reporter - or the alleged conduct did not rise to the level of a policy violation.

In cases where the district's equity policy was not followed at Boston Latin School, the Office of Equity issued recommendations that included disciplinary action and mandatory training. The Office of Equity also recommended the adoption of district-wide guidelines outlining best practices for classroom discussions around issues of racial, ethnic and other differences, including how to approach situations in which offensive language could be used.

"We have a moral obligation to ensure that all of our schools are safe and inviting places for each and every student. The racial, cultural and linguistic identity of every student must be honored," Dr. Chang said. "In recent months, we have taken important steps to support Boston Latin School in this endeavor."

Superintendent Chang, along with the Office of Equity, recently received the completed BLS [racial climate audit](#), conducted by the Boston-based consulting firm, VISIONS, Inc., and has shared it with Interim BLS Headmaster Michael Contompasis.

"While the VISIONS team identified serious concerns regarding the racial climate at BLS, the nature and extent of student and staff experiences, attitudes, and perceptions are comparable to what we have seen in many racially diverse schools across the country," said Rick Pinderhughes, director of programs at VISIONS. "These experiences and conditions must be addressed through comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies and programs."

The BLS interim leadership is carefully reviewing the recommendations from VISIONS, along with those from the Office of Equity, as well as BLS students, parents, and faculty, as it develops a short- and long-term plan to help Boston Latin School create a more welcoming environment and to increase racial diversity at the school.

"I am committed to developing a thoughtful, comprehensive plan that addresses the many recommendations we have received," Contompasis said. "I look forward in the coming year to working closely with students, parents, faculty and the community to create a more inclusive school environment for all."

Some of the recommendations from the VISIONS audit, such as improving information sharing with families, align with work already underway at BPS. The district this year took steps to better inform students about the opportunity to apply to its three exam schools. Mayor Martin J. Walsh, the Boston School Committee and Superintendent Chang have also prioritized expanding the Exam School Initiative prep course by adding additional seats for students from schools that have been underrepresented. BPS is also working to improve communications to schools to ensure that all of the district's students are aware of this resource.

"Our goal as a district is to work toward increasing diversity and opportunities for all of our students at our three exam schools," Dr. Chang said. "This will be a major focus as we move forward."

For an executive summary of the Office of Equity's second phase of its investigation, [click here](#).