

Meaningful Engagement in Action:



Dayton Ohio Public Schools' Culturally Relevant Curriculum

Learning More

Parent organizer Hashim Jabar was volunteering in a 3rd grade classroom during a lesson on genealogy. He watched as a classroom of all Black students read from a handout defining family members — such as uncles, cousins, sisters and brothers — that showed only pictures of white people. It was clear that these images were not relevant to their experience, and children were not engaged as a result. Worse yet, without representation in the classroom, what messages were the students internalizing about themselves and their families?

Setting Goals

In response to problematic lessons like this one, more and more educators, parents, students and community leaders are calling for schools to adopt a curriculum that is relevant to the students in the classroom. Hashim was no exception.

Making a Plan & Writing it Down

Hashim's experience led him to run a campaign to introduce culturally relevant curriculum in Dayton Public Schools through his work at the West Dayton Youth Task Force and Racial Justice NOW! The campaign included the following strategies:

- Curriculum review of the school district's books;
- Selection of culturally relevant books and professionally written lesson plans;
- Attendance at School Board meetings to learn about the process for changing the curriculum — urging the Board to add the new books to the high school curriculum; mobilizing community members to speak on behalf of the issue at School Board meetings;
- Presentation to the school district's policy committee to make the case for why the books were chosen and why they should be added to the curriculum; presentation of lesson plans to the school district's curriculum director; and
- Following-up with one-on-one meetings with the district superintendent, curriculum director, and elected school board members.

Making it Happen

As a result of this successful campaign, the Dayton Public School Board voted in favor of including two books, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* and *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* in the high school curriculum.

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Key Definitions

Pedagogy: the science and art of education, specifically instructional theory; instructional methods

Culture: the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group

