

# 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



# Meaningful Engagement in Action:



## New York City's Young Women's Initiative

In 2014, Girls for Gender Equity (GGE), along with other community leaders, challenged the New York City Council to include the racial and gender justice needs of young women of color within the Young Men's Initiative and the national My Brother's Keeper Initiative.

### Learning More

As a public Call to Action, GGE hosted a series of town hall hearings on girls of color in New York City in partnership with the African American Policy Forum (AAPF), dozens of local organizations, Public Advocate Letitia James and New York City Council Member Laurie Cumbo, Chair of the Committee on Women's Issues.

### Setting Goals

Following the hearings, the NYC Council Speaker staff and GGE met to share a vision for a dedicated initiative for young women and girls of color.

### Making a Plan

In March 2015, Girls for Gender Equity, the New York Women's Foundation, and the NoVo Foundation met with the Speaker's office to present a brief and discuss local and national efforts to build an agenda for young women and girls. In May 2015, City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito announced that the City Council would launch a Young Women's Initiative (YWI) focused on changing the lives of young women and girls of color. Along with Council Members Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Elizabeth Crowley, Laurie Cumbo, and Darlene Mealy, Speaker Mark-Viverito presented an empowering vision before an audience of over 2,000 leaders of community-based organizations and philanthropic partners who gathered for the New York Women's Foundation's annual Celebrating Women Breakfast. Beginning in September 2015, over 200 stakeholders, City Council staff, and young people themselves met numerous times over a six-month period to develop policy, programs, data, and resource recommendations focused on lifting up young women and girls of color in New York City.

### Writing it Down

In May 2016, the New York City Council released the New York City Young Women's Initiative Report and Recommendations that included 80+ policy, program, legislative data and budgetary recommendations from all 5 work groups and overarching recommendations.

### Making it Happen

In August 2016, Girls for Gender Equity began the Young Women's Advisory Council 2.0 (YWAC) so the young women can continue to serve as strategic partners to city agencies, philanthropy and community members. YWAC acts in the capacity of advisory and accountability team as policy and program recommendations are implemented throughout New York City.

YWI Stakeholders continue to track these recommendations and work together to ensure that YWI meaningfully remains a part of the landscape of New York City.

# Meaningful Engagement in Action:



## The Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC)

The Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) is a citywide body of student leaders representing their respective high schools across the city. BSAC organizers work to identify and address pertinent student issues, thereby putting students at the center of the decisions that affect them the most. BSAC acts as the student union of the district, leading organizing efforts, forging relationships with district and city leaders, impacting policy change, and transforming school culture across.

### Learning More and Setting Goals

A 1971 state policy stated that all districts should have a student advisory council (SAC). In 2000, there was no meaningful SAC in Boston and a school committee member brought in Youth on Board to revitalize the program.

### Making a Plan

Youth on Board, a Boston-based, youth-led and adult supported program focused on ensuring that young people are at the center of the decisions that affect their lives, partnered with the Boston Public Schools to co-administer BSAC. Over the next 18 years— through their unique inside/outside partnership, they have made BSAC what it is today.

### Writing it Down

Today, BSAC members:

- convene 1-2 times per week;
- meet with the Superintendent, the Mayor, and members of the School Committee to provide feedback on City and district projects and bring up issues important to them;
- provide student perspectives on education policy issues at the local, state and federal level;
- develop and disseminate materials to help students understand their rights and responsibilities;
- inform their respective schools about relevant citywide issues, and are trained in social emotional learning skills;
- develop youth-led campaigns about STTP, climate justice, student rights, education equity, SEL, and more; and
- are able to get badges or course credit for their participation.

A member of BSAC also serves as a non-voting student representative on the Boston School Committee.

### Making it Happen

Now BSAC is a powerful citywide body of student leaders that represent most high schools in the district and consists almost entirely of low-income students of color, with demographics that closely mirror those of the district. BSAC members identify and organize around pertinent student-identified issues, putting these key stakeholders at the center of the decisions that affect them the most. Projects often operate on multiple levels, addressing district-level systems change, as well as systems change on the state level, while developing workable models of student-led campaign development and movement building for replication across the country. BSAC has worked with their advisors and partners on major initiatives. These include: student rights & responsibilities, sustainability and climate justice, the school-to-prison pipeline, student feedback & teacher evaluation, and more!



Learn more about what BSAC has accomplished at: [youthonboard.org/boston-student-advisory-council/](https://youthonboard.org/boston-student-advisory-council/)