

Atlanta Public Schools Statement on State Board of Education Resolution

Over the past several months, we have been deeply engaged in the work of advancing equity and social justice within our schools. Our efforts to date have produced meaningful milestones including a district equity policy, a Resolution on Racial Equity, and the establishment of our Center for Equity + Social Justice.

Our Center for Equity + Social Justice has been working first to listen and learn from the community to identify the best ways to close gaps in opportunity and access, provide professional learning on equity and equitably distribute resources across our schools.

Currently, within our district, there are inequities in opportunity and access between racial subgroups. There is also a predictive link between our students' racial backgrounds and their academic outcomes. If we are truly going to address the root causes of this link, we must engage in honest, brave and respectful dialogue on race.

The recent State Board of Education resolution in response to efforts to remove Critical Race Theory (CRT) from the educational curriculum is a grave mistake that is rooted in a lack of understanding of what Critical Race Theory is, and the impetus for why a robust conversation about race and racism in this country and state is needed.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is primarily taught at the university level and examines how the concept of race has shaped our laws and the experiences of all people within our society, both past and present.

While CRT is not taught in APS classrooms, this work is critically important, because while our nation has laid the foundation of modern democracy and pluralism, we cannot forget that these ideals were, and in some instances continues to be, denied for many.

Nevertheless, if we are to truly educate our children in a manner that enables them to become engaged citizens, laboring to create a more perfect union, then we must provide them with an honest understanding of our history. This includes calling attention to the long-established systems that reinforce racism and uphold white privilege. It also includes educating our children about the rich diverse history that every group has contributed to our nation. Both can be done without diminishing the very important contributions of others.

The resolution passed today by the State Board of Education seeks to eliminate these educational opportunities from our schools.

At APS, we will continue to operate with the understanding that keeping equity at the forefront fosters a culture that encourages excellence for all students and staff, which includes having conversations about racism and its impact on our families.

Conversations about race in our classrooms are paramount because they enable students to:


1. Become critical thinkers who can empathize with people who are different from themselves.
2. Compete in the global society as individuals who are knowledgeable about the experiences and cultures of others.
3. Actively respond to and engage with racism and other issues that challenge our democracy.

While we are disappointed with the resolution, we will not change our focus—keeping equity at the forefront— and continue this work with sensitivity and careful consideration of all APS families and students. We know this is just the beginning of the conversation, and we look forward to engaging in continued dialogue as we move forward.

Sincerely,



Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent



Jason Esteves, Esq., Board Chair