

## PUBLIC COMMENT

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July 1 – July 6, 2020

[sbe@k12.wa.us](mailto:sbe@k12.wa.us)

### Implement Black History and Ethnic Studies Curricula

SBE received 121 versions of this letter:

Esteemed Board Member:

I am writing to demand the implementation of Black experiences, voices, and history in K-12 curriculum.

Subjecting students to a Eurocentric curriculum throughout their most formative years contributes significantly to the perpetuation of systemic racism within schools. This then contributes significantly to the degradation of Black people beyond the classroom.

Please read the full letter of demands here: <https://racialequityed.org/demands>

These demands are not new. They are an amplification of the calls to action of activists, students, and educators who have asked your school district to immediately implement racially inclusive, anti-racist Ethnic Studies.

The time is long overdue to make change. White supremacy in public education must end now. There is no room for negotiation and placation. The time is now to tear down racism and demonstrate your commitment to ending systemic racism perpetuated by the use of Eurocentric curriculum.

Regards,

A concerned citizen

From: Marissa Rathbone, WSSDA

### WSSDA Feedback on Rulemaking Considerations

Dear SBE colleagues,

Thank you for your leadership and insight regarding considerations for 2020-21 rulemaking. WSSDA members are pleased to hear about the potential for overall flexibility in several areas, especially as it relates to instructional hours and days.

A few considerations as it relates to potential legislative changes for "graduation pathways":

1. Changes in rule/law would require districts/boards to engage all content areas in a thorough planning and implementation process.
2. The level of engagement needed for this process will be challenging in currently required virtual meeting environment.
3. If implementation is for consideration in the 2020-21 school year, districts will not have the opportunity to engage in the most productive and necessary conversations yielding the most student-focused results. If more time is granted, these important conversations can occur.

Please let us know how we can continue to support your direction.

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From: Harshini Iyer

## Bringing Values to Secular Education

Dear Esteemed Board of Education,

This year has been a year of change: the first year living with the new coronavirus pandemic, and consequently, the first year of long-term school building closures and online learning. Moreover, movements against police brutality and systemic racism are headlining the long needed, cultural shift in today's society . [In the spirit of change, I have identified a need that I feel must be addressed in order to translate the SBE's mission and vision of an education system which prepares students for "civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education," and lifelong learning into a feasible reality.

My name is Harshini Iyer and I am a rising junior from Inglemoor High School. In light of recent events, there has been a push for institutions to shed light on such events and their unexpected ramifications. While I am in full agreement with the aforementioned notions, I humbly ask you to take a step back and consider the greater, overarching issue at hand. While discussing current approaches to teaching the humanities and social sciences, we see that institutions only address at most one or two aspects of building students' character in said courses and lectures. Our schools do not even attempt to teach anything beyond the curriculum; much of students' education consists of mastering and memorizing concepts in order to excel on quizzes and exams. These techniques are not adequate in bringing out the potential talent in each child. In most education systems, individuals are treated merely as action agents unable to bring out the potential within a student.

Which brings me to my proposition: I am proposing the introduction and, in essence, the desideratum of a curriculum that would incorporate the importance of moral values, such as fostering love, peace, and compassion. Cohesively, if such values were explicitly aligned with the

education system, they would satisfy the need and desire to create good citizens who can graduate and contribute to their respective communities. While cliché in thought, it can be argued that the intrinsic meaning of “being human” has been ignored and unfortunately forgotten; ironically, it is in such times that we find ourselves divided, when in times like this, standing united has never been more prevalent and needed. It is because of this, that we must prioritize cultivating these values of unity, love, and compassion, especially to the youth; only then can we be assured that the following generations will be able to protect and uphold those same values that will in turn, protect them.

It goes without saying that the basic human values cultivated in students will positively contribute to their personal and academic lives. By adopting the appropriate tools and techniques needed to educate the youth on these moral values, it has been proven that it is possible to create a balanced individual and society— and a well-enforced education system that overlooks value-based education can make it a reality. I look forward to discussing these ideas with you all in greater depth. Please let me know how we can continue this conversation.

Best regards,  
Harshini Iyer

July 5, 2020

Dear Education Leaders:

For 82 week days, I met on Zoom and Facebook LIVE with educators from across the state of Washington - para educators, classroom teachers, college-access program leaders, agency staff and administrators. These educators joined me initially for a free course in racial equity. What began as instruction developed into a community of practitioners learning together about how to implement racial equity at the staff level, in classrooms and for family and community.

After all these days and dozens of hours of conversations, we wanted to share some of our most important learning with you, hoping to point you in the direction of racial justice for your building/district/organization, after one of the most difficult seasons in our nation's recent history.

Here are 10 recommendations:

1. CENTER the needs and voices of your most marginalized community members (consider staff, students and families) as you make decisions about the future.
2. Prioritize RELATIONSHIPS before academic standards - staff - staff; staff - family; staff - student.
3. Regarding racial equity, practice the 3 Hs: show HUMILITY in your own process of learning, HUMANIZE those you serve and HISTORICIZE the institution in which you work.
4. BIPOC students and staff need to know they are seen and heard - they MUST see themselves in the curriculum and practices of the institution.
5. Become the kind of person who is able to LEAD conversations about race and equity and be prepared for the backlash that will inevitably come from some on staff and in community.
6. REIMAGINE building and classroom disciplinary practices to eliminate harm and address the biases that lead to disproportionality.
7. At every opportunity, consider REPRESENTATION in hiring practices and in which community-based organizations are engaged in the work of supporting students.
8. Prioritize support for social-emotional learning (with a racial justice lens) and self-care UP FRONT as the new year begins, NOT academic learning loss.
9. Involve EVERYONE in the building in professional development, including support staff.
10. Leaders must be present ON THE GROUND, starting Day 1, to know what is happening in communities, classrooms and campuses; your physical presence sets the tone.

The Equity Fishbowl is planning a virtual un-conference for the beginning of August to address the above topics. Information will be posted on my Facebook page - Erin Jones LLC. Until that time, we encourage you to spend the summer preparing for a completely different return to a new school year. Staff and students cannot afford to return to business as "usual". This is the first opportunity in the 30 years I have been in the United States working in education for us to reimagine what school could and should look like, particularly for staff and students who have not experienced school as an empowering, affirming, safe place.

For now, take time to do your own work. Read books: anything by Dr. Ibram X. Kendi or Dr. Beverly Tatum. Engage in online learning - Teaching Tolerance and The 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge are great places to start. Watch films: "The Hate U Give", "13th", "Cracking the Codes".

We are ready to run with you, alongside you. Please reach out for support. This task is so great, none of us can take it on alone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erin Jones', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Erin Jones  
Education and Systems Consultant  
& The Equity Fishbowl