



**Ransom Everglades Anti-Racism Task Force  
Report to the Board of Trustees**

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## Introduction

The RE Anti-Racism Task Force began its work in the summer of 2020 following the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, and in the wake of protests globally against police brutality and systemic racism.

On June 19th, Ransom Everglades Black Alumni, reBa, wrote a letter to Head of School Penny Townsend and other administrators with evidence-based REquests for addressing racism on campus. In solidarity, Ransom Everglades Allies proposed the institution adopt specific anti-racist principles. At the June 25 and July 2 town hall meetings that followed, reBa members and some current parents shared experiences of microaggressions, biased treatment and overt racism at RE.

Spurred into action, RE's Board of Trustees' Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee formed the Anti-Racism Task Force. The Task Force chose to build its vision for the most underrepresented racial group in the Ransom Everglades community: Black students and their families. By focusing its work on promoting and ensuring an anti-racist environment at Ransom Everglades, the Task Force endeavors to create a school community that is fully inclusive, one where all members can realize their potential. This all-encompassing initiative has created a clear pathway for Ransom Everglades to become an empathetic and deliberate anti-racist community of learners.

The first phase of the Task Force's charge was completed in December 2020 with the Task Force's presentation of short-term recommendations to the DEI Committee. These recommendations were also published in the April 2021 edition of the *RE Log Magazine*. This Final Report marks the completion of the second phase of the Task Force's work: mid- to long-term recommendations to be implemented within three to five years. The third and final stage of its work, and likely the most important, is the implementation and accountability phase. Task Force members will receive updates from RE administrators and trustees about the institution's progress toward the recommended goals.

This Final Report is divided into six remaining sections. The **Structure and Process** will explain the operational framework and procedures within which the recommendations were formulated and is followed by a list of the **Task Force Membership**. **Guiding Principles** depict the foundational perspective through which the Task Force approached this work, and **School Community Vision** is an ideal the Task Force encourages RE to embrace as it evolves into an anti-racist institution. The **Goals and Recommendations** that follow is a summary of the Task Force's complete short-, mid- and long-term recommendations. Finally, **Acknowledgements** express our sincere gratitude to those who contributed to this Final Report.

## Structure and Process

ReBa's letter advised Ransom Everglades to prioritize work in three areas: 1) REcruitment, 2) REtention, 3) and REinforcement (of equitable policies). The Task Force relied on these REquests in crafting its foundational pillars. We added three more to collectively address the expanse of the work. The six pillars of our work and similarly named subcommittees are: 1) REcruitment, 2) REtention, 3) REsponsibility (originally REinforcement), 4) REflect and REach, 5) RElate, and 6) Student Engagement.

Consisting of seventeen members, the Task Force is an amalgamation of RE stakeholders: trustees, faculty, alumni, leadership members, students, and parents. Each member worked on at least two subcommittees. Task Force chairs presented the subcommittee findings and received practical feedback each month from school administrators and the Board of Trustees DEI Committee. Representatives of Ransom Everglades Parents' Association (REPA), Ransom Everglades Allies, and reBa were invited to join the Task Force after its formation. This work is a result of true collaboration across all sectors of the RE community with a distinct purpose to inspire RE leadership to continue to strengthen its diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

## Task Force Members

### Anti-Racism Task Force Chairs

Victoria Beatty '00

Stephanie Dua P'22 24 27, Member of Board of Trustees

Carla Hill, Director of Inclusion and Community Engagement

Dr. Brandon King, History & Social Sciences Faculty, Coach

### Anti-Racism Task Force Members

Dr. Fiacre Bienvenu P'27

Melissa Buckner P'20 24 24, REPA

Diego Duckenfield-Lopez '20, reBa

Terron Ferguson '04

Lisa Franklin P'22

Wendell Graham '74, Former Member of Board of Trustees

Olga Granda P'22

Patrick Hession, World Languages Faculty, Physical Education Faculty, Coach

Christine James '99, reBa

Dr. Jeannine Lehr, World Languages Faculty

Caroline Miller '06

Kareena Rudra '20

Patricia C.A. Sasser P'27, Head of the Upper School

Jamila Stephens '12, reBa

## Guiding Principles

1. We aim to contribute to an important Ransom Everglades community objective: combating school policies and practices that produce inequitable experiences based solely on race.
2. We acknowledge the sacrifice and suffering of all social groups but our recommendations begin with enhancing the academic enrichment and welfare of Black students.
3. We recommend Ransom Everglades develop an institutional focus of “doing equity” by understanding and addressing how structural racism shows up in institutional operations. We define structural racism as the cumulative effects of elements within the greater community that privilege one racial group over others.
4. Anti-racism, a term referring to a process and outcome that eliminates disparities between social groups based solely on race, is an aspiration for the school itself, it is meant to unify the school community rather than condemn an individual or social group.
5. Becoming an anti-racist educational institution is an indeterminate process, requiring:
  - a. The creation of critical spaces that encourage continued dialogue.
  - b. Consistent interrogation of language and practices.
  - c. Openness to revision.
6. Diversity without inclusion is exclusion.

## School Community Vision

The Task Force strongly encourages RE to commit the institutional care and support each student needs for a self-determined educational experience. Accomplishing this requires institutional planning that anticipates bias.

Our vision for an ideal RE community informs the approach to building an anti-racist RE. While we begin this work with the problems that face students of the African diaspora, we hope these recommendations embrace the interconnectedness of all social identities.

It is our sincere hope RE pledges to do the following:

- Develop curriculum, policies, and institutional practices that eliminate racial inequality.
- Publish a pledge that embodies the ideals of this report.
- Evaluate the school’s social and environmental footprint consistently.
- Distribute resources and training that enable all students, parents, faculty, and staff to contribute to the school’s community ideal.
- Produce graduates that are economically competitive, civically and politically engaged citizens, and individuals of integrity who use their bridge-building skills to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes in their communities.

# Goals and Recommendations

## REcruitment

### *Goal*

To create a school community – students, faculty, staff and trustees – that accurately reflects the racial diversity in Miami-Dade County.

### *Short-term recommendations*

- Initiate recruitment and admissions processes to increase the Black student population by ten students with particular emphasis on the sixth and ninth grades for the 2021-22 school year.
- Increase awareness of Ransom Everglades and enhance recruitment in Black communities through community partnerships, local admissions fairs, and collaboration with local school administrators.

### *Mid- to long-term recommendations*

- Create a student body that is more reflective of the greater community and through its inclusivity helps students experience an anti-racist environment.
- Collect informative and comprehensive data annually on recruitment efforts, applicant pools, professional engagement, and quantify past, present, and future practices.
- Establish a positive and welcoming reputation for RE among Black communities in Miami-Dade County.
- Formulate a faculty and staff body that is representative of the community at large and leads by example.
- Embody anti-racist principles in all marketing and communications.

## REtention

### *Goal*

To enhance the institutional support systems that strengthen the academic development of Black students. Increasing retention of Black students requires an increase in the retention of Black faculty and staff.

### *Short-term recommendations*

Ransom Everglades must provide institutionalized support mechanisms to ensure all students and faculty feel supported and choose to remain at Ransom Everglades:

- Audit curricula on both campuses to ensure cultural inclusivity and incorporate Black history and literature in school programming.
- Provide compulsory and continual DEI training for faculty and staff regarding microaggressions, bias, and inclusive classroom practices.
- Expand financial aid awards to permit students to participate fully in all extracurricular activities.
- Include DEI work formally in job performance reviews, job descriptions, and DEI-related material in curriculum development.
- Develop formal peer-to-peer mentorship for Black faculty and students.
- Create identity-based affinity groups by providing physical space and appropriate faculty advisement.

### *Mid- to long-term recommendations*

- Provide designated physical spaces for programming in diversity, equity and inclusion. The purpose of these spaces would be to build relationships within and between various identity-based groups, as well as to provide a location for mentorship programs that connect students with faculty, alumni, and peers. Faculty and staff leaders leading identity-based groups would undergo training.
- Engage in the collection of data and tracking of retention rates of Black students, faculty, and staff. Retention rates should be reviewed annually in comparison to other racial identity groups.
- Formulate financial aid policies and practices that provide students in need with the necessary financial resources to fully participate in academic programs and extracurricular activities. Financial aid offered should include supplementary expenses that include school trips, transportation assistance, extra course fees, athletics, etc. Additionally, enhanced academic services should be offered such as tutoring for reading and writing, ACT and SAT preparation, and a summer scholars program to prepare newly admitted students for the Ransom Everglades curriculum.
- Create parent and family norms for inclusion in the [Ransom Everglades School Parents' Association Bylaws](#). Update the REPA mission statement to reflect the school's ongoing efforts to adopt anti-racist values. Create parent and family-led affinity spaces and mandate ongoing diversity and inclusion workshops for parents and families.

## REsponsibility

### *Goal*

To identify and document all instances of racism and race-based harm at Ransom Everglades and to enforce equitable disciplinary measures led by the DEI Office.

### *Short-term recommendations*

Ransom Everglades must ensure its disciplinary system and outcomes are equitable for all students. In its letter, reBa used the word REinforcement to frame this priority that all students feel safe and supported by the school environment:

- Appoint an unbiased arbitrator (RE staff, faculty, or administrator) to be a part of every significant disciplinary session involving Black students.
- Update the employee and student manuals/handbooks with more concrete language about RE's anti-racism principles and incorporate clear language about consequences for racist and discriminatory practices or behaviors.

### *Mid- to long-term recommendations*

In an anticipatory spirit, Ransom Everglades must identify, trace, document, and sanction all instances of inequality and discrimination, ensuring accountability for racism and race-based profiling within the school system. This should be done in an anticipatory spirit, respecting privacy and transparency by emphasizing restorative rather than punitive principles:

- Create standards, rules, and regulations that ensure equitable treatment for all students, staff, and employees.
- Provide students, staff, and employees with the means to safely report instances of racism on campus.
- Ensure that one hundred percent of reported racist incidents on school premises are captured and properly addressed by school authorities.
- Develop follow-up steps every semester to prevent racist incidents, restore community spirit, and reinforce coexistence.

## **REflect and REach**

### *Goal*

To further its evolution into an anti-racist institution, Ransom Everglades must cultivate an environment in which its community stakeholders share a collective understanding of past and present injustices, as well as a collective commitment to transforming practices and policies both within and beyond the immediate Ransom Everglades community.

### *Short-term recommendations*

Ransom Everglades School emphasizes the importance of full community engagement and constant reflection and reassessment to prevent stagnation and complacency:

- Convene community town halls/workshops with parents, faculty, alumni, and other key stakeholder groups to facilitate discussions around race, engage in knowledge level-setting, acknowledge the past, and collectively define the future of RE.



### *Mid- to long-term recommendations*

- Foster a collective understanding and vision for Ransom Everglades as an anti-racist institution.
- Ensure that students learn from surrounding communities and their lived experiences.
- Aspire to become and evolve into an anti-racist institution, and incorporate a revised mission and diversity statements.
- Bring together key stakeholders in the RE community to establish a vision for transforming Ransom Everglades into an anti-racist institution.
- Recognize the school's historical past.

## **RElate**

### *Goal*

Student engagement explores ways to share information, expand transparency, and promote closer connection between students and administrators at Ransom Everglades.

### *Short-term recommendations*

To constantly seek, hear, and re-engage student voices because anti-racist work is not just for the adults in the room:

- Facilitate discussions with students around race, engage in knowledge level-setting, acknowledge the past, and collectively define the future of RE.

### *Mid- to long-term recommendations*

- Build a student diversity council at the middle school and expand the council at the upper school.
- Assign diversity practitioners to the middle and upper schools.
- Convene the school community (i.e. parents, alumni, etc.) for updates or simply to express concerns/thoughts. Incorporate DEI speakers into required gatherings for parents, students and stakeholders in general.
- Establish a DEI subcommittee within REPA that would have direct contact with the Director of Inclusion and Community Engagement. Establishing this subcommittee will aid in supporting the DEI initiatives of the school and establish more parent involvement.

## Acknowledgements

First, we must thank the Black students, alumni, parents, along with past and present faculty and staff of Ransom Everglades School. Learning more about the Black experience within and outside the RE community has been inspiring. We thank them for their resolve, honesty, and bravery. Their contributions to this report are immeasurable and, without them, our community's progress could not be achieved.

We are also grateful to the current and former members of the Board of Trustees, two of whom served directly on the Task Force, Stephanie Dua (co-chair and DEI Committee member) and Wendell Graham '74 (former board member). Moreover, we would like to thank the rest of the members of the Board of Trustees DEI Committee for their encouragement and willingness to share their institutional and community knowledge with the Task Force. We especially thank Elizabeth "Betsy" Murphy, Andy Ansin '81, Jeff Hicks '84, Elana Oberstein-Harris '93, David Duckenfield, and the rest of the DEI Committee members who met with the Task Force co-chairs regularly.

Finally, we would like to thank Head of School Penny Townsend and Associate Head of School Dr. John A. King, Jr., for their consistent and direct support in the formulation of the Task Force's recommendations. Without their guidance, the Task Force could not develop implementation-ready recommendations tailored to the resources and capabilities of RE faculty leadership.

We close with an invitation to our entire community to contact our Task Force members with any questions or concerns they may have about their work or recommendations. Please feel free to contact [ARtaskforce@ransomeverglades.org](mailto:ARtaskforce@ransomeverglades.org) for more information about the Task Force's work, past and present.