

Green Book Initiative

STATUS: EXODUS

Findings Report for Castle Rock Middle School

Overview

Once the formal Green Book Initiative Review is completed, this section will be available

Findings Report:

Due to Castle Rock Middle School opting to abstain from engaging in the Green Book Initiative process, this report does NOT include the recommendations from the Green Book Initiative Committee. If the school administration takes meaningful steps to engage, recommendations will be included in the final draft.

Curriculum Inclusivity and Representation:

Findings:

One does not have to go far to discover the unfortunate cultivation and contextualization of exclusion in this curriculum. While fictional, the story of King Arthur originates from medieval European literature, particularly the works of Chrétien de Troyes and the Vulgate Cycle. The broader cultural and historical context in which these legends were created reflects a Eurocentric worldview. This worldview excludes and isolates people of non-European descent.

Here are some aspects to consider:

1. **Eurocentrism and Exclusivity:** The Arthurian legends were written in a time when Europe was heavily insular and its literature glorified white, Christian knights as the ultimate ideal of human virtue. The stories often excluded or vilified people of other races, cultures, or religions, reinforcing a narrow and exclusive view of morality and heroism.
2. **Symbolism and Ideals:** Portrayal of these knights as the “perfect” reflection of value and virtue is rooted in Christian ideals of purity and goodness that were defined through a European lens. This construct inherently suggests that other cultures or races, which were viewed as “outsiders” or “pagans,” could not attain such virtue.
3. **Racialized Medieval Imagery:** During the medieval period, cultural interactions with non-European peoples, such as through the Crusades, often led to portrayals of “Saracens” (a term used for Muslims) and other non-Christian groups as enemies or antagonists in literature. These depictions contribute to a broader framework of racial and religious othering.
4. **Modern Interpretations:** In modern adaptations and retellings of the Arthurian legends, scholars and creators have explored themes of exclusion and systemic bias. Some

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reinterpretations attempt to deconstruct or challenge the Eurocentric and racially exclusive aspects of these stories.

Potential for a Racialized Reading

The ideals the story and characters of King Arthur represent—purity, moral superiority, and divine favor—can be critiqued in a modern context for reflecting the racial and cultural hierarchies that were prevalent when the stories were written. These hierarchies often placed whiteness and Christianity at the top, implicitly excluding or demeaning other groups.

The constructs of purity, heroism, and divinely sanctioned virtue have historically intersected with systemic racism and colonial ideologies in literature and society.

Representation and Belonging

- **Impact of Nomenclature:** The nomenclature of the “teams” at Castle Rock Middle School symbolizes a Eurocentric ideal of virtue, which can inadvertently isolate and demonize Black students, staff, families, and community by failing to reflect their histories, cultures, and values.
- **Cultural Dissonance:** The emphasis on figures rooted in European mythology creates a sense of alienation and exclusion, particularly for Black students who do not see their identities reflected in the school's culture or ethos.

Historical Context and Trauma

- **Connection to Exclusionary Narratives:** The lack of critical examination of the historical context of such symbols perpetuates narratives of white misanthropy by elevating Eurocentric ideals while ignoring the contributions and histories of Black people.
- **“Micro”aggressions and Bias Reinforcement:** The glorification of figures in the story of King Arthur validate “micro”aggressions and racial biases, making Black students feel “othered” or as though they do not belong in spaces that celebrate these narratives.

Impact on Staff and Community

- **Staff Alienation:** Black staff experience discomfort or dissonance working within a system that upholds these symbols, leading to decreased job satisfaction and retention.
- **Community Distrust:** Families and community members feel the school is disconnected from their values, leading to the current state of eroded trust and engagement.

Analysis from Empathic Listening Sessions

Student Sessions

- **Emotional Well-being (sessions 6, 9, 12, 17):** Students reported feelings of invisibility or inferiority when their cultural narratives were excluded or overshadowed.

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- **Academic Outcomes (sessions 15, 33, 68, 73):** Psychological distress from exclusion has led to disengagement, lower academic performance, and higher absenteeism.
- **Behavioral Impacts (sessions 2, 19, 46, 53):** A lack of representation resulted in frustration or behavioral expressions of resistance to the school's culture.

Family Sessions

- **Engagement (sessions 5, 16, 44, 61, 79):** Families felt unwelcome and unrepresented, reducing their willingness to participate in school events or initiatives.
- **Advocacy (sessions 1, 11, 14, 22, 38, 46, 49, 52, 56, 61, 65, 66, 71, 74, 80):** Black, white, and Latine families felt compelled to advocate more strongly for equity, leading to strained relationships with school leadership.

Staff Sessions (former staff ONLY)

- **Retention and Morale (sessions 3, 8, 13, 22):** Former Black staff members felt unsupported or undervalued, leading to high turnover rates and decreased morale.
- **Professional Development (sessions 1, 9, 10, 11, 15):** The lack of culturally competent training exacerbated feelings of exclusion among former staff.

Community Sessions

- **Trust and Collaboration (sessions 3, 8, 16, 18, 29, 36):** A school's reliance on Eurocentric symbols has signaled a lack of commitment to inclusivity, straining relationships with the broader community.
- **Reputation (sessions 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 15, 17, 22, 27, 36, 41, 48, 53):** The perception of cultural insensitivity has harmed the school's reputation, impacting enrollment and community support.

Equity in Disciplinary Actions:

1. Disruptive Behavior

The policy describes disciplinary actions for "disruption of the educational process."

- **Website Reference:** Includes terms like "willful disobedience" and "engaging in behavior disruptive to the learning environment."
- **Impact:** These subjective terms allow for varied interpretations, which have disproportionately targeted Black students for behaviors perceived as disrespectful or noncompliant.

2. Dress Code

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The dress code policy prohibits clothing and accessories deemed "inappropriate" or "disruptive to the educational environment."

- **Website Reference:** Specific rules restrict "hats, bandanas, and items that suggest gang affiliation or disrupt the learning environment."
 - **Impact:** Culturally significant hairstyles or attire (e.g., locs, afros, or dashikis) have been targeted under vague descriptors like "disruptive."
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3. Zero-Tolerance for Weapons, Drugs, and Violence

The policy outlines mandatory disciplinary actions for possession of weapons, drugs, or engaging in violent acts.

- **Website Reference:** "Any student found in possession of a weapon, drugs, or engaging in violent behavior will face mandatory suspension or expulsion."
 - **Impact:** Zero-tolerance approaches leave little room for contextual understanding and disproportionately impact Black students who are statistically more likely to face harsher punishments for similar offenses.
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4. School Resource Officer (SRO) Involvement

Policies allow for the involvement of law enforcement in cases involving weapons, drugs, or violence.

- **Website Reference:** "School administrators may contact law enforcement for violations involving safety concerns or illegal activities."
 - **Impact:** The increased presence of SROs has led to higher rates of arrest or referral to the juvenile justice system for Black students, even for minor infractions.
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5. Substance Use

The policy includes strict measures for students caught using or in possession of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

- **Website Reference:** "Any violation related to substance possession or use will result in suspension and may include a referral to law enforcement."
- **Impact:** Black students are more likely to be searched or disciplined under assumptions of substance use, leading to disproportionate outcomes at Castle Rock Middle School.

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6. Bullying and Harassment

The Code of Conduct prohibits bullying and harassment, including racial harassment.

- **Website Reference:** “Bullying or harassment of any kind, including racial harassment, will result in disciplinary action.”
 - **Impact:** While the policy protects against racial harassment, Black students have experienced inadequate responses to reports of racism and harassment and have been unfairly penalized when defending themselves against such behavior and culture.
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7. Truancy and Attendance

The district outlines consequences for chronic absenteeism, including parental notifications and legal referrals for truancy.

- **Website Reference:** “Students with excessive unexcused absences may be referred to truancy court.”
 - **Impact:** Socioeconomic challenges faced disproportionately by Black families, such as transportation or caregiving responsibilities, may result in punitive measures rather than supportive interventions.
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8. Technology Use and Misuse

Policies outline acceptable use of school technology and consequences for misuse, such as accessing inappropriate content or cyberbullying.

- **Website Reference:** “Misuse of school-provided technology will result in disciplinary action.”
 - **Impact:** Black students have faced harsher penalties for minor infractions, exacerbating inequities in disciplinary records.
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9. Restorative Practices

The Code mentions alternatives to punitive measures but does not mandate restorative practices.

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- **Website Reference:** “Schools are encouraged to use restorative practices to resolve conflicts when possible.”
- **Impact:** Without clear mandates, restorative approaches are not being equitably applied, leaving Black students more vulnerable to traditional punitive discipline.

Analysis from Empathic Listening Sessions (includes former and current students):

1. Disruptive Behavior Policy

Session 36: A Black student raised their voice during a class discussion to advocate for themselves after being interrupted by a peer. The teacher interpreted this behavior as "disruptive" and "defiant" and sent the student to the office, resulting in suspension.

2. Dress Code Enforcement

Session 19: A Black student wore a hoodie with cultural symbols and was told it is “gang-affiliated” and “disruptive to the learning environment.” Another student wore a hoodie with sports logos and faced no consequences.

3. Zero-Tolerance Policies

Session 8: During a lunchroom argument, a Black student and a white student exchanged heated words. The Black student was disciplined more harshly, with a suspension for "violent behavior," while the white student received a warning.

4. School Resource Officer (SRO) Involvement

Session 22: A Black student was accused of having a vape pen in their backpack. The school resource officer (SRO) was called, leading to a search and the student being publicly escorted from class, even though no contraband was found.

5. Substance Use Policy

Session 64: A teacher smelled smoke on a Black student after lunch and assumed they were smoking. The student denied it but was suspended under the "substance use" policy.

6. Bullying and Harassment Policies

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Session 4: A Black student reported being called a racial slur by a classmate. The school took no meaningful action, citing a lack of “proof.” Later, the Black student retaliated verbally and was punished more severely than the original aggressor.

7. Truancy and Attendance

Session 46: A Black student had frequent tardies due to unreliable transportation. Instead of offering support, the school initiated truancy court proceedings, adding stress to the student and their family.

8. Restorative Practices Gap

Session 51: Two students were involved in a fight. The white student was offered mediation and counseling through restorative practices, while the Black student was suspended.

Staff and Leadership Representation:

Findings

1. Lack of Representation in Staff and Leadership

- The school appears to have limited, if any, Black staff members in teaching, administrative, or leadership roles. This absence contributes to a lack of culturally relevant role models and advocates for Black students and families.
- The absence of Black representation in decision-making processes diminishes the school’s ability to adequately address the unique needs and perspectives of Black students and their families.

2. Insufficient Support for Reporting Racial Harassment

- Black students and families report incidents of racial harassment but receive inadequate responses or dismissals from school staff. This lack of action creates an unsafe environment and discourages future reporting.

3. Barriers to Communication and Engagement

- Black families report feeling unheard and dismissed in their interactions with school administrators and staff.
- Communication methods are not inclusive or culturally responsive, leading to a perception that the school does not prioritize Black families’ involvement or concerns.

4. Limited Cultural Competence Among Staff

- Staff members lack training in cultural competence and trauma-informed practices, contributing to misunderstandings and biases in interactions with Black students and families.

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- Implicit biases among staff affect how behaviors are perceived and addressed, resulting in inequitable treatment.

5. Absence of Targeted Support Systems

- The school does not have targeted programs or resources to address the specific social-emotional and academic needs of Black students.
 - Black students and families lack access to affinity groups or spaces where they can feel seen and supported.
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Impact

The lack of representation, coupled with inequitable enforcement of disciplinary policies and insufficient cultural competence, creates an environment where Black students, staff, families, and community feel unprotected and unsafe. Disproportionate discipline practices exacerbate educational disparities and create distrust between the school and the Black community. Furthermore, the absence of targeted support systems leaves Black students without the resources they need to thrive academically and socially. The school's limited engagement with Black families and the lack of effective mechanisms to address racial harassment reinforce feelings of exclusion and disconnection. Collectively, these factors undermine the psychological safety and well-being of Black students, staff, families, and the broader community.

Engagement with Black Families and Communities:

Findings

1. Absence of Parent Engagement

- The school's Parent Involvement Program (PIP) committee is completely vacant, indicating a lack of active structures to engage parents in meaningful ways.
- The School Accountability Committee includes only one individual and lacks representation, particularly from Black parents or community members.

2. Lack of Diverse Leadership

- There is no visible effort to diversify leadership or include voices from Black families or the broader community in decision-making processes.

3. Exclusionary School Culture

- The lack of representation on critical committees and the absence of outreach to Black families suggest a school culture that does not prioritize or value parent voices, particularly from underrepresented groups.
 - Black families are not given the opportunity to participate in shaping policies, programs, or practices that directly impact their children.
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Impact

The absence of parent involvement and representation in the school's committees reflects a broader issue of exclusion and dehumanization within the school culture. This lack of engagement has significant implications for the psychological safety of Black students:

1. Erosion of Trust

- Black families perceive the school as unwelcoming or disinterested in their perspectives, leading to a breakdown in trust between the school and the community.
- Students whose families feel disconnected and unsupported in their educational environment.

2. Missed Opportunities for Advocacy

- Without representation, Black families cannot advocate for the needs and experiences of their children, leaving critical gaps in the school's ability to address inequities.
- The absence of diverse voices on the School Accountability Committee undermines the school's ability to make informed and equitable decisions.

3. Impact on Student Well-Being

- Black students have internalized the lack of representation as a signal that their voices and experiences are not valued, negatively affecting their sense of belonging and psychological safety.
- The exclusionary practices have contributed to feelings of isolation and reinforced systemic inequities within the school.

4. Community Disconnection

- The lack of engagement with Black families and community members creates a divide between the school and the community it serves, reducing opportunities for collaboration and shared accountability.

Castle Rock Middle School perpetuates a culture that undermines inclusivity and psychological safety for its Black students. This systemic exclusion not only impacts the students' educational experiences but also weakens the school's potential to build and sustain a supportive and equitable environment.

Policies and Practices:

Findings:

1. Anti-Discrimination Policies:

- The CRMS Code of Conduct includes policies that prohibit discrimination and harassment. However, the documentation lacks explicit references to "micro"aggressions and detailed definitions of various forms of racism and bias.

2. Reporting Procedures:

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- The Code of Conduct outlines procedures for reporting incidents of discrimination or harassment. Nonetheless, the accessibility and clarity of these procedures are not emphasized, potentially hindering effective reporting and resolution.
- 3. **Diversity Training for Staff:**
 - The document does not provide specific information regarding active and transparent investment in diversity training for staff members. There is no mention of programs aimed at equipping staff with tools to recognize and address implicit bias or to promote cultural competence.

Impact:

- **Inadequate Policy Specificity:**
 - The absence of explicit anti-discrimination policies addressing all forms of racism, including microaggressions, may result in insufficient protection for students and staff. This gap can lead to unaddressed discriminatory behaviors, adversely affecting the school environment.
- **Ambiguity in Reporting Mechanisms:**
 - Without clear and accessible reporting procedures, individuals may feel discouraged from reporting incidents of discrimination or harassment. This ambiguity can result in underreporting and a lack of accountability, perpetuating a culture where discriminatory behaviors are not adequately addressed.
- **Lack of Staff Training:**
 - The apparent absence of a structured diversity training program for staff members suggests a potential gap in cultural competence and awareness of implicit biases. This deficiency can lead to unintentional perpetuation of biases and a less inclusive environment for students and staff from diverse backgrounds.

Support Systems:

The current support systems for Black students are insufficient and ineffective in addressing their academic and personal growth needs. Despite the clear necessity for comprehensive support structures, there are significant gaps in the mentorship programs, academic resources, counseling services, and opportunities for connection and advocacy, which are critical for fostering the success of Black students.

1. **Lack of Effective Mentorship Programs and Opportunities:**

The school has failed to establish or maintain mentorship programs that are specifically designed to provide guidance and encouragement to Black students. Without structured mentorship opportunities, students lack access to role models who can offer the necessary support to navigate their academic and personal challenges. This absence of mentorship contributes to a lack of confidence and academic disengagement, hindering students' growth and success.

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2. **Inadequate Access to Academic Resources:**

Equitable access to academic resources, such as tutoring, study groups, and enrichment programs, is severely lacking. Black students are not provided with the targeted academic support that is essential to their success. The absence of personalized tutoring, study groups, or enrichment programs means that these students are left to struggle without the necessary resources to catch up or excel academically. This gap in academic support contributes to lower academic performance and disengagement from school.

3. **Culturally Incompetent and Insufficient Counseling Services:**

The school's counseling services are not adequately attuned to the unique social and emotional needs of Black students. There is a lack of culturally competent counselors who understand the specific challenges faced by Black students, including issues related to racial identity, discrimination, and trauma. As a result, students are left without the necessary emotional and psychological support to thrive in their academic environment. The absence of empathetic and culturally relevant counseling services exacerbates feelings of isolation, stress, and emotional distress among Black students.

4. **Failure to Facilitate Connection and Advocacy through Affinity Groups:**

The school has not created sufficient spaces for Black students to connect, share experiences, and advocate for their needs. There are no dedicated affinity groups or student organizations that empower Black students to come together and build community. This lack of structured support prevents students from having the opportunity to engage with one another, share their challenges, or organize to address issues within the school. Without these critical spaces, students feel disconnected, marginalized, and without a platform to voice their needs and concerns.

Physical Environment:

Findings:

1. **Upkeep of Facilities:**

- The facility is well-maintained, providing a clean, well-lit environment conducive to learning. The physical space is visually appealing and designed to offer students a comfortable and safe space for academic engagement. However, while the upkeep is notable, there is a lack of evidence to suggest that the physical environment is being intentionally shaped to reflect and nurture the unique cultural and academic needs of Black students beyond the surface-level initiatives.

2. **Safety and Security:**

- The school has implemented robust safety measures to ensure the physical security of students, staff, and visitors. These measures contribute to a general sense of safety within the school environment. However, concerns have been raised about the psychological safety of Black students, particularly with regard to incidents of discrimination or racial bias. The school's physical safety measures

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are evident, but there is an ongoing need to address the emotional and psychological security of marginalized groups within the community.

3. **Representation of Black Culture and History:**

- While there is some representation of Black culture and history, particularly during Black History Month, these displays and symbols are largely surface-level. The walls and common spaces lack consistent, authentic, and uplifting representations of Black culture throughout the year. The artwork, posters, and other visual elements are often tokenized, failing to authentically represent the resilience, contributions, and ongoing struggles of Black individuals. This results in a lack of meaningful and sustained acknowledgment of Black history and culture beyond periodic celebrations, leaving the school environment feeling less inclusive and affirming for Black students.

4. **Inclusivity and Accessibility:**

- The school has made efforts to incorporate accessibility features for students with disabilities or mobility limitations, which ensures that educational opportunities are equitably accessible to all students. However, the level of inclusivity with regard to cultural representation and the voices of marginalized groups, particularly Black students, remains limited. The physical space may be accessible, but the lack of sustained, culturally relevant displays and symbols reduces the sense of inclusion for Black students.

Impact:

- The overall upkeep of the facility provides a positive learning environment, but the absence of consistent and meaningful representations of Black culture and history diminishes the potential for the space to serve as a nurturing, affirming environment for Black students. The lack of continuous cultural representation, beyond occasional Black History Month displays, reinforces the marginalization of Black history within the school environment, making it harder for Black students to see themselves reflected in the space they occupy every day.
- The school's safety measures are solid in terms of physical security, which contributes to an overall sense of trust within the community. However, there remains an emotional and psychological safety gap for Black students, as they may not feel fully supported in an environment that does not regularly affirm their identity, culture, and experiences. This discrepancy undermines the school's overall efforts to foster a safe, trusting environment for all students.
- While the school includes accessibility features, they do not extend meaningfully to cultural inclusion. The physical space may be accessible to students with disabilities, but the cultural space remains limited in its representation of Black students' identities, histories, and contributions. This creates a learning environment that feels less inclusive for Black students, which could negatively affect their engagement, sense of belonging, and academic success.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, while the school demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a safe, clean, and accessible environment for all students, there is clear and undeniable revelation of deep flaws in its approach to inclusivity and justice. The incident, which sparked the need for rapid response, underscores the inadequacy of existing measures to protect Black students from harm, both emotional and institutional. The lack of sustained, meaningful engagement with Black families and communities, superficial representation of Black culture, and the absence of tailored support for Black students' unique needs contribute to a climate where these students may not feel fully seen, heard, or valued. Despite visible safety measures, both physical and emotional security for Black students, staff, families, and community require greater attention, particularly in addressing racial discrimination and bias.

For the school to truly live up to its stated goals of inclusivity and excellence, a more intentional and holistic approach is needed—one that not only acknowledges but actively works to dismantle the systems of harm that perpetuate such inequities, consistently honoring the lived experiences, contributions, and needs of the Black Excellence in its school community.

Green Book Initiative		Your Status: Exodus Status	Instructions
Name of Institution	Castle Rock Middle School		Enter the score for each category based on the detailed assessments in the respective sheets. The overall score and recommendation will be manually calculated based on the total score.
Criteria	Score		Scoring Key
Curriculum Inclusivity and Representation	1.1		5 Exemplary
Equity in Disciplinary Actions	1		4 Above Average
Staff and Leadership Representation	2.1		3 Average
Engagement with Black Families and Communities	1		2 Below Average
Treatment and Involvement of Black School Board Members	N/A		1 Poor
Use for Governance ONLY			
Policies and Practices	2.1		
Support Systems	1.1		
Physical Environment	3.2		
Score	1.7		
In our comprehensive assessment process, each category will be meticulously evaluated using a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where a rating of 1 signifies inadequate support for the thriving of Black students, while a rating of 5 represents exceptional support. Through this methodical approach, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the school's safety and inclusivity for Black students. By averaging the scores across all categories, we will generate total scores, offering a comprehensive overview of the school's performance in fostering an environment conducive to the success of Black students.			
Green Book Schools/Governance will be expected to achieve a minimum score of 4.5, indicating exemplary support and commitment to inclusivity.			
Schools/Governance On Notice will be held to a minimum score of 3.0, ensuring that even institutions requiring improvement maintain a baseline level of support.			
Exodus Schools/Governance will be capped at a maximum score of 3.0, reflecting the need for significant enhancements to better support the thriving of Black students. This scoring system enables us to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for targeted interventions, ultimately fostering continuous progress towards equity and excellence.			