

Green Book Initiative

What is the Greenbook Initiative:

The Green Book Initiative is a pioneering resource crafted with the sole purpose of empowering Black families and the wider community with crucial insights into the safety and inclusivity of schools and governance teams. This initiative is the fruit of a collaborative effort between the Epitome of Black Excellence & Partnership and The Center for Advancing Black Excellence in Education, organizations that are at the forefront of advocating for a transformative change in educational transparency and accountability.

With a mission deeply rooted in the belief that every Black student and family deserves to approach their educational journey with a sense of dignity, respect, honor, and recognition, the Green Book Initiative meticulously evaluates school districts. It aims to shine a light on areas that embody these values, ensuring that Black students find themselves in environments that not only recognize but also celebrate their identity and foster their growth.

This invaluable tool, created by MiDian Holmes, CEO of the Epitome of Black Excellence and Partnership, along with other Black women nationwide, is publicly accessible. Endorsed by the Center for Advancing Black Excellence in Education, the Green Book Initiative ensures school districts consistently meet safety and inclusivity standards through ongoing monitoring.

The initiative classifies districts into three distinct categories:

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Green Book Schools:

Green Book Schools represent the pinnacle of what school districts can achieve in terms of safety, dignity, and inclusivity for Black students and their families. These districts are recognized for their exemplary efforts in creating environments that work intentionally to disrupt and dismantle the historic harms that have targeted the Black experience in education. In Green Book Districts, policies and practices are not only designed to avoid discrimination but actively promote cultural understanding, respect for diversity, and the celebration of Black history and achievements. The curriculum is inclusive, reflecting the contributions and experiences of Black individuals and communities, and educators are committed to equitable teaching practices. These districts also offer strong support systems for Black students, including mentorship programs, resources for academic and emotional support, and platforms

for students and families to voice their needs and concerns. The designation as a Green Book District is a mark of honor, signaling to Black families that the district is committed to upholding the highest standards of equity and respect and is deemed as safe for enrollment.

Schools On Notice:

Schools placed 'On Notice' find themselves at a critical juncture. While not overtly harmful, these districts have been identified as lacking in key areas essential for the safety and dignity of Black students and their families. Being On Notice means a district has been recognized for its potential to provide a nurturing and inclusive environment but is currently falling short in making this a reality for its Black students and families. This may manifest in gaps in the curriculum that fail to represent Black history and contributions adequately, insufficient policies to combat discrimination and bias, or a lack of resources and support tailored to the needs of Black students. Districts On Notice are encouraged to engage in a process of self-examination and improvement, to adopt more inclusive practices, enhance cultural competence among staff, and actively engage with Black families and communities to address their concerns. Improvement plans are expected to be actionable and measurable, with a clear timeline for implementing changes that would elevate the district from On Notice to a Green Book designation.

Exodus Schools:

Exodus Schools are those that have been identified as actively perpetuating harm against Black students and their communities. This designation is a grave one, indicating that a district not only fails to provide a safe and respectful environment for Black students but also enacts policies or practices that actively discriminate or uphold the systemic status quo to harm them. This could include a failure to address racial bullying and harassment, a curriculum that significantly neglects or misrepresents Black history and achievements, or systemic biases in disciplinary actions that disproportionately affect Black students. The label of an Exodus District serves as a clear warning to Black families about the hostile environment their children are likely to face within these schools. It also serves as a call to action for the districts themselves, urging them to undertake significant and fundamental reforms to transform their environments into ones where Black students can feel safe, respected, and valued.

The Green Book Initiative is not just a tool but a movement, setting a new benchmark for how educational institutions are assessed in their treatment and support of Black students. It stands as a beacon of hope and a guide for parents and guardians, ensuring that the principles of safety, inclusivity, and respect inform the choice of a school district.

Green Book Governance

School boards that achieve Green Book status are those recognized for their unwavering commitment to equity, inclusivity, and respect in every aspect of their governance. These boards actively seek to understand and dismantle systemic barriers to success for Black students. Their policies and practices are characterized by:

- **Proactive Equity Initiatives:** The implementation of policies that explicitly aim to eliminate racial disparities in academic achievement, discipline, and access to advanced courses and resources.

- **Inclusive Curriculum and Policy Making:** Decisions regarding curriculum development that reflect the histories, cultures, and contributions of Black people. These boards actively involve Black families and community members in the policy-making process, ensuring that their voices are heard and valued.
- **Professional Development for Cultural Congruency:** Investment in ongoing training for educators, administrators, and board members themselves on issues of racial bias, cultural competence, and anti-racist teaching strategies.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Regular public reporting on the district's progress toward equity goals, including academic outcomes, disciplinary actions, and staff diversity. These boards are open to feedback and willing to make adjustments as needed to ensure the success of all students.
- **Equitable and Respectful Treatment of Black Board Members:** Green Book Governance exemplifies an environment where Black board members are treated with the utmost respect and equity. Their voices are not only heard but are considered essential to the decision-making process. These boards actively seek to:
 - **Representation of Leadership:** The Board ensures that Black board members hold leadership positions and are integral to committee work, reflecting a genuine commitment to diversity at all levels of governance.
 - **Inclusive Environment:** The Board fosters an environment where all board members engage in constructive dialogue and decision-making processes with mutual respect for differing perspectives, especially on issues impacting Black students and communities.
 - **Intentional Onboarding:** The Board implements mentorship and support programs for new Black board members to ensure they are fully equipped to contribute to governance processes effectively and ensures that non-Black board members are aligning with the values of the Green Book District values.
 - **Uniform Evaluation and Accountability Measures:** The board employs transparent, fair, and uniform criteria for evaluating the performance and contributions of all board members. These criteria are publicly available and applied consistently.

Governance On Notice

School boards On Notice are those that, while not engaging in overtly discriminatory practices, are identified as lacking in certain areas critical to fostering an environment of respect and dignity for Black students. Characteristics of such boards include:

- **Recognized Gaps in Equity and Inclusion:** Acknowledgement of issues such as achievement gaps, disproportionate disciplinary measures, or a non-inclusive curriculum, but insufficient action and structures to address these concerns.
- **Limited Community Engagement:** Efforts to engage with Black families and communities may be present but are often sporadic, superficial, or ineffective in bringing about real change.
- **Slow Progress on Equity Initiatives:** While there may be plans or discussions about promoting equity, tangible and relevant actions and results are limited or delayed.
- **Need for Professional Development:** A recognition that board members and district staff require further education on equity, anti-racism, and inclusive practices, but a lack of comprehensive training programs.
- **Disparities in Standards and Treatment:** School boards On Notice may unintentionally apply different standards or expectations to Black versus non-Black board members, manifesting through:

- **Inconsistent Evaluation Practices:** There may be a lack of clarity or consistency in how board members' contributions and performances are assessed, leading to perceptions or realities of bias.
- **Limited Access to Leadership Roles:** Black board members may find it disproportionately challenging to secure leadership positions or significant committee assignments, often due to informal practices or networks that favor non-Black members.
- **Varied Support and Development Opportunities:** Professional development and support mechanisms may not be equitably distributed, with Black board members receiving less encouragement or fewer resources to pursue growth opportunities.

School boards On Notice are implored to develop, publish, and implement a clear, actionable plan for improvement that involves meaningful engagement with Black communities, targeted professional development, and transparent accountability measures.

Challenges Facing Black Board Members: School boards On Notice may not overtly sustain the historically harmful status quo towards their Black board members but may still foster an environment where their contributions are undervalued or overlooked. These boards might:

- **Lack of Thoughtful Inclusion: The** Board exalts the practice of infrequently consulting Black board members on key issues or failing to adequately consider their insights on policies affecting Black students.
- **Lack of Representation: The** Board has minimal representation of Black individuals in leadership roles, reflecting a lack of effort to promote diversity in governance.
- **Limited and Problematic Cultural Congruency: The** Board shows a need for cultural congruency training among all board members to address conscious and unconscious biases and improve the working and decision-making environment for everyone, especially Black board members.

Exodus Governance

Exodus Governance applies to school boards that have been found to actively engage in or tolerate practices that harm Black students and their communities. Characteristics include:

- **Discriminatory Policies and Practices:** Enacting or maintaining policies that result in racial disparities in discipline, academic opportunities, or access to resources.
- **Neglect of Black Students' Needs:** A failure to acknowledge or address the educational and emotional needs of Black students, including ignoring racial harassment or violence.
- **Lack of Representation:** A significant underrepresentation of Black individuals among teachers, administrators, and board members, coupled with a lack of efforts to improve diversity.
- **Resistance to Community Engagement:** An unwillingness to listen to or collaborate with Black families and community organizations, often dismissing concerns raised about racial discrimination or bias.
- **Disruption of the Leadership of Black Board Members:** Boards classified under Exodus Governance demonstrate practices that actively or passively disrupt the leadership of Black board members. This could manifest in ways such as:
 - **Ignoring or Diminishing Contributions:** Black board members are ignored or brushed off especially when they raise issues related to racial equity or the well-being of Black students.

- **Exclusion from Leadership Positions and Decision-Making:** Black board members are excluded from key committees and hierarchical leadership roles, and there may be a systemic exclusion of Black board members from critical decision-making processes signaling a systemic issue with racial diversity and inclusivity at the governance level.
- **Antagonistic or Dismissive Attitudes:** Black board members experience hostility or dismissive behaviors particularly when they advocate for changes to address racial disparities or improve inclusivity.
- **Discriminatory Standards and Expectations:** Black board members may be held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than their non-Black peers, impacting their ability to contribute effectively and advance within the board.
- **Hostile Work Environment:** Black board members might encounter a hostile or unwelcoming environment that challenges their legitimacy or undermines their authority in ways not faced by non-Black members. This could range from overt racism to subtle microaggressions that collectively serve to marginalize their presence and contributions.

For boards categorized under Exodus Governance, significant and immediate reforms are required with moral expectancy. This should involve reevaluating leadership, revising policies to ensure equity and inclusivity, engaging in comprehensive anti-racism training, and creating formal channels for Black students and families to express concerns and participate in decision-making processes.