

# Green Book Initiative

## Findings Report for Cherry Creek Public Schools Board of Education

Green Book Initiative	Your Status: Exodus Governance
Name of Institution	Cherry Creek Public Schools Board of Education
Criteria	Score
Curriculum Inclusivity and Representation	2
Equity in Disciplinary Actions	1
Staff and Leadership Representation	1
Engagement with Black Families and Communities	1
Treatment and Involvement of Black School Board Members <b>**Use for Governance ONLY**</b>	4
Policies and Practices	1
Support Systems	2
Physical Environment	4
<b>Score</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<p><i>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.</i></p>	
<p><i>Green Book Schools/Governance will be expected to achieve a minimum score of 4.5, indicating exemplary support and commitment to inclusivity.</i></p>	
<p><i>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.</i></p>	
<p><i>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.</i></p>	

## Overview

The Green Book Initiative has formally reviewed the Cherry Creek Public Schools Board of Education and has placed this body in the status of **Exodus Governance**. Our comprehensive review is based on several critical criteria essential to curating a psychologically safe educational environment. The findings are alarming and point to systemic issues that are causing significant harm to Black students, families, staff, and the broader community.

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## Findings Report:

### Curriculum Inclusivity and Representation (Score: 2)

- **Findings:** The curriculum in CCPS does not adequately include the contributions and histories of Black individuals. While some attempts at inclusivity have been made, they are insufficient and often tokenistic.
- **Impact Statement:** The lack of Black representation in the curriculum undermines the self-esteem and cultural identity of Black students. It denies them the opportunity to see themselves reflected in their education, resulting in disengagement and a lack of interest in academic achievement. For non-Black students, this curriculum fails to promote understanding and respect for diversity, reinforcing systemic ignorance and racism.

### Equity in Disciplinary Actions (Score: 1)

- **Findings:** Cherry Creek Public Schools has been identified as a leader in the push-out of Black students due to severe and disproportionate disciplinary practices. Black students face higher suspension, expulsion, and punitive measures compared to non-Black students. Additionally, Black student-athletes seemingly have been afforded lighter penalties, which further perpetuates interpersonal and internalized oppression among the Black community of the CCSD.
- **Impact Statement:** The biased application of disciplinary policies has contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline, disproportionately affecting Black students. This approach not only pushes Black students out of the educational system but also perpetuates a sense of alienation, distrust, and fear of educational institutions. It negatively impacts their academic performance, emotional well-being, and long-term socioeconomic prospects.

### Staff and Leadership Representation (Score: 1)

- **Findings:** There is an obvious and severe underrepresentation of Black staff and leadership within CCPS. This lack of diversity extends from teaching roles to administrative positions, reinforcing systemic barriers for Black professionals.
- **Impact Statement:** The underrepresentation of Black teachers and leaders deprives Black students of role models who share their cultural experiences. This absence reinforces feelings of isolation and increases the likelihood that Black students will feel unsupported. Furthermore, it hinders the district's ability to foster an inclusive school culture, as leadership decisions lack the diverse perspectives necessary to address the needs of Black students effectively.

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## Engagement with Black Families and Communities (Score: 1)

- **Findings:** Cherry Creek Public Schools has failed to build meaningful relationships with Black families and the broader Black community. Communication is often one-sided, and efforts to engage these stakeholders appear performative rather than genuine.
- **Impact Statement:** The lack of authentic engagement with Black families has led to a breakdown in trust between the district and the Black community. Without active involvement from Black families, the district is missing critical input on policies and practices that could improve outcomes for Black students. This disconnect fosters resentment and frustration, contributing to the cycle of disenfranchisement and disengagement from the educational system.

## Treatment and Involvement of Black School Board Members (Score: 4)

- **Findings:** Cherry Creek Public Schools has made significant strides in ensuring that Black school board members are treated with respect and are actively involved in governance. Black board members are included in key decision-making processes and have a platform to voice their perspectives.
- **Impact Statement:** The active involvement of Black school board members helps to amplify the concerns and needs of Black students and families. It ensures that decision-making is more inclusive and that the district has diverse leadership guiding its policies. However, this involvement must be paired with district-wide reforms to ensure that the impact of their voices is felt throughout all levels of the school system.

## Policies and Practices (Score: 1)

- **Findings:** CCPS's policies and practices have not been reformed to address the unique needs of Black students. Despite policies on paper, their inconsistent application leads to unequal treatment, particularly in matters of discipline and student support.
- **Impact Statement:** The district's failure to implement equitable policies perpetuates systemic racism and creates an environment of inequity. Black students experience these failures firsthand, deepening their mistrust of the system and exacerbating the already significant disparities in educational outcomes between Black and non-Black students. The district's reluctance to meaningfully reform its policies suggests a disregard for the well-being of its Black student population.

## Support Systems (Score: 2)

- **Findings:** While some support systems exist, they are insufficient to meet the needs of Black students. Counseling services, academic resources, and mentorship opportunities are limited and not adequately tailored to address the specific challenges Black students face.
- **Impact Statement:** The inadequacy of support systems leaves Black students without the resources needed to thrive academically and emotionally. This lack of support

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contributes to toxic educational environments for Black students. Moreover, the absence of strong support structures robs these students of the guidance necessary for personal and professional growth, hindering their future opportunities.

## Physical Environment (Score: 4)

- **Findings:** CCPS provides well-maintained physical facilities that support learning. However, the unequal distribution of these resources across the district and the presence of a hostile disciplinary environment for Black students compromise the sense of safety and inclusivity.
- **Impact Statement:** While the physical facilities of CCPS are well-maintained, the toxic environment created by inequitable disciplinary practices undermines the benefits of these resources. For Black students, a clean and modern building cannot compensate for the emotional and psychological toll of constant surveillance, harsh disciplinary actions, and racial bias. The overall experience of the school environment becomes one of fear rather than safety and inclusion.

## ***2024-2025 Strategic Plan and Policy Review***

After conducting our empathic listening series with students, staff, parents, families, and the community of the Cherry Creek Public Schools District, we integrated these narratives into the review of the strategic plan and outlined policies of the district. ***Upon reviewing the Cherry Creek Schools policies and resources, several elements emerge that could be detrimental to the psychological safety of Black students, families, staff, board members, and the community:***

*We immediately noticed that trying to find an easy way to have the website translated for its end users does not exist, which excludes students, parents, and families who speak other languages from fully engaging with the content.*

### **1. Disproportionate Policing and Security Practices:**

- **Findings:** The district maintains a robust School Resource Officer (SRO) presence, which can disproportionately affect Black students. These officers often handle disciplinary matters that could be addressed by educators or counselors, contributing to the over-policing of Black youth in schools. This heavy-handed approach can lead to the criminalization of minor infractions, disproportionately impacting Black students and contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline.
- **Impact:** The presence of SROs may foster a sense of surveillance and fear rather than safety among Black students, undermining their psychological well-being

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## 2. Lack of Racially Inclusive Curriculum:

- **Findings:** The curriculum framework lacks a clear emphasis on racial inclusivity and cultural competency, particularly regarding Black history and the contributions of Black individuals. This omission perpetuates a Eurocentric narrative, which marginalizes the experiences of Black students and communities, leaving them feeling unseen and undervalued in the learning environment.
- **Impact:** The absence of Black representation in the curriculum can lead to disengagement and a sense of alienation for Black students, further damaging their academic motivation and emotional health

## 3. Vague Anti-Bullying and Mental Health Policies:

- **Findings:** While the district has anti-bullying and mental health initiatives, there is little focus on racial bullying or the specific needs of Black students who may face racial trauma. The absence of targeted support systems for addressing racism in schools creates a gap in psychological safety for Black students, who may suffer in silence without appropriate resources or avenues for reporting racially motivated incidents.
- **Impact:** Black students facing racial discrimination or microaggressions may not receive the support they need, contributing to mental health challenges and reducing their sense of security and belonging within the school

## 4. Limited Family and Community Engagement Efforts:

- **Findings:** The district's family and community engagement programs do not adequately address the cultural and socio-economic barriers faced by Black families. There is insufficient outreach to ensure Black families are involved in school decisions or that their voices are heard in policies that directly impact their children.
- **Impact:** Black families may feel disconnected from the school community, leading to distrust and a lack of involvement in their children's education, further exacerbating disparities in academic achievement and well-being

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Cherry Creek Public Schools (CCPS) faces profound challenges in achieving equity and inclusivity, particularly for Black students, families, and staff. The district has made strides, such as involving Black school board members in governance, which demonstrates a commitment to representation. However, this progress is overshadowed by significant gaps in areas critical to creating an equitable learning environment. Disproportionate disciplinary actions, a Eurocentric curriculum, a lack of Black educators in leadership roles, and inadequate support systems perpetuate systemic inequities. These shortcomings contribute to a school culture where

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generational systemic impact is still a reality for Black students and families. This shows up prevelantly as the feedback has exposed narratives of students feeling unsupported, resulting in long-term negative impacts on their educational and emotional well-being.

The absence of culturally responsive policies that address racial biases and “micro”aggressions leaves Black students targeted to discriminatory practices that undermine their psychological safety. Furthermore, while the district’s family and community engagement efforts are in place, they fail to provide sufficient outreach to Black families, contributing to a disconnect between the school district and a vital segment of the community. Without intentional efforts to address these systemic issues, Cherry Creek Public Schools is consistently perpetuating the achievement gap and exacerbating the distrust Black families feel toward educational institutions.

## Recommendations:

1. **Reform Disciplinary Policies:** Implement equitable disciplinary measures and ensure consistent enforcement across racial and athletic groups. Clear guidelines should be established to prevent the disproportionate punishment of Black students, reducing their overrepresentation in suspensions and expulsions.
2. **Increase Representation:** Actively recruit Black educators, staff, and leaders to diversify the district’s workforce. Initiatives should include mentorship and leadership pipelines specifically aimed at advancing Black professionals into decision-making roles.
3. **Enhance Curriculum:** Integrate Black history and the contributions of Black communities into the curriculum, not just during heritage months but throughout the academic year. A more representative curriculum offers a sense of belonging and cultural pride among Black students and promotes cultural competency for all students.
4. **Strengthen Engagement with Black Families:** Create meaningful, two-way communication channels with Black families and community leaders. Regular engagement through culturally relevant outreach will ensure that their voices are heard and their concerns addressed. Innovatively hosting community forums and town halls on key issues impacting Black students can deepen trust and involvement.
5. **Expand Support Systems:** Invest in mental health and mentorship programs tailored to the unique challenges faced by Black students. Culturally competent counseling services and mentoring by Black professionals can provide essential guidance and emotional support, addressing the specific traumas of racial discrimination.
6. **Address Racial Sensitivity in Behavioral Expectations:** Review and reform behavioral codes of conduct to ensure they are free from racial biases and do not disproportionately target Black students. Language such as “neat” or “appropriate” in

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dress codes should be reconsidered to prevent discriminatory enforcement based on cultural hairstyles and attire.

7. **Create Anti-Racism Training for Staff and Students:** Implement comprehensive anti-racism training for all staff, administrators, and students. This training should focus on understanding implicit bias, “micro”aggressions, and systemic racism. Encouraging dialogue about race will help create a school culture that values diversity and actively works to dismantle racism.
8. **Form a Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Committee:** Establish a permanent committee composed of educators, parents, students, and community leaders from diverse backgrounds to review policies and practices related to equity and inclusion. This committee should inform policy, provide accountability, and ensure that the district remains focused on its equity goals.
9. **Provide Data Transparency on Disciplinary Practices:** Publicly report data on disciplinary actions broken down by race and other demographics. Transparency will hold the district accountable for addressing disparities and will help identify areas where reform is most urgently needed.
10. **Strengthen Restorative Justice Practices:** Expand the use of relevant restorative justice as an alternative to punitive disciplinary actions. Restorative practices can help reduce suspensions and expulsions, offering conflict resolution and building a stronger, more inclusive school community.