

PTA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) January Newsletter

Happy New Year! Please join us for our next meeting on **Thursday February 8th at 6PM.**

Click on the section title below to jump to the section(s) of most interest to you.

[Actions YOU Can Take](#) are actionable items, often in our community, that you can take to promote DEI efforts.

[Recommendations](#) provide DEI resources (e.g., books, museums, social media) that you might find helpful for yourselves and to share with your children.

[RFES Faculty Equity Committee Updates](#) keep you posted on RFES faculty DEI efforts.

Please contact us at dei@rogersforgepta.org if you have any questions or concerns about anything below, have suggestions for the newsletter, or are interested in joining the RFES PTA's DEI committee.

Actions YOU Can Take:

The boundary study committee for BCPS will make its decision in the Spring. We believe this is an opportunity to return the Rodgers Forge Apartments, which are literally across the street, back to RFES. This will add diversity and draw more open, inclusive boundaries to the school catchment area. Although the survey options all included returning the apartments to RFES, in the past decisions have changed last minute. We encourage you to keep posting comments [on the webpage](#) where you can let the boundary study committee know the importance of returning the Rodgers Forge Apartments to RFES, as the options are not set in stone. Please [visit the webpage](#) and add comments, such as "Please return the Rodgers Forge Apartments to Rodgers Forge Elementary."

Information for those if you concerned about overcrowding at RFES:

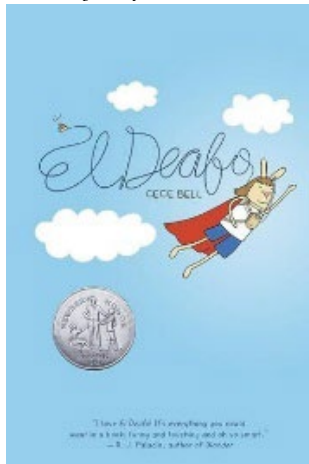
- RFES is currently at 380 students, with our stated capacity of 411. Our pre-Covid numbers were 470 and we fit comfortably in the school.
- The apartments would currently add around 32 students.
- If we go below capacity, we run the risk of losing teachers. With decreasing numbers, staff numbers must go down as well.
- What about adding Pre-K?
 - Right now, we have classrooms that go unused on certain days and two trailers that are empty. We don't plan to return to the days before West Towson was built when we had 9 trailers, but our school functions well using two trailers.

Recommendations:

Here are our book and media recommendations for this month. What are you reading? The DEI committee plans to add these books to the classroom libraries. If there is a book you would like to see in the classrooms, email us at dei@rodgersforgepta.org.

Book recommendations:

El Deafo by Cece Bell



Starting at a new school is scary, even more so with a giant hearing aid strapped to your chest! At her old school, everyone in Cece's class was deaf. Here she is different. She is sure the kids are staring at the Phonic Ear, the powerful aid that will help her hear her teacher. Too bad it also seems certain to repel potential friends.

It's the End of the World and I'm in My Bathing Suit by Justin A. Reynolds



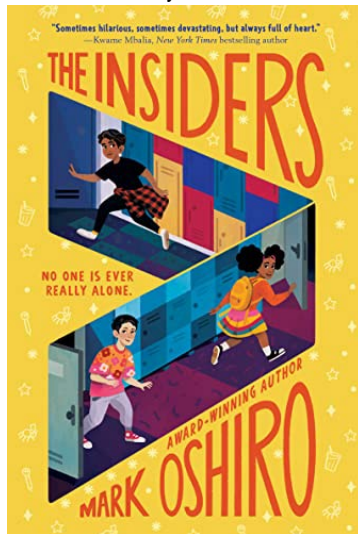
Twelve-year-old Eddie Gordon Holloway has concocted his most genius plan ever to avoid chores... especially the dreaded L-A-U-N-D-R-Y. If he can wear all the clothes he owns, he'll only have to do the laundry once during his school break.

On the day of the highly anticipated Beach Bash, Eddie's monstrous pile of dirty laundry is found by his mom. And Eddie's day has just taken a turn for the worst. Now he's stuck at home by himself, missing the bash, and doing his whole pile of laundry. But mid-cycle, the power goes out!

As Eddie a group of friend try up to find out what happened, they realize that their families aren't coming back anytime soon. And as night falls, the crew realizes that they aren't just the only people left in the neighborhood, they might be the only people left... anywhere. The sequel is due out in Spring 2024.

Audio Book recommendations:

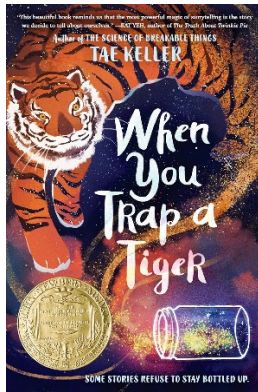
The Insiders By Mark Oshiro



San Francisco and Orangevale may be in the same state, but for Héctor Muñoz, they might as well be a million miles apart. Back home, being gay didn't mean feeling different. At Héctor's new school, he couldn't feel more alone.

Most days, Héctor just wishes he could disappear. And he does. Right into the janitor's closet. (Yes, he sees the irony.) But one day, when the door closes behind him, Héctor discovers he's stumbled into a room that shouldn't be possible. A room that connects him with two new friends from different corners of the country—and opens the door to a life-changing year full of friendship, adventure, and just a little bit of magic.

When You Trap a Tiger by Tae Keller



When Lily and her family move in with her sick grandmother, a magical tiger straight out of her halmoni's Korean folktales arrives, prompting Lily to unravel a secret family history. Long, long ago, Halmoni stole something from the tigers. Now they want it back. And when one of the tigers approaches Lily with a deal--return what her grandmother stole in exchange for Halmoni's health--Lily is tempted to agree. But deals with tigers are never what they seem! With the help of her sister and her new friend Ricky, Lily must find her voice...and the courage to face a tiger.

Places to Go: Activities happening around Baltimore to check out

Be Inspired With Schuyler Bailar

The first publicly documented transgender man to compete in any sport on an NCAA division team, American swimmer Schuyler Bailar, author of *He/She/They: How We Talk About Gender and Why It Matters*, advocates for trans inclusion, body acceptance and mental health awareness. He offers advice on how to better understand and discuss gender identity by teaching the importance of using specific language and context cues that reflect acceptance and inclusion. Book sales and signings follow the presentation.

Thursday, January 18th from 6:30 – 8:00 PM at the Towson BCPL Branch.

<https://www.bcpl.info/events-and-programs/list.html#!/217492>

What the Trees Have Seen – exhibit at the BMA

Inspired by family research into her great-great-great-great grandfather Luke Valentine's service as a free Black militiaman in the American Revolution, Martha Jackson Jarvis has created mixed-media works that imaginatively retrace his journey from Virginia to South Carolina during the Revolutionary War. The result is a tour de force in abstract painting with 13 grandly scaled works on paper, and a focused group of smaller works inspired by the meditative form of the mandala.

<https://artbma.org/exhibition/martha-jackson-jarvis-what-the-trees-have-seen/>

RFES has a self-guided tour scheduled for Sunday January 21 12:30. Meet up with friends at museum and look around together!

Ibram X Kendi visits Baltimore

Ibram X Kendi will be at the Lewis Museum on Tuesday 1/23 from 6:30-8pm sharing/talking about his new book "Barracoon: Adapted for Young Readers." It is an adaptation from the original book by Zora Neale Hurston. <https://www.lewismuseum.org/event/in-conversation-barracoon-adapted-for-young-readers-author-talk-with-dr-ibram-x-kendi/>

Tickets are \$25 and you get a copy of the book.

Social Media Recommendations:

Schuyler Bailar (he/him/his)

@pinkmantaray



1st trans D1 NCAA men's athlete

Schuyler provides education on trans issues and gender activism.

@themompsychologist

Dr. Jazmine provides helpful parenting insights and suggestions.

RFES Faculty Equity Committee Updates:

We are welcoming volunteers to present at the RFES **Cultural Diversity Day on Feb. 14th**. Please contact your child's teacher, or Mrs. Lee at slee5@bcps.org if you are interested in presenting to a class. More details will be coming home soon.



Equity Liaison Updates:

Mrs. Lee attended four *Engage: Why Equity?* sessions hosted by the BCPS Dept. of Equity and Cultural Proficiency. Throughout these sessions, she was able to network with other Equity Liaisons from around the county and practice using the Courageous Conversations Compass to discuss many issues around the topic of equity.

One topic of interest that was explored in these sessions is the diversity among BCPS students and staff. Below are some graphics to highlight the data. Ideas were brainstormed for ways to increase diversity among teachers and staff, such as recruiting more from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and promoting high school programs and internships in BCPS for students interested in the teaching profession.

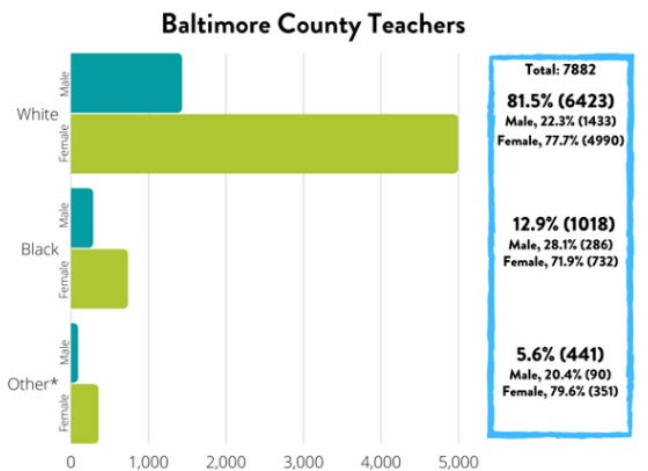
You can visit

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/bcps.team.prod/viz/PublicSchoolProfile/Story1> for more information and data for each school in BCPS.



We are **TEAM BCPS**

Who is BCPS?

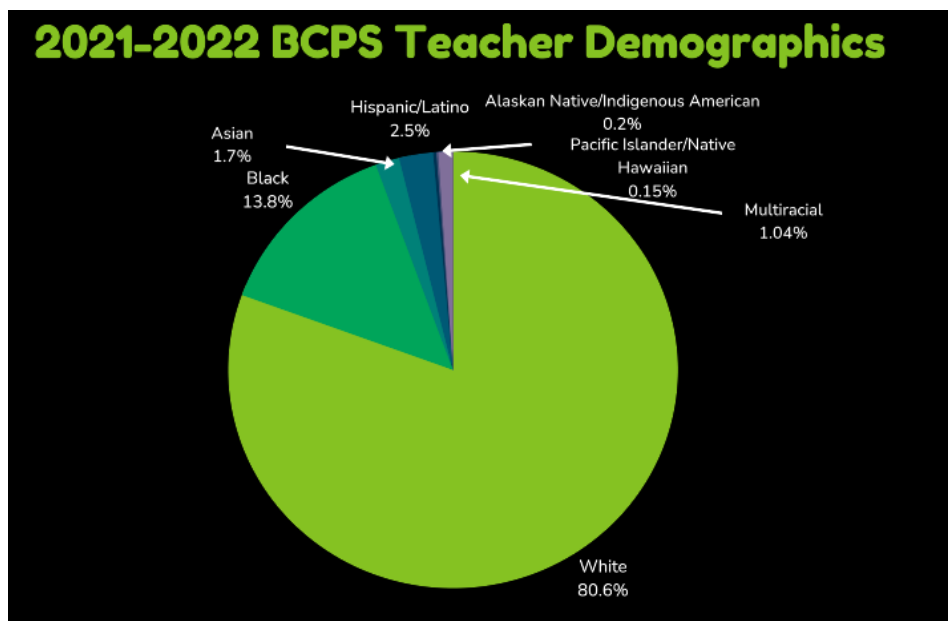


We are **TEAM BCPS**

Who is BCPS?

Data as of October 2020

*Other includes Asian, hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Two or More Races

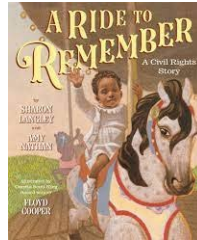




The RFES Black Excellence Program has been participating in book studies, practicing competition questions, and continuing our research projects.

In December, students:

- read and discussed A Ride to Remember



- practiced competition questions for the months of October, November, and December
- learned more about Kwanzaa by reading a story, watching a video, listening to African music, and participating in activities that taught us more about the seven principles.



- Students are working on presentations for the district-wide presentation, focusing on the following topic: *Taking a Stand: People, Ideas, and Events - How have the actions of a few benefited all?*

Everyone is invited to the district-wide presentation of our research projects in February! Save the date - Saturday, Feb. 24th at Perry Hall High School.