



EQUITY, DIVERSITY & ACCOUNTABILITY COALITION

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Create an environment of fair treatment for all, and free of
racism, injustice, inequality and prejudice

Presented in September 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank the Administration and Faculty at Auburn Adventist Academy for their desire to grow and improve in the areas of racial equity and inclusion, and for extending the invitation to create this Focus Group and to bring forward these recommendations. We pray these will improve the experience of every student and family.

Special thanks to our Focus Group Chair, Gesele Thomas, for facilitating the team in weekly goal-driven meetings, for her hard work behind the scenes, and her dedication in seeing this project from start to finish.

A huge thank you to all of our Focus Group team members for the extra time, research, input, passion, and dedication in helping make this project a success.

Thank you to all who shared your concerns and grievances, especially former & current students, Auburn alumni, family members of current or former students, current and former staff members, local and area church members, Conference & Union leadership, all school stakeholders and community members. Your voices helped guide us in the formation of these recommendations that we pray will help make AAA a safer, more inclusive environment for all of God's children.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People of color in America — Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, and others of non-European parentage — have experienced severe structural, institutional, and systemic racism (system of structures with procedures or processes to intentionally create a disadvantage.) Some Americans believe race relations have improved, while others doubt that people of color will ever have equal rights in America. According to a new 2019 Pew Research Center survey, more than four-in-ten Americans say the country hasn't made enough progress toward racial equality, and about six-in-ten (58%) say race relations in the U.S. are bad, and of those 58%, few see race relations improving.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has not been immune from racism, injustice, discrimination, and inequality. In October 1943, Lucy Byard, a gravely ill black Seventh-day Adventist of very light complexion was admitted to the Washington Adventist Sanitarium. Before Lucy Bayard received treatment, her racial identity was discovered. She was subsequently wheeled out of her hospital room into a hallway, where without treatment, she passed away, succumbing to her illness. George Knight, in his historical work, *Organizing for Mission and Growth*, wrote: "Black Adventists in Washington, D.C., including those who worked at the General Conference, could not eat at the denominational cafeteria, send their children to nearby Washington Missionary College, or become a patient at the Washington Missionary Sanitarium." Many members of the church today believe the church is still racially divided, and its profession of unity, that all members are equal, is lacking in practice.

As recently as 2017/2018, several Adventist universities, including Andrews, Walla Walla, and Southern, grappled with incidents of racism. The Adventist

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educational system is designed to provide the highest quality of Christian education in a safe, comfortable environment, where all students can thrive. Unfortunately, feedback from our Adventist school constituents have revealed that in our institutions, there are activities, practices and behaviors which are racist in nature, and must be addressed. The adversary, as we all know, has attempted to creep into all of God's institutions and corrupt that which God has formed and made good.

Based on constituent feedback of racial insensitivity and discriminatory practices, Auburn Adventist Academy (AAA), seeking assistance for change, reached out for assistance. As a result, the Equity, Diversity and Accountability (EDA) Coalition was formed. The group is comprised of 12 professionals of varied backgrounds including members of the community, parents of students past and present, as well as staff members and students of AAA. The group met weekly to review grievances and concerns expressed through social media, phone conversations, surveys and Town Hall meetings. Through hard work, the group identified measurable, obtainable, goals and objectives for four major areas of concern - Staffing, Curriculum, Education and Training, and Policy and Accountability. The methodology, key findings, implications and recommendations are provided in this report.

The EDA Coalition believes now is the right time to address issues of racism, injustice, discrimination, and inequality. AAA has been afforded a window of opportunity that should not be ignored. Auburn Adventist Academy must join institutions like Andrews, Wall Walla and Southern Adventist University in not only denouncing racism, but in listening, dialoguing and championing change. The academy must listen, own their systemic imperfections and respond to past inadequacies. The school must dialogue, to move into a deeper understanding of the issues, champion change to remove systemic barriers and obstacles so that

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each individual will experience an environment free of racial injustice, discrimination, and inequality.

The key to strengthening Auburn Adventist Academy's position in the community is its ability to capitalize on this opportunity to restore trust. Racism, in its myriads of expressions, goes contrary to God's will. It is imperative that we are led by the Bible, as the Lord requires us to "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly" (Micah 6:8).

The EDA Coalition trusts that the recommendations are seriously considered for adoption at Auburn Adventist Academy, and other institutions of learning across Washington Conference and beyond.

"The time is always right to do what is right." Martin Luther King, Jr.

METHODOLOGY

In order for you, the reader, to gain a perspective of why change is imperative at Auburn Adventist Academy (AAA), you need an understanding of the chronology of events leading to the decision by AAA to form a committee and seek assistance for change. Administration's goal of forming a committee was to assist in assessing and identifying necessary and appropriate solutions to what has been suggested by some as a school culture of racial insensitivity, inequity and lack of accountability. The following summarizes the events and facts leading to the formation of the Equity Diversity and Accountability Coalition.

Following the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and the resulting public outcry of injustice towards black lives, some staff members at Auburn Adventist Academy felt it important to make a public statement denouncing all forms of racism, bigotry and hatred. Upon hearing statements of solidarity from students and teachers, a former student on May 30, 2020, created a very emotional social media video which challenged the sincerity of these claims of solidarity. This former student highlighted her own experiences of bullying, racism, and racial insensitivity on the part of students and staff at AAA. The social media post gave rise to multiple responses from people of color with the similar experiences. After meetings with Administration at both the school and Conference level, a statement from Auburn Adventist Academy was publicly shared on June 1, 2020. The statement reads as follows:

"We at Auburn Adventist Academy are saddened, appalled and sickened by the senseless deaths of God's children due to systemic racism. The most recent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and the gruesome killing of George

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Floyd are continued evidence that there is a race issue in this country and in the heart of mankind.

We, as followers of a God of love, denounce any form of racism, bigotry, and hatred. We want to stand with our brothers and sisters of color, and say with you, enough is enough.

We are so sorry that we have at times remained silent, or have not truly listened, or have unintentionally overlooked the pain that is a daily reality for so many of you. We look forward to ways that we can improve and grow as followers of God in this fight for justice, equality and love.

We want to extend an invitation of dialogue to our brothers and sisters of color that we may continue to grow in our understanding, as well as improve our community here at Auburn Adventist Academy. It is our desire that this would be a place that is safe, a place where all God's children are seen and treated as equal, sacred, and beloved.

We desire and choose to live out Micah 6:8, where God has shown us what He requires of us: to DO justice, to LOVE mercy, and to WALK humbly.

Auburn Adventist Academy Staff & Faculty

Please reach out to Pastor Krystalynn Martin (krystalynn.martin@auburn.org) or Pastor David Kabanje (david.kabanje@auburn.org) to continue dialogue on how we can grow & improve our community."

In the days that followed, a survey was created for people to fill out and express what their experience had been at AAA. Pastor Krystalynn Martin made phone calls to hear concerns and stories from people who had commented on the post. Pastor Krystalynn, Pastor David Kabanje, and Peter Fackenthall brainstormed subsequent steps, which included (1) gathering grievances from the surveys and phone calls; (2) coming up with a forum for people to openly share their concerns; (3) creating a Focus Group to evaluate the concerns

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expressed, thereby bringing forward recommendations on how the school can change its culture. This Focus Group would be comprised of members of the community, particularly people of color, as well as a select group of staff members and students. It was also thought that the Focus Group could potentially provide ongoing assistance and support for the change process. Peter Fackenthall reached out to Gesele Thomas who consented to chair the Focus Group.

While upholding the state of Washington's Covid-19 guidelines for small and large gatherings, the first Crucial Conversation Town Hall meeting was held on June 7, 2020. At this first three-hour outdoor Town Hall we accommodated approximately 50 individuals at the location and 50 via the online meeting platform ZOOM. The Town Hall was sometimes filled with emotional and tearful testimonies. Feelings of frustration were expressed as well as a sense of fatigue with the school. Most appreciated the opportunity to express their concerns, but some did not feel confident that substantial change would take place. The meeting was a very good step in listening to and acknowledging past grievances, concerns, and behaviors, relative to racism, lack of diversity, and poor accountability at AAA. The concerns and recommendations were transcribed to be used by the Focus Group in their work. The Administration of AAA was praised for making this first step towards the change process.

Within two weeks of the Crucial Conversation Town Hall, Gesele Thomas, and Pastors Krystalynn and Kabanje began plans to create the Focus Group. Invitations were extended and a group of 12 was formed, comprising three AAA staff members, two AAA students, five parents (current and former), and two concerned members of the community. The Focus Group members are *Gesele Thomas (Chair), Trinity Bias, Dr. Columbus Candies, Harrison Fineout, Noelle*

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Hoori, Pastor David Kabanje, Pastor Eugene Lewis, Pastor Krystalynn Martin, Sylford Nelson, Kelli Robinson, Mimi Weithers-Bruce, and Melia Williams.

On June 22 the first Focus Group meeting was held at the Puyallup SDA Church; thereafter meetings took place every week. Some of the meetings were in person and others were via the online Zoom platform.

During the meetings the group reviewed all the grievances, concerns, and recommendations which were levied from the surveys, phone conversations, and Town Hall meeting. Looking at all of the information, the team then organized the data into similar themes and came up with four primary areas needing improvement. Most of the time together during the summer was then spent meticulously identifying measurable, obtainable goals and objectives, creating timelines for the achievement of these goals, researching NAD policy, and identifying relevant corporate and Biblical references. Gesele Thomas then took charge of the process with the goal to produce this final summary document.

On August 6, Gesele Thomas, along with Pastor Krystalynn and Pastor Kabanje, met with Peter Fackenthall and preliminarily reviewed the recommendations from the Focus Group. Peter Fackenthall thanked Gesele for all the work the Focus Group had done over the summer and is looking forward to taking action on the recommendations, which he considers critical to improving the environment at AAA.

The final document is scheduled to be printed upon completion and distributed to AAA leadership, to conference representatives, union representatives, as well as pastors and principals in the Washington Conference.

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The work of the Focus Group is not done. We will also be available as a sounding board, to assist the school in goal achievement as well as to support and assist in any of the work that needs to be done. It is clear that each and every committee member has been touched by Christian education and is an avid supporter of the same. The expressed intent of each member is to simply do their part in assisting AAA to become a diverse center of educational excellence with fair treatment for all.

KEY FINDINGS

The Focus Group heard a number of grievances from various members of the Auburn Adventist Academy (AAA) community. The grievances, comments and concerns were gathered from AAA's Facebook page, from survey results, at a Town Hall meeting, and through direct phone calls. These grievances have been grouped into the following categories: Accountability/Policy, Bullying, Curriculum, Discrimination, Education/Training, Nepotism, Racism, and Staffing.

The following sections contain relevant materials that we referenced when formulating our recommendations. These materials include the Bible, The NAD Policy Book, Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook, as well as other references. These materials provided a framework for our discussions and recommendations and served as a guide as to what appropriate thought, behavior, and governance should look like in relation to racial equity.

In the following pages you will see, not only these materials referenced, but also examples of the grievances that were brought forth. Once again, these grievances came from different sources. Some of these grievance statements have been abbreviated, and edited to remove specific names (For a full transcript of the grievances, see the Facebook post). Some of the grievances are repeated as they may be pertinent to more than one reference.

The mission statement of an organization is a great reference to compare the organizations current focus and direction with its intended focus and direction. It is also a great tool to measure outcomes. Mission statements publicly provide organizational clarity, strategy and describe the organizations fundamental purpose and goals. The mission statement of an organization should articulate

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why the organization exists. The education mission statement from the NAD is necessary to include in this document because it describes our unique beliefs and standards for Christian education. It is important to ensure that our schools are on the right path in the fulfillment of our mission.

NAD Education Mission Statement

FEA PREK-12 Education Policies – FEA 05 Philosophy of Education

FEA 05 05 Mission Statement – “The Seventh-day Adventist church in North America operates a system of elementary and secondary education that began in 1872. The unique philosophy of Christian education of the Church is based on the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G White.

The primary aim of Seventh-day Adventist education is to provide opportunity for students to accept Christ as their Savior, to allow the Holy Spirit to transform their lives, and to fulfill the commission of preaching the gospel to all the world.

The education programs of church-affiliated schools are predicated on the belief that each student is unique and of inestimable value, and on the importance of the development of the whole person. Students are educated to accept service as a way of life, to be sensitive to the needs of the people in the home and society, and to become active members in the Church.”

Accountability/Policy: Responsibility, expectations, conditions, standards of behavior, attitudes, actions or processes. (Taking ownership of the problem/issue)

Comments from Constituency on Facebook, Survey, Phone Conversations, Zoom, Sunday June 7th Town hall and In-person Meeting:

- **The** Conference Admin needs to be involved in hearing the pain from black alumni from AAA
- **No more** silence from the church, the Conference or the school
- **AAA you** been in the process of step forward to change for about 12 years that's I know of. You always told me that it's going to take time.
- **It's taken** my father's time, my mother's time, my uncle's time, my brothers' and my sisters' time, my nieces and my nephew's time. How much time do you want for your progress?
- **I've sent information about different community conferences and forums to the leadership just to be told that they are too busy.** Learning about anti-racism and racial equity are super optional to our church administration. We have to insist in more.
- **Someone** years ago brought concerns about what they heard happening at the academy to both the school and the conference. They never heard anything from either party.
- **The staff** at AAA need to listen and not make it about themselves - it's the student's time to speak.
- **Now you** guys care about Black Lives? Interesting. I would have thought otherwise with how I was treated at the Academy.
- **They've wronged so many people and never even admitted.** From people of color to people of LGBT community. Not to mention threatening to expel students for merely having depression. Something needs to change in this school so people will stop getting hurt like FAR too many have
- **Many** students who have tried to come forward about topics such as this including myself have been ignored, labeled as rebellious, and in some cases punished under some whack loophole.....
- **Why is this work being dropped on the pastoral staff???** Where are the administrators who are most guilty because they have allowed all of this to happen while they collect a check? Where's the principal and the Washington Conference leadership!! This is a systems problem not a staff problem! The characters can change but it will be the same play if the system doesn't change. A survey is a good start but who is moving the change at the conference level?I want to hear an honest invitation to dialogue and implement policy and procedure related to race and equity. We've been here before and it was all under the same leadership that is currently in place.
- **More dialogue isn't the only thing we need. I still want to hear from (Person X, Person Y, and Person Z) about what they are going to do.I have seen this first hand. It's nauseating and we are done being silent. We expect action and accountability on all levels not just pastors thrown in the mix to keep people pacified. We need policy change and accountability.** Do you know that kids don't feel comfortable saying anything about their experiences until they leave the school? Do you know that my kid was ostracized because she spoke about teachers using racial slurs in class? I have plenty of emails as proof of the lack of action on behalf of our students of color. This just seems like the administration's latest way of getting themselves out of having difficult conversations. There's no school! What is everyone doing? They are still getting paid to the best of my knowledge. Why not schedule an actual conversation? **Listen to the hurt and anger instead of using a white process like surveys to gather information.** Maybe have people submit videos? Maybe

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schedule a zoom. Wait that sounds messy? It is messy. And uncomfortable. People of color are used to being uncomfortable—we don't have a choice. So please join us for a bit. The good news is it definitely won't kill any of you unlike your discomfort around facing these issues that's literally killing us.

- Seeing (*Person X*) comments on here is my last straw. To see people who have had a hand in damaging people play the victim is over the top. I don't know how much risk I am willing to take to contribute when the problems have been stated over the years. Ask your boss—he's well aware. He passed my husband over for a job to give to someone under qualified and dangerous because it was his buddy. Ask him! The problems have not gone undocumented.
- You have said these words many of times, and nothing changes. I don't know what needs to happen for y'all to wake up, and do some re arranging at that school. I will never return to Auburn.
- *Person X* Wow! Extremely disappointed in this response! It's funny how you held the cultural appreciation chapels yet dismiss the blatant racism on the campus within your comment. You have acted as ally to minorities yet when we voice out the blatant racism we have received at AAA, you become upset? If you are in the best interest of the students you would be appreciative that AAA is being held accountable so that your students can feel comfortable within the school walls..... The fact that you feel attacked right now speaks VOLUMES about the fragility of the staff when confronted with real problems. The staff work at a private school that is underpaid and understaffed we all know, but it's no excuse for perpetuating racism on a Christian campus. No one is asking AAA or you to be perfect we're asking y'all to NOT BE RACIST. That should be the bare minimum but apparently that's too much to ask since it has clearly ruffled your feathers.
- We had meetings emails with the school and conference. Nothing happens so yea I am on Facebook like every other person of color to talk about them
- We've been to the conference but how nice of you to assume. You can ask (*Person X, Person Y, and Person Z*) if they know who we are. Sitting in your privilege trying to tell black folk how to navigate a system that is made to protect you and yours. Please stop. You won't win this one. I'm happy to post some email responses on here if you need evidence. How dare you call out students who have taken the risk to expose the dark side of AAA.
- Auburn Adventist Academy I just wanna know why it took a protest, and a black man to get killed again. To finally say we are gonna change? I made a post 2 years ago about the injustice and the mistreatment of black kids at Auburn. You guys told me then "oh we are gonna change, we have a plan". Obviously was no change or plan. If you still see past students on this app having the same problems y'all had two years ago. and I were doing all we can two years ago to get a change. You have this "survey" you want us to do, but how do I know if that's gonna do anything??
- Are you kidding me? We came to the public because the conference would not hear us! Heck, my sister has even gone to the UNION. You have no idea what it is like being a minority yet you are telling us how we should go about dealing with racism. A general statement about the school should not make the unproblematic staff upset, but if the shoe fits wear it. It's not "coming after the school" it's holding them accountable learn the difference. I find it insane how you guys will blindly go to bat for the school without even fully understanding what is going on or putting in any effort to educate yourself on the prime issue. Stop worrying about who did it and start worrying about how an institution allowed blatant and passive racism to be swept under the rug for years.
- "I can't imagine them calling someone the N word".... "no one is perfect I'm sure mistakes have been made".There was nothing in that original comment that screamed "unity" and

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not in a single sentence of my comment did I say to (*Person X*) that you were trying to get positive attention, but I did say that the comment was driving attention away from the issue at hand. There will not be unity until the racism at AAA is acknowledged, accountability is held and a genuine apology is made. Saying Auburn isn't perfect just sounds like a start to a terrible excuse.

- (*Person X*) you don't agree with me..... how not to make racism worse...I have wasted a lot of time meeting with conference staff and your boss to share ideas about what they can do. I have offered local conferences in the community several times just to be told everyone is too busy. I've done my due diligence. Please do yours.
- (*Person X*) you know my husband worked there. He is brown. He tried to do work and was stonewalled ALL THE WAY. I have already outlined what the academy can do—ask your boss. I've emailed (*Person X, Person Y, and Person Z*). I've made clear steps that need to be taken and I have been ignored..... Not until you all make a plan. When the leadership can be honest about the harm that has been done RECENTLY and sets the stage for true work to be done then I will be happy offer my personal experience and my professional knowledge to help.
- Listen to the young people and acknowledge their concerns, Apologize, We need healing and change.
- Should have not taken this long to have this conversation
- Saddened by students lost because of racism. Work hard to get their church kids into SDA education. Saddened when students do not have a good experience when transitioning from public to Adventist Schools.
- Allegations that (*Person X*) told a current black male student that he couldn't date a current islander female student, or he wouldn't be able to return to school and she would lose her office of leadership. This was circulated last summer,.....
- When people of color have brought up their grievances in the past, nothing seems to have been done, so there is not a lot of trust.

References/Resources:

1. NAD Working Policy 2018/2019: B 41 Personal Relations and Organizational Authority BA 41 05 Unity in Work – “It is fundamental that employees counsel together as to plans and policies of work in all organizations, the consensus, or majority conviction, being accepted as the general working plan. Unity in effort is more essential and fruitful in soul winning than exact perfection in plans.”
2. James 4:17. “So, whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” Romans 12:7-8. “If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.”
3. The Ethical Lens Inventory: <https://www.ethicsgame.com/exec/site/eli.html>
“The Ethical Lens Inventory™ (ELI) is a personal evaluation tool designed to help students [faculty, staff and administrators] understand the values that influence their choices. It identifies how they prioritize values when making ethical decisions. By understanding what values are most important to them and what values are most

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important to the other parties involved in an ethical situation, they can minimize unnecessary conflict, make better ethical decisions, and live their values with confidence and integrity.”

Bullying: seek to harm, intimidate, or coerce (Someone perceived as vulnerable; Belonging).

Comments from Constituency on Facebook, Survey, Phone Conversations, Zoom, Sunday June 7th Town hall and In-person Meeting:

- No more silence from the church, the Conference or the school
- It's taken my father's time, my mother's time, my uncle's time, my brothers' and my sisters' time, my nieces and my nephew's time. How much time do you want for your progress?
- More dialogue isn't the only thing we need..... Do you know that kids don't feel comfortable saying anything about their experiences until they leave the school? Do you know that my kid was ostracized because she spoke about teachers using racial slurs in class? I have plenty of emails as proof of the lack of action on behalf of our students of color.....
- I think your administration needs to take a hard look at yourselves cause you too have treated students of color unfairly time & time again.
- What's even more deafening is the silence. So many who will not speak out against what is wrong. We know there are those who are blatantly hateful. There are a lot more who are quiet. They are equally as guilty
- We've been to the conference but how nice of you to assume. You can ask (*Person X*, *Person Y*, and *Person Z*) if they know who we are. Sitting in your privilege trying to tell black folk how to navigate a system that is made to protect you and yours. Please stop. You won't win this one. I'm happy to post some email responses on here if you need evidence. How dare you call out students who have taken the risk to expose the dark side of AAA.
- Many students who have tried to come forward about topics such as this including myself have been ignored, labeled as rebellious, and in some cases punished under some whack loophole. While I want to believe that auburn has changed, it is very hard for me to trust.....
- (*Person X*) you don't agree with me. I see you and I know what you are capable of. You can say whatever you want to in the eye of the public. You attacked a young person that you claimed to care about at some point. A young person who was easily influenced and defended you at some point because she believed you had good intentions. If you want to help read a book. I have posted two links full of information. Don't ask black people who are tired of fighting this ugliness to do the work for you.....
- (*Person X*) you know my husband worked there. He is brown. He tried to do work and was stonewalled ALL THE WAY.Everyone isn't blatantly racist but many are silent in the face of adversity. If you want to make change do the work (see the resources I posted earlier). You have staff who are willing to dig in and do the work. There are a couple of black staff. If the administration would stop using them as figureheads and allow them to lead the work without fear of repercussion then you wouldn't need volunteers.
- They liked online better than actual school
- Hard for students to speak up
- A former teacher was accused of being racist for stopping a video in class when a student of color made a comment that the bad character in the film of course was black. The discussion was around why the student said that, and what if the black character wanted that part to play, etc.
- White boys using racial slurs (from survey)
- Everyone has their own racial clique, many stay within their same race group (from survey)

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References/Resources:

1. Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020

SL-6 Decorum #3 – “At all times, students are expected to treat one another with kindness, respect and compassion.”

SL-9 Prohibited Activities - #1 – “Conspiring to haze or participating in hazing, initiations, cyber-bullying, sexual, physical or verbal harassment or deliberately committing any act that injures, degrades or disgraces a fellow student or causes damage to personal property.”

Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020

Harassment Policy – “No staff member or student may participate in or allow any act of harassment. Harassment includes: 1. Jokes or intimidation or any physical or verbal attack directed at a person’s a. age b. gender c. national origin d. physical condition e. race f. religion.”

Cyber-bullying: “the abuse of social media or other electronic means to defame or impersonate, or to cause harm to another individual in any way. 3. Sexual harassment includes: a. Sexual advances n.12full time b. Sexting c. Requests for sexual favors d. Other verbal or physical conduct that by design or innuendo is sexual in nature Harassment interferes with an individual’s ability to perform work or school assignments by creating an intimidating, hostile, and offensive environment. Incidents of harassment are to be reported to the administration, faculty, or staff and will be fully investigated while maintaining as much confidentiality as possible.”

- 2. Proverbs 6:16-19.** “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”
- 3. Stop Bullying Now** - <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/get-help-now>

Curriculum: The planned interaction of students with instructional content, materials, resources and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives.

Comments from Constituency on Facebook, Survey, Phone Conversations, Zoom, Sunday June 7th Town hall and In-person Meeting:

- It's taken my father's time, my mother's time, my uncle's time, my brothers' and my sisters' time, my nieces and my nephew's time. How much time do you want for your progress?
- AAA doesn't teach true history and it shows
- Huckleberry Finn as a book being read in an English class, and uses the "N" word

References/Resources:

1. NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 FEA PreK-12 Education Policies
FEA 05 20 The Seventh-day Adventist School as an Integral Part of the Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church #8d – “The uniquely designed curriculum in Seventh-day Adventist schools is developed by church educators who ensure that the educational objectives of the church are achieved. It emphasizes a process which encourages, guides, and sustains the learner as he seeks to relate to the Creator and to his fellow human beings.”
2. 2 Timothy 2:15. “Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.”
3. Culturally Responsive & Inclusive Curriculum Resources: What is Culturally Responsive Curriculum?: <https://guides.library.pdx.edu/c.php?g=527355&p=3623937>
4. University of Delaware - Center for Teaching and Assessment of Learning – Diversity and Inclusive Teaching: <https://ctal.udel.edu/resources-2/inclusive-teaching/>

Discrimination: the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex. (privilege, stereotyping, discriminatory systems and processes)

FOCUS GROUP REPORT: Create an environment of fair treatment for all, and free of racism, injustice, inequality and prejudice

Comments from Constituency on Facebook, Survey, Phone Conversations, Zoom, Sunday June 7th Town hall and In-person Meeting:

- No more silence from the church, the Conference or the school
- He must project harder that he is easy going and not aggressive. People assume he is an angry black man. Police officers have harassed him at times
- A graduate of AAA I am glad to see this statement but I wonder why it didn't include a specific apology for not allowing blacks to attend Auburn in the time I did.
- They've wronged so many people and never even admitted. From people of color to people of LGBT community. Not to mention threatening to expel students for merely having depression. Something needs to change in this school so people will stop getting hurt like FAR too many have
- I think your administration needs to take a hard look at yourselves cause you too have treated students of color unfairly time & time again.
- Now you guys care about Black Lives? Interesting. I would have thought otherwise with how I was treated at the Academy.
- We've been to the conference but how nice of you to assume. You can ask (*Person X*, *Person Y*, and *Person Z*) if they know who we are. Sitting in your privilege trying to tell black folk how to navigate a system that is made to protect you and yours. Please stop. You won't win this one. I'm happy to post some email responses on here if you need evidence. How dare you call out students who have taken the risk to expose the dark side of AAA.
- So why is it that you are "entitled to have your own opinions and voice them" but I am not? The hypocrisy is beyond me. Auburn giving an apology on FB isn't enough and I'm not going to just get over. "Bashing Auburn is saying a lot about your character" okay, well your comments are saying a lot about yours and how you clearly don't see the inherent racism at AAA a problem just because you didn't experience it.
- Adventist education – the feeling is we are ALLOWED to attend YOUR school (speaking of SDA schools in general)
- I said y'all.. meaning y'all white people as a whole. Doesn't have to be you included or other white people (*Person X*) mentored, but a majority of y'all got rid of (*Person X*). So I don't wanna hear that.
- (*Person X*) you know my husband worked there. He is brown. He tried to do work and was stonewalled ALL THE WAY. I have already outlined what the academy can do—ask your boss. I've emailed (*Person X*, *Person Y*, and *Person Z*). I've made clear steps that need to be taken and I have been ignored.There are amazing people at AAA—they are my neighbors. Everyone isn't blatantly racist but many are silent in the face of adversity. If you want to make change do the work (see the resources I posted earlier)..... My husband worked there for two years. He has a master's degree in educational leadership and is a man of color. He was never allowed to use his expertise and voice to support the students in an intentional way. He was excellent with the international students. None of that mattered. He was passed over for a position he deserved so that (*Person X's*) friend could get the position briefly before being quietly fired. Such a mess.
- Easy to not interact if you are privileged
- Has been asked "why don't you just leave" at elementary school levels
- Students of color have to code switch in classroom

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- **AAA seeming** to treat students of color with harsher discipline than white students in the recent past, seeming to portray an inequitable environment.
- **Allegations** that *(Person X)* told a current black male student that he couldn't date a current islander female student, or he wouldn't be able to return to school and she would lose her office of leadership. This was circulated last summer, and conversations were tried to be set up, but certain parties seemed to cancel the meeting.....
- **A former student** was asked by *(Person X)* during the 2018-2019 school year to postpone their "Black Lives Matter" chapel talk to a later date. The later date never happened.
- **I had someone** tell me that they didn't believe it was appropriate to discuss black lives matter at the school. "if they just followed the rules they have nothing to be afraid of and the fact that they are always running from the police proves they are guilty of something." The same person also told me if "blacks would stop selling drugs and get jobs they could get off welfare and actually support themselves" "

References/Resources:

1. **NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 – C 48 Human Relations**
C 48 10 Official Position – “As a division with a multicultural heritage, the principle of unity within diversity is strongly promoted. This involves cherishing the differences among us while working toward a harmonious unification in the total life of the Church.”
C 48 10 1 – “All members in regular standing will be given full and equal opportunity within the church to develop the knowledge and skills needed in building up of the church, and all service and positions of leadership on all levels of church activity will be open on the basis of qualifications without regard to race, color, gender, marital status (single, married, or widowed), financial status, or prior military service.”
2. **Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020**
SL-9 Prohibited Activities #11 – “A student engaging in any of the following practices on or off campus, including digital communication, will be subject to discipline. Please note the following list is illustrative but not exhaustive. Activities which may result in a suspension or expulsion: Racist or discriminatory behavior toward others.”

Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020

Non-Discrimination Policy – “Auburn Adventist Academy admits students of any race to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to the Academy’s students, and makes no discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnic background, country of origin, or gender in the administration of education policies, applications for admission, scholarship or loan programs, and extracurricular programs.”

3. **Galatians 3:28.** “There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
4. **Equal Employment Opportunity Council (EEOC) – Race/Color Discrimination**
<https://www.eeoc.gov/racecolor-discrimination>

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5. **Anti-Defamation League – Anti-bias Tools and Strategies:**
<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/anti-bias-tools-strategies>
6. **Southern Poverty Law Center – Teaching Tolerance:**
<https://www.splcenter.org/teaching-tolerance>

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Education/Training: the process of gaining knowledge, skill, and development from study or training. Training is the process of learning the skills one needs to do a particular job or activity. (Blatant and/or willful ignorance)

Comments from Constituency on Facebook, Survey, Phone Conversations, Zoom, Sunday June 7th Town hall and In-person Meeting:

- Are you kidding me? We came to the public because the conference would not hear us... I find it insane how you guys will blindly go to bat for the school without even fully understanding what is going on or putting in any effort to educate yourself on the prime issue...
- *(Person X)* you don't agree with me. I see you and I know what you are capable of. If you want to help read a book. I have posted two links full of information. Don't ask black people who are tired of fighting this ugliness to do the work for you. Google fighting racism, being a true white ally, how not to make racism worse...
- *(Person X)* you know my husband worked there. He is brown.....It's up to you all to read some books, make policies, and have honest conversations with the WHITE students and parents. It is NOT up to black people to get you all on board..... If you want to make change do the work (see the resources I posted earlier). You have staff who are willing to dig in and do the work.
- I've sent information about different community conferences and forums to the leadership just to be told that they are too busy. **Learning about anti-racism and racial equity are super optional to our church administration. We have to insist in more.**
- **She didn't understand white privilege until she educated herself**
- When students return to Auburn, will there be education about these conversations so that all black students will be safe. Will students be able to wear clothing to support movements?
- What will be done to help educate parents because students learn this behavior at home?
- **Will** there be diversity training for staff?
- *(Person X)* used the "N" word in front of a student of color as he told a story of how another black person had been called that word and how that word should not be used...but he used it in telling the story. The student felt uncomfortable, to say the least.

References/Resources:

1. **NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 FEA PreK-12 Education Policies**
FEA 05 20 The Seventh-day Adventist School as an Integral Part of the Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church #4, #8d – (#4) “The school is concerned about the whole person – body, mind, soul – and seeks to ensure that youth receive a balanced physical, mental, moral, social, and practical education.”
2. **Proverbs 22:6.** “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.”
Titus 2:7. “And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching.”

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3. University of Delaware - Center for Teaching and Assessment of Learning - Diversity and Inclusive Teaching: <https://ctal.udel.edu/resources-2/inclusive-teaching/>
4. Anti-Defamation League - Anti-bias Tools and Strategies: <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/anti-bias-tools-strategies>
5. Teaching Tolerance: <https://www.tolerance.org/>

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Nepotism/Favoritism: the practice among those with power or influence of favoring relatives or friends, especially by giving them jobs.

Comments from Constituency on Facebook, Survey, Phone Conversations, Zoom, Sunday June 7th Town hall and In-person Meeting:

- More dialogue isn't the only thing we need. I still want to hear from (*Person X, Person Y, and Person Z*) about what they are going to do. They've already sent out surveys and we are still here!!! The experiences we have struggled with happened up until last year! The staff isn't that new! The most recent rush of staff were hand-picked by (*Person X*). He had every opportunity to hire a more diverse staff and he hired one token that he hired from home. Black staff have been used as pawns when blatantly racist moves have been covered up. I have seen this first hand. It's.....
- Seeing (*Person X's*) comments on here is my last straw. To see people who have had a hand in damaging people play the victim is over the top. I don't know how much risk I am willing to take to contribute when the problems have been stated over the years. Ask your boss—he's well aware. He passed my husband over for a job to give to someone under qualified and dangerous because it was his buddy. Ask him! The problems have not gone undocumented.
- Nepotism is rampant. She was not offered the same privilege of the nepotism as other spouses
- Questions on nepotism. If a married couple works at the school, and one partner in the couple is of a higher status than the other, thus being in a supervisor role, who does the lower status partner in the marriage relationship report to? Shouldn't there be another neutral supervisor that the spouse should report to so that there is no nepotism?

References/Resources:

1. NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 – C 48 Human Relations

C 48 10 Official Position #1 – “All members in regular standing will be given full and equal opportunity within the church to develop the knowledge and skills needed in building up of the church, and all service and positions of leadership on all levels of church activity will be open on the basis of qualifications without regard to race, color, gender, marital status (single, married, or widowed), financial status, or prior military service.”

NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 - E 85 Conflict of Interest and/or commitment

E 84 20 Employee

E 85 15 11 “Using one's connections within the organization to secure favors for one's family or relatives.”

2. Proverbs 28:21. “To show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong.”

Romans 2:11. “For God shows no partiality.”

3. National Conference of State Legislatures – Nepotism Restrictions:

<https://www.ncsl.org/research/ethics/50-state-table-nepotism-restrictions.aspx>

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Racism: prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

Comments from Constituency on Facebook, Survey, Phone Conversations, Zoom, Sunday June 7th Town hall and In-person Meeting:

- **Racism has been from other Adventists and peers**
- **A graduate of AAA** I am glad to see this statement but I wonder why it didn't include a specific apology for not allowing blacks to attend Auburn in the time I did.
- More dialogue isn't the only thing we need..... He had every opportunity to hire a more diverse staff and he hired one token that he hired from home. **Black staff have been used as pawns when blatantly racist moves have been covered up. I have seen this first hand. It's nauseating and we are done being silent.**
- **Subtle, sense of discomfort**
- What's even more deafening is the silence. So many who will not speak out against what is wrong. **We know there are those who are blatantly hateful.** There are a lot more who are quiet. They are equally as guilty
- **Adventist education - the feeling is we are ALLOWED to attend YOUR school (speaking of SDA schools in general)**
- *(Person X)* Wow! Extremely disappointed in this response! **It's funny how you held the cultural appreciation chapels yet dismiss the blatant racism on the campus within your comment. You have acted as ally to minorities yet when we voice out the blatant racism we have received at AAA, you become upset?**“No one thinks of any of this” we know some staff at AAA work hard and “donate to the school” but that has nothing to do with the racism on it's campus, have YOU ever thought of any of this? This is not just a student complaining about any regular thing, it is about RACISM. The fact that I've had to hear white students, staff and admin say the N-word, that other students have heard slurs from CHRISTIAN educators is in and of itself a problem that you should not try to invalidate by deflecting!
- **but it's no excuse for perpetuating racism on a Christian campus. No one is asking AAA or you to be perfect we're asking y'all to NOT BE RACIST. That should be the bare minimum but apparently that's too much to ask since it has clearly ruffled your feathers.**
- **He must project harder that he is easy going and not aggressive. People assume he is an angry black man. Police officers have harassed him at times**
- Auburn Adventist Academy I just wanna know why it took a protest, and a black man to get killed again. To finally say we are gonna change? **I made a post 2 years ago about the injustice and the mistreatment of black kids at Auburn.** You guys told me then “oh we are gonna change, we have a plan”. Obviously was no change or plan.
- **Are you kidding me? We came to the public because the conference would not hear us! Heck, my sister has even gone to the UNION..... Stop worrying about who did it and start worrying about how an institution allowed blatant and passive racism to be swept under the rug for years.**
- **“I can't imagine them calling someone the N word”.... “no one is perfect I'm sure mistakes have been made”. So because no one is perfect we should just move on when they say something racist?**

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- Has been asked "why don't you just leave" at elementary school levels
- Saddened about these types of discussions because we lost our peculiarity. We have adopted society's guidelines and have lost our peculiarity. Didn't experience racism until she came to the US. She has taught her boys how to be black in our country. She has fear for her sons
- Racism is a tool of the enemy. Not a political issue. Salvation issue
- How are students who exhibit racism disciplined?
- A former student was asked by (*Person X*) during the 2018-2019 school year to postpone their "Black Lives Matter" chapel talk to a later date. The later date never happened.
- A former teacher was accused of being racist for stopping a video in class when a student of color made a comment that the bad character in the film of course was black. The discussion was around why the student said that, and what if the black character wanted that part to play, etc.
- Another instance is the former (*Person X*) was distributing books during a staff meeting for the staff to read, and made the comment "this book is so easy even _____ can read it." (insert former staff member's name). Was told by the former (*Person X*) and another former staff member that he talked about BLM too much. His contract was not renewed, for various reasons, but it really hurt a lot of students and community members. He was the only black staff when he first got here.
- White boys using racial slurs (from survey)
- Everyone has their own racial clique, many stay within their same race group (from survey)
- Years ago, not permitted to room with a white student (older alumni from survey)
- No black students at AAA until the 60's (from survey)
- A lot of racism towards Asian students, mostly from other students, and the staff don't seem to notice it and therefore don't stop it (from survey)
- Heard parents say that we needed black students so the academy could win basketball tournaments (from survey)
- I had someone tell me that they didn't believe it was appropriate to discuss black lives matter at the school. "if they just followed the rules they have nothing to be afraid of and the fact that they are always running from the police proves they are guilty of something." The same person also told me if "blacks would stop selling drugs and get jobs they could get off welfare and actually support themselves" "God tells us to love everyone but it's hard when they act like that." "I guess it's better to have them here where we can pray over them" (from survey)
- I heard a student tell a student of color she was pretty and smart "for someone with skin that dark" in front of a staff member who said nothing. I saw a student point to a map of Africa in a classroom and say that was where another person lived before they came to the school (from survey)

References/Resources:

1. NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 – C 48 Human Relations
C 48 10 Official Position #1 -#4, #6:

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(1) All members in regular standing will be given full and equal opportunity within the church to develop the knowledge and skills needed in the building up of the church, and all service and positions of leadership on all levels of church activity will be open on the basis of qualifications without regard to race, color, gender, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap, age, height, weight, marital status (single, married, or widowed), financial status, or prior military service.

(2) Membership and office in all churches and on all levels is to be available to anyone who qualifies. 3) In educational institutions there is to be equal opportunity in the employment of teachers or other personnel and in the admission of students. 4) Where normal entrance requirements are met, all Seventh-day Adventist schools from the elementary to the university level shall admit Seventh-day Adventist youth to the school of their choice. Where a church-supported school fails to follow the counsel of the Church, it is the duty of the next higher organization to investigate and recommend corrective measure. 6) Human relations committees should be formed on each union and local conference level to study specific human relations challenges. Workshops should be conducted to give guidance in dealing with local concerns."

2. Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020

Non-Discrimination Policy – "Auburn Adventist Academy admits students of any race to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to the Academy's students, and makes no discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnic background, country of origin, or gender in the administration of education policies, applications for admission, scholarship or loan programs, and extracurricular programs."

3. 1 John 2:11. "But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

1 John 3:15. "Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them."

4. Equal Employment Opportunity Council (EEOC) – Race/Color Discrimination

<https://www.eeoc.gov/racecolor-discrimination>

Staffing: The process of recruiting faculty, staff and administration with appropriate qualifications and experience to fill a position.

Comments from Constituency on Facebook, Survey, Phone Conversations, Zoom, Sunday June 7th Town hall and In-person Meeting:

- Nepotism is rampant. She was not offered the same privilege of the nepotism as other spouses
- Does the school have an ombudsman person?
- What is the makeup of your faculty and school board? Minority vs. white
- Liaison for students of color?
- Mental Trauma Counselling- will we offer that for student?

References/Resources:

1. NAD Working Policy 2018/2019: E 81 Employment and Productivity

E 81 05 Employment – “In hiring all categories of denominational employees, great diligence should be exercised to secure persons who are members of the church and who exert a positive influence in upbuilding the work along spiritual lines.”

E 81 10 Productivity – “Care is to be exercised in making assignments to conference and institutional employees so as to fully utilize their capabilities. The effectiveness of all employees is to be reviewed periodically. Where employees are found to be ineffective, counsel should be given them and if necessary, they should be given other lines of work or be advised to seek employment outside of the denomination.”

NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 – C 48 Human Relations

C 48 10 Official Position #1 – “All members of regular standing will be given full and equal opportunity within the church to develop the knowledge and skills needed in building up of the church, and all service and positions of leadership on all levels of church activity will be open on the basis of qualifications without regard to race, color, gender, marital status (single, married, or widowed), financial status, or prior military service.”

2. Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020

Counseling Policy – “In order to maximize the personal, emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being of students, the Operating Board has adopted the following policy to assist with the positive development of student interaction on the academy campus. Display of aggressive behavior, injury to others, self-harm, or engaging in any activity leading to physical harm or impairment, may result in suspension of the student from school until a qualified professional has made an appropriate evaluation. All expenses associated with the recommendations of the qualified professional of the responsibility of the parent/ guardian.”

3. Titus 1:9. “He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.”

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4. **School Principal Race and the Hiring and Retention of Racially Diverse Teachers:**
<https://edworkingpapers.org/sites/default/files/ai19-59.pdf>

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The EDA Coalition was formed at the request of the Auburn Adventist Academy (AAA) administration. The request for support, however, did not come proactively, but instead reactively, from another desperate plea for change triggered by hurtful experiences. The death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, forced America, who claims to be the leader of the world on equality, to confront racism, police brutality, and what it means to be a person of color in America. AAA's statement after the incident, denouncing all forms of racism, bigotry, and hatred, was met with apprehension from former and current students, parents and members of the community, based on years of unresolved issues of unfair treatment, real or perceived, towards students, staff and families of color.

Racial inequality persists in America, and the unfortunate reality is that it continues to haunt the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and its educational institutions. The church has made some strides in racial equality, but it still has a long road ahead. Seventh-day Adventist educational institutions are an extension of our churches and must strive to become a safe place for diverse people to experience love and togetherness. **We are called to be a light in a very dark world, and there will be lasting consequences if we ignore this commission.**

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Parents should not have to be faced with the decision to enroll their students at a public school because they are fatigued with discriminatory practices at AAA.

Parents support Adventist Education because of the promise to prepare students not just for success in this life, but for eternity. We know salvation far outweighs the cost of Adventist Education, however that cost should not include subjecting students to poor experiences that could result in lost souls.

It is important for AAA to reflect God's Kingdom. We know that heaven is going to be populated with an incredible diversity of believers. It is important to have diversity reflected and celebrated in our schools and across all our institutions.

It is our prayer that leaders at all levels endeavor to provide a safe, inclusive, learning environment at our schools, so as to ensure our message of hope and love is not lost.

Potential impact of not addressing racial inequalities for STUDENTS includes:

- Lack of education and educational opportunities
- Negative psychological impact
- Increased anti-social behaviors
- Decreased motivation to attend school
- Mistrust between staff, students, and administration
- Hurtful language and insensitive comments "tolerated" which negatively impacts students
- Limited student/family engagement
- Disengagement in lessons focused on white culture
- All students miss out on the opportunity to learn about other cultures in a rich, meaningful way
- Young people leaving the church, and some giving up on God
- Strained relationships between students

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- Behavioral problems (at home and at school)

Potential impact of not addressing racial inequalities for STAFF includes:

- Being unprepared to lead and facilitate a classroom full of culturally and linguistically diverse students
- Lack of understanding which may lead to constant second guessing in many interactions and conversations with culturally and linguistically diverse students
- Missed opportunities for change
- Robbing students of the spiritual experience a Christian education should afford them
- Ongoing lack of diversity in the curriculum does not allow the staff to challenge their implicit bias which limits their ability to be effective in educating students of color
- Staff and administrators cause harm to students

Potential impact of not addressing racial inequalities for the COMMUNITY includes:

- Community members seeing an organization impacted by institutional racism
- Missed opportunity to witness to the community around us because diversity and integration do not appear to be valued
- Missed opportunities for collaboration with community partners who could provide resources to improve school culture

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the themes from the grievances, clear recommendations emerged that cluster into four major areas of concern.

CURRICULUM:

The planned interaction of students with instructional content, materials, resources and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives.

(1) Create a curriculum that supports diversity, equity and inclusion.

(a) Develop a curriculum committee that can begin to review the current instructional content, materials and resources creating tangible recommendations for change to supplementary material and teaching pedagogy. The committee should consist of the Superintendent of schools for the Washington Conference, and other experts outside of the faculty and staff of AAA. This committee should be in place by mid school year 2022/2023. 50% of their recommendations should be implemented by mid school year 2023/2024.

The committee should review materials that are being used in the curriculum and recommend changes with the goal of accurately representing history, our diverse society, and fairness. Changing the curriculum is a daunting task and requires patience. The committee should be in place for at least 5 years taking time to meticulously evaluate the curriculum for change.

Some of their recommendations should include but not be limited to the following:

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(i) Regular, if not monthly, awareness celebrations such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Native American History Month, Asian American History Month, etc. Individuals with the identities of those being celebrated should have a primary influence in the development and presentation of the cultural events. This awareness should cross over in the student experience in regard to ethnic and cultural food, music, dress, and chapel.

(ii) Regularly scheduled crucial conversations delivered in a Ted Talk format in the topics of racism, inequity, diversity, culture. (Faculty and staff should lead out in the presentations).

(iii) Regularly scheduled (at least quarterly) visits to the regional and ethnic churches providing AAA programming such as musical, theatric, social or other interactive events. Could also include some type of service to the community in coordination with the regional church.

(iv) At the beginning of the year and throughout, get to know the students, where they are from, their culture, language etc. Make it a focus in the classroom.

(v) There should be an observation opportunity set up for members of the committee to sit in each class with the purpose of making proactive and constructive recommendations to the teachers with regards to making changes in the curriculum. Focus should be on Pedagogy and Content.

(vi) Create a survey to measure the status and change to the curriculum. Here is a sample survey created by the NPUC K-12 Education Advisory Committee <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VKP7LH8>.

(vii) Develop a list of resources for the teachers to use in the acquisition of tools to incorporate in the curriculum.

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(b) Through professional development and in-servicing, incorporate strategies to accomplish:

- (1) Paradigm shift in the minds of faculty and staff.
- (2) A movement towards inclusive pedagogy.

Resources:

(1) **The Knotted Line** (<https://scalar.usc.edu/anvc/the-knotted-line/index>) is an open-source curriculum guide that helps students connect history to current-day issues of access. A free resource that teachers can incorporate into their curriculum.

(2) **The Fordham Institute** (<https://fordhaminstitute.org/>) offers free resources for the advancement of teacher excellence, as well as research articles on a number of pedagogical topics. Recommend monthly in-services that focus on an article/topic/resource from this site OR an article/resource from this site can be discussed as part of regularly scheduled staff meetings.

(3) For on-going, comprehensive professional development, consider **“Facing History and Ourselves”** (<https://www.facinghistory.org/our-work/transforming-schools>). They offer professional development, educational resources, and pedagogical support with a focus on creating more socially just schools. Note: Their website specifically highlights that they have worked with over 1,500 independent and parochial schools. However, they make specific reference to Catholic schools. Further exploration would be needed to assess their work with non-Catholic parochial schools. The cost is unknown.

(4) Changing pedagogy first begins with changing mindsets. Dr. Columbus Candies is willing to offer a workshop on transformational leadership to all teachers/administrators at AAA. This workshop is based on his award-winning dissertation on the connection between individual/collective transformation and educational reform.

(5) In addition to the above workshop focused on paradigm shifts, a consultant or expert on inclusive pedagogy is recommended to offer training to AAA teachers. Further exploration may be needed to identify such a person and the associated costs.

STAFFING:

The process of recruiting and retaining faculty, staff and administration with appropriate qualifications and experience to fill a position.

(1) **Create a Diverse Employee Base:**

(a) Increase the percentage of qualified employees of color to reflect the diverse student body specifically from African American, Hispanic, Native Indigenous, and AAPI, communities. Appropriate candidates must have experience with justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.

(i) AAA will consult with the AAA Focus Group, as well as the Walla Walla University Center for Educational Equity and Diversity to seek additional avenues for recruiting diverse candidates with strategies such as student teacher internships, additional advertising, university visitations, etc.

Note: If Auburn Adventist Academy falls behind their incremental goal, they will consult with the EDA Coalition, as well as the Walla Walla University Center for Educational Equity and Diversity.

(2) **Create a Diverse Personnel Committee:**

(a) At least 50% of the team should be persons of color with experience in education and/or HR procedures. This goal should be implemented by January 1, 2023.

(i) This goal should identify and remove potential biases in sourcing, screening, and shortlisting candidates. This process should also eliminate turning off or unintentionally discriminating against qualified, diverse candidates.

(ii) Remember that diversity attracts diversity. We recommend

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looking at the pictures and videos of AAA's workplace on the website and social profiles. Pictures and videos of school activities and employees must be diverse in nature.

(iii) Reach out to Adventist educational institutions to specifically share with qualified candidates of color the benefits of working at AAA.

(iv) Ensure job openings are posted on appropriate job boards, and websites, such as the NAD Education website.

(v) Language on job postings should have a statement regarding AAA's belief in, and support of, creating a diverse workforce.

(vi) At all cost, the hiring practices and support of employees should adhere to the North American Division HR policies and procedures.

(b) Pertaining to Recruitment on the Personnel Committee: This goal identifies and removes potential biases in sourcing, screening, and shortlisting candidates. This process also minimizes unintentional discrimination against qualified, diverse candidates.

(3) Create a diverse School Board:

(a) At least 30% of the Board should be persons of color. This goal should be implemented by January 1, 2023.

Note: It is critical that the **AAA School Board** reflect the diversity inherent in the schools they serve. A diverse school board will better understand, be supportive of, and provide appropriate leadership on issues related to equity, diversity and inclusion at the school level.

(4) Staff, Faculty, and Administration vow to embrace and support the AAA diversity statement through personal and professional development and training.

AAA Diversity Statement:

“Auburn Adventist Academy pledges to live out Micah 6:8 — “to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God”. We are intent on fostering an environment of diversity, equity and inclusion in our enrollment process, hiring practices, curriculum and teaching, and all areas of campus life. We desire to nurture and grow a multicultural-aware staff and student body to be good citizens of this world. As followers of Christ, it is our duty to live as Jesus lived by treating all humanity with unconditional dignity and love regardless of race, religion, color, gender, national origin, financial status, age, or ability. Therefore, all forms of racism, discrimination, bullying, harassment, hatred, and bigotry will not be tolerated at Auburn Adventist Academy. It is our redemptive honor to celebrate the sacred diversity of all humanity, as it is a small picture of the Kingdom of God, where “every nation, tribe, people and language will stand before the throne and before the Lamb,” (Revelation 7:9).

EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Education and training for Faculty, Staff and Administration should be goal oriented, measurable and ongoing. Through the process of learning, application, and reinforcement, education and training should equip employees with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills to be effective in a multicultural classroom. The achieved knowledge should be continuous and sustainable. The end goal should be to transform the minds of the Faculty, Staff and Administration as well as to train students to interact with the world in a Christocentric manner with love, justice and mercy.

(1) Create a multiyear mandatory professional development plan focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion with competencies to measure effectiveness of training. First year plan in place with competencies by October 1, 2020. Multi-year plan in place with competencies by January 1, 2021.

Professional development plan content examples include the following:

(i) Training on implicit bias/unconscious bias (CEU credit)
– acting on the basis of prejudice and stereotypes without intending to do so.

(ii) Monthly assignments during staff meetings for discussion and activity which will lead into a larger discussion quarterly.

Topics include racism, equity, equality, justice, diversity.

(iii) Guest Speakers with expertise in diversity, equity and inclusion. Possible examples – Erin Jones, Brenda Salter McNeil, Tim Golden, Walla Walla Diversity Team, Michael Nixon – Andrew's University Vice President for Diversity.

(iv) Book club with discussion, and parents invited.

(v) Implementation of a self-assessment tool to recognize

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where the teachers reside relative to bias, privilege, justice and equity (Ethical Lens Inventory).

(2) **Develop a partnership with a professional or professional consulting organization** to assist Auburn Adventist Academy with the change process. Consultants give lectures, attend board meetings, shadow classrooms, etc., to provide an outsider's perspective on issues pertaining to racism, injustice, and inequality. Professional identified and assisting by November 1, 2020.

(3) **Create a leadership network for Auburn Adventist Academy** to facilitate leadership discussions in equity, diversity, and inclusion. Network should reach outside the Adventist system for support and discussions. Network in place and managed by AAA Principal by October 1, 2020.

(4) **School coach to provide classroom observation** to the teachers, one session annually, to evaluate specific competencies and skills in curriculum delivery with recommendations provided to teachers and principal. Coach identified and consulting by December 1, 2020.

POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

Expectations/conditions/standards of behavior, attitudes, actions, or processes adopted or proposed by Auburn Adventist Academy (AAA) for Faculty, Staff, Administration, and Students.

(1) AAA to develop an equity, diversity, and inclusion statement for the school which will be posted in the school main hallway, in the student and staff handbooks, on AAA's website, and Facebook page. Statement to be completed by August 15, 2020. Entire goal completed by October 1, 2020.

(i) Review Diversity & Inclusion statements from other Seventh-day Adventist schools like Walla Walla University and Andrews University.

(ii) Refer to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for federal guidelines on discrimination.

(iii) Consult Walla Walla University's Center for Education, Equity and Diversity (CEED) for guidance on creating a statement.

(2) AAA to create at least three value statements for the support of equity, diversity, and inclusion. This will be added to goal number one above. The value statements will be completed by September 1, 2020.

(3) AAA to create at least three action statements for the support of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The statements will be added to goal number one above and published on AAA web site and Facebook page. Action statements will be finalized and published on goal number one above by October 1, 2020.

(4) Each student-parent combination upon registration will sign a

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document in support of AAA's equity, diversity, and inclusion statement. If students are registered prior to completion, documents will be sent to students and their parents for signature. All registered students and parents will have signed documents on file by December 1, 2020.

(5) Create successive disciplinary protocols for violators of AAA's equity, diversity, and inclusion values. Publish successive disciplinary protocols on AAA Facebook, website and in AAA staff and student handbooks. Protocols completed by August 15, 2020. Entire goal completed by October 1, 2020.

(6) Create a grievance policy to include a chain of reporting for incidents related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Ensure protection measures are in place for anonymity/privacy and retaliation. Included in the grievance policy should be steps to solve grievances, including access to the Ombudsperson. Grievance policy finalized and published by October 1, 2020.

(i) Refer to the NAD Working Policy Employee Personal Conduct.

(7) Appoint an Ombudsperson who can assist AAA students, faculty, staff and administration in the resolution of conflicts or concerns. It is highly recommended that the ombudsperson have expertise in diversity, equity and inclusion and be a person of color. The ombudsperson should be willing to serve a 2-3 year term. The ombudsperson should be in place by the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year.

(i) Ombudsperson will preserve the confidentiality of those seeking services;

(ii) Ombudsperson will maintain a neutral/impartial position

with respect to concerns raised; understand the issue from the perspective of the individual which is a critical step in developing options for resolution;

(iii) Ombudsperson will work at an informal level at the organization; and is independent of the formal organizational structure;

(iv) Ombudsperson will field issues and concerns, mediate and arbitrate where appropriate, conduct investigations and make recommendations;

(v) Ombudsperson is a source of detection and early warning of new issues and a source of recommendation for systemic change to improve existing processes.

Note: We want to make clear that the Ombudsperson serving AAA will support any and all Conference, Union and Division established policies governing grievances and complaints. The ombudsperson will function as additional support to AAA and its constituents supporting the grievance process through collaborative problem identification and problem resolution, all with the goal of enhancing organizational excellence. The ombudsperson will also support achievement of the EDA goals voted by the school board.

(8) Develop a partnership with a professional or professional mental health community-based service provider to accept referrals from AAA assisting in diagnosis and treatment of students dealing with emotional, psychological, and learning challenges. Develop a critical pathway which outlines circumstances in which the student should be referred. The relationship should be in place by the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year.

(i) Collaboration between community mental health professionals and AAA, to provide services to students in need;

(i) Students with significant needs can have access to

community support after school and on weekends;

(ii) School-employed counselor or nurse will serve as designated service coordinator; acts as the point person between community agencies and AAA;

(iii) Conduct regular evaluation of effectiveness of partnership and service; seek input from staff, students, and families;

(iv) Establish specific procedures that, with parental permission, allow school employees to exchange information with service providers, so not to violate FERPA and HIPAA rules.

CONCLUSION

The Seventh-day Adventist church is rated the most racially diverse religious group in the United States. Auburn Adventist Academy reflects this in its student body. The Equity, Diversity & Accountability Coalition was charged with identifying issues of racism at AAA. Their next step was to formulate ideas, actions and policies to facilitate change. The expectation is to create an equitable and inclusive environment for students from all races. Every student should feel they have a voice and a place at Auburn Adventist Academy. The aim of the committee is to offer suggestions that are achievable in a timely manner. The individual members of the EDA Coalition bring a great deal of experience, knowledge and expertise. It is the committee's desire to support AAA in the ongoing change process.

The four categories for goal setting were identified from social media comments, a town hall meeting and a survey. AAA now has the opportunity to grow through these creative ideas pertaining to staffing, curriculum, education & training, and policy & accountability. Teaching materials that reflect a world view, curriculum that highlights professionals and successful individuals of every race, celebrating cultures, working towards more diversity in staffing, will begin the journey. Accountability and transparency are important to this process.

The committee understands that some suggestions will seem difficult at first and perhaps unattainable, but as administration, faculty and staff process this information, it is the hope that the desire to minister to each and every student will shine through.

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

—Barack Obama

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REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Introduction Reference

1. **NAD Working Policy 2019/2020 Education Mission Statement**
FEA PREK-12 Education Policies – FEA 05 Philosophy of Education
FEA 05 05 Mission Statement

Accountability/Policy

1. **NAD Working Policy 2018/2019: B 41 Personal Relations and Organizational Authority**
BA 41 05 Unity in Work
2. **James 4:17; Romans 12:7, 8**
3. **The Ethical Lens Inventory:** <https://www.ethicsgame.com/exec/site/eli.html>

Bullying

1. **Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020 - SL-6 Decorum #3; SL-9 Prohibited Activities #1**
2. **Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020 - Harassment Policy**
3. **Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020 - Cyber-bullying**
4. **Proverbs 6:16-19**
5. **Stop Bullying Now -** <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/get-help-now>

Curriculum

1. **NAD Working Policy 2018/2019: FEA PreK-12 Education Policies**
FEA 05 20 The Seventh-day Adventist School as an Integral Part of the Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church #8d
2. **2 Timothy 2:15**
3. **Culturally Responsive & Inclusive Curriculum Resources: What is Culturally Responsive Curriculum?:** <https://guides.library.pdx.edu/c.php?g=527355&p=3623937>
4. **University of Delaware - Center for Teaching and Assessment of Learning - Diversity and Inclusive Teaching:** <https://ctal.udel.edu/resources-2/inclusive-teaching/>

Discrimination

1. **NAD Working Policy 2018/2019: C 48 Human Relations - C 48 10 Official Position**
2. **Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020 - SL-9 Prohibited Activities #11**
3. **Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020 - Non-Discrimination Policy**
4. **Galatians 3:28**
5. **Equal Employment Opportunity Council (EEOC) – Race/Color Discrimination:**
<https://www.eeoc.gov/racecolor-discrimination>

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6. **Anti-Defamation League** – Anti-bias Tools and Strategies:
<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/anti-bias-tools-strategies>
7. **Southern Poverty Law Center** – Teaching Tolerance:
<https://www.splcenter.org/teaching-tolerance>

Education/Training

1. **NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 FEA PreK-12 Education Policies**
FEA 05 20 The Seventh-day Adventist School as an Integral Part of the Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church #4, #8d
2. **Proverbs 22:6; Titus 2:7**
3. **University of Delaware – Center for Teaching and Assessment of Learning – Diversity and Inclusive Teaching:** <https://ctal.udel.edu/resources-2/inclusive-teaching/>
4. **Anti-Defamation League** – Anti-bias Tools and Strategies:
<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/anti-bias-tools-strategies>
5. **Teaching Tolerance:** <https://www.tolerance.org/>

Nepotism/Favoritism

1. **NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 – C 48 Human Relations: C 48 10 Official Position #1**
2. **NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 – E 85 Conflict of Interest and/or Commitment: E 84 20 Employee; E 85 15 11**
3. **Proverbs 28:21; Romans 2:11**
4. **National Conference of State Legislatures – Nepotism Restrictions:**
<https://www.ncsl.org/research/ethics/50-state-table-nepotism-restrictions.aspx>

Racism

1. **NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 – C 48 Human Relations: C 48 10 Official Position #1 –#4, #6**
2. **Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020: Non-Discrimination Policy**
3. **1 John 2:11; 1 John 3:15**
4. **Equal Employment Opportunity Council (EEOC) – Race/Color Discrimination:**
<https://www.eeoc.gov/racecolor-discrimination>
5. **How to be an Anti-Racist, by Ibram X. Kendi:** <https://www.ibramxkendi.com/how-to-be-an-antiracist-1>

Staffing

1. **NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 – E 81 Employment and Productivity: E 81 05 Employment**
NAD Working Policy 2018/2019 – C 48 Human Relations: C 48 10 Official Position #1
2. **Auburn Adventist Academy School Handbook 2019/2020 – Counseling Policy**

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3. Titus 1:9
4. School Principal Race and the Hiring and Retention of Racially Diverse Teachers:
<https://edworkingpapers.org/sites/default/files/ai19-59.pdf>