



May 13, 2022

## FABSE- Advocacy in Action

The Fairfax Alliance of Black School Educators (FABSE) supports the Supreme Court's recent decision to stay the current admissions protocol of Virginia Governor's School, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST). FABSE continues its support of the school's stated mission in providing "challenging learning focused on math, science, and technology, inspiring joy from the prospect of discovery, fostering innovation and shared interests of humanity".

As an update to our position on this matter from December 2020, FABSE is affirmed and inspired by the School Board and Executive Leadership of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and their continued commitment to center equity and improve diversity while upholding equal protection principles. TJHSST is broadly recognized as one of the best schools in our nation and was recently ranked by U.S. News <sup>1</sup>as #1 of over 24,000 public high schools in 50 states and the District of Columbia making it also #1 in the state of Virginia. The work and vision of those elected and appointed to serve in the best interests of *all our* students, across racial and socio-economic groups, across home cultures and neighborhoods, across the five FCPS school regions and Fairfax County is manifesting.

FABSE affirms changes made to make admissions a more equitable process, addressing socio-historic practices resulting in disproportionate representation of marginalized student groups. While the current admissions criteria stand as the lower courts continue to hear arguments, there is a freshman class of TJHSST scholars significantly different in representation than years past. The class of 2025 represents a 7% increase in the Black student population from 1%, a number once too statistically insignificant to count. Hispanic representation has also seen an increase, from 3% to 11%. <sup>2</sup>Despite a decrease, Asian students continue to maintain majority enrollment, now representing 54% of the student body (from 73%). These numbers are still disproportionate to the Division's demographic make-up of students, but we champion this as movement in the right direction. As of June 2021, Black students made up 10%, Hispanic students 27%, and Asian students 20% within all FCPS schools.<sup>3</sup>

FABSE is proud to call FCPS home, with full knowledge that what is challenging about equity work is that on its "face" it often appears "unfair". Division Leadership, however, has maintained

<sup>1</sup> [U.S. News](#)

<sup>2</sup> [USA Today](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Fairfax County Public Schools](#)





course. This is what our system needs - this is what our students, families, staff, and community deserve. FABSE understands equity work is not easy. FABSE also understands, learning, teaching, and working within an inequitable system is not easy either. There is no ease in working twice as hard, with half of the resources for the same opportunity based on race, or any other social identity construct.

FABSE stands with FCPS in centering equity and advancing diversity and inclusion. Not only do we celebrate the immediate outcome, but we support the continued work necessary for sustainable progress. Thank you for thinking of those you might not have, nor may ever hear from - but whose voices are no less important, whose futures are no less impacted. Educating generations is no small feat, though all has yet to be won, there are many things to be proud of. Increased diversity not only benefits those that may have fallen through the "gifted" and "advanced academic" cracks but those that would have missed out on having them as peers and students.

So much of learning is influenced by how we see parts of ourselves valued symbolically - representation that is authentic and proportionate affirms belonging and opportunity. It is our responsibility to ensure that factors such as race, ethnicity, location, and/or socio-economic status do not become predictors of students' academic success. Where a student comes from or looks like, should not be a barrier to how far they can go, the pathways available to them, how they are seen, or the ways they are treated.

History continues to demonstrate that education alone is not the great equalizer. Equity, however, offers the structural integrity required to bridge racialized gaps towards equality. It is evident that efforts and commitments have been made by FCPS and the School Board. FABSE looks forward to our continued partnership with the FCPS School Board, division leadership and other affinity groups as we collectively work against the systemic and status-quo practices hopefully leading us all to ending legacies of disparity.

Respectfully,

The Fairfax Alliance of Black School Educators

