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PRESS RELEASE

City's Largest Parent-Led Coalition Released Report Exposing Absence of People of Color in NYC K-5 Curricula

New York, NY (February 20th, 2019) - The Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ), New York City's largest public school parent coalition, held a rally to release a comprehensive report on the lack of representation of students of color in NYC's elementary school curricula, and continue to call on the Department of Education (DOE) to create Culturally Responsive Curriculum in New York City schools.

New York City has committed publicly to increasing diversity and integration in public schools, but has not addressed the absence of authors and characters of color in the curriculum. CEJ's new report analyzes more than 700 books across three commonly-used book lists and seven K-5th grade English Language Arts (ELA) curricula and found that:

- While 85% of NYC public school students are students of color, 84% of the authors of the elementary school curriculum are white
- Of the 71 authors in the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project K-5 grade curriculum, there is not a single Latinx author or cover character
- Of the 140 books on the NYC Department of Education's *Reads 365* elementary school list, 118 are by white authors
- Of the 82 books in the Great Minds K-5 grade curriculum, there is only one Asian author
- There is a high likelihood that a student of color can graduate 5th grade having almost never read a book by an author of their own cultural background; Latinx and Asian students can graduate elementary school having almost never read a book *about* someone of their cultural background
- Between kindergarten and 5th grade, many NYC students read more books with animals as characters than people of color as characters

This can be extremely damaging to students' sense of self and engagement with school.

To address these disparities, CEJ called on the DOE to:

- Create a culturally responsive English Language Arts curriculum for all students, from kindergarten through 8th grade
- Cut ties with all curriculum/book vendors whose materials are not reflective of NYC student demographics in their content and authorship, and consistent with CRE principles

"We need a culturally responsive K-5 ELA curriculum in New York City, and we need it now," said NYC Council Finance Committee Chair Daniel Dromm (D-Jackson Heights, Elmhurst).

"NYC children need to see themselves and their cultures reflected in classroom instruction and learning material. It is high time for the DOE move away from curricula, book lists and textbooks that do not adequately serve our diverse and vibrant public school system. I therefore stand with CEJ in calling on the Department to implement Culturally Responsive education in NYC immediately."

-NYC Councilmember Daniel Dromm

"In a city as diverse as New York City, the lack of diversity in the school curriculum is shameful. I support CEJ's work and will continue to call on the City and the State to pass policy and legislation to address this issue. New York must begin to craft culturally responsive curriculum and cut ties with curriculum and publishing companies that refuse to properly diversify their curriculum and booklists."

-Assemblymember Diana Richardson, lead sponsor of NY State's Assembly Bill A36488 for culturally responsive education

"Young people in Black and Brown neighborhoods are tired of picking up textbooks and not seeing themselves in pictures that promote the richness of their ancestry. NYC youth shouldn't have to wait until college to learn about the history, culture and literature of their communities. We support CEJ's call for a diverse and culturally responsive curriculum from kindergarten through high school."

-Roberto Cabañas, Urban Youth Collaborative

"Diverse curriculum that represents students' cultural backgrounds is an essential component of school integration. Schools that teach Eurocentric curriculum to a diverse student body are mis-educating all their students and upholding the spirit of segregation. New York Appleseed is proud to stand with CEJ in calling for Culturally Responsive Curriculum for every student, in every class, in every grade, every day."

-Matt Gonzales, New York Appleseed

"The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families stands with CEJ and other parents, students, and advocates to call for more culturally responsive education for our 1.1 million public school students. As the nation's only pan-Asian children's policy advocacy organization, CACF believes that it benefits all of our children to be exposed to diverse characters and authors in their English Language Arts curriculum. We are grateful for CEJ's analysis and, unfortunately, were not surprised by their findings - that an Asian Pacific Americans are grossly underrepresented in the ELA curricula and book lists. As a community, we are often left

invisible. Our young people have to deal with stereotypes of the model minority and perpetual foreigner. DOE can do better to ensure strong culturally responsive educational frameworks in every classroom and materials that reflect the beauty of our City's diversity.”

-Vanessa Leung, Coalition for Asian-American Children and Families

“Almost every kid in my classes growing up was Latinx, but we read very few books about people who shared our background. It is crucial to understand that when the curriculum fails to represent the culture of the students, the students fail to see themselves as the heroes and changemakers of their own lives.”

- Dulce Marquez, recent NYC schools graduate and member of Teens Take Charge

“We the students of IntegrateNYC stand for a curriculum that teaches students about their history, encourages them to express themselves and be proud of their culture. We stand with CEJ to say the DOE needs to create a culturally responsive curriculum for every student, every class, every grade, everyday.”

- Matt Diaz, Executive High School Director, IntegrateNYC