**#DitchThe Gap Coalition** urges you and your family, friends, and organizations, to tell JCPS to:

1) make narrowing learning gaps between lower and higher performing groups ( i.e., between each marginalized gap group and the more privileged groups”) a part of the mission statement, and;

2) put measureable reduction targets for these gaps-- across grades and performance levels-- in the plan to measure that progress.

We want a clear commitment in the plan—as clear as “20/20” vision.

If it is not in the final draft, tell the Board members to **vote NO on the Vision** at the November 9 Board meeting.

Contact your JCPS Board member, Board Chair David Jones, Board Strategy Group Chair Lisa Willner, Superintendent Hargens, and Director of Strategy Jonathan Lowe.

Don’t know which Board member is yours? Find Your Member here: **http://www.jefferson.k12.ky.us/Board/Index.html**

Here are the individual e-mails:

District 1, **DianePorter** **porterschoolboard@gmail.com**

**District 2 and Board Chair, David Jone, Jr** **david.jonesjr@jefferson.kyschools.us**

**District 3, Stephanie Horne** **steph.horne@jefferson.kyschools.us**

**District 4, Chuck Haddaway** **chuck.haddaway@jefferson.kyschools.us**

**District 5, Linda Duncan** **lindadduncan@live.com**

**District 6, Lisa Willner** **lgwillner@gmail.com**

**District 7, Chris Brady** **jcps.boe7@jefferson.kyschools.us**

**Superintendent Donna Hargens donna.hargens@jefferson.kyschools.us**

**Director of Strategy Jonathan Lowe** **jonathan.lowe@jefferson.kyschools.us**

**If you have computer access, you can also e-mail through “submit a letter” at DearJCPS.com.**

**#DitchTheGap Coalition: Facts and Talking Points—**

**Gap reduction in JCPS**

* **The draft Vision and Mission are generic .** Any private school might use the same language. More than 150 years ago, Horace Mann said that universal public education is the “***balance wheel***” of American society. That still must be JCPS’ mission as a public system. Twelve (+) years in JCPS must reduce the learning and skills gaps compared with advantaged students and create a more level competitive field at graduation. Failing that, JCPS is part of institutionalizing the race and class inequity that persists in our socie*ty* and community*.*
* **There are two ways of looking at gaps, and JCPS needs to address both at the district level.** The initial Vision 2020 draft has a target for increasing overall gap group proficiency% toward 100%. That is how the state defines “gaps”. **Measuring that is useful to move learning forward for the gap group.** In the last three years, gap group proficiency% increased only 25% of the way toward its target. As a result, the Board saw that it needed to make changes to move faster toward its ultimate goal of 100%. But what if it still advances more slowly than the nongap groups’ increases (which it did)?
* **There is a second, more commonly understood and even more troubling, version of achievement gap: the learning gap between different gap groups—by race, ethnicity, family income, etc—and more advantaged students** (“nongap” students, most of whom are white students from more affluent families). Those gap numbers are harder to find and calculate in the state and national test data, and have not been reported on by JCPS or the media. “Nongap” students this year reached proficiency at rates 2-8 times the rates for the different gap groups. And the gaps have only held steady or widened over the last three years. **Clear reduction targets for that gap would show the Board and public whether all the good initiatives (“equitable access”) are actually working (the more important issue–“equitable outcomes”)** . **If not, the Board would know to respond by rearranging and/or adding budgets and resources.**
* **There is precedent for addressing both gaps simultaneously.** Seattle Public Schools Policy #0030 (8/15/2012) on Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity says in part:

***“…Seattle Public schools will: Raise the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students; …”***

To close these gaps between groups, we need improvement in the so-called “gap” groups at a faster pace than in higher- performing students. This does not mean giving up all improvements for higher-performing students.

* **“What would a commitment be without metrics…?” --Superintendent Donna Hargens (February, 2015)** JCPS leadership --in concert with teachers and other experts-- must research available alternatives (e.g., KPREP, NAEP, etc) or—later-- broader indicators of demonstrated student progress in learning to create targets for gap reduction across groups, grades and performance levels. Relying the intense, once-a-year state testing (KPREP) results may be a requirement currently imposed on JCPS, but they should be used only as an interim option. It makes no sense to enshrine these high-stakes measures for the next five years, given Vision2020 plans to define more authentic, broader learning assessments within that period.
* **Isn’t it all about preparing an educational plan and resources for each child?** That is absolutely necessary, but not sufficient. Gap children by definition come less prepared to learn and burdened by ongoing problems because of their race, living in poverty, etc. Equity is providing each gap child with the additional help to catch up fully. Implementation, though, can be and is being held back by inadequate resources at the school and classroom level. **Good plans for gap students that can’t be implemented fully would show up at the district level as increasing or persistently steady gaps in group outcomes. JCPS can then move/add resources to move toward equity.**

****

****