

**From:** [REDACTED]@jpsk12.org>  
**To:** Kesha Hamilton  
**Subject:** Re: Questions about  
**Date:** Sunday, March 7, 2021 10:23:01 AM

I have not forgotten Kesha,

As I mentioned last week, we are pulling this material together as our work over the last seven years touches the entire District. I will have this information to you as soon as we finish gathering it. I know you have lots of questions, but we are going to have to work on a schedule to perhaps collect and submit those questions once a month and I will return them once a month. I realize there are lots of things you do not know about Jackson Public Schools and the work we have done and are doing, but I can't retask the team or interrupt their work multiple times per week. Perhaps we can create a working document in Google that you and other Board members can feel comfortable placing your questions on and then as they are answered everyone would have access to the same information.

Talk to you soon,



[REDACTED]  
Jackson Public Schools

*Welcome to Jackson Public Schools - Where Community Comes Together!*

On Sat, Mar 6, 2021 at 12:17 PM Kesha Hamilton <[kesha.hamilton@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:kesha.hamilton@[REDACTED])> wrote:  
Greetings [REDACTED]

There was a lot going on last week so you may have forgotten to send this compilation over.

I'm looking to understand what you've done to advance racial equity, diversity and inclusion (DEI) within the district. What policies you've changed, procedures you've adjusted, practices you (and all staff) now engage in and those you (and all staff) no longer engage in.

Including the training in the area of DEI that you have attended and or that you've sent staff too (and which staff that might be). And when.

I'm interested in reading your 'laurels' but I'm really interested to know how you've been intentional about addressing systemic disparities, your success, your attempts or even what you may now be planning.

I'd also like to know if you've made any suggestions to the board in the area of racial equity and or DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion) throughout your time here.

It would be interesting to know who on staff is making these types of suggestions to you. Does anyone, not just the cabinet, but does any staff member approach you about initiatives regarding DEI - how often does that occur, does it occur?

I'm looking to understand the culture that you've created - along with specific info on the subject matter (racial equity) - with staff (teachers, TAs, etc)

Enjoy your weekend and perhaps you can have this to me by Tuesday or Wednesday next week March 10th or 11th?

Thank you,

Kesha Hamilton

On Thu, Mar 4, 2021 at 4:43 PM Kesha Hamilton <[kesha.hamilton@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:kesha.hamilton@[REDACTED])> wrote:

Thank you [REDACTED]

I appreciate being able to review these and look forward to reading your compilation - I imagine it would be fun when you look back at the many things you've done and may have forgotten about.

Talk to you tomorrow morning,

Kesha Hamilton (she, her)  
JPS Board Trustee  
Jackson Public Schools  
[kesha.hamilton@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:kesha.hamilton@[REDACTED])

"Where Community Comes Together"



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**"BOARD MEMBER ALERT:** This email is not for interactive discussion purposes. The recipient should not forward it to any other individual or copy a reply to other board members."

On Thu, Mar 4, 2021 at 2:25 PM [REDACTED]@jpsk12.org> wrote:

Kesha,

Attached you will find the communication data that you have requested. This will be shared at our meeting on Monday night. My first day was June 1st, 2014. I am working on compiling the list of work we have done since then, which is kind of a fun process. I will try to get this information to you by the end of next week. I am attaching interview questions for a few different categories, so that you can get an idea of what we ask. We do have a general application packet and I will get that sent over to you, although our professional staff submit resumes with their letter of interest.



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On Tue, Mar 2, 2021 at 2:27 PM Kesha Hamilton <kesh.hamilton@jpsk12.org> wrote:  
Thank you for the update.

Are you able to send an updated 2-way communication feedback?

I mentioned earlier that I'd like to see our application for employment - do we have a general application that everyone has to submit before being considered? Can you send me that? Or do we have an application per category (job duties) that we have? I'm hoping to get an idea of what we look for in our employees when we're seeing new hires. Can you send me a couple of applications to review?

Also, you've mentioned a few times that since you came here (can you confirm what year you came), that you've intentionally placed a focus on being diverse and inclusive - can you take some time to detail what specifics you've done and implemented that have added to cultural awareness, diversity (of staff, curriculum, policies), inclusion (at the administration level) and belonging (culture of acceptance for populations that are Black and Brown). I'd like to know what you've done, what you've attempted, what was successful and what is ongoing - I'm prepping for my goals for the superintendent and would like to understand what you've already done (that was different whether successful or not) toward Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Thank you,

Kesha Hamilton (she, her)  
JPS Board Trustee  
Jackson Public Schools  
kesh.hamilton@jpsk12.org

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On Tue, Mar 2, 2021 at 8:27 AM Jeff Beal <jbeal@jpsk12.org> wrote:  
Good morning.

Absolutely we can meet our counsellors. We will make a point of visiting them as we are able to continue our site visits. I wish I could tell you all the things that they do or all of the training they have had, but we can certainly visit with them more about their practices. We have not, nor do we require any cultural awareness training or diversity training for any of our employees as a condition of hire. We can create a program of professional development for the 2021-2022 school year to implement this training across all of our buildings. The Michigan Legislature is currently holding up the distribution of the Esser II federal grants. This is worth several million dollars to Jackson Public Schools and will allow us to hire more staff for next year, including counsellors and social workers. The money is being used as leverage right now to attempt to force the governor to give up her rights to issue executive orders or health orders from the Health Department. While I do anticipate this stalemate will end and the money will eventually flow to the schools, we are unable to apply and draw down these dollars as of yet.

We continue to have our counsellor position posted and will be looking to fill that position and several others in the coming weeks. I am anticipating needing to hire between 25-30 positions between today and August 1st. We are slated to participate in an all university virtual job fair on March 16th, we will be participating in another virtual job fair in April and another in June. Jackson Public Schools is being very aggressive in this marketplace with signing bonuses and contracts available for successful candidates. We know that there are critical shortages across every position in the education field and we want to make certain that we are able to hire the best candidates before they find homes in other districts.

See you in a few,



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On Mon, Mar 1, 2021 at 8:42 PM Kesha Hamilton <kesh.hamilton@jpsk12.org> wrote:  
Greetings

There are a couple more items from this email chain that I'd like us to follow up on. I'm quarantined for a few weeks but once this is over - hopefully I'll be physically able - toward the end of March I'd like to be introduced to our counselors and social workers. Eventually I'd like to learn more about what they do (from them) maybe we can plan a 5 or 10 minute chat with each of them.

I'd like to know from you - what diversity and cultural awareness do we require of our counselors and social workers, if any? How often are they recertified - if we require a certification of this sort from them?

You mentioned in December that you were watching the next round of stimulus (please see your comments in the above or below email chain) and once you reviewed it you would look to add more counselors, my indication was more Black and Brown counselors - how is the search going? What did you

find by way of the stimulus?

Also could you send me the updated 2 way communication feedback?

Thank you,

Kesha Hamilton (she, her)  
JPS Board Trustee  
Jackson Public Schools  
[kesha.hamilton@jpsk12.org](mailto:kesha.hamilton@jpsk12.org)

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On Tue, Jan 5, 2021 at 9:36 PM [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@jpsk12.org> wrote:  
Kesha,

I apologize if you took offense to my email. As I have stated several times, I am open and interested to hearing your ideas and suggestions for better reaching a group that traditionally does not participate in the education process or that may feel disenfranchised or unheard. I look forward to your solutions and expertise in this process. When you identify an area of concern, remember that we are a team and providing ideas and solutions is part of the responsibilities that come with the position.

I have included our monthly 2 way communication data as an attachment to this email. We typically talk with between 80-90% of our students and families every week. There are buildings that perform in the 90's, mostly elementary, which is to be expected as parent involvement drops off drastically as students reach the high school. The direct answer to your question is unequivocally, "yes" we hear and regularly communicate with all of our parents including minority and disadvantaged students. "No", we have not heard from them with the concerns you shared, "*I am seeing a lot of what I am hearing from parents (they're really struggling with the work load/requirements)*". I apologize if you did not see my answer. When students and parents have a concern about workload or requirements they speak to the teacher and building principal to work through the challenges of needing more time or access to the appropriate resources. When students are failing or falling behind, we have systems in place to reach out to them. I believe William will be sharing a new program we are participating in to further these efforts, but simply put, we do not ignore or fail to reach out to struggling students and their families. We have multiple layers of safety nets built into our buildings. I do not believe that you have a clear picture of Jackson Public Schools or the challenges we tackle every day. I am looking forward to working with you and introducing you to the work that has taken place and continues to take place in every building across JPS. If you have a community member reach out to you to share that their student is having a hard time keeping up, please forward me the name and I will follow up with the principal and teacher to make certain the parent/ student gets the help they need.

I am a champion for all of JPS and have been addressing issues of race and inequity for years. I am very proud of the work we have done and know that we are just getting started with a long road to go. I have followed your campaign and I do not believe that we are stronger as a District when we sew dissent in our community. We work tirelessly to overcome negative impressions and create an education system where our students feel valued and supported. When you tear down our work, you not only damage the District and our efforts to reverse the school of choice exodus, but your message to our students damages them, our children for the most part love JPS and feel safe and cared for by our staff. Our work has improved opportunities and outcomes for all of our students. You are correct that our students need access to counselors capable of looking back at them with their own eyes, but you fail to recognize all of the diversity we have in our counseling ranks or across our District for that matter. You imply that our counselors fail to meet the needs of our students when daily they go above and beyond to service those most in need. These folks do great work and I would ask that before you pass judgment, you get to know the District, where we were and where we are going. I would ask that you meet our staffs and visit our programs to understand the work and the efforts of people in the trenches every day. I believe you will find that we have a lot to be proud of, that great work is being done and that you can be a part of this work and these efforts.

I apologize if my questions about Paragon are uncomfortable, I will not be the only voice asking them, our staff will question your motivations for wanting to improve a system that you don't send your students to and when you are critical your motivations will be suspect. My questions are legitimate and I am looking forward to very real conversations about schools of choice and your decisions. Examining the reasons parents choose to send their students to another District, even though JPS offers so much more than that District is vitally important to the long term health of Jackson Public Schools. Your voice, efforts and leadership can provide a very real symbol that the best education in Jackson comes from JPS.

You should know that I do not judge our efforts based solely on our county neighbors and am happy to compare our students with any District anywhere. If someone is doing it better, I am thrilled to implement their successes here. In the schools of choice world, we deal with those around us and that is a fact that impacts our budget and ability to provide the services our students and families need. I am an educator, a businessman, a community leader and passionate about building a stronger Jackson with more opportunities for everyone.

I truly am looking forward to the years of work in front of us and commit daily to make Jackson Public Schools a better place for all of our children. It is my hope that we will grow into a positive collaborative relationship.

[REDACTED]  
Jackson Public Schools  
[REDACTED]

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On Tue, Jan 5, 2021 at 4:45 PM Kesha Hamilton <[kesha.hamilton@jpsk12.org](mailto:kesha.hamilton@jpsk12.org)> wrote:  
So this is the [REDACTED] everyone has been talking about. I see.

**Another question** - You followed my campaign and my pages. Review them again.

When we compare ourselves by ourselves and not compare ourselves to those we should be like - we end up missing the excellence we think we've achieved because of the incorrect comparison. The comparison is similar to when a bully prides themselves on being better than everyone but only because they haven't met their match yet.

**More on my question** - I did not make an assumption. I replied based off your direct answer and used your direct words. Since we're doing such incredible work and have so many 'points of contact' it may have been more appropriate for you to say - I don't know and I will seek out the information from these 'points of contact' as opposed to getting off topic. I'll paste the questions you didn't answer and since we have so many 'points of contact' **perhaps you can get a direct answer from them so that you can answer my question** as you promised you would.

*Have we heard from parents of our low income students? And specifically what are we hearing from those who are usually not heard (our marginalized and low income/poverty stricken group/the 60% group). This is where those 'points of contact' should come in handy. And if we don't have a 'bead' on this (if we're not hearing from them) - I'd expect us to be very concerned with 'Why' aren't we hearing from them?*

*I'm sure you know we need to be very concerned about the educational impact this is especially having on this group. I'd love to understand how this group is doing and what/how we're addressing the needs they specify.*

*Black and Brown, poor and rural students should especially be on our radar because we're serious about ensuring that we're educating and addressing the needs of this group. I'd like to see us proactively look to hear from this group.*

**Involving parents in their students education** - You've got to reach them first. And as yet I've not heard how or if we are. Looking forward to what you may find out so that we can strategize on this.

**Social Workers/Counselors** - We agree - we don't only need more, we need a lot more and we need the environment they come into to be conducive and healthy to them staying and being able to work well while here.

Also and again comparing JPS to other districts in our county is unfair to JPS. Of course we have the most diverse - most Black and Brown individuals live in Jackson and far too many of them fall in the category of poor as well - though other districts appropriately may have us beat in the 'rural' category. We do ourselves a disservice to say we're the most diverse and simply patting ourselves on the back. Where else are poor Black and Brown individuals who live in the city going to go for their education? We're the most diverse by default not because we've created such an atmosphere that diverse individuals/families are choosing us. On the contrary they often times are leaving us. But of course we're the most diverse, by default. And have social workers/counselors who can speak to the needs of this niche is another area to keep on your radar.

And I look forward to Friday's check in and review of the agenda - maybe you'll have some specific answers to my questions.

Enjoy your evening,

Kesha Hamilton

On Tue, Jan 5, 2021 at 2:44 PM [REDACTED]@jpsk12.org wrote:

Thank you Kesha,

Please find my responses below

Greetings [REDACTED] And Happy New Year!

**Onboarding** - Thank you for setting this up. See you on Friday.

**Equity Report/NEWA vs. Illuminate/Academic Performance** - Thank you. I look forward to connecting with them.

**Mental Health of Staff & Students** - I look forward to this.

**Another Question** - I am aware of my limitations while also aware of where my power lies. We've had a conversation already on the chain that you feel is best for our JPS community to follow. I am a parent, a teacher, was an administrator and fully understand where and how things are accomplished - it's exactly why I chose to run at the Board level.

Kesha, I was unaware that you were a teacher or an administrator. I looked for your credentials in the State database and was unable to locate them. I would love to know more about your background and experiences so that we can build on this common ground. I would like to know more about your understanding of where and how things are accomplished and on a more personal note what drew you to run for the Jackson Public Schools Board of Education.

I actually am here to ensure (as much as my 1/7 will allow) that the needs of our JPS community be met in a more inclusive manner.

I am very excited about your ability to help us reach more of our community. One area that I am most interested in concerns our charter school competition. One of my primary tools for reaching our community has been a sense of over communication. I would love your perspective on which communication strategies we are using are most effective and which ones are missing the mark. Specifically, I would love to know what the community has shared with you that is working and if there are better avenues, what they would be. We would love to create more open dialog with our parents and targeting our resources to help parents help their students is a high priority in what we do.

I would love your perspective on what needs we have in our community that you feel are not being met or more specifically that drew you to Paragon. I would love to know which practices they are doing that JPS missed and what diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies you have found successful there.

Therefore, I'd appreciate going forward if you'd refrain from beginning and completing statements that begin with 'take it with a'. Those statements are offensive and condescending - whether we intend them to be or not. It also shifts from the issue at hand and I appreciate when we can stay on task. I'd also appreciate if we didn't have more conversations on the point of addressing statements that include 'take it with a'.

**More on my question** - I understand that you're not hearing anything from the particular demographic that I've asked about. Black and Brown, poor and rural students should especially be on our radar because we're serious about ensuring that we're educating and addressing the needs of this group.

As a member of the Board of Education, you are representing all of our students. When I say that, "I have not seen or heard from parents struggling

with workload", it is not just that I have not heard from Black or Brown students, it is because teachers and principals are the front line communicators with our parents and they resolve most of the issues and concerns before they reach my desk. Your assumption that we are not hearing from one demographic or another is incorrect and misrepresents the incredible work being done by more than 400 educators throughout our system to have multiple points of communication and contact with students and parents each week. We routinely reach out to students and parents that are struggling to complete assignments, attend class, or access information they need, but if there is a specific strategy you would like us to try, please feel free to share it as a possible solution.

We're doing well with feeding all, and we've begun well with the WIFI buses and we've done well with reducing the hours at the high school and shortening the videos - how might we hear directly from the demographic I inquired about?

I am open to your suggestions as to how we can get parents to be more involved in their child's education. I am open to your feedback on what we are doing and what other schools and communities are doing better than us. JPS is always looking for opportunities and ways we can encourage more involvement from our parents. I am looking forward to tapping your expertise and background in this area.

**Social Workers/Counselors** - I appreciate knowing that we share a common desire with regard to more social workers/counselors. If this stimulus round is positive toward obtaining more - I'd love to see us add Black and Brown social workers/counselors who can more accurately and appropriately address the needs of the students who make up a large portion of our district but who don't see much of themselves represented - especially within this area.

In this area, we agree. While JPS does in fact have several social workers and counselors that are Black or Brown, more is always better. We have an opening at Jackson High School today if you know of someone looking for a position, please have them call me. I find that like teachers there are not enough students going into the field of education let alone with the diversity to meet our needs. This is a national crisis and one that everyone is desperately seeking to answer. JPS has actively recruited from across the country to fill vacancies, with competitive salaries, signing bonuses and moving allowances. Sadly colleges are seeing fewer and fewer students of any demographic going into education. I am hopeful that you will help me create a "grow our own" program to encourage and provide a clear path for our students to earn their degrees at no charge and with a JPS position waiting for them. As a point of reference Michigan State University, once a top 5 education college in the country has seen its program shrink to 1/3 of its size over the last decade. When reaching out to Central Michigan University looking for students graduating with a Math degree there were only 4 students graduating with a degree in education certified to teach math this year. Please know that we work with many colleges and universities directly to create a more direct pipeline from their classrooms to our workforce. Where once schools had stacks of resume's for each position we are limited to a handful or none (this is both a state and national conversation).

We have the most diverse workforce of any of our county schools, the most diverse leadership team of any district in the county and we provide the greatest opportunities and access to resources of any school in the county. I am always looking for ways to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of our students and look forward to your input as to how another District or school is doing it better, areas that our community feels need more attention, and ways that we can improve our competitive edge with other county districts that would steal resources away from JPS while offering so little in the way of diversity, equity, or inclusive practices. The answer is not simply that we need more. You made a choice to send your students to Paragon even though they don't begin to offer a fraction of what JPS is able to provide. Many times, more is not an option or the answer. Helping our students make the most of what we do have and take advantage of the resources that are offered is critical to determine where the missing elements are and where shortfalls exist.

**Committees** - I look forward to working with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and also our upcoming conversation regarding the other committees.

I will see you on Friday and look forward to hearing your ideas, strategies and solutions that will help Jackson Public Schools provide a stronger education and greater opportunities for our students and community.

[REDACTED]  
Jackson Public Schools

*Welcome to Jackson Public Schools - Where Community Comes Together!*

On Tue, Jan 5, 2021 at 10:46 AM Kesha Hamilton <kesha.hamilton@[REDACTED]> wrote:  
Greetings [REDACTED] And Happy New Year!

**Onboarding** - Thank you for setting this up. See you on Friday.

**Equity Report/NEWA vs. Illuminate/Academic Performance** - Thank you. I look forward to connecting with them.

**Mental Health of Staff & Students** - I look forward to this.

**Another Question** - I am aware of my limitations while also aware of where my power lies. We've had a conversation already on the chain that you feel is best for our JPS community to follow. I am a parent, a teacher, was an administrator and fully understand where and how things are accomplished - it's exactly why I chose to run at the Board level.

I actually am here to ensure (as much as my 1/7 will allow) that the needs of our JPS community be met in a more inclusive manner. Therefore, I'd appreciate going forward if you'd refrain from beginning and completing statements that begin with 'take it with a'. Those statements are offensive and condescending - whether we intend them to be or not. It also shifts from the issue at hand and I appreciate when we can stay on task. I'd also appreciate if we didn't have more conversations on the point of addressing statements that include 'take it with a'.

**More on my question** - I understand that you're not hearing anything from the particular demographic that I've asked about. Black and Brown, poor and rural students should especially be on our radar because we're serious about ensuring that we're educating and addressing the needs of this group.

We're doing well with feeding all, and we've begun well with the WIFI buses and we've done well with reducing the hours at the high school and shortening the videos - how might we hear directly from the demographic I inquired about? I imagine that the first trimester grades will tell us a lot, but I'd like to see us proactively look to hear from this group.

**Social Workers/Counselors** - I appreciate knowing that we share a common desire with regard to more social workers/counselors. If this stimulus round is positive toward obtaining more - I'd love to see us add Black and Brown social workers/counselors who can more accurately and appropriately address the needs of the students who make up a large portion of our district but who don't see much of themselves represented -

especially within this area.

**Committees** - I look forward to working with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and also our upcoming conversation regarding the other committees.

Thank you and Enjoy your Day,

Kesha Hamilton

On Wed, Dec 23, 2020 at 9:01 AM [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@jpsk12.org> wrote:  
Good morning Kesha,

I will send you a calendar invite for Friday mornings at 9:00. I too will have to shift a couple of these as the County Supts also conduct business on Fridays, but we can work through those calendar dates with [REDACTED] once January rolls around.

**Onboarding** - Yes, I'd love a weekly check in and a once monthly review of agenda. How is Friday morning at 9:00am for the weekly? (I may on occasion ask to shift this time depending on my day job but right now this looks good for my schedule.) *Sounds like we have a plan!*

**Equity Report/NEWA vs. Illuminate/Academic Performance** - I look forward to speaking with and working closely with William and Julie on these and the School Improvement Committee. *I have let them know and they are looking forward to working with you in 2021.*

**Mental Health of Staff & Students** - How are these individuals (support staff personnel, para professionals, building secretaries, principals and either counselling, social work, school psychologist, success coaches or direct case workers) conducting their duties during COVID? *While some knocking on doors has occurred this year, most of these services have happened through zoom or over the phone. Once we get back up and running you and I will pop around the District to talk to our various counselors and social workers.*

**Another question** - Have we heard from parents of our low income students? I am seeing a lot of what I am hearing from parents (they're really struggling with the workload/requirements) - are we hearing any of that from anywhere? And specifically what are we hearing from those who are usually not heard (our marginalized and low income/poverty stricken group/the 60% group). *I have not seen or heard from parents struggling with workload. We have made several adjustments to the number and length of videos since the beginning of the year as well as the tatypes of assignments in order to make distance learning more manageable. Typically, parents would talk to the teacher of the building principal and then [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] before it would hit my desk. I have intervened on a couple of situations where students were struggling to log into zoom. I have facilitated a couple of parent teacher conferences where the student was not doing their work, but as a general rule, those typically get handled at the building level. This is my advice, so please take this with the good spirit it is intended for, when a parent calls - ou or let's you know they have a concern, find out the student name, the building or teacher and then forward that message to myself, [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. We will follow up with the concern and see that it is resolved. This gets you out of the middle of trying to resolve a concern with only part of the information. We will let you know when we have taken care of the issue and you can then follow up with the individual. Often times the first line in the conversation should be, "have you talked to the teacher, I will have them call you"*

I'm sure you know we need to be very concerned about the educational impact this is especially having on this group. I'd love to understand how this group is doing and what/how we're addressing the needs they specify.

**Social Workers/Counselors** - I'd love to see more counselors and an emphasis on Black and Brown individuals, we don't have enough per student. *I don't disagree with you and I don't know that we can ever have enough, if such a thing exists. I am watching the current round of stimulus and will be very interested in how this can help supplement our needs.*

**Committees** - I'm very interested in the School Improvement Committee and I'd like to understand what other options (committees) are out there, what their purpose is to determine if I'd like to sit on another. I might be interested in the policy committee. *Is there a committee dedicated to expulsions/discipline oversight/policy? If so, I'd be highly interested in it also. We can talk about committees one on one in the new year. The policy committee oversees all of our policies. They work on the language before it is taken to the full Board. From there the Board goes through 1st reading and 2nd reading over 2 months before adopting any new policy, so if there is language to address we have lots of time to get it right. All of our Board policies can be found on our website and the student specific policies are located in the 5000 section. We don't have a committee that works specifically on expulsions as we don't have expulsion hearings as you might think of them. We shifted away from that shortly after my arrival. We do have discipline hearings where expulsions are an option for a very specific set of behaviors (weapons, striking a teacher), but these are few and far between (especially this year). [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] conduct the due process hearing and work with the committee to review the evidence brought by the buildings and the student/ families before rendering a decision. I only come into the process when there is an appeal that comes before the entire Board. Typically each Board member takes a turn and is on a rotation to cycle through these discipline hearings. In this fashion they have a say and a voice in the process, while providing an opportunity for appeal to the full Board. The student code of conduct located in our handbooks are reviewed every year in June with an adoption in July. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will present the handbooks (elementary and secondary) for review as a discussion item with the recommended changes highlighted and the old language crossed out for comparison as a discussion item. In July after you have had a chance to review the material and ask questions, the handbooks are brought back before the Board for approval.*

*We do monitor suspensions and expulsions every year and have drastically reduced the number of days of suspensions and expulsions over the last several years. This would be good to review when you join the school improvement committee as we have been actively working on this specific topic as it relates to our minority and disadvantaged students. I am glad you want to be part of this work!*

*Enjoy the holidays and have a safe and happy New Year!*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Jackson Public Schools

*Welcome to Jackson Public Schools - Where Community Comes Together!*

On Mon, Dec 21, 2020 at 2:45 PM Kesha Hamilton <kesha.hamilton@[REDACTED]> wrote:  
Greetings [REDACTED]

Thank you again for such a thorough response. I really appreciate it.

**Onboarding** - Yes, I'd love a weekly check in and a once monthly review of agenda. How is Friday morning at 9:00am for the weekly? (I may on occasion ask to shift this time depending on my day job but right now this looks good for my schedule.)

**Equity Report/NEWA vs. Illuminate/Academic Performance** - I look forward to speaking with and working closely with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] on these and the School Improvement Committee.

**Mental Health of Staff & Students** - How are these individuals (support staff personnel, para professionals, building secretaries, principals and either counselling, social work, school psychologist, success coaches or direct case workers) conducting their duties during COVID?

**Another question** - Have we heard from parents of our low income students? I am seeing a lot of what I am hearing from parents (they're really struggling with the work load/requirements) - are we hearing any of that from anywhere? And specifically what are we hearing from those who are usually not heard (our marginalized and low income/poverty stricken group/the 60% group)

I'm sure you know we need to be very concerned about the educational impact this is especially having on this group. I'd love to understand how this group is doing and what/how we're addressing the needs they specify.

**Social Workers/Counselors** - I'd love to see more counselors and an emphasis on Black and Brown individuals, we don't have enough per student.

**Committees** - I'm very interested in the School Improvement Committee and I'd like to understand what other options (committees) are out there, what their purpose is to determine if I'd like to sit on another. I might be interested in the policy committee. Is there a committee dedicated to expulsions/discipline oversight/policy? If so, I'd be highly interested in it also.

Thank you and I trust you have an enjoyable holiday.

Kesha Hamilton

On Wed, Dec 16, 2020 at 1:44 PM [REDACTED]@jpsk12.org> wrote:

**Onboarding** - I am typically putting the agenda together with the Board president on Wednesday and Thursday prior to the Board meeting. If you would like we could meet on that Friday. Is there a time that works best for you? I am very comfortable setting up a standing meeting each week to walk through what is happening throughout our District and once a on the we can specifically focus our conversation on the agenda. I promise you, that I will never ask you to vote on something you do not know about or have not had a chance to discuss.

**Equity Report** - I have asked [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to reach out to you once the new year gets here to share with you the equity audit, findings and professional development we are working on here in the District. Additionally, they chair the school improvement committee and will be looking forward to working with you.

**Renaming Lincoln** - [REDACTED] is chairing the renaming committee and spearheading that work alongside [REDACTED]. I understand you are meeting with them tomorrow and will have an opportunity to talk about this topic.

**NWEA v. Illuminate** - [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] can and should show you the examples of reports as well as the differences in the information we can use to inform instruction from both NWEA and Illuminate.

**Academic performance of students** - I have let them both know that you have asked for this information and I expect they will be reaching out to you with this information.

**Mental health of students and teachers** - Every week we are working with employees that are struggling for a variety of reasons. We receive head's up from principals and other staff members as well as employees reaching out to seek extra assistance. The challenges are as wide and broad as the number of employees we have. As for student wellness checks, each building has support staff personnel, para professionals, building secretaries, principals and either counselling, social work, school psychologist, success coaches or direct case workers from DHHS providing these checks. Teachers may refer students who are not participating or struggling academically. We have had folks go knock on doors, make follow up phone calls, work directly with parents and or students.

**I was not aware that we had social workers (who are they and how many students do they provide service for per social worker)** Jackson Public Schools employs 6 behavioral coaches, 9 social workers, 5 counselors (although we made an offer to replace a high school counselor to a new candidate this morning - hopefully you will see this on the January consent agenda), 5 school psychologists, 8 impact/success coaches, we also host 3-4 direct case workers from DHHS that work in our buildings with students and families. At the elementary and middle level you can think of social worker and counselor as interchangeable services performing the day to day triage of helping students. They are handling the crisis of the day as well as working with the family to provide long term our outside help. The disparity has more to do with licensing than services performed. Once students reach the High School level our counselor focus shifts more to graduation and post graduation planning. While there is a fair share of social emotional work that takes place at the high school, the bulk of high school counselling work centers around academic counseling. They are assigned to every building, typically this is done via a formula based on the at-risk percentages for that building as these positions are funded through a state level grant. This means larger buildings with greater need like Cascades or Northeast have more resources than smaller buildings like Sharp Park and Dibble (these two buildings share a social worker as each building only has enough allocation to cover a 1/2 time position). I wish I could tell you exact caseloads, but we are somewhere in the range of 325/1 for just our counselors/ social workers, based strictly on numbers.

**Is it safe to assume that we have at least 1 counselor per grade level?** I would not describe it as a grade level counselor at any grade level. They are assigned to buildings based on state funding and service the students in that grade level, but every building has some measure of support and the case levels fluctuate with the students in that building.

**What's the JEA?** We have 5 bargaining units not counting our unaffiliated group. The JEA or Jackson Education Association represents all of our certified/ professional staff (teachers, counselors, etc.). The JESPA or Jackson Educational Support Personnel Association represents teaching assistants that work with special education students that have identified needs. The JPA or Jackson Paraprofessional Association represents our para educators. The JESA or Jackson Educational Secretaries Association represents our secretaries, The JPSAA or Jackson Public Schools Administrative Association represents our principals, assistant principals and directors. We also have a non-unit group that are made up of cabinet members, Reynold's Hall secretaries/ business office staff that due to the nature of their positions do not belong to any of the above groups. Fun fact, when I arrived in Jackson in June 2014 all of our contracts were expired and most of our units were enduring a multi-year freeze. You should ask [REDACTED] about it. these were not fun times. In that first year I negotiated 5 contracts that included new money for every employee in the District and have successfully renegotiated those contracts several times since then. Employee relations is an area that we work very hard to head off problems and address challenges along the way through a process called professional counsel that meets monthly or more often as needed.

**Organizational Meeting** - Nominations have typically come in for the president and then a motion for the VP, secretary and treasurer come in as a slate, mostly because ever body knows who has expressed interest in any given position. [REDACTED] is probably better suited to walk you through this process. [REDACTED] for example has been treasurer for a couple of years and [REDACTED] has been secretary since I joined the District.

**Swearing in Ceremony** - Committee assignments are no mystery either. We identify the committee, I ask for volunteers or interest in serving, no nominations necessary. You tell me where you would like to serve and I will help get you to that subcommittee. Typically, the treasurer chairs the Facilities and Finance committee to be better prepared for handling the oversight of the District funds. [REDACTED] has done this for years, but there is room for 2 at large members. Marcus Leon will lead this committee work. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have all taken turns on the Policy committee, but I promise you no one will object if you want to participate (this tends to be very dry work). I am not sure what that says, but I lead the work with the policy committee. Additionally, school improvement, which will work on District and Board

goals is organized by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] as the bulk of this work is in their areas of responsibility.

Great questions! Keep them coming. We will make sure you have all the information you need for this new adventure.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Jackson Public Schools

*Welcome to Jackson Public Schools - Where Community Comes Together!*

On Wed, Dec 16, 2020 at 10:40 AM Kesha Hamilton <[kesha.hamilton@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:kesha.hamilton@[REDACTED])> wrote:

Thank you, [REDACTED] I appreciate your quick and thorough responses to my questions.

I'll answer these with the main word so as to not confuse things.

**Onboarding** - I love the practice of being walked through the agenda before each meeting. It would give me an opportunity to develop my questions prior to and possibly be able to ask them prior to so as to be sure of what I'm voting on/supporting. If setting up a monthly time is an option for you for this practice that would be great if not we can wing it.

**Equity Report** - I look forward to speaking with Dr. [REDACTED] as soon as possible. I'd like to better understand the equity audit and our responses to it.

**Renaming Lincoln** - Do we know who is on the subcommittee? Can we know what the suggested names were that have been submitted or does that violate a board policy? Wow!! Half of Vandercook are JPS students? Not cool! I'm guessing there is a well thought out plan already at work for drawing those students back with the reopening of Lincoln - I'd love to understand it.

**NWEA v. Illuminate** - Thank you for explaining this, makes me feel like I can understand why we'd like to go with Illuminate when we're eligible. I look forward to speaking with Dr. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to understand this more.

**Academic performance of students** - I'm highly interested in understanding this and look forward to speaking with Dr. [REDACTED] and Julie Baker as soon as possible regarding how our students are doing.

**Mental health of students and teachers** - I appreciate what we're doing around this and that you acknowledged the 'steady flow' that the pandemic has caused. Help me to understand better what this entails. Wellness checks - are we asking questions during the 'wellness check'? Do the participants know that they're being observed for a 'wellness check'? And or observing what we can from zoom calls? Are we making 'wellness check' phone calls or are we relying on students and teachers to reach out?

I was not aware that we had social workers (who are they and how many students do they provide service for per social worker) and how does their job duties differ from the counselor?

Is it safe to assume that we have at least 1 counselor per grade level? What do they perform differently than the social workers? I'm familiar with the high school counselors (1 per grade level) but did not know there were social workers available for our students. I'm interested in understanding this much better.

What's the JEA?

**Organizational Meeting** - Thank you for explaining this, [REDACTED] I'd love to understand the process of nominations vs. slate more? Or are they the same?

**Swearing in Ceremony** - I'm interested in all three committees but understand my own limitations in time. How do, when do we decide which board members will sit on those committees? Is this done during the organizational meeting?

I look forward to touring the schools and meeting the cabinet and being brought up to speed on all the other amazing things happening at JPS.

Again, I appreciate your thorough responses and look forward to hearing from you again and getting a better understanding.

Thank you,

Kesha Hamilton

On Tue, Dec 15, 2020 at 7:44 PM [REDACTED]@jpsk12.org> wrote:

Good afternoon/ evening Kesha,

Please find the answers to your questions below.

Should I expect an **'onboarding' session** for new board members? Or do we rely on training classes from MASB? Is there an official session and what/when is it? I'd like to better understand this boards process.

This is typically done over the course of several weeks. I meet with Board members to bring them up to speed on current issues, what to expect we visit several buildings and talk about the various programs. Often times, especially early on Board members will want to visit or know more about specific programs or have questions from parents that they want to be able to answer or understand. I will walk you through some best practices and help you find and use the Board policies, District App and administrative resources to assist you along the way. Additionally, I am happy to meet and walk you through the Board agenda prior to the Board meeting, so that you can have any questions answered before the night of the meeting.

I was excited to hear that you'd addressed the **Equity Report** by bringing in Race Forward (mentioned by Ms. Fitzgerald.) - What does 'bringing in Race Forward' mean? What was the tangible response to the equity report? Who was impacted by the tangible response - who participated? What did they participate in?

We have actually been involved with Race forward for a couple of years now. The first year we sent several staff to the conference in Detroit and last year we brought them to the District for professional development with our administrative team. I will put you in touch with [REDACTED] as he has been leading the work on the equity audit. Currently he is involved with MSU on reducing suspensions

of African American students (work we have been doing for years).

Regarding the **renaming of Lincoln** - what grades does this school serve? What's the demographic makeup of the children who will attend this school? Also will we get a list of the names being submitted prior to having to decide on the name? Will we see all the appropriate names (names submitted with reasons and that aren't outright silly)? Or will it be like the top 3 - what's the process for deciding which names the board will be given to decide on come the new year?

This is a trickier question, as Lincoln has not been a school for almost 30 years. We are hopeful that the building, which will service grades prek-5 will be a true representation of our entire school district. We realize that several students living in that neighborhood have made choices to attend Vandercook Lake and we would very much like to provide those students with a neighborhood school to better provide for these students, as nearly half of the Vandercook Lake School District are schools of choice students from JPS. This neighborhood represents the largest growth for 5-18 year olds over the next 20 years for the entire county. If we see the program launch like our montessori program we will probably start with younger students and add grades or classes as the student enrollment population demands.

As for the naming, the subcommittee looking at the names will be tasked with bringing forward either a unanimous choice or 2-3 names that they can live with, then the Board will have to debate each of the names in open session and vote on them at a regularly scheduled Board meeting.

I'd like to understand the **NWEA vs. Illuminate platform** - is there a pro vs. con list or an article or an expert you can point me to that I can speak with?

NWEA is an online assessment that we have used for years in both Math and Reading for students in grades 3-9. The test tallies all of the students from Michigan and provides rough ranges for students to be performing at grade level. We opted to move away from this assessment because the data provided very little insight into what specific skills the students were lacking. Illuminate offers content specific questions that are designed to not only tell us where the students are performing, but also provides insights into the thought processes students likely had when selecting an incorrect answer. There are multiple assessments each year aimed at demonstrating growth and keeping our staff on grade level with their instruction. The test provides very a clearer predictor for how students will perform on the state and national tests. This is probably a great topic for you to explore with both William Patterson and Julie Baker as they oversee the curriculum and instruction for secondary and elementary programming. Additionally, Illuminate allows teachers to create their own assessments import them into our data warehouse where we can use multiple filters to draw down just about anything you could want. This is part of what will be missed because we are forced to stay with NWEA for another year.

How are our **students doing academically**? Report cards have come out - how well are they faring? Or not faring? Do we have racial demographic reports on the grades (how our white students fared? Black students fared? etc)? Do we have the socio-economic reports? And are we able to break it down by school as well?

Yes, we can run almost any report you would like. I do not have specific data to share with you as I type this, but again, I will have you work with William and Julie on this project and they can break in down by building, grade level, ethnicity, and socioeconomic.

Are we addressing the **mental health of our students and teachers**? If we are, how are we? If we're not, do we have a plan to?

We have a robust system in place for providing social and emotional needs for each of our students, social workers and counsellors as well as impact coaches provide resources to our staff and students. While our teachers and principals are monitoring the academic progress of our students, they are also performing wellness checks to see if there are needs in the house and or hurdles keeping students from being successful. I meet with the JEA every month to handle the soft issues that are hurdles or challenges and I work individually with staff that are experiencing a hardship, struggle or need because life happens. These challenges tend to ebb and flow, but I would say that we have had a steady trickle this year due to the stress of the pandemic.

What should I expect at the **organizational meeting** in Jan?

The organizational meeting happens every January and will start off with me calling the meeting to order as we will not officially have a Board president at the start of the meeting. As we only have new Board members every other year, I will swear both you and [REDACTED] in at the beginning of the meeting. It is very non ceremonial as I will ask you both to repeat after me and we walk through typical language and away we go. I will call for nominations for Board president (I will let [REDACTED] walk you through this). Once I have a nomination and a second we will vote for the president and I will then turn the meeting over to the new president. >From there the remainder of the officers are nominated (often as a slate) and then voted on by the members. We will will vote to approve our meeting dates and times, who we advertise with, who our attorney will be, who will represent us on the County Board Association, on the parks and Rec Board, where we deposit our funds, which association or memberships we support, and a host of other line items that are required either by state law or Board policy. You can find last year's agenda minutes [here](#) for reference and a copy of the agenda [here](#). I will make certain to reach out to you prior to the meeting, so you will have a handle on each agenda item.

Do we have any info on the **swearing in ceremony**? Is there a swearing in ceremony where we officially take office? Day, Time, format, place, # of those able to attend?

There is no separate swearing in ceremony outside of our Board meeting, which is open to the public. It is still up in the air, but I fully expect that we will be able to meet virtually in January.

I know you have a strong interest in both policy and school improvement. We typically run multiple subcommittees of the Board. The Facility and Finance committee, the Board Policy Committee, which might be a perfect fit, meets about 3 times per year to amend or adopt policies, and our School Improvement Committee, which is where the equity work is being done. We usually provide for up to 3 members to sit on any given committee so as to not violate the open meetings act with the presence of a quorum.

I know you missed our District tour in November, but once we clear the holidays, I will be reaching out to you to introduce you to the cabinet, bring you up to speed on the bond projects and help get you familiar with our various buildings and programs.

As a side note, and I apologize for not reaching out to you sooner, I can have our principals reach out to you to discuss enrollment options for your students that are at Paragon. Having your students in our programs will give you first hand insights into the excellent work happening in all of our JPS buildings. Just let me know the grade levels and which buildings you are interested in.

Let me know if there is anything else you need, And as always, feel free to call me on my [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Jackson Public Schools

Welcome to Jackson Public Schools - Where Community Comes Together!

On Tue, Dec 15, 2020 at 1:18 PM Kesha Hamilton <kesha.hamilton@jackson.k12.ms.us> wrote:  
Greetings! I have a few questions from last night's board meeting and other questions on my mind. I've cc'd [redacted] - please jump in when necessary. (As we get to know each other better you'll realize that I ask LOTS of questions :-))

Should I expect an **'onboarding' session** for new board members? Or do we rely on training classes from MASB? Is there an official session and what/when is it? I'd like to better understand this boards process.

I was excited to hear that you'd addressed the **Equity Report** by bringing in Race Forward (mentioned by [redacted]) - What does 'bringing in Race Forward' mean? What was the tangible response to the equity report? Who was impacted by the tangible response - who participated? What did they participate in?

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Are we addressing the **mental health of our students and teachers**? If we are, how are we? If we're not, do we have a plan to?

What should I expect at the **organizational meeting** in Jan?

Do we have any info on the **swearing in ceremony**? Is there a swearing in ceremony where we officially take office? Day, Time, format, place, # of those able to attend?

Thank you,

Kesha Hamilton (she, her)  
JPS Board Member  
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"Where Community Comes Together"



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