

Those Affected Must be at the Policy Table

Before BESR began its work, the Black community was under-represented or entirely absent from state-level policy discussions about public schools. BESR has provided a focal point for hundreds of people and dozens of community organizations to represent the interests of Black students in Olympia and now “AT and ON” local school boards. When at least 1,000 Black people in our state are informed, engaged, and strongly connected to efforts to improve schools, systems change will happen faster. This cadre of informed and connected people could sustain the long-term effort required to shift entrenched educational bureaucracies – but only if funding can be sustained. We are building that team of 1,000 education activists and striving to stimulate, focus, and leverage their energies.

Black People at the Policy Table Means:

- 1) Community leaders, families, guardians, and friends have one-on-one relationships with their local state legislators and school board members, top administrators in school districts, and critical staff and administrators in state agencies involved with education. They use relationships and advocacy to influence policy-makers and help Black students succeed.
- 2) Black advocates understand key policy issues that affect local schools and individual students and can cite links between public education and challenges in the community.
- 3) Black advocates have the information, access, and opportunities to influence public education from “inside” and “outside.” Inside includes serving on boards, committees, work groups, and seeking elective office. Outside includes influencing elected officials to advocate for specific policy changes.