



We at Black Lives Matter Rhode Island demand that the Pawtucket School District (PSD) complete the plan to return to in-person learning immediately. Every district will have completed their return to in-person learning for all students who want it by January 11, 2021, except Pawtucket. Pawtucket has the highest percentage of African American students without the option of attending school in person. This racial disparity does not go unnoticed.

Commissioner Infante-Green and the team at the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) have gone out of their way to support Pawtucket in the re-opening of their schools. Per the State of Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in a letter to the School Committee City of Pawtucket dated January 6, 2021 “we have observed negligible rates of transmission among close contacts in school, far below other settings in the state, and rates of incidence of COVID-19 lower among our in-person students than among our students that are learning virtually. Nationally, we have seen worrisome trends of significant learning loss among students that were not afforded the opportunity to receive in person instruction.”

“Superintendent McWilliams shared previously that 70% of students opted for in-person instruction, if it were to become available in Pawtucket. It is our shared responsibility to ensure that these students are afforded the same opportunity as others in Rhode Island so that they can realize the academic, health, and social/emotional benefits that in-person instruction provides.”

We know that COVID-19 has exacerbated education inequities and has disproportionately impacted the African American community here in Rhode Island. This is of particular concern for communities like Pawtucket, that based on the state’s new accountability system, is tracking towards a 1-star rating.

Black Lives Matter Rhode Island demands that PSD, the Pawtucket School Committee, the Mayor of Pawtucket and all appropriate delegation begin work to

open all public schools immediately, especially for elementary students. Such a dereliction of duty and insensitivity for every single student in the entire Pawtucket School District can only be seen as complete negligence or complete intentionality. Neither is acceptable.

The Pawtucket School Committee is set to meet on **January 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm.**  
Jenks Junior School  
350 Division St. Pawtucket, RI 02860

Black Lives Matter Rhode Island will attend to be the voice for families and students in Pawtucket.

*Brother Gary Dantzler*

Brother Gary Dantzler  
Executive Director