

Mid-Year Board Goal Report

February 2017



Board of Education

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Executive Summary

The Washtenaw ISD Board of Education embarked on a commitment to examine every aspect of the agency through a lens of Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice. The board positioned the agency to undertake this approach by weaving the initiative into the board goals for the 2016-17 school year and by participating in a panel discussion on Opening Day to reinforce with staff the importance of this effort. This Mid-Year Board Goal Report is a look at the work in progress.



Goal 1

Cultivate a culture of equity, inclusion, and social justice through education, dialogue, and engagement.

Strategy 1: Build public awareness of the educational needs of students with disabilities.

Raising the profile of and educating our stakeholders about the many accomplishments of our students is the catalyst for the Monday Memo features that began in September 2016. The stories are then shared on the WISD social media sites to engage a broader audience and reinforce the value of the services and support we provide to students with special needs. Some of the published success stories include:

- A Young Adult student who lacked focus and motivation was coached and guided to a position in a local grocery store, where he now takes pride in his work and is an asset to his employer
- Horseback riding has given a legally blind student the confidence to tackle other areas of her life that have led to gainful employment
- A Forest School student has redirected the challenges in his life to producing a video documentary, giving him focus and encouragement to stay on track

Several video projects are in the works and, when completed, will be uploaded to YouTube and posted on the Internet.

Strategy 2: Review the value of existing Washtenaw ISD programs, collect performance and post-school data and make recommendations for countywide, high quality, and efficient continuum of services.

Several local districts have identified multiple areas that need additional support including: preventative activities, transition supports, and a continuum of service for disruptive youth. The Emotionally Impaired/Autism Spectrum Disorder (EI/ASD) Committee has proposed a five-tier solution to provide academic and behavioral support to Washtenaw County students with emotional and behavioral challenges and students with autism:

- professional development

- academic/behavior teams
- continuum classrooms
- center-based intensive classrooms
- local resource rooms

The EI/ASD Committee was charged with:

- Designing a Continuum of Services Model for students with EI and ASD
- Designing criteria for entry
- Developing a plan for implementation of the new model (formal agreements, staffing, supervision, etc.)



The committee is in the final stages of writing a report on recommendations for the 2017-18 school year to present to the local special education directors and superintendents.

The Young Adult Task Force, initiated in the 2015-16 school year, has continued the work based on the recommendations and activities published in the task force's final report. Ongoing work includes:

- Young Adult staff met in the fall to research and identify benchmarks for the students served in the YA programs
- A small internal sub-group is collecting data and information to consider a balanced calendar for the 2018-19 school year
- A broad-based stakeholder group, made up of consumers, providers, educators, and community members, will meet in February to review and consider the results of the WISD YA programs regarding data on the impact, effectiveness, and efficiency of services
- Exploring the potential of becoming a Project Search site for the 2018-19 school year. Project Search is a one-year transition program focusing on business-led, school-to-work efforts in the workplace. The goals of Project Search include:
 - Facilitating a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations

Strategy 3: Organize and offer agency-wide forums, moderated discussion groups, book studies, and a WISD employee blog (moderated by the Superintendent) on the topic of equity, inclusion, and social justice.

Staff Commitment. On opening day, staff members submitted their personal “commitment” to advancing WISD’s pledge to equity, inclusion, and social justice (EISJ) during the school year. A variety of “on ramps” have been identified to enable staff to engage in a deeper dive on their understanding of what equity, inclusion, and social justice looks and feels like when fully operational.

Book Studies. The launch of three separate book studies began in December 2016, and over 50 staff members are joining the discussion, online and in person. Several staff



members took advantage of the opportunity to hear Claudia Rankine, the author of *Citizen: An American Lyric*, in January when she was a guest speaker at U-M.

Web Presence. An employee only web page, dedicated to our EISJ work, was established. It includes a link to the superintendent's blog, recommended readings, and a dedicated "Let's Talk" link where employees can submit inquiries and suggestions directly to the superintendent.

Staff Forums. Open forums were held with employees to discuss the impact of the 2016 election. The WISD

Cabinet engaged in a professional learning session that included an exercise on "privilege"

Strategy 4: With a clear focus on equity and inclusion, review and recommend improved processes within Washtenaw ISD (equity impact analysis in budgeting and hiring).

- Develop administrative guidelines to ensure consistency in policy application
- Analyze recruiting strategies; advertise vacancies to diverse audiences in and outside of Washtenaw County
- Provide guidance with structuring diverse interview panels to avoid unintended bias
- Update job descriptions to include the following language that reflects the organization's focus on equity and inclusion:
 - The WISD's Mission is to promote the continuous improvement of achievement for every student while providing high-quality service to our customers through leadership, innovation, and collaboration
 - The WISD's Vision is to be a leader in empowering, facilitating, and delivering high-quality, boundary-spanning, educational system that educates all children through an equitable, inclusive, and holistic approach
 - Demonstrates a strong commitment to social justice and inclusive educational practices
 - Supports the WISD mission and vision to enhance achievement for all children
 - Review Onboarding; offer more frequently during the school year to assist employees with adjusting in their new position and to the culture
 - Continue relationship with Humanex to conduct surveys that obtain feedback



- directly from staff regarding the WISD's culture
- Conduct exit interviews to determine why employees are leaving
- Provide training; require additional Safeschools training for all employees (such as Diversity Awareness - Staff to Staff and Staff to Student, Sensitivity Awareness, and Discrimination Awareness)
- Use an equity lens when meeting with budget supervisors to determine priorities for expenditure appropriations
- Review, including by a Board subcommittee, the overall budget to identify areas of equity, inclusion, and social justice impact

Strategy 5: Engage in deliberate and intentional shaping of policy in equitable and socially just ways at the county, region, state, and national level.

County

- In October, Superintendent Menzel presented the Keynote address at the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce "Impact 2016" event. The title of the keynote was: *A Time to Act: Why getting public education right in eastern Washtenaw County is critical for our kids, our community, and our economy.* The focus of the presentation was on equity and the opportunity gap and ways in which the community can work to address these challenges
- Superintendent Menzel was asked to serve as co-chair of the United Way of Washtenaw County's Equity Committee
- Supported a January 28, 2017 special session of the Washtenaw Association of School Boards. The topic was "Equity and Opportunity Advancing Public Education in Washtenaw County"

Regional

- An EISJ core team from WISD traveled to Columbus, OH to meet with staff from the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio (ESCCO) to discuss shared interest in equity, inclusion, and social justice work and launch planning for a regional conference on the same topic in the summer of 2017
- Supt. Menzel serves on the planning committee for the AESA National Conference for 2017—with a theme of "From Hope to Change: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice"

National

- In January 2017, Superintendent Menzel was asked to represent AESA at the Phi Delta Kappan (PDK) "Bridging the Divide," a convening of public education advocates to discuss equity and social justice opportunities and challenges in light of new political realities

Strategy 6: Engage local district leaders, teachers, and students in diversity-focused learning through targeted professional development, diversity forums, and assessment of socially just practices.



The Diversity Forum. The format was adjusted this year to provide a more intimate and focused experience. Instead of holding the Diversity Forum on a single day with teams from 18 high schools, it was divided into three events in November and December with 4-5 schools at each. This allowed the students to still engage with other young people from different communities, but the smaller group of 30-40 students allowed the event to be hosted at the Neutral Zone and go deeper into the diversity conversations and build stronger relationships with the teams. The work with adults was more intentional, helping them to support existing Student Diversity Forums at their schools.

EISJ Workshops. A series of after-school workshops for teachers was established related to equity, inclusion, and social justice. These sessions have been very well received and have wait-lists due to the interest of many educators. The election cycle this year raised awareness and need for more work around diversity and inclusiveness. In addition to our Achievement Initiatives Team members and Shayla Griffin from the Peoples Dialogue Project, we are working with two professors from the University of Michigan in providing additional professional learning supports.

Culture and Diversity Workgroup. This workgroup has continued to refine the Education Justice Assessment and Transformation Tool (EJATT). The tool was utilized in Milan to help determine the areas where the district can strengthen their work around culture and diversity.

Connecting EISJ district efforts. An initial framework that connects the various aspects of support to the districts has been developed. This framework strategically links the Diversity Forum work, the teacher professional development opportunities, the EJATT vision, and self-evaluation tool, the WISD internal equity work with the county culture and diversity workgroup. All of these aspects of the equity, inclusion, and social justice work connect in important and powerful ways.

Goal 2

Continue to ensure coordinated and aligned efforts from birth through college and career through the Cradle to Career Collaborative.

Strategy 1: Collaborate with Michigan State University's ABLe Change (a systems change approach designed to help communities address social issues affecting children, youth, and families) team to explore and develop a county parent engagement model.

During fall 2016, the Cradle to Career Collaborative worked with a graduate student team from Michigan State University to research and learn about parent engagement frameworks. The group collectively created a focus group set of questions to pilot with

a small group of parents from eastern Washtenaw County. The focus group was conducted in late December 2016, and both the process and content of the qualitative data collection are being refined. Work with the Parent Cafe's, that launched from the summer 2016 100-day challenge team has also continued with monthly Parent Cafe's in the MacArthur Blvd. neighborhood. Our team is exploring replicating and designing next steps with a parent engagement framework.

Strategy 2: Expand and sustain the Study of Early Literacy (SOEL) work for our early elementary teachers and explore ways to expand SOEL to include additional early childhood administrators and teachers.

Two new Essential Instructional Practices for Early Literacy documents (for pre-k educators and early elementary educators) have been developed by the Early Literacy Task Force. All five WISD Early Childhood Specialists have attended a professional



development workshop led by Nell Duke, U-M Professor in the School of Education, to support the implementation of the practices with pre-k teachers. Sharing the practices was a critical component of WISD's Early Childhood Conference in August, attended by 150 local early childhood educators, with Nell Duke being the keynote presenter. Utilizing a new state grant, WISD has also engaged three Early Literacy Coaches to support 10 elementary buildings in

Washtenaw and Livingston Counties.

Planning is also underway to align the work of the Early Childhood Specialists and Literacy Coaches, especially for building teams that have both pre-k and early elementary educators. In addition, planning is underway to include a presentation on the Study of Early Literacy (SOEL) group's work at the 2017 WISD Early Childhood Conference. The goal is to recruit more early childhood teachers and administrators to participate in SOEL.

Strategy 3: Build capacity to implement the chronic absenteeism protocol with local pilots in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, integrating intentional collaborative partners with key community agencies.

Ann Arbor. Two leadership sessions have been conducted with the principals and staff at the Ann Arbor pilot location. Casework has also begun in the school communities. Ann Arbor has hired two employees to work with a central office administrator on case management, and the team has received training. Working with complex cases and building their capacity and routines for early intervention is the focus. Next year, Ann Arbor would like to expand this work to their entire district, which will require a tremendous amount of work and resources.

Ypsilanti. Coordination, training, and alignment of staff and resources began in summer 2016. All office professionals and principals were trained on the chronic absenteeism protocol and the data tracking and reporting expectations from central office. The new data liaison from central office has followed up to monitor issues of data entry, technical assistance, and data summarization/analysis. The community liaisons, central office staff, juvenile court case managers, and WISD truancy liaison have met monthly to discuss emerging cases, training on roles and responsibilities, and align needed community resources for youth and families. For example, two siblings stopped attending school in November. Through team efforts, both children re-enrolled in January, and their mother was supported to explore GED programming for herself and her 18-year old daughter. We were also able to meet with the high school community liaison, before the holiday break, to connect youth with supports through referrals to Ozone House and Corner Health. Monthly meetings occur to transition the DHHS Pathways to Potential program to Erickson Elementary; WISD partners with Community Mental Health, Orchard's Children's Services and Student Advocacy Center for case management and wrap-around services for families.

Lincoln. Referrals are coming from staff, however, we are working most closely with Child's Elementary and Lincoln High on early warning processes and a few cases. The plan is to expand this partnership into next year.

Strategy 4: Expand the College Success Coach program, serving the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation (AAACF) Community Scholar & Ypsilanti Gillenwater Scholar recipients, in partnership with Eastern Michigan University and Washtenaw Community College.

During fall 2016, a 3-year funding proposal was developed and submitted to AAACF to expand the College Success Coach program. This program aims to provide a near-peer mentor to help problem-solve and support Community Scholars to and through post secondary school. Several meetings were held to discuss the needed supports and funding models. A timeline for scale up was developed, as well as support for a financial proposal to various funders. The Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation has committed to working with Washtenaw Futures for this effort and will help cultivate administrative costs for leadership and project management. Funding specifics will not be confirmed until summer 2017, but WISD staff will continue to work closely with AAACF staff on the planning and logistics. Mid-year feedback from the 2016 Community Scholars highlighted the importance of this role:

"The AAACF Community Scholarship lifted an extreme burden off my shoulders, giving me the opportunity to attend a four-year university. During this transition to adulthood, I really appreciated Ms. Shawntae Harris [my College Success Coach], who worked with me to figure out the way I want to go. Thank you to everyone who made my college dreams possible!"



Strategy 5: Advocating for and participating with local partners to implement Summer 17, a summer youth employment program.

Employers of the summer 2016 youth employment program were convened to debrief the experience and discuss future work. Washtenaw ISD hired one of the two summer youth employees to work evenings for the technology team. The county offered to provide more human resource services, such as talent matching and skills

exploration, to increase employment matches. The collective recommendation was to start working as a team in midwinter on the summer 2017 program to obtain a greater variety of employment options, prepare employers for on-site planning, and manage workload for Southeast Michigan Works! team members. A follow-up meeting was held at United Way of Washtenaw County with the Ginsberg Center and the Poverty Center from the University of Michigan to explore their potential partnership and planning support for Summer 2017. Next steps are forthcoming.

Strategy 6: Collect information, and examine through an equity lens, pertaining to the existing career and technical education programming in Washtenaw County.

Communication channels have been opened with the SWWC Program Director Jody Gielinski, and she has agreed to attend WISD Executive Cabinet meetings quarterly to provide updates on Career Technical Education and to explore opportunities for other student populations.

Strategy 7: Support the Washtenaw My Brother's Keeper initiative.



The Washtenaw ISD has taken a very active role in assisting with the development and forward-movement of this initiative:

- Washtenaw ISD sponsors one of the two Michigan Community Service Commission Vista Volunteers dedicated to supporting WMBK
- A grant from the Neutral Zone was awarded to WISD to support the development of a Young Brothers Youth Council. The grant provided funding to send inaugural members of the youth leadership team to training
- Washtenaw ISD staff assisted in the planning and implementation of the second WMBK Local Action Summit, held at Eastern Michigan University in October
- Washtenaw ISD hosts weekly meetings of the core planning team and worked closely with the Executive Director, Vista Volunteers, and Tabitha Bentley to

launch the successful WMBK “Suit and Tie” drive on Martin Luther King, Jr. day at Eastern Michigan University

- Washtenaw ISD employs a VISTA volunteer to support the WMBK initiative

Goal 3

Establish enhanced, advanced and efficient technology systems and use of those systems to meet district needs and increase opportunities and outcomes for students.

Strategy 1: Support districts in their approach to incorporating technology teaching, learning, and school management systems.

Washtenaw ISD contracted with Modern Teacher to continue to support the digital convergence work in Saline and Milan. The Modern Teacher leadership team is providing continued facilitation for strategic planning as the two districts move through the process to outline their technology integration plans.



The countywide Technology Directors have been investigating options to provide equitable Internet access to students throughout the county. There are several providers offering plans and programs that have been reviewed. Vendor presentations will continue and the Tech Directors will explore the possibility of a grant application through the Sprint Million Dollar Grant program.

EveryoneOn (www.everyoneon.org) is a national nonprofit working to eliminate the digital divide by

making high-speed, low-cost Internet service and computers, and free digital literacy courses accessible to all unconnected Americans. After checking, it has been determined that EveryoneOn’s services are available in all Washtenaw County zip codes.

Carriers. The Tech Directors explored a number of carrier possibilities for Internet service. The services of T-Mobile, AT&T, and Comcast are available in the bigger cities in Washtenaw County. However, in smaller towns and villages Comcast or AT&T were not always available while the T-Mobile option was always available.

Devices for purchase. The Tech Directors found that the following devices were available to everyone in any zip code in Washtenaw County: Desktop PC with Windows 7 Home Premium, Office 2010; Laptop with Windows 7 Home Premium; Chromebook (Samsung) with Google OS

Training locations. Each zip code provided at least two training locations for new or interested users. A public library was always one of the site options.

Strategy 2: Review county-level educational technology support and capacity, and propose an updated service and funding model.

The county Technology Directors presented information to the Superintendents at their November 2016 meeting. The topics covered were: core county services and the interdependencies of ISD provided services and the network infrastructure/Internet provided by the agency. The group gave next steps to creating a cost-sharing model:

1. Refine Core versus Extended versus Specialized Services provided to the districts
2. Create a cost-sharing model while understanding interdependencies
3. Further define the cost of the core services
4. Create a consortium agreement for shared services

The group has developed the core costs of the support and replacement of the countywide network and Internet access costs. A presentation will be made at an upcoming Washtenaw Superintendents Association meeting.

Strategy 3: Propose and begin to implement a model data system to hold information that bridges preschool data to the k-12 system in a longitudinal format.

The Early Childhood and Achievement Initiatives teams from Washtenaw and Livingston Counties have been working to pilot a strategy to share child outcomes data. The data collected on pre-k children in Head Start and GSRP (Teaching Strategies GOLD data and HighScope COR data) would be uploaded to a data warehouse system (Illuminate) that can be accessed by early elementary teachers and administrators in Local Education Agencies. Illuminate will also house elementary outcome and testing data on students, so that longitudinal assessment of students who participated in pre-k interventions can be conducted.

To date, team members have collected outcome data from a sample of classrooms and have worked with both Illuminate and other ISDs utilizing Illuminate in preparation for a pilot data upload this winter.

