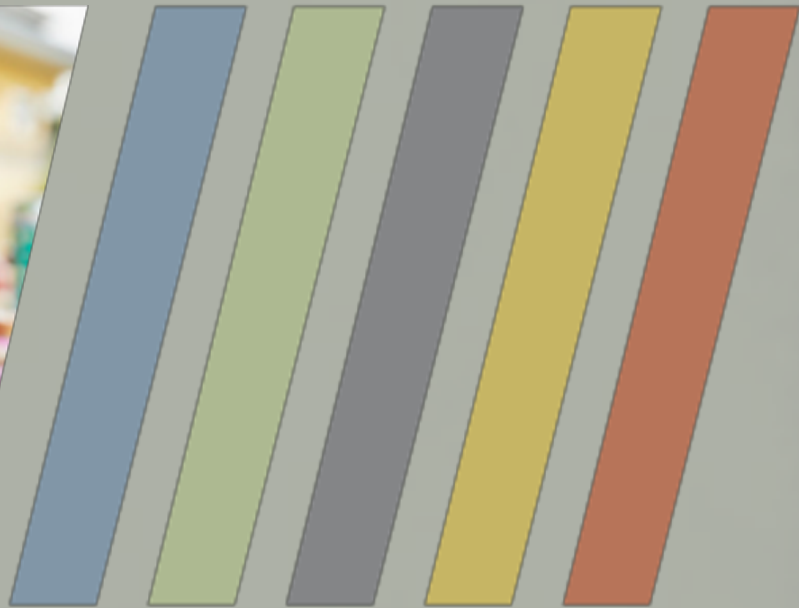


COMPREHENSIVE EQUITY AUDIT

# Midland Public Schools



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# PART I

## CONTEXT

In this section, please find:

- An overview of the audit process including background and methodology
- Important district context and background

# INTRODUCTION

There is currently an active discussion in schools and districts regarding how to ensure that each and every student has equitable access to a high-quality education. Schools and school districts are uniquely situated to impact both educator and student views and actions related to equity. However, without thoughtful planning, clear objectives, and an honest assessment of the current situation, districts will be less likely to achieve educational equity for each and every student.

The purpose of this report is to share the results of a comprehensive equity audit that Insight Education Group's audit team conducted in Midland Public Schools (MPS). The team met with stakeholders from the district and larger community in order to gain as many perspectives as possible and to confirm trends identified through examination of multiple data sets. The audit included an analysis of district student achievement data, graduation and discipline data, district staffing, professional development, and stakeholder perceptual data.

Data shows that students in the United States face significant disparities in educational opportunity and outcomes. This is especially true for students of color and students from low-income communities. (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2016; Reardon, 2014). When considering disparities in educational opportunity and outcomes, it is important to also consider access, a third variable that we consider to be the critical bridge between the first two. It is our belief that the pressing challenge facing schools and districts is to provide all students with both equitable opportunity and access to high-quality educational experiences in order for them to achieve successful life outcomes.

The equity audit team has developed this report in alignment with our Racial Equity Framework. It includes recommendations that are aligned to each domain in the framework for the superintendent and his team's consideration. This report addresses the current district landscape pertaining to equity and presents an important opportunity for district leadership to develop a plan to implement the recommendations in an aligned, coherent and intentional manner. It is recommended that the district take time to study and make sense of the findings and recommendations to develop a plan to stage the necessary work efficiently and effectively in order to improve outcomes for each and every student in MPS.

## DISTRICT CONTEXT

The city of Midland is the county seat of Midland County, and is located in central Michigan. According to the US Census Bureau, Midland has 42,547 residents. Midland Public Schools (MPS) reports that they currently serve approximately 7,798 students. MPS employs approximately 500 teachers and paraprofessionals, 218 operations staff members, 44 administrators, and eight guidance counselors.

With 11 school sites and three virtual learning programs, MPS offers an array of educational opportunities for students in pre-Kindergarten through high school. As a local school system, MPS serves a demographically homogeneous student population in terms of race/ethnicity and socio-economic status.

According to data provided by the district, the student enrollment population at MPS as of 2019-2020 can be broken down into the following by race and ethnicity: White (86%), Black or African American (2%), two or more races (3%), Hispanic/Latinx (4%), Asian (4%). American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (OPI) are each less than 1%. At the time of the Equity Audit, approximately 35% of students were receiving free or reduced meals.

Midland Public Schools has been formally working on equity since the 2018-2019 school year, when they began the process of developing a Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. Efforts to address equity in those early years focused primarily on providing staff professional development, incorporating lessons of diversity and inclusion into student offerings, adopting a district Inclusion and Diversity Vision, and processing / responding to incidents as they occurred.

At the start of the 2019-2020 school year, a Inclusion & Diversity Advisory Council made up of parents, students and staff was formed and in January 2020, Dow Chemical's Executive-on-loan program provided MPS with a DEI Consultant.

With guidance from the DEI Consultant, and during the school closings related to Covid-19, MPS spent 2020 engaged in virtual conversations about district culture, equity-focused book studies, and meetings with community and student groups following national incidents in the summer of 2020. They also adopted a new District Vision encompassing DEI and in August 2020, the Board approved the *"Resolution to Change the System, Eliminate Racism and Create More Equitable and Inclusive Schools for All."*

In January 2021, MPS hired their own full-time DEI Director charged with leading the district's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategy and collaborate with District staff to ensure equitable support for all learners.

# METHODOLOGY

## DATA COLLECTION

Insight Education Group conducted an Equity Audit in MPS between July and December 2021. The team met with stakeholders from the district and larger community to gain as many perspectives as possible to determine district trends using an equity-focused lens while collecting multiple datasets.

In this section of the report, we will review the primary components of our methods surrounding the Comprehensive Equity Audit for MPS and will provide a detailed overview of the data collection process. We will share data analysis techniques employed to inform our understanding of trends occurring in MPS, both in strengths and areas for future improvement.

The Insight audit team worked closely with the district to amass a robust set of district data and documents for review in the initial phase of the Equity Audit as well as to engage stakeholder groups throughout the data collection process during the first semester of the 2021-2022 school year.

The data collection process included the following activities to assess district beliefs, policies, and practices in relation to equity:

- Review of graduation data
- Evaluation of student achievement data
- Review of district documents and communications
- Examination of district policies
- Stakeholder surveys
- Focus groups and interviews

## *DISTRICT DOCUMENTS*

In addition to preliminary quantitative datasets provided by MPS, the audit team conducted an evaluative review of district documents to establish additional trends involving equitable beliefs, practices, and policies maintained by the district. The audit team evaluated district artifacts within the scope of five domains outlined by the Insight Equity Framework. The five domains are outlined as follows and will be described in further detail with relevant research in latter sections of this report: 1) Structures, Systems, and Resources; 2) Culture and Community; 3) Equity in the Educator Workforce; 4) Professional Learning and Personal Growth; and 5) Curriculum, Instruction, and Learning.

The Insight audit team reviewed district organizational charts and strategic planning documents to evaluate the structures and systems in place at the district level utilized to provide an equitable education for all Midland students.

Insight audit team members reviewed the MPS website, social media sites, and outgoing communication to the community to evaluate trends aimed towards building a culture and community grounded in equity. Additionally, team members reviewed district discipline policies and student codes of conduct for punitive actions and escalation practices as well as any biased or discriminatory language.

Insight assessed the MPS educator workforce with a focus on racial equity in the recruitment, retention, placement, and promotion of district educators. Furthermore, audit team members reviewed professional learning opportunities extended to MPS educators to foster a sense of professional growth and learning as well as district recruitment cycles.

Lastly, the district provided samples of curriculum, information regarding Social-Emotional Learning programming, as well as course information to provide ability to review equitable policies for student education relative to equitable access to programs and opportunities.



## STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

In partnership with Insight's audit team, MPS invited a diverse stakeholder group to complete a survey evaluation of equity within the district as well as the assessment of equitable practices and policies exhibited throughout the district. Survey questionnaires ranged in length from 25 questions to 40 questions depending on which stakeholder group the participant maintained membership. The stakeholder groups included: school leaders, school-based staff, non-school-based staff, students beginning in Grade 5, and family and caregivers. In the first section of each survey, respondents provided descriptive information including personal demographics: race, age, gender, length of professional career, and school affiliation.

After completing this demographic section, participants were asked to respond to equity specific questions related to the district and district schools. In this portion of the survey respondents recorded their answers on a 4-point Likert scale. Participants responded to a statement prompt and recorded their level of agreement with the statement. As an example, a student participant would respond to the statement, "My school prioritizes equity." In response, the student participant indicated their agreement using the following: "1" strongly disagree, "2" disagree, "3" agree, and "4" strongly agree.

The third section of the stakeholder survey was qualitative in nature. Participants were asked three to five questions, depending on their respective stakeholder group, centered on equity in the district.

Responses provided by participants were securely acquired, stored, and managed by the Insight audit team. Respondents participated on a voluntary basis and were assured that their confidentiality throughout the data collection and reporting process would be upheld.



## *FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS*

MPS recruited stakeholders from multiple groups to engage in focus group sessions and interviews with Insight audit team members. During the recruitment process, MPS invited potential group members from the following stakeholder groups: executive leaders, school leaders, teachers, instructional coaches, building support staff, families and caregivers, community partners, and high school students. Focus groups and interviews were facilitated by Insight team members, held virtually via Zoom tele-conferencing platform with attendees, and were approximately 45-60 minutes in length. The Insight audit team conducted 12 focus groups and 11 interviews.

During the focus groups and interviews, participants were provided the opportunity to share their lived experiences in the district. In particular, focus group participants conveyed the district's definition of equity as well as their understanding of equity as communicated by the school district in beliefs, policies, and practices. All focus groups maintained a standard operating procedure where group members were led in a discussion guided by the same set of questions across all groups facilitated by audit team members.

For ethical and integrity reasons, participants were notified their participation in the focus group or interview was voluntary and should they choose to no longer participate, they were at liberty to terminate their involvement. Parent/guardian permission was secured by the district before student participants were able to engage in focus group sessions and those sessions were also attended by an employee of MPS. Participants were assured their identifying information and views expressed during the focus group would remain confidential. As such, audit team members would anonymize all details during the reporting process.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Insight audit team members conducted data analysis in three stages. In one stage, audit team members employed descriptive statistical analysis to data sets provided by the district where analysts documented trends in school profiles, student demographics, discipline rates, and academic indicators. Insight analysts also coded the qualitative data sets derived from district artifacts during this stage of analysis.

During a second stage, Insight analysts conducted survey response analysis across all stakeholder surveys in relation to the five domains of the Equity Framework first with descriptive statistics followed by inferential statistics. All participant responses were coded and cleaned prior to analysis whereby all responses were de-identified using numeric demographic codes, response codes, and responses containing missing data not at random were removed prior to analysis. As part of this stage of analysis, Insight analysts utilized the statistical software package SPSS to evaluate differences in mean scores of respondents by subgroups.

Lastly, analysts began qualitative data analysis for focus groups as well as researcher field notes and memos (Emerson et al., 2011). Analysts employed an iterative coding cycle to documents and texts where they executed coding cycles until saturation was reached (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Saunders et al., 2018). Audit team members collaborated during the data analysis phase of the equity audit to ensure inter-rater reliability was achieved among team members for each of the noted district trends, findings, and recommendations. Of note, audit team members triangulated data sources to support all discussed trends, findings, and recommendations from the equity audit of MPS.

# PART II

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, please find:

- Assets, findings and recommendations for the district grounded in the five domains of the Insight Racial Equity Framework.

# OVERALL ASSETS

For each focus area, the report provides an overview of relevant research and/or best practices, an analysis of the current structure, specific areas for improvement, and recommendations to achieve improvement. Prior to delving into areas in need of improvement, it is important to highlight some overall assets observed during the MPS Equity Audit process. It will be essential to understand these assets and their relationship to the equity work of the district, as well as how these assets might be leveraged to enact change more quickly.



## LEADERSHIP

As evidenced in Domain 1, Midland Public Schools has focused intentionally on equity work recently. The district appointed a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and has created a DEI strategy. This asset puts MPS in a strong position to work on the systemic implementation of equity throughout the district.



## CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

As evidenced in Domain 2, there were indications that many families and caregivers felt comfortable in their children's schools and that they were able to engage school leadership and staff in conversation. This asset provides a solid foundation to continue to build on and to ensure that all families come to feel the same way.



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND PERSONAL GROWTH

As evidenced in Domain 4, the district offers a variety of optional and mandatory equity-focused professional learning. Staff members at all levels expressed interest in further developing their understanding of equity and expanding their skills in translating that understanding into actions that provide equitable opportunities for students. Staff members who recognize their growth areas and are interested in developing those areas of need will prove a tremendous asset as the district begins its journey toward consistently and universally implementing practices related to equity.



## CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND LEARNING

As evidenced in Domain 5, members at all levels of the organization expressed a consistent level of agreement that MPS offers a rigorous academic program. This asset provides an opportunity for the district to continue to examine student access to these opportunities.

## RESEARCH

### DOMAIN 1

## STRUCTURES, SYSTEMS, AND RESOURCES



Operations, finance, and organizational structure can feel very technical in a school district. But what sits under those technical components is a belief system and understanding of the impacts of bias on adults and students. A growing body of scholarship emphasizes the critical role of district leadership in ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities for students. Districts must intentionally design organizational structures and routines that support the success of historically underserved students, otherwise schools may “function as sites of oppression” rather than places of opportunity (Irby et al., 2019).

A district’s commitment to equity relies on fundamental systemic change throughout the organization, as well as the anti-racist beliefs and actions of individual educators and leaders (Welton et al., 2018). Furthermore, districts must explicitly centralize equity in their school improvement plans to ensure that resources are equitably distributed to students in both policy and practice (Starr, 2018; Gorski, 2019).

At the foundation, strategic planning (a district process of establishing goals and the strategies that will be employed to achieve those goals) should explicitly name race and equity as a priority in the organization. Goals must be meaningful and represent access and opportunity, not just absolute achievement, in order to ensure equitable support of all students. In order to achieve this, district goals, as well as their measurable targets, must be developed collaboratively with leaders and stakeholders.

Upon the foundation of strategic planning sit the technical decisions and systems that comprise budgeting; the allocation of resources; access to clean, healthy and updated facilities, access to technology hardware, software and internet; quality food and nutrition programs; and safe and effective transportation. Therefore, this domain addresses both the degree to which the school board and senior leadership team have and continue to develop racial competence and use that to plan strategically, make technical decisions and create structures and systems that promote equity.

There is a clear and direct link between student achievement and access to material and nonmaterial resources such as effective teachers, high-quality instructional materials, academic rigor, and learning-ready facilities (Travers, 2018). The allocation of these resources at the macro level can alleviate or exacerbate inequities across an organization. Research suggests that districts and school boards often do not direct resources to students with equity in mind, resulting in intra-district disparities in teacher assignment, curriculum, and building quality (Darden & Cavendish, 2011). Cheatham, Baker-Jones, and Jordan-Thomas (2020) suggest that districts can demonstrate their commitment to racial equity by “intentionally allocating their resources more flexibly based on the changing needs of individual students” through strategies such as reconfigured funding formulas and differentiated instructional designs.



## FINDINGS

An important aspect of the structures, systems, and resources that allow a district to ensure equitable practices and improved outcomes for each student is a clear message that equity is important to all members of the district. Frequently, this is represented through an aspect of the district's strategic plan, and/or an equity plan that includes the district's vision for equity, that all stakeholders are aware of and understand.

There was ample evidence across different data sources to suggest that Midland Public Schools has made efforts to bring an intentional focus to improving equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for students in the district. The following examples illustrate that intent:

- The district has a stated vision for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) that is included in the Superintendent's weekly communiqués and published elsewhere.
- As noted in the Superintendent's weekly communiqué in June 2020, the district began a concentrated push to improve equitable practices in MPS during the 2018-2019 school year.
- In January 2020, the district began working with an external DEI consultant on loan from Dow Chemical and as part of that work, the district collaborated with a group of district stakeholders (DEI Advisory Team) to construct a districtwide DEI Strategy that outlines five focus areas and broad goals for each.
- The Board of Education's *Resolution to Change the System, Eliminate Racism and Create More Equitable and Inclusive Schools for All* from August 2020 signals their commitment to supporting the development of systems and structures that improve equitable opportunities, access, and outcomes for all students.
- The district created a new position, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, in January 2021 to spearhead its efforts in improving equitable experiences and outcomes for students.

Stakeholder feedback indicated that participants believe that equity is important throughout the district. As evidenced in surveys, family and caregivers had an average level of agreement (3.12 where consensus level of agreement is 3.0) where nearly 86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed; non school-based staff had an average level of agreement (3.08); and school-based staff

## FINDINGS

approached consensus level at 2.93. Also evidenced in all stakeholder surveys, there was near consensus that the district has a definition of equity (range of 2.84-2.99). However, stakeholder feedback across all focus groups indicated a need for this vision to be more uniformly understood. While most participants agreed there was a district equity stance, they were unable to articulate it. The following comments from focus group participants are representative of the larger collective:

- “In all honesty, I'm not sure the district has a clear definition.”
- “Sometimes [there is] confusion between equity and equality.”
- “It’s probably posted somewhere but honestly I can't tell you.”
- “I wouldn't say that we have a formal definition but I would say we get to it in our vision statement.”
- “I know we have a flier or document that has a DEI statement but I don't know it verbatim.”

While stakeholders are aware of various district efforts to support equitable access and outcomes for students, there was a level of disagreement that systems exist in the district and schools to identify and address potential inequities (ex. allocation of resources, access to academic support and interventions, implementation of discipline policies, etc.). Additionally, while some bodies of work are codified through a strategic plan (e.g. a *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy* document and the *M.P.S STEM Strategic Plan*), there was no evidence of a comprehensive district strategic plan to align the district’s focus. Ideally, a strategic plan would highlight equity as the district’s foundation for all work.

The district’s involvement in the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) could serve as the foundation for the development of a comprehensive strategic plan. The two goals defined in the district’s MICIP are to:

- create a team-driven comprehensive screening and assessment system to drive low inference data-based decision making and provide better access and opportunity to an equitable curriculum with supports for students; and
- create a safe and collaborative culture and learning experience for students that embraces diversity, is inclusive and equitable for all students, and meets their individual needs.

## FINDINGS

A commitment to these goals could help to center equity in the work of the district moving forward.

A key critical aspect of ensuring that the district's vision for equity is being executed with fidelity is the ability to strategically use data to identify and address inequities and track and monitor progress.

When asked, "Are there systems in place in your school and in the district to identify and address potential inequities?", several respondents across different focus groups simply stated, "No." One focus group respondent shared, "I believe there is a Google Form that you can use to anonymously report an incident - I don't know where that form would be." Another stated, "No. In fact, I think we have a difficult time even talking about how people are different and don't have equal access to opportunities." One stakeholder shared, "I wouldn't say we have clearly defined systems. I think we have opportunities to self-identify and bring inequities forward."

Stakeholder feedback also indicated a need to develop or refine data systems to allow for more equitable decision making. For example, there was a low level of agreement in school leader surveys (2.18 where 3.0 is a consensus level of agreement) that data sets are used to identify and address gaps among student groups. Instructional staff members' response to the survey prompt "My colleagues and I use data to identify and address the opportunity and access gaps students face", indicated an average level of agreement (3.01). When school leaders responded to the prompt "My team and I monitor enrollment in special education, gifted education, and advanced courses for disproportionality", the average level of agreement was low at 2.53, and 40% of school leader respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed to the aforementioned prompt.

While some stakeholders evidenced pockets of uniform data use, responses during focus groups largely reinforced the need to improve data practices. The following comments are representative of responses:

- "Data doesn't get disaggregated. If it does, it is by socioeconomic or specialized services."

## FINDINGS

- “We have the systems to be able to disaggregate the data, but I do not know that we collect data in a way that makes that easy to do - or even possible.”
- “When we do act on data disaggregation, it is very narrow and we don't dig deeper.”

Importantly, the district has recently begun using NWEA MAP for grades K-8 and has indicated plans to purchase a student information system (SIS). These additions to the district's practice have the potential to mitigate some of the existing challenges around data. It will be important for the district to commit to building a culture of data use amongst all stakeholders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1.1

#### Develop robust data-collection, analysis, and implementation protocols

- Identify consistent data points (academic achievement, disciplinary infractions and outcomes, access to enrichment programs, equitable resourcing, etc.) that will be examined at the district office and in each school to identify areas for programmatic improvement. Ensure that the data points can be examined both as aggregated data sets and as sets disaggregated by demographic groups.
- Identify consistent, ongoing processes at the district office and in each school for reviewing aggregated and disaggregated data that reveal disproportionalities in students' opportunities, access, and outcomes.
- Develop specific processes at the district office, and in each school, to mitigate disproportionalities discovered through the data review.

### 1.2

#### Develop uniform expectations and practices system-wide that ensure equitable opportunities, access, and outcomes for all students.

- Identify a process to develop a uniform definition of equity aligned with the district's vision for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Ensure that the district's vision for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is explicitly addressed in the district's Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process plan (MICIP), including short-term and long-term quantitative goals.
- Unify the work of the various groups in the equity space in MPS.
- Communicate evidence-based expectations for uniform implementation of district identified core practices (SEL, MTSS, professional development, curriculum, e.g.).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1.3

Develop a District Equity Team (DET) to serve in an advisory capacity to ensure equitable practices are enacted in the district

- Enlist the Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion to chair the work of the DET and to identify key District stakeholders at all levels to co-lead equity work.
- Identify clear roles and responsibilities for the DET, including an examination of existing teams to protect against overlap.
- Use the DET to refine the existing DEI Strategy so that it is aligned to and/or embedded within the district's MICIP and to ensure that it not only includes a vision of equity, focus areas, and broad goals, but also a clear definition of equity, review of pertinent district data, specific goals for progress in identified areas, metrics to measure progress toward goals, and professional learning opportunities for all stakeholders.
- Use the DET to examine current practices around identifying and addressing potential inequities in schools.
- Ensure that the District Equity Team has formal structures to collaborate with other key committees to nurture alignment and ensure cross functionality.

### 1.4

Assist each school in developing a School-based Equity Team (SET) to serve as leaders in supporting implementation of equitable practices in the building

- Identify SET participants in each building.
- Identify clear roles and responsibilities for the SET.
- Use the SET to develop a building-based equity plan aligned to the school improvement plan and the district equity plan.
- Ensure the SET provides ongoing equity-related professional learning opportunities to all staff members.
- Ensure alignment between the processes and structures of the DET and SET.



## CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Racial competence is central to a culture in which students, educators, and families of color feel safe, welcome, and valued as integral members of their school and district community. Establishing a culture of racial competence requires creating an anti-racist climate in every building, utilizing social and emotional supports for active engagement with racial issues, and leveraging family and community partnerships to develop social trust. With racial competence as the foundation of a district's culture, students, educators, and families can understand and challenge the racial biases that affect every aspect of teaching and learning, engage in productive conversations about race and equity, and reach their full potential in a safe and supportive school environment.

The distinction between school climate and school culture is nuanced but can be explained as follows: climate refers to a school's attitude, while culture refers to its personality. A school or district's culture is shaped over time through changes to its climate (Gruenert, 2008). Therefore, creating an equitable, anti-racist climate in every school is necessary for establishing a deeply ingrained culture of racial competence throughout a district.

An equitable school climate gives all students, staff, and families—regardless of racial or socioeconomic background—access to “effectively supported high expectations for teaching, learning, and achievement; emotionally and physically safe, healthy learning environments for all; caring, courageous, self-reflective relationships among and between peers and adults; and multiple, culturally responsive pathways to participation” (Ross, Brown, & Biagas, 2020).

A district's commitment to racial competence requires teachers and leaders to have an asset-based approach to educating and serving students and families of color. This means that diversity is viewed as a strength and individuals are valued for their unique contributions to the school and district community.

A racially competent school climate mitigates the potentially harmful effects of policies and practices on staff and students of color. Dress, hair, and conduct policies often include coded or racialized language about appearances and attitudes, with negative consequences for students of color, including harsher punishments and increased time away from the classroom (Fregni & Zingg, 2020). Black children, especially males, are disciplined at higher rates than their white peers as early as preschool and throughout grades K-12, with long-term implications for their likelihood of



arrest and incarceration as adults (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2016; Bacher-Hicks, Billings, & Deming, 2020).

Restorative discipline is a promising alternative to traditional disciplinary methods that “fosters belonging over exclusion” and helps improve school climate and culture (Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue, n.d.). Social and emotional learning (SEL) can also be used as a driver for racial equity in education. According to the National Equity Project, SEL “offers the possibility of acknowledging, addressing, and healing from the ways we have all been impacted by racism and systemic oppression” (National Equity Project, n.d.). SEL in schools should be approached with the explicit purpose of creating a culture of racial competence through improving the self-awareness and social and emotional intelligence of all students and educators with respect to race and equity.

Establishing an equitable school climate also requires including the voices of diverse students, staff, families, and community members in decisions related to school policy and facilitating “courageous conversations” about equity on an ongoing basis (Ross, Brown, & Biagas, 2020). Research has shown that family and community engagement benefits not only individual student achievement, but also overall school improvement. Yet many districts do not effectively involve families and communities of color in their school improvement efforts, often due to misguided deficit thinking about non-white cultures and attitudes about education (McAlister, 2013). School and district leaders must develop social trust and positive relationships with families and community organizations to strengthen the culture of racial competence and improve.

## FINDINGS

An important aspect of culture and climate is the extent to which students feel connected and as though they belong in schools. This sense of belonging is many times fostered through the ability to participate in meaningful conversations with adults and peers about important concepts such as race, gender, orientation, etc. When asked whether there are opportunities in classes and/or school to talk about diverse identities (ex: race, gender/gender identity, differences in learning or physical abilities, and/or sexual orientation) students evidenced an average level of agreement of 2.74 (where 3.0 is a consensus level of agreement) with roughly 30% of students disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. There were also gender differences evidenced as follows: Nonbinary 2.23; Female 2.72; Male 2.81.

Several groups' stakeholders shared their understanding of the importance of building relationships with students to ensure their successful school experiences. A teacher shared, "I try to be good about supplying kids with the resources and support they need... I think I'm pretty good at building relationships with kids...I try to reinforce the social-emotional lessons/tips that the leadership shares." A student shared, "I feel like the classes where I feel most supported are when the teachers take time to talk with us as people and not just school all the time."

Family and caregivers reported a positive perception of communicating with district representatives, as 95% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to feeling comfortable speaking with the staff and administrators of Midland Public Schools. When asked during focus groups, "How comfortable do you feel interacting with teachers and principals at your student's school?", one family member stated, "The teachers of my students have been pretty welcoming and ... I know them." Another shared, "We have had extremely positive experiences with teachers meeting needs, going above and beyond." When asked specifically about whether there was district outreach to gain family and caregivers' input, nearly 30% of survey respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed to the prompt, "I have been invited to be actively involved in planning initiatives, supporting programs, and/or providing input at the school my student(s) attends." When asked during focus groups, "Do you feel that you have a voice in the district?", one participant responded, "It's one thing to have the voice, but it's another thing to feel like your voice is actually heard, which has not necessarily been my experience." Another shared, "It's on an individual basis. I feel like all is well when I'm in the room and we are all laughing and joking, but when things get more serious, I think my voice is less willing to be heard."

## FINDINGS

A district's culture and climate are also driven by policies and practices. MPS publishes a Code of Conduct for students. The Code of Conduct largely outlines a range of discipline, stating "The School District will consider restorative practices as an addition or alternative to discipline. The discipline for violating some prohibited acts ranges from administrative intervention to expulsion. For other prohibited acts, the penalty ranges from suspension to expulsion. For violation of the most serious prohibited acts, the penalty is expulsion." The Code of Conduct also makes mention of restorative practices more specifically, stating "Restorative practices should be the first consideration to remediate offenses such as interpersonal conflicts, verbal and physical conflicts, theft, and damage to property, class disruption, and harassment, bullying, and cyberbullying."

Several focus group participants referenced Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and associated programs RISE and Mind, Body, Grow as aspects of students' experience in MPS. There were also statements indicating the district's intention to provide training and resources to meet students' social-emotional needs. It was unclear, however, the extent to which there is systematic implementation of restorative practices or SEL structures and strategies in the district. One teacher shared, "I did SEL with the RISE program and so it is something I can implement very easily, but other teachers don't know it and haven't had that chance yet." Another stated, "There is a lot of feeling that there should be an SEL curriculum so there is a common language." Another teacher stated, "I understand the district wants to trial things, but if it goes well, I don't understand why then the rollout isn't wider. There are teachers using these programs and loving it and then there are others who are frustrated because they aren't getting the training." A leader shared, "We had training over the summer and I think we are pretty aligned, but without continued coaching and reflection, I think we are regressing."

## FINDINGS

As evidenced on survey responses, there are mixed perceptions regarding the consistency of discipline enforcement in the district. When responding to the following prompt, “School discipline policies and practices are enforced consistently with all students at my school”, the following data was noted:

- Student responses approached consensus at 2.95 (where 3.0 is a consensus level of agreement), however 21.9% of student respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed
- Family and caregivers responses indicated a 2.89 average level of agreement, however 24% disagreed or strongly disagreed
- School based staff indicated a 2.79 level of agreement
- Non school-based staff respondents reported an average level of agreement to the same prompt at 2.64
- School leaders reported an average level of agreement at 2.94

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2.1

Develop a restorative, system-wide, process for implementation, enforcement and reporting of disciplinary matters. As a public school district, accountability and transparency are a priority.

- Track discipline data to understand trends in incidences and outcomes.
- Convene the district leadership team to review examples of systems of positive behavior supports, including restorative practices, that exist nationally. Identify a comprehensive suite of supports and develop a plan for consistent implementation, monitoring, and adjustment at the district and school level.
- Review the district's Code of Conduct. Identify opportunities to supplement punitive consequences with existing or new restorative practices, and develop a plan for consistent implementation, monitoring, and adjustment at the district and school level.

### 2.2

Enlist the entire school community to work toward establishing a supportive community, focused on equitable outcomes and inclusivity among all stakeholder groups.

- Work actively to elevate the DET as a visible, recognized, and leading voice in the MPS, where authentic dialogue is encouraged.
- Build upon already established communication processes to ensure that all stakeholder voices can be heard and acknowledged.
  - Develop stakeholder comfort by holding meetings with MPS leaders, staff, caregivers and students (particularly students of color, from the LGBTQ+ community, those with disabilities, etc.), on specific issues relevant to them and meaningfully engage them in decision-making at the district and school level. Ensure access to these opportunities by varying the time of occurrence, utilizing remote platforms and providing translation services.
  - Track and monitor data collected to identify trends and needed supports accordingly.
  - As significant themes emerge, develop, implement, and monitor action plans to address concerns.



## EQUITY IN THE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

Every student deserves educators who will provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in school today and in their futures. Some of the most compelling research in recent years indicates the significant positive impact that teachers of color have on all students—particularly students of color—in terms of achievement, expectations for success, and long-term life outcomes. A racially diverse educator workforce represents a district’s dedication to creating equitable access to excellent educational opportunities for all students, as well as its commitment to eliminating barriers to entry and providing equitable career advancement opportunities for educators of color.

Given the significant impact of effective educators on student outcomes, getting the right people in the right positions should be a top priority for school districts. When educator talent is managed well, a district can transform entrenched bureaucratic systems into more nimble processes that support the ultimate goal of ensuring all students have access to effective teachers in every classroom and effective leaders in every school.

Equitable beliefs, policies, and practices are necessary at every stage of an educator’s progression through a school district, from recruitment and hiring, to retention, to placement and promotion. People of color are both less likely to enter education at all and more likely to leave if they do enter. Therefore, a district must employ intentional strategies to attract racially diverse candidates into open positions, equitably place them in schools and classrooms, encourage them to remain in the district at

proportional rates, and provide equitable opportunities for them to progress upwards in the organization.

These strategies could include involving diverse voices in the hiring and onboarding process; implementing induction programs and leadership academies specifically for educators of color; and ensuring that school and district leaders understand the positive and negative experiences of teachers and staff of color. Together, these strategies can mitigate racial inequities and ensure the equitable representation of educators of color at all levels of the organization.

Diversity benefits every workforce, and teaching is no exception. Research repeatedly indicates that teachers of color benefit students of color—particularly Black males—in a variety of ways, including increased test scores, lowered school suspensions, improved academic attitudes, increased student attendance, and reduction in the risk of

dropping out (Gershenson et al., 2017; Lee, 2018; Miller, 2018; Partelow et al., 2017). Racial diversity among teachers also helps break down biases across races, thus having a positive effect on all students (Partelow et al., 2017).

Yet most districts do not effectively recruit and retain educators of color. In 40% of U.S. schools, there is not a single teacher of color on staff, and teachers of color only represent 18% of the overall teaching population (Partelow et al., 2017; Putman & Walsh, 2016). Many school districts are not yet implementing strategies to address this challenge: only one in three districts actively recruits from HBCUs or MSIs, only 40% of districts even consider a teacher's contribution to workforce diversity when hiring teachers, and 80% of districts "do not provide any specific supports geared toward inducting teachers of color" (Konoske-Graf, Partelow, & Benner, 2016).

Teachers of color tend to leave the profession or transfer schools at higher rates than white teachers (Barshay, 2018). In fact, national data

indicates that there is a turnover disparity of approximately 7 percentage points between Black and white teachers (Barnum, 2018). According to a recent report by Dixon, Griffin, and Teoh (2018), teachers of color often leave their districts and/or education altogether due to antagonistic school culture, unfavorable work conditions, lack of agency and autonomy, feeling undervalued, and the high social and emotional cost of being a teacher of color.

In many districts, there is a trend to place higher percentages of teachers of color in hard-to-staff, low-income schools with less experienced leadership and with fewer professional development opportunities, leading to frustration and teachers exiting the district. Additionally, findings suggest that Black teachers tend to change schools or leave the profession if they aren't exposed to Black colleagues or a principal of color (Mahnken, 2018).



## FINDINGS

The data regarding equity in the educator workforce in MPS reflects some of the challenges outlined in the research above. Approximately 98% of the teaching staff is White as is approximately 96% of the paraprofessional/support services staff. District and school leader demographic data was not provided by the district.

Midland Public Schools has an Associate Superintendent for Finance and Human Resources, who oversees the Human Resources Office, Labor Agreements, Prioritization Contracts, and Pupil Accounting (as evidenced in an Organizational Chart provided by the district). A conversation with the district's Human Resources Director indicated that the district has focused recruitment efforts on Michigan Schools of Education. In the past two years, however, the district has also started to use the accelerated program at Saginaw Valley State University and has been placing more people out of the accelerated programs in part due to the diversity of candidates available.

Evidence collected in stakeholder surveys suggests recruitment and retention of staff of color are areas in need of improvement. As noted on the School-based Staff survey, participants had a low level of agreement (2.21 where 3.0 is a consensus level of agreement) when responding to the prompt, "School and district leaders effectively recruit staff of color", with 65% of respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Of note, a statistically significant difference arose between teachers and paraeducators, where respondents who identified as teachers indicated a 2.11 level of agreement to school and district leaders effectively recruiting staff of color, compared to paraeducators who indicated a 2.60 - the highest level of agreement among all respondent roles. Non School-Based Staff also had a low level of agreement (2.40).

Similar results were found when examining perceptions of retention of staff of color. There was a low level of agreement (2.51) when School-based Staff responded to the prompt "School and district leaders effectively retain staff of color." Additionally, 45% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed to the prompt. Non School-Based Staff also indicated a low level of agreement (2.68).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 3.1

Develop a Talent Management strategy that is led by a senior staff member familiar with talent management strategies, addressing recruitment, retention and development of a talent pipeline to encourage career options and advancement through a lens of equity.

- Create conditions for district leaders to continue to engage in deep reflection about the impact of their personal biases and their institution's history with equity. Analyze how these factors may be impacting hiring practices and decisions regarding recruitment, retention and advancement of staff of color. Develop a plan to address and mitigate these findings:
- Develop district processes and structures to support the active recruitment, retention and advancement of staff of color.
- Offer a robust induction program to support teachers of color in their first years of teaching. This may include being matched with a veteran mentor-teacher, additional professional development opportunities and/or extra coaching support (Carver-Thomas, 2018).
- Develop meaningful partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) to actively recruit teachers of color into teaching and administrative roles, especially those who have evidenced commitment to working in hard-to-staff schools.
- Develop a pipeline that includes opportunities for career growth for staff of color, including participation in leadership academies, instructional and leadership coaching, and other leadership development opportunities.



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND PERSONAL GROWTH

For years, educational equity work has centered primarily (and necessarily) on our students - their race, culture, language, socioeconomic status, and identity. However, too often, the impact of educators' race, culture, and identity on students has been left unacknowledged. Placing equity at the center of educator practice means building structural, individual, and collective consciousness among all staff around issues related to racism, bias, and power, and the ways in which they interact to undermine equitable education for students. By engaging all educators in personalized, aligned professional learning that critically examines individual and systemic biases and provides effective tools and practices, schools can improve their effectiveness in working with diverse populations.

As districts work towards creating systems that dismantle systemic racism, it is imperative that their professional learning examine, question, and address personal and institutional issues of race, bias, and power head-on. People are not born racially competent—the skills and attitudes that comprise racial competence are learned through continuous questioning, reflection, and realignment. And yet, that work is often avoided out of fear that it will “expose our gaps in racial competence, and people might think we are racist. But without asking questions or taking risks, we can’t grow. If schools adopt a growth mindset about race, we can create a culture in which everyone is continuously developing their racial competence” (Michael, n.d.).

Additionally, research shows that professional learning is most effective

when it is content-focused and job-embedded. When creating professional learning to develop the racial consciousness of educators across the district, it is important to not only meet staff where they are in their personal learning, but also to ensure that the offerings are tailored, as is appropriate, for their specific role. Engaging educators in collaborative professional learning and providing opportunities for them to have an active role in the development and implementation of professional learning is essential for sustaining an effective and responsive professional learning program.

In order to ensure that the district creates a professional learning culture grounded in the need for continuous development of racial competence, it is critical to seize every opportunity to engage educators in the understanding and ownership of the priorities around equity. In doing so, improvement feels

cohesive and relevant, and becomes an invaluable part of what it means to be a racially competent educator.

Recent research repeatedly corroborates the link between teacher quality and outcomes for students (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). According to the Center for Public Education, teacher quality has a greater impact on student achievement than other factors often associated with academic outcomes, including a student's race, socioeconomic status, and prior academic record (Schmidt et al., 2017).

In order to have a positive impact on outcomes for all students, teachers must be provided with the training, resources, and supports needed to deliver high-quality instruction to all students. Research also shows that teachers and their implicit biases can be a barrier to students of color reaching their full academic potential (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016).

Teachers must be provided with opportunities to participate in equity-focused training so that they are willing and able to continually and critically reflect on the ways in which their personal and professional identities inform their ability to effectively meet the needs of a diverse student population (Larrivee, 2000).

While the impact of teachers cannot be overstated, students' experiences in schools are influenced by all adults employed by the district. Ongoing professional learning in equity and bias must be designed to allow all educators to reflect on their implicit biases and learn culturally responsive best practices.

Educators who engage in professional learning related to race and equity learn to formulate strategies for collectively addressing equity issues in their schools. Through this process educators gain a deeper understanding of equity and equity-related problems in their school context and are more empowered to contribute to the solutions.

## FINDINGS

MPS provides substantial opportunities for professional learning. In focus groups and survey responses, MPS staff members at all levels of the organization referenced opportunities to participate in internal and external professional learning related to a variety of topics, including equity.

Among the district offered topics, professional learning opportunities were centered around school-specific initiatives, exploring personal mindset and broad issues related to equity, and social-emotional learning practices. Staff members surveyed indicated an average level of agreement to the prompt, “I have access to professional learning opportunities that deepen my understanding of bias and its impact on education” at 2.81 where roughly 30% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the prompt. It is unclear, however, whether or how the district is embedding actionable professional learning opportunities focused on equity throughout the year and for all staff members. When provided with the prompt, “I am trained in culturally responsive instruction and use the techniques in my classroom,” 67% of instructional staff disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, school leaders indicated a low level of agreement with the prompt, “Our teachers are trained in culturally responsive instruction and use the techniques in the classroom” (2.18 where 3.0 indicates consensus).

There was evidence in multiple stakeholder groups that the district offers a wide variety of optional programming including DEI Forums, the Racial Equity Challenge, and school-based book clubs in addition to mandatory equity training. Numerous staff members specifically referenced “The Racial Equity Challenge” as a beneficial offering for those who chose to engage in the work. Participants recommended that it would be helpful to have similar offerings moving forward, but to include all staff and to provide space and time for planning and collaboration with colleagues around issues of equity.

Another theme that emerged in focus groups was that while multiple initiatives and training related to those initiatives are available throughout the district, availability and implementation is inconsistent across the district and within schools. Participants expressed interest in receiving more direction from the district, as well as expectations for action related to DEI work.

## FINDINGS

The following are a selection of quotes from various district and school leaders and staff members regarding this topic:

- “We have some autonomy and are really not held accountable to what the content of our professional development is - there are suggestions from the district and there is very little time to do district wide professional learning, so it is really dependent on the leader what kind of PD there is.”
- “We've done the standard diversity training, but we haven't gotten deeper - what does it look like in your classroom, in your teaching moves, in your resources. At the district, we are just starting to do this.”
- “We get so many great ideas about DEI - we'll have a great professional development session for like an hour - but then nothing happens with it...no training on how to implement it. And that happens with a lot of DEI work - great ideas but very little is put into practice.”
- “DEI has planned a lot of these on a voluntary basis and the PL offered - the Canvas course, for example (MPS Racial Equity Challenge) - has been super helpful and eye-opening. My concern is that those who need to know about this stuff/participate choose not to do so.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1

Develop and implement a plan for district-wide, consistently implemented professional learning, with a focus on cultural competence for all levels of staff; including district office staff members.

- Elevate the leadership of the Director of DEI by providing opportunities for him to receive advanced, intensive cultural competence professional learning so that he can then develop and deliver professional learning for all stakeholders (all staff, students, parents & community members).
- Partner with an external organization with demonstrated experience in training district staff members in developing culturally competent mindsets and practices.
- Ensure that all aspects of equity and cultural competence, including race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ and other identities, are addressed during professional learning.
- Develop a multi-year training plan that ensures consistency in professional learning schedules and content for all members in alignment with the district's MICIP.
- Ensure that professional development offerings are guided by data (*quantitative and qualitative*) and student outcomes.
- Provide ongoing training and professional development in SEL, culturally responsive teaching, Universal Design for Learning, anti-racism instructional practices, etc.





## CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND LEARNING

The quality of a student's learning environment and their access to opportunity play a key role in their academic and developmental life outcomes. Research has shown that a racially conscious curriculum and teaching practices are beneficial to all educators and learners. An equitable learning environment provides the culture, climate, and content needed to enable all students to thrive in the global economy. The establishment of equitable teaching and learning practices and the equitable provision of teaching materials and resources ensure positive student outcomes by providing racially affirming and high-quality instruction, diverse and inclusive curriculum, and programmatic access and equity.

Good practice dictates that educators analyze student performance and identify gaps in learning. However, if those educators do not reflect on the systems, biases, and practices that lead to such inequitable outcomes, there is a tendency to engage in deficit thinking and seek to "fix" the students. Educators who instead focus on fixing the system are those who have invested in increasing their own understanding of the historical and social context of students, their culture, and education through reading, reflection, and discussion with colleagues and students.

These race-conscious educators:

- Ensure each student feels like an active member of an inclusive learning family through engagement and connection.
- Center all students by promoting their voice and celebrating their identities, interests, cultures, and context.
- Actively engage each student in meaningful learning experiences through collaboration, differentiation, and exploration.

Providing students with equitable learning opportunities builds trust, enhances rapport with learners and, consequently, improves student motivation (Weimer, 2010). As noted by Chiefs for Change in their 2019 report "Honoring Origins and Helping Students Succeed: The Case for Cultural Relevance in High-Quality Instructional Materials," a commitment to cultural relevance is a commitment to honoring student diversity and increasing student engagement and cannot result in the decrease of academic rigor. Providing a high-quality education to all students requires that a district offer them equitable access to a variety of courses. Students are best prepared for successful lives when they are engaged in teaching and learning that goes beyond knowledge transfer and pushes them to generate new ideas, engage with content critically, express themselves effectively, and work with others to solve problems in a global world.



## FINDINGS

Midland Public Schools is known for providing a strong, rigorous academic program to include the universal implementation of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme and optional Diploma Program. Their use of The Center for Educational Leadership's 5D+™ Teacher Instructional Growth and Evaluation Rubric provides an avenue through which teacher practice can be more closely examined through a lens of equity.

Survey responses indicated a mixed opinion on curriculum and materials being reflective of other cultures, backgrounds, identities, and experiences. Family and caregivers who responded to the survey reached general agreement (3.05) while student respondents did not achieve consensus (average level of agreement of 2.80). There were also statistically significant race and gender differences among student respondents. In particular, Asian students (n=72) reported a 2.79 agreement level compared to their Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander peers (n=2) at 3.00, White peers (n=2003) at 2.82, and peers that chose not to disclose their race (n=199) at 2.83. When comparing agreement levels by gender identification, students that identified as non-binary (n=96) reported a below average level of agreement to the aforementioned prompt at 2.53 compared to their female peers (n=1202) at 2.81, male peers (n=1279) at 2.80, and peers that chose not to disclose their gender identity (n=84) at 2.88. Focus group members across stakeholder groups also spoke to the need for a more expansive variety of materials.

- A parent said, "The district needs to give teachers a curriculum, the diverse literature, the training, et cetera that they need to teach an inclusive lesson."
- District staff members said, "The process for reviewing classroom libraries has been in place for years - a checklist," and "there is a formal process for reviewing and adopting curriculum, which is quite old and does not consider all the things we want to consider so we are working with peers across the state to create something comprehensive enough to do this well."
- Further, it was noted by district staff that "the review process frequency is typically driven by the state, or the revision of standards, or something becoming too old...there's no cycle..."

As with other domains, an overarching trend in focus groups was the need for consistent district-wide expectations around curriculum, instructional materials, and related training and implementation. When discussing curricular and instructional efforts to increase equity in the classroom, multiple teachers referenced the fact that most “are things done by individual teachers because they have made a decision to do it. There isn't a decision or action by the district to make any of this standard.”

When asked to respond to prompts about access to various opportunities in the district, students indicated a perception that there is equal access, reporting an average level of agreement of 3.15 to the statement “Teachers at my school give students the same opportunities in the classroom” an average level of agreement of 3.37 to the statement “Students at my school are given the same opportunities to participate in chorus, band, sports, STEM, student leadership, and other special programs” and an average level of agreement of 3.23 with the statement, “Students at my school are given the same opportunities to participate in all courses.” Conversely, there was evidence, based on stakeholder comments, that the district’s use of tracking at the high school level should be reexamined.

- “We track starting as far back as middle school and by the time they get into sophomore, junior year you'll hear kids say ‘Oh, I'm in the dumb math class’ and they play it like they're joking, but they do feel that way.”
- “We have .2 (level classes), .3 (level classes), and .4 (level classes) and there is such a stigma of being a .2 student but there is also all this pressure in being a .4 student. I am not good at math and I dropped from .4 to .3; I was considering dropping to .2 and my teacher said ‘Oh no, you can't do that you're not a .2 kid!’”
- “Our district is heavy IB and it dominates what we do and offer. [There is] a lot of support for staffing and for IB, but the students in the middle - their class sizes are big, they don't have the same resources.”
- “ It really reinforces a fixed mindset and I know that's not the goal - the goal is to meet kids where they are, but it ends up that they get stuck.”

Information provided by the district outlines a pilot initiative begun in 2017 at Dow High School in which the English Language Arts department condensed the existing point levels and intentionally scheduled students and teachers to allow for diverse class enrollment. Analysis of this initiative’s impact over time will be an important point of reference for the district as they reexamined the point level tracking system in place in the high schools.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1

Continue to expand current curricula and instructional materials in all content areas to prioritize inclusion and equity and to align with the 5D+ Teacher Instructional Growth and Evaluation Rubric.

- Identify a tool to conduct a curriculum and materials review to understand where gaps in inclusion and equity exist (outdated images, ideas, social constructs, e.g.).
- Develop or revise curricula based on findings, working toward ensuring representation of a diversity of perspectives, authors and characters; a focus on social justice, and; resources for customizing curriculum to meet students' unique needs and interests.
- Provide professional learning for all levels of staff in the use of new/revised curricula and materials.
- Develop a calendar that ensures all curricula and instructional materials are reviewed and updated on a consistent, regular basis and that training occurs alongside any changes made.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.2

Establish a district-wide culture of developmental responsiveness which ensures that the practices adults use respond to students' individual, cultural and developmental learning needs and strengths.

- Invest in professional development that provides educators across the district with consistent, robust support and resources in the following areas:
  - Use of active and interactive teaching practices
  - Creating and sustaining a classroom environment that represents all students
  - Use of words and non-linguistic models
  - Developing connections and relationships with their students
- Develop a multi-year plan to increase the flexibility of and ensure diversity of enrollment in the academic tracks in high schools in the district.
  - Engage in research review and data analysis to understand the current state of tracking and high school course enrollment in MPS as well as the impact of inflexible tracking on students' equitable access to opportunities.
  - Identify and examine other districts that have been successful in increasing the flexibility of and/or reducing academic tracking.
  - Develop a communication plan for various stakeholders.

# PART III

## REFERENCES

In this section, please find:

- List of all references used in the compilation of this report.

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