



**Washtenaw I S D**  
A REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY

# 2021-22

# MID-YEAR BOARD REPORT

Washtenaw Intermediate School District

March 2022

# STUDENTS FIRST



## MISSION

To promote the continuous improvement of achievement for every student while providing high-quality service to our customers through leadership, innovation, and collaboration.

## VISION

To be the leader in empowering, facilitating, and delivering a high-quality, boundary-spanning, educational system that educates all children through an equitable, inclusive, and holistic approach.

## BOARD GOALS

Because we put students first, the Washtenaw ISD Board of Education has established these goals, adopting a lens of equity, inclusion, and social justice.



### **Goal #1 –**

Lead, develop, and support a culture of equity and opportunity while disrupting systemic racism in coordinated efforts for underserved students from birth through college and career in Washtenaw County.



### **Goal #2 –**

Cultivate and nurture an organizational culture of equity, inclusion, and social justice by leading sustained education, engagement, and action and intentionally disrupting systemic racism within WISD and our partnering schools and organizations.



### **Goal #3 –**

Lead and advocate for policies and practices that support equity, and inclusion, and the disruption of systemic racism on the local, state, and national levels.

# COMMITTED TO STUDENTS & FAMILIES



Washtenaw ISD's Board of Education is committed to resource allocation, policy, and practice is designed to close the opportunity gap to ensure equitable educational access for all students, with a specific focus on achieving an equitable system for students in poverty, students with disabilities, and students of color.

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**Ashley Kryscynski**,  
Communications and Public Relations  
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# WASHTENAW ISD MID-YEAR BOARD REPORT 2021-22

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## GOAL 1:

***Lead, develop, and support a culture of equity and opportunity while disrupting systemic racism in coordinated efforts for underserved students from birth through college and career in Washtenaw County.***

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### **INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS**

#### **High Point Reimagined**

WISD's High Point Program, as well as Honey Creek Community School, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program, and Gretchen's House moved into their newly renovated building behind the Teaching and Learning Center on January 3, 2022. Some small construction projects are still being completed, but students and staff are eager to learn and grow in their new surroundings that support student focused teaching and learning. A Community Open House will be held on May 19, 2022.



#### **Achievement Initiatives Team Provides Coaching to LEAs**

The Achievement Initiatives (AI) Team offers and facilitates professional learning, and provides various texts for study, that focus on equity within our local districts and across the county. Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS), Ypsilanti Community Schools (YCS), and Lincoln Consolidated Schools (LCS) all have Responsive Teaching Institutes tailored to the needs of their districts. In LCS, the team also provides Justice Leaders, assessment literacy, and middle school literacy trainings. [Course offerings](#) are developed to provide intentional spaces to support educators across the county, and they also provide support in analyzing data sets for districts through an equity lens.

#### **Mom Power**

WISD is currently midway through our eighth Mom Power cohort, which follows an evidence-based curriculum to support under-resourced mothers with young children in the county. The Mom Power groups help mothers learn how to interpret their child's behavior and attend to their needs. They also receive help navigating local safety net services from Trusted Parent Advisors.

#### **Mental Health & Public Safety Preservation Millage Partnership**

Through continued funding from the Mental Health & Public Safety Preservation Millage, WISD has been able to award twenty mini-grants to middle and high schools across Washtenaw County to support various student-led mental health projects.



### **Crisis Team Planning and Support**

WISD continues convening the District Crisis Team Leads of local districts to work on supporting student and staff mental health, as well as threat assessment work. The group meets monthly to share ideas among districts and learn about community resources.

### **Handle With Care**

Handle with Care continues to notify schools when their students have witnessed or experienced a potentially traumatic event outside of school that involved law enforcement. Handle with Care notices have been increasing since schools have returned to in-person learning. WISD has also consulted with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) on their forthcoming statewide Handle with Care system.

### **Transforming Research Into Action to Improve the Lives of Students (TRAILS)**

WISD has received \$96,000 in 31p funding to bring TRAILS programming to ten schools in our county. Middle schools were selected because of the unique developmental opportunity of teaching Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills to students at this age. Training will begin this summer.

### **Clinical Social Work Support**

The continuation of 31n(6) funding has created the opportunity to support local districts with 3.25 FTE clinical social workers to support general education students grades K-12. For the period of October-December 2021, social workers had 137 encounters with students, providing them with critical supports such as crisis intervention services, psychotherapy, and behavioral health counseling. Additional funding from the Mental Health and Public Safety Preservation Millage will allow the addition of up to four licensed Bachelor of Social Work interns from Eastern Michigan University to provide case management support.

### **Significant Disproportionality Work with Local Districts**

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) continues to push on ISDs as subrecipients of IDEA funds to provide LEAs and PSAs with technical assistance to ensure all students with IEPs receive FAPE. In doing so, WISD created two positions for a Technical Assistance & Data Analysis Teacher Consultant to work alongside the Compliance Monitor. Their role is to aid in gathering, monitoring and disaggregating State Performance Plan Data and providing technical assistance for all LEAs and PSAs.

### **Justice Leaders**

We continued to provide the Justice Leaders courses. We offered 4 cohorts of the Core Course and one cohort of the Advanced course. Each of these cohorts involved multiple sessions over three months. Additionally, we provided Justice Leaders monthly meetings and nine additional sessions around targeted topics such as Interrupting Bias and Bigotry and Socially Just Holiday and Heritage Months. To address the needs of our local districts, some of the offerings were held in the evenings. For the cohort offerings, this meant shifting from 4 longer days to 8 shorter evening sessions.

## **TECHNOLOGY ACCESS & SUPPORT**

### **Remote Learning Access**

WISD has moved to providing every student with a device for remote access and digital instruction to ensure equity for students in our student programs, as well as for early childhood families with need of technology for virtual home visits.

### **Washtenaw County Fiber Consortium**

The Washtenaw Fiber Consortium subcommittee has presented a contract for renewal to all constituent district superintendents. This contract brings together multiple areas under one umbrella including PowerSchool hosting, PowerSchool Special Programs, and New World, along with the Fiber consortium updated services.



As part of the consortium agreement, the Technology department is also providing Cyber Security Assessment reports to assist districts in identifying potential vulnerabilities and potential remedies.

### **New Website Development**

WISD's Technology and Communications departments have engaged in a redesign of the district's website platform with Foxbright. As a part of this transition, there will be a focus on accessibility, ADA compliance, and language translation services to ensure our content can be viewed and accessed by all stakeholders.

### **Assistive Technology at High Point**

WISD Assistive Technology has provided training to all High Point staff on the new equipment provided through weekly newsletters with videos, directions, and instructional application.

## **EQUITY IN THE COMMUNITY**

### **2030 Long Range Planning**

The Long-range Core Planning Team members have met with five different groups for the listening sessions (Transgender Task Force, Washtenaw My Brother's Keeper, Washtenaw Association of School Boards, WISD staff, and A2Y Chamber Education Leadership Day participants) and have feedback from over 300 people. Fifteen more sessions are planned for the spring.



### **Washtenaw My Brother's Keeper**

Washtenaw My Brother's Keeper (WMBK) completed volume 2 of the Formula 734 album. Sessions were held every Tuesday for 15 weeks from October 26, 2021-February 1, 2022. This round included two participants through our partnership with the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office and Vera Institute for Justice thanks to their Motion for Justice grant. The partnership aims to keep Black and Brown young men out of the Washtenaw County detention center.

Formula 734 also received two film festival wins for best documentary, one from the Detroit Trinity International Film Festival and another from the Capital City Black Film Festival based out of Austin, TX.

WMBK is also currently in the third month of coordinating the Ypsilanti Community Middle School boys group programming through the Young Men of Purpose partnership with Mentor2Youth, Parkridge Community Center and Christian Love Fellowship Church supported by Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation.

### **Trusted Parent Advisors**

Trusted Parent Advisors continue their equity work in the community. One goal is to support parents by using evidence informed Parent Cafes which build on the strengthening family protective factors. In the last 6 months Trusted Parent Advisors have held 150 Parent Cafes, many in the YCS district area, for 75 moms. In addition to building a social support network and resilience, they have helped parents enroll their children in K-12 schools, WIC, Early Head Start, mental health supports and basic family needs. Our Trusted Parent Advisor who speaks Arabic has helped immigrant families navigate the unfamiliar education and human services systems. We use the discussion themes from the cafes to inform other work and help us better advocate for families in Washtenaw County.

In addition, Trusted Parent Advisors have done one-on-one education about COVID-19 vaccines and have directly helped 178 people access vaccine appointments. They are also instrumental in encouraging residents from the MacArthur Boulevard area to attend community listening sessions and township board meetings to advocate for the use of American Rescue Plan dollars to support children and families in this neighborhood.

### **Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative**

The Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative has started an ABLe Change Organizational Equity Self-Assessment to develop a strategy that the Collaborative can adopt to bring an equity focus to the early childhood system of programs in Washtenaw County. The first strategy is to survey and interview traditionally marginalized parents about how programs are successfully addressing their needs and ways program staff can do better.

### **Early Childhood Expansion and COVID Relief**

Although we all see the signs of the pandemic coming closer to an end, the challenges that have faced our community and programs continue to be heavy. State and federal legislation has prioritized supporting early childhood in the form of expansion funds and COVID-19 relief. WISD's Early Childhood department has maximized the use of these funds and has been able to support Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), community-based organizations, home visiting programs, and families. The Early Childhood team has been able to provide needed COVID-related equipment and materials, hybrid learning opportunities, at-home learning materials, technology, rental, and food assistance. Our dedicated staff has also been essential for programs and families needing additional social-emotional support.

### **Youth Detention Center & Clinical Day Treatment**

WISD has been providing on-site educational support at the Youth Center since July 2021. A pilot program with a clinical day treatment program with Black Family Development Inc. as the clinical partner has been serving approximately four youth since November 2021. This collaborative team is still reviewing design elements at this time.



### **Adult Education in the Washtenaw County Jail**

Since July 1, 2021, WISD has been able to officially capture services for 58 participants, but we have served more than 70 individuals in both Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED, High School Completion, and Career Preparation. We have provided special education services to over 30 young adults. We have had two of our GED graduates from the jail enroll at Washtenaw Community College this semester with the goal of enrolling in the Returning Citizens Fellow Program at Eastern Michigan University in the Fall of 2022.

### **Addressing the Root Causes of Absenteeism**

The absenteeism work with the local districts moves forward as we continue to work with local schools to reach out to families to address the root causes of absenteeism. This year, WISD has worked with over 150 families to help navigate resources and systems within the WISD and Washtenaw County. Root causes are often related to housing instability, economic hardship, family trauma, and mental health concerns, and our team works to connect families with supports.

### **Child Savings Accounts**

Washtenaw County has asked to meet with our leadership team to discuss planning next steps to work together, in partnership, on a Child Savings Account project that would develop post-secondary savings accounts for youth across the county. A cooperative agreement or Memorandum of Understanding will be discussed for potential future work. Initial work to determine the operational aspects of the program and identification of opportunities for alignment with similar scopes of work such as Washtenaw Futures are in the preliminary stages.

## GOAL 2:

***Cultivate and nurture an organizational culture of equity, inclusion, and social justice by leading sustained education, engagement, and action and intentionally disrupting systemic racism within WISD and our partnering schools and organizations.***

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## **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

### **Courageous Conversations About Race Book Study**

The Community and School Partnerships team is holding monthly book studies of the *Courageous Conversations About Race* book which is helping to deepen our understanding of the CCAR protocol and serving as a foundation for our Equity Team work.

## **BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTS**

### **Improving District Communications**

As part of the Communications Department's effort to improve communication across the district, the Smore Newsletter service was implemented in Fall 2021. Existing weekly communications such as the staff Monday Memo and the Family Newsletter transitioned to Smore, and an initial team of supervisors were trained in using Smore to develop program- and department-level communications. From September 2021 through the end of January 2022, a total of 95 newsletters were created garnering more than 27,000 views by readers within and outside of WISD.

### **Disrupting Racism & Decentering Dominant Power Structures**

The AI Team offers various learning sessions as entry points for educators to learn to disrupt racism and decenter dominant power structures within schools. The professional learning offered includes Centering Students and Families in Continuous Improvement, Teaching the Standards in a Socially Just Classroom, and Elena Aguilar's model for coaching, as well as the [Tri-County Culturally Responsive Mathematics Institute](#) and continued offerings of Justice Leaders to our local districts.



### **Professional Learning**

Dr. Christopher Emdin and Dr. Bettina Love served as our opening day speakers and addressed the ways that we can make schools more inclusive, especially for students of color. WISD student program educational staff attended along with over 500 people from local districts.

We offered the Virtual Courageous Conversation Experience (VCCE) for any staff interested in joining the Courageous Conversation work within the organization. For those interested in joining equity teams or interested in equity leadership, the six day LEADS series was offered over the course of the year as well.

### **Equity Teams**

Staff who are willing to step into equity leadership roles were given the opportunity to join team, program or department-level equity teams. These 18 teams, with over 70 individuals, represent all departments, programs and teams at the ISD. The equity teams meet as small department/program teams on a schedule that they have set for themselves and every 6-8 weeks as an organization-wide equity team facilitated by the national Courageous Conversation facilitators. The equity teams have identified their team purpose and racial equity challenge(s).

### **District Equity Leadership Team**

The District Equity Leadership Team (DELT) has been meeting every 6-8 weeks during the year. The group of district leaders is working on building their individual and collective leadership around racial equity. They are using system leadership tools to understand how mindsets and beliefs underlie many of our organizational practices. These leadership tools can help us be deliberate and intentional when we are developing processes, structures, and routines in our organization.

## GOAL 3:

***Lead and advocate for policies and practices that support equity, and inclusion, and the disruption of systemic racism on the local, state, and national levels.***

### **STATE-LEVEL ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP**

#### **Superintendent's Advocacy**

Superintendent Naomi Norman continues to serve as Chair of the Governor's PreK-12 Literacy Commission advocating for systemic supports and funding for youth and families around literacy development. She also serves on MAISA's Instruction Committee and the GELN DEI Task Force.

#### **Special Education Advocacy**

Interim Deputy Superintendent Cherie Vannatter serves on Special Education Instructional Leadership Network's (SEILN) Critical Shortage Workgroup, the Michigan Department of Education Communications Workgroup, and the Preschool Inclusion Workgroup. She is also on the K-12 Alliance Special Education Advocacy Group.



#### **School Business Advocacy**

Interim Associate Superintendent Brian Marcel is on the MSBO Board of Directors and also serves on a subcommittee related to Investing in MSBO Members, which assesses opportunities for scholarships to various MSBO professional development sessions, workshops, and conferences. He continues to advocate for equity factors being considered for the awarding of the scholarships. He is also working on options to recruit college graduates into considering school business as a career choice.

#### **Technology Advocacy**

Chief Information Officer Merri Lynn Colligan serves on the METL (Michigan Education Technology Leaders) Executive board as the Past Chair and is on several task forces including Cybersecurity, MiConnect, Workforce retention, and MISEN (Michigan State Educational Network) advisory. She advocates for equal access to connectivity and digital instruction for all students and equitable support for districts in the areas of connectivity and securing data integrity.

#### **School Public Relations Advocacy**

Communications and Public Relations Specialist Ashley Kryscynski serves on the Michigan School Public Relations Association's Board of Directors and Executive Board as Board Secretary. During Fall 2021, she co-led a process with the Board to determine if the association should pursue creating a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee or task force, and is now co-leading the development of this new task force to better support school public relations professionals.

## **Instructional Advocacy**

The Achievement Initiatives team seeks to shift power to center the voices of those who are impacted most by our policies and practices from the classroom to the national level. Through professional learning with local districts, as well as state-level work, the AI team advocates for practices that center and foster authentic family and student agency. This includes participating in state-level task forces such as the Early Mathematics, Early Literacy and Disciplinary Literacy Taskforces, proposing revisions to the Early Math, Early Literacy, and Disciplinary Literacy Essentials, and connecting state leaders to national academic scholars including Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz and Dr. Gholdy Muhammad. We also encourage districts to look at non-traditional data sets including disaggregating data by various subgroups. [Responsive Teaching Institutes](#) are offered countrywide as well as within local districts (AAPS, YCS, LCS) with scholars Dr. Chris Emdin, Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, Dr. Gholdy Muhammad and Dr. Terry Flennaugh.

## **LOCAL ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP**

### **Mental Health Advocacy**

Holly Heaviland serves on the Washtenaw County Community Mental Health “Mental Health Millage Committee,” representing K-12 educators. Millage-funded programs include a broad array of initiatives, but among the most important is access to mental health and substance use recovery services for all Washtenaw County residents who have difficulty accessing private care, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay for services. Holly works to align our K-12 mental health investments with emerging scopes of work for funded initiatives.

### **Advocacy with Area Business Leaders**

Ashley Kryscynski serves on A2Y Regional Chamber of Commerce’s Board of Directors and Public Policy Committee. In her role on both the Board and Policy Committee, she is responsible for weaving in issues related to local public education and lifting up achievements that business leaders should be aware of, such as the successful renovation of and return to High Point School, which was endorsed by the A2Y Chamber.