

Year One, Mid-year Report to the Minnesota Department of Human Rights

Dr. Michael Cary, Superintendent

Cloquet Public School - ISD 94

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the activities completed and in progress from the agreement between the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) and the Cloquet Public Schools outlined in Exhibit A, *Cloquet ISD 94 Plan to Reduce Referrals and Suspension and Expulsion Rates*.

Summary

The Cloquet Public Schools outlined new activities to be implemented in conjunction with current practices and activities in effort to reduce referrals, suspensions and expulsions for students. There was special emphasis on strategies to reduce/close any gaps that exist between the rates of referral, suspension and expulsion for protected class students, including special education students. The remainder of this report will focus on the status of implementation of the new activities proposed in the plan.

Implementation Status of Activities

Supportive Discipline Response Centers in Elementary Schools

Behavior support rooms are available to students in both elementary schools beginning with the 2018-19 school year. The rooms support all students in grades K-4 with social-emotional support, behavior interventions as well as teaching self-replacement skills. In conjunction with the elementary behavioral support rooms, elementary classrooms have implemented calming corners which include hands on and manipulative items to help refocus students.

At both Churchill Elementary and Washington Elementary we have half-time ADSIS behavior intervention support in place to provide services to students. These certified staff approach intervention in a variety of ways to come alongside students and help them develop skills in areas of deficit. Many of our students with the highest frequency behavior are lacking the ability to cope and self-regulate. Our ADSIS behavior interventionists have designated time in their schedules, daily, to do individual and small group instruction focused on the specific skills students are working to acquire. Because of how we structure their schedules, interventionists are often able to provide on-the-spot instruction based on the specific issues that may arise. The focused skill instruction directly impacts the discipline disparity in that as students gain the skills necessary to self-regulate, they are showing us through behavior referral data that they are having fewer

occurrences. Our ADSIS addition was designed to reduce disciplinary events and disproportionate discipline.

Alternative to Suspension Activities in Secondary Schools

Cloquet Middle School created a program that has allowed for the drastic reduction in students who are suspended out of school during the school year. The program uses a variety of research-based strategies and techniques to address student discipline issues and also addresses the underlying concerns that are causing the behaviors. The techniques and strategies include, but are not limited to: Restorative Practices, Trauma Informed Curriculum, and Suite 360. Suite 360 is an app-based behavior modification program designed to teach students both the negative aspects of specific behaviors and replacement behaviors which can be used in the future. The students who spend time in this program also receive, as part of the daily routine, time for missing homework and are required to participate in a community service project either in the building or in the community.

Administrators assign students to this program in situations where the behavior is sufficiently severe or frequent, where the student would have traditionally been suspended out of school. The goal is to teach students replacement skills they can use to make positive choices and improve outcomes. Cloquet Middle School also focuses on social/emotional learning that will develop empathy towards fellow students and staff. CMS strives to help students understand the harm their behavior(s) can cause and provide alternate strategies.

Cloquet High School created a program called Restorative In-School Engagement (RISE). The program consists of a group of teachers that spend time during their non-instructional periods supporting students in lieu of suspending them. The students report to an assigned teacher's classroom each hour of the day – some students are escorted to the assigned room if needed. The teacher's role is to help restore any harm that was done, check in with the student, and begin to build a relationship with that student. Over the course of the day, a student assigned to the RISE program will have spent time with seven different teachers and formed up to seven new relationships with caring, invested adults. Teachers volunteered to staff the RISE program in place of supervising a study hall. If a teacher does not have a student assigned to them for a particular hour, they are walking the halls building relationships and acting as a positive presence in the building. We are seeing great results by keeping students in school instead of sending them home to an, often times, empty home.

Social Emotional Instruction for Students

The Second Step Curriculum has been implemented in both elementary schools. Second Step is an evidenced based curriculum that promotes social-emotional learning. School guidance counselors, in conjunction with K-4 classroom teachers, are presenting on topics such as empathy, calming down strategies, problem-solving skills and skills for learning. The lessons support the concept of student self-regulation.

The Cloquet Middle School is a Top 20 School in order to help create a safe and healthy culture for all members of the school community. The Top 20 program helps students and staff alike to develop their potential to think, learn and communicate more effectively in order to make a positive difference in their lives, relationships and experiences for others and themselves. A group of trained Cloquet Middle staff rotates through each grade level teaching the 20 strategies from the

Top 20 program to small groups in each grade. All Cloquet Middle School students attend this program on a bi-monthly basis.

The goal of Cloquet Middle School Top 20 program is to ensure that students and staff are aware of the power they possess within themselves to more often be the best version of their selves individually and as a community.

Review and Standardize Discipline Procedures and Records

During the summer of 2018, the principals for all buildings with Cloquet Public Schools met to review current and compare disciplinary procedures and record keeping practices in their buildings. They worked to complete a short guide to reduce the number of incident types being entered into the student information system and align those types with those provided by the state.

The goal of this work was to ensure consistent practice across our buildings that aligns with state reporting systems.

Engagement Strategies to Review Disciplinary Policies and Procedures

Student handbooks from each site were distributed in November at the Local Indian Education Committee (LIEC) meeting. Discipline policies and procedures were reviewed with representation from Cloquet school board members, the superintendent and members of school administration. Meaningful conversations focusing on discipline policies and practices were the base of the discussions. American Indian families shared some experiences and situational insight to create a better understanding of social norms, cultural relevance and traditional practices. The increase in Restorative Practices throughout the district was noticed and supported. Cloquet School District places a high importance on the inclusion of feedback and insight from our American Indian families, community and leadership.

A future review opportunity was discussed and was highly supported by the LIEC.

Truancy Prevention

Truancy prevention is currently an item for future action within the plan. There is an initial meeting scheduled with our truancy prevention staff member to review current practice and discuss methods for improvement.

Cultural Training for Staff

Cloquet Middle School has also had professional development by the Cloquet Public Schools Indian Education Coordinator centered around culturally responsive reading instruction and material. Furthermore, we are currently using the book *We Got This* by Cornelius Minor, which is also about culturally responsive teaching, in a book study.

Cloquet High Schools holds monthly equity trainings designed to identify and address the implicit biases present in the educational setting. Additionally, there has been work to implement restorative processes for use in the building when conflict arises.

Trauma Training for Staff

Washington Elementary has been working to become a trauma-informed school. During the fall of 2017 the Building Leadership Team helped steer planning for staff development to focus on improving understanding of adverse childhood experiences and trauma, and how to more effectively respond to students who are dysregulated. In January of 2018, the school formed a voluntary “Trauma Planning Team” that continues to meet monthly with Carlton County staff to reflect and plan. Through this team, a number of staff development topics have been identified and presented to staff since that time. Topics include: Trauma Informed School, Introduction to ACEs, RP Foundations, Happiness Equation, Gratitude, Historical Trauma, and Implicit Bias. Three additional trainings are coming up this school-year as well: Toxic Stress, Poverty & Child Development and Resilience. Additionally, as building staff were trained, a voluntary “Trauma Response Team” was formed as well. This group of staff have received additional training and have had additional meetings to reflect and plan for the future.

Churchill Elementary has also engaged in recent training focusing on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and trauma.

Over the past two years, the Cloquet Middle School staff has received professional development in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) training and trauma-informed teaching. Outside professionals presented each piece and then follow up training has continued by Cloquet Middle School staff in both ACES and trauma-informed teaching.

The Cloquet Area Alternative Education Program (CAAEP) staff is in year 3 of full school implementation of the Restorative Process (RP) practice. RP is a trauma informed response with ongoing training throughout the school year. Specifically, the CAAEP staff has been trained in ACES (Adverse Childhood Trauma) by the Carlton County Collaborative and Health and Human Services. Over the last 3 years, the rate of out of school suspensions has decreased by 90% with an increase of a positive cultural climate, as illustrated by the community and student surveys received in January 2019.

Restorative Process events are scheduled quarterly. This school year, one of our RP days was dedicated to the American Indian traditions of the Ojibwe. Special guests were invited into the school for storytelling, dream interpretations and dream catcher making, along with health and wellness concerns of the Native population and how Fond du Lac band is providing proactive trainings in these areas. These special guests taught the students and the staff of traditional Native culture.

Achievement and Integration Program

The Cloquet Public Schools have been working toward submission of an application for the Achievement and Integration (AI) program through the Minnesota Department of Education. The purpose of the AI program is to pursue racial and economic integration, increase student achievement, create equitable educational opportunities, and reduce academic disparities based on students’ racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds.

As a part of the grant preparation process, Cloquet Public Schools has secured partner districts to participate in the AI program, created a local leadership team to lead the identification of strategies for inclusion in the plan, and conducted a needs assessment including feedback from families, students and staff.

The AI grant application is due by March 15th. At present, the district has identified the following strategies for inclusion in the grant application:

- Training for leadership and staff in culturally responsive leadership, teaching and systems
- Increased after school enrichment opportunities focusing on academic achievement and American Indian cultural activities
- Additional transportation opportunities to improve student attendance
- Increasing representations of diverse culture in building décor
- Restorative practices coordinator to expand RP efforts as a behavior intervention and school climate improvement strategy
- AVID instructor and training to support underrepresented students to participate in advanced high school coursework
- Summer opportunity to take a college course for credit to gain experience in post-secondary education

Communications

The Cloquet Public Schools has been in regular communication with our families concerning the changes being implemented as part of our MDHR agreement. These communications have come in the form of newsletters from individual buildings highlighting new programs and supports, inclusion in surveys and walkthroughs as part of the Achievement and Integration program needs assessment process, and through our regular meetings with our local Indian education parent committee.