

Year Two 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 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. It supports participants in developing 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 School staff rotate 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 to be the best version of themselves individually and as a community.

Review and Standardize Discipline Procedures and Records

During the summer of 2018, all building principals within 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. This work is continuing into the fall of 2019. The district administrative team, which includes central office and building administrators, will continue to review discipline resolutions and the tracking/reporting of resolutions to ensure consistency and fidelity.

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.

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 in positive culture/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 elements of traditional Native culture.

Achievement and Integration Program

The Cloquet Public Schools received approval of our Achievement and Integration (AI) program grant 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.

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 Achievement and Integration Plan for Cloquet Public Schools was approved by the Minnesota Department of Education in the spring of 2019. The plan was also approved locally by Cloquet Public Schools’ American Indian Education Parent Advisory Committee and the Multidistrict Collaboration Council consisting of representatives from the Cloquet, Carlton and Proctor communities. Major plan activities that intersect with the goals of the agreement with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights will be summarized in the following paragraphs.

Through the Achievement and Integration grant, the Cloquet Public Schools expanded after school program activities for students with a special focus on our American Indian students. The program, called the Makoons Club, is designed to reinforce reading skills for students while also providing opportunity to learn more about Ojibwe culture. The club is open to all students with the intent of improving reading skill while also broadening cultural understanding for participant students. The

program is open to all students at both district elementary schools. The expanded after school opportunities were implemented during the fall of the 2019-2020 school year.

An addition to the after-school program is the creation of parent activities designed to bring in families from our community. The goal is to strengthen parent/school partnerships to foster positive communication between school staff and families in support of students.

A minor effort to improve the climate of our schools is the addition of building décor and signage that is representative of the diversity within our schools. The Cloquet Public Schools added signage and décor across all buildings that clearly represents the diversity of the students served within the district. An example of this additional is the adding of signage in Ojibwe with the grandfather teachings.

Through the AI grant, the Cloquet Public Schools is also focusing on creating integrated learning environments for our students through the intentional creation of lessons that focus on learning standards through Ojibwe culture and tradition. Program funds were used to assist teachers in creating Ojibwe specific lessons which address grade-level appropriate standards. The funds allowed Indian Education staff to support one grade level to develop new lessons and purchase materials. This work will be phased upward through the grades in subsequent years. The purpose of this work is to create greater understanding of Ojibwe culture and tradition to foster greater cultural understanding and positive interpersonal relationships between peers. It also serves the purpose of creating greater cultural understanding for staff.

Programs funds are also supported the delivery of the Culturally Responsive Leadership Academy during the 2019-20 school year. The training, which began in August, was attended by all building administrators in the Cloquet Schools and by select district administrative staff. The purpose was to build a common understanding of culturally responsive leadership practices and skills among district leadership to later foster training of staff. The goal of this work was to bring changes to practice in support of all learners in the district. This learning opportunity was a collaborative effort with two adjoining school districts with the purpose of creating a regional base of support in culturally responsive leadership. The academy was led by Dr. Muhammad Khalifa and Dr. Katie Pekel from the University of Minnesota.

Another feature of the AI program was the addition of the 0.5 FTE Restorative Practices Coordinator. The Cloquet Schools have supported the use of restorative practices in our schools for a number of years. The addition of a Restorative Practices Coordinator is an intentional attempt to reduce exclusionary discipline practices for students. For those unfamiliar with restorative practices, the purpose is to replace traditional discipline strategies with opportunities for discussion and learning when conflict arises. The restorative practice process can be used between students, between students and adults within the schools, and between adults in the community and school staff. Restorative practices help to foster understanding between individuals when conflict arises. We believe that increasing understanding within our schools will help to reduce disparities in exclusionary discipline.

There will be a number of other new options being provided in support of students through the three year grant period. These will be covered in future reports as those programs are implemented.

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.