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October 15, 2018

Via E-Mail and U.S. Mail

Jacqueline Wernz
U.S. Dept. of Education
Office for Civil Rights
500 West Madison St., Suite 1475
Chicago, IL 60661-4544

RE: Rochester Public Schools Submission for October 15, 2018 Reporting Deadline
OCR Docket No. 05-10-5003
Our File No. 0535-0345

Dear Ms. Wernz:

On behalf of Independent School District No. 535, Rochester Public Schools (“District”), I write to provide you with the District’s submission for the October 15, 2018 reporting deadline outlined in Resolution Agreement #05-10-5003 (“Resolution Agreement”). This letter is the District’s final report under Item 16 and completes the District’s reporting obligations under the Resolution Agreement.

We are copying Peter Zuniga, General Counsel for the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (“MDHR”), on this letter because the District agreed to provide MDHR with a copy of its last report to OCR pursuant to a recent agreement between the District and the MDHR. I e-mailed you a copy of the MDHR agreement on September 6, 2018.

The enclosed disc contains a spreadsheet labeled “2018 Annual Building Meetings,” which documents the dates on which the administration at each of the District’s school sites conducted an annual meeting with teachers to review student discipline data as required in Item 16. The enclosed disc also contains documentation from each site concerning the meetings. These records are organized in folders for each school. The documentation from Mayo High School is redacted to remove instructions for using the building’s intercom system in an emergency situation.

Administrators at each site met with Superintendent Michael Muñoz, Executive Director of Elementary and Secondary Education Jacque Peterson, and Executive Director of Human Resources Karl Bakken to review discipline data from the 2017-2018 school year. This information was then shared with site staff by building administration. During each site's meeting, staff considered the reasons for any disproportionalities that exist and potential ways to eliminate any disproportionalities. As noted in my September 6, 2018 e-mail correspondence to you, the District is committed to continuing efforts to reduce disparities and is implementing the plan described in the MDHR agreement I provided to you last month.

With respect to Item 16(c), the District continues to put PBIS at the forefront of its professional development. The District continues to work with Dr. Sharrocky Hollie, who again spoke to all staff during the District's back-to-school training. Dr. Hollie is also working individually with certain sites where data shows more disproportionality with regard to discipline. Dr. Anton Treuer, another expert, spoke to all staff at the District's back-to-school professional development. Dr. Treuer is Professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji State University whose expertise includes cultural competence and equity, as well as strategies for addressing the achievement gap. The District continues its efforts to have all staff trained in ENVoY strategies. ENVoY training is provided to new staff and existing staff have the opportunity to reinforce their training by working with experienced coaches to learn from classroom observations.

Moreover, the District added an Equity Implementation Associate to work with sites to support teachers and coaches as they develop culturally and linguistically responsive instructional practices. This year, the bulk of the Equity Implementation Associate's work involves coordinating District-wide coaching (with Dr. Hollie and the Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning) and professional development related to culturally and linguistically responsive teaching ("CLRT") practices. The District's intent is to continue efforts to build up the foundational mindset and skill set its teachers need in order to better validate and affirm the cultures each student brings to the classroom through careful and intentional instructional planning. Further, the District continues to provide support for teachers as they work on building and bridging students to situationally appropriate school behaviors through re-teaching school expectations.

As to Item 16(d), the District conducted follow-up meetings with individual staff members for whom data showed a high number of referrals for black students compared to other students. In one situation, the District placed a teacher on a professional growth plan designed to improve the teacher's student discipline practices. In another situation, a teacher who had been demonstrating a higher rate of referrals for black students was moved to a different position at the end of the school year.

With respect to Item 16(e), building principals encourage staff to do peer observations in other classrooms. This is one mechanism the District uses to allow teachers to learn from a colleague. In addition, teachers are required to observe a peer as part of the District's evaluation and professional growth process. Teachers are encouraged to visit classrooms of colleagues who are successful in managing student behavior.

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Thank you for your professionalism in our conversations and correspondence regarding this matter. Please feel free to call if you have any questions or concerns before OCR confirms the District has complied in full with the requirements of the Resolution Agreement.

Very Truly Yours,



John P. Edison

Enclosures

cc: Peter Zuniga, MDHR General Counsel (w/encl. via U.S. Mail only)
Michael Muñoz, Superintendent (w/encl. via U.S. Mail only)

RASW: 119918