



Minnesota Department of Human Rights and Independent School District 196 Semi-Annual Report September 1, 2019

This is Independent School District 196’s third semi-annual report to the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) pursuant to the Collaboration Agreement entered into by the parties on June 27, 2018. This report provides information concerning District 196’s progress implementing the Collaboration Agreement and District 196’s local plan to address disparities in student discipline. The report will address each strategy in the local plan, including intended outcomes, implementation steps and responsive changes taken in the reporting period, as well as metrics to measure effectiveness. The intended outcomes and metrics remain the same as in past reports. The implementation steps include updates since the last report. A spreadsheet with de-identified suspension data is also attached to this report as required by the Collaboration Agreement.¹

I. Periodic Review of District Discipline Policy

Intended Outcomes – District 196 will periodically review its student discipline policy to improve the fairness and objectivity of the policy, provide alternatives to suspension and allow for community engagement in the development of the policy.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes – District 196’s annual process for making changes to the discipline policy contained in its student handbook was completed in the spring of 2019 following the receipt of school and community input on needed changes. District 196 made numerous changes for the upcoming 2019-20 school year. Changes included eliminating “insubordination” as a disciplinary category and reducing disciplinary consequences for the categories of “interference, disruption or obstruction,” “threat of bomb or violence” (for elementary students) and “Tobacco and E-Cigarettes, Possessing” (for secondary students). District 196 also added language to its handbook pertaining to its efforts to prevent student dismissal from school through the early detection of problems, as well as through student support and social emotional learning.

¹ The Collaboration Agreement requires suspension data from the preceding six months to be submitted along with the September and February semi-annual reports. Because suspensions typically occur during the nine months of the school year, and because September and February are not spaced six months apart, the District has designed its suspension reports to split the school year in half. Accordingly, the February report will provided data for the first half of the school year beginning with summer school and ending on the January 15th before the February report. The September report provide data on the second half of the school year beginning on January 16th and ending with the end of the school year. The September report will also include additional data on those students who were suspended in both halves of the year, consistent with paragraph 2 (j) of the Collaboration Agreement.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. This strategy will also be measured by the amount and quality of suggested policy changes.

II. Data Review

Intended Outcomes – District 196 will periodically review student disciplinary outcomes to increase awareness of the effect of current suspension practices on students.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes –The data review is scheduled to occur three times per year near the end of each trimester at three separate tiers (school, task force² and cabinet). Data has been reviewed at all tiers. Data was also reviewed with the school board. The comparison of data from year-to-year has been made somewhat more difficult by District 196’s change in student information systems. The entire district transitioned to the Campus student information system in the 2018-19 school year and is looking forward to the start of its second year on the districtwide system. District 196 continues to examine the disparities in student discipline and seek ways to reduce or eliminate these disparities.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. This strategy will also be measured by the fidelity of all schools to the data review process.

III. Alternatives to Suspension

Intended Outcomes – District 196 is actively seeking alternatives to suspension for student misconduct in order to reduce the use of suspension for student misconduct that is nonviolent and unrelated to drug possession, sale or use.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes –As reported in the past, the district has established a Student Support and School Climate Team (“Climate Team”). The primary purpose of the team is to meet to review districtwide disciplinary practices and alternatives to suspension, as well as other matters related to student engagement, attendance and school climate. Over the last year, the team has grown in membership and scope. It has developed a steering team and sub committees (Rights and Responsibilities, Attendance, Restorative Practices). The Student Support and School Climate Team seeks to close the gap, eliminate disproportionality, reduce failure, decrease suspensions, and increase attendance while shifting mind set and practice.

Individual schools are also encouraged to implement alternatives to suspension where possible. Efforts to create alternatives to suspension have varied depending on the level, but have included alternatives (where appropriate) such as:

- In-school disciplinary options;
- parent meetings;
- determining the underlying functions behind behaviors and addressing those needs with the child and families;
- Deepening relationships with students and families;
- Teaching lagging student skills instead of punishing through consequences;
- Restorative discipline;
- Restoration circles; and
- Learning in a buddy classroom.

² The task force identified in the strategy has been renamed the “Student Support and School Climate Team.”

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. The effectiveness of this strategy will also be measured by the frequency of the Climate Team’s meetings and the initiatives recommended by the Climate Team.

IV. School Climate Initiatives

Intended Outcomes – District 196 will implement school climate initiatives in all schools to reduce disciplinary incidents and improve student engagement and inclusion.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes –As described in previous reports, the district has identified and is implementing various school climate initiatives including, but not limited to, REACH, Responsive Classroom (restorative practices) and Conscious Discipline. Individual schools also implement various forms of school specific climate initiatives. These initiatives vary by school but may include the establishment of common expectations, norms and language, morning meetings to build community, “The Leader In Me” programming, PBIS, “staff buddies,” Yoga Calm programming, “buddy bench” for friendship building, the Check and Connect mentor program, schoolwide celebrations, kindness journaling, student recognition programs and more. Schools report to their directors on their individual school climate initiatives.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. This strategy will also be measured by the twice annual reports by the schools regarding their school climate initiatives.

V. Professional Development for Staff

Intended Outcomes – District 196 offers professional development to staff in order to develop a workforce of culturally proficient staff attuned to the social/emotional learning of students.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes – As reported in the past, the district has identified and offered many learning opportunities for staff to address topics related to cultural proficiency, school climate, student discipline and social/emotional learning, including some of the trainings identified above in strategy IV. These opportunities have included, but are not limited to, Restorative Practices 101, Responsive Classroom, Yoga Calm, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Conscious Discipline, Comfortable Cafeteria, Behavior Tools, REACH training, trauma informed practices/ACES training and Check and Connect Mentorship training. Eight of District 196’s elementary schools are going more in-depth by adding coaching and modeling in classrooms regarding conscious discipline strategies, while eleven elementary schools are moving forward with a book study.

During the second half of the 2018-19 school year, several key District 196 leaders participated in the first four of an ongoing series of seven workshops concerning the topic of school discipline. The workshops were recommended by the MDHR and hosted at the Minnesota Department of Education and include:

- Code of Conduct, Character and Student Support: An Accountable Restorative Approach
- The Engaged and Well-Managed Classroom: High-Impact Practices and Strategies
- Addressing Learning Gaps and Behavioral Concerns-Tier2 Teacher Facilitated Interventions
- Closing Equity Gaps through Bias Awareness, Cultural and Developmental Competencies, and Practical Action Steps

- Schoolwide Restorative Interventions
- Creating Public Spaces that are Welcoming, Safe and Orderly
- Expectations, Rules, Consequences and Interventions-A Coordinated Approach

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. This strategy will also be measured by the number of professional development offerings concerning cultural proficiency (including implicit bias) and student social/emotional learning.

VI. Consultation

Intended Outcomes – District 196 consults with the Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center and the Center of Excellence to improve the district’s understanding of needed equity work.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes – The district participates in web-based trainings with a cohort of school districts.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. This strategy will also be measured by the number of consultations conducted.

VII. Staff Review of Policy

Intended Outcomes – District 196 requires all employees to review its anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies to improve staff understanding and awareness.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes – Policy review is conducted in the fall of the year. The 2019 policy review is just now being communicated and completed at all sites with all staff. It includes a review of the anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. This strategy is also measured by the fidelity of all buildings to the policy review requirement.

VIII. Family and Community Engagement

Intended Outcomes- District 196 provides numerous community engagement opportunities to improve community engagement and voice.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes – As reported in the past, the district has scheduled and conducted various meetings and events for families and community. Examples of these meetings include the district’s Community Collaboration Council, Community Education Advisory Council, Curriculum and Instruction Advisory Council, Early Childhood Family Services Advisory Committee, Gifted and Talented Advisory Council, Legislative Advisory Council, Native American Parent Advisory Committee, River Valley Project Explore Advisory Council and the Special Education Advisory Council. District 196 offers a districtwide One District Many Voices community event that occurs in the spring and is very well attended, with community support ranging from donations to serving food.

As reported in the past, school specific engagement opportunities have included various theme-based family nights, outreach videos, “One School One Book” initiatives, “Family Game Night,”

family math and literacy activity nights, all school picnic and block party, magnet school family nights, “Tea and Talk” night, “Dinner and Dialogue” night, “Community Think Tank” events, “Author Night,” health and wellness events, “International Food Night,” and school carnivals. In addition, all schools are required to conduct regular meetings of a school engagement organization (e.g., site council, PTO, schoolwide booster club).

District 196 employs cultural family advocates to work with building sites to support family engagement and connection.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. This strategy will also be measured by the frequency of key community engagement meetings held districtwide.

IX. Reimagine Minnesota

Intended Outcomes – District 196 has and will continue participate in available Reimagine Minnesota activities to enhance inter-district collaboration on the issue of equity.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes – Key district level administrators have reviewed the organization’s action plan and will continue to attend any available Reimagine Minnesota meetings. Reimagine Minnesota facilitator Paula Forbes provided a workshop to the Superintendent’s cabinet at their summer retreat and each of the ten cabinet members are developing goals and action plans for their departmental areas that align with one or more of the nine strategies in the Reimagine Minnesota plan.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data.

X. Use of School Resource Officers

Intended Outcomes – District 196 limits the role of school resource officers (SROs) in school discipline in order to minimize the criminalization of school misconduct.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes – District 196 has ensured that limiting language concerning the role of SROs is contained in school district policy and in the SRO contracts between the district and the cities providing the SRO services. The SRO contracts with the cities are in the process of being finalized for the 2019-20 school year. SROs have participated in the cultural proficiency training offered to district staff.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. This strategy will also be measured by the policy and contract language.

XI. Culturally Inclusive Curriculum

Intended Outcomes – District 196 reviews and improves curriculum to ensure the inclusivity of curriculum and academic offerings in District 196.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes – District 196 has a curriculum review process in place. As curriculum comes up for review, administrators use an equity lens when examining the suitability of curriculum for District 196 students. The district also uses an equity

lens when reviewing pedagogy and academic offerings. Particular actions have included the following:

- In alignment with the Reimagine Minnesota strategies, an “Equity in Curriculum Guidance Team” is in the process of being formed. The team, made up of parents, students, teachers, and administration is charged with identifying and developing a working “equity in curriculum” definition/framework, supporting values/beliefs, and related rubric(s), tools, and resources for use in the selection process for curriculum resources both at the district and building level. The guidance team will be gathering feedback/input from the district’s Equity Advisory Board during this process.
- Middle school units of study are continuing to be developed in 6th grade science and 6th grade social studies. Instructional coaches are working with teacher representatives from each school to develop unit maps, using an Understanding by Design framework. Content standards, literacy standards, and equity standards are being woven together in the unit maps.
- The district is continuing to contract with “Grassroots Indigenous Multimedia” to create original, authentic Ojibway story books that fit with its units of study at the elementary level.
- Peer leaders are piloting the use of a revised version of Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching, which includes equity elements infused into each of the four domains. Peer leaders (cognitive coaches) help teachers reflect on their teaching practices through this lens and language.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. This strategy is also measured by the participation of students of color in AP classes and by overall participation in the AVID program.

XII. Mental Health Support

Intended Outcomes – District 196 provides various mental health supports to meet the needs of students with mental health needs.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes – The district has finalized the 2019-20 contracts with outside mental health providers to provide co-located mental health support to students in all of the district’s schools. The district was also able to recruit and add an additional co-located provider at one of its high schools. The district has maintained its staffing levels for school-level support personnel such as social workers, counselors, psychologists and nurses. District 196 has a levy referendum on the ballot in November of 2019. The district has stated that one of the purposes for the additional levy funds is to increase mental health support for students. Please see past reports and other sections of this report for other initiatives.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196’s suspension data. This strategy is also measured by the number of buildings served by collocated mental health providers.

XIII. State Diversion Committee

Intended Outcomes – District 196 participates in the Diversion Committee to generate best practices to address disparities in student disciplinary outcomes.

Implementation Steps and Responsive Changes - The district has identified District 196 representatives to serve on the Diversion Committee and has participated in all meetings to date.

District 196's Integration and Equity Coordinator is one of the co-chairs of the implicit bias subcommittee. Further responsive changes are expected as the Committee develops best practice recommendations.

Metrics – The effectiveness of all strategies will be measured, in part, by District 196's suspension data. This strategy will also be measured by the number of diversion committee meetings attended by District 196 representatives.