



General Counsel's Office
Independent School District 625

360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102-3299

Telephone: (651) 767-8137 • Fax: (651) 767-8351 • www.spps.org

March 1, 2021

Rebecca Lucero, Commissioner
MN Dept. of Human Rights
Freeman Building
625 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55155

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Dear Commissioner Lucero,

This is Independent School District No. 625's fifth semi-annual report to the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) pursuant to the Collaboration Agreement entered into by the parties on June 14, 2018. This report provides information concerning District No. 625's progress implementing the District's Educational Plan ("Plan") from September 1, 2020, through the present date.¹

Through the implementation of this Plan, in alignment with the District's Strategic Plan, SPPS Achieves, the District intends to reduce suspensions and expulsions for students of color, American Indian students, and students with disabilities. The effectiveness of the District's Plan will be measured, in part, by its suspension data. The District has identified Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports ("PBIS")/Multi-Tiered System of Supports ("MTSS") framework as the structure to organize and operationalize evidence-based practices that serve to reduce rates of suspensions and expulsions for students of color, American Indian students, and students with disabilities. Social Emotional Learning ("SEL") programs, Restorative Practices, and Trauma Informed practices are included in the District-wide multi-tiered framework of support.

The District's last semi-annual report was dated September 1, 2020. With very few exceptions, the District has remained in distance learning during Quarters 1 and 2 of this school year.

During this time, the District has continued its focus on PBIS and SEL. Since its last report, the District presented guidance to building administrators regarding Systems of Student Support in Distance Learning 2.0. *See attached.* The District also provided regular newsletters to staff and

¹ There were fewer than 20 of each event or resolution during Quarters 1 and 2 of the 2020-2021 academic year. Thus, consistent with the District's practice of avoiding the risk of identifying any particular student, incident, or resolution, the District is not reporting data with this semi-annual report.

administrators, containing information regarding staff and student social and emotional well-being. *See attached.* Further, the District provided relevant professional development, such as: (1) SEL in Distance Learning; (2) Trauma Informed Schools Parts I and II; (3) Choose a Q&A Discussion Group on PBIS, SEL, Mental Health, or Restorative Practices; (4) Introduction to Trauma Informed Schools; (5) Foundational PBIS; (6) Reviewing the School Wide Discipline Plan; (7) Introduction to SEL; and (8) SEL Awareness. In addition, as it prepares to transition back to in-person learning, the District created and shared with staff Return to In-Person Learning and Academic Support Information for Mental Health Support Teams (February 2021) and Return to In-Person Learning And Academic Support for Administrators (February 2021). *See attached.*

Finally, the District has solidified its commitment to culturally responsive instruction through the District-wide adoption of a pedagogical framework called Ready for Rigor. Culturally responsive instruction is an asset-based pedagogy designed to increase motivation by replacing mainstream teaching practices with those grounded in students' experiences and ways of knowing. The Ready for Rigor framework organizes the key elements of cultural responsiveness into four practice areas (awareness, learning partnerships, information processing, community of learners/learning environment). At its core is the neuroscience that unifies the frame: the brain's reaction to living in a racialized world as well as how it programs itself using culture. The inner circle of the Ready for Rigor frame are the four staple practices of every culturally responsive teacher, which are: (1) affirmation; (2) validation; (3) instructional conversation, and (4) "wise" feedback. The art of cultural responsiveness lies in weaving together these four practices areas into a process that calms the brain and sets the stage for neuroplasticity where the brain can grow itself. The Ready for Rigor frame is also in direct alignment with the 4R's of culturally responsive instruction (relationships, relevance, rigor, realness).

Please reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Jamie Jonassen

Jamie Jonassen
Assistant General Counsel

Attachments