

Special Services Department

District Office

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St. Francis Area Schools

St. Francis Area Schools ISD#15 Suspension and Expulsion Reduction Plan Progress Update September 2019

The Goal of St. Francis Area Schools is to decrease disproportionality in discipline for students of color and students with disabilities, and to have suspensions and expulsions be considered as a last resort for all students in the district.

Suspension Data Review....

Suspension data for the 2017-18 school year is now available, both at the state and individual district level through the Minnesota Department of Education Disciplinary Incident Reporting System (DIRS). The district leadership team, the building principals and program supervisors have been focussing on the process to reduce out of school suspensions across the district. The objective was to raise awareness of the issue and to look at alternatives to suspension for all students. The data results for the 2017-18 school year for St. Francis Area Schools is very encouraging, demonstrating success in our efforts to reduce wherever possible the out-of-school suspensions of students for disciplinary reasons. The following are data elements across multiple measurement categories, using five years of DIRS data (2013-14 through 2017-18 school years).

- **Five year trend** for total number of out of school suspensions:
 - St. Francis Area Schools experienced a 49.8% decrease in the total number of suspension incidents for the 17-18 school year (257), compared to the 16-17 school year (512). This number reflects all students of all racial and ethnic categories.
 - By comparison, the total number of suspension incidents for the state increased by 10.69%.
- **Year-over-year comparison, based on racial/ethnic categories**, comparing the 2016-17 school year to the 2017-18 school year for St. Francis Area Schools:
 - The number of suspension incidents for Black students decreased by 41.0% (139 incidents in 16-17; to 82 incidents in 17-18).
 - The number of suspension incidents for Hispanic students decreased by 42.9% (21 incidents in 16-17; to 12 incidents in 17-18).
 - The number of suspension incidents for Multi-racial students decreased by 43.8% (48 incidents in 16-17; to 27 incidents in 17-18).

- The number of suspension incidents for American Indian students decreased by at least 83.3% (24 incidents in 16-17; to less than 5 incidents in 17-18).
- For comparison, the **state-wide** total number of suspension incidents increased for Black students (+14.1%), Hispanic students (+14.8%), Multi-race students (+16.7%), and Asian/Pacific Islander students (+5.8%). State-wide numbers of suspension incidents for American Indian students decreased (-1.3%).

While there is still much work to be done regarding suspensions of students, current data suggests that the district is trending in the right direction. The significant decreases in suspensions across almost all measurement categories for the district is positive. There is still work to be completed in the analysis of how and why the district experienced such a significant decrease in suspensions in a single year.

In addition to the district administration reviewing the results, the district also now has a teacher-led team which is taking a deeper dive into the numbers. The district has implemented a Network Improvement Community (NIC). The NIC is comprised of teachers who will dedicate their professional development activities for at least the 19-20 school year to the topic of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and positive behavior systems. This group will use the current DIRS data within their work and further analyze the results.

Moving Forward....

In July of 2019, the district completed its transition to a new superintendent. During this transition and prior to the start of the new superintendent, some of the district's proposed strategies and action items were not completed in a manner that is consistent with what was the original intent of the agreement with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR). For example, some items were not completed in the intended chronological order. Also, some district-level work teams were not developed in time to provide adequate input to new processes and procedures. There are also a few action steps and strategies which will need to be reviewed and possibly modified. As we began the implementation of the plan, there were some items that lend themselves more easily to community input and others are more legally mandated. Our current plan is not conducive to those types of constraints or opportunities. The core elements of the plan are solid, but some of the implementation of action items prior to the superintendent transition were not completed to the satisfaction of the district. Therefore, the district is in communication with the staff of MDHR to possibly make official revisions to the approved plan. These revisions will allow us to move forward under the direction of the new superintendent to meet the goal of minimizing out of school suspensions for all students of St. Francis Area Schools.

Actions and Accomplishments over the summer.....

1. The district continues to be actively involved in the MDHR subcommittee and task force teams. Specifically, district staff continue with the work of the DIRS Task Force.
2. The district has made significant improvements in being able to use our Alpine Student Data System to more easily identify and analyze student suspension data by race, ethnicity and disability. This newly modified system now has the capability to capture student data and identify trends that were not possible or were extremely cumbersome with the previous systems.

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