

2020-2021 Report of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC)

Submitted to the Grand Ledge Public Schools
Board of Education

June 25, 2021

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Consultant to the District



Overview

In the 2020-2021 school year, Interim Superintendent Dr. David Chapin and a sub-committee of the Grand Ledge Public School Board of Education embarked upon the work of putting measures in place to address challenges related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the school district, and design and implement anti-racist and justice-focused educational initiatives. With the help of an external consultant, the district created the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) comprised of parents, students, teachers, administrators, GLPS alumni, and additional community members. The EDIC was established to guide and monitor the creation of a diverse, inclusive, and equitable learning and work community for all students and staff by advising on policies, practices, programs, curricula, and interactions (see Appendix A for an overview of the EDIC).

In this school year, the EDIC met virtually between October 2020 and May 2021 to establish its goals and scope of work for the academic year. This work was largely in response to recent and ongoing challenges related to racial inequity and discord throughout the district and community. The 23-member committee (see Appendix B for full member list, inclusive of three Board members and Dr. Chapin) identified four priority areas that represent pressing needs to address in order to enhance the overall culture and climate or student wellbeing and academic excellence in GLPS. This report represents their initial thinking regarding recommendations that require Board support over the next 3 to 5 years, in the form of financial and human resources.

June 13, 2021

To Members of the School Board of Grand Ledge Public Schools

On behalf of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC), we present for your consideration recommendations across four priority areas that we believe are essential to address in order to promote cultural competency, inclusion, and academic excellence for all students and staff in Grand Ledge Public Schools (GLPS). Our recommendations are stimulated from a specific need to address issues related to racial equity and justice in GLPS. We have had the awesome opportunity to work with Dr. Dorinda Carter Andrews, professor and chairperson of the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University and consultant to GLPS, in establishing this committee and working to identify priority areas and goals related to enhancing racial literacy and cultural competency throughout the district.

These recommendations represent eight months of knowledge building, deep engagement, and courageous discussions by parents, students, teachers, administrators and other community members. The EDIC has identified four priority areas where the Board can take immediate action to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the district. The priority areas are as follows:

1. Cultivating a welcoming and inclusive school community for students
2. Prioritizing racial and ethnic diversity in the District's hiring practices
3. Diversifying the curriculum across subject areas to include more antiracist and social justice content
4. Establishing a plan for professional learning focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion for teachers, staff, administrators, and students

Within these priority areas, the Committee is recommending specific action items be taken. We see this as a first step in developing a long-term plan to advance racial equity and social justice in the district as an explicit goal in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in GLPS.

We look forward to our continued partnership with the School Board in the months and years to come in creating and sustaining an equitable and inclusive educational environment for all Grand Ledge students. We thank you for your commitment and leadership.

Sincerely,

2020-2021 Members of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee
Grand Ledge Public Schools

PRIORITY AREA #1: Cultivating a welcoming and inclusive community for students

Goal 1. Create visual displays for each school building that instill a welcoming and inclusive environment upon entry.

Recommended Action Items

1. Provide a budget for each building to develop unique visual displays, such as a murals and flags representative of diverse populations. Establish a fun community competition between buildings to drive energy and interest

Goal 2. Establish and/or expand teacher and staff-focused diversity, equity, and inclusion committees at elementary, middle, and high schools

Recommended Action Items

1. Create a structure for committees, which is modeled off the RISE committee at the middle school, that each building can emulate
2. Facilitate dialogue between the superintendent and each building's committee by establishing a monthly check-in meeting.

Goal 3. Establish and/or expand student-led diversity, equity, and inclusion clubs at elementary, middle, and high schools.

Recommended Action Items

1. Dedicate adult advisors to help guide committees and ensure individual goals are advanced.
2. Provide a small budget for committees to start-up to prevent the need for a student club fee.
3. Establish a recurring agenda item for students to present at school board meetings.

Goal 4. Facilitate gatherings, assemblies, and other educational sessions at each building to share diversity, equity, inclusion topics.

Recommended Action Items

1. Leverage partnerships to bring in relevant, age-appropriate DEI educational information to each building.
2. Provide field trips for student engagement in DEI discussions.

Goal 5. Conduct annual surveys to assess the degree to which students, parents, and visitors feel welcomed and included within Grand Ledge Public Schools in order to gauge the impact of the EDIC efforts.

Recommended Action Items

1. Work with EDIC members to draft survey questions during the summer of 2021 for fielding early in the 2021-22 school year.
2. Communicate survey results through district newsletters, social media, website, and other media.

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3. Analyze survey results to identify areas where the district is doing well related to DEI and areas for continued improvement
 4. Conduct follow-up surveys in subsequent years to assess impact over time.

Goal 6. Hire a diversity, equity, and inclusion coordinator/director that helps to ensure DEI efforts become permanently embedded into the culture and work of Grand Ledge Public Schools.

Recommended Action Items

1. Provide resources for students and parents to raise awareness on how families can look differently (e.g., single parents, same sex parents, mixed race families, grandparents and other guardians).
2. Meet regularly with student-led and teacher/administrator committees to listen, advise, and provide resources.

PRIORITY AREA #2: Prioritizing racial and ethnic diversity in the District's hiring practices

Goal 1: Expand knowledge of DEI as a district and learn from others.

Recommended Action Items

1. The district should reach out to similar districts to better understand strategies and practices they utilize for diversifying their teaching and administrative staff.
2. The district should ensure that staff members participate in MASA's new Beyond Equity program beginning fall 2021. Applications are due on May 28th, and decision on the 10 participating districts will be made in early June.

Goal 2: Work toward hiring and maintaining a staff that reflects the population of the student body.

Recommended Action Items

1. Develop and implement a more robust recruitment and retention staff hiring plan.
2. Create an Executive Director of DEI position within the district.
3. Talk with current and former Teachers and Staff of Color to better understand their experiences working in the district.

Goal 3: Collaborate with existing community groups to promote Grand Ledge as a community where people want to work and live.

Recommended Action Items

1. Update GLPS website and other communication outlets to better reflect the district's DEI focus
2. Work to be an active presence within and alongside community organizations that are promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in Grand Ledge (e.g., Grand Ledge United).

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3. Encourage cross-collaboration amongst groups by creating an ad-hoc group that serves as a tool for various building groups to meet and communicate on their DEI work and goals

Goal 4: Refocus hiring practices and current processes to include more focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion

Recommended Action Items

1. Include an equity/diversity/inclusion statement as part of application materials for job postings in GLPS
2. Ensure interview questions for job postings have a DEI component

PRIORITY AREA #3: Diversifying the curriculum across subject areas to include more antiracist and social justice content

Goal 1. Utilize research-based tools to develop an equity-based curriculum audit tool.

Recommended Action Items

1. Establish a team of teachers to use the tool to assess and pilot new curriculum. Use the lessons learned from the pilot assessments to examine current curriculum. Make curriculum purchases and curriculum changes based on scores within the curriculum audit tool

PRIORITY AREA #4: Establishing a plan for professional learning focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion for teachers, staff, administrators, and students

Goal 1. Research and fund professional development/professional learning for staff, administrators, and students

Recommended Action Items

1. Develop and implement a staff survey that guides decision-making regarding DEI professional learning for future years.

Goal 2. Facilitate educators' use of a DEI lens in their everyday interactions and practices with students.

Goal 3: Develop a 3-5 year professional development plan to scaffold learning opportunities for all staff (including instructional and non-instructional staff)

APPENDIX A

Grand Ledge Public Schools Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) Vision, Mission, and Goals

Vision

Grand Ledge Public Schools (GLPS) are a welcoming and nurturing environment for all students, alumni, families, staff, and visitors regardless of race, ethnicity, country of origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or cognitive ability, age, or religion.

EDIC Mission

To guide and monitor the creation of a diverse, inclusive, and equitable learning and work community for all students and staff by advising on policies, practices, programs, curricula, and interactions.

Goals

1. Facilitate understanding of student and staff experiences by surveying alumni, students, staff, parents/guardians, and other community members.
2. Advise on modifications to the district's curricula to ensure that it speaks to the full human experience.
3. Recommend accountability measures to ensure that handbook changes related to symbols of hate and hate speech are enforced.
4. Advocate for equitable practices to ensure that students of color are not disproportionately impacted in the referral, suspension, and/or expulsion process.
5. Monitor the use of a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens in the review and revision of staff and student policies.
6. Facilitate the development of hiring processes that ensure the demographics of teachers, administrators, and staff reflect the student population.
7. Prioritize professional development for teachers, staff, and administrators that embeds an understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competency, including topics such as implicit biases, microaggressions, and the roots of systemic oppression, into the context of all elements of teaching and learning.
8. Recommend a transparent process for the district to share progress on diversity, equity, and inclusion activities with the community (e.g., updates at school board meetings, on the district website, in the district newsletter, etc.)

EDIC relies on the following guiding definitions:

Equity: Taking proactive measures to ensure that every student at Grand Ledge Public Schools (GLPS) has support and access to the resources needed to be successful and identifying and eliminating barriers that have prevented the full participation of students most impacted by systemic bias and discrimination. Improving educational equity in GLPS involves fostering equal access to opportunities, and fairness and justice within the development and implementation of procedures and processes in the district, as well as in the distribution of resources. Addressing and responding to equity issues requires an acute understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities at large. Equity is different from equality. Equality refers to treating everyone the same; however, that does not always lead to an equitable outcome because diverse communities have varied needs and have faced and continue to face distinct obstacles and inequities.

Diversity: The range of human differences and backgrounds, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, physical or cognitive ability, religion or ethical values systems, national origin, political beliefs, and cultures. Diversity is more than a simple acknowledgment of and/or tolerating a difference in another person; rather, it is a set of deliberate and conscious practices that seek to understand and appreciate the differences of our school community.

Inclusion: Ensuring that students of all backgrounds, identities, abilities, perspectives, and beliefs experience a welcoming and affirming learning community in GLPS and have equal opportunity to positively contribute to the GLPS community. Inclusivity promotes and sustains a sense of belonging and fosters a culture of respect in which all students are recognized for their unique and inherent worth, dignity, talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and lifestyle.

APPENDIX B

List of EDIC Members 2020-2021

Bill Barnes
Kaaviya Baskaran
Andrea Beachnau
Julie Boruta
Shawn Bronson
Jay Cage
Dave Chapin, Interim Superintendent
Stacey Dohm
Halima el-Sulayman
Jacqueline Freeman, Chairperson
Steve Gabriel
Jon Horford
Amaya Johnson
Tasha Kelley-Stiles
Rachel Kuntzsch
Todd Marsh
Chelsey Martinez
Patrick McKennon
Sara Clark Pierson
Jon Shiflett
Celine Smith
Greg Stevens
Dorinda Carter Andrews, External Consultant

