



## **Report on Pupil Nondiscrimination Self-Evaluation**

July 2017

In response to PI 9.06 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code Cycle III for the 2016-17 school year, Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) conducted a self-evaluation of data related to pupil nondiscrimination. This self-evaluation was facilitated by the MPS Division of Research & Evaluation in accordance with requirements and recommendations provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The following report describes the process, findings, and recommendations that resulted from the self-evaluation.

### **Process**

A group of MPS staff, including individuals from Research & Evaluation; Interscholastic Athletics/Academics; School Counseling; College & Career Readiness; Business, Community & Family Partnerships; Student Assessment; and the district Equity Specialist served as the Self-Evaluation Team. This team chose relevant data to review, facilitated Data Retreats with key stakeholders, and reviewed findings to develop recommendations. See the final page of this report for a list of team members.

Data related to each of the three elements required by DPI were reviewed. Specifically:

1. "...methods, practices, curriculum, and materials used in...counseling..." (PI 9.06(1)(c), Wis. Admin. Code)
  - a. Comprehensive School Counseling Curriculum Outline by Grade Level
  - b. Sample Comprehensive School Counseling Lesson Plans
2. "trends and patterns in awarding scholarships and other forms of recognition and achievement provided or administered by the school district" ..." (PI 9.06(1)(f), Wis. Admin. Code)
  - a. Scholarship Total Awards by Student Race
  - b. Average GPA by Race
  - c. School Attendance Rate by Race  
*Note:* Data points (b) and (c) were reviewed because scholarships often have a GPA and/or attendance requirement.
3. "participation trends and patterns and school district support of athletic, extracurricular and recreational activities" ..." (PI 9.06(1)(e), Wis. Admin. Code)
  - a. Number of High School Sports by Gender and School
  - b. Number of High School Sports Teams by Gender and School
  - c. Number of High School Participants in Sports by Gender and School

Current enrollment in MPS by gender, disability status, economic disadvantage, and race and ethnicity data were included to provide context during data retreats.

Two Data Retreats were held to engage key stakeholders in the self-evaluation. The first retreat was held with five students; the second retreat was held with 14 stakeholders, including teachers, principals, school counselors, parents, community members, and administrators. Participants represented a range of races (74% African American, 21% White, 5% Asian, and 5% American Indian/Alaska Native) and genders (68% female, 32% male).

Retreat participants were presented with the data outlined above and guided through a district protocol for analyzing data, called the Reflection Process<sup>1</sup>, to solicit their insights and potential next steps. These reflections were recorded anonymously and reviewed by the Self-Evaluation Team to develop recommendations for improvements.

## **Findings**

Self-evaluation participants noted the importance of contextual information for understanding the data presented. For instance, they pointed out that 23% of MPS students have disabilities, while the national average is 13%. Furthermore, while 45% of City of Milwaukee residents are White, only 11% of MPS students are White, and while 29% of Milwaukee residents live in poverty, 82% of MPS students are economically disadvantaged.

In terms of the specific areas requested for review by DPI, there was some discussion regarding the counseling curriculum. There was enthusiasm regarding the comprehensiveness of the curriculum and the focus on relationship building. On the other hand, some were concerned that the robustness of the curriculum will make it difficult to implement. Others wanted more clarification on how the curriculum includes or excludes students' cultures.

Regarding scholarships and awards, participants noted that although African American students comprise 55% of MPS' student population, they account for 43% of total scholarship dollars awarded. Related, student outcomes (e.g., GPA, attendance) for African American students are below that for Asian, Latino/a, and White students, and participants were concerned that students are not being equally engaged in MPS. Participants also discussed the overall low proportion of students receiving scholarships: while there were 727 scholarships awarded, there are about 4,000 seniors enrolled in MPS at any given point in time.

Participants noted that the number of sports, teams, and participation generally varies little by gender. They also pointed out that schools with strong academic outcomes tended to have high participation in sports and there was a discussion around fees for participation in athletics and how the district works with students who cannot afford to pay fees. However, participants wanted more information, specifically information about participation by race and about other extracurricular activities students participate in, such as clubs, music, arts, etc.

## **Recommendations and Next Steps**

During the start of the 2016-2017 school year, MPS shifted towards a culture a project management, beginning with the creation and implementation of a Strategic Plan related to the Superintendent's Eight Big Ideas. In completing the self-evaluation, it was determined that much of the feedback was helpful in shaping projects in the Strategic Plan and support the development of robust and impactful programs for the 2017-2018 school year. Further, MPS adopted a district Problem of Practice (PoP) and Theory of

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<sup>1</sup> The Reflection Process is a four-step process that structures a meeting where data is discussed. The process was created by the MPS Division of Research and Evaluation based on *The Art of Focused Conversation* by Standfield and the concept of the Ladder of Inference. Further information about the Reflection Process can be found on the MPS Research and Evaluation website: [http://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/en/District/Initiatives/Research-Development/Research-Resources.htm#\\_ftnrefl](http://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/en/District/Initiatives/Research-Development/Research-Resources.htm#_ftnrefl)

Action in August of 2016 focused on improving systems for equity across the district. The MPS equity PoP states that,

*MPS has neither consistently nor effectively engaged all of our students of color in an environment conducive to learning; thus, there are opportunity gaps that perpetuate low student achievement.*

The equity PoP has set the foundation for subsequent work related to the Strategic Plan. As such, the Self-Evaluation Team examined the feedback from stakeholders and developed subsequent recommendations for project development. Described below are the recommendations and plan for next steps determined by the team.

### *Counseling Curriculum*

The development and pilot of the curriculum was a project in the Strategic Plan for the 2016-2017 school year. Related to the counseling curriculum, communication of the curriculum and the role of the school counselor to stakeholders was considered as a barrier to understanding the curriculum and its purpose. It was recommended that the coordinator for the curriculum provide needed professional development for school counselors and communicate the curriculum to various stakeholders. Time could also be dedicated at regular district Family Institute meetings to communicate the curriculum to families. The team also feels that evaluating the outcomes of students who engage with the curriculum should also be considered to learn the impact that the curriculum will have on student development and school climate. A pre-post assessment was discussed, which would be created by the curriculum coordinator and supported by the Division of Research & Evaluation. Finally, components of the curriculum were considered, including adding financial literacy and social and emotional learning (SEL) development to the high school curriculum, based on stakeholder feedback. These revisions to the curriculum would be considered by the department of school counseling for development and all recommendations will be forwarded to the project team for the counseling curriculum in developing the curriculum further for the 2017-2018 school year under the Strategic Plan.

### *Scholarships*

The team determined that achievement of students of color should be an area of focus to improve student eligibility for scholarships. Under the Strategic Plan, a significant number of projects have been dedicated to closing the achievement gap in MPS and improving district and school climates. The wide majority of these projects have focused on identifying areas of inequity and developing strategies to address areas of need. The district is currently revising their Early Warning System (EWS) based on research of effective EWS indicators, so that students at-risk for not graduating high school or college could receive early intervention during middle school. The district also recently adopted a policy that allows students to retake courses where they have received a U or D in order to improve their GPA. Related to scholarships specifically, the district recently created a scholarship coordinator position. The team determined that this position could be used to focus specifically on closing the opportunity gap related to scholarships and communicating scholarship opportunities to high school students.

### *Athletics, Clubs, and Extracurricular Programs*

The team viewed the current data collection practices related to athletics, clubs, and extracurricular activities as a barrier to analyzing data in a way that highlights areas of need for students. A current project in the Strategic Plan has focused on aligning district data collection systems for afterschool programming so that there is a coherent data system in place. Once this system is aligned, the district could begin to look at the demographic breakdown of student participants in afterschool programming.

Further, it was determined that a focus for the 2017-2018 school year should be on using the current student information system for rostering students who participate in athletics clubs or teams. The Athletics department agreed to determine the appropriate person at each school who could input sports team rosters in the current student information system for their respective schools so that the district is well positioned to examine the outcomes of our students who participate in athletics.

## **Summary**

MPS has demonstrated its commitment to equity by creating a PoP and subsequent projects focused on uncovering and addressing inequities throughout the district. As was mentioned, the district's Strategic Plan that was adopted in the Fall of the 2016-2017 school year includes a significant number of projects were included that focus on closing opportunity and achievement gaps. Although the areas of focus for this self-evaluation (i.e. counseling curriculum, scholarships, and athletics) were already projects in the Strategic Plan, the process afforded those leading these projects the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the needs within their projects using district data. Feedback from stakeholders and the Self-Evaluation Team will be considered in developing the projects in the Strategic Plan for the 2017-2018 school year.

## **Self-Evaluation Team Members**

A special thank you to the following team members who contributed to this evaluation:

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Questions about the information contained in this report, or the process used for the self-evaluation, can be directed to the MPS Division of Research and Evaluation: [mpsresearch@milwaukee.k12.wi.us](mailto:mpsresearch@milwaukee.k12.wi.us).