

2022-23 Mid-Year Board Report

May 2023



Students First.
Equity.
Inclusion.
Social Justice.

STUDENTS FIRST



MISSION

To promote the continuous improvement of achievement for every student while providing high-quality service to our customers through leadership, innovation, and collaboration.

VISION

To be the leader in empowering, facilitating, and delivering a high-quality, boundary-spanning, educational system that educates all children through an equitable, inclusive, and holistic approach.

BOARD GOALS

Because we put students first, the Washtenaw ISD Board of Education has established these goals, adopting a lens of equity, inclusion, and social justice.



Goal #1 –

Lead, develop, and support a culture of equity and opportunity while disrupting systemic racism in coordinated efforts for underserved students from birth through college and career in Washtenaw County.



Goal #2 –

Cultivate and nurture an organizational culture of equity, inclusion, and social justice by leading sustained education, engagement, and action and intentionally disrupting systemic racism within WISD and our partnering schools and organizations.



Goal #3 –

Lead and advocate for policies and practices that support equity, and inclusion, and the disruption of systemic racism on the local, state, and national levels.

COMMITTED TO STUDENTS & FAMILIES



Washtenaw ISD's Board of Education is committed to resource allocation, policy, and practice is designed to close the opportunity gap to ensure equitable educational access for all students, with a specific focus on achieving an equitable system for students in poverty, students with disabilities, and students of color.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

R. Stephen Olsen, President
Diane B. Hockett, Vice-President
Mary Jane Tramontin, Secretary
Don L. Garrett, Jr., Trustee
Dr. Theresa Saunders, Trustee

SUPERINTENDENT

Naomi Norman

EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION

Cherie Vannatter,
Deputy Superintendent

Brian Marcel,
Associate Superintendent

Merri Lynn Colligan,
Chief Information Officer

Cassandra Harmon-Higgins,
Executive Director of Human Resources & Legal Services

Edward Manuszak II,
Executive Director of Early Childhood

Holly Heaviland,
Executive Director of School & Community Partnerships

Deborah Hester-Washington,
Director of Special Education

Dr. Jennifer Banks,
Director of Instruction

Sherri Papazoglou,
Director of Finance

Tanner Rowe,
Director of Operations

Ashley Kryscynski,
Communications and Public Relations Specialist

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Goal 1:	4
Assess, review and report on the needs of young people and their families through an equity, inclusion, and educational equity lens	4
Strengthen trust and relationships between WISD, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and Public School Academies (PSAs)	6
Partner to improve access to services, supports and opportunities	6
Goal 2:	8
Build trust and honor multiple perspectives across the district	8
Building organizational structures and routines to support engagement across teams	10
Develop processes that encourage and promote staff voice in shaping organizational practices	10
Goal 3:	12
Advocate	12
Engage in Intentional Practice	13
Leadership	14

GOAL 1:

Lead, develop, and support a culture of equity and opportunity while disrupting systemic racism in coordinated efforts for underserved students from birth through college and career in Washtenaw County.

Assess, review and report on the needs of young people and their families through an equity, inclusion, and educational equity lens

Systems Mapping with Community Mental Health

Currently, community discussions are underway to provide input and feedback regarding a potential Youth Resource Center model in our community. Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH) worked with various sectors to create maps of how our landscape currently looks for justice-involved youth and families: Community, schools, courts, law enforcement, the prosecutor's office, and the youth detention center. WISD convened Trusted Parent Advisors, McKinney-Vento district representatives, and some alternative and after-school youth providers to learn and provide feedback to system leaders.

Aligning and Leveraging Resources

Braiding together multiple resources, the Education Project for Homeless Youth (EPHY), which primarily served homeless youth qualifying for McKinney Vento services, has begun to evolve into the Education Project (EP). Services in EP are now available to support young people and families in need who are being identified through the increased mental health work and chronic absenteeism. The focus is on becoming a source of holistic support, wrapping around youth and families in an intentional way to disrupt systems.

Initial steps have been taken to develop and expand adolescent mental health and substance use disorder prevention, early intervention, and crisis response options focusing on high needs districts and buildings. The project includes sustainability funding in an approved CMH proposal.

WISD has also initiated a partnership with Project Success to increase substance use disorder services to Whitmore Lake and Lincoln. Services are based on the 5 Healthy Towns model currently utilized in Chelsea and Manchester.

Mental Health & Public Safety Preservation Millage Partnership

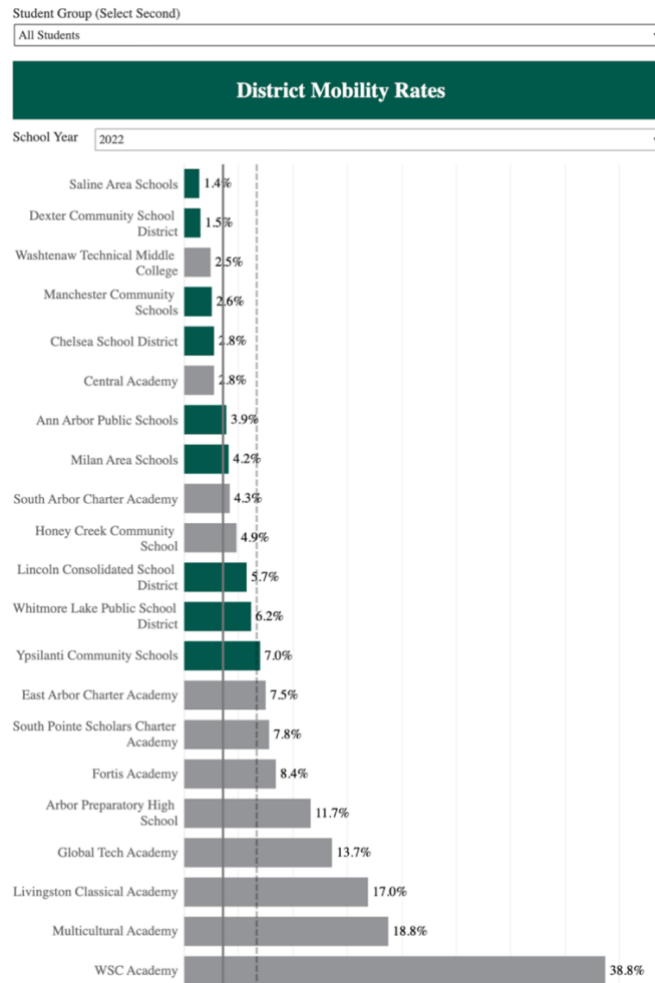
WISD successfully submitted a funding proposal to expand and align mental health resources from the mental health and public safety millage to directly serve local students and families. We are looking to expand programming to additional communities.



Absenteeism and Student Mobility

Hanover Research has met with several members of the WISD leadership team to identify a way to report on student absenteeism and mobility in Washtenaw County. We are trying to understand the impact of the pandemic on several different factors and the degree to which Washtenaw County is the same or different from the rest of the state.

Figure 1: Student Mobility Rates Across Schools in WISD's Service Area



Strengthen trust and relationships between WISD, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and Public School Academies (PSAs)

Customized Professional Learning and Support

In an effort to be responsive to the needs of area school districts, the WISD Achievement Initiatives (AI) team has offered a number of customized professional learning or curriculum support services focused on equity, assessment literacy, health education, and teacher action research. We have also continued to offer county-wide professional learning focused on coaching, continuous improvement, mathematics, science, and literacy while centering equity, social justice, and inclusion. The team has also grown and continued to work in partnership with districts in creating Diverse Learning Libraries. The AI Team has expanded this year to better meet the needs of teachers who support English Learners and Newcomer students and families. In addition, we have added an Adult Education Coordinator to initially support the needs of adult learners across Washtenaw County and the region.

Preschool Inclusion

In the Early Childhood Department, Supervisor Michelle Pogliano is leading team meetings bi-monthly with local school districts to aide in the preschool inclusion discussion and how to offer more services to our children and families within Washtenaw County.



Strengthening Trust and Relationships with Public School Academies

This year has been a very challenging year for all school districts in Washtenaw County as it relates to retaining educators and service providers. However, it has been even more challenging for our public school academies (PSAs). As a service agency, WISD has stepped up with supporting LEAs and PSA with staff shortages by contracting staff i.e., school psychologists, teacher consultants, and speech therapists to assist with the shortages. This effort has built trust and fostered new relationships with our constituent districts, especially our PSAs.

Partner to improve access to services, supports and opportunities



My Future Fund Children's Savings Accounts

With a Spring 2023 launch, My Future Fund, Washtenaw County's children's savings account program, will give Washtenaw County children and families a jump-start on saving and planning for future college and career training. Key milestones for program implementation to date include hiring Sara Saylor to serve as program coordinator, developing an online account portal for families, convening an Advisory

Committee, and working with financial partner TIAA to hold the funds in an omnibus account for the participants. Over 7,000 students will be enrolled this spring/summer and will receive initial deposits, depending on their free and reduced lunch eligibility, of \$25 or \$500 into their long-term savings accounts.

Trusted Parent Advisors

The Trusted Advisor initiative has secured two grants that will allow the program to expand their reach to parents of school-aged children. The Community Priority grant from the Washtenaw County Equity Office involves the Trusted Parent Advisors into the redesigned Education Project, making it possible to support family needs which will ensure that their children can attend school regularly. A grant from Superior Township will make it possible to expand the Parent Cafes of the Trusted Advisor initiative. The Parent Cafes are research based parent led support for parents or caregivers. The cafes build parent resilience, a social support network, and connect families to needed community resources.



Adult Education

In partnership with Washtenaw Community College and the Washtenaw County Jail, Adult Education continues to be provided to residents on the east side of the county and those residing in the jail facility. Students are receiving access to English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency (GED), and, in partnership with Ann Arbor Public Schools, High School Completion (HSC). The focus for the remainder of the school year will be the integration of Special Education through Teacher Consultant services into Adult Education programming.

GOAL 2:

Cultivate and nurture an organizational culture of equity, inclusion, and social justice by leading sustained education, engagement, and action and intentionally disrupting systemic racism within WISD and our partnering schools and organizations.

Build trust and honor multiple perspectives across the district

Cybersecurity Risk Assessments

The Technology Department is working in coordination with all staff over the next nine months on the Risk Assessment Process. This includes reflecting on their individual risk in their positions, as well as to share voice and perspective on the status of their department's risk as it relates to hardware and software tools, business processes, and stakeholder engagement. The insight and knowledge gained through these discussions has proven very valuable to educate each other, identifying gaps and potential areas of focus.

Equity Teams

Equity teams remain a key mechanism to address our racial development efforts at the team, school, and department level. We took time to reflect on how the process has been working for us and what we would like to see going forward. We have two staff members, Amy Olmstead Brayton and Greg Myers, who are going through the Courageous Conversation "Affiliate Program." They were willing to step up and support our e-teams effort during the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. We relaunched e-teams under their facilitation with a focus on providing space to build and strengthen a nurturing, learning community focused on ensuring equity is a part of our ongoing work and using the Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) Protocol to engage in inquiry cycles that center race.

We have 12 teams meeting collectively three times this year with team work between sessions. E-teams are responsible for:

- Engaging in a process of investigation to discover how race impacts their personal and professional beliefs and behaviors.
- Leading the school/central office staff in the examination of individual and institutional culture as it relates to equity and anti-racism.
- Establishing a professional learning community in which adults can effectively develop the skills and knowledge necessary to improve student performance and eliminate racial achievement disparities.

WISD's Vision, Mission and Values

The district has dedicated time this year to work on our vision, mission, and values. This has been a process that has intentionally lifted many voices in multiple different ways.

The vision work started with listening sessions with a number of community groups. The information from those sessions were brought forward to help ground the visioning writing process. We worked with ZingTrain to hold a vision writing session. Over 25 people – from different roles and teams from the ISD as well as community and board members – attended the vision session.



The mission development was also done with ZingTrain with a diverse group of staff, several community partners, and WISD board members.

The values were shaped by the original listening sessions and work that the Cabinet leadership team did to understand the community defined values. They selected 28 different values that we then brought to all staff on Opening Day. Our staff engaged with the values and identified those that most resonated with them. That narrowed it down to nine values that have become our draft values. The values that had the most selections by staff were:

- Love, humanity, and empathy
- Centering students
- Communication
- Integrity
- Belonging
- Equity
- Positive relationships
- Multiple perspectives
- Interconnectedness



Build organizational structures and routines to support engagement across teams

Office of the Ombuds

The Ombuds office continues to provide a place for staff to discuss conflicts or other challenges they are having at work. We have established regular meetings between the Ombuds office, Superintendent's office, and HR department in order to be more proactive in our support for staff. By regularly convening these three offices, the district can better support cross-team engagement between the HR and Ombuds offices.

ZingTrain Leadership with Cabinet

Zingerman's is a local business that engages in a service-oriented and shared leadership mindset and structure. Their leadership development training provides models and "recipes" for building a culture of appreciation using a service-oriented approach and a clear personal vision connected to the organizational vision, along with many other strategies to challenge traditional hierarchical models of leadership. This training is being done with the entire Cabinet leadership team to develop their own leadership skills, as well as be in community with one another and support one another as leaders. The leadership sessions run monthly from October to June, and have leaders engage in many tasks between sessions to help build skills.

Restorative Practices

Training will be offered during February and March to internal and external participants by Black Family Development, Inc. This was requested from local school participants, as well as our own internal staff. We will explore additional training in the future for more participants. We have also invited other internal staff to help co-facilitate circle work to navigate team dynamics and a few have used the staff meeting circle process with their teams.

Develop processes that encourage and promote staff voice in shaping organizational practices

WISD Policies and Practices Workgroup

We have formed a Policy and Practices Workgroup to review our policies, administrative guidelines, written procedures, and informal practices through an equity lens. We invited all staff to participate and over 40 people plus nearly all of the 30 cabinet members signed up to participate. This will allow us to form 4 working groups to address various policies and practices. The workgroup will engage for 3-5 years and one product will be a dynamic staff manual that documents key processes and procedures and how they align with our

organizational policies. The group met as a whole and will be moving forward in smaller workgroups.

Onboarding

One area in which we were intentional in lifting staff voices was in redesigning our onboarding process. After receiving numerous complaints from new staff that the onboarding and orientation sessions could be improved, we asked staff what they thought the process should look and feel like. Taking that information, we formed an Onboarding Committee made up of 17 staff members who volunteered to serve on the committee. The committee identified key ways we could lean into our equity, inclusion, and social justice commitments, address the technical needs, and create the kind of culture and support for new staff that they want. The committee met seven times to outline an onboarding process that starts when a job is offered and continues through the new employee's first year. The final process along with who is responsible and accountable for each component will be shared in June with the new process launching in the Fall of 2023.

GOAL 3:

Lead and advocate for policies and practices that support equity, and inclusion, and the disruption of systemic racism on the local, state, and national levels.

Advocate

Special Education Funding Formula

The Special Education Instructional Leadership Network (SEILN) Finance Workgroup met several times to review current special education funding in the state. Using an equity lens, the group looked at five different formula ideas and settled on the formula that would benefit the most districts in the state. Brian Marcel was able to attend one of the SEILN meetings with Cherie Vannatter and due to his advocacy, the presentation will now go to the Michigan School Business Officials (MSBO) as stakeholders to review before going to the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) as a recommendation.

State Cybersecurity Planning

The Technology Department continues to engage with state-level organizations to raise awareness around the importance of educating all stakeholders in cyber awareness and protecting their individual and agency level data. Through the lens of equity, this is yet another layer of the digital divide. Not all stakeholders own a personal technology device or have regular access. When they must interact in societal systems, they may find themselves more vulnerable to attack and uncertain about what to do next. This is particularly of concern for our stakeholders in lower socioeconomic statuses and impacts our communities of color at a higher rate. We must advocate for equitable funding and educational resources to fill this divide with not only devices, but experience and ongoing knowledge to protect and use these devices in a safe and secure manner.

Instruction-Related State Policies and Practices

Team members from the AI team participate in various statewide task forces to advocate and influence policies and practices aligned with equity, inclusion, and social justice. We have a presence in the following state task forces: Early Mathematics, Early Literacy, Disciplinary Literacy, General Education Leadership Network, Southeast Michigan Equity Coalition, and Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI). The DEI Task Force hosted the Midwest Equity Forum with Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz and Eric Hemenway. We have also advocated for more diversity on the task forces to reflect the needs of all students across the state. In addition to participation in

task forces, the Regional School Health Coordinator has worked intentionally to advocate for more inclusive materials for the Michigan Model for Health and SNAP-Ed curriculum.

Birth Through Five MDE Early Literacy Committee

The WISD Early Childhood Department will be represented by Executive Director Edward Manuszak on the Michigan Department of Education Birth Through Age Five Early Literacy Committee. This invitation represents the children and families of Washtenaw County on a state-level committee thus being able to address specific concerns and will be used to help eliminate academic gaps that are systemically based while developing strategies on a statewide basis.

Engage in Intentional Practice

Talent Together

The Paraprofessional-to-Teacher Certification Pilot Project has shown that we are able to fill slots in higher education teacher certificate programs in the field of special education (with waiting lists) *and* meet our goals of diversifying the education profession. As we worked with colleagues around the state, we discovered there was significant interest in building systems similar to what we have done in our county, but accessible across the state of Michigan. That was the impetus for the Michigan Talent Together Initiative. Since its launch earlier this year, 48 ISDs have come on board to create a consortium of ISDs working together to build an apprenticeship approach to teacher certification focusing on access for a group of educators that typically cannot access the profession (due to geography, funding, income, etc.). The group has applied for \$99M in state grand funds and was named in Governor Whitmer’s proposed budget for 2023-34. Applications for host districts and candidates were recently announced, and we expect the first group to start in the program in the Fall of 2023. This is an example of WISD leaders and local Washtenaw school district leaders successfully advocating for a statewide system that creates new pathways for becoming a teacher.



Washtenaw My Brother’s Keeper

Washtenaw My Brother’s Keeper (WMBK) has been playing an increasingly important role in our community. Jamall Bufford, WMBK Project Specialist, serves on a number of boards and committees and has helped develop numerous programs for young people.

These programs have centered on young men and boys of color. The advocacy for boys and young men of color has



led to the creation of the CLR Academy, a summer sports program, the continued focus on Formula 734 to provide a music and arts approach to youth engagement, and the Young Men of Purpose program at middle schools. The community supports this body of work through significant grants and other funding from Washtenaw County Government, the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office, Washtenaw ISD, the Ann Arbor Community Foundation, the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office, and Pittsfield Township. The new additional funding through Pittsfield Township came due to the advocacy for these efforts by key township board members.



Connecting Communities Grant and Feasibility Study

WISD was awarded the Connecting Communities grant to perform a feasibility study that would provide access from the AAATA bus line to the High Point and TLC campus, as well as a pathway for alternative access to our main campus via bike or foot utilizing the new walkways.

Early Literacy Diverse Texts Set

Success by 6 Great Start Collaborative received a grant to support early literacy and promote collaboration. With the help of the WISD Achievement Initiatives and Early Childhood teams and Child Care Network, we curated a list of books for children ages 0-5 that included diverse characters with authors who shared those identities. The books were distributed to childcare providers who serve low income children, preschool classrooms, and parents. We made a point of purchasing books through local bookstores, including a black owned bookstore.

Leadership

Superintendent Naomi Norman

Naomi Norman continues to serve as the Chair of the Governor's PreK-12 Literacy Commission advocating for systemic supports and funding for youth and families around literacy development. She also serves on the executive team for Talent Together, the steering committee for the Washtenaw Health Initiative, and on MAISA's Instruction Committee and GELN DEI Task Force.

Deputy Superintendent Cherie Vannatter

Cherie Vannatter serves on SEILN Critical Shortage Workgroup, MDE Communications Workgroup, Finance Workgroup, and the Preschool Inclusion Workgroup. She is also on the K-12 Alliance Special Education Advocacy Group and part of the design team for Talent Together.

Associate Superintendent Brian Marcel

Brian Marcel is on the Michigan School Business Officials (MSBO) Board and is on a subcommittee related to Investing in MSBO Members, which assesses opportunities for scholarships to various MSBO professional development sessions, workshops, conferences. He continues to advocate for equity factors being considered for the awarding of the scholarships. He is also working on options to recruit college graduates into considering school business as a career choice.

Merri Lynn Colligan, Chief Information Officer

Merri Lynn Colligan is a member of the Michigan Education Technology Leaders (METL) and serves on several task forces including Cybersecurity, MiConnect, Workforce retention, and MISEN (Michigan State Educational Network) advisory. In addition, she was President of the Michigan Association for Educational Data Systems (MAEDS) Board, and currently is on the CyberSecurity Planning Committee for the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant. She advocates for equal access to connectivity and digital instruction for all students and equitable support for districts in the areas of connectivity and secure data integrity.

Holly Heaviland, Executive Director of Community and School Partnerships

Holly Heaviland serves on the Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (WCCMH) Mental Health Millage Committee, representing K-12 educators. Millage-funded programs include a broad array of initiatives, but among the most important is access to mental health and substance use recovery services for all Washtenaw County residents who are having difficulty accessing private care, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay for services. Holly works to align our K-12 mental health investments with emerging scopes of work for funded initiatives.

Cassandra Harmon-Higgins, Executive Director of Human Resources and Legal Services

Cassandra Harmon-Higgins continues to serve as a Director on the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) Michigan Council of School Attorneys (MCSA). The MCSA assists

attorneys representing boards of education in Michigan by providing information and practical advice on legal issues and questions of school law.

Edward Manuszak, Executive Director of Early Childhood

Eddie Manuszak serves for the seventh year as the co-lead for the AASA (National Superintendents Association) Early Learning Cohort, a national group of district leaders committed to promoting Early Childhood Education. He also serves on the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation Council. This term expires in June of 2024. He also serves on the National Advisory Committee of Foundations, Inc., which is a non-profit organization based out of Philadelphia that supports equity and equitable access to before and after school learning opportunities for all children. He also serves as the Region 8 President for Michigan Association for School Administrators (MASA) this school year (2022-2023) and will be the acting Past President for the 2023-2024 school year. He also sits on the Washtenaw Community College Early Childhood Advisory Board and is a member of the Ann Arbor Kiwanis Club.

Jennifer Banks, Director of Instruction

Dr. Jennifer Banks serves on the Early Mathematics Task Force, supporting professional learning around equity, inclusion, and social justice for the task force. She also serves on the GELN Legislative Subcommittee and the DEI Task Force. Finally, she participates in the Southeast Michigan Equity Coalition and the design team of Talent Together.

Ashley Kryscynski, Communications and Public Relations Specialist

Ashley Kryscynski serves on the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) Executive Board as both Board Secretary and Co-Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force. She is facilitating a book study with the Board on “Courageous Conversations About Race,” by Glenn E. Singleton. She is also working alongside Melissa Cischke, who is co-facilitating a parallel book study for MSPRA membership, as part of Melissa’s commitment to the MSPRA DEI Task Force. Ashley was also recognized as the 2022 Gerri Allen School Communicator of the Year for her outstanding leadership and work to keep diversity, social justice, and relationships at the center of her communication work.



Ashley continues to work alongside WISD departments and teams on marketing and outreach campaigns for Help Me Grow, free preschool via Head Start and the Great Start Readiness Program, and My Future Fund so more families of color, families in poverty, and families with children with disabilities learn about WISD’s various services and supports.