



# 2020-21 MID-YEAR BOARD REPORT

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**WASHTENAW INTERMEDIATE  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
FEBRUARY 2021





# WASHTENAW ISD

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 OF EDUCATION

**Dr. Mary Jo Callan**  
**Diane Hockett**  
**R. Stephen Olsen**  
**Dr. Theresa Saunders**  
**Mary Jane Tramontin**

## EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION

**Naomi Norman**, *Interim Superintendent*  
**Cherie Vannatter**, *Interim Deputy Superintendent*  
**Brian Marcel**, *Interim Associate Superintendent*  
**Merri Lynn Colligan**, *Chief Information Officer*  
**Cassandra Harmon-Higgins**, *Executive Director of Human Resources & Legal Services*  
**Holly Heaviland**, *Executive Director of School & Community Partnerships*  
**Alan Oman**, *Executive Director of Early Childhood Programs*  
**Deborah Hester-Washington**, *Director of Special Education*  
**Sherri Papazoglou**, *Director of Finance*  
**Diane Sevigny**, *Manager of Operations*  
**Ashley Kryscynski**, *Communications and Public Relations Specialist*





# WASHTENAW ISD

STUDENTS FIRST.

## BOARD GOALS

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

## BOARD COMMITMENT

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.



## 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

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

# WASHTENAW ISD MID-YEAR BOARD REPORT 2020-21

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## 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.*

### **COMMUNITY-BASED WORK**

#### **Head Start Summer Preschool Camp**

As the pandemic continued, concerns about the time out of school for our youngest learners grew. In response, WISD implemented a Head Start Summer Preschool Camp in the summer of 2020. The program provided an extension of the school year for 63 children who had been enrolled in Head Start and were transitioning to Kindergarten in the fall of 2020. To balance continued public health considerations around COVID-19 and the social emotional needs of our children and families, the WISD preschool team developed a hybrid plan that offered virtual instruction, regular in-person outdoor park meetings and events, and at-home learning kits for families. These kits, delivered directly to children's homes, facilitated successful participation in the virtual learning sessions and continued learning into Kindergarten.



#### **Meeting Basic Needs for Home-Based Birth to Three Families**

Many Early Head Start (EHS) families suffered loss of employment in the early months of the pandemic response creating an increased need for resources to meet basic needs. To support these families with infants and toddlers, our EHS program has continued to provide families with resources such as diapers, formula, and wipes every month as the pandemic continues.

#### **Trusted Parent Advisors**

The Trusted Parent Advisors have continued to support vulnerable families by delivering food, diapers, cleaning supplies, summer activity bags for children, school supplies and headphones. Over 200 families have been served by the Trusted Parent Advisors (TPA), with many receiving support on a weekly basis. In addition to supporting families with basic needs, TPAs have assisted families with remote learning and technology troubleshooting, and have provided social emotional support through Parent Cafes and referrals to community resources and eviction prevention assistance.

The Trusted Parent Advisors have also supported Ypsilanti Community Schools (YCS) in various ways. TPAs have also worked with YCS to support their parent engagement effort by surveying parents about their interest in the Ypsilanti Learning Labs and then helped recruit students. TPAs and WISD staff assisted YCS in reaching out to families who had not received their pandemic EBT cards by mail. Through phone calls, informal networks and emails, and then delivery, 65 families received their EBT card with an estimated total of more than \$40,000 in food benefits for their families thanks to the Trusted Parent Advisors.

## **Great Start Collaborative and the Great Start Parent Coalition**

Great Start Collaborative organizations have used the ABLLe Change Organizational Equity Assessment to further their equity work. Great Start Parent Coalition has also partnered with MSU Extension to support parents of young children during the pandemic by providing virtual parenting classes.

## **Mom Power**

In partnership with the University of Michigan's Zero to Thrive, WISD and community facilitators conducted two Mom Power groups for low-income mothers with young children in Washtenaw County. Mom Power is a 10-week evidence-based treatment specifically designed to target trauma-induced barriers to healthy relationships, social support, and engagement with local resources and services. Of the 20 mothers who participated in these two groups, 45% identified as Black or African American, 30% identified as White, 15% identified as multi-racial, 5% identified as Hispanic or Latinx, and 5% as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

## **Community School Justice Partnership and Truancy**

The Community and School Partnerships team has worked in collaboration with the Washtenaw County Juvenile Court to form the Community School Justice Partnership, which accepts referrals from local school districts to work with students who struggle with absenteeism. The goal of the work is to help students attend school and re-engage by identifying and addressing root causes of each student's truancy. So far this year, the work has been non-punitive and provides students and families with one-on-one conversations. We also work to provide mentoring, connection with Student Advocates, counseling with the help of the WISD 31N social workers and referrals to Washtenaw County Community Mental Health, Trusted Parent Advisors, the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office SURE Moms, and other community resources such as HAWC, Barrier Busters, and Legal Services of South Central Michigan.

The pandemic has lifted up the inequities in our communities and has also shed light on the lack of systems in place to bridge the gaps of unemployment, food instability, adequate internet, and housing when there is economic crisis. It has brought to the forefront the critical shortage for families of not having their basic needs met. It has primarily affected students living in Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township, and Belleville. The Community School Justice Partnership found that families look to schools for care because there is a lack of adequate systems in place.

As of February 1, 2021, more than 240 families have been referred to the Community School Justice Partnership team and they have received the following referrals for assistance:

- 6 referrals through barrier busters for assistance in bill pay;
- 4 families enrolled in local adult education programming;
- 11 families referred formally to CPS preventions for assistance;
- 50 Thanksgiving meals donated to sycamore meadows residents;
- 33 families referred for housing assistance to HAWC or legal services;
- 50 chickens donated to YCS ACCE families for the winter break;
- 12 families received lunches and breakfasts in partnership with Lincoln Consolidated Schools and Food Gatherers over the two-week winter break, who otherwise would have been without food;
- 26 families without transportation and food instability referred for regular food delivery in partnership with Hope Clinic, Jewish Family Services, numerous food banks and churches in the community;
- Coordinated Christmas supports for 7 truancy families with community partners;

- Under the Community School Justice Partnership, Jessica Ashmore employed the Juvenile Court to coordinate Christmas for 52 families and 206 people total with the Secret Santa Society;
- Numerous families provided with technology, technology exchange, and hot spots in coordination with local districts;
- Numerous families given clothes, winter clothes, cleaning supplies and household items;
- Numerous gift cards and donations to families prior to the holiday;
- Numerous referrals to CMH and 31N Social Workers.

### **Reimagining the Homeless Student Referral and Support Process**

Sarah Hierman from the Community and School Partnerships team developed a virtual submission process for the Education Project for Homeless Youth (EPHY) to adjust operations in response to the pandemic. Additionally, she developed an alternative process for stop gap resource distributions so that we could continue to meet the needs of homeless students and families.

### **Coordinating Mental Health Supports**

Shannon Novara has expanded mental health and wellness supports in our county. WISD trained our first cohort of trainers for Youth Mental Health First Aid, which involved district leaders. This training helps all staff understand the 4 most common mental health issues that emerge during adolescence and how to connect youth with early intervention to mitigate longer term impacts. Shannon also worked with our partners at TRAILS to create and provide a self-care training for all staff. It was also recorded so that it is accessible to any staff member in Washtenaw county to support staff wellness and wellbeing. This is increasingly important during this stressful period of time for our students and staff.

Our team has also convened the District Crisis Leaders from our local districts on a monthly basis at the request of the county superintendents. This has created information flow so that we can help support their local needs that arise related to the pandemic. This network has continued forward and also serves as a source of support for those district leaders.

In partnership with the Miles Jeffrey Roberts Foundation, WISD was able to provide free access to any community member to view the two Screenager movies, which help educate both parents and youth around the management of technology use on a daily basis, along with the potential impacts on mental health. Over 500 views were downloaded and a community panel on Facebook Live connected families with local community resources and answered questions that arose from the viewing.



### **Redesigned Summer Instructional Program for On-Site Student Learning at St. Louis Center**

During the summer of 2020, summer instructional services were provided to students who reside at St. Louis Center, located within the Chelsea School District, in a redesigned format. Instead of transporting the students to High Point School as usual, services were brought to the students at St. Louis Center. In-person and virtual academic instruction was provided, as well as adaptive physical education and music therapy.

### Michigan Moonshot Initiative: Expansion of Community WiFi Hotspots

The Technology Department worked with the School and Community Partnerships Department to apply for a Toyota Grant with a primary goal to bridge the digital divide that may serve as a barrier preventing students from fully participating in either synchronous or asynchronous instruction. Toyota ultimately awarded the grant to Merit Network as part of a larger regional partnership along with WISD and Cisco, but the award included \$100,000 to be allocated to WISD from Merit to deploy and manage 30 community WiFi access spots across local Washtenaw County school districts.

### Washtenaw My Brother's Keeper (WMBK)

WISD partners with Washtenaw County Government, Washtenaw County Sheriff's office, Eastern Michigan University and Ypsilanti Community Schools to provide funding and support for the WMBK initiative in Washtenaw County. Each party has doubled their investment in the initiative, and during COVID, the efforts have multiplied. WMBK continued to provide leadership and coordination for our community in many ways. This fall, the album *Formula 734* was released. This album was created by a group of black men from our community, centering the voice and stories of young black men. The making of the album was also filmed and a [documentary film](#) was created. This film had its worldwide premiere in mid-February with nearly 300 people in attendance at the virtual event.



## LEA SUPPORTS

### Pandemic Coordination with the Washtenaw County Health Department

At the start of the pandemic, WISD took on the responsibility of coordinating a clear line of communication between Washtenaw County LEAs, public school academies, and private schools. Weekly communications included emails or Zoom meetings as health and safety information related to schools was newly released or revised. This coordination helped reduce the burden on the Washtenaw County Health Department by creating one common communication channel for both schools and the health department to turn to as they navigated evolving state and federal guidance. This has led to continued partnership, coordination, and relationship-building between the Washtenaw County Health Department and schools.

### Trauma Informed Supports

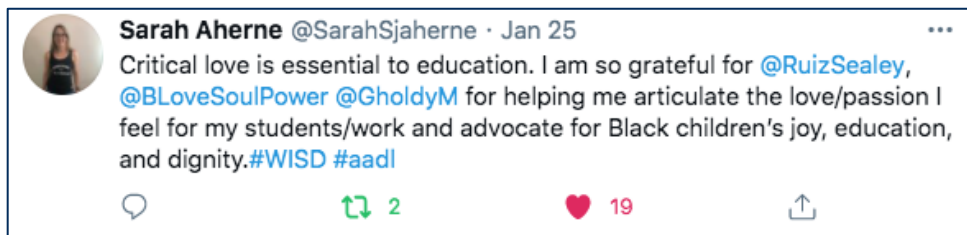
Sarah Hierman worked with Ypsilanti Community Schools and Starr Commonwealth to create a cohort of trainers and administrator certifications on building Resilient Schools. The importance of this work has become heightened given the impacts of children and families during the pandemic, particularly in the greater Ypsilanti community. There is now a strong group of approximately 20 staff who are working through the certification process to deepen their knowledge and usage in their buildings. This mirrors the work being completed with our Progress Park colleagues and builds even greater capacity in our community.



## Responsive Teaching Coalition and the Responsive Teaching Institute

The Responsive Teaching Coalition, a group of local districts and WISD committed to racial equity, coordinated a county-wide Opening Day virtual event in late August. This event, titled “Interrupting the Status Quo in Our Education System,” had over 1,300 participants. A panel consisting of three of the leading Black researchers in the country, Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, Dr. Gholnecsar Muhammad and Dr. Bettina Love, addressed key issues for racially equitable schools. It kicked off the year-long series of sessions and book studies utilizing Dr. Gholdy Muhammad’s book, *Cultivating Genius: A Four-Layered Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*. The Coalition offered 20 sessions in the first half of the school year centering on culturally responsive teaching and leadership, which included sessions like:

- Linguistic justice and black language, literacy, identity and pedagogy with Dr. Baker Bell;
- Socially just assessment and grading;
- Culturally responsive mathematics teaching with Dr. Nathan Alexander (in partnership with Oakland Schools and Wayne RESA);
- Community forum with Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz;
- Moving learning into action; and
- Implementing culturally responsive education with Dr. Terry Flenbaugh.



## Responsive Leadership Institute

The Responsive Leadership Institute is a series of sessions with Dr. Gholdy Muhammad to look at the ways district and building administrators can lead for racial equity. The sessions utilize the framework in the book, *Cultivating Genius*, and look at the kinds of leadership considerations that are needed to support culturally responsive instruction. About 30-40 district leaders are attending the sessions. Session topics include:

- Leading during social unrest;
- Culturally and historically responsive assessment;
- Dismantling and revising recruitment and interview processes;
- Examining data and establishing equity plans; and
- Equity coaching for culturally and historically responsive education.

## Justice Leaders Expansion

The Justice Leaders Core and Advanced sessions have had a large influx of participants over the last year. We have offered seven Core Course series in the fall, each one covering four days of content, and we offered one Advanced Course in the fall. We have a number of other sessions offered through the Justice Leaders efforts:

- Interrupting Bias & Bigotry (1 day skill practice);
- Justice Leaders: White people working for racial justice (4 day series);
- EJATT Deep Dive (8 two-hour sessions);
- Building and sustaining equity teams and justice squads (2 hour session);
- The necessity of diverse books: Helping students see themselves and others in children’s literature ;
- Understanding disability and ableism; and
- Socially just celebrations and holidays.

## **SUPPORTING WISD STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND STAFF**

### **Individualized Student Services for our WISD Students and Families**

Individualized special education services and programming are continuing during the pandemic. Special Education Director Deborah Hester-Washington has consistently convened the Instructional Governance Committee (IGC) throughout the school year. The IGC is a representative group of program staff from across and up and down the district, including teaching assistants, teachers, teacher consultants, ancillary staff, coordinators and specialists, as well as program supervisors and other administrators.

The IGC reviews data from the four quadrants of our Decision-Making Matrix (Individual Student Needs, Program Compliance, Transportation and LEA Partners, and Health Metrics) to determine the student mode of instruction going forward. This recommendation is presented to the Pandemic Response Team (PRT), who in turn make a recommendation to the Board of Education. We also continue to follow our Continuity of Learning Plan and our Preparedness and Response Plan.



### **Early Head Start Meets Technology Needs of Families to Provide Virtual Services**

WISD's home-based Early Head Start (EHS) program has made significant changes to better meet the needs of children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Weekly home visits with families have moved to a virtual format to ensure that services could continue to be provided safely. Access to technology was a barrier to participation to many families who would have been unable to participate without support. In order to continue providing services and support, iPads were distributed to EHS families to use for the duration of virtual programming, as well as internet hotspots for connectivity.

### **Preparing and Maintaining Safe Facilities**

The WISD Facilities Department has worked hard to meet the needs of each of WISD's unique facilities to ensure they are safe and healthy spaces following guidelines from the CDC and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Actions taken include implementing:

- Comprehensive written custodial procedures guide incorporating CDC recommendations for COVID 19 preparedness developed to incorporate best practice and clear instructions for safe working conditions for Unit III staff and to create safe, clean working environments for our campus communities.
- Clearly defining the cleaning and disinfecting tasks as two separate processes and ensuring routines for WISD sites to receive consistent levels of services. Custodial procedures guide developed in an adaptive version for WISD student workers and WISD graduates. Verifying products effective for novel based viruses and ensuring proper and safe use of chemicals throughout the operations.
- A variety of engineering controls that increase safety, such as plexiglass enclosures, stanchions purchased and placed to create safe social distancing for positions that interact with the public, signage promoting safe pandemic practices, and the development of routes to limit and direct traffic flow. Additional engineering control changes include increasing outside air intake and improving air purification, ensuring all drinking water taps were regularly flushed to avoid stagnant water.

- A system that clearly indicated when work areas had been cleaned and disinfected and when they had been used and required cleaning and disinfecting during periods of limited availability of custodial staff.
- Increased service levels with custodial providers to add Day Porters at Red Oak and Progress Park.
- A custodial services program expanding opportunities for WISD graduates to work part time at YA sites and negotiated supplemental cleaning to ensure high levels of cleanliness and sanitation at outcenters (Carpenter YA, Washtenaw News YA, Dexter YA, Liberty YA).
- Coordination of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Washtenaw County schools, including accessing bid pricing of disposable surgical gowns, surgical grade disposable masks, N95s, KN95s, hand sanitizer, face shields, sanitizing and disinfecting wipes, and also acting as a redistribution center for PPE received in donation from Toyota (Face Shields), General Motors (fabric face masks), and the State of Michigan (3M style face masks) for the local county school authorities.
- Events Services team leading the coordination with Scio Township for voting at the TLC (primary and National Elections) to ensure access and safe environmental conditions, as well as ensuring a safe facility environment and communication plans to continue hosting Pupil Bus Driver Training onsite at the TLC during the pandemic.
- Adapted mail service with new mailboxes installed, revised service contracts with local couriers, and processes put in place to ensure USPS mail and packages could continue to flow both out of and into the district and maintain general operations for WISD.
- A collaborative process with program supervisors to audit facilities and remove/more furniture, equipment, place signage, close areas, identify isolation/sick rooms, where necessary to ensure proper social distancing cues were in place.
- Provided training to HR Fingerprinting staff on proper use of cleaning and disinfecting chemicals, as well as the proper use of PPE (gloves, face masks, face shields, gowns).



### High Point Reimagined

WISD continues to keep the timeline and focus on track so we can soon open our reimagined High Point School. This continued work includes impacted staff to make sure students with disabilities are adequately supported.



The administration has been partnering closely with the construction manager to do everything in our power to keep the High Point construction project on schedule. Project status, successes, questions, concerns, etc. are being addressed through:

- Scheduled weekly meetings and walk-throughs of the building with the Facilities administrative team, the construction manager, and architects;
- Scheduled bi-weekly meetings with the broader administrative team, the construction manager, and architects; and
- Ongoing, daily communication with the Director of Operations and the construction manager.

Stakeholder meetings have been and continue to be held with teachers, teacher assistants, related services staff, Honey Creek, Gretchen's House, etc. to ensure decisions are made in the best interest of the students and the programs.

## 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.***

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## **EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Growing WISD's Courageous Conversations About Race Efforts**

As part of our commitment to disrupting racism and developing our capacity to create a racially equitable organization, we have continued our efforts to practice the Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) protocol. We are working with Pacific Education Group (PEG) to support our initial introduction to the CCAR protocol in the Virtual Courageous Conversation Experience, which we have offered twice this fall/winter to over 125 staff and organizational partners. We have continued with the District Equity Leadership Team (DELT) efforts to support leadership development and the framing of a district equity transformation plan with 16 district leaders. And lastly, we are continuing with our equity leadership team efforts through LEADS, a learning space to deepen our understanding and practice of the CCAR protocol as we engage with colleagues. Over 70 WISD staff and organizational partners are engaged in the LEADS teams.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

### **Early Childhood Department's Social Justice & Inclusion Workgroup**

As part of the Early Childhood Department's commitment to the WISD's Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice goals, a Social Justice and Inclusion Workgroup has been established. This workgroup was created by department team members and includes representatives from all of the department's program teams. The group includes team members who have participated in Justice Leaders and Courageous Conversations sessions, and the workgroup purposefully examines how systemic bias and racism is at play within our early childhood systems and the real impact of system racism on the children and families participating in our programs. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the workgroup has continued to meet and advance its work.

### **Home Visiting Staffing Equity**

In response to requests from the Early Intervention team, Early Childhood supervisors and members of the Executive Administration team have met to discuss compensation concerns raised by Early Intervention team members. Early Childhood Supervisors have worked with non-affiliate staff to review and update job descriptions. The job descriptions are now being reviewed for approval by Human Resources. WISD has engaged Rahmberg, Stover & Associates to conduct a compensation study this spring that will include a review of Early Childhood Non-Affiliate compensation. The contractor will also conduct a salary market analysis and an internal

comparison between the home visiting staff and positions in the professional staff bargaining agreement.

### **Bridging Education and the Juvenile Justice System During a Pandemic**

Our Washtenaw County Complex Team has been working in partnership with the Washtenaw County Trial Court Juvenile Administration team to support their clients with K-12 services and problem-solving barriers to ensure limited gaps in education and so no students were detained for lack of school programs. WISD has provided educational updates, as requested, and coordinated program enrollments through probation officers and court administrators, in both the adult and juvenile systems. Bridging between the court and educational systems has been critical during the pandemic to ensure equitable access to our families.

In partnership with Youth Center Juvenile Detention administration, our education team has also created new operational processes for remote learning to ensure students can continue their education engagement. We have had to problem-solve on individual cases to honor movement of staff and students in the facility due to COVID operations and mitigation planning. We hope to maintain some of the new models we have developed, as we have experienced some wonderful success for students.

### **Community Connects: Creating Space for Staff to Come Together**

After feedback from staff about how many appreciated the “Coffee Chats” hosted over Zoom in the spring when the pandemic began, the Coffee Chats were rebranded and “Community Connect.” All WISD staff are invited to these monthly sessions, but their attendance is optional. Community Connects provide a short wellness activity such as guided breathing exercises, meditation, Zumba, or drawing. They also provide opportunities for staff to meet across departments and programs thanks to Zoom’s randomized breakout sessions. Community Connects also provide Interim Superintendent Naomi Norman the chance to share district updates with staff directly. On average, approximately 50 to 70 staff attend the Community Connect each month.

## **ACTION**

### **Launch of the WISD Family Newsletter**

In response to WISD families sharing they wanted more consistent updates from the district, especially during the pandemic when information changes rapidly, WISD launched a weekly Family Newsletter. Sent using our School Messenger system, the Family Newsletter has been crucial in sharing updates related to student and early childhood programs, COVID-19 cases, plans for remote or in-person learning, tips from the Washtenaw County Health Department, and more. The Family Newsletter also was helpful in getting feedback from families in August and January, with 179 and 149 families, respectively, completing the surveys and sharing their thoughts on virtual, individualized, hybrid, and full in-person instruction and service delivery.



## **Infrastructure and Desktop Technology Support**

The Infrastructure and Desktop Technology team have helped staff and students transition to remote instruction since when the pandemic first started. Since July, the Desktop team has deployed over 72 laptops for staff, 13 iPads, 177 student Chromebooks, and over 60 hotspots to staff and students who had no internet access at home. A parent help desk phone line was created for parents to contact the IT department if they experienced problems with their Chromebooks or hotspots. The Desktop team also has provided training sessions and documentation for using Zoom and Google Meet.

Since July, the Infrastructure team has expanded wireless coverage into the parking lots at all WISD locations so staff and families can safely access the internet without having to be inside a building. Currently, the Infrastructure team is working with local districts to increase wireless parking lot coverage so students in local districts can access wireless internet safely without building access. The Infrastructure team also has helped increase VPN access and support for staff working remotely to further limit in-person trips to the TLC for staff. The Infrastructure team also coordinated and worked with local school district staff to safely and effectively update all PowerSchool Student Information Systems over the summer and was able to perform this all remotely with only minimal downtime at each district.

## **Washtenaw County Jail Education Services**

Given the challenges of the pandemic, the Jail Education team continued to offer both general and special education services to students housed in the Washtenaw County Jail. Since the pandemic began, WISD staff continued providing virtual support and services to students, and in October 2020, WISD staff were allowed into the jail to support students in-person. The team remained responsive to the pandemic and resumed virtual services as COVID-19 cases rose again in the winter, and continue to be dedicated to providing support and meeting with students. In addition, we have received the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title II grant and have been able to extend career pathway services and soft skills distance classes to our students. Washtenaw County is one of the few education programs in the state that has been able to maintain adult education services in the jail setting.

## **Handle with Care**

WISD continues to work with local law enforcement agencies and our local districts to bring attention to students who've witnessed or experienced trauma. So far this school year, schools have received Handle with Care notices for 526 students. Although student demographic data is not tracked for Handle with Care notices, research shows that Black children are more likely than white children to be exposed to frightening or threatening experiences. The Community and School Partnerships team also sends quarterly reports to local districts of students who have received multiple Handle with Care notices.

## **Mental Health Mini-Grants**

Again this year, WISD has received funding from the Washtenaw County Community Mental Health Millage to award mini-grants to middle and high schools who apply to support students' mental health. To encourage local districts to more actively target their mental health efforts toward students of color, a new question to the application asks, "Please cite how you plan to use this mini-grant to reach populations of students who often do not participate in mental health activities (e.g. freshmen, students of color, shy students, LGBTQ+ students, low-income students, etc.)" The addition of this simple question has caused thoughtful discussion and the sharing of ideas about engaging students in these efforts.

### **WISD Provides Financial Oversight of CARES and GEER Funds**

WISD received funds through the Governor’s Emergency Educational Relief (GEER) funding for Early On and for WISD programs more broadly, totaling approximately \$52,000. The Early Childhood department coordinated the spending around the Early On funds and worked with Finance on getting the budget established and the grant approved. GEER grant funding was coordinated in Finance and the grant has been approved, budgeted, and the funds have been spent.

### **Safe Schools Washtenaw PPE Drive**

Thanks to a generous \$100,000 grant and a donation of 10,000 face shields from Toyota Motor North America Research and Development, WISD was able to launch the Safe Schools Washtenaw donation drive for personal protective equipment at the start of the 2020-21 school year. As part of the donation drive, WISD collected homemade and disposable face masks, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, facial tissue, disposable gloves, and monetary donations. An Amazon Wishlist was also created to make donating easier for community members. All items collected or purchased using grant and donation funds were distributed equitably across all nine public school districts and the public school academies.





## GOAL 3:

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

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### **LOCAL ADVOCACY**

#### **LEA Technology Team Ensures YCS and LCS Operations**

The WISD LEA Technology team has been hard at work distributing nearly 6,000 student technology devices to students at the start of the 2020-21 school year. Since then, regularly scheduled device distribution for replacements and repair have occurred twice a week at each district. The total number of replacement devices since the start of school is approximately 800 devices combined. Since the pandemic outbreak, our ticket volume increased over 36% with a combined total of 6,134 requests for support as of January 21, 2021.

Aside from normal technology operations, the LEA Technology team has several projects in both districts underway. At Ypsilanti Community Schools, a staff laptop refresh with over 400 new staff laptops is currently underway, a wired network infrastructure upgrade that will include every single building in the district leveraging E-Rate, and a security camera modernization project that will include West (WIMA-WIHI).

For Lincoln Consolidated Schools, Interactive displays are being installed to replace projectors and smart boards by integrating them into this single device for classrooms, and upgrading the wired network infrastructure for the high school through E-Rate. In addition, Technology assisted the districts in partnering with Eastern Michigan University and Comcast to provide Internet Essentials at home for students with over 400 families enrolled and have deployed about 200 hotspot devices to families in need for both districts. Additional technology updates for each district which can be viewed here for [YCS](#) and [LCS](#).

#### **Personalized Student and Family Instruction that Honors Family and Community Context**

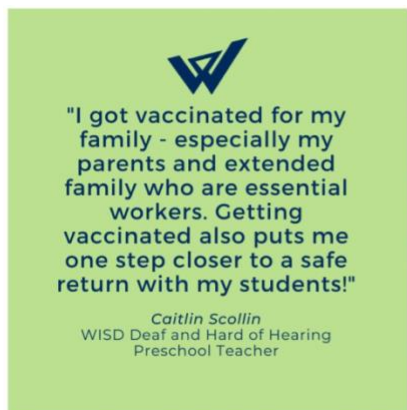
Throughout the pandemic, the WISD staff have been personalizing instruction for our students while also being conscious of our students', families', and community's basic needs. Using Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, WISD staff have continued to inquire about a family's need for food, transportation, and access to education, which includes access to devices and internet services. More formally, WISD staff have surveyed families to better understand and lift their voices and specific needs.

#### **Sustained Coordination with WSA to Align and Support Equitable and Inclusive Policies and Practices Related to Serving Students and Families**

The local superintendents, along with the WISD Interim Superintendent Naomi Norman and Interim Deputy Superintendent Cherie Vannatter, consistently convened twice a week throughout the summer and first half of the 2020-21 school year. Trainings to support equitable and inclusive policies and practices have been discussed, supported, and offered in the county. A county-wide joint session on the Opening Day of the 2020-21 school year featured a Keynote

delivered by Dr. Gholdy Muhammad. Dr. Muhammad is the author of *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*.

## Vaccination Advocacy: Including Special Education Teachers and Teaching Assistants in Phase 1A



Through many conversations describing our vulnerable students with medical and behavioral challenges, such as their inability to mask and practice social distancing, in special education classrooms with local superintendents and the Washtenaw County Health Department, WISD was able to successfully advocate for teachers and teaching assistants in those rooms to be

added to the very first Phase 1A vaccination group. This meant special education staff were given opportunities for vaccinations earlier than other educators due to their unique circumstances.

## STATE AND NATIONAL ADVOCACY

### Advocating for Inclusive Policies to Broaden Support for Michigan Schools

As the Legislation & Advocacy Chair for MAISA's Early Childhood Administrators' Network (ECAN) and Government Relations Chair for the Michigan Head Start Association (MHSA), Alan Oman supported advocacy efforts that led to the Governor's signing a second phase of Teacher grants for Head Start and Great Start Readiness Program classroom staff that will be distributed this spring. Alan is currently serving as a liaison on behalf of MHSA advising the Department of Treasury on the implementation of the grant program with Head Start programs. WISD administration also joined intermediate school districts across the state in advocating for the expansion of hazard pay for special education educators supporting young adult students age 18-26.

### Early Childhood Advocacy

Despite the fiscal uncertainty created in Michigan due to the pandemic, Alan Oman, supported the efforts of the Early Childhood Administrators' Network (ECAN) and the Michigan Head Start Association (MHSA) to communicate strategies with the Governor's Office and the advocacy community that led to funding for the GSRP Pre-K program being left untouched in FY21 and holding ISD's harmless for funding in FY21 regardless of actual student enrollment.

Thanks to statewide advocacy efforts, the Governor's proposed budget for FY22 includes a \$32 million increase in funding for GSRP, which increases funding per student by over \$1,000 and now aligns per student funding for Pre-K in Michigan with K-12 Foundation funding for the first time. In addition, the Governor's budget includes an allocation of \$3 million in federal emergency relief funding for ISD Early On programs in FY22.

### **MiConnect Advocacy and representation for Connectivity**

As the Chairperson of METL, WISD Chief Information Officer Merri Lynn Colligan assisted in the MiConnect Taskforce to provide guidance and oversight of \$25 million dollars allocated across the state for device rebates, cybersecurity conference and training videos, and connectivity funding.

Connectivity funding was allocated per ISD to allow for regional prioritization. Any unspent funds would go back into unfunded local and regional efforts, and ISD technology staff facilitated the administrative process for reimbursement requests from MAISA.

The task force assisted MAISA in creating a formula that balances per-entity and per-student funding models for allocations that indexes entity needs based on three factors:

1. Economic need - using percentage of economically disadvantaged students
2. Available connectivity services - using geographic locale from EEM
3. Other COVID relief funding - established in the ESSER Formula, ESSER Equity & GEER grants



Washtenaw ISD was allocated \$442,240.20 for LEA and PSA reimbursement of purchases directly related to connectivity and remote instruction.

### **Michigan School Business Officials**

Interim Associate Superintendent Brian Marcel worked with the Michigan School Business Officials (MSBO) to support scholarships to professional development opportunities for districts that are financially distressed and have a low socio-economic status profile.

Based on the subcommittee of two people of which Brian Marcel is a member, the MSBO Board approved a scholarship program to MSBO's Business Manager Academy that included consideration of a district's percent of students who are economically disadvantaged, the fund balance percent relative to expenditures, and a declining enrollment trend over three years.

### **Michigan School Public Relations Association**

Communications and Public Relations Specialist Ashley Kryscynski joined the board of the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) and joined the effort to develop a series of three communications toolkits in advance of the 2020-21 school year. The toolkits helped schools across Michigan communicate about the pandemic, changes in instructional models, evolving guidance, and COVID-19 cases in their communities. These toolkits were shared widely with professional associations such as MAISA and MASA in order to support districts regardless of their ability to have dedicated communications and public relations professionals during a time of crisis.

### **Early Childhood and Washtenaw County Device Project**

In late 2020, WISD's Early Childhood Department received a Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Digital Divide grant from the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) and the Michigan Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity for \$129,748. These funds were used to purchase iPad

tablets and 12-month data plans for 139 Head Start families. Head Start and Early Head Start families were prioritized to receive devices based upon need including homelessness and existing access to school district provided devices. The Early Childhood team has been able to distribute the devices at contactless pick-up events and home deliveries, thanks to exceptional support and assistance from WISD's Technology team.

### **Vaccination Advocacy: Increasing Vaccine Doses for Educators**

Working closely with the governor's office, local district leaders, the County Health Department, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and local politicians, WISD helped increase the number of doses of vaccine allocated to Washtenaw County in an effort to help vaccinate educators.

