

Efforts Underway to Support Resolution 2021R-022

At its June 24, 2021 meeting, the Board adopted Resolution 2021R-022 by Director Taylor regarding the school-to-prison pipeline. An emphasis of the Board's action was to engage the community and government partners under the One Milwaukee Initiative to explore and address the systems that support and perpetuate the pipeline to prison. The Administration will continue to support the Board as it continues to partner with the One Milwaukee Initiative, particularly as it concerns eliminating the school-to-prison pipeline. Efforts underway in working toward elimination of the school-to-prison pipeline include academic programs and achievements, progress in reducing disproportionality, personal efficacy and systemic change, community support, and youth engagement.

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction is committed to providing all students equitable access to high-quality, grade-appropriate instruction aligned to the Wisconsin State Standards. Through our Ambitious Instruction: Accelerating Learning initiative, we explicitly acknowledge the critical role all content areas play in ensuring students acquire essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions for school, college, and career success. More specifically, programs are in place in the Advanced Academic Program to offer students in Advanced Placement programs a college-level readiness orientation through our Advanced Placement Summer Bridge Program. Riverside University High School and Milwaukee High School of the Arts were the first to pilot this program summer of 2021. In addition, our work in Advanced Academics is to recognize, respond, and to nurture student potential. We offered talent development camps in the summer (Young Ornithologists and STEM Carnival), and two more will be provided in November and December. We are building teacher capacity to recognize and nurture student abilities because we know that building teacher knowledge on how to meet our students' needs is a way to mitigate the school-to-prison pipeline.

The Department of Specialized Services is supporting the elimination of the school-to-prison pipeline through an increased its focus on providing preventative mental health services to students. Our School Community Partnership for Mental Health (SCPMH), which collaborates with local community providers to put licensed community therapists in our schools, has expanded this year to 38 sites under the direction of the MPS Violence Prevention Program.

District-wide Trauma Care Specialists have been providing intensive supports to 30 of our schools and broad supports across the district. This includes collaborating with Building Intervention Teams (BIT) to consider the impact of traumatic events in the lives of our students and families, and problem-solving ways to mitigate their effects. The team recently started integrating with the district's Crisis Response Team to enhance postvention for schools and families following a tragedy, which includes collaboration with the MPS Success Center in increasingly impactful ways.

The Black Lives Matter Initiative is helping to work towards eliminating the school-to-prison-pipeline through an emphasis on personal efficacy and systemic change, community support, and youth engagement. One of the ways the BLM initiative is helping is by engaging the youth in projects and activities that help them use their voice. Youth engagement and advocacy is encouraged and promoted with the BLM initiative. Students have been encouraged to write political figures, school administration, and others to help advocate for change and equity.

Another way the Black Lives Matter Initiative is helping to work towards eliminating the School to Prison pipeline is through personal efficacy and systemic change by promoting building a positive school culture and climate. Through BLM, students experience culturally relevant curriculum, projects, and activities that challenge students to excellence. This helps students feel a sense of belonging. This in turn leads to students wanting to be at school because the school community is caring and supportive and the students see themselves as a part of the school community.

The Department of Student Services continues to support school communities and students through efforts to reduce disproportionality. These include a number of approaches including focus groups for school leaders, teachers, students, parents and the community to review the district code of conduct and disciplinary action levels. The December Community Conversations series will also focus on reviewing the code of conduct. Other approaches include providing schools with resources on alternatives to suspension such as the Alternatives to Suspension Toolbox, analyzing and evaluating individual school data related to suspensions to determine the best course of action to address disproportionality, continuing and expanding book studies, and forming district committees to identify, develop, and implement strategies to reduce suspensions.

The Administration will continue its efforts to eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline and provide support to the Board as requested relative to the One Milwaukee Initiative.