



Enhancing Educational Communities and School Climate January 2025

A primary goal of Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is to reduce discipline disproportionality across the district. This January report will address work from a variety of departments through December 31, 2024.

PACE Committee members and constituents have inquired about specific efforts geared toward supporting 9th grade students.

9th Grade Students

Milwaukee Public Schools received a three-year grant from the Department of Justice that addresses student well-being and prevention of violence. Project STEPS (Students Talking Equity and Prevention Systems) was created and awarded a three-year grant through September 2027. Within this grant, implementation of Link Crew as an evidence-based peer mentoring program will be supported at schools that currently do not have any trained facilitators of the program. Link Crew is a peer mentoring program that specifically supports 9th grade students with their transition to high school.

Additionally, in collaboration with UW-Madison, MPS has collaborated on a research grant to bring Peer Learning (.net) to teachers of 9th grade students. Staff members at identified schools have the opportunity to be trained in the best practices from Peer Learning (.net) to utilize in their classrooms. Peer Learning (.net) is from the University of Oregon that aims to provide best practices for academic engagement and social emotional skill building within the academic instruction of the classroom.

PACE Committee members and constituents have inquired about Cycle 1 progress within School Improvement Plans.

Cycle One School Improvement Plans

Cycle one of the Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) for the year ended in November. All schools reviewed their progress with their outlined goals and action steps. Monthly school-based teams of the Climate Tier 1 Team and Building Intervention support the work of culture and climate and the identified goals within the CSIP. The district PBIS Team monitors team meeting minutes within the CSIP. Through December, 85% of Climate Tier 1 Teams have submitted meeting minutes and 92% of Building Intervention Teams have submitted meeting minutes. In collaboration with their school performance coordinator (SPC) from the Department of Research, Assessment, and Data, all schools assessed their growth utilizing a rubric and made any needed adjustments to their outlined goals and action steps for the year. In December, the Department of Public Instruction and MPS Professional Learning Community looked closely at CSIPs reflecting on what is going well across the schools, what are areas of improvement, what patterns exist with the data, and what the next steps for building leaders are based on the data in the CSIP.

Depending on the school's problem of practice, a district team including Violence Prevention, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Restorative Practices, and others, have reached out to the school providing opportunities for support. Within the category of culture and climate, all schools selected an educator data point and a student outcome data point to collect to monitoring their theory of action and evidence-based improvement strategy. Some example educator data points identified include PBIS Walkthrough Tool, Second Step data, Class Dojo, Infinite Campus PLP Contact Log, and restorative practice observational data. Some example student outcomes identified include behavior referrals, wellbeing survey results, student attendance, and Infinite Campus PLP notes.

PACE Committee members and constituents have inquired about ensuring continued Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) implementation.

Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) and District Equity Leadership Team

Implementation of CCAR is looking to become intensified and systematic through monthly sessions of the Courageous Conversations Continued Learning series and Courageous Conversation Luncheons. Each month all climate equity liaisons receive an email with case studies, example conversations, strategies to integrate the framework, and articles and videos to stimulate conversation. Sessions of Beyond Diversity will be held in January and February for staff members looking to continue their journey with the framework. All schools are required to send at least one staff member to one of the Beyond Diversity sessions in January or February. Additional sessions will be added for April, May, and June.

Through collaboration with equity coaches from CCAR, MPS has had 40 individuals partake in their Courageous Conversations Practitioners Cohort. Starting in January 2025, all practitioners are invited to participate in a monthly networking experience in which participants will engage in the Courageous Conversations framework specifically looking at issues of race and equity in MPS and the Milwaukee community.

The District Equity Leadership Team (DELT) meetings have continued to engage with the Systemic Transformation Framework provided through CCAR, specifically looking at knowledge, will, skill, and capacity. Currently, members of DELT are collaborating with Chicago Public Schools around a staff member self-reflection growth tool based upon Chicago's Liberatory Thinking Tool.

PACE Committee members and constituents have inquired about the progress of equitably supporting schools as part of the Teaming in Equitable Education Coaching and Holistic Support (TEECHS) collaboration.

Supporting Schools

Schools identified for equitable and holistic coaching through TEECHS have all begun receiving weekly in-school support from a Team of Aligned Needs (TAN). A collaborative calibration was conducted at each school in which students, staff members, and school leadership worked through the Goals, Reality, Obstacles, Way forward (GROW) model of improvement. Schools identified goals for the school, discussed the current reality at the school, identified obstacles, and laid out a way forward for the school. Based on that model, three goals within the locus of influence of the school and TAN were created, as well as two larger systemic goals that may be inequitably affecting schools.

Every week, members of the TAN go to the school and provide a variety of coaching, modeling, professional development, data analysis, facilitating student groups, or additional supports aligned to the school's three locus of influence goals. Example goals from schools include facilitating student intervention groups; modeling and coaching newly hired teachers; supporting school-wide community building; co-teaching utilizing district curriculum and best practices; and increasing academic discourse and rigor.

Additionally, the Project STEPS grant has been completely aligned to the identified schools within TEECHS. All best practices, mentoring, and interventions within the grant will be provided to TEECHS schools based on need. Elements of Project STEPS include Marquette Peace Center toolkit, Sky Schools mindfulness curriculum, Link Crew expansion, continued CCAR seminars, mentoring support for students, Reframing Behaviors professional development, and a variety of other professional development for staff members.

PACE Committee members and constituents have inquired about topics discussed with student leadership groups and areas of concern for students.

Student Leadership Committees

Student discipline committees at all traditional middle and high schools have been meeting monthly to further examine their problem of practice, starting to gather additional student voice, and researching potential recommendations for the school and district. Some of the problems of practice being discussed include increasing student involvement in school activities and events; hall walking and tardy students; creating a sense of belonging for students; disruptive behaviors in the classroom; cell phone policies; and restorative approaches across the school.

Project STEPS will be collaborating with Marquette Peace Center to work with selected Student Discipline Committees to identify specific social emotional needs with students. The student discipline committee will lead work incorporating the Marquette Peace Center student toolkit and peer mediation support across the school community.

In December, MPS contracted with CCAR for a variety of student leadership opportunities. Throughout second semester, equity coaches from CCAR will be facilitating Beyond Diversity for Students as well as engaging with 80-100 high school students as part of their Students Organized Against Racism (SOAR) three-part leadership series.

PACE Committee members and constituents have inquired about specific best practices schools have implemented that are resulting in the lowered suspension rates we see across all schools.

School Best Practices

Through December 31, 2024, there are 85 out of 161 schools that have lowered total suspensions year-to-date compared to the 2023-2024 school year. A variety of best practices have been utilized at those schools based on specific needs and through analysis of data. Some of those best practices include:

- Consistent messaging on the five components of school climate.
- Adjustment of locations of classrooms to minimize movement during passing time.
- Spacing out lunch time further to maximize student movement between lunches.
- Weekly check-ins and morning meetings with students.
- Use of the 2x10 intervention with identified students.
- Behavioral t-chart identifying classroom managed and office managed behaviors.
- Expansion of strategies within the Climate, Culture & Alternatives to Suspension Toolkit.

PACE Committee members and constituents have inquired about re-entry of students after discipline and other school changes.

Re-Entry of Students

A school social worker is assigned the role of “re-entry coordinator” within the MPS Department of Student Services to support student re-entry after coming out of behavior reassignment schools and youth corrections. MPS has also partnered with Stanford University on a research grant implementing their Lifting the Bar intervention for students re-entering schools from within a youth correction facility. All students meet with a support staff to identify specific staff members and student preferences on creating meaningful connections at school to reduce recidivism. Staff members get a one-page letter written by the student, inviting the staff member to help shift the culture and stigma of the student in the school community. Several TEECHS schools have identified re-entry of students as part of their goals and are identifying next steps to support re-entry frameworks at the school.

PACE Committee members and constituents have inquired about historical trends, and current reality with disciplinary practices by race and grade level.

Suspension Deep Dive

All data through December 31, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

Across all schools there have been 5,485 students suspended, 8,767 total suspensions, and a total of 22,084 days of suspension.

Suspensions by race

	Hispanic/ Latino	American Indian	Asian	Black/ African American	Native Hawaiian	White	Multiple Races
Total Suspensions	1412	38	155	6586	3	203	370
Percent of all Suspensions	16.11%	0.43%	1.77%	75.12%	0.03%	2.32%	4.22%
Percent of Enrollment	28.6%	0.3%	9.2%	48.6%	0.1%	8.6%	4.5%

Suspensions by grade

K4	K5	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade
14	34	89	175	214	336	351
6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
812	959	1075	2346	1261	711	390

Suspensions by month comparison

Month	2024-2025	2023-2024	2022-2023
August	XXX	524	692
September	1,578	1,971	2,357
October	2,700	3,047	2,336
November	2,411	3,143	2,259
December	1,967	2,087	1,824