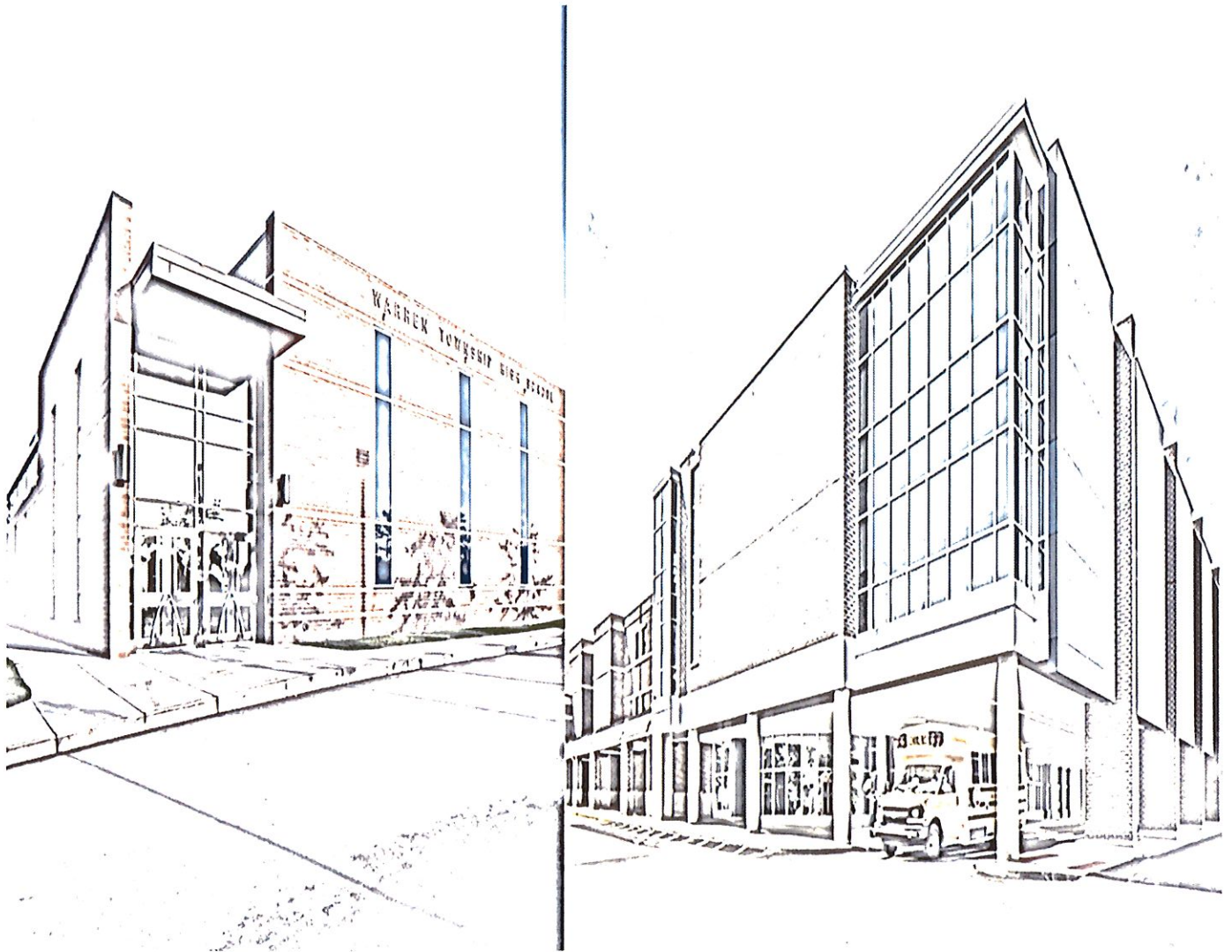




Warren Township High School District 121

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Master Plan



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Master Plan

Warren Township High School District 121 has over a century of history in educating the youth in Warren Township. WTHS has a critically important responsibility for our students, families and entire community. The secondary education which our students are provided allows them to further experience post-secondary education or career opportunities, and ultimately transition into adulthood. District 121 has a wonderfully diverse school community which greatly increases our opportunities to help young people grow and thrive in an increasingly diverse and dynamic world. One of the belief statements within our current strategic plan is that at WTHS student growth and achievement are maximized when we unleash the power of our inclusive and diverse culture. Our diversity has been identified as a district strength for generations.

In 2016, after several instances of racially insensitive graffiti and school unrest, Warren Township High School was confronted with the reality that while we were an organization proud of our diversity, we had some tremendous growth opportunities ahead in regards to policies, practices and programming to try and maximize the inclusion and equity for all of our students. At that time, the district began to embark on a multi-year investigation into the ways we can move forward together with the best interests of all in mind. A parent Diversity Committee was formed as well as several WTHS student committees to help with two-way communication as we moved forward with new initiatives. These committees, along with staff members who were willing and prepared to contribute to our equity work together formed our District Equity Team. Our Equity Team was also supported significantly with guidance and training from the BRIDGES (Building Resourceful, Inclusive, Deverse & Globally Engaged Schools) Consulting LLC.

A significant amount of the early work that was done by our Equity Team was the investigation into some of the inequities that WTHS has been experiencing in regards to outcomes for different subgroups of students. Specifically, performance levels and

success rates for our students demonstrated that not all of our students were having a shared experience during their time at WTHS. These discrepancies among subgroups of students were seen in areas including but not limited to:

- Graduation rates
- Suspension rates
- Grade point averages
- Enrollments in WTHS most rigorous classes
- Enrollments in Post Secondary Educational Opportunities (PSEO)
- ACT/SAT scores
- College and Career Readiness

Some of the data which revealed these inequities were pulled from district historical data, others from Illinois State Board of Education annual school report card data for WTHS. The most current recent year school report card available is included for reference at the conclusion of this plan.

During the 2019-20 school year, the Equity Team was committed to creating this initial District Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Master Plan to capture some of our District's core tenets, as well as document some past, current and potential future initiatives to support our work with equity. This document is comprised of six particular equity commitments, with focus areas for each, and identified initiatives within each focus area. While these commitments, focus areas and initiatives are certainly not independent of each other, they are identified as such within this document to support clarity and accountability for our district work. Some of the identified initiatives currently have been and/or are currently active within the district. Others are yet to be initiated due to current lack of opportunity due to resources, and these are identified as "to be determined" (TBD) as such within this plan. This document is also intended to be reviewed regularly, and no less than annually to review progress and modify initiatives to help achieve goals related to our equity work.

Early in our process, our Equity Team requested, reviewed and supported the following definitions for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to help with a common understanding and articulation.

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, we embrace a broader definition of diversity that also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. Our definition also includes diversity of thought: ideas, perspectives, and values. We also recognize that individuals affiliate with multiple identities.

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. It's important to note that while an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group isn't always inclusive. Increasingly, recognition of unconscious or 'implicit bias' helps organizations to be deliberate about addressing issues of inclusivity.

We define diversity, equity, and inclusion based on language from the D5 Coalition, Racial Equity Tools Glossary, and UC Berkeley.

I. **District Leadership Commitments.** One of the most critical commitments that our district can make is to ensure that advocacy for the equity work we are undertaking is explicit and supported at the highest levels, including the Board of Education. Policies, procedures and other guidelines should reflect the focus on inclusion and equity.

A. Board of Education Advocacy

1. Facilitating a District Board of Education Diversity Committee. The Parent Diversity Committee (currently also the Equity Team), which was established in 2018 was established as a Board of Education committee with active Board members participating in this committee.
2. Strategic plan alignment to equity initiatives. Annually the district facilitates a strategic planning process in which to identify some of the most important goals to be worked on as well as establish accountability processes for prior year's goals. This includes the creation of this Master Plan which is one item within the 2019 strategic planning document. Our focus on Equity should be captured on the Strategic Plan's Formulas for Success to explicitly identify this priority in our work.
3. BOE Policy 1:30 regarding :School District Philosophy" is modified to be a District 121 specific policy which represents our Strategic Plan's "Vision, Belief Statements, and Formulas for Success to highlight diversity, equity and inclusion as a high priority for the Board of Education and entire school district.

II. **Staff Efficacy Commitments.** Our WTHS staff have the greatest opportunity to help support our equity initiatives as they impact expectations and culture dramatically everyday in school. The administration, faculty and staff need to be trained in competencies to support inclusion and advocacy. Administrative procedures, the parent student handbook and other school documents should reflect the focus on inclusion and equity. Hiring a diverse workforce to mirror our community is critically important in the establishment of a school culture which aims to allow all students to find adult individuals with which to connect.

A. Administration and Staff Equity Training

1. Courageous Conversations Training: Beyond Diversity™ is a two-day seminar designed to help participants understand the impact of race on student learning and investigate the role that racism plays in institutionalizing academic achievement disparities. Administration from both campuses along with some teachers completed this training.
2. BRIDGES Consultant at Institute for all staff: speaker addressed a range of topics to help staff gain a better understanding of our diverse population.
3. BRIDGES Consultant: provided lunch and learns for the entire staff at both campuses.
4. BRIDGES training for consistent school-wide response after trauma or crisis event for Social Studies staff.
 - a) If an event were to occur, the Social Studies teachers will present information for students and offer the opportunity for dialogue. This will also present an opportunity for our staff to identify students that need additional support from our student service teams.
5. BRIDGES training for English teachers
 - a) English is a four-year requirement and we wanted to be sure all English teachers had comprehensive training regarding diversity in the classroom.

6. BRIDGES training for athletic coaches

- a) All athletic coaches were given comprehensive training as they work with students closely and develop stronger relationships with students outside of the school day.

7. On-going professional development

- a) PD for staff to develop cultural competency, including understanding and reducing implicit racial bias.
- b) PD for staff to develop an understanding of, and reducing gender bias in instruction. **(TBD)**

B. Student Handbook expectations

- 1. Insure the consequences of hate crime misconduct are strong and communicated on our student handbook

C. Human Resources

- 1. Recruitment at university job fairs, and increased hiring of candidates that mirror our community.
- 2. Grow your own program (in conjunction with the university center and GYO Lake County) to develop candidates for hometown faculty and staff.

III. **Instructional Program Commitments.** In order for all students to have the opportunity to experience the highest levels of academic success, all students must have the ability to experience rigorous courses. This process also includes a look at the potential pathways of all students as they enter in 9th grade through their graduation. Exposure to post secondary educational opportunities through AP programming and dual credit have significant impacts on student success in college after WTHS. The curriculum of “college knowledge” is particularly important to examine for first generation students, as many of the decisions students make in high school are often based on their familiarity with the overarching post-secondary process which all students should have the opportunity to learn as well. Additionally, courses should utilize materials that are relevant to, and supportive of our diverse student population.

A. 9th Grade Placement Process

1. Remedial course offerings are only available for students who enter WTHS reading at a 7th grade level or lower, and without an IEP. All other students are placed in grade-level, honors, or AP courses during their freshman year.

B. Supporting Students In Their Learning: All students require different levels of support in their learning. WTHS is committed to providing the necessary supports to ensure the success of all of our students.

1. Equity and Intervention Aides / Equity and Assessment Data Specialist. WTHS will investigate the addition of these 2 positions. These positions will work with students and their families to ensure all students have access to rigorous coursework, and that students are moved in and out of supports and interventions as necessary. The Aides will work with the Data Specialist to identify students who should access more rigorous coursework, and to monitor current achievement trends to ensure all students are prepared for their post-secondary experiences in college, vocational schools, or the workplace. **(TBD)**
2. Students requiring additional academic support in their Math and English courses will receive support through our On Track intervention program will provide additional instruction and support for students who require that intervention.

- a) WTHS is implementing Math on Track at the freshman level during the 2020-2021 School Year.

- b) Additional On Track supports are being planned. **(TBD)**
 - 3. WTHS will investigate the addition of dedicated math resource room and writing center staffing at both campuses. This will provide informal drop-in tutoring services for all students. Students can also be assigned into these centers for additional support if needed. **(TBD)**
- C. Diagonal Movement possibilities in Mathematics
 - 1. Students who are successful in Algebra I during their freshman year will have the option to take Geometry during the summer before their sophomore year, and enroll in Algebra II/Trig during their sophomore year. This will provide these students with access to advanced mathematics (Calculus or Discrete Finite Math) before graduating high school.
- D. Advanced Placement, Dual and Articulated Credit Growth, and Transitional Credit opportunities for all students
 - 1. Computer Science Principles will be offered as an AP Course beginning in the 2020-2021 School Year.
 - 2. Dual Credit will be offered in English beginning with the 2020-2021 School Year.
 - 3. Transitional English and Mathematics Courses are being offered beginning with the 2020-2021 School Year. Transitional courses allow students who pass the course to enroll directly in a credit-bearing course at The College of Lake County.
 - a) Dual Credit in 20-21: Honors Earth Science, Honors Language and Composition
 - b) Transitional Courses in 20-21: Language & Composition, Preparatory Math and Statistics
 - 4. Dual Credit and Articulated Credit Opportunities are being investigated in the Science, Industrial Technology, and Business Departments. **(TBD)**
- E. Commitment to Maintaining Excellent Instruction
 - 1. Instructional coaching FTEs increased by .4 for the 20-21 School Year.
 - 2. In the future, will investigate the possibility of increasing by an additional 2.0 FTE to provide additional instructional support and professional development for WTHS teachers. **(TBD)**
- F. Exposure to college process & importance of PSEO
 - 1. Schuler Scholars: provides support for 1st generation students

2. HBCU tour: is promoted by our counselors and a recruitment drive is held with an informational table outside the cafeteria during lunch hours
3. Partnership with Equal Opportunities Schools to help identify students who are missing academic opportunities while at WTHS. **(TBD)**
4. I'm First Club: First Generation College-Bound Students Organization helps students who will be the first in their families to attend college. Students learn about the admissions process, and are supported in their college selection process.

G. Course curriculum review

1. In 2017, the District facilitated a review of texts and other curricular materials and expanded the sources used in English and Social Studies courses to reflect more diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

IV. **Advocacy Commitments.** From an advocacy perspective, we must always think about helping those who need the help the most, and often will not speak up for themselves. In regards to identification of students in need, social and emotional supports, academic supports, this is the core of our work in helping individual students and also must be core to resource allocation at WTHS.

A. Supports for at-risk students

1. The ACHIEVE program at O'Plaine, to support at-risk students in their transition into WTHS and includes home visits to welcome incoming students.
2. The Almond ACHIEVE program supports students as they transition to the Almond Campus. Students who participated in the ARC program at O'Plaine are invited to attend monthly meetings. Students can also be referred to the ACHIEVE program by student services. Our program focuses on social/emotional learning, executive functioning, self-advocacy, and motivation
3. O'Plaine after school tutoring.

B. Alternative approach to discipline

1. Senate Bill 100 implementation and training: Illinois State Senate Bill 100 represents extensive reform of school discipline policies in public and charter schools throughout the state. SB 100 eliminates "zero-tolerance" policies and provides that the harshest forms of punishment may only be used for students who pose a threat to the school community or who substantially disrupt, impede or interfere with the learning environment. SB 100 dramatically alters the ability of districts to use disciplinary exclusion (suspension and expulsion), especially in response to relatively minor behavior problems. It also requires positive intervention before and in conjunction with any disciplinary exclusion, placing a priority on helping students, rather than just excluding them.
 - a) The student service teams have attended several seminars to ensure we are in compliance with the new standards
 - b) Presentations to staff on several Institute dates
2. Restorative practice programming : Restorative practices in schools, inspired by the philosophy and practices of restorative justice, prioritizes repairing harm

done to relationships over the need for assigning blame and dispensing punishment.

a) Student service teams have attended several professional development seminars to improve our understanding and implementation of our restorative programming.

b) Deans have used restorative practices in lieu of consequences.

3. Behavior Interventionist (1 at each campus) **(TBD)**

a) Each campus would have a staff member to support, assist and counsel students that have need a restorative response to their actions. This will also reduce our need to suspend for specific offenses.

4. Mental Health Professional (1 at each campus) **(TBD)**

a) Each campus would have an additional staff member to assist the student service teams in immediately responding with a behavior intervention that requires a restorative response rather than scheduling a meeting days or weeks later and potentially requiring a student to miss school.

5. Substance Abuse Counseling **(TBD)**

a) The district will enter into an agreement with a contractor to provide timely drug and alcohol assessment in response to student behavior.

The counseling and assessment will be timely and reduce suspensions

C. Emergent Bilingual Program: Students who speak a language other than English at home are identified as Emergent Bilingual (EB) students. These students are provided supplemental instruction that focuses on language acquisition as well as content literacy. Students are enrolled in the EB program unless their parents refuse services, or they earn a score of 4.8 on the ACCESS Test, which is administered annually in January. We continue to adjust our program structure to best meet the needs of our EB population.

1. Added a Bilingual Aide position at the Almond Campus to support EB students in core courses.

2. Increasing the number of certified teachers who hold a valid ESL license from the State of Illinois. The ESL License certifies a teacher to teach the Sheltered courses that support Language Acquisition.

3. Our Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee meets quarterly, and reviews how the district should invest funding in the education of our EB students. The district also provides college information to parents through our Bilingual

Parent Advisory Committee. This is an important committee and we are continuing our work to engage these parents in this work.

4. Teachers who work with EB students undergo annual Professional Development to maintain current in their knowledge of best practice when working with Emergent Bilinguals.
5. The district is committed to utilizing funding from the State of Illinois and the Federal Government to provide access to additional resources to improve the educational experience for all EB students.

- V. **Student Life Commitments.** Allowing students to embrace our diversity and the rewards of working together.
- A. Student Retreats
 - 1. BRIDGES diversity retreats provided the past two years to student leaders from various organizations.
 - 2. WTHS diversity retreats to start being offered by our own staff
 - 3. Opportunities for cultural retreats to other schools/groups by BSU and other WTHS student organizations.
 - B. Student Organizations: Unite and Inform, Avanza, Black Student Union, Muslim Student Association, Pride Club, South Asian Student Association, International Club.
 - C. Advisory Development - Developed proposal for student advisory program to be integrated into the school day for students. This program would focus on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) standards and provide an opportunity for important conversations about relevant topics to be discussed. **(TBD)**
 - D. Library reconfiguration and refocus at both campuses to engage and motivate all students towards inquiry. **(TBD)**

VI. Community Engagement Commitments.

- A. Parent Committee Work has continued with meetings approximately quarterly
- B. Parent Retreat in 2019 to mirror the student retreat experience for many members of the parent committee.
- C. Student Liaison positions.
 - 1. Equity and Intervention Aides / Equity and Assessment Data Specialist. WTHS will investigate the addition of these 2 positions . These positions will work with students and their families to ensure all students have access to rigorous coursework, and that students are moved in and out of supports and interventions as necessary. The Aides will work with the Data Specialist to identify students who should access more rigorous coursework, and to monitor current achievement trends to ensure all students are prepared for their post-secondary experiences in college, vocational schools, or the workplace. **(TBD)**
- D. Cultural celebrations
 - 1. Avanza Posada
 - 2. BSU Black History Month celebration
 - 3. Additional cultural celebrations
- E. Home Language focus
 - 1. Increased communications in Spanish
 - 2. Better utilization of WTHS website other vehicles to communicate with tools used by our parents