



# The 2020 Advisory Committee

October 11, 2018

## Annual Letter from the 2020 Advisory Committee

Minneapolis Public Schools  
1250 West Broadway Ave.  
Minneapolis, MN 55411

Dear Superintendent Graff, Minneapolis Public School Board, and District Chiefs:

This letter is written on behalf of the World’s Best Workforce Advisory Committee to Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). Under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.11, school districts are to develop a World’s Best Workforce (WBWF) Annual Report and report summary for each school year. In addition, the legislation requires that there be a district advisory committee that provides recommendations regarding rigorous academic standards, student achievement goals and measures, district assessments, and program evaluations. In MPS, these recommendations come in the form of an annual letter, and the following is the letter from the 2017-18 school year.

The letter is outlined in the following way:

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## Action Steps Requested from the Committee

The following are action steps requested based on the work of the committee over the 2017-18 school year and supported by the content in the letter that follows.

### 1. Inclusion and Access

- a. The school district leadership structures their communications, school pathway opportunities, curriculum choices, staff hiring practices, and marketing to maximize the message to the greater community the value-added impact of a diverse community of learners can have on the social, emotional, and academic learning for all our students and their families.
- b. The school board decisions and school district policies be reviewed and structured to ensure that our learning communities, from schools to classrooms to after school clubs, be inclusive and accessible to all; and that the Board's decision-making be consistent and aligned to existing district-wide MPS mission, vision, and values, as successfully shifting the behaviors or initiatives of such a large district can take years. There needs to be inclusion for students with both seen and unseen disabilities.
- c. Report back as to how the comprehensive plan aligns with legislative goals of WBWF.
- d. Review programs not only budgetarily and academically, but for how well they advance the district goals of equity and inclusion for all.
- e. Sites should be held accountable for ensuring that the rich diversity of the students is also reflected in the school, classroom, curriculum and in the staff.
- f. Access to early education and High 5 should be increased to add locations, delivery models and availability.

### 2. Literacy and Curriculum

- a. Improve reading for students. Strategies to do this include: Increase teachers' ability to teach reading to students; Provide a comprehensive pedagogical professional development reading strategy for all Pre-K through 3 teachers; use a curriculum with reading foundations that include phonics; increase focus on early childhood reading skills.
- b. Work more closely with community partners to promote Math and Literacy connections in their programs to better align out of school time and in school time for students.
- c. We are requesting the data report broken down by school, race, ELL, Special Ed, and HHM regarding the students who are identified as not meeting criteria under the Reading Well by Third Grade Law and the interventions that are being provided.
- d. Audit curriculum to insure we are providing high quality, effective, and culturally relevant curriculum to students.



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3. Graduation / Career and College Readiness
  - a. Add ethnic studies as a requirement for all students, starting in high school and then continuing the expand down into lower grade levels.
  - b. Add Career and Technical Education (CTE) or Career Readiness requirement for graduation.
  - c. Develop comprehensive post-graduation programs and clarify to students what their options are for after graduation.
  - d. The district should offer courses that provide students with life skills to prepare them for their adult lives and life experiences outside the classroom.
  
4. Relationships and Social and Emotional Learning
  - a. Increase efforts around Social and Emotional Learning.
  - b. Increase educators' impact on program decisions.
  - c. The school board honor the Equity and Diversity Impact Assessment (EDIA) process when making district-wide resource decisions and especially when the decision is related to significant resource allocations and/or significant impact on MPS services to students across the district.
  - d. Improve the environmental quality of the student learning space.



## Introduction

We, the 2020 Advisory Committee, see the diversity of our community as a strength and tremendous asset for MPS. As such, we support the Minneapolis Public Schools promise to the community to provide an inspirational education experience in a safe, welcoming environment for ALL learners where our students can acquire the tools and skills necessary to confidently engage in the global community.

It is important that the district understand that a diverse learning community is an asset for our students whether they are academic standouts or struggling in school. Too often, integration is proposed as a solution from a deficit mindset rather than being properly seen from a growth mindset.

We request that the school board honor the Equity and Diversity Impact Assessment (EDIA) process when making district-wide resource decisions and especially when the decision is related to significant resource allocations and/or significant impact on MPS services to students across the district.

## Inclusion and Access

In alignment with MPS Equity and Diversity Policy 1304 we, the 2020 Advisory Committee, request that the School Board remain committed to this policy and the underlying accountability message.

*“Every student deserves a respectful learning environment in which their racial and ethnic diversity is valued and contributes to successful academic outcomes. Minneapolis Public Schools is committed to identifying and correcting practices and policies that perpetuate the achievement gap and institutional racism in all forms in order to provide all of its students with the opportunity to succeed. Learning and work environments are enriched and improved by the contributions, perspectives and very presence of diverse participants. Minneapolis Public Schools is committed to the success of every student in each of our schools and to our mission and vision statements.”*

Equity, inclusion, and valuing diversity must remain a core value for the district, we believe that MPS needs to place greater emphasis on commitment to these beliefs that are embedded at the school and classroom level. Strategies must extend beyond a simple look at school-by-school demographics. The presence of a diverse student body is not evidence of inclusion, if all parts of that student body are not provided opportunity to participate in many of the programs within a school.



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More intentional consideration must take place for the student, family and staff experience within MPS. Do all feel welcome in the school? Are student supports available to ensure that students of any background can succeed? Are the voices of all families well represented in school decisions, not just a vocal and privileged minority? Are hiring practices equitable?

**Self-Evaluation.** We request that the school district perform a mandatory self-examination and assessment of the current equity, diversity and inclusion practices within our schools/learning communities and the district. This self-examination should be performed: for all students in all racial groups and communities including students with disabilities; in all areas of the school (classrooms, hallways, after school programs, etc) and; for all types of programming, from IB programs to Special Education.

As schools and programs are undergoing what may be a difficult and painful self-assessment, it is important to stress the harm that is being done not just to those students being left out of certain programs, but that is being done to the students who are learning without the full benefits of a diverse classroom that would provide them with a richer experience.

Assessments of inclusion must include the voices of all families in the school, not just a vocal and privileged minority. It is critical to understand the perspective of families who have felt excluded in the past.

### Advisory 2020 recommendations - Inclusion and Access

- One measure of the cost effectiveness of a program or decision must be whether it is advances district goals of academic excellence, equity and inclusion. Programs or communities that historically limit access to certain student groups and habitually exclude others must be asked to take corrective action.
- Access should be viewed very broadly, such that schools are encouraged to look beyond their walls to the rich experience in the community outside (e.g. neighborhood groups, social services) for ideas and assistance in ensuring students and their families feel valued.
- Inclusion also means that the rich diversity of the students is reflected in the classroom, school, curriculum and in the teaching staff. Schools should be proactively working to insure their schools reflect the diversity of our community.
- Students need to be the drivers of the way they are learning including: Individualized learning plans, student voice, student-led education, project-based learning, and having curriculum that reflects the students including race/ethnicity, disabilities, etc.
- Based on our conversation with high school students, there is a need for less distractions from other students in class.
- Students have asked for broader access to life skills such as arts and financial literacy in school.
- There is also a greater need for partnerships with local companies with internship possibilities.
- Ethnic studies should be a requirement for graduation.

## Literacy and Curriculum

Early learning and reading at grade level by third grade is essential in student success and a key indicator of being on track to graduating college and career ready. Minnesota’s Reading Well by Third Grade legislation (MN Statute 120B.12) mandates that districts identify students by end of 3rd grade who are not reading at grade level and provide interventions until they are reading at grade level.

In SY18, the 2020 Advisory enlisted panels of elementary teachers (PreK-5), literacy specialists, and high school students from marginalized communities (including students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, students of color and students of advanced learning) to share their personal accounts and expertise related to literacy efforts in MPS. As a result our advisory learned: 1.) teacher prep programs are not preparing our teachers to effectively teach foundational skills aligned to the literacy development needs of our students. 2.) Student representatives informed us that student/adult relationships, academic comprehension and keeping students engaged at their individual proficiency level is extremely important; and that student behaviors that create complex classroom management issues are how students communicate to teachers that school is not meeting their individual needs. 3.) PreK-3 students are entering schools with fewer words than years prior and lacking in foundational reading skills; some with exposure to over 20,000 words less than their peers.

### Advisory 2020 recommendations - Literacy and Curriculum

- MPS must continue to host regular and explicit professional development opportunities for teachers to ensure that they can successfully engage their students in quality and effective instruction leading to improved literacy outcomes for ALL MPS students.
- MPS must ensure that ALL curriculum is of high quality, culturally appropriate, and accelerates the learning of the students in all areas.
- Access to early education and High 5 is an effective intervention and programming should be increased to add locations, delivery models and availability, especially for our neediest learners.
- Develop a metric with the City of Minneapolis and community partners to measure enrollment in high quality early childhood programs.
- Provide support to the community utilizing outside and community-based programs to educate parents/guardians about the importance of early reading literacy and the availability of early education and High 5 programming. *(The 2020 Advisory committee is aware of the district's efforts and acknowledge the Hybrid model referenced on page 8 in response to our 2017 letter.)*
- MPS should utilize our legislative lobbyist to express our concerns about teacher prep programs not educating our teachers how to teach foundational literacy skills



### Graduation / Career and College Readiness

Students should graduate from MPS college and career ready with life skills to navigate a 21<sup>st</sup> century global society. To get there, students need to be engaged in and responsible for their own learning, offered experiences in the real world and guided to think ahead about their future.

Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.125 requires all students beginning no later than 9th grade to have a Personal Learning Plan around several key elements. A student's plan should be looked at as a life plan that includes academic scheduling, career exploration, career and employment-related skills, community partnerships, college access, all forms of postsecondary training, and experiential learning opportunities.

According to legislation, school districts must implement these requirements for all students starting no later than grade 9.

The 2020 Advisory concurs with the value and importance of this section of the World's Best Work Force legislation and believes that MPS students should be engaged in coursework that prepares them for success after high school graduation, includes real-world experiences, and provides them with information and access to multiple post-high school options to further their education or enter directly into the world of work.

### Advisory 2020 recommendations - Graduation / Career and College Readiness

- In our panel, high school students expressed conflict between academic requirements for graduation and the need to work to take care of multi-generational family needs. Students expressed they were consistently encouraged to pursue traditional course-taking options by counselors and to NOT seek alternative assessment pathways or opportunities to acquire the array of credits required by the state and MPS for graduation.
- Students need to be prepared for what happens after high school and exposed to work that matters, so they can envision their future careers. Toward that end, students need 'real life' skills to prepare them for their adult lives (like financial basics, how to find housing, insurance, career exploration, etc...) and real-life experiences outside the classroom.
- Explicit and readily available career exploration and career/college counseling needs to be available to students, so that informed choices can be made during high school re: course choices, as well as development of individual learning plans and post-high school goal setting.
- Coursework needs to be catered to meet both student interest and career needs. All students should have Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Ethnic Studies (ES) Courses. Both CTE and ES should be aligned whenever possible to MPS graduation requirements and state academic standards thus allowing more creative design of the student high school experience and maximizing the limited hours in a school day.



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- Student voice should be more heavily involved in the learning plan, particularly as students approach graduation. To honor diverse perspectives and modes of learning, schools should better utilize: Individualized learning plans, student voice, student-led education, art electives, project-based learning.
- Opportunities to participate in Career & Technical Education should be available to all students, not segregated by region based on a decades-old de-segregation distribution model. Experiential learning partnerships with local industries and community organizations should be leveraged to provide MPS high school students career exploration and foundational skill preparation prior to graduation that includes access to courses related to future workforce needs of the Twin Cities metro (i.e., healthcare, engineering, manufacturing, business, information technology, human services, agriculture)
- Students should be educated on alternative paths to graduation including PSEO, 3-year graduation path (21.5 credits), IB/AP and CTE in order to meet their personal learning goals and pursue post-high school career and/or educational opportunities.

## Relationships and Social and Emotional Learning

From our conversations with high school students invited to meet with our committee as well as based on our experiences as students, parents, staff and community members, the Workforce 2020 Committee members share a strong belief in the importance of relationships between students and staff as a determinant in student success.

The 2020 Advisory believes the district is rightly emphasizing social emotional learning and supports its role in developing positive relationship skills for both students and staff. We also believe resources should be allocated to support this work as an integral component to the district's school improvement plan.

### Advisory 2020 recommendations - Relationships and Social and Emotional Learning

- Staff development opportunities giving teachers tools to improve their relationship building skills—especially ways they can better know their students.
- Creating space amidst the demands on what teachers teach to conduct activities that allow teachers to better know their students and for student to be better understood and heard in the classroom.
- Building-wide experiences for students and staff to engage in quality relationship building with each other and their surrounding community.



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# The 2020 Advisory Committee

Sincerely,

The 2017-2018 MPS WBWF Advisory Committee

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