

Community Impact Grant Project Update McFarland School Board- July 18, 2022

Title: Supporting the Social Emotional Health of K-12 African American Students
Funder: Wisconsin Partnership Program-Community Impact Grant, School of Medicine and Public Health at UW-Madison
Partners: McFarland School District (MSD), Natural Circles of Support (NCOS), and Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER)
Timeline: January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2025

Purpose of the Project: This 5-year project aims to make substantial lasting positive impacts on the social emotional health and academic success of African-American/Black students enrolled in the McFarland School District.

Equity Issue: McFarland School District consistently ranks among the top districts academically in Dane County and in the State of Wisconsin. However, MSD has not successfully created conditions that prevent racialized experiences and disparities for African American students that promote their social emotional wellbeing and academic success.

Community Partner: *Natural Circles of Support* takes an assets-based approach to changing the underlying conditions that result in persistent racialized disparities in schools. They work with schools to surface and unlock the potential for positive change that already exists within school communities. Centering the voices and agency of Black students and building on their strengths and those of their families and teachers, NCOS will work with district leaders to empower staff at each MSD school to lead the necessary change in school systems and culture that will eliminate racial disparities and contribute to the wellbeing and success of all students.

University Partner: The mission of the *Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER)* at UW-Madison is to “improve educational outcomes for diverse student populations, impact education practice positively and foster collaborations among academic disciplines and practitioners.” Dr. Christine Pribbenow serves as the academic partner for this grant and will serve in leadership for overall implementation, research, and evaluation of the grant.

Goals:

- o Lead Student-Agency Centered Practices, such as Mentoring Circles, to give and receive support; develop positive school identities and engagement; take part in collective problem solving; and work together for positive school change.
- o Empower a Staff Leadership Team to guide the deep inquiry process and interpret data; define the focus and the role of NCOS in their district; provide guidance on how to align NCOS with other equity initiatives; guide the implementation and evaluation of NCOS; and connect to the full staff to foster investment and ownership throughout the district.
- o Engage in District-wide Inquiry to highlight the perspectives of students and reach a shared understanding of what contributes to disparities; decide on the initial focus of systems change; form a theory of change to guide decisions and incorporate evaluative feedback; develop a work plan and timeline; and put in key structures and processes to support the work.
- o Develop and implement Seminars and Communities of Practice to build learning communities to collaborate, sustain the co-learning and mutual support among staff and across districts.
- o Engage Families and the Community to form partnerships with the district to improve family-staff communication and connections; understanding of families’ needs by staff; understanding of school practices and policies that disproportionately affect Black/African American students; and develop and participate in common activities in support of student outcomes.

Key Accomplishments as of June 2022

Goal 1: Leading Mentoring Circles for Students

- Mentoring circles for students in grades 3-12
- Prepare for district staff to lead mentoring circles

Goal 2: Empower a Staff Leadership Team

- 3 day summer leadership seminar for administrators
- District equity leadership team, building equity leadership, circles leadership (NCLT)

Goal 3: Engage in District-Wide Inquiry

- Situational analysis and work plans at each school
- Evaluation and research- analyzing district and building data to set goals

Goal 4: Development and Implement Seminars and Communities of Practice

- Participation in the culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning practices training

Goal 5: Engage Families and the Community

- Working with families of students involved in mentoring circles
- Exploring a district-wide parent equity group

What is next: July 2022-June 2023 Memorandum of Agreement

Goal 1: Leading Mentoring Circles for Students

- Continue mentoring circles for students in grades 3-12 and sharing with NCLTs, administration
- Student summit in May of 2023

Goal 2: Empower a Staff Leadership Team

- Continue the district equity leadership, building equity leadership, and circles leadership (NCLT) teams
- 3 communities of practice professional development seminars with equity leadership teams
- NCLT team join student summit in May of 2023
- Administrator collaboration together quarterly and with NCLT monthly

Goal 3: Engage in District-Wide Inquiry

- Continue and expand evaluation and research- analyzing district and building data to set goals and evaluate progress

Goal 4: Development and Implement Seminars and Communities of Practice

- Continue participation in the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning practices training
- 3 communities of practice professional development seminars with equity leadership teams

Goal 5: Engage Families and the Community

- Continue working with families of students involved in mentoring circles
- Develop a community-parent group centered on equity