



2019-20 YEAR-END BOARD REPORT

**WASHTENAW INTERMEDIATE
SCHOOL DISTRICT**
AUGUST 2020





WASHTENAW ISD

STUDENTS FIRST.

MISSION

To promote the continuous improvement of achievement for every student while providing high-quality service to our customers through leadership, innovation, and collaboration.

VISION

To be the leader in empowering, facilitating, and delivering a high-quality, boundary-spanning, educational system that educates all children through an equitable, inclusive, and holistic approach.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dr. Mary Jo Callan
Diane Hockett
R. Stephen Olsen
Dr. Theresa Saunders
Mary Jane Tramontin

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Naomi Norman, Interim Superintendent
Cherie Vannatter, Interim Deputy Superintendent
Brian Marcel, Interim Associate Superintendent



BOARD GOALS

Because we put students first, and consistent with the Education 20/20 plan, the WISD Board of Education has established these goals, adopting a lens of equity, inclusion, and social justice.

BOARD COMMITMENT

Resource allocation, policy, and practice is designed to close the opportunity gap to ensure equitable educational access for all students, with a specific focus on achieving an equitable system for students in poverty, students with disabilities, and students of color.



GOAL #1

Provide leadership for equity and opportunity to ensure coordinated and aligned efforts from birth through college and career with specific attention to underserved students in Washtenaw County.

GOAL #2

Cultivate an organizational culture of equity, inclusion, and social justice through education, engagement, and action.

GOAL #3

Advocate for policies that support equity and inclusion on the local, state, and national levels.



WASHTENAW ISD

STUDENTS FIRST.

A LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

The 2019-2020 school year was filled with immense growth and change for us at the Washtenaw Intermediate School District, as well as for our local school community and our country. In the first half of the school year, our community supported a bond proposal to rebuild and renovate High Point School, which will ensure students with the most significant needs will one-day have a high-quality facility to learn in like their peers across the county – an exciting step towards becoming a more equitable and inclusive district! Passage of the bond proposal also meant our WISD team would take on significant work over the coming years in order to ensure a smooth transition to a temporary facility for students and staff while also engaging in a collaborative process that listens to the voices of students, families, staff and the community throughout the project's development.

The second half of the school year brought new and unique challenges. In February, overt incidents of racism within one of our constituent districts shook our entire county and became the spotlight of a national conversation on racism in schools. The WISD and the Washtenaw Superintendents' Association stood together to recognize that racism exists in each one of our communities, yet it is our collective responsibility to actively nurture anti-racism so every student feels welcomed, loved, and valued in our schools.

In March, our country and others across the world grappled with slowing the spread of a novel coronavirus, COVID-19. Washtenaw County was the first community to collectively close our school buildings and transition to remote instruction in response to the first cases of COVID-19 in our state so we could do our part to protect the health of our students and families.

As we navigated the global pandemic, we then watched in horror as George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor were unjustly murdered. Communities across the country organized to protest systemic racial injustices, even as COVID-19 disproportionately impacted communities of color, including across Washtenaw County.

In the midst of an ever-changing landscape, we witnessed our WISD team rise and lead in thoughtful, bold ways. We challenged ourselves to keep equity, inclusion, and social justice at the center of each and every shift we made to better support our students, families and community. Our team worked day and night to meet both the educational and basic needs of students and families, supported the mental health and well-being of students, families, and each other, and engaged in courageous conversations about race and anti-racism as a district, as a school community, and as an education system.

This year tested us in ways that we never could have imagined, yet it also strengthened our resolve as we continue striving for a more racially and socially just future. We found that our WISD family is truly that – a family that we can turn to and lean on during our most difficult days and one that we celebrate with when our teamwork, dedication, and perseverance all pay off in service of our students and families. Thank you to our Board of Education, our WISD team, and to our students and families for being with us throughout our most memorable year yet.



Interim Superintendent
Washtenaw Intermediate School District



WASHTENAW ISD

STUDENTS FIRST.

ADAPTING TO COVID-19: AT A GLANCE

Data from March 12-June 30, 2020

38,200+ MEALS DELIVERED TO FAMILIES

4,550 TECH DEVICES DISTRIBUTED TO YCS & LINCOLN STUDENTS AND STAFF

2,100+ CLEANING SUPPLY BAGS DELIVERED TO FAMILIES

2,462 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SLOTS FILLED



1,100+ HEALTH SCREENER SUBMISSION FOR WISD FACILITY ACCESS

78K VIEWS OF WISD COVID-RELATED FACEBOOK UPDATES

572 HANDLE WITH CARE NOTICES IMPACTING 861 STUDENTS

530 RESPONSES TO WEEKLY STAFF WELLNESS SURVEYS



106 BOXES OF DIAPERS DELIVERED TO EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILIES

98% EARLY HEAD START FAMILIES VIRTUALLY CONNECTED WITH HOME VISITORS WEEKLY

4 FAMILIES AVERTED HOMELESSNESS FOR 4-6 WEEKS BECAUSE OF EPHY

226 YCS FAMILIES RECEIVED FREE INTERNET VIA WISD, YCS & EMU PARTNERSHIP

GOAL 1:

Provide leadership for equity and opportunity to ensure coordinated and aligned efforts from birth through college and career with specific attention to underserved and underperforming students in Washtenaw County.

ASSESSMENT LITERACY

In addition to moving Assessment Literacy network meetings and the summer series online and offering additional check-in meetings with teachers, WISD also offered an extra series of the book study for *Grading for Equity*. New this summer, a full-day session on *Socially Just Assessment and Grading* was designed to look at the ways that our personal and collective beliefs, behaviors, practices, and policies with grading and assessment uphold unjust cultures and systems. That session blends the work of the Assessment Literacy Network with the work of Justice Leaders, as well as learning from Culturally Relevant Teaching and Critical Consciousness.

ED 20/20 INSTRUCTION ACTION TEAMS

During the first week of school closure, instructional leaders from around the county met to determine how they would frame their work together during the pandemic particularly around the continuity of learning. They identified a shared purpose, a core set of values, and goals to guide the county efforts as we navigated forward. They also set in motion a number of action teams to facilitate their work together. The shared purpose and values states:

“Our *shared purpose* embraces the concept that all students are our students and we must ensure equity and inclusion for all, within and across districts. To deliver this *shared purpose* with transparency, authenticity and intentionality, we all embrace the following core beliefs, now and in the future:

- **Equity and Inclusion for All:** We work within and across districts and recognize that all kids are our kids.
- **Stronger Together:** We work as a community, together, in ways that unite us.
- **Belonging:** We build a system that sustains a sense of belonging for children and adults.
- **Connected:** We strengthen our human connections, both to deepen connections with ourselves and, with generosity, to help others.
- **Student Centered Learning:** We support students in developing a love for learning by focusing on the whole child and ensuring opportunities for learning for each student.
- **Creativity:** We persist, innovate and use a culture of creativity to develop new approaches to learning.
- **Community and Love:** We support one another, are generous, and build relationships of trust.”

MENTAL HEALTH & DISTRICT CRISIS LEADERSHIP ACTION TEAM

WISD hosted four Zoom sessions with district crisis leads between April and June reaching over 50 attendees each session. The sessions provided multiple resources, connections, and supports:

- Provided COVID-19 mini-CBT sessions and materials to use with youth and families;
- Distributed Transforming Research into Action to Improve the Lives of Students (TRAILS) self-care materials for school staff, including rolling out the new TRAILS social emotional learning curriculum for district use and provided space for district networking and resource sharing sessions;
- Connected to free trauma training through Starr Commonwealth and overviewed Youth Mental Health First Aid and free resources and materials from Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH);
- Shared WISD staff wellness action items and created a non-communicative student & family process per districts requests;
- Redesigned work around chronic absenteeism to partner with Washtenaw County Juvenile Court to outreach to needed families;
- Developed mental health landing webpage highlighting all available resources and organizing by staff function and need;

- Coordinated Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructor training to support FY21 and also secured funding from CMH for training materials.

STUDY OF EARLY LITERACY (SOEL) & INQUIRY INTO DISCIPLINARY LITERACY AND LEARNING (IDLL)

As with other action teams and teacher networks, the Study of Early Literacy (SOEL) and the Inquiry into Disciplinary Literacy and Learning (IDLL) transitioned to virtual meetings. WISD transitioned to twice weekly check-in meetings on Zoom for one hour for SOEL and IDLL teachers and coaches to come together and talk from March 17 to the end of the school year in June. This often served as mental and emotional support of each other during a time when no one knew what changes await us, as well as their thoughts on student engagement and the equity gaps that had widened immediately with some students not having devices or internet access, and later food and other supplies. Meetings typically had a range of 3-6 teachers each time, some regularly attending and some off and on. The school year rounded out with final network meetings for [SOEL](#) and [IDLL](#) where teachers shared their learning from book studies and teacher action research. We had about 12-15 in each network attend.

The “[Let’s Talk Literacy- A Virtual Mini EdCamp](#)” was also created in collaboration with 826michigan and the EMU Office of Campus and Community Writing. The topics came out of teacher and coach interests (Equity and literacy in virtual spaces, writing and reading workshop in virtual spaces, enlisting adult writing support in virtual spaces). We had approximately 25-40 in each session and ran this a total of four times in May and June.

The Diverse Lending Library also transitioned to meet the needs of teachers during COVID-19. The Diverse Lending Library went digital where possible and “porch pick-up” was offered for books, both of which were utilized by teachers.

RESOURCES ACTION TEAM

WISD’s Melissa Brooks-Yip of the Achievement Initiatives department co-led this group with Karensa Smith in Lincoln Consolidated School and Sue McCarty in Ypsilanti Community Schools. This team brought together many diverse voices across the county from the districts, including administrators, human resources, and communication staff, to talk about what common resources could be put together and shared across the county. In the time we met, the group compiled summer resources for learning and summer food distribution, [now available here](#). The group plans to continue meeting, but will need to decide what our focus is moving forward into the school year and how to sustain the team’s work.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTION TEAM

The Achievement Initiatives team surveyed 696 educators across Washtenaw County to assess what professional learning (PL) needs they had during the COVID19 pandemic and also their willingness to help curate lessons and content if needed. With representatives from almost all school districts, the team assessed how remote education was going in the spring and created shared definitions around what remote engagement and assessment look like. A professional learning inventory spreadsheet was created with the hopes that districts will open up PL across the county and also get a sense of what school districts were already offering in terms of PL now and in the future. This group plans to continue meeting next school year. There was a sense of shared purpose around the PL needs, particularly if school districts continue remote teaching and learning.

WASHTENAW MY BROTHER’S KEEPER (WMBK)

Washtenaw My Brother’s Keeper (WMBK) continued holding #50Strong Connecting Breakfasts during the second Saturday of each month, alternating between the former Willow Run High School and Ann Arbor’s Peace Neighborhood Center, eventually including a transition to virtual breakfasts. ([See a virtual breakfast recording here](#).) Averaging approximately 45 attendees the six months prior to COVID-19 and then averaging about 100 participants via Zoom and Facebook Live, about 1/3 of the #50Strong Breakfast participants are consistently high school age or younger.

“I enjoy the brotherhood.”

“I enjoy the pancakes and the fellowship because I don’t eat much at home.”

“I enjoy sharing and listening.”

“I enjoy talking and learning and being at the breakfasts because its spiritual.”

WMBK also began establishing relationships with schools using a Boys Speaker Series as part of their [100-Day Challenges](#). One full 8-week session concluded prior to the pandemic at Scarlett Middle School, while Ypsilanti Community Middle School and ACCE in Ypsilanti made it two weeks and one week, respectively, into the series. Clague Middle School in Ann Arbor has yet to begin. Other successes as part of the 100-Day Challenges included attending monthly community events and partnering with Black Men Read to assign 11 volunteers to read at local elementary schools to build relationships.



Pictured above: #50Strong WMBK virtual breakfast held on April 11, 2020

JUSTICE LEADERS

The Justice Leaders Core Course, Advanced Course and Systems Course all transitioned to a fully virtual format during remote working and schooling. Because of the local racial issues, as well as the national movement for systemic racial justice, enrollment for the courses has been very strong. For the first time, WISD hosted Justice Leaders sessions all summer. Due to the addition of 10 more Justice Leaders courses during COVID-19, WISD saw just as many people attend Justice Leaders this year as we have the last five years combined.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

WISD continued deepening our relationship with Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH) to grow and support a number of partnership initiatives:

- **Caring 4 Students:** Added 11 staff from districts to staff pool list and provided training on Medicaid reimbursement process for general education students.
- **CMH Anti-Stigma Mini Grants:** Received funding from CMH to support anti-stigma campaigns in high schools across the county through provision of grants.
- **31N Expansion of mental health services:** Employed social worker to meet with and assess general education students in Ypsilanti, Lincoln, Milan, and Saline.
- **Handle with Care:**
 - Routed 572 Handle with Care notices affecting 861 students from local law enforcement to school districts, PSAs and private schools.
 - Added a field for students' additional needs while school buildings are closed and followed up on needs such as mental health and technology support.

- Encouraged law enforcement to continue submitting notices during the pandemic as school staff were still in contact with students.
- **Social Emotional Learning Network:** Continued to meet and began planning for re-entry examining work and best practices of other LEAs, including Ferndale Public Schools.

MOM POWER

WISD coordinated a Mom Power support group for eight low-income mothers who reside in Washtenaw County and have at least one child under the age of six. The group held sessions at the Ypsilanti District Library and included facilitators from community partners: Child Care Network, Community Mental Health, and the Ypsilanti District Library.

Mom Power included childcare and a meal each week from January until the pandemic hit in mid-March, which then shifted to developing a virtual model via Zoom in partnership with Michigan Medicine. Virtual sessions will take place July-August 2020 to re-engage mothers with young children who were vulnerable to social isolation during the pandemic.

TRUSTED PARENT ADVISORS

The Trusted Parent Advisors, in conjunction with the Adequate Prenatal Care Action Team, surveyed 100 women to understand why each year 28% of Washtenaw County women do not receive adequate prenatal care. The qualitative survey revealed a disproportionate number of women of color who reported that their questions and concerns were not addressed by their medical providers and they often felt disrespected and dismissed. The Trusted Parent Advisors are preparing a presentation about the survey for the now virtual statewide Maternal, Infant Health Summit.



(Pictured right: WISD Trusted Parent Advisor Najma Treadwell is featured in Concentrate's article, "[Resources are available for Ypsi families struggling to teach and feed kids during school closures.](#)"

PRESCHOOL SUPPORT AND SUMMER HEAD START SERVICES

With all Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) and Head Start classroom-based programs transitioning to virtual classrooms, WISD's Preschool team immediately transitioned to supporting classroom teaching teams with strategies, professional development, and guidance to best support three and four-year-olds and their families in a virtual learning environment. Supports included:

- Many forms and releases parents must provide to preschool partners were migrated to Script forms so parents can electronically submit and sign confidential documents securely, with the support of WISD's Technology department.
- WISD allocated CARES Act Head Start funds to provide summer Head Start opportunities to children enrolled in Head Start for the 2019-20 school year and who will be transitioning to kindergarten in the Fall. With our Head Start delegate districts overwhelmed with planning for the fall, WISD proposed operating the summer program directly from the ISD. In addition to the existing WISD team, eight classroom teachers and associate teachers were hired for the summer. This innovative solution works to mitigate some of the instructional time lost during the pandemic.
 - **Success!** 63 Head Start families enrolled for continued virtual instruction and support throughout the summer. Head Start Summer Camp includes summer field trips plus activities each Friday at Parkridge Park. Children participate in outdoor activities with their teachers while parents participate in parent cafes led by the Trusted Parent Advisors, all while receiving a healthy snack, a kit for learning at home with activities, and direct access to community partner organizations including Ypsilanti Community Schools and Food Gatherers Summer Food Program.

ALT+ SHIFT

In the fall of 2019, High Point and Local-Based classroom staff, along with staff from the Achievement Initiatives team, began working with Alt+ Shift, a collaborative within the Michigan Department of Education. In support of these goals, the WISD staff concentrated on the “Foundations of Math: Teaching Students with Significant Disabilities” course. This course focuses on the components of math and includes research and classroom video specific to learners with significant disabilities and complex communication needs. The staff has been implementing math strategies unique to their students in their classrooms and has noticed progress in our students’ math skills. This training will continue for the 2020-21 school year and will expand to include teachers at Progress Park.

RESPONSIVE TEACHING INSTITUTE

The Responsive Teaching Institute continued this school year; however, due to the pandemic, the conference was revamped to a virtual model. From April through June 2020, Washtenaw educators had the opportunity to participate in eight different virtual sessions. Presenters this year included: Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, Dr. Terry Flenbaugh, Dr. Aris Winger, and Dr. Debi Khanabis. Each virtual session had between 25-40 people attending. The institute concluded with a virtual panel discussion with all of the presenters and was moderated by WISD Justice Leaders Facilitator, Gregory Myers. Due to the masterful facilitation of the presenters and the accessibility of the online format, the virtual institute received extremely positive reviews from participants.

DEVELOPING FLUID LEARNING CONTINUITY WITH A BLENDED APPROACH

WISD’s Achievement Initiatives department developed the Developing Fluid Learning Continuity with a Blended Approach synchronous and collaborative professional development offering focused on strategies and systems that support school districts in addressing challenges in the post-pandemic blended learning environment. This body of work currently resides in a Google Classroom course as a resource for teachers and leaders to continue to use. Participants developed competencies in areas such as preparing for blending learning, addressing issues of inequity, selecting technology tools, creating systematic approaches to blending learning, and preparing teachers for fluid continuity in their blending learning.

ESTABLISHING A VIRTUAL NGSX MI FACILITATOR PATHWAY

Washtenaw ISD took on the fiscal agent role for the Next Generation Science Standards professional development grant earlier this year. This statewide grant supports instructional practice for science in grades K-12. To address COVID-19, WISD supported the piloting of a virtual learning pathway dedicated to building Michigan's facilitator capacity to lead NGSX teacher study groups. The shift to a virtual network was made to respond to the diverse needs that were emerging as the pandemic unfolded. It also helps to address issues of equitable access to the support system for districts that struggle to align time and financial resources for this work. Having NGSX state and district facilitators prepared to lead NGSX study groups is a major step in ensuring that school communities have the professional development capacity they need to support teachers.

YOUTH CENTER PROGRAM CHANGES

While WISD services are contracted for students *in* the Youth Center, the team provided educational services and social work support to students exited from the building, as well as students on probation who were not well connected to local districts. As of July 27, 2020, the team has served 46 students. During the pandemic, services continued for youth in the Youth Center via coordination with the County utilizing tools such as Zoom and Edgenuity. During the pandemic:

- While Washtenaw County aimed to have as few young people as possible in the building, there continued to be between at least one and as many as six students at any given time. Initially due to low number of students, and county budget challenges, summer school programming was nearly cancelled.
 - **Success!** The team worked with the County, WISD, team members, and the Federation to offer a reduced cost and schedule summer school, as well as provide follow up supports for students once they leave the Youth Center.
- The team organized weekly juvenile case conferencing with court administrators to document and connect students and provide food, housing, technology, and social support.

- The team used and continues to use additional time to write updated policies, procedures, handbooks and build socially just curriculum, specifically designed for the identity development and experiences of our students.

JAIL PROGRAM CHANGES

The jail team seamlessly transitioned their students from face-to-face learning to correspondence learning by:

- Providing customized correspondence learning for our special education students.
- Partnering with Washtenaw Literacy to engage more students and to offer additional literacy support to our low-level learners and special education students.
- Adapting programming to continue offering students re-entry transition support with a focus on self-efficacy.

Additional changes included actively developing a new process in alignment with the Transition from Jail to Community matrix and in the EISJ framework, for all individuals incarcerated at the jail including those with learning barriers to have increased access to in-house and post-release programming.

VIRTUAL FREEDOM SCHOOL

WISD piloted its first Virtual Freedom School (VFS) initiative at Lincoln High School and Ypsilanti Community High School. VFC sought to use social justice issues and current events as springboards for engaging students in Mathematics and English Language Arts. VFS participants explored current events such as the Black Lives Matter Movement and COVID-19, as well as reviewed historical injustices and inequalities to better understand current issues. The curriculum developed by WISD team members Jennifer Banks and Melissa Brooks-Yip incorporated community members as co-teachers. Community members from across Washtenaw County were eager to participate and share their knowledge. The community members included Trevor Stone (Riverside Art Center), 826 Michigan, Dr. Cathy Fleischer (EMU), Matt Siegfried (Ypsilanti Historian), Shamar Herron (Michigan Works Southeast), and Katie Bounds (Southfield Police Department), as well as WISD team members Jamall Bufford, Gregory Myers, and Janae Townsend. There were 12 students enrolled in the course at Lincoln High School and five students enrolled at Ypsilanti Community High School and two teachers from each building also participated. This work will inform professional learning for teachers in the upcoming year and there are also plans to continue this work in both districts next year.

This effort “holds the potential to set the conditions for elevating the genius of students we consistently undervalue in our education system while making evident the teaching practices that perpetuate that undervaluing. Making these instructional practices evident is key to being able to address them and then counter those practices with healthy and sustainable pedagogy.”

-Janae Townsend, Guest Participant & WISD Supervisor

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

This year, social emotional learning (SEL) transitioned to coalition-building around a countywide definition of transformative SEL. WISD held four quarterly workshops with approximately 30-40 attendees at each session. In January, teams assessed their transformative SEL readiness and we also had representatives of overlapping mental health initiatives including restorative practices, mindfulness, and TRAILS anxiety and depression work. In the spring, the group transitioned to two workshops focused on transformative SEL in the remote environment and how best to address SEL needs in light of COVID-19.

GENERAL SUPERVISION GRANT: GRADUATION

Our priority area for the General Supervision grant was “graduation for students with disabilities.” While we have been making progress in this area, our WISD data for 2018-19 indicated five local districts and one public school academy did not meet the state target of 80% or greater graduation rates for students with disabilities. Our small workgroup, with representatives from the WISD, local school districts and parents will continue to meet monthly and examined data entry, drop-out rates, Personal Curriculums and discipline data in regard to graduation.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL DISTRICTS

WISD Technology provided training and support for instructional and administrative staff in various remote learning tools and systems including Zoom, Google Classroom Basics, Supporting All Learners, Videocasting, Google Meet, PowerSchool Basics, PowerSchool Special Programs contact and service logs.

- **Success!** A total of 336 local district seats were utilized in April as staff across the county worked tirelessly to swiftly shift to remote teaching and learning.

LOCAL LEA TECHNOLOGY TEAM EFFORTS

At the start of the school shutdowns, the LEA Technology team met districts' needs to deploy devices to their students to provide at-home and online enrichment instruction. With the help of several volunteers and local district departments, we managed to get over 4,550 devices out to staff and students combined for Lincoln and Ypsilanti. This included:

- Lincoln Consolidated Schools with about 1,500 devices for students (all grades) and 200 devices for staff.
- YCS with about 2,600 student devices (all grades) and 250 devices for staff.
- In conjunction with Eastern Michigan University, YCS and the LEA Technology team were able to implement an at-home internet initiative to provide families and students in need of internet services for six months at home with no-cost to the family. The current sponsored number of families is 226.



The Technology team also managed the integration of Countywide Next Generation Firewall Intrusion Prevention System for all of our local WISD MISEN connected school districts, as well as installing the High Point live stream and stop motion camera to record the demolition of the current High Point building and construction of the new High Point building.

COMMUNITY-BASED COVID-19 RELIEF AND SUPPORT

Community-based work grew during the second half of the school year and then shifted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the needs of our students, families, and community members.

The following subsections represent critical community relief and support provided by our food service delivery, Home Visiting, Trusted Parent Advisors, Jail Program, and WMBK teams.

FOOD DELIVERY FOR WISD FAMILIES

WISD staff reached out to all families enrolled in WISD programs or receiving other WISD supports to offer home food delivery services, in partnership with Dexter Food Services, during the COVID-19 school building closure. The Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) provided three vehicles and six officers to partner with our staff to distribute 16,970 meals between March and June, with additional food delivery continuing through August 14, 2020. The donation of WCSO vehicles and staff time was invaluable to help support our families with food insecurity.



HOME VISITORS

The Early Head Start Home Visiting program transitioned to providing virtual services in mid-March as all "in-person" home visits were suspended. In addition to providing virtual services, Early Head Start team members worked to provide families with basic supplies for their infants including diapers, wipes, and formula, and also connect them with WISD's food delivery system.

- 98% of Early Head Start families were receiving weekly contacts by April from their home visitors with the majority of families transitioning to virtual home visits. With the assistance of WISD Technology department, iPads and wifi hot spots were provided to families who needed support.
 - **Success!** “Virtual” home visits attendance rates among families improved since March.
- By June, all 70 Early Head Start children had also received a comprehensive kit of age appropriate materials for parents to utilize at home with their children including during virtual home visits. The kits included approximately \$90 of manipulatives, sensory materials, books, puzzles, soft toys, crayons, and craft supplies.
- Early Head Start utilized CARES Act funding that WISD received from the Office of Head Start to purchase additional supplies and materials for families.

A similar transition took place for Early On and Early Intervention families with the move to “virtual” home visits beginning in March. By May, 290 Early Intervention families had agreed to receive their IFSP services virtually.

- All Early On/Early Intervention staff were offered iPads and other technology if they needed it and every family also received an age appropriate comprehensive kit of materials for parents and children to use during virtual home visits.
- 19 Early Intervention children who turned 3 years old during COVID-19 have continued to receive services from WISD service providers. Under typical circumstances, these children transition to their local school district at age three in order to receive services under an IEP. An agreement was reached with the county’s LEAs to delay transitions during the early months of the pandemic to minimize the impact on families and children.



TRUSTED PARENT ADVISORS

WISD’s Trusted Parent Advisors continued to work in critical communities during COVID-19 school building closure. They were essential in helping Ypsilanti families receive food, secure technology, internet and school materials from their home districts, including:

- Delivering +16,000 meals to 77 families, impacting 185 children, primarily in the Sycamore Meadows/Danbury Green and Forrest Knoll communities and families referred from Ypsilanti Community Schools.
- Delivering 130 bags of cleaning supplies to families at Forrest Knoll, 55 bags of cleaning supplies to families in Sycamore Meadows and assisting with the community distribution sites at Peace Neighborhood and the New West Willow Neighborhood Association.
- Delivering 106 boxes of diapers to Early Head Start families and other families in the community through a pandemic grant from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation (AAACF) and the Education Project.
- Creating kits for children to honor Ramadan and to help parents engage their children during days of fasting.
- Securing a fresh produce distribution at Forrest Knoll and Sycamore Meadows and a new Summer Food Program site at Forrest Knoll.

JAIL EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Jail Education team worked diligently to connect students and families currently and formerly receiving jail education and truancy services to basic needs and health and safety items:

- Delivered a total of 5,292 meals to 16 families and 27 children between March 16 and June 25.
- Worked with Washtenaw County to secure and deliver cleaning supplies to 46 families in the Ypsilanti and Whitmore Lake Communities.

EDUCATION PROJECT FOR HOMELESS YOUTH (EPHY)

The Education Project for Homeless Youth (EPHY) team quickly pivoted to adjust services to better suit homeless family needs during the COVID-19 crisis. Prior to closing the office, staff prepared large quantities of hygienic items, including sanitizer, wipes, and available gift cards, and prepared an alternate distribution location in partnership with Ozone House.

- With shelters full at the onset of COVID-19, four families received 4-6 weeks of hotel support. The longer timeframe for support kept them from having to stay in unsafe conditions and/or risk exposure from doubling up.
- Partnered with the Early Childhood department to provide diapers, wipes, and baby food to at-risk families, easing financial strain on those families. This was done using the funding provided by the Knight Foundation with their permission.
- Continued to provide supports to stabilize families and process new referrals using new techniques such as shipping items to families.
- Worked with the Technology department to create a digital referral process.
- Helped identify families who were to receive Pandemic-EBT benefits, but who had relocated since the last count day (and, subsequently, last known address).
- Regularly assessed needs of students and families through meetings with Liaisons.
- Worked with Community and School Partnerships team to train additional staff to access resources available through Barrier Busters

WASHTENAW MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

WMBK worked to slow the curve in communities of color by leading a public safety campaign encouraging community members to practice social distancing, wear masks, and follow other health and safety guidelines.

As featured in [The Ann Arbor News](#) and the [Lucy Ann Lance Show](#), WMBK distributed over 1,900 supply bags that included bleach, laundry detergent, Pinesol, Palmolive, masks, gloves, paper products, sponges and soap over the course of 6 weeks to the following communities:



- Sugarbrook, Ypsilanti (250 bags delivered)
- West Willow, Ypsilanti (1,070)
- Peace Neighborhood, Ann Arbor (270)
- Forrest Knoll, Ypsilanti (30 delivered)
- Cheney Academy, Ypsilanti (60)
- Carrot Way, Ann Arbor (5 delivered)
- UNIFIED HIV Health, Ypsilanti (100)
- Mutual Aid Community Group, Ypsilanti (40)
- Senior citizens near Ecorse, Ypsilanti (20)
- Manchester Resource Center (75)

GOAL 2:

Cultivate an organizational culture of equity, inclusion, and social justice through education, engagement and action.

WISD ANTI-RACISM COMMITMENT

In light incidents of overt racism in our community and around our country, and in light of our organizational commitment to equity, inclusion, and social justice, the WISD executive administration team wrote a joint letter outlining our continued and explicit leadership commitment to racial equity for our organization:

- Empathetically listening to understand our students, families, staff and community.
- Providing spaces where we can listen to, explore, and raise up perspectives and experiences different from our own.
- Learning and reflecting on our own biases and privileges, and working to address them.
- Taking a stand against racism by dismantling oppressive policies and practices, which have been institutionalized throughout our nation's history and in systems including education.
- Empowering students to challenge injustice and inequity through meaningful actions.

CONTINUOUS & CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

Communication with WISD staff and families on the development of the novel coronavirus began on February 27, 2020, and in partnership with the Washtenaw County Health Department. As a novel virus, sharing timely information as it became available was important in ensuring staff and families had the knowledge they needed to make informed decisions about how to stay healthy and safe. As the pandemic evolved, communications to staff, families, and the community took many forms:

- 12 formal staff and family letters were sent with critical updates related to COVID-19 health and safety information, school closures, Continuity of Learning, and emergency childcare.
- Every day between March 19 and May 15, 2020, the Communications and Superintendent offices, with support from the WISD Executive Administration team, wrote and sent "Daily Update" staff emails, ultimately totaling 85 pages of information. Daily Updates sought to guarantee staff received timely, factual updates on COVID-19 case numbers, local, state and national policy changes, technology tips, budget information, internal process changes, wellness opportunities, and district successes.
- The Communications and Technology departments launched a WISD COVID-19 webpage to compile WISD, LEA, and community-based information related to COVID-19, including resources and supports to meet basic needs.
- 34 School Messenger communications were sent to parents and/or WISD staff between March 12 and June 30, 2020, with COVID-19-related updates, which allowed the district to simultaneously send phone calls, emails, and text messages to families and staff.
- 45 Facebook posts between March 12-May 26, 2020 specifically related to COVID-19 had over 78,000 impressions, or views, on Facebook news feeds.
- Virtual "Coffee Chats" (pictured to the right) regularly engaged 80-120 WISD staff on a weekly basis during an informal opportunity for staff to meet others from across the district, connect socially in small groups, listen to updates from district administration, and directly ask questions of the Superintendent and other administrators. This helped prevent social isolation, built relationships across the district, and gave staff the opportunity to learn about leadership decisions in a timely manner.



CENTERING HEALTH & SAFETY WHILE MAINTAINING ESSENTIAL OPERATIONS

WISD was actively striving to keep the health and safety of students, families, staff and the community at the center of all planning and decision-making. As the first county in Michigan to collectively decide to close school buildings in order to keep our community safe, WISD modeled leadership during challenging times to our staff, families and community.

As the pandemic impacted our state and as businesses were required to identify “essential staff,” WISD identified our Facilities/Operations staff, Technology staff, and Business and HR staff as essential, in addition to our administrative Pandemic Response Team (PRT). Various systems and internal controls were updated to accommodate general staff and essential workers attempting to work remotely. However, essential staff had to establish schedules and pivot points as to when they would need to be on-site to continue operations of the district and the local districts we support.

The administration created a Building Access Protocol document and developed a health screening tool for employees to complete, which met the guidelines set by the Washtenaw County Health Department. As of June 30, 2020, there were 1,100+ submissions for access by individuals to WISD facilities.

As each Executive Order was issued by the Governor, the administrative team reviewed each one to determine the impact on WISD. While some impacted the educational service delivery of our organization, others impacted us because we were an employer in the state with employees, such as our essential workers, needing to be on-site at a physical location. In addition, federal legislation was issued, primarily the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which expanded the Family and Medical Leave Act, or FMLA (EFMLA) and established Emergency Paid Sick Leave.

Lastly, WISD administration and the Board of Education took swift action to temporarily guarantee pay to all WISD staff as the initial weeks of the pandemic unfolded and the state and country began to see record-breaking furloughs and layoffs. This decision was made with equity, inclusion, and social justice at the forefront and with understanding that failure to act would have disproportionately impacted staff of color and staff in hourly positions. Eventually, Governor Whitmer’s Executive Orders required schools to continue this practice through the end of the 2019-20 school year.

TRANSITIONING TO REMOTE WORKING & LEARNING

The Technology, Communications, and Special Education departments worked together to assess existing access to technology for staff and students. A variety of communication methods were utilized via School Messenger that allowed the district to connect with and hear from staff and families using email and phone surveys. Ultimately, multiple Chromebooks and hotspot devices were distributed to students and staff for instructional learning:

- **Student/Staff Device Sanitization Process:** Ensured the safe prep and delivery of equipment to staff and students, including procurement of PPE for staff and device packaging, sanitization processes for specific device types, coordination with ATAC Lab, and pick-up/drop-off instructions for parents and staff.
- **Student Device Deployment:** Identified students in need of equipment for remote learning, facilitated configuration and deployment of devices with staff, parents, and community partnerships. Included:
 - Coordination per program supervisor and with Communications
 - Program-specific instructions for parents communicated via phone/email/text
 - Online resources for parents
- **Staff Device Deployment/VPN Access:** Collected, reimaged, and deployed laptops w/VPN access to staff to facilitate remote work. Required collaboration between Technology, Event Services, Special Education, Manchester, and Milan to ensure our staff had access to the necessary number of devices

- **Desktop Team Onsite Schedule/Coordination:** Developed a routine on-site schedule for desktop team to ensure reliable and timely accessibility for staff, student, and parent support.
- **Parent Helpdesk Line Activation:** Dedicated phone line for parents to call for equipment support from our Technology department staff.

The Technology department led the implementation of new systems to accommodate the remote work and the process during which staff would transition between working remotely and on-site:

- **Fax2Mail Conversion:** Converted all buildings and programs to e-fax lines to ensure confidential, HIPAA/FERPA-compliant faxing capabilities for continuation of services during remote work.
- **ScriptApp:** Forms created to allow for remote work and approval workflows: development of online workflows to ensure continuation of standard processes, procedures, and services within the WISD, including HR, Technology, Medicaid, Finance, Early Childhood, etc., workflows.
- **Square Appointment Booking Online Scheduling App:** Online tool to assist parents and staff in scheduling device pick up and drop off.
- Cisco IP Communicator Implementation.
- Voicemail to email forwarding for all administration and secretarial staff.
- **PaperCut Configuration and Installation:** Badge-swipe login tool installed on TLC building copiers. Reduces the need to touch high-traffic areas of the copiers and allows for automatic monthly usage reports emailed to Business Office.
- WISD Call Emulation from a WISD phone number.
- **Zoom and Google Hangouts:** Remote connectivity application configuration, implementation, and training for all WISD Staff.
- **Zoom Licensing:** Conversion of staff zoom licensure to zoom education accounts, which included unlimited attendees and minutes, and zoom training sessions for staff.
- Wireless Broadcast extension into TLC, High Point East, and WIMA/WIHI parking lots to provide Internet access to WISD community.

Throughout the Stay at Home Executive Order, the Technology department saw a 20% increase in technology requests during remote working (compared to the 2019 Spring season) to support distance learning and staff.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

INSTRUCTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR WISD STAFF

The WISD Technology department provided training and support for instructional and administrative staff in various remote learning tools and systems including Zoom, Google Classroom Basics, Supporting All Learners, Videocasting, Google Meet, PowerSchool Basics, PowerSchool Special Programs contact and service logs. In all, a total of 2,126 seats were utilized by WISD staff in April and May.

The Technology department also created support videos for staff and parents such as Loom video tips and handouts on a blog, as well as supported the creation of a YCS Distance Learning Guide.

STAFF HEALTH & WELLNESS

In order to support staff during the pandemic, a small work team created weekly staff wellness surveys to provide an opportunity to gather input on their needs and check in on their well-being to direct our leadership responses. Themes emerged around health and well-being and we were able to use the Coffee Chat time to address issues that were surfacing. We were also able to provide direct, one-on-one support to employees who asked directly for someone to reach out to them to work through their individual needs. Staff shared how overwhelming the pandemic felt for them and also how appreciative they were that the district cared about their mental health and well-being during a time of uncertainty:

"Thanks for reaching out and caring about our mental and emotional health."

"Thank you so much for this offer of support. I am fortunate to have a "village" in my friends, neighbors, and family...remotely, of course. I appreciate this outreach and advocacy from my special work place. Gratitude."

"I miss my students and friends within the agency, but this too shall pass! Zoom meetings and coffee chats are great! Thank you to all admin for holding us all together, and for everyone else part of the glue."

"I'm very thankful for the support and trust of the WISD thus far. Thank you."

Another early area that emerged as a need from staff were opportunities for connection and space to process all that was occurring in the world during this time. The Technology and Community and School Partnerships departments created a COVID-19 hotline that staff and families could utilize, and then sought additional supports for staff. By leveraging the talents of our WISD staff, several opportunities were created for regular connection that included mindfulness and meditation, Zumba, yoga, virtual gaming and a working parents networking group.



Pictured above: Weekly self-care opportunities provided to staff (left) and JaVon Jason from the Early Childhood department leads a Zumba exercise during the wellness opening of a Coffee Chat.

STUDENT PROGRAM SUPPORT

WISD staff worked diligently to connect with students and families across all WISD programs, including High Point, Progress Park, Red Oak, our Young Adult classrooms, and Local-Based and EI Continuum classrooms, when the pandemic forced the transition to a virtual environment. WISD team members rapidly pivoted to ensure instructional, ancillary, and social emotional supports and services were provided, as well as supporting technical shifts, such as:

- Utilizing a variety of methods to connect with students and families, including Zoom, Google Classroom, phone calls, and text messages.
- Continued providing special classes like [music with "Music Mike."](#)
- Continuation of virtual education for Extended School Year (ESY).
- Delivered yard signs and held physically distant graduation celebrations for graduates. *(Pictured below.)*
- Attendance Calendar adjustment for COVID.
- Special Codes adjustment for COVID.
- Transcript adjustments.



COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE (CCAR) STUDY TABLE

The face-to-face institutes and leadership work with the Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) Protocol was on pause due to COVID-19. However, the CCAR Study Table continued by transitioning to a virtual approach that took place starting March 3 and continued until May 12. From the first session until the last, we always opened with a mindfulness moment of stillness and meditation to ground energy and set our intentions, then we transitioned into time to read, and then time to discuss the reading using a protocol/participation structure so that multiple voices were present and being considered. Overall, 24 WISD staff colleagues attended representing multiple departments.

“During these sessions they also used the protocols to relate to current events, so when COVID hit the discussion stayed on the students and how it might be affecting them in this unprecedented time.”

-Michele Danilowicz, WISD Teacher Consultant

HIGH POINT SCHOOL: RECONSTRUCTION & RENOVATION

Opportunities were provided for interested WISD staff to preview preliminary schematic designs for the new High Point facility and to provide input and recommendations. The High Point staff were invited to sessions specifically targeted to them to gather their input. In addition, High Point Supervisor Jennifer Parrelly took input individually from staff who were not able to attend sessions.

As we entered the bidding phase of the project, the Board and the administration emphasized their intent to ensure that women- and/or minority-owned contractors would be notified of the opportunity to bid. The administration worked with our construction manager, Clark/Axiom Joint Venture, to make individual email and phone contacts to women- and minority-owned businesses to make them aware of the opportunity. As a result, we received several bids through Bid Pack 3 from women- and minority-owned contractors and also awarded some of the bids to those businesses.

The administration spent a significant amount of time working on a Responsible Contractor policy and the related administrative guidelines. The goal was for the policy and guidelines to determine the information the district would request from contractor bidders to identify the “lowest responsible bidder” on projects to assist in having an equitable and inclusive process. The policy was adopted by the Board in February. The administration went through multiple iterations of the guidelines and updated the Board regularly on the status of the guidelines. The current guidelines were reviewed with the Board in June.



*Pictured left:
WISD administration, the
Board of Education, and
the design and construction
management team pose for
a groundbreaking photo.*

GOAL 3:

Advocate for policies that support equity and inclusion on the local, state, and national levels.

WSA ANTI-RACISM STATEMENTS

In light incidents of overt racism in a constituent district's community in the winter and followed by the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, WISD convened the Washtenaw Superintendents' Association to issue two statements on anti-racism. These statements clearly articulated a shared vision for a more equitable, inclusive and socially just education system to the Washtenaw County community:

"As leaders of the nine traditional school districts and the Washtenaw ISD, we are compelled to speak out in response to recent events that have called attention to racist attitudes and actions within our schools and the larger community in Washtenaw County.

...It has been said that "what you permit, you promote." Silence in the face of racism and racist actions is complicity and therefore we will not remain silent.

As leaders of the public education system in Washtenaw County, we are committed to nurturing anti-racist educational learning environments where each and every child is respected and valued for who they are regardless of skin color, gender, sexual identity or orientation, ability or disability, or any other category. Our diversity is what makes us stronger, and we will not accept educational environments where students are subject to conditions where their identity makes them a target of abuse."

-WSA Anti-Racism Commitment Statement
February 5, 2020

COORDINATION OF EMERGENCY CHILDCARE FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS

At the beginning of the pandemic in March, WISD worked in partnership with the Governor's Office and MAISA to craft an Executive Order to support essential workers who needed access to childcare in order to continue working.

Over the last four months, Executive Director of Early Childhood Programs has worked directly with the Governor's Office, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, the Great Start Regional Resource Center (Child Care Network), and local childcare providers to coordinate referrals and requests for care from essential workers and matching them with providers who remained open or who reopened after the start of the pandemic. Because of this coordination, 129 Washtenaw County essential workers received assistance to find care for their children through July 24, 2020.

ADVOCACY FOR STATEWIDE EARLY CHILDHOOD COVID-19 GUIDANCE

During the last four months, Executive Director of Early Childhood Programs, Alan Oman, worked directly with a number of statewide organizations and agencies to advocate for guidance and executive orders specifically impacting early childhood programs and services. This included regular communication with the Governor's Office, the Michigan Department of Education, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, MAISA, the Early Childhood Administrators' Network (ECAN), and the Michigan Head Start Association. Advocacy efforts have included the drafting of COVID-19 guidance for childcare programs, summer camps, and home visiting programs, as well as serving on an MDE workgroup specifically focused upon the funding implications for GSRP. All advocacy efforts have focused upon mitigating the impact of the pandemic and on providing support for the State's most vulnerable young children, especially children of color, children in poverty, and children with disabilities or developmental delays.

RETURNING TO WORK SAFELY AND SECURELY

With the issuance of Executive Order 2020-114 on June 5, 2020, WISD developed a comprehensive return to in-person work document, which identified a plan for facilities where employees would be reporting to work. The development of this plan included all of the WISD Cabinet leadership and allowed for review by staff to give them the opportunity to share their feedback.

As we implemented our return to in-person work plan, the Operations department met with various departments that would be possibly returning. The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) Hierarchy of Controls was utilized in developing appropriate return to in-person work strategies. This included adding physical barriers in some locations where there was regular interaction with the general public, providing directional signage, limiting access to common spaces, and modifying procedures, all to provide a safer work environment for our staff.



GENERAL SUPERVISION SYSTEM - COHORT 0

Our work with Michigan Department of Education and Cohort 0 has continued virtually during the pandemic. We submitted our self-assessment and it was reviewed by a team from MDE. Unfortunately, we were not able to convene for our in-person review of the document, but we did receive a written report with areas of strength (such as an increase in graduation rates for students with disabilities) and possible areas for further examination (untimely reporting and non-compliance by local districts). The work of the eight ISDs in Cohort 0 will continue in the next school year and will guide assessment of the ISDs in the state.

RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Dr. Richard Milner from Vanderbilt University met with a small group of leaders across the county to discuss school practices and policies that promote inequity. This small group of instructional leaders met with Dr. Milner three times throughout the month of May.

RESPONSIVE TEACHING COALITION

In April 2020, the Responsive Teaching Coalition was developed with the support of curriculum leaders from across the county. The Responsive Teaching Coalition is a network of districts that work collaboratively to redefine education by inviting school administrators, K-12 teachers, and students to work collaboratively through a framework focused on equity in learning. Currently, seven districts have expressed interest in participating in the coalition for next year. The focus for the group is supporting all stakeholders in identifying and implementing specific actions that will interrupt systemic racism within our Washtenaw education system.

STATEWIDE SUPPORTS FOR CONTINUITY OF LEARNING PLANNING

MAISA and the General Education Leadership Network (GELN), in partnership with many other ISD networks and state organizations, helped to develop tools and supports for districts throughout the state. This was coordinated with the Governor's release of the *MI Safe Schools Return to School Roadmap* for districts. Assistant Superintendent Naomi Norman was a member of the GELN Continuity of Learning Task Force.