

Report for Verona Public Schools

From Grand River Solutions, Inc.

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What We Were Asked to Do

Evaluation, feedback, and recommendations on:

- School climate and culture
- Hiring, recruitment, and retention of teachers and staff

Methodology

- A review of documents provided by the District, with the District providing the following documents:
- The results of a climate survey, with 158 students and 95 employees participating.
- Interviews with School and District staff, teachers, and students.
- Multiple meetings with members of the six Diversity Committee subcommittees.
- Emails received from members of the Verona community, offering comments for consideration.

Regarding
Climate

Concerns about:

- Participation
- Safety
- Classroom treatment
- Involvement

Advanced Training on Classroom Management

Annual professional development specific to culturally responsive pedagogy

Classroom management – handling outbursts, how to follow up, training and support for how to effectively pause a difficult conversation that they are not ready to address

Content warnings – when are they appropriate, how to deliver

Shared understanding of words and phrases that are considered inappropriate or denigrating slurs, and how to respond if one is used

Advanced Training for Teachers and Staff

- Teaching practices when working with students with hidden or non-visible disabilities
- How to identify potential Title IX cases and how to respond, and mandatory training completed and posted
 - Multiple situations shared during review should have been reviewed using Title IX analysis, but were not
 - Key employees should be aware of proper protocols

Improving HIB investigation practices

- All students should receive explanation of HIB and all reporting options, resources, rights
- Include students in process, including outcomes
- Calendaring to ensure timely completion
- Vet all cases, have the hard conversation
- Do not use guidance counselors as investigators when possible
- Consider use of more neutral language throughout District
- Re-launch conflict resolution program
- Consider restorative justice

Additional Actions to Consider

- People first language
- Staff transitions; consider the impact on students and create communications plan
- Focus on reducing turnover in guidance counselors
- Consider a fully confidential space for students, particularly high school
- Prepare communications plan for teachers in the event of parent push-back to assigned material or content, have clear communications plan
- Consider additional community wide training on social media usage, dangers of having very young children using social media
- Continue to rely on librarians for creating culturally responsive spaces, inclusive displays

Suggestions Regarding Discipline

Gather

Gather data on time out of class, to assess impact

Maintain

Maintain data on disciplinary referrals that includes name of referring teacher

Learn
about

Learn about Restorative Justice as option

Reassess

Reassess practices; if repeated detention is not working, look for other options

Curricular Considerations

- Multiple paths for student success to include vocational education programs
 - Ensure these are not seen as “lesser” options
- Consider competency-based rubrics rather than seat-time based, particularly in elementary schools

Training for Students; to Consider

Bias and implicit bias

Power of words to both hurt and heal

Sexual harassment, what it is/isn't, and how to identify it

Reporting

Age-appropriate consent training

Bystander intervention techniques

"If you see something, say something" is not enough – must train on exactly what is meant

Enhanced training for athletes

Recommendations Regarding Hiring: DATA



Collect data on applicants throughout process



All data entered back into system of record



Identify a rubric to document the consistency of applicant screening process

Hiring Process



Consistency



Develop and include EEO statement, and shared definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion



Demonstrated understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy



Training for all hiring managers



Timeliness of hiring process will increase likelihood of exceptional hires



Job fairs, events



Self-audit each year to assess hiring practices

Recommendations Regarding Retention

Greater turnover in newer staff suggests increasing diversity will be a challenge

Consider creation of formal mentorship program for more senior teachers

Local affinity groups

Ongoing consistent feedback to all new teaching staff throughout year

Climate surveys

Questions?

