



Ferndale Public Schools
Equity Connect! EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable
Centering Equity in School Boards & District
Leadership
August 19, 2021



TRANSCRIPTION

Dr. Tiffany Kyser: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, everyone and welcome to the third session of the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center's *EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable Series: Equity Connect!* On behalf of the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center, we are thrilled that you are taking time out of your busy schedule to join us. During this equity connect session, our guest district, which I'm excited to learn with and from them today, Ferndale Public Schools which is located in Ferndale, Michigan. They'll be discussing how they leverage their partnership with the MAP Center, highlight tools and resources that strengthen their work and approaches they took to build the capacity of their district leadership and school board and to develop an equity focused strategic plan. So again, welcome. Welcome.

Dr. Tiffany Kyser: My name is Tiffany Kyser. I have the great privilege of serving as the Associate Director of Engagement and Partnerships with the MAP Center. I'm thrilled to be co-hosting today with Robin Jackson, Products Lead and Doctoral Research Assistant. Robin will also be serving as our Technical Director for today as well.

Robin Jackson: Thank you, Tiffany. Welcome everyone. Thank you for being with us today, for today's *Equity Connect!* we want to remind you, because this is a virtual space, to please make yourself comfortable. Move about as you need, take breaks as needed and we have alt text on images slides, and I believe Tiffany we have a captioner with us today as well?



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Dr. Tiffany Kyser: We do have a captioner with us today, and so you should be able to utilize closed caption through your toolbar by selecting closed caption as well.

Robin Jackson: Additionally, the session, it's intended to be interactive. Participants are asked to interact in real time via our teleconferencing format. We ask that everyone enable both their audio and camera function if able and willing. To reduce noise, we ask that all participants mute their microphone when not speaking. We will use various tools to facilitate group interaction and decision-making. Uh, please don't forget to mute your microphone when not speaking. Also, I want to say throughout the session as the presentation is going on, if there are any questions or comments that you have, you can either drop those into the chat bar and we'll address them or if you feel comfortable, you can unmute your microphone and join the conversation.

Robin Jackson: One of our goals at the MAP Center is to engage participants and well-defined content-rich technical assistance such that knowledge and expertise are shared in a way that results in transformative systemic change, as well as personal reflection and growth. To this end, we aim to make this unique learning available on our website via recording and transcription. Additionally, sharing photos of today's conversation on social media platforms. We encourage participants to consider this disclaimer as they share and engage today. At the end of today's presentation, we'll be taking a group photo for social media and we will let you know when it's happening. So don't be afraid. We'll let you know when it's happening, we hope that you join us on camera for that picture.



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Dr. Tiffany Kyser: Thanks Robin for walking us through some logistics and netiquette. I want to provide a little bit of grounding for those that might be new to the *Equity connect! Virtual Roundtable* series. This series is intended to provide further insights to public schools, districts, and State Departments of Ed broadly. Additionally, to support teacher and leadership education, program students and faculty in advancing their learning regarding authentic practice space, equity obstacles and avenues experienced by our partners. Within this virtual convening, partners will introduce the rationale for the partnership with the MAP Center outline goals of the partnership highlight at least one key resource or tool they have utilized in their equity work and present key approaches to optimizing, excuse me, transformative change towards equity.

Dr. Tiffany Kyser: So, without further ado, I'd like to now introduce our guest district who will lead us in our virtual roundtable discussion, beginning with some upfront framing, pepper in some points of reflections and consideration, followed by time to engage and questions and answers from each of you. We are joined by Dr. Dania Bazzi who is the Superintendent of Public Schools and Sandra Dukhie who is the Vice President of the School Board at Ferndale Public Schools, Sandra and Dania, welcome. And I'll turn it over to you to just kick us off.

Dr. Bazzi: Sandra do you want to introduce yourself first?

Ms. Dukhie: Sure. So, my name's Sandra Dukhie. I'm the Vice President of Ferndale School Board. I've been on the board, since about 2014 or 2015. It's also the district where I was raised and educated. And this time around I'm here



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to help make our district, one of the leading districts in the country, definitely in Michigan.

Dr. Bazzi:

My name is Dania Bazzi. I'm the superintendent Ferndale Public Schools, entering in my fifth year with the district and in my eighth year as a superintendent. I've been a public school educator for the entirety of my career. I was lucky enough to land in Ferndale, where there's a strong focus on equity, equity for all students which is really, has been, like, freeing in a sense to be able to be who you are, express your beliefs, and find a place that has a spot for everybody in the community.

Dr. Bazzi:

Our partnership with Midwest Equity started in my first year. When I started, the then Board President connected us. Basically, the goal was really to provide technical assistance and professional development to the Board of Education as it relates to equitable school policies. This technical assistance was so useful that we asked Midwest to partner also with our district administrators. And so, they, we went on a two-year journey with them that provided technical assistance as it relates to administrator growth and professional development as well. But this in and of itself led us to work on updating our strategic plan. Whereas we integrated the work that we're doing with Midwest, with our, with our strategic plan process. So, with Midwest equity, we created an equity vision statement and that worked with the community to build the strategic plan. And those two things really went hand in hand. The community stakeholder group was very receptive to the work that we did with Midwest Equity, and they ensured to integrate that equity vision statement into the strategic plan as well as other equitable practices within the district improvement plan.

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Dr. Bazzi:

So, there's a few things to discuss in terms of having meaningful partnership with Midwest is that you have to create a safe space for everyone to be honest. We have to be honest where we are at with our own particular journey, where our staff are at within their own particular journey where our students are at. Where our board is at. It's important that everyone feels safe to be able to speak their truth with the understanding that we are all here to grow and support one another and really move forward. A lot of times when you speak of topics like implicit bias or racism or any of the isms, there's a, there's a natural tendency to be defensive. And so, it is important that we create a safe space so that everyone has the ability to speak their truth so that we can move forward as one team.

Dr. Bazzi:

Another thing to keep in mind is to be willing to have those courageous conversations. It's really difficult to push the status quo if you're not willing to have those courageous conversations. We'll speak to some of this later on. But what we'll get into how we facilitated discussions about having a School Resource Officer within our high school/ middle school campus, how we took a look at our dress code policy and who, you know, who did it benefit most or not benefit. We have to be willing to have those courageous conversations.

Dr. Bazzi:

There's not any one within the organization that, that I haven't reached out to for assistance that hasn't provided timely, relevant feedback. For example, we had Midwest review our Equity Audit Tool that we'll be using in the classroom this fall, as well as review our interview questions for teaching or administrative positions to make sure that we're covering questions that are in line with our strategic plan and equity

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vision. So, they're always available to assist and have been a great resource to the district.

Dr. Bazzi:

And lastly, maximize the professional development they offer. The professional development that they offer is meant to be used within the school setting. It is actionable, it is relatable. Again, later on, we'll get into a curriculum assessment tool that was provided to us during one of our professional developments and is now part of our standard practice within the classroom. Items that they provide you with in the professional development.

Ms. Dukhie:

So, one of the first things we, one of the first PDs we had with the MAP center was. working on an equity vision for our district. We had some language in our strategic plan and in our mission and in our vision, but nothing solely spoke to how we felt about equity and what we wanted for our kids. So, we spent some time I think it might have been a full day's PD. We spent some time really hammering out what we valued as a board along with along with Dr. Bazzi and her cabinet. Just working through what we were saying and what we meant and what we valued.

Ms. Dukhie:

Our strategic plan has three main pillars, empowerment, environment, and excellence. And then the fourth one is equity, which is the vein that runs and holds all of those pillars together. And as a direct result of our equity statements and our strategic plan, the school board last June adopted a resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis.

Dr. Bazzi:

So, through that resolution, what I appreciate about our Board of Education is that they're very detailed in terms of direction, right? They, they don't

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provide haphazard direction. So, within the resolution they were very direct asks of it. So, they basically charged myself and the district to implement various aspects within that resolution so that we had a clear direction moving forward. One of those things was to ensure that there was racially and culturally relevant elements into the curriculum and within school buildings. What that inspired in the long run was to implement the couple of curricular changes and we'll speak to some of those a little bit later. But specifically, again, we created a classroom equity tool that will be used both within the teacher coaching process as well as for the teacher to utilize within their classroom. So, they'll be using it first, but self-reflection tool, we'll be using it for a coaching tool as we go through the classrooms. A tool that...

Robin Jackson: Excuse me, Dania?

Dr. Bazzi: Yeah. Yeah.

Robin Jackson: Oh, I didn't want to get too far before I address the chat, someone has asked you and Sandra, if you can mention those four pillars again, they're taking copious notes on what you all are saying. And someone also wants to hear the mission statement again, I believe that was on the last slide.

Dr. Bazzi: Yes. So, the three pillars, the three pillars are empowerment, environment, and excellence and equity is the vein that connects all three of those. Because again, you can't have, you cannot have excellence, empowerment, and environment if there is not equity, right? If it's not accessible to all students, then we're not doing the things that we say. So, the vision statement specifically states, "At Ferndale Public

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Schools, we are a school family of continual learners. We support each and every student to develop their purpose, plan, and passion. We encourage and honor dialogue about the histories, cultures, and goals of our community. We heavily and intentionally facilitate equitable access in representation, meaningful participation and high expectations for all." So, if you go to our website, ferndaleschools.org if you just type in the search "strategic plan", it'll take you to our full strategic plan or I could, when Sandra is speaking, I can, I can put the link to that specific strategic plan within the chat.

Dr. Bazzi:

So, moving along. But thank you. Thanks Robin. You're one step ahead. I appreciate that. So specifically, about the Classroom Equity Tool, it involves a few different areas. So, one thing for example, is the equity tool discusses trait representation within the classroom materials, curriculum materials, what you see on the classroom walls, the physical environment. We all know that impacts student learning. And if that students within our district, if they're not represented in those things, we know that that's certainly not best practice. It also gets it into asking kind of the deep reflective questions. Specifically, for example, I've personally researched issues related to race, equity, and how they impact my students. So, if I teach math and I've been teaching calculus for the past 10 years, I personally researched issues on race or socioeconomic status. So, these are the types of questions that we're going to be asking ourselves this year. And then it, ensuring that our teachers and staff have those opportunities that we can better serve our students.

Dr. Bazzi:

Another thing that we started is social justice courses at Ferndale Middle School and Ferndale High School. The ultimate goal though, is and again,

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this has been discussed with the board, it's how do we integrate aspects of social justice into our curriculum. So right now, we're kind of doing a vertical alignment of all social studies curriculum to see how these topics can be integrated so that social justice lives in all that we do, it's not simply a separate course. But for now, we are, we did create an elective course that gets into deep content that really interests our student body. And looking forward to see how those go this year.

Ms. Dukhie:

Another action item that's part of our resolution is this discontinuing to honor Columbus Day and instead move to Indigenous Peoples Day. So, it's in our resolution. We, I think we have moved away from this, but the Board wanted to explicitly state that we were no longer going to recognize Columbus Day and honor Indigenous Peoples Day. So, we have made that move and there has been some implementations of some items within the school, within the curriculum.

Dr. Bazzi:

And that, you know, that did take some from, a school leadership perspective, that did take some coaching and discussions and professional development. There are, for example, there are certain staff who've taught for a long time. They have particular lesson plans. And really to discuss the harm, you know, the, the harm of that was, was, you know, was really eye opening. So, it was it was not simply we just discontinued it. There were obviously discussions around that.

Dr. Bazzi:

So, the Board also within the resolution asked that we, you know, we work to reduce racial bias and discrimination, um, through DEI training for all staff and all means all. So, we have done training for secretaries, teachers, counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals, transportation employees. In

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terms of, of DEI training, this year, the focus on our training is going to be ethnocentrism and sexism. We've been going through for the past two years, the isms as well as implicit bias. I tell you especially the topic of implicit bias, that was probably where we had some of the most challenging conversations around it. Because the first step of addressing implicit bias is the understanding that all of us carry some bias, right? And uncovering that and be willing, to be willing to have discussions around that without the fear of being judged or, or shamed. But understanding that, it's important for our students that we address these biases that, that occur.

Dr. Bazzi:

One example is, for example, we noticed a few years back that there was a disproportion as it related to discipline between students who identified as black and white. So, we asked a very simple question: Do we believe, right, do we believe that certain races are more prone to need to be disciplined? Like inherently that they are going to, they cause more of the issue. And of course, everyone said "No, of course not.", right? We don't think that people discipline based on that, or that people do make poor choices based on their race, right? No one would know, no one in education that I know would, would openly say, "no, we, we do believe that it's accounted by race." Right? But it's interesting. So, when you look at the data and you see disproportionality you ask, well, why is that occurring? And no one can give an answer. And it's simple, it's because of the policies in place are converging the data to that point. So that's where we had the deep discussions about policy, as it related to grading discipline, placement in honors and AP courses and things like this. So, we will continue our professional development with our staff we're using your US² Consulting, who is Meghan Fuciarelli. And we've been in that partnership for, for a couple of years. Now, look at the data, obviously a

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year and a half of COVID has impacted our ability to, to look at that data within the school setting, but it's something that we'll continue. And the understanding that DEI training doesn't end, it's continuous, especially with staff changing and the understanding that there's a lot of work to do in this particular area.

Ms. Dukhie:

One of the other, one of our latest decisions in helping to promote our culturally affirming climate is the one around the School Resource Officer. Um, and this was one of those challenging conversations because the community is and has been divided on whether we should have a School Resource Officer or not. And we've had one for quite some time and as a board, and along with the admin, decided to move away from having a School Resource Officer and repurpose those funds to hire additional, additional social workers for our students. This this conversation, it's not over. We spent some time both internally and externally. And it's one that's a new move for this coming school year.

Robin Jackson:

Can I ask a question before you move on? How has, how has not having a School Resource Officer affected like the morale of the schools, of the students, of the teachers? Like how has it affected the atmosphere?

Dr. Bazzi:

To be honest, we discontinued it, this last school year was the last year that we had one.

Robin Jackson: Okay.

Dr. Bazzi:

So, we'll be starting in the fall.

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Robin Jackson: You'll have a better answer next year then?

Dr. Bazzi: Correct. And I think though the issue is that we had a great relationship with our School Resource Officer. It was really a difficult decision. We were looking at the context of the research in terms of SROs in school. It's not having to do with the individual. It had to do with the systematic approach of who benefits from having a resource officer in school and who doesn't benefit from it? Anyone who gets in a scuffle or has an argument with the teacher, should the first-person, the interface be with an officer or a social worker, or a restorative practice coach, or the dean of students? So, that's really, we had a great relationship with our SRO. And that's what the person, the personable aspect is what made it a difficult decision, in terms of what's best for kids. Yea. I think they adults had more of the issue than students.

Robin Jackson: And that was my next question, you just answered it. We have a question here on the chat. How are you collecting or compiling data to inform actionable steps for next year? And how do you measure that impact as it relates to DEI trainings?

Dr. Bazzi: So, we utilize a lot, a lot of qualitative surveys among staff and students. We give a six-week survey to students and staff that assess certain things as it relates to our direct professional development so that we're finding out if this PD, what's the perception around the PD? Is it, "Well, I sat and got it, and now I move on to the next or does this impact my practice?" So that's, that's one aspect, the qualitative aspect. The second aspect is looking at data in terms of discipline as it relates to race. It looks at harassment claims based on what, you know, what the particular

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issue is, is it is it racially motivated harassment? We look at data in terms of grades, in terms of failure rates. We look at data as it relates to placement in AP classes at our high schools. To say, again, who's, even though we're a self-selection district, that means any student could come and say, I want to be in AP or honors, right? They, they, they are placed into it. They, we give them a chance. But why is it that we still see disproportionality within our AP classes? So, we have to do a little bit more than just say, it's open, you can take it. All those data points then are discussed within our PLC process. And the action items, they look at the data, they make observations, they construct hypothesis to those, to those observations, and then they create smart goals or action items based on those hypotheses.

Ms. Dukhie: Another action item that's in our resolution was charging the superintendent to create employee resource groups or create the space for employees to create their own resource groups. And directly from that, we have, we now have an African American employee network. We have a Women and Leadership and one of the, we also have an Equity Task Force. And if I'm not mistaken, we also have a group, a LGBTQ group for staff that also, that has been initiated. And I've heard from employees and a couple of these groups, and they did, they were grateful for the ability to create these groups. No one ever said they couldn't create these groups, they just, I felt like from the people that they were waiting for permission to create these groups. And I don't know, maybe Dania you can speak to the actual concerns, issues, suggestions that have come from those groups.

Dr. Bazzi: Yeah. You know, we had some discussions within those groups about culture within buildings as it related. Whether it was LGBTQ +

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comfortable, people being comfortable or as it related to race within, within particular buildings. A lot of that feedback was provided to the district. Also though, I really do see it as the group's ability to support one another and, and kind of where they want to be in terms of as an educator, as an employee. So, I know it's been internally used. A lot of the work that we've done through the equity task force has funneled through our network groups. So again, they come to us with discussions. For example, the classroom environment, are we seeing representation within the environment of the classroom? And those are things that then spur kind of the Equity Audit Tool and other things. For example, women in leadership. We know within the education profession that the majority, the vast majority of teachers are women. Probably, I don't know exactly the statistics, but probably over 80%. But if you look at administration or the superintendency, the vast majority are men. And so, looking at women in leadership, for example, in that particular group, are simply asking great questions in terms of the path and how do they get to where they want to go even with, with honestly that, that bias that exists within our own profession. So, I think those network groups are still growing and will continue to grow. But I know that the feedback that I've gotten as well is and oh, and the feedback I've gotten has been relatively positive. So, we'll continue to see how that goes.

Dr. Bazzi: Yeah, sorry, SRO, we're in a world of acronyms. I apologize for that, but yes, School Resource Officer.

Robin Jackson: Before we go on, I'm sorry. First of all, I want to say that all of the changes and things that you have all presented are making my heart very happy. I

know that for the vast majority, um I know that you have gotten some push

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back on every single decision that you all have made, that you all have presented. But I want to go back to something that Sandra said. I landed on and couldn't move away from this word "permission" that you said earlier, how some of the folks who are working in the district didn't feel, they had permission to create these types of affinity groups. And, um, I don't know, I think that's interesting that we exist in a society where we don't feel that we have permission to be safe or to have camaraderie and have these safe and like, conversations where we're free to be ourselves and that the school system itself probably, like, I'm talking about the broader school system, operates in such a way that makes everything feel politicized, even our safety and freedom. If that makes sense.

Ms. Dukhie: It makes total sense. So, when the resolution passed, so, so I have lived in Ferndale my entire life. So, and I've worked I've worked a bulk of my career in education also in Ferndale, so I know a lot of people here in Ferndale and a lot of staff. And when the when the resolution passed, I can't tell you the number of text messages, phone calls, emails that I received, just like thanking us as a Board for putting in play. And then I don't even think it was a week later, maybe two weeks that the African American employee network was launched. And the couple, I had lunch with three people that are in active members in that group and that network and they were like we they they, they use the word "permission", like they needed permission to do that. In the conversation, I'm like, well, you didn't need permission. Like did you ask did you just create it like, and it gives, it was just like a sense, like it is politicized. Well, you know the politics like we didn't want to cause, cause the storm, make waves. But we're glad that that the board recognizes that we needed something like this.

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Dr. Tiffany Kyser: All right. I just want to add in as we transition to the tool and just share that from a socio-historic perspective when it comes to, to use Dania's phrase, who benefits from our decisions and policy and governance and who doesn't. I think the board enacting resolutions is redistributing the onus of who traditionally has not benefited, who has, and further, whose labor should be centered. And so I think by leaders of organizations making it explicit through governance and policy, the direction that they're moving in to advance educational equity, takes the labor and onus from those often on the margins, who were experiencing the most adverse conditions, i.e. students, families, parents and caregivers and community members, from pushing a system to being embraced by a system who is making very clear decisions at the top in terms of power and leadership of the organization, of what it values, and what types of redistribution of resources, what kind of redistribution of space, and acknowledgment. And so these sort of different tiers of actions and activity, I think that Sandra and Dania are surfacing are great examples, but of course not an exhaustive list of all the ways that each of us in this virtual space can consider how we elevate structural shifts to both recognize and also redistribute the ways in which we use and allocate power by determining a very hard decision, that, what the research tells us is that at a School Resource Officer versus a Social Worker for Ferndale, it made the most sense to use those funds to hire more social workers speaks to the redistribution not only of funds being allocated, but the types of opportunities that are availing themselves. When more social workers have less of a caseload per pupil for example.

Dr. Tiffany Kyser: So, I just wanted to surface that, that for me to nuance the conversation around permission shifts the gaze back on people who are not benefiting

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from, from that, from the system. And I would encourage us to think about that, but also shift the gaze back on who are the decision-makers and those who hold the responsibilities of drafting broad policy and governing our organizations? And how are we creating a space where that's an expectation is that the leaders of our organizations are being very clear about what is and is not in alignment to our pursuit of educational equity. Rather than, I think the default, which is usually putting the onus on individuals, people, or groups of people that are often on the margins.

Dr. Bazzi:

That's one thing that I have to give the Board of Education an immense amount of credit for is that has been they've always made decisions that are based on what's best for all students. Even when there's political pressure that, that doesn't want us to challenge the status quo. I think, you know, and I found that in my career when you make decisions based on what's best for students, you really can never go wrong. Because when people ask the why, it's very simple. But if you make decisions based on adult comfort or ease or what they're comfortable where there's always there's always a flaw that can be found when you're asking the why. And so, with Ferndale and making some of these changes. It's important to, to continue to focus on what's best for kids.

Dr. Bazzi:

There's one resource that, we have a number of resources from, from Midwest, but there's one that I really wanted to highlight in terms of their resource. It's called "Assessing Bias and Standards in Curricular Materials." This tool allows an advocate or anybody to determine the extent to which the developed standards and curriculum materials reflect equity . So, it provides you a way to review standards and curricular



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materials, using equity-oriented domains. There is also storing and an analysis guide so that you can kind of see where it lands on the continuum.

Dr. Bazzi:

For us, we use this specifically for textbook and curriculum materials because we understand that a student's identity and others is really important. When students see their personal lives depicted in characters or curriculum materials they've acknowledged and respected and recognized it helps reduce the amount of bias that we see within the classroom. I think it's very important as we expand our classroom libraries and we continue to develop and refine the equity audit tool that we use, a tool that is measurable and allows us to see what's, what's taking place. So specifically, as it relates to the, to the tool, and they passed this slide, which is fine. But that the first one where it had building consciousness. No, you don't have to go back. It's okay. I wanted to make clear that everyone was aware that that was the "standards" part of the rubric and it's sectioned into three domains. So, "the building consciousness", "the reflection of students", and "social improvement". It's also divided into the curricular part of the rubric, and it has seven domains. The first domain is "invisibility". Ensure that a group is not excluded from, from the curricular altogether. The rubric also looks at stereotypes that can be very damaging within, within the classroom setting. And then another one is "imbalance and selectivity". Now, the thing I want to make, you know, one thing that I learned from one of the Midwest is that we tend to form our biases around the age of 12. How much impact we spend seven to eight hours a day with our students. There bias, is developed by age 12. So, the social emotional learning is very important for students to understand and to ensure that they have curricular materials that are free of bias and representative is really, really important because it's shaping who they are by the age of

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12. Obviously, there's home factors involved as well. But it's something that we have to have an impact.

Dr. Bazzi:

Very quickly, I'll give one example. There's the mask mandate, right? Do, do, do students have to wear masks in school or not? And that has been turned into a political debate, right? If your one, one political party, you're saying one thing. If you're in another political party, you're saying another thing. Absolutely not, absolutely not, right? It's basically the science guides how can we best protect their students and families. It has nothing to do with political ideology. It's about what's safest for our students, but it's something that has been hijacked to a sense where even our students are seeing it as a political debate. So when, when we see students debating it, it's almost they're debating politics, instead of do masks keep us safer, free of illness and spread within our schools?

Ms. Dukhie:

A couple more domains to the tool is historical whitewashing. And we know this is whoever who has a pen writes the story. And certain groups were excluded from having the pen. So, it's recognizing that in text and the curriculum materials and trying to eliminate the historical whitewashing. And the same thing with fragmentation and isolation. When, when curricular materials physically or visually isolate a group of people in the, in the book or in software. And it's just making sure we're, we're we use a tool often and help use portions of it in our equity audit tool. Because we are all about all students and we say all we mean all and we're doing everything that we can and every day in every way to make sure that everyone is included.

[silence]

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Dr. Bazzi:

Then the last curriculum materials are related to linguistic bias and cosmetic bias. So, it's, it's really important that those things are really evaluated when you're selecting a textbook or curricular material. These things matter, this is this tool, now is a part of our normal process. The Board of Education won't even approve a curricular selection or a course unless we show them that we've went through the rubric, we've scored it. And so that's included every time we go for approval for new course or new textbook selection, or a new curriculum material. This resource is a part of it, is a part of that process.

Dr. Tiffany Kyser:

Thank you both Dania and Sandra for that really thorough unpacking. First of what led you to the partnership with the MAP Center and what was happening in your context, what the co-collaborative goals were, how that contributed to some very fundamental shifts in policy and governance. Using one example through the resolutions and the mini steps underneath the resolution undertaken. And then finally, the anti-bias in standards and curriculum materials tool as one of many resources that you all were able to leverage and, in this case, codify in your actual practices and decision-making at the board level. So, with that, I want to just sort of open up much more explicitly to the roundtable component of today's session. And for those that feel comfortable and want to enable their cameras, feel free to do so. But we also honor that you all are working from many spaces and have different comfort levels in terms of being on camera during the recorded session. So, we want to honor that as well. Um, and so we've got about five to seven minutes, maybe a little bit more, depending on the conversation to really center Sandra and Dania with responding to any



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questions that you all may have or any thought partnership that you want to engage with the virtual room

Robin Jackson: Dania, someone asked in the chat, do you have research on a development of bias? that may have been off the heels of your stat about developing biases by 12. I'm wondering if you, if you know of any authors or books or articles off the top of your head?

Dr. Bazzi: I can look at that specifically, that was actually just in a Fall presentation that I attended with through US² Consulting. So, I can email that to Robin and Tiffany and then you can if you can send that out to the participant list.

Robin Jackson: Thank you.

Dr. Tiffany Kyser: I see some familiar faces. So, if there are any, I know there are some partners that we're working with who might have some pressing questions, feel free. Or if you're still collecting your thoughts, feel free to take your time to have and have some transition time as you're, thinking of your questions, please, please enable your mics as well. Sharon, go ahead and kick us off.

Sharon: My question is this, I'm in Ohio, real close to Michigan, Midwest. And I guess what was the pushback or was there any pushback? You know, our states are very similar. And this, you know, this kind of anti-progressiveness, this anti-inclusiveness as states. And so, I just kind of wonder, yeah, did the Critical Race Theory come up? How did you combat that? Just, I like to know if it was great presentation, ladies, but more about your process for me.

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Ms. Dukhie:

So, I can say, I'll go first Dania, I can't say that as a Board Member, we got a ton of push back on, like the resolution or any, the push back comes with like individual decisions. So, and it depends on what it is, our community, it just happens to be one that's progressive and is ready for this. We have always, Ferndale has always talked and touted about the diversity and how he valued it, celebrated. But we I could tell you as a student and an employee, we did that with words we at we didn't live into that. And so, as I became a board member, I was really about pushing the district and the board to live into that and stop just talking about it. I think our push-back does come when we take those really difficult ones like the School Resource Officer that's probably, I'm thinking about all the things we've done so far. That's probably the one that stands out the most. Our school year hasn't started yet. So, I haven't heard anything from anyone about critical race theory. And we were like, I don't know that we're going to have a showing of parents saying, "are you teaching it and you can't teach it?" I don't know that we have that in our community. But this school year with us being back in person would be the telling sign and we were virtual the majority of the year, last year, so.

Dr. Bazzi:

Yeah, just to add, it's been around in Ferndale, as Sandra said, in terms of words and speaking, yes, everyone's very supportive, DEI focus. But it's now when we start change to policies and guidelines where we're starting to see a little bit of discomfort. So, I'll tell you some of the bias that comes in. Not again, not on purpose, but it comes through. So, when we say that we want to, we want more representation in AP classes, right? The first thing that we're met with is well, don't, don't change the rigor of the class. As if adding students to a class reduces rigor, right? So, we start to

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peel back that onion to say, here you have a student who identifies as white, 2.7 student. Pretty much not doing well in all other classes, but you know, in AP US government, they're doing pretty well because that's like a passion area for them. So, it doesn't mean that AP is for your 4.0 student, right? It could mean that this is a passion that they have.

Dr. Bazzi:

Or if you find a student who's, fits the same, criteria on paper. And you say, but you have many black students who fit the same criteria, why aren't they in the class, you haven't rang the bell saying that this particular student is going to decrease rigor, right? So, I think that's where the difficulty has come in to say, Okay, no, no, we're actually going to look at the data. And we're going to, we're going to ensure that we place students in classes that they want to be in and that we know that they can excel in. And if they, if they don't excel, we don't have the mentality, Well see I told you so. It's what supports do we need to provide so that they are successful? So that's been kind of the biggest pushback in terms of all of that. Critical Race Theory is integrated within some of our social justice courses. I have had some family say that you're trying to indoctrinate our students. It's not. We explain. We look at, we look at the curriculum, we will get example, Common Core and things like this. It's just, it's not applicable for students to read about a Midsummer Night's Dream anymore. I, you know, I particularly didn't like it or relate to a growing up. So, we're just picking curricular, curricular materials that meet the needs of our students. So, there's certainly has been push back on certain things. And I think it's very important that what has helped Ferndale is we have such a cohesive board who take the time to have those discussions. They have the debate and they come to a conclusion, and they move forward in terms of what they believe is best for Ferndale. And I can't

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stress that enough, how important it is. And they trust us to execute the things that they ask of us, and they hold us accountable to it. So, I think you're going to get some pushback in Ohio. Again, I'm not stereotyping Ohio, but from what from what you shared, you know, I would say stick to the research, stick to what's best for kids.

[crosstalk]

Sharon: Did the board drive this or did the, you as a superintendent, drive this? Who drove this initiative?

Dr. Bazzi: I would say they drove it because they were they were, they were the ones to, one second sorry.

Sharon D: I can tell you that we drove it. We like I said, we as a district, have always talked about how diverse we are, how great our diversity is. And we, we did a lot of that. But our data was not showing that we truly valued and celebrated and included everyone. And so, we actively wanted to look at what we were saying versus what we were doing. And Midwest was great about that. I can remember we did like a self-evaluation of the board and the district and where we thought we were like where we evaluated our self and all these DEI and equity things. And we had students that took part in that. And just kind of looking at where we felt we were and where we actually were what was at that time, we put a lot of work into that.

Dr. Tiffany Kyser: Thank you, Sandra. Thank you, Dania. We've got and I'm so sorry to cut you off Sharon you were asking a follow-up question. My apologies. We've got time for one more question. Is there a pressing question? I see Bobby's

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hand. So, we'll call on Bobby. And if we have time, we might be able to squeeze in one more. So, Bobby...

Bobby: This is an easy one too, so it doesn't require a bunch of conversation. What is the racial composition of your Board?

Dr. Bazzi: Well, I'm well, to my knowledge, we have two board members who identify as black. We have five who would probably identify as white. In terms of male to female ratio we have two males and five females.

Dr. Tiffany Kyser: Any other questions? we do have time for one more. Feel free to enable your mic if you have a pressing question before we wrap up.

Anna: Last question because I know I'm busy in the chat. How do you guys celebrate? Do you make room for fun? Because for me this is fun. Exploring other people's identities and cultures this is fun to me. Okay? How do you guys put the fun in this work?

Ms. Dukhie: I don't know. I mean, I think we all enjoy doing this. I think when we come out with a win, it's celebration enough, like when we actually see whatever we have active as it's implemented as a success and it's embraced by the community or by the staff or by the students, I think at least for me, that's a win enough for me. I mean, Dania.

Dr. Bazzi: Yeah, I think we do celebrate our successes as a team within, within Ferndale, were very prideful of, of kind of being Ferndale Eagles in terms of when we're able to ensure that we're making changes that benefit all students. I think that's part of the celebration. We, you know, I think part

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of for me that the best thing about being in Ferndale is that there is such diversity within our school district. And that's why like I truly enjoy going to all the different things, whether it's dance or basketball or marching band and to be able to see students excel in the areas that they have passion for brings us, bring us great joy. So, for me though, everyone tells me you're here in the evening, that's not work. That's the part that I enjoy the most. And so, I think I see a Board that's also very active in the community and active within those various activities. And I think that's what makes it fun like. For example, our Board President Mike Davidson is on with us. Our Board Treasurer or I'm sorry, Board Secretary is with us, Jackie Hart. So, they're always very supportive, always supporting one another and all they do.

Dr. Tiffany Kyser: I think that was a great question, to close on and Dania and Sandra, Thank You. What I, just to mirror back this idea of relationships and authentically engaging in one's called community as a mechanism to navigate the complexities of this work. And so just really appreciate that final question. I think that for me at least puts us at a close on a very intense topic in a very positive tone. So, thank you for that, Anna. Robin is going to move to wrap up. And if you do have to depart early, Robin has placed a post-session questionnaire in the chat. We do ask that you take about five to seven minutes to just let us know how we did. We are an organization of continuous improvement. We want to know is this, is this *Equity Connect!* and this type of *Equity Connect!* where partners are able to engage directly with, with partners in our region and beyond, helpful. And so, we really appreciate your feedback.



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Dr. Tiffany Kyser: Episode 4 of our anti-racism vodcast series, I'm excited to announce, is released today. The title of Episode 4 is "Anti-racism at the Intersections" And so you're able to subscribe to our podcast and vodcasts which are available on our website. And Robin will place that in the chat. So, we just wanted to announce that exciting news. We also have our final *Equity connect!* for this year before we ramp up, hopefully another season moving forward next year. So, the next *Equity Connect!* is entitled, "Ensuring my State Agency, is a critically conscious learning organization". We are thrilled to have our one of our partners in Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction who will be centered and sharing a little bit about their story in their partnership with the Midwest and plains Equity Assistance Center that occurs on Tuesday, September 14th, at 1pm Eastern noon Central and 11 AM Mountain Standard Time.

Robin Jackson: Thank you, Tiffany, the USDOE has published a couple of COVID-19 related resources to safely reopening schools. Volume one is entitled "Strategies for safely reopening elementary and secondary schools. Volume two is called "Roadmap, to reopening safely and meeting all student's needs". We encourage you to check them out in order to keep our students safe. And again, these guides are updated as new information comes out from the CDC. And I will drop those links here in a second, here you go. And if you are not following, following us on social media, why not? Please follow us on Facebook and on Twitter, and I'll drop our links here shortly. If you feel so inclined, you can #MAPEquity. What is it MAP Equity? and answer the question, how are you going to apply what you learned today? And if you follow us on social media, you'll get updates on our new products in all of our PD that is coming out.

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Dr. Tiffany Kyser: We would love your feedback to let us know what was a strength of this episode of the *Equity Connect!* What are some areas of growth? Um, I'll also be following up with an email with this link as well. So, if you have to go to another meeting or you are just incredibly busy and you may appreciate the reminder, we'll ensure that we do that. Finally, again, I want to extend a special thanks to Dr. Dania Bazzi and Ms. Sandra Dukhie, who are representing Ferndale Public Schools who are prior 2019 Equity Innovator Award recipients from the MAP Center who have engaged in a multi-year partnership with the MAP Center, and who have continued to commit and to grow at the highest levels of their district to center the perspectives and lived experience, the funds of knowledge of students and families who've experienced the most adversity in their school community. And because of that, I think they are realizing tremendous results across, as they noted, all of their students and the experiences of all of their staff. So, with that, we hope that you have a wonderful rest of your day. And I'll give the final goodbyes, to Dania or Sandra if there's any closing remarks or any words of encouragement.

Dr. Bazzi: I just wish everybody a happy and healthy school year to the start of the year. I know that being in education, there's certainly difficult days, but we are doing the work, great work. And it's, one of those jobs, I heard somebody saying that, you know, it's a job that we have to do or that we get to do and it's there's no bigger there's no more honorable, honorable profession than the education field. Continue to fight the good fight. We, I am here as an ally to fight for those whose voices aren't heard in anything you need along your journey. If you ever come to find Ferndale, I love to eat out. No one likes to eat out, everybody's very health conscious. But I'll, I'll go out to eat come by my way and I'll take you to a good place.

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Robin Jackson: Everyone heard her, right?

[laughter]

Dr. Bazzi: Ask them. They know me. Honestly.

Dr. Tiffany Kyser: Thank you so much, Dania. Thank you all so much. Have a good rest of your day. Thank you. Take care.

[End of Audio]