



Equity Advisory Group Findings, Community Discussion

Presented at Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, October 20, 2021

Education

What the Advisory Group Found

Barriers:

- Lack of transparency and public accountability within the Utica City School District
- Need for more parent/community engagement and interest in the K-12 curriculum
- Lack of mentorship and college/workforce development
- Lack of cultural competency/structural inflexibility K-16
 - Programs and services/staffing and leadership
 - Equitable funding

Suggestions:

- Investing dollars in education partners, mentorship organizations, and other nonprofit agencies would garner ownership and culpability of policies, procedures, and practices in the Utica City School District
- Hold school district accountable to students and parents through diversity and inclusion mandates in school board and leadership
- In conjunction with the Utica City School District, hire an education policy expert and community builder to create:
 - Website for publicizing complaints and school/student hearings for greater transparency and fairness
 - Fair and clear metrics for assessing outcomes and progress
- Develop a K-16 curriculum with levels of cultural/structural flexibility
 - Address the lack of intercultural competence by providing additional support and resources from an academic, linguistic, and socioemotional standpoint, whereby people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds can engage, communicate, and learn from one another in a thoughtful and respectful manner
- Consider programs/services, staffing and leadership, and equitable funding to support the theme of education and barriers that might impede forward progress:
 - Strengthen and support the role of guidance counselors
 - Fortify the Arts and Humanities curriculum
 - Provide families options for educating students such as Charter Schools and diversify schools within districts
- Develop and improve mentorship and modeling around college/workforce development

What the Community Told Us



- Improve communication, transparency and accessibility between the Utica City School District and the community. Examples include:
 - Informing parents and general community on the who, how, when, and where of school board meetings
 - Documenting board meeting outcomes and action plans
 - State intervention to address perceived corruption such as nepotism and systemic racism
- Diversify teacher, administration, and school board racial and ethnic makeup. Social learning theory depicts how people learn best from modeled behavior and people that look like them.
- Change curriculum with community input; recognize students learn differently and have different interests
- Encourage students of color to consider the education field as a profession to help diversify the district and improve the curriculum/lack of intercultural competence
 - Colleges should develop more partnerships amongst one another to provide additional bridge and/or 2+2 programs
 - The school district should provide incentives for students to teach and reside in the community
- Increase parent involvement and interest in their children’s learning and development. Examples include:
 - Educate parents on the value of an education and available resources to help better understand the education process
 - Provide resources for parents whose first language is not English
 - Inform parents and the community on how to address problems
 - Voting in School Board elections - voice has power
 - Allow parents who do not have citizenship to vote on education-related matters as it pertains to their children
- Create an engagement strategy to ensure programs have a strong presence within schools that allow students to access and choose relevant programs
 - Review successful models around the nation to see what we can adopt within our own community
- Invest in internship opportunities, especially for middle-school-aged students. Opportunities should be equally accessible for all students across the district including the charter schools and Notre Dame
- Improve partnerships with local colleges to offer classes and opportunities for K-12 students to create more pathways for their success
- Develop and increase 1:1 mentorship opportunity to broaden students’ professional networks
- Inventory college and workforce programs, their effectiveness, and how they can best work together for maximum support to our students