



Ionia County Intermediate School District
2191 Harwood Road
Ionia, MI 48846
616 527-4900
www.ioniaisd.org

Partners in building full potential

COLLABORATION INTEGRITY INNOVATION SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY DATA-DRIVEN

Board Report---April 17, 2025

- **Property Transfer Request:** The ISD has received a property transfer request for a property within Belding Area Schools to be transferred to Lowell Public Schools (Kent ISD). None of the other impacted districts support this transfer. This item is on agenda for consideration of action (calling for a joint ISD special meeting for official action; or tabling and letting the consideration timeline expire and serve as a denial).
- **Policy Update:** We have a policy revision recommended for immediate adoption. It is a clerical update to update our policy language around following state laws regulating paid time off. The updated language references the new Earned Sick Time Act.
- **Legislative Update:** Due to the significant inclement weather impacts to the north, school districts are seeking legislation to support some sort of additional days of forgiveness for this school year. Some districts are 20+ days out of session at this point across the state, and may be experiencing more. There seems to be some universal support for this and there is precedent for this from prior years. The mechanics legislatively of who is able to grant those waivers must be addressed.

In other state news, Dr. Rice has announced his retirement from his position as state superintendent. Appointing the state superintendent is the responsibility of the State Board of Education. As the state board begins to take steps in filling this position, it will be worth watching how current proposed legislation develops that was centered around giving this authority to the governor's office.

At the federal level, much of the current focus has been on a specific requirement that the US Department of Education (USDOE) recently sent to all fifty states. The *Response to U.S. Department of Education Request for Title VI Compliance Recertification* was sent out on Thursday, April 3, 2025. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and other state education agencies received an unsigned email from the USDOE Office of Civil Rights that requested that states certify both state and local education agency compliance with anti-discrimination requirements included in the "Reminder of Legal Obligations Undertaken in Exchange for Receiving Federal Financial Assistance and Request for Certification under Title VI and SFFA v. Harvard" within 10 days to continue to receive federal financial assistance. Additional information was shared in an April 3 press release from USDOE. On April 7, a follow-up email from the USDOE provided an additional 10 days to reply, which requested responses by April 24, 2025.

MDE sent a response to USDOE's communication stating that Michigan had previously certified compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations and that those certifications remain in effect. MDE further stated that all of Michigan's more than 800 LEAs have similarly previously provided such compliance assurances.

MDE shared with the field that it feels several of Michigan's recent and current state educational initiatives are strongly in support of anti-discrimination; such as promoting the availability and reading of diverse literature, teaching a more comprehensive and inclusive history, language accessibility beyond English for those who don't read or speak English, Grow Your Own programs for students and support staff in all communities to become teachers, and a range of student voices in leadership roles within schools, districts, and communities.

Further, MDE shared that in its opinion, in certain instances; activities under the banner of diversity, equity, and inclusion are federally mandated. For example, the education of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment based on student Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) is required according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) U.S.C. § 1412(a)(5). Students with disabilities must be included in general education settings to the extent appropriate in student IEPs. Pre-K-12 programs that promote diversity representing all children, regardless of race, and inclusion of all children, regardless of race, do not inherently harm particular groups of children and are not de facto violations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

On April 10, an update from one of the state's leading education legal counsel firms shared that this recent request for certification by the USDOE was delayed in an agreement to a lawsuit filed by the National Education Association ("NEA"). In ongoing litigation, the NEA had filed a request for a temporary restraining order, seeking to prevent enforcement of certifications submitted by State and Local Education Agencies (or the lack of such certification) and the February 14, 2025 Dear Colleague Letter issued by the U.S. Department of Education.

The temporary restraining order was dismissed as moot after the NEA and USDOE reached an agreement that states that the USDOE will not initiate enforcement actions, investigations, or otherwise take action based on any State or LEA certification, lack of certification, or communication with the U.S. Department of Education regarding the certification, until after April 24. The request for certification and any enforcement actions have therefore been delayed. The court in this case scheduled a hearing regarding this for April 17 and a ruling is expected by April 24, 2025.