

Three Rivers School District 2020-2021 Annual Report

1. There are clear impacts from the reduction in SIA funding and from the direct efforts to respond to COVID-19. While you can't fully set those aside, what is important for your community, including focal student groups, families, and educators, to understand about your SIA implementation efforts during the 2020-21 school year and the positive impacts that have occurred? How were you able to make progress towards the goals and outcomes you were aiming at with SIA funding and processes? (500 words or less)

Despite Covid-19, regional fires, and reduced SIA funding, we were able to implement an SIA plan that represented a wide range of needs. In our engagement process, we surveyed (in English and Spanish) all students in grades 6-12, all parents, and all staff. By including demographic questions in our surveys, we were able to disaggregate the data by focal group. We also held virtual town halls with parents and community, again, in both English and Spanish. Our student and parent focal groups included homelessness and poverty; students with disabilities, English learners, and underserved race/ethnicity.

From that process, we learned that our stakeholders favored keeping our goals around academic success and mental health support and the strategies we had identified to reach those goals. Based on that input, we kept our strategies but reduced the number of activities planned for each one. We also looked for crossover activities that supported more than one strategy. For example, to provide a more well-rounded education for students, we hired elective teachers at the middle school. Those hires also helped us to reduce class sizes. The activities, below, supported our strategies and positively impacted our goals:

Goal: Improving academic success and reducing disparities

Strategy: Targeted class size reduction; remove barriers

We were able to reduce class size in targeted schools and grades, so that we were able to better serve focal groups and all students. For example, we added a special education teacher and an autism support consultant to better serve students with disabilities. Since much of the year was spent in distance learning, we hired three extra teachers to reduce the overall teacher load and provide more individual attention to students. We also paid for technology support to ensure that all students had a working computer and access to the internet, which was part of our work to remove learning barriers for students. We also were able to support our charter school, Woodland, with added support staff for the upper elementary grades, a new curriculum, and professional learning.

Goal: Increasing safety, behavioral, and mental health support for students and staff

Strategy: Hire staff to provide student and staff support

We hired two nurses to work with students and staff, K-12. The nurses have helped parents, students and staff to better understand Covid-19, stay disease free, and address mental health needs related to the pandemic and other issues. Having nurses also has increased staff understanding of the health needs of our students. It is now common practice to have regular on-site consultations with staff regarding medical issues. Finally, we hired a behavior specialist to serve our elementary schools, which helped reduce behavior issues for in-person learning students and during CDL.

Even with Covid-19 and the move to CDL for much of the year, as well as reduced SIA funding, our district staff feel positive about what it was able to implement.

2. What barriers, impediments, or challenges to your SIA implementation have you faced or identified that are helpful for your community and/or state leaders to be aware of? (500 words or less)

A significant challenge was implementing our SIA plan in the midst of COVID-19. As ODE, in collaboration with other agencies, continued to make changes to the *Ready Schools, Safe Learners* guidance, our district had to spend many hours implementing those changes and adjusting our SIA plan to fit in-person, CDL, and Hybrid learning models. Another challenge was finding qualified staff. To implement our strategies, 9.5 FTE were hired and Three Rivers had to compete with other districts that also were hiring many staff. In addition, some staff chose not to work during the pandemic. Including our charter school in the engagement process and helping them develop their own plan created more demands on administrator time. The largest challenge to the SIA implementation for Three Rivers School District was the decreased funding due to a decrease in state revenue. We heard from our stakeholders the priorities they wanted to see implemented with SIA dollars and with a reduction in funds, we were not able to accomplish all our goals. This led to frustration from many as these goals were crucial to student success. Fortunately we received an increase in funding for the 2021-2022 school year and are hoping to fulfill those goals our stakeholders identified as crucial for TRSD.

3. SIA implementation includes ongoing engagement with focal students, the families of focal students, and educators. What successes and challenges, if any, have you experienced in maintaining engagement? (500 words or less)

Though we have always interacted with our community to improve school programs, the quality and breadth of the engagement has grown through the SIA process. For example, our recognition of and interaction with family focal groups has now become a key part of our school improvement planning and implementation process. Meeting focal group needs will help us reduce academic disparities and make the application of our equity lens a meaningful part of our improvement process.

We also are continually learning how to improve the engagement process. For example, last year, we did empathy interviews with students. While this gleaned good information, not every student was interviewed; therefore, some voices were not heard. This year we did a student survey with every 6th - 12th grader. The survey was sent out in both English and Spanish. Based on the number of completed surveys, we feel that method this provided a better forum for more student voices to be heard. Another example is holding town halls in the home language of some of our focal groups. For example, in the first round of engagement, all of our meetings were in English. Last year, when we held a town hall in Spanish, those families reported that it met their needs and made them feel respected. We also moved meetings from the day time to the evening to allow parents who work to attend. That change increased the number of people attending and giving input. Finally, to increase participation, we asked community partners to reach out to families to encourage them to participate. One of our challenges also was getting families to participate virtually due to COVID-19. Again, reaching out to families to be sure they had computers and an internet connection and knew how to use them helped increase participation from some of our marginalized groups.

We are committed to ongoing engagement with staff, students, families and community. That engagement not only served us well in SIA planning but also in implementing *Ready Schools, Safe Learners* guidance document.

We have also increased the number of community partners to approximately 9 organizations, which brings more community support and resources to our district.

Finally, the engagement process has helped to improve our relationships with stakeholders. Students, parents, staff, and community have said that they appreciate being part of the decision-making process and focal groups, especially, appreciate seeing their needs reflected in the SIA plan.

4. Please share your professional assessment of what guided your choices and prioritization efforts in the first year of SIA implementation? What stands out? Anything important or surprising to report back or reflect on? How were key decisions on scaled down implementation made? What impacts, if any, are helpful to name in how you navigated through the last year, specifically as it relates to SIA implementation? (500 words or less)

Our engagement efforts were led by our administrative team. They identified the engagement activities to use and then helped lead many of them. They also collected, analyzed, and interpreted the input from the engagement activities and then proposed goals and strategies. The team shared those goals and strategies with students, parents, staff and community for feedback. When we learned that our funding had been reduced to 30% of what was projected earlier, the administrative team went back to stakeholders to hear their priorities. We were happy (and surprised) to learn that we should stay the course with the goals and strategies that were developed. It showed us that the work we did in our engagement process was effective. To make the budget work, the number of activities for each strategy were reduced, which mostly focused on hiring fewer new staff. The team used the Oregon equity lens (focusing on questions 1, 2, and 6) to determine which positions would not be filled. We also prioritized our charter school, which had fewer resources.

We learned that we are getting better at using an equity lens to inform our decisions. Specifically, we are addressing focal group needs by reducing class size, adding interventions, creating a more engaging curriculum, eliminating barriers, providing mental and behavioral supports, and more.