

V. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CMSi CURRICULUM AUDIT™ TEAM FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE COEUR D'ALENE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Based on the four streams of data derived from interviews, documents, site visits, and online surveys, the CMSi Curriculum Audit™ Team has developed a set of recommendations to address its findings shown under each of the standards of the audit.

In the case of the findings, they have been triangulated, i.e., corroborated with one another. In the case of the recommendations, those put forth in this section are representative of the auditors' best professional judgments regarding how to address the problems that surfaced in the audit.

The recommendations are presented in the order of their criticality for initiating system-wide improvements. The recommendations also recognize and differentiate between the policy and monitoring responsibilities of the board of trustees, and the operational and administrative duties of the superintendent of schools.

Where the CMSi audit team views a problem as wholly or partly a policy and monitoring matter, the recommendations are formulated for the board. Where the problem is distinctly an operational or administrative matter, the recommendations are directed to the superintendent as the chief executive officer of the school system. In many cases, the CMSi audit team directs recommendations to both the board and the superintendent, because it is clear that policy and operations are related, and both entities are involved in a proposed change. In some cases, no recommendations are made to the superintendent when only policy is involved, or none to the board when the recommendations deal only with administration.

Audit recommendations are presented as follows: The overarching goals for the board and/or the superintendent, followed by the specific objectives to carry out the overarching goals. The latter are designated "Governance Functions" and "Administrative Functions."

Recommendation 1: Provide equal access to comparable programs, services, and opportunities to impact student achievement. Take steps to allocate equitable resources based on student needs.

A well-managed school system provides all students equal access to programs, services, and opportunities provided by the district. Fairness to all students is apparent in access to resources, effective teachers, and the distribution of financial resources. School districts that serve heterogeneous communities have students that require differentiated resources in order for all learners to be given an equal opportunity to experience success in the educational program. Ensuring academic success means providing instruction and resources to students based on their individual needs, not based on what works for the majority of students or even a formula or standardized procedure. Equity requires a comprehensive shift in prioritizing individual students and their needs, rather than system level priorities and needs. Such a shift in focus must take place at every level if the system is to realize improvement in every student's academic achievement.

At the system level, areas of inequity must be monitored and addressed through new policy directives, coordinated district and building level planning, professional development initiatives, and sometimes staffing changes. Identifying areas of inequity is achieved through data analysis and anecdotal evidence collected from district stakeholders focused on how various components of the district function as an integrated, coherent system. Areas of inequity must also be identified, monitored, and addressed at each school through data analysis, monitoring of classroom instruction, teacher evaluations, and school improvement planning. In the classroom, teachers monitor equity in similar ways but with a much smaller population, looking at assessment data for different subgroups, monitoring the effectiveness of their own instructional strategies and behaviors, and ultimately evaluating whether students are making appropriate gains in achievement despite any demographic factors that might predict failure. What is fair for one student might be unfair for another; being equitable many times means one must treat students differently according to their unique needs.

Auditors found inequities existed in the Coeur d'Alene Public Schools with no intentional plan in place to address inequities. Board policies were insufficient in requirements for annual review of equity data and the use of such data to develop a plan to correct equity issues (see [Finding 1.1](#)). Auditors found inequities in graduation requirements, transfer procedures, and implementation of full-day kindergarten (see [Finding 3.5](#)). In order not

to perpetuate but overcome the relative disadvantages that some students face when they enter the education system, the following recommendations are presented to the board and superintendent. These recommendations should be put into place and implemented over a 6 to 18 month period.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Board of Trustees of Coeur d'Alene Public Schools:

G.1.1: Direct the superintendent to prepare for board adoption a policy framework to address the issue of equity, and prioritize it district-wide. The policy needs to accomplish the following:

- Define equity specifically in terms that clearly contrast it with equality. Specify when things are supposed to be equal (such as access to resources) and when they are supposed to be equitable (fair, just, and different to level the playing field).
- Direct the methods to be used in collecting data on equity across the district. Specify the instruments, measures, and procedures to be used to identify equity problems and determine probable causes.
- Require the disaggregation of all centrally collected assessment and program participation data by subgroups (including gender, ethnicity, language, and program participation status), and monitor their performance. Direct district leaders to pay close attention to achievement gaps that do not narrow over a reasonable amount of time ([Recommendation 2](#)).
- Require when problems with equity are evident multiple measures to evaluate reasons for achievement gaps; identify the key factors that contribute to maintaining the gaps. Determine the suitability of current efforts to ameliorate the gap, based on new data.
- Require that the factors contributing to inequities, when they are within the scope of the district's control, be targeted and eradicated, using whatever means necessary to make changes that will result in their improvement.
- Establish the importance of high quality, student-centered instruction. Describe specifically what such instruction looks like in the classroom; require teachers to adhere to the district's instructional model; and hold their supervisors responsible for coaching, monitoring, and evaluating them on implementation of the model ([Recommendation 4](#)).
- Institutionalize the importance of equity in all curriculum management functions throughout the district, including all planning, monitoring, curriculum revisions, curriculum delivery, and program development and implementation. Require that departments and schools collaborate to address equity issues from a system perspective ([Recommendation 1](#)).
- Identify professional development initiatives that are necessary to address equity issues, create a plan that outlines their accomplishments, and ensure the plan's integration with the district professional development plan ([Recommendation 4](#)).
- Establish high expectations for all students, regardless of race, income level, language proficiency, gender, or special needs status. Specifically describe how those expectations are to be actualized in the classroom.

G.1.2: Direct the superintendent to develop with principals and other administrators strategies to help students experience success in the district's educational program, and incorporate such strategies into the strategic plan and school improvement plans (see [Recommendation 5](#)).

G.1.3: Direct the superintendent to review all programs and interventions to determine equality of access and equitable distribution of resources using achievement data.

G.1.4: Require congruity of board policy intent with administrative and school-based decisions and actions. Direct the superintendent to systemically monitor all reports, the budget, planning documents, assessment data, and programming plans to ascertain the equitable treatment of all school sites and all students.

G.1.5: Direct the superintendent to review all curriculum areas, programs, and facilities to determine equality of access and equitable distribution of resources using achievement gap data and cost benefit analyses.

G.1.6: Direct the superintendent to provide frequent and annual updates regarding efforts and progress in eliminating inequities within the district, using measures congruent with methods for equity data collection defined by policy.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended for consideration of the Superintendent of Coeur d'Alene Public Schools.

A.1.1: Prepare for board review and approval a policy framework to prioritize equity across the school district (**G.1.1**).

A.1.2: Establish administrative procedures clarifying, interpreting, and expanding the board policies addressed in **G.1.1**. Share the administrative procedures with the board, and ensure all district and school administrators are appropriately informed and trained.

A.1.3: Include in the development of the strategic plan a focus on equity and implementation of research-based strategies demonstrated to have the most powerful impact on closing achievement gaps. Include measurable objectives and evaluation components to clearly demonstrate changes in professional practice that link directly to leveling the playing field and improving student performance. Require all school improvement plans and department plans to be similarly constructed and aligned with the district's strategic plan to create a cohesive system of support for all efforts to achieve equity across the district (see [Recommendation 1](#)).

A.1.4: Monitor achievement by student subgroups at all levels through state assessments, district curriculum-based assessments, and formalized formative assessments, as well as national exams such as *Advanced Placement*, *SAT*, and *ACT*.

A.1.5: Require an instructional model that is centered on the individual student. The instructional model should reflect the latest research concerning effective approaches and activities for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students. Such approaches are typically characterized by individualized instruction at the appropriate level for each child. The adopted instructional model should reflect the district's mission and goals.

A.1.6: Confirm and align the classroom observation protocol and teacher appraisal system with the district's instructional model. Continue to train all school administrators in using classroom observation protocols and the appraisal system to monitor instruction and provide growth feedback to teachers. Monitor school administrators' use of monitoring and teacher appraisal as tools to increase productivity and improve outcomes for students in the school district as a whole, as well as to improve the performance of teachers who are struggling with differentiation and using diagnostic assessment data to drive their planning and instruction.

A.1.7: Regularly review site-based decision making for equity, particularly the decisions that impact the delivery of the educational program and equitable access to learning opportunities.

A.1.8: Oversee all reports, budgets, planning documents, assessments, programs, and interventions to ascertain the equitable treatment of all students at all school sites and alignment with district direction.

- Continue to disaggregate data pertaining to the needs of students to serve as background information in all reports, planning documents, and program plans.
- Require that budgets reflect the equitable distribution of resources.
- Require regular analysis of disaggregated data pertaining to all district practices, including program enrollment, course offerings, disciplinary actions, and academic interventions, to determine disparities and inequities.

Inequities existed in the Coeur d'Alene Public Schools system in graduation requirements, transfer procedures, and implementation of full-day kindergarten. These recommendations, if put into place over the next 6-18 month period, will aid in overcoming relative inequities that some students face when they enter the district.