



Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT * HIGH EXPECTATIONS * STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

**POST – PANDEMIC
STRATEGIC PLAN
2021-24**

Preparing

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Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT * HIGH EXPECTATIONS * STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Advanced

Mission and Vision Statement
Superintendent's Message
Global View

Strategic Points

Instruction and Assessment
Multi-Tiered System of Support/Academic Remediation
Technology
Social-Emotional Learning
School Culture and Management
Teacher Evaluation
Administrator Evaluation
Labor Relations
Personnel and Staffing
Finances & Budget
Facilities
Transportation
Nutrition Services

Non-Discrimination Statement

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Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT * HIGH EXPECTATIONS * STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

MISSION

Purpose and Direction * Advanced

The mission of the Warren Consolidated Schools, in partnership with families and community, is to achieve a level of excellence in teaching and learning which enables all students to become knowledgeable, productive, ethical, and successful citizens.

VISION

Purpose and Direction * Advanced

We're creating a collaborative culture of stakeholders committed to scholarship and creating success for our staff and students.

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Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT * HIGH EXPECTATIONS * STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Governance and Leadership * AdvancED

Life After The Pandemic...

There is little doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused economic, social, and educational disruption and it will require a concerted effort on the part of all stakeholders to meet the needs of our students in the years to come. From job losses and families unable to gather for holidays or celebrations to our students being forced to learn from home, the pandemic has been extraordinarily challenging.

On the brighter side, the arrival of a vaccine has given hope and continues to help us get back to normal, which for me has sounded the alarm – one that requires us to anticipate what school will look like when we re-open and students are back in school. It is important for all of us to remember that many things changed because of the pandemic, including the integration of technology into our instruction, the significant loss of employees who sought work elsewhere, and the loss of students due to homeschool or other opportunities.

As we look ahead to the return to normal, we must be prepared for things to be different, and more importantly, be ready to welcome our students and staff back to our schools. This WCS POST-PANDEMIC STRATEGIC PLAN is designed to identify, anticipate, and develop solutions to critical areas of our school district that need to be ready for the return of students and staff. Earlier this year, the state of Michigan released MI Blueprint for Comprehensive Student Recovery, which provides guidance and recommendations on the return to in-person, post pandemic learning. As you will see, WCS is several steps ahead of this blueprint given the initiatives that we have considered in this plan.

Our district's strategic planning process has always been anchored by the word *dynamic*, reflecting the district's commitment to remaining flexible given the extraordinarily complex nature of public education as it currently exists in the state of Michigan. This has now been compounded by the pandemic, and we must maintain a strong focus on our students in order to help them transition back into school.

As a result, our strategic plan continues to “weatherproof” the district from a sea of constant change by remaining focused on student achievement, high expectations, and strong relationships as the foundation for helping students prepare for their return to in-person and beyond. Key sources to guide our work include the WCS Strategic Plan for Programs & Courses, Instructional Practices, Learning Environments, and Evaluation supported by the AdvancED Standards for School Systems.

In the update that follows, we have maintained a connection to the appropriate AdvancED standards, which include: Purpose and Direction, Governance and Leadership, Teaching and Assessing for Learning, Resources and Support Systems, and Using Results for Continuous Improvement. These standards provide us clarity of purpose in our focus on continuous improvement.

Finally, we remain committed to a shared vision for decision-making with our constituent employee and parent groups, and in the end, this plan is about serving the children of our community.

Robert D. Livernois, Ph.D.
Superintendent

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Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT * HIGH EXPECTATIONS * STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

GLOBAL VIEW

Purpose and Direction * AdvancED

State-of-the-Art

PROGRAMS & COURSES

Continuous Improvement * AdvancEd

State-of-the-Art Programs and Courses includes high academic expectations, curriculum that connects to students' lives, cultures, and communities, career and technical education, partnerships with higher education, interdisciplinary courses, and project- and community-based learning. These learning experiences include a set of ideas, principles and strategies that lead to students being well prepared for post-secondary education, career and civic participation.

Rigorous and Relevant

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Teaching and Assessment * AdvancEd

Rigorous and Relevant Instructional Practices should connect directly to students' lives and deeply engage them with the content in order for students to be better prepared for post-secondary education, career and civic participation. To succeed in postsecondary education and in a 21st century economy, students must be afforded opportunities to practice higher-order thinking skills, such as how to analyze an argument, weigh evidence, recognize bias, distinguish fact from opinion, balance competing principles, work collaboratively with others, and be able to communicate clearly what they understand. In other words, instruction must be rigorous, meaningful and real-world applicable.

Dynamic and Flexible

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Resources and Support * AdvancEd

Dynamic and Flexible Learning Environments are educational philosophies and systems, concerned with providing learners with increased choice, convenience, and personalization to suit their particular learning need. In particular, flexible learning provides learners with choices about where, when, and how learning occurs.

EVALUATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

Evaluation and Accountability is the measurement of the district's schools and personnel as it relates to student achievement through the use of local, state and national assessments as well as performance standards established by state, national, and international agencies. Evaluation and accountability also includes the analysis and allocation of district resources to focus all stakeholders in *Preparing 21st Century Learners for a Globally Competitive World*.

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Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

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INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

Instructional Practices * WCS

Teaching & Assessing for Learning * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

- The pandemic has slowed the pace of instruction for teachers and students. The district must make recommendations to teachers with respect to state standards, curriculum and pacing, knowing most students will have learning gaps from their time away from school.
- While there are likely to be learning gaps, educators must be mindful of maintaining a growth mindset and not simply focusing on deficits.
- Assessments are important drivers of classroom instruction. The district needs to identify assessments and build a calendar for next year. Consideration of what, if any, assessments we can eliminate to produce additional teaching time is important, as is a plan for how we can make better use of teacher common formative assessments.
- Lastly, we will need to revisit how we report benchmark data and student progress to parents in simple, readable formats. Discussion on report cards for various levels will be important.
- Special Education students in specialized classrooms did not have as many mainstreaming opportunities as they have had in the past.
- As we consider instruction, assessment, and how we report student progress, we must be mindful of the diverse population we serve, taking an important look at equity in our practices.

Update:

- Beginning in the summer of 2021, the district will offer “Extended Learning Opportunities,” both formal and informal, to support closing learning gaps for our students and reconnecting them with our schools. These opportunities could also be offered during the school year.
- Use of a supplemental tool, such as eSpark Learning, when students are away from school will provide support for foundational skills, this will be available for all elementary students. In addition, elementary schools will distribute “Summer Bridge Books” to support key skills such as reading and math. For students in grades 8-11, we will encourage use of online resources through the College Board and Khan Academy which align with the SAT.
- The Office of Curriculum and Instruction will support PK-12 teachers on prioritizing essential standards, identifying pre-requisite skills, and planning instruction/assessment so students receive rigorous grade-level

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Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT * HIGH EXPECTATIONS * STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

curriculum. We will also support building administrators through the Professional Learning Community process to support targeted classroom instruction.

- Next year's school calendar balances our district professional learning time, allowing staff to meet regularly. Protecting this scheduled time will ensure teachers and administrators can focus on instruction, assessment, and student support.
- Returning to in-person instruction will allow for more mainstreaming opportunities. Additional sections of ECSE Bridges classrooms and Cross-Categorical Resource Room have been added to accommodate students.
- To support our youngest learners, the district will open 4 additional Great Start Readiness/World of Fours Program classrooms.

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MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT/ ACADEMIC REMEDIATION

Instructional Practices * WCS

Teaching & Assessing for Learning * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

- As of the writing of this document, many students from Warren Consolidated Schools have been away from our buildings and in-person instruction for 14 months. The teaching and learning that has been occurring online has been less frequent and at a slower pace. This has certainly led to wider gaps in student learning in reading and math that will require an intense focus on remediation for many students.
- While work with the process of selecting standards and an assessment calendar will be helpful to overcoming learning gaps, students will need more instructional time and extra support to make up for lost learning time caused by the pandemic.
- The pandemic has clearly shown many of the inequities in our community. Language barriers, internet access, and income disparities exist throughout Warren Consolidated Schools. Establishing the proper role of the school in addressing these matters and working together to support students and families will be critical.

Update:

- Additional interventionists to support students, as well as instructional coaches will be added. When the majority of students are missing key skills, the most effective approach is to adjust classroom instruction, instructional coaches can support teachers in this planning.
- In partnership with the Macomb Intermediate School District, an additional elementary literacy coach, to add to our team. This additional position would allow us to support more teachers in their planning and how they deliver classroom interventions to students.
- Applied for additional grant funding to support before and after school programs.
- We will improve our MTSS process through the use of Performance Matters to document interventions, progress monitor students, and inform parents of progress.

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Creating Dynamic Futures

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TECHNOLOGY

Instructional Practices & Learning Environments * WCS

Teaching & Assessing for Learning * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

- The pandemic introduced a universal platform for teachers to distribute content to students, Schoology, as well as increased devices throughout our district. Careful attention must be paid to the future of the 12,000 laptops purchased by the district, as well as the technology that was installed in our school buildings as part of the 2016 bond.
- Further consideration for laptops: Do students bring their laptops with them each day as part of daily instruction? If students are bringing in laptops on a regular basis this will likely create the need for dedicated building IT assistance. Will computer labs be dissolved? How will any charges to students be assessed and collected? And how will the District pay for additional laptops in the event some become broken or when they become obsolete?
- There are virtual tools that can help our need to assess students, provide classroom instruction and remediation opportunities. However, the district must be strategic in their implementation, carefully monitoring tools and their implementation. The district has worked diligently for the past several years to limit purchases to a few high-quality resources. Providing direction to schools on which tools the district recommends will be important.
- Some families have liked the virtual option we have provided. In addition, there are also opportunities for alternative high school students in a virtual program.

Update:

Over the past year, WCS not only purchased 12,000 laptops but also remote hotspots for families that may need connectivity. Also, in order to continue to facilitate technology and remote learning needs, the District intends to purchase new laptops for staff members using grant funds. These laptops are more conducive to long term daily use with a focus on an additional focus on collaboration. This District plans to use grant funds for this purchase.

The District also seeks to take advantage of grant funds to purchase an additional 870 student laptops in order to continue to refresh the student laptop inventory. Also, to continue to support the vast technology throughout the District, the IT Department will continue to ensure additional bandwidth and security through use of cloud-based security appliances. This system not only provides additional bandwidth to WCS web traffic, it also extends the protection of the in-house security firewall to remote staff and students. For even additional security and to ward against potential cybersecurity threats IT also intends to utilize cybersecurity software which helps to monitor application activity, network traffic and user behavior to assist in thwarting attacks.

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Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

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SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

*Learning Environments * WCS*

*Resources & Support Systems * AdvancED*

What is the problem and resulting implications?

- Transitions can be a major challenge for children. Intentional planning for student well-being as they move from learning at home to being back in school will be critically important.
- Ensuring students feel safe, connected to our schools, supported, and that we focus on ensuring they enjoy being back at school will be critically important to any instruction, assessment, or remediation initiative the district chooses to pursue.
- Our district lacks a systemic Tier 1 approach as well as a formal structured time during the day to address Social Emotional Learning.

Update:

- Additional counseling support will be added at the elementary school level.
- The District Social-Emotional Learning Committee have made a series of recommendations to district and building leaders to ensure students have support during the 2021-22 school year and beyond, including structures and common language.
- The SEL Committee has built a Schoology page filled with resources for staff to use.
- Staff throughout the district will continue to be trained in Trauma Informed & Resilient Schools.

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21ST CENTURY LEARNERS

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Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

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SCHOOL CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT

Learning Environments * WCS

Governance & Leadership * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

- With students having been away from school buildings for so long, staff will have to work with students on the basic management aspects of a school day. Knowing what side of the hallway to walk on, how to take turns at recess, or how to line up to buy lunch in the cafeteria are examples of “school management” that will need to be formally reintroduced when students return. Likewise, older students will have to adjust to structure and supervision, which may have been reduced in the remote learning environment.
- In some cases, students have transitioned to new schools since the start of the pandemic. Children in Kindergarten, 6th, and 9th grade have all transitioned to new schools. In addition, the number of new students who have never set foot in our buildings but are participating in remote learning will also have to be accounted for.

Update:

- To support student transitions, schools will offer a “transition” camp experience for incoming Kindergarten, 1st grade, 6th grade, and 9th grade students prior to the school year. These camps will be the week of August 23, 2021.
- The 2021-2022 school year will begin on August 31, 2021 for all students. This pre-Labor Day opening to the school year will allow teachers and students to take some time to focus on getting to know one another and procedures.
- Some processes will continue, such as virtual parent events, to allow additional family participation.
- Staff trained in Trauma-Informed & Resilient Schools will utilize resiliency strategies to help strengthen students’ skills in the areas of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

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TEACHER EVALUATION

Evaluation & Accountability * WCS

Using Results for Continuous Improvement * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

Statutory Requirements and Assessment/Growth Data - The confluence of assessments and evaluations, at a time we are heading into several years of unreliable, and potentially, invalid data as we prioritize remediating the educational impact on many of our students' long-term success is troubling. The federal and state governments have provided little relief or adjustments to the various accountability systems, which currently account for 40% of teachers' evaluations.

Update:

Waivers or relief provided in the 2019-2020 school year ended, and we are now back to following the school code and legislation as written and executed prior to the pandemic for teacher evaluations. We have begun reviewing strategies and types of data that can be used at the local level of the growth component in alignment with the other recovery efforts with students that can be fair, reliable, and meaningful.

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Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

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ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION

Evaluation & Accountability * WCS

Using Results for Continuous Improvement * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

- *Statutory Requirements and Assessment/Growth Data* - The confluence of assessments and evaluations, at a time we are heading into several years of unreliable and potentially invalid data as we prioritize remediating the educational impact on many of our students' long-term success is troubling. The federal and state governments have provided little relief or adjustments to the various accountability systems, which currently accounts for 40% of administrators' evaluations.

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21ST CENTURY LEARNERS

for a Globally Competitive World





Warren Consolidated Schools

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LABOR RELATIONS

* WCS

Governance & Leadership * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

- *Labor Shortages* – As we anticipate staffing shortages in greater abundance, the ability to move all groups along a single salary increase/decrease continuum becomes a challenge. The market rate may impact our ability to staff certain positions and, potentially, favor one labor group, or even a portion of one labor group over another. Additionally, many concessions resulting from 2014-2015 have subsequently been returned to all labor groups. With an unsure future moving beyond 2021-2022, a more cautionary approach to concession relief is warranted.
- *Conflict over Pandemic Decisions* – Decisions which were made during the height of the pandemic may or may not need to be “undone” once we are passed the brunt of the pandemic. Redeployed staff may not be able to return to their previous positions dependent upon overall staffing and qualifications throughout the District. Individuals and groups have long memories when it comes to decisions they may have negatively impacted them, which can create morale concerns.

Update:

Since the pandemic began, the District has received financial support from a number of different sources. Much of this is considered ESSER grant funds (Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief). Although there are restrictions on how much of the funds can be spent, some of these resources can be used to increase staffing in specific areas of learning recovery support and/or through targeted employee compensation methods for retention efforts. This will be one of the considerations as we work to determine the most appropriate uses of the funds while keeping in mind the best interests of WCS students.

We also continue to experience a labor shortage in some areas, with Transportation being the most critical. We worked with AFSCME through the mediation process to establish more competitive wages in high demand areas. In addition, we have reached agreement with all four labor groups to be more competitive in the market. We will maintain our commitment to the mediation process and work collaboratively with all labor groups through the post-pandemic period.

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PERSONNEL AND STAFFING

Personnel and Staffing * WCS

Resources & Support Systems * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

- *Staff Shortages*- Maintaining a full staff will continue to be a challenge post-pandemic. Difficulties in staffing various positions existed prior and have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The most notable positions experiencing shortages are Transportation, Latchkey, Classroom Aides, Substitutes, and Teachers. With additional funding and demonstrated need for additional staff to accommodate learning recovery efforts, shortages are expected to continue.
- *Quarantine or Testing Requirements* – In addition to finding substitutes in regular environment, should the District experience a significant number of staff or students requiring quarantine, we could experience difficulties in any area, nutrition, transportation, instruction, after school programs, etc. In addition, it is still unknown what protocols and restrictions will be in place for the 2021-2022 school year, such as testing, which will require additional time and attention from staff.
- *Staffing a Virtual Program* – This continued offering for students and families will further complicate staffing procedures for the 2021-2022 school year with the potential for staff to have “hybrid” schedules to accommodate both in-person and virtual students. Providing in-person instruction while simultaneously running a K-12 virtual program will magnify staffing complications and may require additional staff

Update

We will be hosting multiple career fairs to actively recruit potential employees in all staff areas and will be heavily advertising openings across multiple avenues, such as billboards, social media, job posting links, etc. We have hired a Pandemic Coordinator for the 2021-2022 school year to support any remaining COVID restrictions, testing or other requirements in collaboration with our school nurses, in addition to supporting the other efforts included in this strategic plan. We will also be evaluating any potential barriers of entry for potential candidates with our labor groups, such as language barriers, testing protocols, qualifications, etc.

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BUDGET & FINANCE

Budget and Finance * WCS

Resources & Support Systems * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

School finance continues to be uncertain and fluid. Since presenting the 2021 budget to the WCS Board of Education in June of 2020, many things have changed financially for our District and for education funding in general in Michigan. Since the presentation of the budget WCS began school virtually (in-person school as “normal” was budgeted), new funding sources have become available, there was a reduction in state aid to finish the 2020 fiscal year, the “blending” calculation of student count was modified and additional pandemic-related costs have been incurred. We face the uncertainty of further reductions to state aid, additional pandemic related costs and the reinstatement of the original blending formula. We also face enrollment challenges. Alternatively, will there be additional grants and resources that will be available to the District to assist with PPE and other COVID-related costs?

Update

Warren Consolidated Schools is fortunate to have been granted a number of different grant sources since the beginning of the pandemic. These include three phases of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSERS) funds as well as Coronavirus Relief (CRF) funds. Additional grants have been received that are specific to certain areas such as technology needs, PPE, summer programs and childcare (preschool and latchkey). To date the District has received over 10 different grant awards.

There are restrictions surrounding a number of the awards and some may be used over a number of years. A large percentage of the recent funding (including ESSER II and ESSER III) is not yet available to the District and we are currently working on future spending plans of the funds to best benefit the District. This planning will be an important component of the amendment to the 2022 budget as well as the 2023 District Budget.

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Warren Consolidated Schools

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FACILITIES

Facilities * WCS

Resources & Support Systems * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

The facilities department will face many new challenges upon the return of students to WCS buildings. Unanswered questions remain, including: Who will clean student desks between classes? How will frequently touched surfaces be cleaned regularly? How will custodians be able to thoroughly clean all areas when they are currently doing rotating A and B loads? Also, staffing is a challenge within the custodial department. There are currently nine open positions within the custodial department and six subs available, which is down significantly from previous school years.

Update

The Facilities team continues to be diligent in keeping our buildings clean including a focus on frequently touched services. The department reacts promptly in the event of a positive case.

The Department also works closely with each building to ensure that buildings are well stocked with PPE including masks, gloves and wipes. Using the grant funds awarded to WCS we will continue to keep PPE stocked as necessary.

Also, using grant funds, the District is currently finalizing the installation of the Board-approved air purification system District Wide called Global Plasma Solution Technology. This is one of the leading technologies in air purification and has shown to have a 99% reduction rate of SARS – COV 2.

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Warren Consolidated Schools

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TRANSPORTATION

Transportation * WCS

Resources & Support Systems * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

WCS requires 60-62 drivers in order to pick up and drop off WCS students on time as well as to service athletic trips and field trips. WCS currently has 46 drivers which leaves the department significantly short resources. A number of drivers have left since the beginning of the year for a number of reasons including for other positions inside the district and outside the district and some due to retirements. Replacing open positions at the current time has proven to be extremely challenging. Based on our current staffing levels, modifications to transportation would have to be made in order to not only transport all of our students, but to ensure the appropriate cleaning of busses between runs.

Update

The 2020-2021 school year was a challenge for the Transportation Department due to the lack of drivers. The Transportation Department worked diligently to accommodate the in-person hybrid schedule as well as athletics transportation needs and daily “shuttles” (example: to and from CPC, Butcher, etc.).

The recently approved mediator’s report with Local 1346 has afforded the district the opportunity to compete at market rate for bus drivers, which will be essential to the transport of students next year. An aggressive advertising/promotional campaign has been underway for the past several weeks to recruit drivers. Efforts have been paying off and a number of additional drivers have been hired. However, because of the time and attention it takes to onboard and fully train a new driver, we do anticipate some staffing challenges to begin the school year.

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NUTRITION SERVICES

Nutrition Services * WCS

Resources & Support Systems * AdvancED

What is the problem and resulting implications?

Similar to Transportation, the Nutrition Services department is experiencing a staffing crisis. In order to fully operate our food service program within our school buildings and our Central Kitchen consistently with previous years, approximately 100 staff members are needed. We currently have 67 staff members. We previously had 11 or 12 consistent substitutes; only two have expressed interest in continuing once school resumes. With our current staffing levels, a number of changes will need to be made to the food service program. Also, we will need to continue to monitor in-person dining requirements and anticipate only being able to have our cafeterias at less than full capacity.

Update

Nutrition Services has continued to focus on feeding all WCS students. During the school year the focus was on in-person meals when students are learning in-person as well as meal distributions for times that students are learning virtually. Throughout the summer the Department focused on areas that housed summer programs for students.

For the upcoming school year, the Federal Government has extended free meals for all students through the 2022 school year. The Department will also be serving virtual students by having meals available for pick up.

In order to continue to foster efficient meal distributions the Food Service plans to make some equipment purchases including new milk coolers using grant funds.

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Warren Consolidated Schools

Creating Dynamic Futures

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT * HIGH EXPECTATIONS * STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

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In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Americans with Disability Act of 1990, the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act of 1977, and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008, it is the policy of the Warren Consolidated Schools that no person shall, on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, (including sexual orientation or transgender identity), disability, age, religion, height, weight, marital or family status, military status, ancestry, genetic information, or any other legally protected category, (collectively, "Protected Classes") be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to, discrimination during any program, activity, service or in employment. Inquiries should be addressed to the Chief Human Resources Officer, 31300 Anita, Warren, Michigan 48093, (586) 825-2400, ext. 63110.

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