



Catalog Final Report prepared for  
**Williamson County Schools**



## Summary

In February of 2021 Williamson County Schools engaged FHS to provide DEI workshops, evaluate school culture, and provide a customized cultural strategic plan. After four months of immersion into WCS culture and hearing from all who desired to share, it is our pleasure to provide our findings and recommendations. The information gathered was instrumental in identifying strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and opportunities for improvement in WCS operations. FHS exercised multiple avenues by which to accomplish this goal. During discovery, FHS provided:

- Workshops for school administrators and district leaders
- Document and handbook reviews
- Listen and learn sessions with email submissions
- Surveys, including a SWOT Analysis
- School visits

Data results show strengths: in academia, rigor is evident; resources within the county exist to provide insight and education; district level policies show intention to provide a safe learning environment for students. Weaknesses include: limited awareness of cultural differences and history; no formal bias training mechanism for employees; a lack of consistency in systems, policies, and procedures; and limited diversity among leadership and across the county. Opportunities: enhancement of communications and publications highlighting diversity and inclusion; improve student engagement for all students to ensure inclusion versus isolation; expand employee diversity; celebration of individual and group uniqueness; intentional efforts to increase post secondary educational and vocational opportunities; reset school culture. Threats: lack of accountability in policy implementation to ensure student safety at all levels throughout WCS; deeply-rooted institutional systems that directly impact matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion; lack of professional development in managing student behaviors; lack of diverse hires and the retention of those new hires; reputation among communities of color poses a hostile environment if issues are not adequately addressed; students sacrifice safety for educational advancement.

Data collected during discovery also points to a county divided in opinions and experiences. While many support WCS's efforts to make its culture inclusive, there are those who oppose those efforts. Parents and stakeholders expressed disdain for *Wit and Wisdom* curriculum and condemned Critical Race Theory. Parents and stakeholders also praised the long overdue attention to cultural differences and shared devastating stories of racism without consequence experienced at school. There were also those who admitted to blindspots and welcomed education and awareness for all.

At the leadership level, it is unclear what measures are in place to ensure compliance of WCS board policies and procedures. Handbooks lack consistency of information, policies, processes, and procedures. They are independently structured without a framework or format making them difficult to follow. Measures to ensure compliance with policies and procedures should require annual monitoring.

Feedback from teachers and administrators centered around the need for training, support, and accountability, while some pushed back on the need for DEI, stating there was "only a problem if you go looking for one with that agenda." While there were competing arguments, the thing everyone agreed on is that "every student deserves a safe place to learn, grow, and get prepared for the world." Some shared the importance of cultural awareness and respect being taught at home, while others recognized the need for discipline and accountability at school due to the lack of such lessons being taught at home. Still, everyone agreed that students need a safe place to report misbehavior when it occurs and need to do so without the fear of retaliation or their experiences being dismissed (which there were examples provided). One parent shared, "while the primary responsibility of WCS is to educate students, that education should include a high bar for character, respect, and empathy."



In conclusion, feedback received includes support for diversity initiatives, opposition to Critical Race Theory, praise for their voices being heard, and a push to stop diversity efforts immediately. It is clear that multiple perspectives exist among WCS constituents/stakeholders, and these perspectives manifest into the current culture of WCS, a county divided.

Based on the findings, Williamson County Schools will benefit greatly from a culture reset and an extensive cultural strategic plan. FHS recommends implementation and oversight of the plan be executed immediately using an external DEI professional. For the purpose of this summarized report, we present the following recommendations.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Policy/Handbook**

- a. Create a template for both student and teacher handbooks to ensure all handbooks contain the same information, standards, procedures, and processes.
- b. Revise student handbooks to ensure a consistent, systematic approach to policies and processes. All handbooks (for each school) should contain the same information across WCS. Handbooks should be available and easily retrievable for students and parents in print and on websites.
- c. Revise teacher handbooks to contain consistent language and inclusive processes for all student expectations. All handbooks (for each school) should contain the same information across WCS.
- d. Revise all WCS handbooks to reflect clear and consistent policies on bullying and harassment.

### **2. Disciplinary Action**

- a. Review each school's discipline records to ensure consequences are fair and equitable.
- b. Monitor reports connected to classroom discipline; communicate with parents involved to build trust, demonstrate transparency, and encourage resolve.

### **3. Communication**

- a. Offer a safe space for students to report incidents of abuse, bullying, and/or harassment. This should include a weblink versus an email to allow for anonymous submission.
- b. Clearly articulate new processes to employees prior to disseminating information to parents/constituents. Doing the opposite creates mistrust and signals a lack of support and transparency. Provide as much information as possible to parents concerning their children. Be proactive, not reactive to situations when they arise. For example: explore a few resources such as "Possip," "Remind," and "Class Mojo."
- c. Create a pipeline for open communication to hear the voices of WCS - students, parents, and employees. This pipeline should be two-way communication to hear from parents, students, and employees to answer questions and concerns.
- d. Create more avenues to communicate with parents and evaluate the effectiveness of communication mediums with faculty, staff, and the community. For example: utilize summer and orientation to introduce new expectations, accountability measures, and communication channels.



#### **4. Resources & Culture**

- a. Provide support for counselors to access various post-graduation opportunities to include diversity of majors, flexibility of university choices, as well as non-college career opportunities.
- b. Partner with Conexion Americas, Nashville LGBT Chamber, API Middle Tennessee, as a resource for minority populations. Tennessee Educators of Color Alliance is a great resource for employees.
- c. Increase diversity hires in teaching and leadership levels. Focus efforts on culture, support, and professional development to increase retention rates for diversity hires.
- d. Identify and implement multiple literature options to include all nationalities for all students to experience the culture of their classmates.
- e. Cultivate relationships with community organizations that specialize in all areas of a whole child approach.
- f. Engage counties and districts with higher populations of ethnic diversity for collaboration and innovation.
- g. Build relationships with diverse institutions, organizations, and communities for exposure and employment opportunities.

#### **5. Training & Accountability**

- a. Implement initial, intermediate, and high-level (intense) diversity education for all WCS employees annually.
- b. Create systems to track efforts and measure outcomes from training to ensure accountability of all initiatives.
- c. Implement a 360 Survey annually to assess performance of staff and leadership.
- d. Document experiences with implementing new DEI strategies to set an example for other districts to follow.

#### **6. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

- a. Adopt a universal definition for diversity, equity, and inclusion. This should be used across all WCS campuses. All employees, leaders, students, and parents should know this is the definition of choice used for WCS. For example: In developing your definitions, remember inclusivity involves more than race and gender; DEI is a practice in daily behavior, attitude, and understanding of inclusive practices. Simply put, DEI is the fair treatment, value and respect of all people. Diversity is not a checkbox for a completed task.
- b. Implement the cultural strategic plan provided, which was created with the assistance of WCS leaders, teachers, and students.

Thank you for allowing FHS to walk beside you on this critical step in your journey forward. We are available to answer any questions and/or concerns you may have to ensure your full satisfaction of the materials presented. We also look forward to walking beside you as you continue making progress along the way.