

Forest Lake Area Schools (FLAS) *District Diversity Plan*

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District Mission Statement

The mission of the Forest Lake Area Schools, the innovative leader of a community engaged in learning, is to develop individuals who excel in, and contribute to, a dynamic global society, which will be accomplished by:

- *Attracting and retaining the best and brightest staff*
- *Integrating technology seamlessly*
- *Fostering interactive partnerships with parents*
- *Challenging students at all levels and*
- *Inspiring students to be actively engaged in meaningful lifelong learning experiences.*

District Overview

The Forest Lake Area School District is one of the largest geographic districts in the state, covering an area of 240 square miles and parts of three counties. The district serves the communities of East Bethel, May Township, Ham Lake, Hugo, Forest Lake, Columbus, Lino Lakes, Linwood Township, Marine, New Scandia, Stacy and Wyoming. The district is home to eight kindergarten through sixth grade elementary schools, including a Montessori program; two junior highs for grades 7-9; an Area Learning Center for students in grades 6-12; and a senior high for students grades 10-12.

The area served by the Forest Lake school district is experiencing significant residential and commercial growth along with rapidly changing demographics. Student demographics for the Forest Lake Area School District mirror these changes. Between the 2002 and 2009 school years, the:

- Percentage of students of color increased from 2.89% of the student population to 8%.
- Percentage of students eligible for free and/or reduced meals increased from 12.4% to 20%.
- Percentage of students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) increased from .38% to 1%.
- Percentage of students receiving special education services increased from 10.07 % to 12%.

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

The Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity identifies ten counties in Minnesota with the largest percent change in people of color from 2000 to 2005. The three counties served by the Forest Lake Area School District, Washington, Chisago and Anoka, are all included on this list. Of the three counties, Chisago County saw the greatest increase (90.2%) followed by Anoka County (73.8%) and Washington (69.1%). Chisago County also ranked third in the state following Scott County (114.89%) and Wright County (113%) for the greatest percent change in people of color.

District data from completed Primary Home Language Questionnaires reflects an increase in the number of students who speak a home language other than English from 186 students in the 2005 school year to 253 students in the 2007 school year. Nineteen languages other than English are spoken in the district, including: Hmong, Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, Ukranian, Russian, Chinese, Krio (Liberia), Cambodian, Cebuano (Philippines), Vietnamese, Sign Language, English: Creole, German, Korean, Laotian, Portuguese, Romanian, Slavonian, Thai.

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

Minnesota Trends

Key findings from the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership's (MMEP) 2006 State of Students of Color Report include:

- Students of color are driving Minnesota's K-12 enrollment growth, while white non-Hispanic enrollments decline.
- Refugee and foreign born populations create even greater diversity for Minnesota schools.
- Minnesota's school aged population will continued to grow more diverse.
- The increase in enrollment for students of color in K-12 education is no longer a Minneapolis and Saint Paul phenomenon. Since 2000, increases in students of color have occurred in the suburbs of Minneapolis and Saint Paul and in school districts in Greater Minnesota.
- Achievement gaps persist, despite slight improvements for all students.
- Students of color are less likely to be prepared for higher education.
- Enrollment of students of color in higher education continues to rise, but participation of many students of color right after high school still lags behind white non-Hispanic and Asian students.

Data Collection and Needs Assessment

The focus areas included in this plan, as well as the strategies designed to address them, were identified through meetings and information gathering from a wide variety of stakeholders and resources, including:

- Strategic planning action team
- District staff and administrators
- Families and individual community members
- Community groups
- Other school districts in Minnesota
- Minnesota state agencies and organizations

Statutory Authority for Plan

- **Language Access.** Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons. Requires service providers who receive federal funds to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to services for people with limited English proficiency (LEP).
- **Language Access.** Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), 2000. Provides resources and guidance to improve access to

federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities for persons who, as a result of national origin, are limited in their English proficiency (LEP).

- **Inclusive Curriculum and Instruction.** Minnesota Rule 3500.0550, Inclusive Educational Program. Requires each district to adopt a written plan to assure that the curriculum developed for use in district schools establishes and maintains an inclusive educational program. An inclusive educational program is one that employs a curriculum that is developed and delivered so that students and staff gain an understanding and appreciation of multiculturalism, gender fairness and disability awareness.
- **School District Integration Revenue Program.** Minnesota Statutes 2005, Chapter 124D.86. School districts who are eligible and/or required to participate in this program must use the integration revenue to create or enhance learning opportunities which are designed to provide opportunities for students to have increased intercultural contacts through classroom experiences, staff initiatives, and other educationally related programs.
- **Indian Education Act,** Minnesota Statutes 2005, Chapter 124D.74. Originally passed in 1988 to formalize the State's commitment to supporting the unique cultural and academic needs of American Indian students. Requires school districts which enroll ten or more American Indian students to afford parents the opportunity to provide input related to the educational needs of American Indian students and to address the need for adult education programs for American Indian people in the community.

District Diversity Plan Overview

The FLAS District Diversity Plan grew out of the district's strategic planning process and supports the Strategic Plan's objectives related to student academic achievement, character development and community service. The Diversity Plan, like the Strategic Plan, is a "living document" that will always be open to change to ensure it is meeting the needs and reflecting the values of the community.

In order to ensure that the Diversity Plan is relevant to district needs and reflects a wide variety of perspectives, a District Diversity Committee will be formed to:

- *Identify existing and emerging needs* related to diversity within the district and community.
- *Recommend activities* to respond to these needs.
- *Promote and support* diversity initiatives within the district and community.

District Diversity Plan

The Diversity Plan identifies seven strategies to support the creation of learning environments that promote the academic success of all students. Specific activities will be developed to implement each of these strategies.

1. Student Academic Achievement:

FLAS will set high academic standards and expectations for all students and will provide the supports necessary for all students to realize their full potential.

2. Intercultural Student Activities and Partnerships

FLAS will promote activities and partnerships that provide opportunities for intercultural contact and learning between students.

3. Intercultural Staff Development

FLAS will provide professional development opportunities for all staff that facilitate the development of intercultural understanding, competence and practice.

4. Safe, Respectful and Inclusive Learning Environments

FLAS will work to create safe, respectful and inclusive learning environments through district-wide initiatives.

5. Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Staff

FLAS will work to recruit and retain highly qualified administrators and staff who reflect the diversity of the student body and the community and who have the intercultural knowledge, skills and abilities to work effectively with students from diverse backgrounds.

6. Inclusive and Responsive Curriculum and Instruction

FLAS will implement strategies through the Curriculum Review and Development process to ensure that culturally responsive and inclusive curricula, instructional materials and methods are used at all grade levels and in every subject area.

7. Communication with Staff, Families and the Community:

FLAS will implement strategies as part of the district communications plan to ensure that staff, students, families and community members have a clear understanding of the district's diversity goals and initiatives on an ongoing basis.