

Chippewa Valley Schools hires diversity and culture consultant

- By Nicole Tuttle For The Macomb Daily

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Harry Weaver, III was announced as the Chippewa Valley Schools new diversity, equity and school culture consultant on Dec. 2. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHIPPEWA VALLEY SCHOOLS

A Chippewa Valley Schools strategic plan initiative first conceived in 2014 took a key step ahead Monday when Harry Weaver, III was announced as the district's new diversity, equity and school culture consultant.

During a regular Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education meeting, Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services Donald Brosky announced the recent hire of Weaver as a district diversity, equity and school culture consultant. He will work with the Educational Services Department on staff workshops, professional development training and community programs.

"Harry started with us last week and will be meeting with the educational services staff to map out our plans for the next year," Brosky said, adding Weaver will offer a presentation at a future board meeting.

Weaver will be based out of the district's administration building in Clinton Township. Weaver was hired under a grant and contracted on a yearly basis as a part-time employee paid \$45 per hour. As a consultant, he will not receive benefits, according to district spokesperson Diane Blain.

"Chippewa Valley schools has a diverse student and parent population in all of our K-12 buildings. To acknowledge that diversity when we were developing our strategic plan in 2014 one of the areas the groups in attendance agreed upon was to have a culture goal," Brosky said.

The vision for this goal was to enhance the district community by embracing and celebrating diversity as well as connecting students and families. Weaver will take over work started in part by Oakland Schools diversity and equity consultant Jay Marks, who provided professional development training last school year for administrators and teaching staff.

"The strategies for this scope area included implementing professional development of staff and increases of cultural awareness and student support strategies," Brosky said. "Providing programs for all students that ensure opportunities for cultural awareness and positive behavior supports of fostering a welcoming atmosphere where all community members feel a sense of pride and connection to our district to name just a few."

An external district review done in 2016 for accreditation through advanced education indicated that the district needed to address the improvement priority of implementing and monitoring a districtwide sensitivity and diversity plan, Brosky said. The goal of this plan was to promote respect and understanding among students, staff, families and the community.

"Many schools within the district have provided a limited scope regarding cultural diversity and equity. However we envision the districtwide initiative to address the issues in our strategic plan and on the improvement priorities," Brosky said.

"Dr. Marks also conducted five sessions of professional learning with six of our elementary, middle and high schools within, that had the most diverse populations," Brosky said. "Although Dr. Marks' training was excellent, we realized that the time is now to have a person who was able to focus on Chippewa Valley, one who was able to work with teachers, students, parents on a consistent basis."

Brosky said prospective candidates presented their visions for the district.

“The decision was to contract services with Mr. Harry Weaver. His contract is currently until June and he will be paid entirely through grant funding,” Brosky said.

Weaver has experience as a facilitator of anti-bias diversity and inclusion training as well as program design. He has been an education director, certified trainer and facilitator for the Anti-Defamation League since 2001. Weaver has also worked with students and teachers across the state and nation. Over 20 years he has designed and facilitated programs and training for Metro Detroit school districts, businesses, local and national law enforcement agencies and other organizations. He is also a member of the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement and has taught middle school in Detroit. Weaver has a bachelor’s degree from the University of Michigan in history.

Also on Dec. 2, the Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education approved a resolution for regional enhancement millage. Board President Beth Pyden said that the board approved a similar resolution in September, but that a wording change made re-approval necessary.

“You all may recall that we had passed this same motion back at the end of September. At that time I believe we were the fourth or fifth district that did. There are now seven. And the one change that is being made to this is the minimal wording on it, that is in exhibit A. So we will be passing the same resolution that the other districts have already passed,” Pyden said.

Post-meeting, Superintendent Ron Roberts said the resolution included no material changes. The newly adopted language still indicates the board’s request that the Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD) submit a question of levying a regional enhancement millage at a rate of 1.9 mills for 10 years, specifically calendar years 2020-29. If the question reaches the ballot, voters in MISD districts would consider the measure next March. Pyden said that Chippewa Valley currently receives the lowest per-pupil foundation allowance in the state.

“The revenues from a regional enhancement millage are distributed entirely to the ISD's local public schools on a pro rata basis,” Pyden said. “The revenues from a regional enhancement millage will be unrestricted general funds and the district would be able to use such revenues to sustain its current level of programming by helping to offset increasing costs of education which are outstripping increases in the per-pupil foundation allowance from the state of Michigan.”