

Spotlighting Effective Strategies Influencing Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan

Goal 5 – Increase the percentage of all students who graduate from high school

District Spotlight: Durand Area Schools (DAS)

Strategy: Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System (EWIMS)

The current version of Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System (EWIMS) at Durand High School begins every school year by drilling down into student data. The Principal at Durand High School, Nicole Carpenter, explained how students are identified for support, "Initially, our primary data piece was course grades, but we came to realize that grades were a reflection of student engagement. To get students engaged, the first step was to improve attendance, so attendance became a focus area for our EWIMS team. Looking at multiple data sets allows us to better identify which students need help." **The first Tier 1 intervention put into practice by the staff was simple but effective, and it focused on improving communication.** Teachers in the building made a commitment to updating grades bi-weekly and reporting that information to families. Students were informed about their level of progress in classes and whether they were on track to earn credit in their courses. To facilitate the data collection process and work with students, the district has also hired an Academic Interventionist at the high school building. This staff member serves as the team lead and coordinates the EWIMS process. His responsibilities include meeting-bi-weekly to assess current schoolwide practices/programs, examining what additional data (and data tools) are needed to monitor progress, what action steps need to be taken to make schoolwide improvements, and working with individual students when necessary. To assist students who need greater intervention, the high school has invested in holding a parent/staffing meeting as a Tier II intervention. Participants in these meetings include the Principal, the Academic Interventionist, the School Counselor, the Student Services Coordinator, the parent, and the student. The meetings address issues such as attendance, behavior, and academic progress. Principal Carpenter stated, "This opportunity sends a clear message to families that we care, we are paying attention, and we want to help. The most important outcome is that parents and students can communicate what barriers they are experiencing and how we assist them. They truly appreciate being heard, and these meetings improve our relationships."

In addition to their efforts to identify students that need intervention, the EWIMS Team has also broadened their process to examine schoolwide patterns to discover elements that contribute to academic risk. Some elements that effect achievement can be difficult to pinpoint without a concentrated analysis of root causes. This focus allows the district to reveal not only the underlying issues but also the opportunity to implement more effective supports or initiate an evolution of their EWIMS process.

In the DAS District, EWIMS has expanded to other buildings. At Durand Middle School, Principal Becky Shankster, with the full support from staff, has enacted a series of tiered interventions that have changed the learning environment in remarkable ways. Tier I interventions, such as creating class competitions between grade levels for the lowest number of missing

assignments and best average attendance, have motivated most students to come to school and be active participants in the learning process. In terms of Tier II interventions, providing special attention to struggling students through a Check-In and Check-Out System, which pairs a mentor teacher with a student for quick meetings at the beginning and the end of the day, as well as including parents in attendance meetings has also made a difference. For students requiring Tier III interventions, the primary activity is to create behavior plans with the help from counselors, social workers, parents and administrators; these plans are specific and targeted to these student's needs. All these interventions have helped the school realize its goals. **Principal Shankster was pleased to share, "In the two years we have fully adopted our EWIMS process we have seen a decrease of 35% in failing grades for courses, a 30% decrease in behavior referrals, and a decrease of 33% of students that are classified as chronically absent."** The evidence for improvement can also be seen in some statewide assessments. Our average 8th Grade PSAT score in EBRW and Math (in the 2022-23 school year) was above the state average for the first time in my career of 16 years in the district. We are so excited to make this happen here." For districts considering using EWIMS as part of their secondary program, Principal Shankster advises to dream big but start small, "My advice is to pick one area and focus on it. It can be attendance, behavior or achievement. If you try to take it all on, you will be overwhelmed. You can start with any one of these, but you will see an improvement in all areas as a result. Experience some success, build momentum and look to expand."

At the core of the success of EWIMS at Durand Area Schools, school administrators agree that their willingness to collaborate to disrupt the status quo to help more students experience success is what drives their work. Principal Carpenter was grateful for the team effort, "I can't thank the Shiawassee RESD enough for their support of the EWIMS process. They have been incredibly helpful in making this work. Their guidance on adopting the whole process with fidelity has made a significant difference."

Are you ready to initiate a change in your district? Are you wondering if this will work for you and your students? Contact MDE-EWIMS@michigan.gov for assistance or visit the [Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System \(EWIMS\) \(michigan.gov\)](https://www.michigan.gov/earlywarning) to learn more.

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