Practical Community Learning Project
Project Proposal: Oakland County School Board Association Fall 2020

Introduction

This Practical Community Learning Project (PCLP) consists of a semester-long policy-based community project. Your group will meet in a remote setting regularly with the Community Engagement Manager of P3E to work with an organization around a mutually agreed upon initiative. The project will provide you with opportunities for dialog, research, and service. PCLP is open to Ford School of Public Policy undergraduate and graduate students. Participating students will receive two credits of independent study credit.

The Oakland County School Board Association seeks to partner with the University of Michigan’s Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy to host independent study students to examine diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in Oakland County schools. The Oakland County School Board Association (OCSBA) is a private 501c4 membership organization representing the School Boards in Oakland County funded by the Michigan Association of School Boards. This project is a continuation of the Practical Community Learning Project fellowship from Summer 2020.

Scope of Work

During the summer 2020, a team of Ford School students conducted a preliminary study in order to both evaluate and challenge the barriers to equity facing students in the Oakland County School District. Using data primarily from government and research institutions, student researchers analyzed discrepancies in schools based on factors such as race, income, and school budget. This led to the recommendation of five policy proposals: increased funding for low-income students and English Language Learners, the implementation of project-based community learning, faculty and staff DEI training, enacting accountability and transparency measures, and removing the Headlee rollback provision. The current project will examine the connection between schools and the juvenile justice system that creates barriers to DEI. Using the framework of the school to prison pipeline, you will compare student codes of conduct throughout Oakland County schools. By examining the punitive aspects of the various schools; the goal is to identify discrepancies between the racial and socioeconomic student populations thus informing leadership of potential changes to school policies. You will use criminal justice data, census information, and other available resources to propose policy solutions that will be shared with the OCSBA membership.

Expected Results

Your team’s work will inform the community partner by providing policy research and data analysis to better understand barriers to equity in Oakland County public schools. At the end of the independent study, the expectation is for you to present an understandable overview of the juvenile justice policy system and its intersection with the Oakland County school district. The overview should be straightforward and accessible to a non-expert audience. The overview will be accompanied with a more detailed account of the different issues areas as they relate to education, school discipline, and equity topics. Through the process, you will learn about the complexity of decision makers, institutions, and legal frameworks that impact the variety of communities living within the county. These deliverables will help school officials identify key decision-makers and opportunities for impacting policy. Most importantly, the work will provide a framework for the OCSBA, residents, and other stakeholders to influence investments, regulations, and other policies to support educational efforts on DEI and reduce the negative impacts on students moving forward.