

# A Promise to Act: Educational Equity and Excellence for All of Our Children

## Race Equity and Excellence in Education Action Plan™

Developed in conjunction with: Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe leaders, Isle Schools, Nay Ah Shing Schools, Onamia Schools, Wewinabi Early Childhood Program, and Central Lakes College

With consultation from the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, (MMEP)

April 2014



Funding Provided by: MMEP, Central Lakes College, the Otto Bremer Foundation, the Initiative Foundation, and the Blandin Foundation.

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## Race Equity and Excellence in Education Action Plan™

### Plan Authors

**Cathy Donovan** | Parent, Onamia School District

**Mary Fletcher** | Wewinabe Early Childhood Program, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

**Monte Fronk** | Parent, Isle School District

**Jennifer Godinez** | Associate Director, Minnesota Minority Education Partnership

**Larry Jallen** | Building Operations Manager, Onamia School District

**Dean Kapsner** | Principal, Isle School District

**Jason Long** | Parent, Isle community member, Family Community Liaison, Onamia School District

**Josh Mailhot** | Continuous Improvement Specialist, Onamia School District

**Anne Olmsted** | Communications Teacher, Isle School District

**Chris Nayquonabe** | Parent, Indian Education Coordinator, Onamia School District

**Jean Novak** | Isle Alternative Learning Center, Isle School District

**Linda Osburn** | Parent, Community member, Garrison

**Darla Peterson** | Data and Instructional Coach, Onamia School District

**Tammy Quist** | Race Equity Policy Fellow, CLC and MMEP (also provided facilitation services and data analysis for this process)

**Cyndy Rudolph** | Onamia Community Education Director, Onamia School District

**Mary Sam** | Director of Diversity, Equity, and Tribal Relations at Central Lakes College

**Fr. Jerry Schik** | Clergy, Mille Lacs community

**Mary Simon** | Former principal at Nay Ah Shing Tribal School, community member

**Nadine Wade** | Grandparent, Onamia School District

**Tammy Wickstrom** | Wewinabi Early Childhood Program Director, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

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# Introduction | Summary of Action Plan Steps

## Race Equity and Excellence in Education Action Plan™



**In 2011, Central Lakes College (CLC) brought together community leaders in Central Minnesota**, the communities of Onamia, Isle, and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, including Nay Ah Shing School and Wewinabi Early Childhood Program and began to mobilize around education equity in the region. After organizing community members, Central Lakes College (CLC) applied for and received funding and consulting support from the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership (MMEP) in order to develop a collective action project that addresses opportunity gaps in education impacting students of color, American Indian, and White students in the region. The project has also received funding from: CLC, MMEP, the Otto Bremer Foundation, the Blandin Foundation, and the Initiative Foundation.

In an effort to close opportunity gaps in education in their community, (commonly referred to as ‘closing the achievement gap’), the CLC and MMEP collective action project is constructed in three phases.

Phase 1 of this process involved gathering Race Equity in Education Community Profiles in order to understand the racial disparities in education affecting the region and to present these findings at a Race Equity and Excellence in Education Summit held in the summer of 2012. As a result of the Summit, there were several key outcomes. The community signed “Promise to Act” written commitments and formed a “Promise to Act Team.” The Promise to Act Team is made up of educators, families, and students who agreed to continue working on a Race Equity Action Planning process and Race Equity goal-setting process. Local Foundation Presidents and staff from the Blandin Foundation and the Initiative Foundation were also present at the Summit. Additionally, the school district board of directors from Nay Ah Shing, Onamia, and Isle all approved formal resolutions that stated their support for the work of the Promise to Act Team as they developed strategies and recommendations to reach equity and excellence in education in their community.

In Phase 2, the goal was to develop community-vetted strategies to address opportunity, race equity gaps in the region. The Promise to Act Team held a series of meetings that produced: community visioning, reviews of other opportunity communities from around the country that are closing education gaps, strategy development, and race equity goal-setting sessions to develop the Race Equity and Excellence in Education Action Plan™.

The product for Phase 2 is this plan — “A Promise to Act: Educational Equity and Excellence for All of Our Children.” It proudly presents the results of the sessions held from June 2013 to March 2014 and considerable additional hours on planning and assessing potential race equity in education solutions.

The Promise to Act Team members stand in support of the following recommendations to lead to equitable and excellent outcomes in this region, and would like all stakeholders to establish a key role in the Implementation Phase 3 of the process.

## PHASE 1

Race Equity in Education Community Profiles + Promise to Act Summit =  
**Building Awareness of Gaps that Exist along  
Cradle to Career Education Continuum**

## PHASE 2

Community Visioning + Strategy Development =  
**Race Equity and Excellence in Education Action Plan**

## PHASE 3

District implementation plans + Community-Wide Campaign =  
**Building Opportunity and Access for more Students in Central Minnesota**

**This Action Plan provides a step-by-step set of recommendations and strategies to address race equity and excellence in education. The steps recommended by the Promise to Act Team include:**

- 1.) Understand the Vision of the Community** – All strategies to address race equity in education in this region, must start with the community’s vision for a more equitable and excellent delivery system. The community engagement process outcome provides guidance for this vision!
- 2.) Consider adopting and approving Race Equity School Principles and Policies** – The Promise to Act Team strongly recommends that school board leaders and educators consider the listed principles and consequently create school policies to enact these principles into rules, processes, and procedures that all staff must follow to reach race equity goals in Onamia Schools, Isle Schools, Nay Ah Shing Schools, and the Wewinabi Early Childhood Program.
- 3.) Implement Community-Developed Race Equity Strategies** – Over a period of six months, a set of Race Equity strategies were developed from a careful review of national case studies, national and local research, and community insights. The Promise to Act Team thus urges all stakeholders to invest in these strategies and measure their impact and progress in addressing education racial disparities.
- 4.) Adopt the Race Equity Goals – Closing the Gap Goals** – In order to track progress on reaching race equity, the Promise to Act Team set Race Equity Goals that include “closing the gap” percentage target goals for the next four to five years. Race Equity Goals also help to hold all stakeholders accountable on implementing their strategies and staying consistent on the overall plan’s objectives. The Promise to Act Team encourages all stakeholders to commit to achieving these goals.



## Defining Race Equity and Excellence in Education



There continues to be large gaps in the academic outcomes between White students and students of color and American Indian students in Minnesota. (Table 1 and Table 2 and *State of Students of Color and American Indian Students, 2012*). These achievement gaps between student groups refers to outcomes measured by kindergarten readiness indicators, 3rd grade reading and math state exams, 8th grade math exams, high school graduation rates, and college access and success rates. **Opportunity gaps**, however, refers to the systemic barriers — unequal distribution of resources or and opportunities — that distinct student groups have historically faced and continue to encounter. These barriers limit their ability to succeed in schools and universities.

**Racial inequities in education** means that differences in academic outcomes are along racial categories and that race continues to predict distinct outcomes for distinct groups of students. (Ferguson, 2008).

**Education Equity goes beyond formal equality** — treating all students the same — to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of race, have the opportunity to benefit equally (*Case Study: Portland*). Furthermore, in order to reach Race Equity and Excellence in Education, race must cease to be a predictor of student achievement and success. We must raise excellence for all youth, while closing gaps between groups. (Ferguson, 2008).

The state of education today is one in which racial disparities are persistent in many communities. This means that education systems and communities must be transformed by addressing opportunity gaps for all student groups, treating them more equitably and thereby removing racial predictability and truly gaining excellent educational outcomes for all children.

Table 1  
Trend Data MCA Math 2008-2013

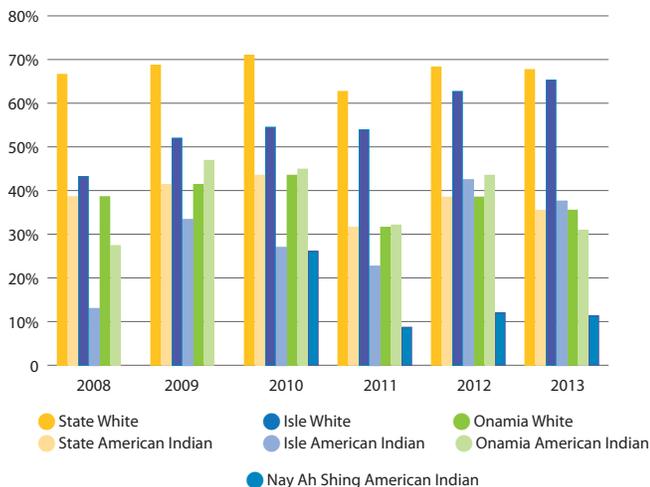
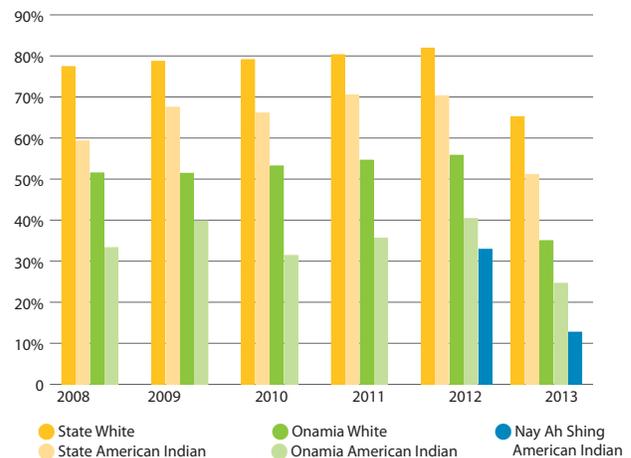


Table 2  
Trend Data MCA Reading 2008-2013



Education Equity goes beyond formal equality — treating all students the same — to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of race, have the opportunity to benefit equally.

— Case Study: Portland Schools' Plan

## Why Does Race Equity Matter?

The data is clear — our American Indian and students of color in Minnesota, as measured by academic standards, do not succeed academically at the same rates as White students. (*MMEP Community Profiles*). The analysis on U.S. demographic groups and academic outcomes came into full transparency over a decade ago through national legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) under U.S. President George W. Bush. There are communities who have focused on clear solutions to remedy the gaps and have seen results, proving that racial disparities are not due to inherently different levels of innate ability or intractable due to income status. (*Ferguson, 2008*) Researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings references the educational debt that has occurred with American Indian communities and communities of color in the U.S., as the true origin of these racial disparities. (*Ladson-Billings, 2006*). The historical, institutional barriers specifically for American Indian families and students have their origins in the exclusionary, discriminatory practice of sending American Indian students to White boarding schools, overt language discrimination that denied students the speaking of their native languages, and the lower expectations that overall barred American Indian students from educational opportunities. (*Child, 2000*). As a result, one of the major consequences today of past discrimination includes the underrepresentation of American Indian students in higher education and other U.S. economic success pathways. (*Shotton, Lowe, Waterman, 2013*).

The responsibility to dismantle engrained, systemic barriers that have limited students of color and American Indian students' educational opportunities does not fall on one person or one community. Rather, all educational institutions and their leaders must take responsibility and appropriate actions to understand and recognize their roles in structures of access and opportunity. We must all commit to assess opportunity gaps in our communities and build strategies to eliminate racial disparities in education through race equity policies and practices. Several communities nationwide making progress on closing racial disparities in education have started this process through an analysis of what policies and practices are systemic barriers limiting academic progress. Additionally, these communities have built strategies to address those barriers and have started to see accelerated academic progress. (*See Case Studies: Castro Valley, Portland, Harlem Children's Zone*)

**“In the United States we have to remember there is a history of systemic exclusion and invisibility for American Indians.”**

— Monte Fronk, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Promise to Act Team member

## STEP 1 | Community Visioning

As part of the “Race Equity and Excellence in Education” Action Planning process of MMEP, MMEP staff and consultants met with the community to gather key insights. Community members discussed their dreams for their children and their overall thoughts of the barriers that currently exist limiting the ability to reach more equitable and excellent education outcomes in their local school communities. This visioning process was done encouraging an open, “dream out loud” dialogue. From these original visioning ideas, would later come strategy and race equity goal-setting sessions.

On June 25, 2013, MMEP with Central Lakes College co-hosted a Race Equity and Excellence In Education Community Engagement session. The graphic below results from this conversation.

From the community visioning process, the community and education stakeholders at the table developed its collective vision for a system of education equity and excellence that produces:

1. Higher Education access for all.
2. Cultural and linguistic respect for all.
3. Students that are committed to civic engagement.

### Community Engagement Themes

#### Higher Education Access for All

- 100% graduation rates
- Strong diplomas
- Opportunities past K-12
- Find passion and tools

#### Cultural and Linguistic Respect

- Retain Ojibwe language
- Identity
- Strong self-esteem
- Unify school districts

#### Students that are Committed to Civic Engagement

- Creating communities that children want to return to as adults
- Encourage community service

### What Does an Equitable System Look Like?

#### Equity

- Meets the need of all students
- Higher education is a priority and expected for all
- Everyone has the ability to succeed

#### Equity (continued)

- Resources are shared to help address barriers
- Equal access to tools and cultivation of language

#### Solutions to Eliminate Barriers

- Work together informing kids and families of all their options
- Engage community
- Build a culture of belonging and welcoming

### Barriers

#### Racism

- Teaching the value of higher education
- Native history is not taught
- Historical trauma and oppression
- Peer pressure around group identity
- Lack of inclusion
- Negative messages about American Indians in community

#### Youth Issues

- Self-empowerment
- Self-determination

#### Staff

- Caring adults that respect culture of students
- Strong relationships

Note: Content in this graphic are verbatim comments from community participants.

## NEXT STEPS

The next steps in the *Race Equity Action Planning* process involved six strategy meetings with the Promise to Act Team that took place monthly from October 2013 to March 2014. In these meetings, MMEP staff and consultants led the participants through a process of analyzing current academic disparities, sharing case studies of national and local models that worked in addressing race equity and closing opportunity gaps, reviewing examples of national and local Race Equity school policies that have set a framework around new strategies for other communities, strategy development that emerged from facilitated conversations around the ‘root causes’ of key education equity issues and analyzing the role of schools, families, students and business in addressing opportunity gaps, and finally, race equity goal-setting to set target “gap closing” goals for key academic indicators in each community represented in the project.

## STEP 2 | Race Equity and Excellence in Education Principles and Policies

The process to understand the role race and political status have played in education from a systemic and practical standpoint, to increase cultural competency and awareness for administrators and educators, and to deepen community engagement from all families and students must start with the knowledge of key race equity in education principles. Thereafter, all educational administrators (decision-makers), community leaders, families and other educational stakeholders can adhere to these principles.

The Promise to Act Team reviewed the principles outlined by the Portland Schools, in a document that led to Portland’s final Race Equity Plan. (*Case Study referenced in Appendix*). The following principles were agreed upon as critical to this school-community and implementing new race equity strategies for all students to succeed:

- The Districts shall provide every student with equitable access to high quality and culturally relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities and other educational resources, even when this means differentiating resources to accomplish this goal.
- The Districts shall create multiple pathways to success in order meet the needs of our diverse students, and shall actively encourage, support and expect high academic achievement for students from all racial groups.

- The Districts shall recruit, employ, support and retain racially and linguistically diverse and culturally competent administrative, instructional and support personnel, and shall provide professional development to strengthen employees’ knowledge and skills for eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in achievement.
- The Districts shall remedy the practices, including assessment, that lead to the over-representation of students of color in areas such as special education and discipline, and underrepresentation.
- All staff and students from each District shall be given the opportunity to understand racial identity, and the impact of their own racial identity on themselves and others.
- The Districts shall welcome students of color and American Indian families as essential partners in their students’ education, school planning and decision-making.

**By setting race equity principles and policies, school board members, community members and investors can hold themselves accountable for supporting the strategies and goals that are outlined later in this Plan. Furthermore, setting District policies and procedures ensures that the strategies to reach equitable outcomes are not temporary, but a race equity framework is established to transform education from a systemic approach for years to come.**

## STEP 3 | Strategies to Close Opportunity Gaps

### Mille Lacs Promise To Act Plan-Strategies and Key Roles and Responsibilities Chart

**Theory of Action:** In addressing racial disparities in education, the “Promise to Act: Educational Equity and Excellence for All of Our Children Plan” Team members feel that it is crucial to highlight key, research based strategies. These strategies should be per academic indicator on the cradle to career continuum that include the role of families, parents, and educators. **The major theme: the responsibility lies with all of us. A key reminder, we are not individually responsible for past discrimination in education — but as collective community members — we are all responsible for improving our schools for equity and excellence.**



#### Early Literacy, Ready for Kindergarten

##### Race Equity Goals

Goal 1.1: Kindergarten readiness will increase by 10% yearly in each school beginning in 2015 as measured by Oral Language Acquisition Inventory, AimsWeb, STAR Early Literacy, MAP, ICC, or Teaching Strategies Gold data.

Goal 1.2: Baseline data for Preschool participation will be collected in each community and strategies aimed at increasing participation for all students.

##### Strategies/Action Steps

a.) Develop a 0-3 *Learning for All Children* public campaign to empower families, honor all families, and educate families on the key skill development areas of early childhood education.

b.) *Develop an early childhood collaborative that meets quarterly* in regions which aim to increase low-income children’s enrollment in free early childhood services, increase quality of daycare providers, and train parents for home-based early childhood skills.

c) *Develop appropriate assessments* and gather baseline data to work toward goals.

##### Role of Business & Community

a.) *Businesses* support a public awareness campaign, investing in its development and distribution throughout the community; *through a field organizer/advocate and billboards.*

b.) *Businesses* and other investors fund a website, listserv, and overall communication tools to align resources around this area.

c.) *Newspaper/Media highlight* family stories of success with early childhood strategies and development.

##### Role of Families & Students

a.) *Families and students* provide direction to the best messaging for the public early education campaign.

b.) *Families* access available resources for the increased participation in preschool programs.

##### Role of Schools & Educators

a.) *Collaborate on MDE “Act Early, Learn Signs” campaign.* Gather ideas from families on best local, culturally appropriate messaging for this campaign.

b.) *District leaders work with MDE* officials for the design of appropriate assessments and baseline data.

**Native Language Literacy and Pride:** *Expand on the Ojibwe language teaching — Districts have a coordinated teaching, learning professional development course and program for educators to get best practice Ojibwe language and cultural competency training. We recommend that Central Lakes College offer professional development credits for completion of such a course and training program.*

## Reading Well by 3rd Grade

### Race Equity Goals

Goal 2.1: Onamia will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers by 20% annually on the 3rd Grade Reading MCA beginning in 2015.

Goal 2.2: Isle will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers by 20% annually on the all school Reading MCA beginning in 2015.

Goal 2.3: Nay Ah Shing will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers (in Onamia and Isle) in 3rd grade by 20% annually beginning in 2015.

Goal 2.4: All student groups in the Mille Lacs area will perform at or above the state average by 2019.

### Strategies/Action Steps

a.) Develop an *Early Literacy, Attendance public campaign* with families that empowers families around their role in developing reading skills from Kindergarten to third grade. (See case study on MPS attendance rates and Native families.)

b.) Expand the current “One Book, One School” campaign from Birchwood House to the entire region.

c.) *Incorporate Curriculum that is culturally relevant to American Indian history and accomplishments* in order to make reading more relevant and accessible to American Indian families and students. (Case Studies: MinnCAN American Indian Student Achievement Report, “Language Immersion Creates Academic Rigor”, “Achievement Gap Summits,” Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico.)

### Role of Business & Community

a.) *Businesses* support the Campaign, investing in its development and distribution throughout the community.

*-Businesses specifically fund the development of Billboards encouraging greater attendance, and reading to children in early ages.*

### Role of Families & Students

a.) *Families and students* provide direction to the best messaging for the *early literacy and attendance campaign*.

### Role of Schools & Educators

a.) *Professional development for teachers* around culturally responsive classrooms and school climates: culturally relevant curriculum, inclusive practices of teaching, learning etc.

b.) *Professional development* for teachers on effective instruction. Ensure the use of best teaching practices in all classrooms daily to engage students.

DEVELOP an intentional 6th to 7th grade *Transition Program for American Indian youth* in Central Minnesota. Since transition from elementary school to middle and high school is critical, a transition program can help build navigation skills, college awareness, and overall identity development for youth transitioning into higher grades.

a.) *Businesses invest* in the transition program: early school orientation, and summer program.

a.) *Families and students* provide input on the areas that the Transition program would highlight.

a.) *Educators would collaborate around this transition program* and provide training for staff.



## 8th Grade Algebra

### Race Equity Goals

Goal 3.1: Onamia will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers by 20% annually on the on the 8th grade math MCA beginning in 2015.

Goal 3.2: Isle will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers by 20% annually on the District Math MCA beginning in 2015.

Goal 3.3: Nay Ah Shing will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers (in Onamia and Isle) in 8th grade math by 20% annually beginning in 2015.

Goal 3.4: All student groups in the Mille Lacs area will perform at or above the state average by 2019.

### Strategies/Action Steps

a.) *Incorporate Curriculum that is culturally relevant* to American Indian history and accomplishments in order to make Math more relevant to American Indian families and students. (Case Study: Stone and Hamann.)

b.) *Increase the number of American Indian youth in higher level Math classes*, introduce these pathways earlier (6th, 7th grade) for students.

### Role of Business & Community

a.) *Businesses Engage with schools* to provide relevancy for math achievement (career options, financial options, etc.)

### Role of Families & Students

a.) *Families get information to encourage students* to challenge themselves by participating in higher level math classes.

b.) *Families Participate in math fun nights*, math camp, etc. as offered by the school and community education.

### Role of Schools & Educators

a.) *Professional development* for teachers around culturally responsive classrooms and school climates and Professional development for teachers on effective instruction.

b.) *Train Math and Science teachers in region on Best Practices in engaging more American Indian youth and White youth in STEM learning* and STEM pathways. Connect math learning to post-graduate options and careers.

c.) *Educators participate in the Region 7 MSTP Grant* working with: Resource Training and Solutions.

d.) *Central Lakes College* should collaborate with Districts to develop more college service learning projects around STEM.

## High School Graduation

### Race Equity Goals

Goal 4.1: We will increase the 4-Year graduation rate incrementally from baseline so that within 5 years, 100% of all students graduate within 4 years as evidenced by the MDE graduation rate.

### Strategies/Action Steps

a.) *Develop a local "Grad Nation" public campaign* with families that empowers students and families around completion of high school for future academic and community growth.

b.) *Incorporate Curriculum* that is culturally relevant (on American Indian history and accomplishments) to make the high school curricula more relevant to American Indian families and students. (Case Study: Maxwell, Education Week.)

### Role of Business & Community

a.) *Businesses* support the Campaign, investing in its development and distribution throughout the community.

### Role of Families & Students

a.) *Encourage more families to participate in the American Indian feast graduation* celebration – and expand it to more areas and grades, i.e. elementary school graduation, middle school completion.

### Role of Schools & Educators

a.) *Professional development for teachers* around culturally responsive classrooms and school climates.

b.) *Facilitate the creation of individual college and career readiness plans for each student*. Participate in Ramp Up to Readiness.



## College Attainment & Success

### Race Equity Goals

Goal 5.1: We will decrease the college attendance and completion gaps between American Indian students and their white peers by 20% annually beginning in 2015 in order to close the gap by 2019.

### Strategies/Action Steps

- a.) *Develop a regional College/Post Graduate and Career Planning Center* with college and career information sharing for families to increase the number of students that understand college pathway steps and then attend some form of post-secondary, college program.
- b.) *Collaborate with Upward Bound/ TRIO programming, MN College Access Network and Office of Higher Education* for increased financial aid trainings in region for American Indian families.

### Role of Business & Community

- a.) Businesses invest in the Center's development.

### Role of Families & Students

- a.) All Families engage in circle conversations region-wide with college-going facilitators to discuss the skills, steps toward higher education.
- b.) *Families participate in a regional higher education access and retention campaign.*

### Role of Schools & Educators

- a.) *Integrate college and career readiness standards into existing curriculum* at specific pre-determined grade levels and content areas.
- b.) Facilitate the creation of individual college and career readiness plans for each student.  
*-Participate in Ramp Up to Readiness.*
- c.) Participate in the CLC annual high school to college transition camp.

## STEP 4 | Race Equity Goals – Closing the Gaps

During the planning process, the Promise to Act Team dedicated a session to set Race Equity in Education Goals. They set the Race Equity Goals by first reviewing the MMEP Community Profiles of the Mille Lacs area with data summarizing the racial disparities disaggregated by race in the area's school districts and a consideration of how accelerated strategies can help to close gaps starting in 2015 and continuing for four years (See Appendix for Community Profiles reference). Each indicator section will have a table of existing proficiency rates from standardized state exams. Where no baseline data exists, a recommendation will provide detail on what data can help inform Race Equity Goals.

*Note: The goals and strategies recommended in this plan are designed to work in tandem with the existing School Improvement Plans and community efforts designed to close achievement gaps.*

**From discussions regarding baseline data emerged five indicators with accompanying goals and strategies aimed at achieving equity and excellence for all children in the Mille Lacs area community.**

### INDICATOR #1

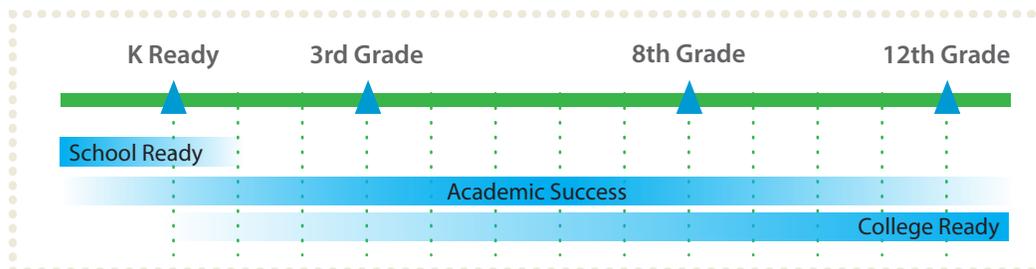
#### Early Literacy – Ready for Kindergarten

Statewide, only 51% of Minnesota's incoming Kindergarteners are fully ready for the demands of academic achievement and the percentage of American Indian and students of color are much lower (*Minnesota Department of Education*). Minnesota ranks 38th out of 38 states in terms of access to publicly funded preschool programs and has the second largest achievement gap in the United States (*Minnesota Department of Education*). The Governor has identified kindergarten readiness as a priority education area of focus for Minnesota.

Although all three schools in the Mille Lacs area use different types of assessments for their early learners, they all agree on one key issue: many students entering kindergarten are not adequately prepared for school (*Mille Lacs Visioning Meeting, October 21, 2013*). Each school community assesses school readiness and eligibility for service prior to Kindergarten in different ways:

**Onamia Early Childhood Screening** includes School Readiness Assessment Student Report (colors, Upper/lower letter recognition, shapes, identify letters in first name, counts objects 0-20, name writing, drawing, speech/language observations, social/emotional development observations, and scissor use. Students who qualify for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) prior to kindergarten are assessed using the Hawaii Preschool Profile (Monitors development), Kindergarten Readiness skills assessment, and progress on their IEP goals. During kindergarten, student assessments include NWEA, MAP, Monthly Letter/Sound skills, quarterly standards based/report card assessments of skills, AIMSweb (intervention students=weekly, strategic=biweekly, benchmark/benchmark+=monthly to every six weeks) and the OLAI (beginning fall of 2013).

### State Indicators for Student Achievement



**Isle Early Childhood Screening** includes Desired Results Developmental Profile School Readiness (DRDP SR), Preschool Screening Ages 0-3 to kindergarten entrance, Early Screening Inventory — Revised, and classroom inventories. In Kindergarten, students are assessed using the STAR Early Literacy assessment 4-6 times/year, quarterly Inventories that are aligned to our curriculum, and checklists for letter, sound and sight words. The school is implementing standardized assessment in the 2013-2014 school years and should be useable for students entering kindergarten for the 2014-2015 school years.

**At Wewinabi/Mille Lacs Band Headstart** all children are screened within 45 days of the start of school. Children ages 0-3 are screened with the ASQ in the fall, winter, spring and ASQ-SE. Children ages 3-5 are screened with the ESI-P, ASQ-SE, and the Investigator Club Curriculum (ICC) Assessment. The ICC assessment has been reviewed by the Education and Child Development Specialist to ensure alignment with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (HSCDELFF), as well as with School Readiness Goals. The ICC assessment measures 101 indicators in the areas of Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Creative Arts, Social/Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Physical Health and Development, Social Studies and Technology. Children are assessed three times per year, once each in fall, winter and spring. After each assessment period, a data review meeting is conducted and teachers create classroom and individual goals.

**Isle Kindergarten Readiness Levels:** There isn't currently a comprehensive set of readiness data in Isle, however, the school is implementing standardized assessment in the 2013-2014 school years and this data should be useable for students entering kindergarten for the 2014-2015 school years.

Although all three schools in the Mille Lacs area use different types of assessments for their early learners, they all agree on one key issue: many students entering kindergarten are not adequately prepared for school.

Table 1.1

**Onamia Kindergarten Readiness Levels**

2013 Aimsweb LSF Fall Kindergarten	At or Above Target		Below Target		No Score
	American Indian	White	American Indian	White	
Number of Students	1	5	15	22	4
% of Students	12.8%		78.7%		8.5%

Source: Onamia Public Schools

In Onamia, the Aimsweb data in the fall of 2013 indicated that On Letter Sound Fluency (LSF) only 12.8% of students were at or above target and only one of those students was American Indian.

Table 1.2

**Onamia, Math Kindergarten Readiness Levels**

2013 MAP Math Fall Kindergarten	High		Average		Low		No Test Score	
	Am. Ind.	White	Am. Ind.	White	Am. Ind.	White	Am. Ind.	White
Number of Students	1	2	5	11	15	22	3	
% of Students	6.4%		34%		53.2%		6.4%	

Source: Onamia Public Schools

In Onamia, the 2013 Math MAP data shows that 40.4% of all students in Kindergarten scored at average or above.



Table 1.3

**Wewinabi/Mille Lacs Band Head Start (Ages 3-5) Readiness Levels**

Skill Assessed Using the Investigator Club Curriculum (ICC) Assessment	Fall Assessment	Spring Assessment
Language and Listening Development	31%	75%
Literacy	16%	68%
Mathematics	15%	60%
Science	18%	67%
Creative Arts	36%	77%
Social/Emotional Development	18%	68%
Approaches to Learning	24%	70%
Physical Health and Development	31%	75%
Social Studies	13%	61%
Technology	12%	50%

Source: Mille Lacs Early Education School Readiness Report, Districts I, II and III, 2012-2013

While the data in Table 1.3 suggests that participation in the Wewinabi Preschool Program increases kindergarten readiness, additional data needs to be collected to ascertain the number of eligible Kindergarteners participating in the program. The Mille Lacs community participants reported during the Community Visioning meeting that the lack of enrollment in the available Preschool programs makes up one of the barriers to kindergarten readiness.

The Mille Lacs Promise to Act Team identified this indicator as a necessary component to include in the Race Equity Action Plan and, therefore, recommends that each site determine the appropriate assessment and gather baseline data to work toward the 10% yearly increased achievement goal beginning in 2015, until 100% of all incoming students are fully prepared to learn in an academically rigorous and supportive school environment.

**GOAL 1.1** Kindergarten readiness will increase by 10% yearly in each school beginning in 2015 as measured by Oral Language Acquisition Inventory, AimsWeb, STAR Early Literacy, MAP, ICC, or Teaching Strategies Gold data.

**GOAL 1.2** Baseline data for Preschool participation will be collected in each community and strategies aimed at increasing participation from all students will be developed.

**INDICATOR #2**

**Reading Well by 3rd Grade**

In 2010, Minnesota adopted the Common Core English language arts standards in their entirety and added some supplementary content. Public schools in Minnesota were required to implement the 2010 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards — English Language Arts no later than the 2012-2013 school years. The 2013 Reading Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) reflected the new Common Core English language arts standards. Schools were given several years to prepare for this change, and yet many schools across the state saw a drop in student achievement in reading as a result of the more rigorous expectations in the new standards and assessment. This is true for all three schools in the Mille Lacs area. The state average dropped from 80.5% for all students in 2012 to 57.6% in 2013 (*MDE School NCLB Data Report, 2013*).

*Note: To compute yearly goals to close the gaps within five years, the current gap is multiplied by 20%. That number is then subtracted from each subsequent year until the gap is zero.*

*Note: Isle cell size is too small to report for this indicator. Some analysis on Isle Schools may not be complete.*

In looking at trend data, the reading proficiency gaps between White and American Indian students have persisted in all three Districts. In 3rd grade, reading gaps in Onamia more than doubled from 2012-2013; the gap in 2012 was 15.9 and the gap in 2013 is 35.2 (*MMEP Race Equity and Excellence in Education Community Profiles and MN Department of Education*). Mille Lacs area White students as a group performs below the state average for White students; 66% for a state average compared to 62.5% for Onamia White students and 23.1% for Isle White students. Additionally, the American Indian student state average for reading proficiency levels is higher than the American Indian Onamia and Nay Ah Shing American Indian student proficiency rates. 35.4% for the American Indian state average on reading proficiency and 27.3% for American Indian students in Onamia and 16.7% in Nay Ah Shing. There is still a local gap between White students and their American Indian student peers. In Onamia, the Reading MCA 2013 results show that White students proficiency rate was 62.5% while the American Indian rate was 27.3%. For Nay Ah Shing, we compare the 16.7% rate of 3rd grade American Indian

Table 2.1

Reading Proficiency Levels

Reading Well by 3rd Grade	Current Percent of 3rd Graders Meeting or Exceeding Reading Proficiency 2013 MCA White Students	Current Percent of 3rd Graders Meeting or Exceeding Reading Proficiency 2013 MCA American Indian Students	2013 Gap between White and American Indian Students	2015 Gap Goal	2016 Gap Goal	2017 Gap Goal	2018 Gap Goal	2019 Gap Goal
State Average	66%	35.4%	30.6%					
Onamia	62.5%	27.3%	35.2%	28.2	21.1	14.1	7.0	0
Isle	23.1%	*cell size too small						
Avg of Onamia and Isle combined	**46.9%							
Nay Ah Shing	No white students	16.7%	**30.2%	24.2	18.1	12.1	6.0	0

Source: MN Department of Education

\*The Minnesota Department of Education will not report data when the number of students in the subgroup is fewer than 10.

\*\*Nay Ah Shing is a tribal school and serves only American Indian students. To identify gaps between these students, we used their white 3rd grade peers in the two closest surrounding schools: Onamia and Isle. The two schools together have a total of 49 white 3rd grade students. Of those, 26 (53.1%) did not meet proficiency and 23 did (46.9%).

Table 2.2

Reading Proficiency Levels

Reading Well by 3rd Grade	Current Elementary School Percent Meeting or Exceeding Reading Proficiency 2013 MCA White Students	Current Elementary School Percent Meeting or Exceeding Reading Proficiency 2013 MCA American Indian Students	2013 Gap between White and American Indian Students	2015 Gap Goal	2016 Gap Goal	2017 Gap Goal	2018 Gap Goal	2019 Gap Goal
State Average	65.2%	35%	30.2%					
Isle – all elementary students	*54.2%	*26.1%	*28.1%	*22.5	16.9	11.2	5.6	0

Source: MN Department of Education

\*Signifies all elementary grade reading (cell size is too small to be reported in 3rd grade). The gap for Isle is based on the performance of all elementary students.

proficiency levels to the White student proficiency levels of Onamia and Isle White students or 46.9%. In Isle (due to the small cell size, we compare all elementary students), the gap between White and American Indian is the difference between 54.2% and 26.1% respectively (See Table 2.2).

The Mille Lacs Promise to Act Team identified this indicator as a necessary component to include in the Race Equity Action Plan and, therefore, recommends the following goals for each site.

*Note: To compute yearly goals to close the gaps within five years, the current gap is multiplied by 20%. That number is then subtracted from each subsequent year until the gap is zero.*

**GOAL 2.1** Onamia will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers by 20% annually on the 3rd Grade Reading MCA beginning in 2015.

**GOAL 2.2** Isle will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers by 20% annually on the all school Reading MCA beginning in 2015.

**GOAL 2.3** Nay Ah Shing will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers (in Onamia and Isle) in 3rd grade by 20% annually beginning in 2015.

**GOAL 2.4** All student groups in the Mille Lacs area will perform at or above the state average by 2019.

## INDICATOR #3

### Math Proficiency, 8th Grade Algebra

The Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Mathematics were revised in 2007, with full implementation by the 2010-11 school years. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) III Mathematics exam assesses the mathematics standards in grades 3-8, and 11. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) and alternate assessments (MCA-Modified and Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)) are the state tests that help districts measure student progress toward Minnesota's academic standards. Most students take the MCA, but students who receive special education services and meet eligibility criteria may take the MCA-Modified or the MTAS (Source: MN Department of Education).

Mille Lacs area White students performed below the state average of 64.4% proficiency levels for the Math MCAs; 51.6% for the local Onamia White students and 58.6% for the local Isle White students. Interestingly, the American Indian students in both Onamia and Isle performed above or at the same rate as the proficiency levels of their overall state American Indian student peers. While the state proficiency rate for American Indians on the Math MCAs was 28%; Onamia American Indian students rate was 33.3% and Nay Ah Shing was also at 28% for the Math MCA tests. There is still a local gap between White students' proficiency rates compared to their American Indian student peers' rates of proficiency on the Math MCA test results. In Onamia, while White students MCA Math proficiency rate was 51.6%, American Indian students proficiency rate was 33.3%. Nay Ah Shing American Indian students' proficiency rate of 28%

Table 3.1

#### Math Proficiency Levels

8th Grade Algebra	Current Percent Meeting or Exceeding Proficiency 2013 MCA White Students	Current Percent Meeting or Exceeding Proficiency 2013 MCA American Indian Students	2013 Gap between White and American Indian Students	2015 Gap Goal	2016 Gap Goal	2017 Gap Goal	2018 Gap Goal	2019 Gap Goal
State Average	64.6%	28%	3.6%					
Onamia	51.6%	33.3%	18.3%	14.6	11.0	7.3	3.7	0
Isle	58.6%	*cell size too small						
** Onamia and Isle Proficiency Levels	**55%							
Nay Ah Shing	n/a	28%	27%	21.6	16.2	10.8	5.4	0

Source: MN Department of Education

\*The Minnesota Department of Education will not report data when the number of students in the subgroup is fewer than 10.

\*\*Nay Ah Shing is a tribal school and serves only American Indian students. To identify gaps between these students, we used their White 8th grade peers in the two closest surrounding schools: Onamia and Isle. The two schools together have a total of 60 White 8th grade students. Of those, 27 (45%) did not meet proficiency and 33 did (55%).

Table 3.2

#### Math Proficiency Levels

8th Grade Algebra	Current Percent Meeting or Exceeding Proficiency 2013 MCA White Students	Current Percent Meeting or Exceeding Proficiency 2013 MCA American Indian Students	2013 Gap between White and American Indian Students	2015 Gap Goal	2016 Gap Goal	2017 Gap Goal	2018 Gap Goal	2019 Gap Goal
State Average	67.7%	35.5%	32.2%					
Isle – all elementary students	*65.4%	37.5%	27.8%	*22.2	16.7	11.1	5.6	0

Source: MN Department of Education

\*Signifies all district math (cell size is too small to be reported in 8th grade for American Indian students). The gap for Isle is based on the performance of all middle school students.

is lower than the proxy (\*\*Onamia and Isle White student rate) comparison proficiency levels of \*\*55% (See Table 3.1). And for Isle, while the proficiency rate for American Indian students is at 37.5%, the White students Math MCA proficiency rate for 2013 was 65.4% (See Table 3.2).

The Mille Lacs Promise to Act Team identified this indicator as a necessary component to include in the Race Equity Action Plan and, therefore, recommends the following goals for each site. To compute yearly goals to close the gaps within five years, the current gap is multiplied by 20%. That number is then subtracted from each subsequent year until the gap is zero.

**GOAL 3.1** Onamia will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers by 20% annually on the on the 8th grade math MCA beginning in 2015.

**GOAL 3.2** Isle will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers by 20% annually on the District Math MCA beginning in 2015.

**GOAL 3.3** Nay Ah Shing will decrease the Achievement Gap between American Indian students and their White peers (in Onamia and Isle) in 8th grade math by 20% annually beginning in 2015.

**GOAL 3.4** All student groups in the Mille Lacs area will perform at or above the state average for Math by 2019.



## INDICATOR #4

### High School On-Time Graduation Rate (4-year)

In 2011, the US Department of Education made an attempt to standardize how states report graduation rates by implementing the 4-year regulatory adjusted cohort rate (those that received a diploma in 4 years). This the rate we have reported since 2011. When the U.S. Department of Education released their report in December of 2012, based on 2010-2011 school year, Minnesota had the lowest graduation rate at 42% for American Indian students in the nation. Minnesota has had a 6.34% growth in American Indian high school graduation rates since 2011, from 42% to 48.75% (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

#### Minnesota, American Indian High School Graduation Rates 2011-2013

Year	Rate
2011	42.4%
2012	45.5%
2013	48.8%

Source: U.S. Department of Education  
<http://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/state-2010-11-graduation-rate-data.pdf>

The Mille Lacs region’s high school graduation rate for all students is below the state average (See Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

#### High School Graduation Rates — all students in Mille Lacs Area

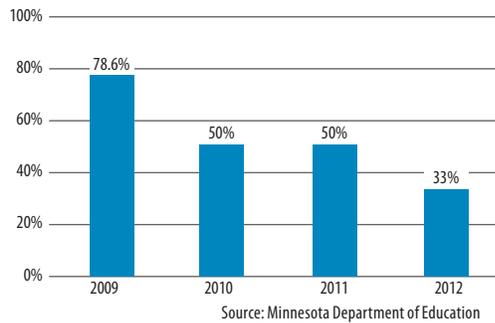
4-Year High School Completion	Current Rates 2013 (all students)	2015	2016	2016	2017	2018
		Goal	Goal	Goal	Goal	Goal
State	77.55%					
Onamia	54.55%	63.64	72.73	81.82	90.91	100
Isle	68.89%	75.11	81.33	87.55	93.77	100
Nay Ah Shing	*					

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

\*No data available – Nay Ah Shing had fewer than 10 students graduate in 2013

Table 4.3

Percentage of Graduates  
from Nay Ah Shing School 2009-2012



Although there is no data for 2013, trend data for the 4-Year Graduation rate for Nay Ah Shing students is well below the state average for White students (See Table 4.3). The cell sizes are too small to disaggregate by race, however, representatives from the Districts on the Promise to Act Team anecdotally reported that American Indian students are graduating at a lower rate than their White peers (*Community Planning Meetings, 2013*). Nay Ah Shing graduated fewer than 10 students in 2013 but trend data between 2009 and 2012 indicates that graduation rates are still a concern and need to be addressed. The MN state 4-year graduation average for American Indian students is less than half (45.46%) compared to 83.87% for students — a 38.41% gap (*Source MN Department of Education*).

The Mille Lacs Promise to Act Team identified this indicator as necessary to include in the Race Equity Action Plan and, therefore, recommends the following goals for each site. To compute yearly goals, the current graduation rate is multiplied by 20%. That number is then added to each subsequent year until the rate is 100%.

**GOAL 4.1** We will increase the 4-Year graduation rate incrementally from baseline so that within 5 years, 100% of all students graduate within 4 years as evidenced by the MDE 4-Year graduation rate.

## INDICATOR #5

### College Access and Completion

According to all three school districts, there is currently no local baseline data collected to indicate the numbers of students attending and completing college. Through the visioning exercise, the Promise to Act Team and area schools agree that fewer American Indian students attend and matriculate through college than their White peers in this community. We have state and national data that suggests similar low rates of college attendance for American Indians throughout the country (*MN Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education*).

Minnesota American Indian students have the lowest college participation and completion rates as evidenced by trend and recent data. In 2012, 26.2% of Minnesota American Indian students were enrolled in a Minnesota postsecondary institution and the percent of population of American Indian students with degrees is substantially below their White peers (See Table 5.1). Twenty-nine percent of American Indians have an Associate's degree or higher compared with 77% of White students (See Table 5.3). This data shows the lowest attainment and completion rates for American Indians for 2 & 4 year degrees as well as a declining enrollment trend (See table 5.2).



The Mille Lacs Promise to Act Team identified this indicator as a necessary component to include in the Race Equity Action Plan and recommends that each site determine the appropriate tool to gather baseline data to work toward the goal of decreasing the college attendance and completion gaps between American Indian students and their White peers by 20% annually.

**GOAL 5.1** We will decrease the college attendance and completion gaps between American Indian students and their White peers by 20% annually beginning in 2015 in order to close the gap by 2019.

Table 5.1

**College Participation Rates of Minnesota High School Graduates, 2012**

In-state participation rate by race/ethnicity (Minnesota high school graduates enrolled in a Minnesota postsecondary institution)

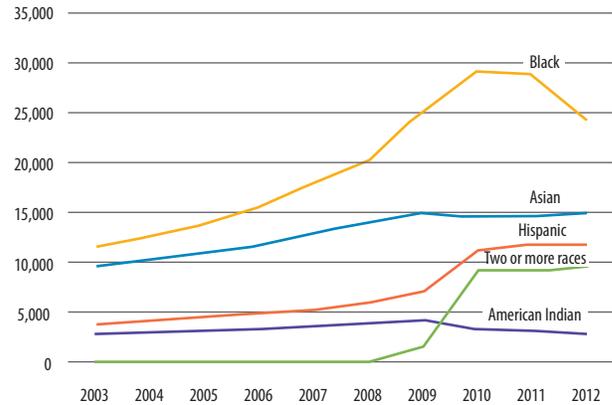
Race/Ethnicity	In-State Participation Rate
Black	42.4%
Asian and Pacific Islander	51.6%
Hispanic	58.0%
American Indian	26.2%
Total Students of Color	48.4%
White, Non-Hispanic	48.4%
Total in-state participation rate	48.3%
Enrolled in other states*	21.3%
Total participation rate of Minnesota high school graduates (enrolled in state plus out of state)	69.6%

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS enrollment survey.

\*Percent participation by race and ethnicity for students enrolling out-of-state are not available. Out-of-state enrollment data are from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS enrollment survey.

Table 5.2

**Minnesota Undergraduates of Color Enrollment Trends, Fall 2003 to 2012**

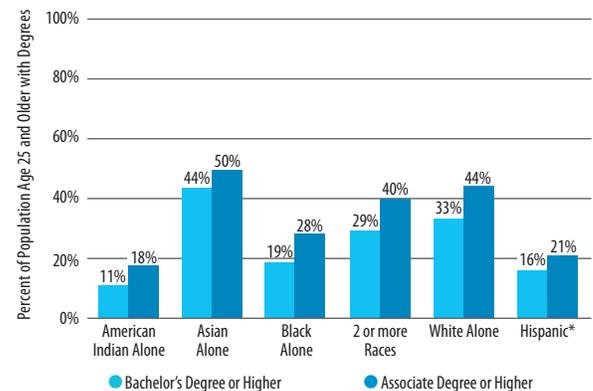


Does not include high school students or students enrolled at Capella and Walden Universities.

Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Table 5.3

**Minnesota Degree Attainment Population Age 25 and Older by Race/Ethnicity**



\* Hispanics may be of any race.

Data for Hispanics may overlap with data for other race groups.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

**“Relationship is key! Building relationships require trust ... having trust will increase everyone around our Lake valuing, supporting, and engaging in education.”**

—Mary Sam, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Tribal Relations at Central Lakes College

## **Conclusion | Recommending Race Equity Policies, Strategies, Goals, and Action**

The Promise to Act Team comprised of community members, educators, families in the Mille Lacs region (Onamia Schools, Isle Schools, Nay Ah Shing Schools, Wewinabi Early Childhood Program), understands that the next phase of this work is the “Implementation and Funding phase” of this race equity and excellence in education plan. The hope is that any questions on what the Community envisions or strategizes to address race equity are answered through this careful process and plan that outline the following key recommendations:

### **1 Understand the Vision of the Community**

All strategies to address race equity in education in this region, must start with the community’s vision for a more equitable and excellent delivery system. The community engagement process outcome provides guidance for this vision!

### **2 Consider adopting and approving Race Equity School Principles and Policies**

The Promise to Act Team strongly recommends that school board leaders and educators consider the listed principles and consequently create school policies to enact these principles into rules, processes, and procedures that all staff must follow to reach race equity goals in Onamia Schools, Isle Schools, Nay Ah Shing Schools, and the Wewinabi Early Childhood Program.

### **3 Implement Community-Developed Race Equity Strategies**

Over a period of six months, a set of Race Equity strategies were developed from a careful review of national case studies, national and local research, and community insights. The Promise to Act Team thus urges all stakeholders to invest in these strategies and measure their impact and progress in addressing education racial disparities.

### **4 Adopt the Race Equity Goals – Closing the Gap Goals**

In order to track progress on reaching race equity, the Promise to Act Team set Race Equity Goals that include “closing the gap” percentage target goals for the next four to five years. Race Equity Goals also help to hold all stakeholders accountable on implementing their strategies and staying consistent on the overall plan’s objectives. The Promise to Act Team encourages all stakeholders to commit to achieving these goals.

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## MMEP Community Profiles Reports

Onamia, 2012; Isle, 2012; Nay Ah Shing, 2012, MMEP source.

## Promise to Act Team Visioning and Planning Sessions

Community Visioning Meeting: June 25, 2013

Planning Sessions: September 30, 2013; October 21, 2013; November 26, 2013  
December 18, 2013; January 22, 2014; February 25, 2014 and March 11, 2014



**Minnesota  
Minority  
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2233 University Avenue West, Suite 220  
Saint Paul, MN 55114  
651.645.7400 • [www.mmep.org](http://www.mmep.org)

**CLC** CENTRAL  
LAKES COLLEGE

501 W. College Drive  
Brainerd, MN 56401  
218-855-8159 • [msam@clcmn.edu](mailto:msam@clcmn.edu)

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**If you would like more information about this report please contact  
Lead Researcher, Jennifer Godinez,  
at [jgodinez@mmep.org](mailto:jgodinez@mmep.org), 651-645-7400 or  
Central Minnesota Promise to Act Team Coordinator, Mary Sam,  
at [msam@clcmn.edu](mailto:msam@clcmn.edu), 218-855-8159.**