

BOARD POLICY EXPECTATION

The Superintendent shall not fail to produce an annual written District/School Improvement Plans (D/SIP) that articulate the strategies, expected outcomes and responsible personnel that are being initiated and monitored for achieving the mission of the district.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby present my monitoring report on Executive Limitations Policy EL-7 “District/School Improvement Plans” in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true as of September 29th, 2015.

Dr. Mark Mansell, Superintendent

SUPERINTENDENT’S INTERPRETATION OF POLICY

I interpret this expectation regarding district/school improvement plans to mean the board believes it is important for the district to have an overall strategy or framework for improvement so as to systemically work toward achieving of the district’s mission as stated in Board Policy Ends-1.

REPORT

There are two specific areas described in this policy. The following will address each specific area of EL-7 as best as possible. At the time of this report, I believe that the district is in compliance with the Board’s expectations.

1. The superintendent shall not fail to develop, disseminate, share and implement strategies that will achieve the Board’s Ends policies. IN COMPLIANCE

There are six broad areas of focus that we are working on as an organization to achieve the Board’s Ends-1 Policy. Most of these have been ongoing efforts that have been occurring for many years. Without a doubt we have made consistent and steady progress towards implementing these changes/improvements in deep and meaningful ways. The six broad areas of focus for organizational improvement are:

- High Cognitive Demand Learning Environments
- Personal Learning Technology
- Family Support and Engagement Services
- Safe Schools
- Flexible Learning Experiences
- Data Driven Decision-making

Below I will articulate the various current efforts that are underway for each of these six areas.

High Cognitive Demand Learning Environments

This has been an ongoing objective of our collective work across the district for nearly a decade. There are ample evidences of our progress in creating learning environments for everyone in our organization (students and adults). The cornerstone of our work is the creation and implementation of our district Learning Model. The Learning Model has become deeply engrained in our work, our communications, our documents and more importantly in our daily practice as an organization.

As an example of our work to achieve this key part of the mission is to help all staff, but in particular our new staff how to develop lesson plans and thereby create learning environments that ask our students to think instead of simply know. Beyond our normal array of professional development for our staff, this past year we provide targeted professional development for our new staff called Learning Model Orientation (LMO). It was specifically designed to provide them both the background and the tools necessary to create high cognitive demand learning environments for students.

This effort served as an opportunity to deepen our knowledge and skill set in creating the high cognitive demand learning environments students need in order to meet the Board's Ends-1 Policy expectations, regardless of a teacher's time in the district.

Personal Learning Technology

We continue to progress towards increasing the availability and use of personal learning technologies in the learning environments. This is much more complicated than giving students a device. Critical components of a successful effort include work necessary to change the pedagogy of the teacher in the classroom, creating a robust network backbone to support connectivity needs and increasing student skill sets to use these devices.

This past year we have made significant strides to expanding both our network infrastructure as well as our connection of the network out to the Internet. Additionally we took the next step towards greater device access in two major ways. First we once again increased the access to the physical access students have to devices by placing eleven Chrome carts with classroom sets of Chromebooks throughout the middle school. This eliminated the need (in most cases) for a centralized checkout process and gives teachers more consistent access to devices. This move also allows us to shift other devices such as older Chromebooks and iPad carts to other parts of the district such as the elementary thereby expanding access for these students as well.

The second key move this past year in our work to provide students with personal learning technology was the professional development provided to teachers to implement Google Classroom. This training and ongoing support is giving the teachers the tools and expertise to move their learning environments even more into the digital realm. We also provided greater ongoing digital learning support for staff through the work of Stephanie Holmes and her Internet Café after school learning opportunities where teacher teams work on specific areas of interest they have in supporting their students using digital tools.

Without a doubt, we continue to make strides in this area and move ever closer to a One-to-One model (one device for each student) learning environment. There are many more decisions that will need to occur as we move forward, but I feel we are more ready than ever to step into this type of district wide digital tool learning environment.

Family Support and Engagement Services

We have now completed our second year of our Family-Community Resource Center (FCRC) effort and continue to see growth in the positive impacts for our students. This last year we expanded the program into the high school to make the effort a K-12 service. As you probably know, this program is designed to provide a clearinghouse for families that need extra support or assistance to find services quickly and easily. As with all new programs, there will be growing pains but I am very pleased with the progress that was made.

Services such as mental health counseling, food and clothing, parenting support (Love & Logic), Watch Dogs and our Jump-Start Backpack program were all provided through the FCRC. I see in the future the FCRC expanding services to families in need as our community further connects to our school through the FCRC. One area we continue to work in is developing an even stronger after school learning program that blends our current programs such as ASK, Community Ed., Title I/LAP offerings and our Highly Capable programs all under the umbrella of the FCRC.

One of the key ingredients to making this after school effort even more utilized is student transportation. So we worked this past year and are implementing this current school year a late transportation option for those students who take advantage of the growing number of extended learning experiences we are developing. There is a lot to learn about this new transportation option and how to best serve students, but this is another big step in the effort to provide as many options for students so they can work toward completing the Board's Ends policies.

Safe Schools

As we have consistently done, we have worked very hard to provide a safe learning environment for all our learners. This includes continued work on anti-bullying, team building, student leadership as well as traditional school safety

efforts such as emergency drills and contingency plans. Our partnership with the La Center Police Department continues to thrive in our collective efforts to ensure safety of our students and staff.

As part of this effort, we worked to develop a plan to enhance our video camera system. We have secured some new funding for this effort and we're working to create the network backbone capacity to handle the new digital video requirements. I am very pleased that the work done last year will allow us to complete the video camera upgrade during this current school year.

Flexible Learning Experiences

As you know, two years ago we created our Home School Academy (HSA) to connect with students and parents who have chosen an alternative pathway for their child's education. Previously, these students only had the option to enroll in a home-school partnership outside of our district. We were able to offer that option for our students through our HSA for the first time with positive results.

Last year, we expanded our flexible learning offerings by creating a program for students who struggle in the regular learning environment through an online program we call the LINX program. This alternative pathway is our form of final safety net to help those students who are unsuccessful in the traditional learning environment to have access locally to such a program. Previously, these students needed to travel outside of the district to receive these services.

As part of our staffing hires this past year, we were able to hire as our new associate principal at the high school Kurt Gray who has brought a wealth of experience in alternative learning from his previous roles. I am very excited about his knowledge and experience in ALE (Alternative Learning Experiences) and look forward to seeing this year how the program grows.

Data Driven Decision-making

Over the past couple of years we have worked hard to develop a data driven decision-making model that is built around what we call Learner Success Indicators (LSIs). The focus of this effort is to help make sense of the "avalanche of data" that we have at our disposal and focus in on key signs of students' success (LSIs).

The key concept of LSIs is to find highly connected points of data that link a student's success to a few key benchmarks throughout their educational journey. This journey I am talking about is from the time a student enters kindergarten to the time they graduate. Therefore, our current LSI's include:

- 1) Kindergarten readiness scores;
- 2) First grade reading scores (DIBELS);
- 3) Grades 4 and 5 reading and math scores;
- 4) Middle School accountability watch list;
- 5) 9th grader earning six or more credits; and

6) On-time graduation rates.

Using these LSI benchmarks are driving much of our change in programs within the buildings. In the elementary this includes Kindy Cub night and Kindy Cub Camp programs as well as our changes to our ACE learning support efforts. In the middle school LSIs have change our transition plans, accountability support efforts and our program offerings. In the high school, LSIs have change the way staff look at and discuss support changes for Freshman as well as programmatic changes such as the LINX program (detailed above). Additionally, our summer school program has been dramatically revamped due to the LSI data and what it illuminated for staff in regards to student learning needs.

This past year we also made another move forward in making data more accessible through the implementation of HOMEROOM software. We are piloting this software (at no cost to us) for the year. The software takes all the data recorded in Skyward and gives educators a powerful tool to sort and analyze students individually or in customized groups. We have begun training administrators to use this new tool as well as frontline support staff such as counselors, psychologists, Title/LAP teachers, etc. Once this training is complete and we have worked through and customized this tool, we anticipate beginning a process of training our teachers to use HOMEROOM as part of their work as well as TPEP responsibilities.

Concluding Thoughts

Overall I am very pleased with the work that our team has done this past year in each of these areas in support of the district mission. I have also seen how each building team has aligned their own Learning Enhancement Efforts to these six areas, yet they are doing the work they see is necessary to serve their students. Contrary to how most districts roll out initiatives from the central office, our model (Based on the Board's Ends as the key direction for the district) allows for stronger ownership and empowerment at the same time creating a "hand and glove" alignment to the mission. One can think of this model similar to how a school of fish moves through the ocean. All the fish are moving individually, but the group collectively stays together as one body. For our work as a team in the district, it all starts with the Board's Ends policies setting the base direction for the work.

2. The superintendent shall not fail to adequately monitor progress toward achievement of the district's mission. IN COMPLIANCE

The mission of the La Center School District can be broken down into three parts:

- **Create a supportive learning environment that empowers students to reach their fullest potential.**
- **Partnership with families, the community, staff and students**
- **Develop confident and self-reliant life-long learner who thrive in a rapidly changing, more technologically advanced and diverse society.**

The six areas of focus above are all easily connected to the three parts of the district mission. Therefore, I am confident that I am meeting this expectation. For example, I see the work and progress monitoring listed above in expectation #1 could easily fit into the following three parts of the district mission:

- 1) Create a supportive learning environment that empowers students to reach their fullest potential.
 - High Cognitive Demand Learning Environments
 - Family Support and Engagement Services
 - Safe Schools
 - Flexible Learning Experiences
 - Data Driven Decision-making
- 2) Work in partnership with families, the community, staff and students.
 - Family Support and Engagement Services
 - Safe Schools
 - Flexible Learning Experiences
- 3) Develop confident and self-reliant life-long learners who thrive in a rapidly changing, more technologically advanced and diverse society.
 - High Cognitive Demand Learning Environments
 - Personal Learning Technology
 - Flexible Learning Experiences
 - Data Driven Decision-making

With this in mind, I would offer all the examples detailed in the first part of this monitoring report as ample evidence that I am working to achieve the expectations to adequately monitor progress toward the district's mission.