Monitoring Report - Executive Limitations Policy
EL-13, Academic Standards and Practices

BOARD POLICY EXPECTATION

The Superintendent shall not fail to ensure that the district adopts a standards-based system of instruction with a rigorous and viable curriculum for specific courses of study intended to achieve the Board's Ends policies.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby present my monitoring report on Executive Limitations Policy EL-13 "Academic Standards and Practices" in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true as of November 24th, 2009.

Mark Mansell, Superintendent

SUPERINTENDENT'S INTERPRETATION OF POLICY

I interpret the board's expectation regarding academic standards and practices to mean the district must implement a coordinated and connected K-12 scope and sequence of curriculum that is both rigorous and appropriate to prepare students for their future pathways in life. The curriculum and instructional strategies used by staff must also be research based and designed to meet content standards as defined either at the local level, state level and/or federal level. I further interpret this policy to mean the board expects timely and effective communication with parents about their student's progress as well as stakeholder involvement in the process of developing new and/or significantly changing existing district academic programs and standards.

REPORT

There are eight specific areas described in this policy. The following will address each of the areas of EL-13 as best as possible. At the time of this report, I believe the district is in compliance with all these board expectations.

1. ***The superintendent shall not fail to implement rigorous academic content standards that reflect research based "best practices".*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
   The district continues to strive to create high quality learning environments that are built upon rigorous academic content standards provided to us by the state. We are consistently reviewing best practices and researching curriculum to find what best meets the needs of our students. We are currently operating on a 7-year adoption cycle for each of our departments. The actual adoption process takes three years, using the first year to research practices and curriculum, the second year to review materials and the third to implement and provide the initial staff development around the adoption.

Over the past year we have learned a lot relative to our practices in this work. What we have learned from the effort to review and select math curriculum materials significantly caused us to reflect on our practice and rethink what and why we select and use content. This learning has helped us really begin to think differently about content so as to see it as a "means" to an "end" rather than an "end" itself. This new thinking has allowed for many new and innovate solutions to come forward (e.g. SuccessMaker, Bridge Math, etc.) so as to wrap around various students rather than working to find a one-size fits all curriculum. To be sure we have lots more to learn but I am confident we are headed in the right direction.

2. ***The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that the district works with staff, parents, students, appropriate elements of the community, and others to review, and revise content standards to ensure maximum and continuing effectiveness.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**

   The district follows a seven-year adoption schedule. The adoption process includes the research and review of up-to-date research based materials that meet state and national standards in order to maximize the potential for student success. In addition, materials go through a rigorous review and evaluation process to identify materials with a maximum level of alignment of standards, assessment and instructional strategies, as well as district philosophical stance on the type of learning environments we seek to create. When appropriate, materials are piloted prior to adoption to identify potential staff development needs and necessary support for successful implementation.

   As stated in #1 above, we learned a lot last year with our math adoption. Parents and engaged community members, along side of staff continue to work on learning what content and learning opportunities might be best for students. This work has not always been neat and clean, but my sense is the ownership is high and the desire to meet all students where they are rather than expect them to meet us is strong and clear. An example of this is the work the high school is doing to help students transition from middle school and to adapt the new curriculum to student needs. They are listening to students and parents, creating alternative strategies to help students learn, as well as really working hard to reflect on their own practice as learning environment leaders. Again, this work is not always tidy but I believe the energy and desire that is necessary to meet the intent of this expectation is present and strong.

3. ***The superintendent shall not fail to implement a rigorous and viable curriculum and program of instruction aligned with Federal, State, and the District's adopted content standards to provide students with the educational experiences needed to achieve the standards.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**

   The district focus is to provide staff with the necessary information and resources to implement a rigorous and viable curriculum and program of instruction aligned with national, state and district adopted content standards. The primary concern for all new courses and the adoption of materials is to support the successful

implementation of courses that align with standards of the state and national organizations and with NCLB in a way that supports student success.

The staff has and continues to connect their work to state standards. An example of this is within science where the state has recently published new standards. Staff has begun to review these standards and to plan for how they will weave them into their instruction.

Beyond the standards, as stated previously, our staff is working hard to rethink how they create learning environments that help students use the content to learn rather than simply using it to know. Our learning to learn model and their work in the professional learning communities and Lab Classroom Project Teams are focused on rethinking their practice in order to create 21st century learning environments for students.

4. ***The superintendent shall not fail to develop assessments that will adequately measure each student's progress toward achieving the content standards.***
IN COMPLIANCE
The district uses annual state assessments as a primary indicator of student progress in grades 4-11 (students assessed in the spring of the previous year). In addition, classroom based assessments aligned with state grade level expectations (GLEs) are used to monitor student progress throughout the year. The district curriculum, instruction and assessment (CIA) department provide building support to assess student achievement in reading using DIBELS (Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy) assessments three times each year in grades K-6. In grades 7-12, students are assessed for reading (other than the WASL) on an as needed basis. Additional tools such as SuccessMaker for math have been added to provide us important information on student progress.

Staff has been working hard to rethink their use of assessments and how they are used to change their practice. This shift of mind is different than simply using assessments as verification that the content has arrived in the students' minds safely.

5. ***The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that parents are kept informed of student progress toward achieving content standards and how such progress is measured.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
Parents are informed of student progress through progress reports, report cards, parent conferences, and individual contacts. Student Learning Plans (SLPs) are developed for struggling students to outline ways to adjust instruction and enlist parental support to ensure student success toward academic standards is achieved.

Staff also uses their individual teacher web pages, on-line teacher plan books and PowerSchool (now Skyward) as additional tools to keep parents well informed on student progress. Additionally, parents receive WASL scores showing their

student's results. In the elementary, SuccessMaker for math has also been added to help show student progress data.

6. ***The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that all LCSD secondary students have an education plan for their high school experience.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
We continue to implement, explore and redesign as necessary a program known as Navigation 101. A key piece of this work is built around student-led conferences. Two important new frameworks have been added this year which are the new graduation requirements and the associated Pathways model for learning. With these now in place, our work with Navigation 101 needs to be further refined as a wrap-around process to these frameworks. With the technical, academic and honors pathways now more specifically articulated in the graduation requirements, I believe students via their work in Navigation 101 will have a more solid foundation to base their course selection. Without question, there will be lots more to learn in this work yet at this juncture based on what we know now I believe we are meeting the intent of this expectation.

7. ***The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that all LCSD secondary students have an education plan for the year following graduation.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
As stated in number 6 above, Navigation 101 requires the development of a post-secondary plan for each student. This plan is developed currently in 9th grade and is used as a tool in the selection of courses.

8. ***The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that all LCSD students demonstrate through a culminating project the comprehensive application of academic and work competencies inherent in LCSD Ends.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
All high school students are supported in the creation of their own comprehensive portfolio throughout their high school years. Part of this process is the creation of a fifth-year plan delineating their post-secondary pathway choices. As part of Navigation 101, students present their plans and portfolio's to parents, family and faculty advisors. For seniors, this serves as their culminating project. This program is now entering into its third year. Work to align this process to the boards Ends Policies is also underway as we are now entering our third full year using these polices to guide organizational actions. The board's recent revision of these policies will also assist us in our work to raise the cognitive demand of learning environments and ultimately the culminating project.

With all that said, I know we can and need to make this experience better. The high school Navigation 101 Captains (grade level leaders) are working to develop additional ideas to improve the program and I believe in conjunction with our technology efforts we will be able to enhance this opportunity even further for students.