Monitoring Report - Executive Limitations Policy
EL-14, Academic Program

BOARD POLICY EXPECTATION

The Superintendent shall not fail to adopt and develop an academic program for the district to enable students to meet content standards and to achieve the Board's Ends policies.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby present my monitoring report on Executive Limitations Policy EL-14 "Academic Program" 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 the academic program of the district that it needs to be challenging, appropriate, and supportive to a wide-variety of learners. The academic programs must also be regularly evaluated for effectiveness. This policy also expects that I ensure the approved curriculum of the district is what the faculty teaches. I further interpret this policy to expect appropriate and timely notification of pending significant changes and/or alterations to programs or course offerings to the board and stakeholders as required.

REPORT

There are four specific areas described in this policy. The following will address each area of EL-14 as best as possible. At the time of this report, I believe that the district is in compliance with each of these Board expectations.

1. ***The superintendent shall not fail to develop and implement an academic program that is research-based, provides access and challenge for all, is complete, is culturally responsive, comprehensively uses resources, encourages innovation, and considers class size and organization.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
   This past year involved a significant amount of work in the area of mathematics across the district to research, review and adopt. Prior to consideration for adoption, all instructional materials were determined to meet minimum requirements as defined by NCLB as being scientifically research-based. These materials were then reviewed through the lens of what the research states as the best instructional practice to support learners. Specifically, staff began their work from a book study about best practices on how people learn math. Guidelines established by such national organizations as National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) as well as highly recognized research facilities such as Northwest Regional Educational Laboratories (NWREL) provided additional support in determining best practices.

Researching, reviewing and selecting curriculum is a critical step in the process, but it is only a part of it. The instructional materials must then be integrated into the learning environment through the teacher in support of students. Additional professional development has been and continues to be provided through both the traditional and non-traditional methods. Staff has been working as a whole group through various avenues such as scheduled staff inservices as well as small group meetings. Furthermore, staff has been working through the Lab Classroom Project to improve their practice and several of them have used math as examples of their instructional needs and improvements. The district leadership team has also used math instruction as a focus of our own learning.

Finally, selecting the instructional materials and supporting the teacher through professional development must lead to how does it work to help students. Weaving together the professional development as an ongoing journey with collecting evidence of student success causes staff to reflect on their practice and change as necessary. This is the centerpiece of our learning to learn model. If we can't learn to improve our own practice as staff, then doesn't it seem odd that we would expect students to learn when we fight it ourselves? I have been pleased with how staff have really taken a hold of this concept and are extremely willing to change their practice and adjust in how they create learning environments when student evidence shows things are not working. Evidence of this is the work the high school is doing relative to our Math A students. In the elementary their work to redesign Math Club and incorporate SuccessMaker into the learning process are key examples of this systemic change when the student evidence of struggling occurs. In short, we assume learners want to learn and if they don't, then something with the learning environment needs to change.

2. ***The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that faculty know and teach the adopted curriculum.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
   As stated in #1 above, I have clear evidence that staff is working hard to learn and harness the potential of our new math instructional materials. Built around the concept of we need to make sure we are learning about our own practice if we expect to maximize the opportunity for students to learn, my greatest opportunity for learning is from the district leadership team. We have spent the bulk of our meeting times focused on improving our own instructional practice and ability to learn. This effort has allowed us to become better as instructionally focused leaders rather than simply managers. This shift in our focus creates a learning drive that motivates us to own the curriculum along side of staff rather than simply provide quality control. Evidence of this focus can clearly be seen each month in the principals' board report.

3. ***The superintendent shall not fail to ensure the regular monitoring and evaluation of the academic program and make appropriate modifications in practice and content.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
   As stated above, within the math instructional material adoption process over the past year we made adjustments in our review, adoption and implementation processes and strategies. We continue this work in order to provide the best instructional materials and instructional practices for students. Our learning focus on our practice is based on

the evidence provided by students. Without question, as a collective learning team of professionals we are meeting this expectation on a daily basis.

I would like to seize this opportunity to point out the fact that this idea of regular monitoring and evaluation process is actually built upon the work of the board within the Policy Governance model. The board leads the way in this work and it has begun to root this way of being throughout the entire organization. As a volunteer board, you need to know the importance of your commitment to this process at the board level creates powerful motivation throughout the entire organization.

4. ***The superintendent shall not fail to report to the Board (and provide sufficient advance notice to the public on) significant changes, deletions or addition of programs and courses of study.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
Once again, this past year with the math instructional materials adoption and implementation process has provided significant energy from stakeholders (i.e. students, staff, parents and community members) behind this effort. This energy stretched our thinking and tested our processes. Without question this work has not always been neat and clean. I'm okay with this because I believe that real learning and growth requires challenges that sometimes cause us to fail. We clearly had some experiences over the past year that we would approach and address differently now than we did at the time. For example, with the math implementation of Core-Plus at the high school, we should have done a better job of reaching out to and supporting parents in the transition. We did the best that we knew at the moment, but I don't think the lesson of needing to have greater parental engagement earlier has gone unnoticed. I am confident we have met the spirit of this expectation in board reports by principals, Bonnie Lock and myself, as well as in presentations and conversations indirectly and directly to the board.