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 26th, 2013.

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" along with the district's Learner Competencies.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
   Our staff has begun the work of sorting through the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to determine how best they fit in meeting the expectations of the Board's Ends policies. Unlike many other districts around the state, we feel our schools are owned by our community rather than being a government school. This is more than just word play, it is a mindset that I believe our team takes seriously. What that means is our goal is to prepare our students for a lifetime of learning. Long after the CCSS are a faint memory, our students will be building solid lives for themselves using the learning tools they learned in the La Center School District.

That is why the Learner Competencies are the foundation of our work as educators rather than CCSS.

With that said, to help our students become the most confident, self-reliant learners they can become, they have to have a broad based and solid spectrum of content standards for them to immerse themselves into. That is were CCSS comes in. The Common Core is not seen as the "end" objective by our district, but rather it is a "means" to an "end". Put another way, if our students are to work every day to expand their ability to think, learn and problem solve, we need a comprehensive set of content standards for them to think, learn and problem solve within. That is where CCSS comes in.

Our staff is working hard to familiarize themselves and begin to use CCSS in their lesson design. These content standards as a general rule so far have shown to be much better (particularly in English/Language Arts) in being of high cognitive demand than the state's previous standards. What we are sorting through is which standards do we need to alter/change so as to raise the cognitive demand of the learning target we are seeking. Our teachers are becoming much more aware of content standards that are of a lower cognitive demand and changing them as needed.

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 both content standards and the Learner Competencies.***
IN COMPLIANCE
The district follows a seven-year rotation adoption schedule (available online). 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 part of the adoption process, parents, students and engaged community members, along side of staff work on learning what content and learning opportunities might be best for students. Dave Holmes has led a lengthy and inclusive process over the past two years to collect and review a wide range of instructional materials in mathematics to support the type of learning environments we believe will meet the Board's Ends policies. These materials will be selected first and foremost for helping us achieve the Board's Ends and the approved Learner Competencies. From there, we are looking to find the most comprehensive materials to help our students learn using the Common Core State Standards.

3. ***The superintendent shall not fail to implement a rigorous and viable curriculum and create learning environments to meet Federal, State, and the District's adopted content and the Learner Competency standards so as to provide students with the educational experiences needed to develop into confident and self-reliant life-long learners.*** **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 with federal law in a way that supports student success.

   Beyond the standards, as stated previously, our staff continue working hard to create learning environments that help students use the content to learn how to learn anything rather than simply knowing the content itself. Our learning to learn model and their work within a wide variety of professional learning communities are focused on rethinking their practice in order to create 21st century learning environments for all students.

   A key example of this learning work by our teachers is to expand their instructional strategies/toolbox to raise the cognitive demand of their student's learning work. Almost every teacher has now been provided additional protocols and/or routines to help students practice their skills to think critically and expand their ability to become more confident, self-reliant learners. Based on this evidence, I feel very confident I am in compliance with this expectation.

4. ***The superintendent shall not fail to adequately measure each student's progress toward achieving the content standards and the Learner Competencies.*** **IN COMPLIANCE**
   The district uses annual state assessments as a primary indicator of student progress in grades 3-10 (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 Teaching and Learning department provides 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 MSP/HSPE) on an as needed basis. Tools such as SuccessMaker and IXL math have been added to provide us important information on student progress in 3-6 math. Additionally we may use other measures to inform student progress such as SAT or ACT scores, AP participation and scores, and 8th grade promotions policy success rates to name a few.

5. ***The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that parents are kept informed of student progress toward achieving content standards and Learner Competencies, but also 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 Skyward as additional tools to keep parents well informed on student progress. Additionally, parents receive MSP, HSPE and EOC scores showing their student's results. Again, in the elementary, SuccessMaker and IXL programs for math are provided to help students improve their math skills/abilities as well as track 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 Navigation 101. A key piece of this work is built around student-led conferences, which continue to be successful for all involved. Ms. Krem has continued the work with advisory groups at the middle school so that all students beginning in the sixth grade will identify a pathway. With the technical, academic and honors pathways now more specifically articulated in the graduation requirements, and being introduced in the sixth grade, I believe students via their work in Navigation 101 and advisory, will have a more solid foundation on which to base their course selection.

My own experience as a Navigation 101 teacher (in my second year, now with a group of sophomores) has helped me see first how this program can be a powerful way to help students develop meaningful plans for their future learning. An additional bonus of this experience is that I have been able to work on my own practice in creating learning environments through the implementation of the Learner Competencies.

What I am learning is that the Navigation curriculum is actually pretty good, but the difference between a successful outcome and one that is less successful is more connected to the mindset of the teacher rather than the instructional materials. I find myself using the materials as a guide rather than strict instructions. My focus is helping my Nav students become more independent of me through every class. The tools of Navigation have not stood in my way to focus on this and in almost every case they have provided the learning experiences I needed to achieve this goal.

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 6th grade and is used as a tool in the selection of courses and to focus student's work on their pathway to their next learning opportunity.

8. ***The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that all LCSD students demonstrate through a culminating project the comprehensive application of their academic work and the Learner Competencies inherent in the Board's Ends policies.***

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 seventh year. We continue to gather survey data from teachers, parents and students around this process and make appropriate changes and improvements. With the rollout of the iPads throughout the high school as well as my own personal learning experience with Navigation, I believe we should begin to see a greater use of current technology within the Student Led Conference experience.