Superintendent's Report

November 21st, 2012

LEARNING UPDATE

- **Ends-2 Reflection** – I believe reflection is a critical part of the learning process. If it is not too boastful, I think this is something that I do reasonably well. Additionally I want to share that I take my responsibility to produce monitoring reports for the Board seriously, which at its core requires a lot of reflection. The Ends-2 monitoring report in particular always causes extra thought and consideration so this month much of my time has been spent thinking about and talking with principals, Dave Holmes and other staff about the data connected for my Ends-2 monitoring report to the Board. As a result of this effort, to be direct I have found myself a bit frustrated.

  I often tell staff when they become frustrated about an issue or concern they are working on that the frustration is most likely because they don't know how to accomplish something to a specific level of satisfaction that they expect to achieve. For me, data we have looked at in this and past years as appropriate measures for evidence of progress towards Ends-2 expectations are what is causing me my frustration. This is because I see every day how hard staff works to create the type of learning environments that I almost always find both highly engaging and powerful. But for some reason, the assessment results we are looking at in the lower grades do not give us confidence of a strong correlation between the results and ultimate student success. I point to the fact that even though we don't always see great K-8 state scores, yet in these same academic areas by the time they graduate students are doing exceptionally well.

  As I have shared with the Board in the past, I have called this phenomenon for lack of a better name the "Corbett Effect". Several years ago we visited the Corbett School District in Oregon to learn from them about their learning environments as they had gone from being one of the worst high schools (as measured by state assessments) in Oregon a decade ago to one of the top five high schools in the nation. Even with this significant evidence of success as students graduate their school student test scores on state assessments at their lower grades were often times at or below the scores of other Oregon schools. Sounds very familiar, but not comforting. To me this is where my frustration resides and I want to learn why this is occurring.

  My reason for this need to learn why is that I fully believe student success is maximized if they have greater and greater experiences where they can hone their thinking skills every day in every classroom. The Board's Ends-1 expectation of developing confident, self-reliant lifelong learners is the genesis of what I am convinced has become a foundation of our district's learning culture. So either the tests at the early grades are so disconnected (no correlation) from the final assessments required by the state for graduation that it doesn't really matter what students score in the lower grades or we are missing a tremendous opportunity to learn much more about our practice. If you know me well, you will not find it

hard to figure out where I landed on that choice… I unquestionably see this as an opportunity to learn. The question is then, how do we sort through this learning opportunity effectively?

It is from this point that I have been thinking hard about my own practice. I needed to share my thoughts here in the Learning Update section of my Board report as I couldn't by the nature of the Ends-2 monitoring report structure share them there. With this in mind, one of the things I am pondering is how do we connect our explicitly known and valid data as well as develop new more meaningful data across the district in ways that further deepens our connectedness as a team of learners? Each building is collecting and using data in their own unique ways, but we are not learning to the extent I know we are capable of as a team if we only had a way to identify and make sense of more meaningful data to help us in our learning environment development.

From this learning focus, I have begun to develop a strategy on how to link the data we have currently available to us across the district to try and see more systemically the correlation (or lack there of) between our actions and learner success evidences in new and powerful ways. I will be calling these data points *Learner Success Indicators* (LSI). We need to learn what specific data points are truly powerful LSIs followed by how do we most effectively develop and implement strategies to move the LSIs in the desired positive direction? I believe the composite of these LSIs will provide a much better picture of what is occurring with learner success than just relying on regularly shifting and disconnected state assessments. This doesn't mean that we will disregard the data from state tests, but rather augment them to create a broader perspective on learner success.

In closing and in the spirit of the Thanksgiving season, I want to express my appreciation for the support and encouragement the Board provides me as a learner. I know we can do better in every aspect of the environments we create for our students. This is no truer for anyone else than it is for myself as your superintendent. Unquestionably I have lots to learn about my practice, but thanks to the explicit expectations around learner success by this organization you charge me to lead, I have full confidence my own frustration will be transformed into greater learning.

BOARD UPDATE

- **Budget Update** – Now that the election is over, what I am beginning to hear as the upcoming legislative session rapidly approaches is that one of two basic scenarios will occur relative to next year's budget. The first is that the state will make progress toward providing more funding keeping with the ruling of the Washington state Supreme Court. The counter scenario could result in a change to the definition of basic education that the state must fund. With the governorship remaining in the democrat side of the isle and the house remaining strongly democratic, I believe the scenario with more funding is more likely than not to occur. With that said, I am hearing about some legislators who are not happy with the Supreme Court forcing their hand and might be itching for a showdown. My sense is when the dust settles, we will see a bit more funding than currently based on the present conditions with the economy.

- **Redefining Technology and Teaching & Learning Responsibilities** – I am very pleased with how Dan Bentson and Dave Holmes (with their respective teams) have worked to refocus their priorities around the iPad implementation. They have initiated several new strategies to enhance learning opportunities with the iPads for students and for staff. More on this matter as this work continues to move forward, but I just wanted to share how proud I am of the staff work with learning how to roll out these new learning tools.
- **Capital Facilities Plan** – Up until 2009, as a district we were required to update our Capital Facilities Plan that included recalculations of our impact fees every two years. Then when the economy downturn occurred, the need for new facilities declined across the county so the County Commissioners changed the ordinance to move the requirement to a four-year cycle. Well that would mean that we would be required to update our capital facilities plan starting next year. That would be fine, but because they will need to update their own county wide plan as per the GMA (Growth Management Act) in two years, we would just have to turn around and do our plan over again in a short time frame. With this situation occurring, we have requested for the county to allow us to move forward with our current Capital Facilities Plan and just complete the process once, thus saving the district several thousand dollars in the process. We recently received approval for our request, so we will move forward with great thanks to the commissioners and their staff for saving us these resources.

I think that is all for now. Please give me a call if you have any questions. Talk with you later.

Mark