Monitoring Report - Ends Policy
E-1, District Mission

BOARD POLICY EXPECTATION

The mission of the La Center School District is to create a supportive environment that empowers students to reach their fullest potential. We will do this in partnership with families, the community, and employees to create life-long learners who can adapt to a changing, more technologically advanced and diverse society.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby present my monitoring report on Ends Policy E-1 "District Mission" in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true as of July 21st, 2009.

Mark Mansell, Superintendent

SUPERINTENDENT'S INTERPRETATION OF POLICY

I interpret the district mission to serve as a written description of the overarching purpose of the organization as well as the manner in which district personnel will operate in the process of accomplishing this stated purpose. The results are to be derived from the creation and/or maintenance of a supportive learning environment for students, which connects and harnesses the energy of the adults around the students (staff, parents and community members) in a way that garners a broad based effort to prepare students for a future where their ability to learn will be more valued than their accumulated knowledge.

REPORT

There are no specific delineated requirements with this Ends policy as there are with all the others. However, to fully give a report on this expectation I would like to discuss the three major sections that are clearly written into this policy. Broadly stated, these sections relate to a *supportive learning environment*, *partnership with stakeholders* and the creation of *life-long learners*.

The district has worked hard over the years with significant success in the area of creating *supportive learning environments* for students. Each building has developed very active student leadership programs that encourage and fosters student ownership of the learning environment. One great example that can serve as evidence of student ownership of the learning environment would be that we have a tremendous collection of art in the high school with a long record of zero vandalism to what is easily described in many cases as fragile and exposed. When I have asked students in the past about why there is so much respect and care given by students for the art, they have always looked at me with puzzlement as to say,

"Why would we ever want to do something to damage our school?" I wonder how many high schools function from this starting place? Not too many I'm sure, and this is a credit to our students as well as our staff and community expectations. Even with these expectations, if students didn't feel valued themselves they would not value the physical things in the environment. Therefore, part of this critical work to create supportive learning environments must include student voice in the process in order for them to feel valued. Again, through student leadership, board linkages with stakeholders (including students), surveys that are designed from the perspective that our students have valuable input and we want and need to tap into this knowledge and energy in order for us to provide the greatest amount of support to them. With all this in mind, I believe the district is in compliance with this portion of the Ends-1 expectations.

The second portion of the district's mission statement is relative to the expectation of having strong *partnerships with stakeholders*. From the 10,000 ft. view, there are plenty of examples of how we have and continue to reach out to students, staff, parents and other stakeholders in the process of operating the district. Engagement of stakeholders in important work with traditional school-community partnership such as with bonds and levies are plentiful. What was mentioned above in terms of surveys, holding linkage meetings and so on are additional examples. Furthermore, we can show how we provide numerous opportunities for volunteers to serve on many other decision and involvement efforts such as the Food Service Advisory Committee, Instructional materials review committees, working within classrooms (Reading buddies, head checks, classroom supports, etc.) and on playfields (K-8 field day), with the Fall Carnival, as part of the Lion's Health Screening van, helping out with classroom and office tasks, or going along with students on field trips or the outdoor school. We are truly blessed to have such a strong level of connection and support from stakeholders in both an inward and/or outward flow of energy for the betterment of students.

Even though there are numerous examples of how we partner with our stakeholders, throughout the math adoption process this past year we really struggled at times to consistently and/or effectively meet this expectation. The energy of stakeholders with this work tested the boundaries of our thinking and processes. I see this testing as a very good thing and something that I am deeply appreciative of. The stakeholders who were involved in this work were very patient with us and I believe helped us learn a lot! What we learned from this as an organization was that this policy really did serve as an anchor to hold us true to the belief that we really do desire a partnership with stakeholders. Even though we believe in this, our processes initially were geared for only a certain level of partnership and entry into the process at certain points in the journey. We learned that our stakeholders wanted and needed more involvement and we were slow to catch up with this. Even though the learning curve was steep for us, with patience and a lot of hard work by stakeholders and staff, I believe we found better ways to connect

stakeholder energy to the process in more meaningful ways.

This is why I said above that we were meeting this expectation "from the 10,000 ft view". The math adoption process showed us what we had done previously to involve stakeholders was effective from a certain vantage point. However, we now realize we actually had farther to go to be in even greater compliance. I believe we are much better as a result of this work. In the end, we are more in compliance with this expectation than we were last year because of our new vantage point and feel comfortable with our progress to date (albeit we arrived more slowly than I would have liked). With that said, I am absolutely sure we have a lot more to learn but be assured we are headed in the right direction with this expectation.

The third and final area expected in the district mission statement is that we are charged by the board to *create life-long learners*. Last year I shared with you in my Ends-1 monitoring report the following statement:

> "I believe we have not effectively and systemically been as intentional as we need to be in this area. As a staff, we must re-evaluate our focus relative to the creation of life-long learners. I know there are many of our staff members who are working hard to teach students how to think and be effective learners. However, I don't believe we have an effective model on which to focus our collective energies, nor is there a common and clear articulation of this expectation across the district. What results is an effort that is not systemic nor is it broadly focused."

At the conclusion of last year's report I stated that we were not in compliance with this expectation. This year, I can proudly state that even though we have a long way to go, we are absolutely in compliance. Without question we have an effective district-wide model for learning. Our staff has worked extremely hard to redesign their thinking relative to creating learning environments that are learning to think focused rather than simply content delivery based. This new "way of being" has permeated virtually every part of our organization in ways that are hard to fully describe. Evidence of this change can be observed in our conversations and actions, and I believe is rooted in a new way of thinking about our own learning. I have shared with staff the following on numerous occasions:

> "Imagine we are in the skateboard business and nobody in the company skateboards. That would be odd… right? Well, we are in the learning business. Are we learners ourselves and what does that look like for us as leaders of learning environments? What and how are we learning relative to our own professional practice?"

As a board, I am confident you have seen evidence of this powerful work over the past year in everything from how staff and administrators communicate at board

meetings, to my own superintendent reports (which includes an entire section each month on our learning). We have efforts occurring throughout the district for not only students to learn, but staff to learn and rethink how they create learning to think classrooms. Learning to know classrooms will not consistently and systemically create life-long learners. Learning to think classrooms, we believe, will. Efforts such as the Lab Classroom Project, Lesson Studies, Professional Learning Communities and so on are examples of the profound shift in our thinking over the past year to create for ourselves a culture of a learning to think staff. A learning to think staff will do a much better job of creating learning to think environments for students. Even what I reported above regarding the math adoption process shows our focus to learn has made a huge leap forward. Instead of resisting the opportunity to learn from the math adoption process because we "know", we approached it from a learning to "think" perspective. With all this in mind and as I stated above, I believe we are in full compliance with your expectation to create life-long learners from a systemic point of view. Without question, we have much to learn, but our systemic focus has now moved to an entirely new level when it comes to this expectation.

Policy Type: Ends

District Mission **E-1**

The mission of the La Center School District is to create a supportive environment that empowers students to reach their fullest potential. We will do this in partnership with families, the community, and employees to create life-long learners who can adapt to a changing, more technologically advanced and diverse society.

Adopted: November 27, 2007
Monitoring Method: Internal Report and Direct Observation Monitoring
Frequency: Annually in July