Monitoring Report - Ends Policy
E-1, District Mission

BOARD POLICY EXPECTATION

The mission of the La Center School District is to create a supportive learning environment that empowers students to reach their fullest potential. We will do this in partnership with families, the community, employees and students to develop life-long learners who can thrive in a rapidly 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 27th, 2010.

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*.

Supportive learning environment speaks to the need for the adults around the students to create positive and internally motivating learning environments for all of our students. Therefore, to accomplish this expectation our partnership with stakeholders (the second expectation) must be strong. We believe that in order to tap into the internal energy of the adults around students, they too must be invited to be life-long learners as well. With all this in mind, we clearly cannot achieve any one of these three expectations to the fullest potential without working on the others. The key for us has been to approach our work with a "learner mindset", which creates a need to have partnerships which in turn creates a supportive learning environment.

Examples of our efforts over the past year in these three areas include our continued efforts to focus our learning efforts as educators on improving our professional practices. We began this year with a new initiative known as the Lab Classroom Project, where more than 30 educators worked in five different teams across the district to develop a specific problem of practice based on what they were seeing in their students. These problems of practice focused and personalized staff's professional development by allowing them to customize their own learning plan. This effort eroded the barriers of isolation between teachers that the system creates for them (e.g. separate classrooms, different schedules, etc.) and allowed them the opportunity to really work with and learn from each other. Because the learning focus was of their own making, their internal motivation to accomplish their work was significant.

What resulted for students from this teacher learning focused effort was that teachers began to shift their thinking from "content delivery" within their own classrooms to learning about their practice from their students. Teachers began to see their students more as experts to learn about their own teaching practices rather than simply as "file cabinets" to be filled with their content knowledge. The shift of focus allowed students to own the learning more (just like the teachers were experiencing) and thus created greater internal motivations from students. We are seeing in classrooms less "sage on the stage" teaching where the teacher is doing the talking to "guide on the side" teaching where the teacher is more of a learning facilitator. This evidence is creating stronger, learner centered learning environments across the district, which is clear evidence that staff is achieving the core of the E-1 expectation.

Directly from students we are seeing evidences that we believe are a result of this shift of teacher thinking. Examples are significant increases GPAs at the middle school (the MS staff is farther along this journey than staff of the other buildings), feedback from students that they are being asked and allowed to ask more questions about their learning and this is specifically connected to their academic improvements, as well as greater student engagement is being observed across the district during classroom visits. Evidence of this shift of thinking gained from teachers would be when the Board heard from teachers involved in the Lab Classroom Project during the school showcases throughout this past year. The energy and excitement about their learning was very obvious and that energy is also being observed in the classroom from the teachers (who set the tempo for learning) and from the students. Finally, we have seen an increase in participation in Lab Classroom teams jump from about 30 teachers this past year to nearly 60 for next year. This increase is not connected to any incentives or encouragements from administration. It simply is due to the opportunity to improve their practice and to create stronger learning environments for students.

All in all, I fully believe the people who comprise this organization are working

very hard to achieve the mission of the district as articulated in this Board Ends policy. Therefore I am confident that we are in full compliance with these expectations.