

BOARD POLICY EXPECTATION

The Superintendent shall not fail to provide educational leadership for district staff required to achieve the Board's Ends Policies.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby present my monitoring report on Executive Limitations Policy EL-5 "Educational Leadership" 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 10th, 2015.

Dr. Mark Mansell, Superintendent

SUPERINTENDENT'S INTERPRETATION OF POLICY

I interpret this expectation regarding educational leadership to mean the board believes it is important for the superintendent to serve as both a district and community leader in a positive and proactive way so as to advocate on behalf of our students the value of public education.

REPORT

There are nine specific areas described in this policy. The following will address each specific area of EL-5 as best as possible. At the time of this report, I believe that the district is in compliance with the Board's expectations.

1. The superintendent shall not fail to project a strong image of instructional leadership to all stakeholders. IN COMPLIANCE

I could provide many examples of instructional leadership that have produced positive results over the years. One tremendous example of this that I would point to recently presented itself to me at a State Board of Education (SBE) meeting that was held last week at our ESD. I was sitting at a discussion table with several other area administrators, a school board member from a larger school district in our region and two individuals from the SBE, one of whom is a board member. We were talking about issues facing our schools as the SBE wants to hear what is happening locally so they could learn and possibly help through their policies. I had the opportunity to share our concerns about the continual erosion of local control due to ever-encroaching rules and mandates from the state and federal authorities.

It was at this point that the topic of CORE-24 came up and the concerns from other districts facing challenges to implement the SBE's 24 credit requirements. As I sat there listening to the long list of concerns and complaints about what the SBE is doing to impact students negatively with this rule change I had time to

reflect upon our own journey with implementing CORE-24 expectations in the district. Back in 2007 I had the opportunity to serve on a state-wide committee known as the CORE-24 Implementation Task Force. In fact, I had the opportunity to serve as the co-chair for the team of about twenty-plus members. At that time we heard all the same concerns and issues with implementing these new graduation requirements without any new funding.

As a result of that work our district completed a transcript study and discovered that about half of our students already earned 24 credits and only needed some course changes to fully meet these new requirements. About 35% of our students needed to push themselves harder their senior year as we found many students were actually taking less than rigorous classes as they met our lower class requirements. The remaining students (about 10%) were truly struggling just to get to our old requirements. The end result was that we found that for most students we simply needed to raise the bar for requirements and provide additional course offerings to support the higher standards. For the truly struggling students, we decided that as a system we needed to provide more supports and additional pathways for them to catch up and keep up with the new graduation requirements.

With all that research, we decided that we needed to act and move towards the higher standards even though the state was not funding these changes. We did this because we felt our students were not only capable, but would benefit in the long run by challenging them to learn more. The result is that our graduation rates actually increased; our supports for struggling students expanded; and our scholarships earned by students actually increased from a few hundred thousand dollars a year to more than two-million dollars per year. All this is a stark contrast to the concerns and even anger that the SBE via CORE-24 was actually going to cause the exact opposite for students. So with this one example in mind, I am very confident that as a team of educators, students and parents that we are in full compliance with this expectation.

2. *The superintendent shall not fail to communicate an optimistic vision for the mission and the work of the district and public education.* IN COMPLIANCE

I have many opportunities to represent the district in a variety of settings. Whether that is inside our community (e.g. Lions Club, city council meetings, community celebrations, linkage meetings, etc.) or outside La Center (e.g. other districts, Clark County Superintendents' Group, ESD, WASA, working with legislators, etc.), it is always a joy to share and respond to questions as a champion for the La Center team. Being optimistic about what's before us and helping to set in place action steps to shape future successes is something that comes naturally to me and so many others here in La Center. It is an integral part of the spirit we have. Whether as students, staff, families or community members, we have great hope in facing the challenges that head our way and we consistently do so with optimism and confidence. More so than any other place I

have served, our can-do attitude is the “secret ingredient” to our recipe for success. They don’t call it “The La Center Way” for nothing 😊

3. *The superintendent shall not fail to possess and use up-to-date educational knowledge in the course of their work. IN COMPLIANCE*

Due to our size of school, being connected in a variety of settings with stakeholders is a tremendous opportunity that is afforded to me as superintendent. It allows me the opportunity to listen to so many stakeholders, which provides me multiple perspectives on a wide range of topics on a continuous basis. That said, we are also at a size of district where there is enough people power to allow me to stay connected outside of the district as well. This multiple source flow of information provides me with so much information so as to allow me to be consistently up-to-date on a wide range of topics. Without question, my ability to stay current is bolstered so much by the special circumstances that our district enjoys. Therefore, I am very thankful for the reasons why I am in full compliance with this expectation.

4. *The superintendent shall not fail to maintain and enhance his/her own educational knowledge through continuous learning. IN COMPLIANCE*

One of the many, many wonderful parts of being part of the La Center team that I enjoy is the tremendous collective thirst for learning stakeholders have here in our community. Our entire culture as a team of professionals is built on this drive to learn as a way to improve our practice as educators in the service of our students. I am truly blessed to be part of so many teams of learners. Whether that team includes students (my Navigation team), teachers/support staff (Old Dog, safety committee, lunch room chats), administrators (leadership team), the Board (workshops, linkage and Board meetings), parents/community members (formal and informal meetings/conversations, Lions Club, city council), I am afforded an endless list of opportunities to learn from and with stakeholders.

Outside of the district I enjoy being part of so many other educational teams that adds so much to my overall opportunity to learn (county/regional superintendents, ESD, WASA, community groups). Additionally, I personally work on expanding my learning that started with my doctoral studies relative to creating and growing learning teams/organizations. I am confident that there is ample evidence of my drive to continually work on enhancing my own educational knowledge and drive to learn.

5. *The superintendent shall not fail to maintain and consistently communicate that student achievement is the focus of district staff efforts. IN COMPLIANCE*

One of the keys to our success as a learning organization is the clear focus the Board provides us in their Ends Policies. Particularly with Ends-1, the mission of our district is abundantly clear. Therefore, our effort to communicate this focus and strive daily to meet its expectation is at the core of our work. In particular, the key statement of this expectation is to “...develop confident, self-reliant life-

long learners...”. This has become a powerful lens that shapes our daily efforts and decisions. Ends-1 is so much more than a mission statement in our district because it has become a way of being for us as a learning team. I am very confident that we are in compliance with this Board expectation.

6. *The superintendent shall not fail to research and utilize the best and most effective instructional practices as the foundation of their work as the top educational leader. IN COMPLIANCE*

Our collective work around the district’s learning model has become the core of our practice as educators. This learning model is designed to engage the innate need and desire to learn that is part of our DNA as human beings. This includes our students as well as for ourselves as adults. That is why all of our practices across the district are geared towards creating learning environments that ask learners to think, supports learners in doing the work and finally trusts them to become active learners in the process. Therefore, I am very confident that we are in compliance with this Board expectation.

7. *The superintendent shall not fail to respond to the changing needs of students/parents in a positive and proactive manner. IN COMPLIANCE*

The systemic shift of mind our professional team has made over the years to not only responding to changing needs of students and parents, but to seek feedback as a critical part of the equation to create powerful learning teams has been one of the greatest joys of my professional experience. Our staff’s growing need to seek the thinking of students as a course of their own learning on how to modify their strategies for their classroom has been an important part of our instructional practice. This is why I believe our work is perfectly aligned with the Board’s expectation in this area.

8. *The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that a high quality curriculum is in place at all levels and that staff effectively use approved instructional materials to meet district, state and national standards that are approved by the Board. IN COMPLIANCE*

We continue to work on improving our instructional materials whether that is in mathematics, science or English/Language Arts. This is done through review and adjusting to needs of teachers. We are in process of working on creating a new multi-year plan for curriculum adoption that is more reflective of our needs to renew these instructional materials on a more realistic schedule. This is because some content areas need upgrading on a faster timeline than seven years, while others need less rotation. This is a work in process, but I am confident that we are still in compliance with this expectation.

9. *The superintendent shall not fail to provide appropriate professional development necessary for staff to use the approved instructional materials. IN COMPLIANCE*

Professional learning with the implementation of newly adopted instructional materials is an ongoing process. This effort is one that is especially powerful

when we do so using our district's learning model. As our teachers (as learners) dive into the process of learning these materials they do so in a manner that will help them create the types of learning environments necessary to meet Ends-1 and Ends-2. What we are finding is that not all publishers provide professional development opportunities that align well with our learning model. This is why we need to provide additional opportunities for teachers so as to go deeper into the materials. This is kind of frustrating, but this effort shows that we are meeting the expectation that our collective effort to support teachers beyond traditional publisher professional development is ample and appropriate.