

To: School Board, Ferndale School District (WA)

From: Linda Quinn, Superintendent

Date: September 24, 2019

**Subject: 2019 Monitoring Report
Operational Expectations Policy 4 (OE-4)
Personnel Administration**

School Board's Monitoring Notes

(To be completed by each member individually prior to discussion by the whole Board)

Board Member: _____

Total Number of Monitoring Indicators = 38

Number Compliant= _____ Number Partially Compliant= _____ Number Non-Compliant= _____

Commendations

Recommendations

Other Notes

Overall Rating: _____ Compliant _____ Non-Compliant

Superintendent's Introduction

Through Policy OE-4, the School Board has provided guidance about how they expect us to care for our human resources. As such, it is a subset of the Board's third Strategic Commitment, which talks about managing resources responsibly and productively. In Commitment 3, the Board says:

*We believe the way we allocate [and manage] resources significantly impacts our ability to serve the growth and learning needs of children. Therefore, we are dedicated to the careful use of all resources -- **people**, time, facilities, and money, along with other less tangible but essential resources like trust, vision, ideas, energy, and hope.*

It is no accident that people are the first resource in the Board's list of resources. More than 80% of our operating budget is allocated to the people we employ, and those employees are the force that drives everything we do. Whenever we talk about programs for students, we are really talking about people. We can't talk about instruction without including the instructors. We can't talk about buses or lunches or facilities without including the staff who drive or cook or maintain them. As we have stated in the first line of our interpretation of Policy OE-4, we are a "people business" and we need to invest in the people who power our business.

A year ago (Fall 2018), when we wrote our interpretation of OE-4 and identified the monitoring indicators we would use to demonstrate compliance, our Executive Director of Human Resources (Or Personnel Management, as it is called in this policy), John Fairbairn, was brand new in his position, having transitioned from his elementary principalship only a few months earlier. John and I worked together on the Phase One Report. Looking back on it now, I think we may have been overly ambitious in the number of indicators we included -- 38 of them in all -- and also in judging the viability of some of those indicators. Throughout this report, you will find our responses to several of the 38 indicators to be somewhat thin. Although it might be possible to collect all of the data they call for if we devoted sufficient time to the task, we are hoping to have a candid conversation with you about whether doing so would be the best use of our time.

As when we wrote the Phase One Monitoring Reports -- which included interpretations and indicators of compliance -- we are learning a great deal as we embark on this second phase of reports -- in which we are charged with providing evidence for each indicator. We look forward to getting your feedback on all of the information and evidence we have provided in this Phase Two Monitoring Report.

Speaking of evidence, I want to acknowledge that many of our responses to the indicators take the form of attestations that evidence of compliance exists, rather than the recitation of the evidence itself, which, if included, we make this 21-page report several hundred pages. We stand ready to provide such evidence upon your request.

Finally, before launching into the content of this report, I want to share a few notes about its format and organization:

First, we have included the interpretations and monitoring indicators you approved a year ago (September 2018) in our Phase One Report for Policy OE-4, so that you do not have to look back and forth between two documents. The language from the Phase One Report is written in blue.

Second, Policy OE-4 contains 12 components, each with its own monitoring indicators. The components are written in bolded black. (This language is from your adopted policy.) The interpretation of each components is written in blue. (These are the interpretations we wrote and you approved last year in our Phase One Report.) The monitoring indicators are written in bolded blue. (These are the measures of compliance we wrote and you approved last year in our Phase One Report.) Our response to each indicator, which follows that indicator directly, is written in black and marked with a black arrow. (This is the new work we are presenting to you as part of this year's Policy OE-4 Monitoring Report.)

Example:

Component 1 of Policy OE-4

Interpretation of Component 1

Monitoring Indicator for Component 1

→ Our response to the Monitoring Indicator

Finally, as per your request, we have included a box by our response to each monitoring indicator for you to score it “Compliant,” “Non-compliant,” or “Partially Compliant.” We have also, as per your request, included at the very beginning of this document a place for you to tally your “scores,” make a final determination about the compliance level of our report, and record your comments and notes. Since this is the first time we are presenting you with this particular format, we welcome your feedback on it as well.

Policy

The Superintendent will assure the recruitment, employment, development, evaluation, and compensation of District employees in a manner necessary to enable the District to achieve its *Results* policies.

Interpretation

In general, we understand this policy expresses the Board's reminder that we are a “people business” and therefore we need to invest in people in a way that (a) makes the Ferndale School District a place people choose to work; (b) ensures a talented, healthy, and committed staff in every part of our school system; and (c) creates a sufficiently diverse workforce to reflect all aspects of our community. In other words, we understand the Board expects us to put together the best team possible to fulfill our commitments to the District's owners and realize the goals of our organization. To do this, our Human Resources Department will intentionally work to achieve the following six-part people-focused mission:

- Providing a Quality Workforce (Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention)
- Ensuring Effective Contracts (Negotiated Agreements)

- Offering Staff Support and Assistance (Employee Services)
- Partnering for Additional Resources (Parents, Universities, and Volunteers)
- Leading Lifelong Learning (Certification and Professional Development)
- Evaluating for Continuous Improvement (Accountability)

Monitoring Indicator(s) are provided below for each component part of OE-4.

1. Assure that no person is employed by the District without first clearing thorough background inquiries and checks.

Interpretation

We understand this component requires us to ensure all employees are vetted through the proper channels for the safety of students, staff, and District property. In other words, we understand there are resources including the Washington State Patrol, OSPI, the Administrative Office of the Courts, the FBI, the Department of Corrections, and former employers that can help us identify persons whose past behavior could make them risky to employ. We recognize the Board expects us to use our hiring processes to minimize potential negative impacts to the District’s ability to fulfill its commitments to its owners. We further recognize that the character of the individuals we choose to employ reflects on the District as a whole. Finally, we acknowledge that time and maturity may allow someone with past bad acts to grow and mature to a degree that he/she becomes employable without significant risks; and that the Board expects us to follow standards of humane and reasonable judgment in determining such cases.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **We have written procedures that all employees are required to follow when conducting background checks on candidates under consideration for employment.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

➔ Procedures are written and communicated, including appropriate forms for completing background checks for prospective employees. These are located in the “Personnel” section of a shared online drive as well as in the Principal’s Handbook.

This past year, the Human Resources Department improved/amended the hiring process and held a training for all administrators and administrative assistants to inform them of changes. Additionally, we mandated they attend a training on safe hiring practices put on by our third party insurer, Clear Risk.

We completed both a Washington State Patrol background check and an FBI check on every employee we hired during the past year.

- **We have evidence that appropriate background checks have been completed on all new hires, including reference calls to former employers.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ For each new employee we hired during the past year, we completed background checks -- including reference calls to former employers. These background checks were submitted to either the Classified or Certificated Human Resources Specialist. All of them are retained as a part of the employee's hiring packet.

- **We have documentation showing the number of background checks with findings and the District's response to each.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ In 2018-2019, as a part of the required background check we discovered that one new employee had been convicted of a felony, which had not been disclosed in the application process. The employee was suspended pending an investigation. Upon completion of the investigation, the employee was terminated from service to the District.

2. Assure that no volunteer has unsupervised contact with students without first clearing reasonable background inquiries and checks.

Interpretation

We understand the Board places the well-being and safety of all students at the top of its list of priorities. As such, this component requires us to ensure all adults (including parents) who volunteer in schools or at school events in a manner that allows them to be alone with students (other than their own children) must be thoroughly vetted and cleared in advance.

At the same time that the Board expects us to take all reasonable measures to protect children, we believe they also expect us to avoid potentially harmful consequences of this component such as scaring away parents whose presence in our schools would be very valuable. The Board understands the critical importance of parental involvement to student success; and they acknowledge the potential burden background checks can impose on some already fragile home-school connections. Therefore, the Board expects us to fulfill this component in a sensitive manner that strikes an appropriate balance between our dual goals of safety and parent/community involvement.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **We have written procedures that all employees are required to follow when conducting background checks on potential parent and community volunteers.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ All volunteers are required to fill out a volunteer packet that includes the process for applying to become a volunteer in the District. Part of this process is to complete appropriate background checks through the "Watch" and Washington State Patrol.

During the 2018-2019 school year, we investigated and selected a system to streamline this process and close any gaps that may have existed. The Safe Visitor System is being implemented in our schools at this time.

- **We have evidence that appropriate background checks have been completed on all volunteers.**

___	Compliant
___	Non-Compliant
___	Partially Compliant

→ We have a policy that requires background checks for every volunteer. We have spelled out a clear procedure for how those checks should be conducted. We have communicated our expectations about background checks and the procedure for completing them to all relevant parties -- principals, administrative assistants, teachers, coaches, activity advisors, PTO leaders, etc. When we learn that someone is volunteering who has not gone through a background check, we take corrective action. However, with all that said, we are not sure how to verify that every single person who has volunteered in one of our schools has been vetted through our background check process. We can only verify that we have put in place a system to ensure all volunteers are checked and that we monitor the use of that system to the best of our ability.

- **We have evidence of the steps the District has taken to mitigate potentially harmful consequences of background check requirements, especially on parents whose involvement in our schools would assist us in achieving our goals.**

___	Compliant
___	Non-Compliant
___	Partially Compliant

→ Part of the application procedures for volunteers includes an appeal process for any person who is denied volunteer clearance due to findings identified in the background check. In 2018-2019, several people with criminal backgrounds met with the Executive Director of Human Resources for the purpose of appealing the District's initial decision to deny them access to volunteer activities. Some of these petitioners were allowed partial or full volunteer privileges following the interview. Factors considered in the appeal process are the nature and severity of the infraction(s), the length of time since the infraction(s) occurred, corrective actions taken, the relevance of the criminal charge to children, and the violent nature and/or involvement of weapons during the offense.

We are currently looking at a way to put all of the elements we consider when hearing an appeal from a person who has been denied volunteer clearance into a matrix or rubric to ensure that we are evaluating all petitions against the same standards and treating all petitioners fairly.

3. Select only highly qualified and the best-suited candidates for all positions.

Interpretation

We understand this component acknowledges the Board’s belief that the people employed by our organization are its most valuable resources, and therefore the Board expects us to recruit and retain the best workforce possible for achieving our mission.

We further understand the Board’s belief that “the best workforce possible” will reflect the richness of diversity in the world, in our community, and in our classrooms. By promoting and achieving a diverse workplace -- in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, talents, perspectives, and characteristics -- we will increase our ability to deliver essential services to our students.

In other words, the Board expects that we will not interpret “highly-qualified” and “best-suited” to mean “the people who are most like the people who already work here.” Rather, the Board expects us to expand our outlook and use creative strategies to draw on all the varied skills of our community and attract a wide variety of employees to our District workforce. They recognize a diverse workforce is integral to achieving our District goals and also essential to promoting a civil society.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **We have evidence that all our employees meet legal requirements with regards to certifications, endorsements, and other credentials.**

___ Compliant
___ Non-Compliant
___ Partially Compliant

→ In the audit conducted this past year, “teachers working out of endorsement” was a compliance category that was specifically addressed. During the audit process, we discovered several teachers did not have the proper endorsements for the courses they were teaching. In each case, we brought the instructors fully into compliance. Additionally, we have created a plan and communicated it to principals and registrars, which is aimed at maintaining the District’s compliance in this area. This plan has been implemented for the 2019-2020 school year.

- **We have a profile of the overall qualifications of our employees in terms of education and experience.**

___ Compliant
___ Non-Compliant
___ Partially Compliant

→ The most recent audit of our employees’ qualifications reveals that:

- 99.3% of our teachers have full certification.
- 0.7% of our teachers have a limited certificate.
- 62.2% of our teachers have a master’s degree or higher.
- Our teachers have 15.1 years of experience on average.
- 12% of our teachers have a National Board Certification.
- 17.5% of our teachers are in their first 5 years in the profession.
- 23.0% of our principals have less than 5 years’ experience in administration.
- 11.6% of our teachers teach at least one class out of their field.

- **We maintain a summary of awards and honors earned by our employees during the preceding year in recognition of their high quality.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ We do not currently have a central repository for maintaining information about honors and awards earned by our employees, and our call out to members of the Administrative Team this fall requesting such information did not yield any responses. In short, our current practice for tracking information about honors and awards is more informal than systematic. When an employee is honored or awarded, someone usually notifies the District Office, and we, in turn, offer our congratulations and provide the information to the Communications Department for sharing out. If this indicator represents an area of high importance to the Board, we will work on becoming more systematic in tracking and summarizing the information it calls for.

Based on our collective recollection (which is undoubtedly incomplete), the following awards and honors were earned by Ferndale School District employees during the past year (2018-2019):

Employee Name	Honor and/or Award
Amy Nylén	Teacher of the Year from the Masons
Jill Iwasaki	Peace Builder Award from Whatcom Dispute Resolution
Kellie Larrabee and the Cascadia Elementary School Staff	School of Distinction named by the State Board of Education and OSPI
Sabrina Hauck, Tessa Briggs, and Rachel Unger	National Board Certification
Faye Britt	Superintendent's Credential
Marcie Schneider	Principal's Credential
Ferndale School District	Nominee for the Spirit of the Community Award by the Ferndale Chamber of Commerce

- **We produce a report on the diversity of our employees containing (a) our specific goals for diversifying our workforce, (b) the strategies we employed to meet those goals, and (c) the results we have achieved.**

→Our goal continues to be to employ a workforce that reflects our community and its students. At this time, our staff is much less diverse than our student population and our community.

___ Compliant
___ Non-Compliant
___ Partially Compliant

Category	Students	Staff
Female	48.3%	76.0%
Male	51.7%	24.0%
American Indian/Alaska Native	8.1%	1.5%
Asian	3.6%	1.3%
Black/Non-Hispanic	0.8%	0.3%
Multiracial	7.2%	0.6%
Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.1%
White, Non-Hispanic	59.3%	92.3%

To date, the strategies we are employing to meet our goal of diversifying our workforce include: (1) actively encouraging minority candidates to apply; (2) evaluating and modifying our screening process to remove inherent bias; and (3) rewriting our interview questions and rating systems to make them more equitable to all candidates.

One segment of our organization where these strategies have yielded the best results is our Administrative Team. Four years ago, we were an all-white group -- which definitely is not representative of the students and families we serve in Ferndale. This year, our leadership group includes a Lummi principal, and Latino principal, and an East Indian assistant principal, all of whom are bilingual and all of whom have chosen to work in our District despite having other options available to them. One of our newest hires, Kelly Parsons, who has assumed the principalship of Cascadia Elementary, is bilingual in Spanish and has worked extensively with ELL, indigenous, and migrant populations. During her interview, Kelly said one of the reasons she wants to work in Ferndale is that David Rodriguez told her we are a District that really cares about diversity and equity and we are doing the hard work to turn these values into action plans.

4. Administer clear personnel rules and procedures for employees.

Interpretation

We understand this component requires us to have in place documents which contain concrete guidelines defining expectations and directions for staff members. Such documents – which include collective bargaining agreements, administrative policies and procedures, Board policies, and employee handbooks – need to communicate parameters for the actions of both the District and its employees

related to such topics as compensation, work day, working conditions, grievance procedures, evaluation criteria, schedules, and application processes. All of these parameters should ensure fairness and equitable treatment of staff and students alike; and all should be readily accessible to all staff. In other words, the Board expects us to develop an informed workforce with a high level of knowledge about both our organization's expectations and its goals and adequate reference materials and resources to answer any questions they may have about either.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **We have evidence that we have in place documents which contain concrete guidelines defining expectations and directions for staff members, such as current collective bargaining agreements, administrative policies and procedures, Board policies, and employee handbooks.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ We have in place current collective bargaining agreements for all of our employee groups. Administrative policies and procedures are in place and available on BoardDocs and in each work location.

During the 2018-2019 school year, we began the process of creating an intranet site that will include the components of a Staff Handbook, as well as a variety of other documents -- with the goal of meeting the expectations of this particular component in mind. We anticipate fully launching the intranet site during the current school year (2018-2019).

We have also put in place an electronic drive that serves as a Principal's Handbook to offer resources and guides to our building leaders. This handbook was developed using input from administrators about the resources they would find helpful.

- **We have evidence of the various ways we have made the information contained in these documents accessible to our employees.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ We specifically review key policies during the onboarding of all new employees. We also highlighted certain policies, procedures, and important points of emphasis during our full-day new employee orientation in August. Further, when required by law, or when circumstances call for it, we make certain policies and procedures part of our Safe School's annual on-line training required of all District employees. Policies are also available on the District Website and through BoardDocs.

5. Effectively handle complaints and concerns.

Interpretation

We understand this component requires us actively to collect and pursue information that is both critical and helpful for the improvement of our organization.

To these ends, the Board expects us to establish multiple avenues for staff, students, and citizens to provide such information to us, thereby allowing us to address perceived and actual shortcomings. To do so appropriately, the Board expects us to (a) investigate incidents reported and information received, (b) research causes and solutions, and (c) implement remedies aimed at both solving the immediate issue and also preventing recurrence. And they expect us to do all of this in a manner that is respectful, timely, transparent to the extent possible, and clearly documented.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **We have documentation of our responses to community questions and/or comments made on our website portal entitled “The Listening Post.”**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Partially Compliant

→The “The Listening Post” is a website portal we developed ourselves to allow stakeholders to make comments about the District or ask us questions, either with their names attached or anonymously. Entries into “The Listening Post” are monitored by the members of our Communications Department, who make sure each with an identified recipient receives a personalized response. Entries left anonymously are addressed through other channels, such as our monthly Responses to Community Questions.

The Listening Post does not include an easy way for us to catalogue and categorize all of the entries. For several years, we paid a significant annual subscription fee for the use of an online tool developed and provided by K-12 Insight called “Let’s Talk.” The Let’s Talk application is quite a bit more sophisticated than our Listening Post, and it did provide us with the ability to track and theme all questions/comments from stakeholders and all of our responses. It also allowed us to keep data about how promptly District employees were making those responses. If the Board desires such specificity of documentation, we can look into renewing our contract with K-12 Insight. As with everything, it is a question of weighing the relative benefit of a good thing -- in this case, Let’s Talk -- to determine whether the return on our investment warrants making it a priority.

- **We have published written responses to (non-confidential) community questions and concerns on BoardDocs and the District website each month.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Partially Compliant

→At the end of each month, our Executive Team collects questions that have been raised by members of the community (including our own employees) throughout the month. In most cases, we provide responses to these questions to the questioner within three days of receipt. We also gather all of the questions and responses into a single document that is posted on

BoardDocs under the “Public Comment” section of each School Board business meeting agenda. The questions and responses are also published on the District website and included in the monthly electronic community newsletter called WeAreFerndale.

None of the questions we publish in these formats is focused on an individual employee or student. We respond to questions of a personal nature in a confidential communication.

NOTE: We would like to add the qualifier “non-confidential” to this Monitoring Indicator.

- **The School Board has received zero reports that District officials have failed to respond to legitimate questions or concerns from stakeholders, when those questions or concerns have been communicated through an appropriate venue (notwithstanding that the stakeholders may not agree with or like the response they received).**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ To our knowledge, the Board has not received any reports that District officials have failed to respond to questions or concerns, although there have been instances when questioners have contacted the Board about either the timeliness or the content of the response we provided.

Board members themselves are in a position to best judge our performance on this indicator.

6. Maintain adequate job descriptions for all staff positions.

Interpretation

We understand this component expresses the Board’s expectation that we develop, maintain and update regularly clear, written expectations in the form of “job descriptions” for each of our employees. Such documents should communicate the values and priorities of the District and also help identify the right employee(s) for particular job(s) by providing the foundation for such personnel processes as recruitment, selection, compensation, and evaluation. We further understand the Board expects our job descriptions not only to provide an overview of the role, necessary qualifications, and essential duties, but also to explain how the position relates to the vision, values, and goals of the organization.

We believe the Board also wants us to maintain job descriptions for the following reasons:

- A job description can serve as a starting point for an interactive dialogue about essential job duties with qualified applicants with disabilities who may need reasonable accommodations to perform those duties in a manner that does not create an undue hardship on the District or a direct threat to the individual or others.
- A job description can be helpful in soliciting the advice of professionals such as physicians, chiropractors, counselors or rehabilitation therapists about whether an individual can/should perform a particular job.

- A job description that includes minimum certification and/or qualifications for a position can provide the District with objective, nondiscriminatory rationale for not placing a prospective employee (applicant) into a job or for removing a current employee from a job.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **We have written job descriptions for all of our employees.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→During the 2018-2019 school year, the members of the Human Resources Department took an in-depth look at the existing job descriptions across the District. After determining that, as a whole, they were inconsistent, we created a plan for updating them. At this time, all job descriptions are less than three years old, and all of them share a common format. The job descriptions are maintained on a shared drive, which is accessible to all administrators.

- **We have a written schedule for reviewing and updating job descriptions.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→As a part of the process described above, we created a plan and a schedule that will ensure that all job descriptions are reviewed and updated at a minimum of once every three years. The plan includes an approved process for updating existing job descriptions, as well as procedures and a format to be used when creating a job description of a new position.

- **We have evidence that our job descriptions not only provide an overview of the role, necessary qualifications, and essential duties, but also explain how the position relates to the vision, values, and goals of the organization.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→Each job description includes: (1) the Position Purpose/Overview; (2) Education and Experience/Desired Qualifications; (3) Essential job functions; and (4) Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Physical Requirements.

Our job descriptions, as consistent with common practice, do not specify the vision, values, and goals of the organization. In the Position Purpose/ Overview section, however, they do explain the role, thus allowing an applicant to ascertain how that particular role would fit with the District’s current vision, values and goals. (For example, the following language is included in the Elementary Counselor job description: *The School Counselor will have knowledge in counseling, assessment and instruction, as well as skill in helping students to become active learners and will provide family, students, and staff services which help promote the education and emotional development of students. The School Counselor will have knowledge and skills specific to the developmental state and social and emotional needs of students and must believe in setting high expectations for themselves and students. The school counselor is a leader, advocate, collaborator and systemic change agent.*

We would like the Board’s feedback about viability of this particular indicator and whether they think we should devote the time and energy required to comply with the letter of the expectation it has established.

7. Protect confidential information.

Interpretation

We understand this component requires us to respect the privacy rights of staff to the greatest extent possible and to hold confidential information in a safe and secure place that cannot be accessed by anyone other than those with a legitimate need to know. We also understand that some of the data we keep about staff is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and must be released in the event of a public disclosure request. To assist staff in navigating the territory between personal privacy and the requirements of public transparency, we believe the School Board expects the District to make its stance on confidentiality as it relates to its employees – both in terms of guarantees and limitations – open and accessible, so that all staff understand and are able to trust the boundaries of privacy operating across the system.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **We have a Confidentiality Statement that outlines both the District’s commitment to confidentiality and the limits to confidentiality that can be offered employees.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→The District has an Administrative Policy referencing confidentiality. We review this policy during the onboarding process for new employees, and we ask each employee to sign the policy. Additionally, we require employees who work with confidential information as part of their regular duties to complete a confidentiality component as part of their annual Safe Schools online trainings.

- **We have clear procedures for handling employee-related confidential information and evidence that appropriate staff have been trained in following these procedures.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→We have clear guidelines in place for handling confidential information. We communicate these guidelines as required procedures to employees who regularly deal with confidential information, like our Administrative Assistants. A printed copy of the procedures is maintained in each office. As mentioned above, we also require employees who work with confidential information as part of their regular duties to complete a confidentiality component as part of their annual Safe Schools online trainings.

- **There have been no breaches in confidentiality practices as outlined in District policy and/or federal regulation.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

➔ We know of one breach in confidentiality during the past year: In spring 2019, a District computer and set of hard copy student health files were stolen from the car of one of our employees. The employee immediately reported the breach, and our Executive Administration immediately thereafter began the process of notifying the parents and families whose information may have been compromised. Fortunately, within 24 hours of their being taken, both the computer and the files were recovered intact by law enforcement. To our knowledge, none of the student records were copied or used in anyway. However, as a result of this incident, the District has implemented corrective measures aimed at preventing similar breaches in the future, including re-education of the employee.

The incident described above represents a breach in the confidentiality of *student* information *caused* by a staff member. Policy OE-9 (Learning Environment), which focuses on the treatment of students who attend school in our system, includes a component about protecting student confidentiality. This policy, OE-4, focuses on the treatment of employees. As such, we can logically conclude that this indicator is asking for a report of any missteps taken by the District in efforts to protect employee confidentiality. We have no evidence that any confidential employee information was breached during the 2018-2019 school year.

8. Assure that compensation and benefit plans attract and retain the highest quality employees by compensating employees, within available resources, in a manner consistent with the applicable marketplace, including but not limited to organizations of comparable size and type.

Interpretation

We understand this component requires us to provide competitive tangible compensation to employees, including money, insurance, worker’s protection, and other benefits. The Board acknowledges that compensation is an important factor in employees’ decisions to relocate to our District, and that disparity between compensation packages offered by our District and other potential employers may have a negative impact on our ability to attract and retain employees. We further recognize that, in order to fulfill this component, the Board expects us to keep up-to-date on salary and benefits packages being offered by potentially competitive districts, especially those in Whatcom and Skagit County.

At the same time that the Board wants us to provide competitive compensation packages to attract and retain the best possible workforce, they also expect us to be good stewards of available resources and to maintain balance among the various responsibilities fulfilled by those resources. In other words, they expect us to “live within our means.”

Additionally, by requiring us to ensure our expenditures are aligned with the commitments and goals of the organization, we understand that the Board has

authorized us to provide those with the greatest impact on meeting the commitments and goals of the organization with the greatest compensation, **as long as we do not violate any collective bargaining agreement.**

NOTE: We would like to add a qualifier referencing collective bargaining agreements to this Interpretation.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **We have Collective Bargaining Agreements with each employee group that spell out wages and other benefits.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ We have current contracts in place for all of our employee groups and each of those contracts includes information about wages and benefits.

During the 2018-2019 school year, we opened and negotiated contracts with the Public School Employees of Washington/PSE (para-educators and food service), Service Employees International Union/SEIU (custodians, grounds and maintenance), Teamsters (transportation), and our Administrators. As of this writing, all of these negotiated contracts are complete pending School Board approval, with the exception of the Administrators' contract, which the Board approved in August 2019.

- **We have compensation studies showing our employees' total compensation packages in relationship to employee compensation packages in other districts in the region and state, especially those districts that are comparable to Ferndale.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ As a part of the bargaining process, the key features of each group's was compared with those provided to employees with like positions across the County. We consistently use such comparisons to ensure fairness and competitiveness. Currently, the compensation we provide Ferndale employees in every job category is at least equal to the midpoint of Whatcom County Districts.

- 9. Consistent with the Superintendent's own evaluation, evaluate all employee performance according to their contribution toward achieving the Board's *Results* policies and their compliance with the Board's *Operational Expectations* policies.**

Interpretation

We understand this component requires us to begin with the end in mind. The Board recognizes that the achievement of organizational goals should be the primary purpose of the actions of all of the employees of our organization, and that meeting District benchmarks equates to collective and individual success. In other words, each person has a part to play in the success of the whole, thereby

signifying an inherent connectedness between all of the organization’s members, purposes, and goals.

We further understand that, through this component, the Board is setting the expectation that we identify and use clear criteria tied to the District’s values and goals to evaluate both the successes and the positive growth of all our employees on a regular basis, regardless of the role they play in our organization.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **We have documentation that all District employees have been appropriately evaluated.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ During the 2018-2019 school year, the process for tracking staff evaluations was amended to increase accountability. Currently, the Human Resources Department can account for the evaluations of 98.1% of our total workforce. Copies of these evaluation have been submitted to HR and placed in staff files. HR staff are following us on the remaining .9%. They expect these evaluations will be accounted for by the end of first quarter of 2019-2020.

As a clarifying note, State law and the provisions of negotiated contracts dictate the evaluation process and timeline for the majority of our employees. To our knowledge, no laws or contract provisions related to evaluations were violated during the past year. A small segment of our employees fall into the category of “unrepresented,” which means they do not belong to a union and are not subject to contractual timelines or even legal requirements that they receive an annual evaluation. While we acknowledge the importance of evaluating every employee every year, whether required by law or not, the evaluation cycles for some of our unrepresented staff do not sync up with those of the majority. This accounts for the 0.9%.

- ~~**We collect summary information about how employee evaluations are related to the achievement of the Board’s Results policies and compliance with the Board’s Operational Expectations policies.**~~

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ We do not currently have a mechanism for determining the degree to which individual or collective evaluations are aligned with any Results or Operational Expectations Policies. Even if we wanted to expend the manpower that would be necessary to gather this kind of data, the differences between the evaluation forms and processes used by various employee groups, combined with the variation in the quantity and quality of narrative comments and the focus and intent of the evaluator, would make it almost impossible to collect the information that this monitoring indicator seems to call for. We believe this represents one of the areas in which we were overly ambitious in determining measures of success. As such, we would like to ask the Board to consider allowing us to eliminate, or at least modify, this indicator.

10. Ensure that all staff members are qualified and trained to perform the responsibilities assigned to them.

Interpretation

We understand this component requires us to provide our employees with job-related professional development, coaching, mentoring, and/or continuing education aimed at (a) promoting the collective success of the organization, and (b) increasing each individuals' overall value to the organization. In other words, the Board expects us to create conditions that encourage our employees to engage in continuous learning, systematic acquisition of new competencies, and on-going knowledge production in relation to their current and future roles within our organization and/or our profession. In short, the Board is committed to developing employees who are lifelong learners.

To accomplish this component, we understand the Board expects us regularly to assess the knowledge, skills, and interests of our employees in order to provide professional development that appropriately responds to their needs and makes a measurable difference in their performance. The Board also expects us to maintain an in-depth understanding of the various jobs we ask employees to perform in order to ensure the professional development we provide matches the knowledge and skills required by the various roles they fill.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **The District has produced a professional development calendar for the year.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ The District maintains a shared professional development calendar through the Teaching and Learning Department. Additionally, during the 2018-2019 school year a professional development calendar for classified employees was created at the District level for the first time (at least in recent history).

The Executive Team has established the expectation that 60% of all building and department staff meetings are devoted to professional development.

- **We have evidence that District employees have been given the opportunity to provide input into the kind of training and professional development they need.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ The FEA contract specifically gives certificated staff control over most of the professional development they receive outside of what is provided for all staff by building and department leaders. All other employee groups have been represented in decision-making about appropriate professional development for the members of their respective groups.

During the past year, professional development was a regular topic of conversation in Labor Management meetings with Teamsters, SEIU, and PSE. The District solicited specific input from each of these groups. Both FAAA (our administrative assistants) and PSE (our para-educators and food service workers) have provisions in their contract which obligate professional development funds and ensure employee input into decisions about how those funds are used. Our Administrative Assistant group, in particular, has been very involved in designing trainings that align with the professional development needs and preferences of their members.

Other evidence that we are working to comply with this indicator includes:

- Beginning in the fall of 2018, when Tammy Bengen moved out of her position as Director of Communications, one of the new responsibilities she took on was working with the Human Resources Department to develop a more systematic and responsive approach to providing professional development for classified staff.
- With the advent of new State laws requiring all para-educators to participate in 14 hours of professional development during each of the next two years, Tammy has worked with members of the HR Department and the President of PSE to determine how we can deliver the prescribed curriculum in a way that best meets the needs of Ferndale paras.
- Each principal, as part of his or her compensation package, receives an annual stipend for professional development, which he or she can choose to use to advance his or her knowledge and skills related to any aspect of our District Improvement Plan.
- A year ago, we created a District fund to allow principals to attend a national conference once every three years.
- We have begun using our new ThoughtExchange tool to provide employees with more opportunities to provide regular input into the content of meetings and professional development activities.

- **We can produce sample agendas and participant evaluations from District-sponsored professional development programs.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Partially Compliant

→ We are not currently collecting this information in any kind of systematic fashion. As a regional clock hour provider, the District does maintain an electronic record (including agendas) of the courses and activities for which we have awarded clock hours. However, we are not sure these records fully meet either the letter or the intent of this indicator.

We would like guidance from the Board about how much effort they want us to devote to creating systems to fulfill the expectations of this particular success measure.

- ~~**We have summary information linking professional development to (a) achievement of the Board's Results policies, (b) compliance with the**~~

~~Board's Operational Expectations policies, and/or (c) the employee's own performance/evaluation.~~

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

➔ Once again, providing a comprehensive response to this indicator has proven nearly impossible given the way our system is currently organized. As such, we would like to ask the Board to consider allowing us to eliminate or modify this success measure.

While we do not think we can link all professional development to all three outcomes listed in the indicator, we do think we can do a better job of keeping track of the way major District-sponsored professional development initiatives support one or more of the Board's governance policies.

For instance, during the past two years, we have provided significant professional development in mathematics to teachers at the elementary level. In each of those two years, our students have shown growth in the area of mathematics as measured by standardized tests, more growth than they have shown in language arts where the same focused professional development did not occur. Since mathematics is the subject of the Board's Results Policy 2.2, we can draw a direct link between our professional development program and the Board's Results Policies.

11. Maintain an organizational culture that positively impacts the ability of staff to responsibly perform their jobs and allows them to work in an environment of professional support and courtesy.

Interpretation

We understand this component requires us to create the kind of supportive environment for our employees that will contribute to their well-being at work. As a basic foundation of this component, the Board expects us to ensure each employee is treated with civility and respect by supervisors, co-workers, and clients. Further, to create a supportive environment, the Board expects us to attend to building relationships; acknowledging contributions; creating opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making and problem-solving; ensuring effective avenues of communication; furnishing the right tools for operating efficiently; and providing good work conditions in terms of benefits, health, and safety.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **We have a District Civility policy and evidence of the ways it has been communicated.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

➔ The District maintains a Civility Policy, which is posted at every worksite and is also available on the District's website. We review the Civility Policy with all new employees as part of the onboarding process. This year, reading

and signing off the on Civility Policy is also a component of the Safe Schools online training that all employees are required to complete.

- **We have evidence of the District’s efforts to build positive relationships with employees.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→The Human Resources Department did outreach in every building once a month during the 2018-2019 school year. HR staff also initiated such relationship-building events as a spontaneous sharing of donuts in February and flowers on May Day.

We have made a concerted effort to grow and improve relationships with our various union groups through regular Labor Management meetings. Part of this effort has included an intentional focus on increased communication, transparency, and reliability.

This fall, we rolled out a new way of talking about the importance we place on building positive relationships in our District. Under the umbrella of FerndaleCARES, we let all of our employees know that relationships are a priority, and we invited all of them to give us suggestions for acting on this priority.

- **We have evidence of the ways the District has acknowledged employees’ contributions.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→A year and a half ago, the members of our new Communications Department launched a blog/electronic newsletter called WeAreFerndale with the express purpose of recognizing employee contributions and sharing their individual stories with all stakeholders. During the past 18 months, they have published dozens of these stories.

We have continued our practice of honoring long-time employees who are retiring or resigning from the District with a special recognition at a public School Board meeting.

During the past year, the Superintendent has written personal cards to 500 of the District’s employees.

At the building and department level, members of our Administrative Team are employing various methods of acknowledging the contributions of their employees. At Horizon, for instance, Principal Britt includes thank yous in her weekly staff newsletters.

- **We have evidence of the ways employees have been invited to participate in meaningful decision-making and problem-solving.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→The District maintains a high level of commitment to involve employees in decisions that impact them.

A wide variety of District committees -- such as the Equity Team, the Safety Advisory Committee, the Communications Advisory Committee, the FHS Design Advisory Committee, and curriculum-focused task forces like the current group working on a new elementary language arts adoption -- and Building committees -- such as School-based Leaderships Teams, Safety Committees, and PBIS Teams -- allow multiple opportunities for employees to be meaningfully involved in decision-making.

New tools such as ThoughtExchange are expanding our ability to solicit input from an even wider group of staff members.

Finally, the Superintendent has established an expectation that all administrators maintain the kind of open door policies that encourage direct communication.

- **We have evidence that the District has put in place a variety avenues for communication.**

___ Compliant
___ Non-Compliant
___ Partially Compliant

→Some avenues of communication have been maintained for years (like staff meetings and hard copy newsletters). Others have been introduced during the past decade (like robo calls and Facebook pages). Still others have been spearheaded by the members of our new Communications Department during the past two years (like electronic newsletters and Instagram). Our Director of Communications and Community Engagement, Erin Vincent, often talks about the fact that our customers, both internal and external, do not all want to get their information in the same way, which means that good customer service must involve the use of a wide variety communication channels. In Ferndale, the channels we are currently using include the following:

- Email
- District website
- School websites
- Robo calls
- Facebook pages (the District is now associated with about a dozen such pages)
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Hard copy newsletters
- Hard copy paper and magnetic calendars
- An monthly electronic staff newsletter called *District Direct*
- An monthly electronic community newsletter called *WeAreFerndale*
- Weekly electronic newsletters from each principal to his or her building staff
- Weekly Bond Updates

- Community Forums and Town Halls
- Facebook Live programs
- Staff meetings
- District and building committee meetings
- *The Listening Post* online portal for questions and concerns
- Direct face-to-face communication

- **We have evidence that the District has furnished employees with the necessary tools to do their jobs.**

→The District has established a set of minimum equipment that we guarantee we will provide in every classroom, including furniture, curriculum and technology.

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

In addition, all full-time certificated staff members receive \$100 annually to use at their discretion for individualized classroom/office supplies.

All certificated staff members are provided with their own laptop computer. All employees are provided with email addresses and access to technology.

Each building and department also receives a budget to be used at the discretion of building and department leadership teams to fulfill specific staff needs. For the past four years, these budget allocations to schools have included dollars for purchasing the supplies students need to do their classroom learning work (instead of relying on parents/guardians to provide such supplies).

- **We have evidence of District efforts to ensure good working conditions for employees in terms of benefits, health, and safety.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→Our District maintains comparable benefits packages with other County and State districts.

Each work site maintains a Safety Committee that meets at least a quarterly. Notably, the Ferndale School District has been an acknowledged leader in the region in conducting large-scale safety drills and preparing staff and students to respond to emergency situations.

During the past two years, the District has expanded its commitment to health and safety by launching a proactive, preventative component to our safety efforts. Specifically, we have increased our focus on developing students' social and emotional skills, we have doubled the number of counselors we employ, and we have launched a new way to talk about our priorities under the umbrella of FerndaleCARES.

The Superintendent may not:

12. Retaliate against any employee for initiating a legitimate complaint.

Interpretation

We understand this component requires us to allow employees to speak up about concerns, complaints, potentially harmful practices, or perceived misconduct without fear of negative repercussions from the District. The Board recognizes that our District benefits when employees feel free to communicate about any relevant issue of concern, because by doing so they allow us the opportunity to resolve concerns as quickly as possible. A culture of fear in which complaints are silenced will not produce the kind of environment where our District mission can be achieved.

We understand retaliation refers to any kind of negative action against a current or former employee that takes the form of punishment and/or creates a hostile, threatening, or uncomfortable environment as a result of his/her reported complaint.

We further understand a “legitimate complaint” to be one that has been made in good faith whether an investigation proves the complaint to be true or false. In other words, this policy refers to circumstances when an employee’s report is found to be justifiable as well as circumstances when the report is found to be baseless. We will not consider the report’s validity when it comes to no-retaliation principles.

Employees who are found guilty of retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may also apply to employees who repeatedly file false or unreasonable complaints based on intentional lies or motivated by personal benefit, thereby preventing abuse of the Board’s no-retaliation policy.

Monitoring Indicator(s)

We will know we are in compliance with this component when we can show:

- **There have been no reports of District employees engaging in retaliatory behaviors.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ During the 2018-2019 school year, neither the Human Resources Department nor the Superintendent received any reports of retaliation.

- **In the event that retaliation is claimed, we have evidence that the claim has been taken seriously, investigated fully, and addressed appropriately.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Compliant

→ The Ferndale School District has put procedures in place that allow for both internal and external investigations in the event of an allegation of retaliation is reported.

Superintendent’s Final Remarks

I have to end where I began: The Ferndale School District is a people business, and the people who work for us are our most valuable resource -- all 700+ regular employees and also all 300+ substitutes, coaches, and activity advisors. Although Policy OE-4 focuses primarily on ensuring all of our systems and procedures are up to snuff so that we are employing quality people, treating them fairly, holding them and ourselves accountable, and following all applicable laws in the process, the soul of the work we do under the heading of Human Resources (or Personnel Management) has everything to do with such values as empathy, compassion, respect, and responsibility. The heart of the work is always about relationships.

As you know, we kicked off the current school year with a new “brand” to communicate the mission of our School District. FerndaleCARES is our new way of talking about what we do and why we do it. As I told our whole District staff at a 2019-2020 kick-off breakfast on September 3, if I had to boil everything down to a single word it would be RELATIONSHIPS. The best way we can achieve the mission represented by FerndaleCARES is to make relationships our top priority. I went on to say that “developing positive relationships with each of our students, helping them develop relationships with one another, reaching out to build stronger relationships with parents and families, strengthening the relationship between the School District and the community, and working on our internal relationships as well, between classified staff and certificated staff, between administrators and the team members they lead, between the District Office and our school buildings, between me and you.”

Relationships are definitely the heart and soul of our Human Resources Department. I hope that comes through in this report.

I mentioned in my introduction that John Fairbairn was brand new to the role of Executive Director of Human Resources when we wrote our interpretations and monitoring indicators for OE-4 last August. Before I conclude this Phase Two Monitoring Report, I feel compelled to comment on the excellent job he has done leading this important aspect of our organization by highlighting several of his most significant accomplishments during his first year.

1. John headed up the District team that conducted negotiations with the FEA team, and together they settled on a contract before Labor Day. During one of the most complicated bargaining seasons in history -- when we were hearing about districts across the state where negotiations were becoming extremely contentious, participants were moving toward arbitration, and teachers were taking strike votes -- we managed to achieve a strong two-year agreement with FEA with very little negativity or drama. Although credit is due to the teams on both sides of the table, this was John’s first major accomplishment as our Executive Director for Human Resources and Chief Negotiator, and it was much appreciated by our whole organization.
2. John built relationships with the members of his department and made strides toward creating a strong team. He was aware that the HR administrative support staff had some trepidations about his coming to the role. Last June, they shared their

apprehensions with me. Last November, they made a point of telling me they had been wrong: They loved working with John, and they felt he was exactly who they needed to take them to the next level. John's leadership instincts told him that he needed to attend to building relationships and establishing trust with his closest colleagues first, and his efforts seem to have paid off.

3. John took steps to build relationships with the staff in our schools and departments. He and his HR staff made customer service a high priority. They did more intentional outreach. They implemented a program they called "two surprises" per site -- like donuts on a Wednesday morning with a note reading "Just because...from your HR Department." The efforts of John's department were aimed strengthening relationships and beginning of a culture shift in the way District Office staff relate to staff in schools and other departments.
4. John began working on hiring practices to make them easier to manage for the system's users and also to make them more equitable for applicants. His equity focus is something I particularly want to commend. I appreciate his willingness to tackle such a big, complicated issue during his first year -- *because it is so important.*

In short, feel lucky to have John Fairbairn shepherding the values and expectations you have established in Policy OE-4. Under his leadership, I am confident we will continue to move closer to achieving the high standards you have set.