

MONITORING REPORT: Policy R-1 (Mission) **REVISED**

PHASE ONE: Interpretation, Benchmark Data, and Goals

DATE: December 2018

Policy

All students graduate prepared to pursue their dreams, attain their goals, and serve their communities with integrity, honor, and pride.

Interpretation

This first Results Policy captures the essence of our District's core purpose and thereby serves as a beacon for guiding all of our programs and services. We understand the Board intends this mission statement to be more than conceptual. Rather, they have set it forth as the foundation for an action plan based on a success agenda.

The distinctive terms and phrases found in the mission express both values and expectations. They provide us with a common denominator regarding the outcomes we will collectively pursue for our students. Therefore, a shared definition of these terms and phrases is critical.

- **All** refers to the School Board's commitment to do whatever it takes to ensure 100% of our students are successful. We must communicate clearly our expectation that every single one of the young people we serve can and will, with our unfailing support, graduate from high school. We must make sure every district employee feels a personal stake in developing graduates. Starting with our youngest learners, we must address students' unique educational needs and challenges in a timely fashion at every level. We must regularly drill down into student achievement data so that we can turn every statistic into an individual student's face, and then take whatever steps necessary to prevent even one of them from slipping through the cracks.
- **Graduate**, in the most technical sense, refers to guaranteeing students meet all of the State-defined graduation requirements for their assigned year. To graduate, and thereby to earn a high school diploma in Washington, students must earn credit in all required subject areas mandated by the State Board of Education and demonstrate mastery in certain specified areas. Washington graduation requirements, which are based on Common Core Standards, are:
 - "Research and evidence based;
 - Clear, understandable, and consistent;
 - Aligned with college and career expectations;
 - Based on rigorous content and the application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills; and
 - Informed by other top-performing countries to prepare all students for success in our global economy and society." (2018 Common Core State Standards Initiative)

Beyond the technical definition, we recognize that graduation is much more than a celebration occurring on a particular Saturday in June. Graduation is a process that begins before students enter kindergarten. As such, we understand the Board expects us to take a multi-faceted approach to ensuring that we maintain a “culture of graduation” throughout the District.

- **Prepared** refers to making sure students are confident, equipped, and ready when they graduate to take the next steps into college, career, and civic life. To meet this standard, the Board expects us not only to teach students to think and imagine, but also to act and execute. They expect us not only to provide students with knowledge and skills, but also with an understanding of the way society works and plans for how they can become adult members of it -- and ultimately transform it in positive ways. **They expect us to ensure students leave us with a viable plan.**
- **Pursue their dreams** refers to **building on strengths**. **It involves** recognizing and respecting the uniqueness of every child and youth; finding out how **they are** smart, not just how smart **they are** according to someone else’s standards; **building on their strengths**; and helping each one to become exceptional in his or her own way. The process of preparing students to pursue their dreams requires the District to provide them with opportunities to (1) discover their distinctive talents and passions; (2) develop them; and (3) envision ways they can be used to enrich **their own lives and the lives of others**.
- **Attain their goals** refers to **hitting a target**. **It involves** helping students realize their own personal and professional potential by providing them with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to execute a wide range of life choices. The process of preparing students to attain their goals requires the District to (1) accelerate students’ growth and development through effective educational experiences; (2) assist them in applying definition and specificity to their passions, dreams, and strengths in order to turn them into goals; and (3) teach them how to create specific action plans that will lead to their becoming productive and engaged individuals, family members, neighbors, workers, and citizens.
- **Serve their communities** refers to developing students whose goals include both themselves and others. In other words, the Board expects us to encourage students to commit to achieving the highest ideals of knowledge and skill not only for their own advantage in life, but also for the advantage of, service to, and leadership in the larger community, nation, and world. Our democracy depends on an overarching sense of community supported by ethical leadership at all levels. To prepare graduates for the responsibilities of citizenship and leadership in such a democracy, we must provide them throughout their maturation process with meaningful opportunities to participate, serve, and lead in various communities within the District in ways that will instill in them the expectation that participation, service, and leadership are lifelong commitments. We must show them that leadership is not merely a formal position in organized groups, but rather itself a form of service.

Leadership occurs whenever a person wholeheartedly pursues excellence and thereby inspires others to do the same and whenever a person has a positive influence on others.

- **Integrity** refers to placing appropriate focus on developing strong character in each of our students, specifically the kind of character that manifests in an understanding of right and wrong, a deep commitment to honesty, and the mutual respect **and kindness** that **are essential to a** civil society and the **qualities** that allow two people to appreciate one another for the value each brings to a relationship.
- **Honor** refers to helping each of our students do their best. Living with honor means living with purpose and dignity. It means keeping commitments and being guided by core values such as kindness, empathy, and service. It means demonstrating the kind of moral and ethical behavior worthy of respect from others and, more importantly, self-respect. Above all, living with honor refers to students' pursuing excellence in order to make the most of their lives both as individuals and as members of an interdependent society.
- **Pride** refers to fostering in each of our students a sense of self awareness, personal worth, and positive agency. The Board expects us to build on students' strengths and nurture in them the kinds of feelings that inspire them to do their best work and be their best selves. In the context of this policy, pride also refers to the District's becoming the kind of organization that fosters a sense of belonging and deep connection in each individual, so that **all students** can assert confidently **their** pride to be a member of the Ferndale School District community.

The Board expects us to teach these values, model them, provide opportunities for students to practice them, reward them, and build students' capacity for carrying them into their lives past graduation.

Through this mission, the Board clearly establishes the role of the Ferndale School District as a vital and creative force for positive change leading to a productive and fulfilling life for every student touched by its programs and services. To this end, the Board, and by extension, its administrative team are committed to:

- Student success through engaging and supportive learning environments, which include multiple pathways to achievement;
- Teaching excellence at all levels;
- Recognition of parents and guardians as students first teachers and critical collaborators throughout their educational journeys;
- Strategic partnerships that recognize the work of developing students and graduates includes the whole community;
- **Deep appreciation for** cultural diversity and promotion of cultural enrichment;
- Accountability and integrity; and
- Perpetual improvement leading always to greater equity.

Benchmark Data

- The Ferndale School District's certified on-time graduation rate for the class of 2018 was 85.7%. In 2013, our on-time graduation rate was 68.7%, and we made a collective decision to say that was not good enough. We were not going to allow more than 30% of our students to slip through the cracks. We were not going to keep doing what we had been doing if it meant that nearly one in three students were failing to earn a diploma in our School District. **Therefore**, we made a concerted effort that encompassed multiple levels and strategies. And our efforts paid off. At the end of five years, we had improved our graduation rate by 17 percentage points, which translates to a nearly 25% increase.
- Additional benchmark data is **embedded** in our interpretations of each of the other Results policies.

Goals

1. Our commitment and aspirational goal is a 100% on-time and extended graduation rate. However, reasonable progress toward achieving this goal must be viewed as a multi-year effort. We believe it is reasonable to expect an increase of 2% in the overall District graduation rate during the year ahead. In addition, we believe it is reasonable to expect that such increase will be realized across **all** student groups in a way that makes progress toward closing achievement gaps.
2. Additional goals are included in our reports for each of the **Board's** other Results policies.