

**To:** School Board, Ferndale School District (WA)

**From:** Linda Quinn, Superintendent

**Date:** January 28, 2020

**Subject:** 2020 Monitoring Report  
Results Policy 2.1  
Mission

**School Board's Monitoring Notes**

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

**Board Member:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Number of Improvement Goals = 1**

Number Demonstrating Reasonable Progress = \_\_\_\_\_

Number Not Demonstrating Reasonable Progress = \_\_\_\_\_

**Commendations**

**Recommendations**

**Other Notes**

**Overall Rating:** \_\_\_\_\_ Reasonable Progress \_\_\_\_\_ Not Reasonable Progress

## Superintendent's Introduction

When we submitted our first report on Policy R-1 to you a year ago, we had devoted considerable time and thought to carefully defining the terms in what, at first glance, might look like a fairly straightforward sentence, perhaps even one that sounds a little cliché. The Board grappled with us in the process of getting our interpretation just right. Our purpose was to come to a shared understanding of the powerful intentions contained in this seemingly simple one-sentence mission statement. Our purpose was to imbue it with the necessary force to propel us to action.

We only attached one goal -- focused on graduation rate -- to last year's monitoring report for Results Policy 1. We said that we would share other measures of progress in our reports on the remaining 13 Results Policies. We still believe that should be the case. As with all mission statements, this one points a direction and charts a course, but it does not easily lend itself to measurement. With that said, this mission has inspired significant changes in our organization.

Perhaps most notably, the work we did collaboratively to explicate this policy informed a new way of talking to all District staff and the community we serve about our mission. Because I expressed this "new mission" in my remarks to all 700+ FSD employees at an opening of school kick-off breakfast at the Silver Reef Event Center on September 3, 2019, I decided it would be appropriate to reprint those remarks in this report -- which I have done beginning on page 9.

In addition to providing data related to our graduation rate goal, I have also highlighted several other initiatives we have implemented, or have plans to implement, in support of the mission you have set forth in Policy R-1. You will find this list (which is by no means exhaustive) at the very end of the report.

Finally, I want to make a note about the formatting of this document. As in our other Phase Two Monitoring Reports, we have included the interpretations and goal you approved a year ago (December 2018) in our Phase One Report for Policy R-1, so that you don't have to look back and forth between two documents. All of the language from the Phase One Report is written in blue. All of the new information regarding each of the six goals is written in black.

## 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**

\_\_\_Has made reasonable progress

\_\_\_Has not made reasonable progress

- 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.**

As the chart below indicates, our graduation rate for the Class of 2019 did not go up by 2% over the Class of 2018. Rather, the rate dipped in the other direction a little more than a percentage point. We are currently exploring reasons for the decline and also applying research-based strategies to reverse the downward trend and continue to climb toward our ultimate goal of 100% graduation rate.

School Year	Graduation Rate (All Students)	Increase/Decrease in Percentile Points From Previous Year	Percentage of Growth From Previous Year
Class of 2014	74.4		
Class of 2015	78.1	+3.7	+4.98%
Class of 2016	76.2	-1.9	-2.43%
Class of 2017	80.9	+4.7	+6.17%
Class of 2018	85.4	+4.5	+5.56%
Class of 2019	84.3	-1.1	-1.30%

A deeper dive into the data provides some cause for optimism and also raises some additional questions.

- We have realized an increase of nearly 13% in overall graduation rate in the last six years (2014-2019) -- and nearly 25% in the last eight years!
- During the same six-year timeframe (2014-2019), the graduation rate of Native American students has increased from 36.4% to 57.9%, which constitutes a gain of 59% -- 4.5 times greater than the rate of increase for all students. We don't want to lose sight of the fact that the graduation rate for Native students is still significantly lower than the graduation rate for all students, but the gap is closing!
- During this same six-year timeframe (2014-2019), the graduation rate of our Latino students has increased from 68.5% to 73.5%, which constitutes a gain of 7.3%. Although our Latino graduation rate is closer to our overall graduation rate than that of their Native peers, the increase between 2014 and 2019 has only been about half as great as the increase for all students. This causes us to wonder if we need to explore additional targeted strategies to support this particular group.
- During this same six-year timeframe (2014-2019), the graduation rate of our identified low income students has increased from 61.0% to 75.3%, which

constitutes a gain of 23.44%. Like the sub-group of Latino students, this sub-group is closing in on our overall graduation rate. Although there still exists a differential of 9 percentage points, the six-year increase of 23.44% for low-income students (compared to 13% for all students) is a hopeful sign that the gap is closing.

Clearly, we will have work to do. Our strategies for continuing to work on this graduation goal are captured at a high level in this year's (2019-2020) District Improvement Plan, which we have included below:

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Goal Two: Graduation</h2> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The percentage of students in the Class of 2020 who achieve <b>on-time Graduation</b> will be <b>at least 88%</b>, as calculated by the state's four-year high school graduation rate formula.</b></p>		
<p><b>Data Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ferndale School District has increased the On-Time Graduation Rate for four out of the past five years.</li> <li>The 4-Year On-time Graduation Rate for the Class of 2019 is 84.3%. The 5-Year Cohort graduation rate for 2019 is 88%.</li> <li>The Ferndale School District Graduation rate has increased by 11.2% over the last 4 years. (2016-2019) and has continued to improve with a focused PreK-12 emphasis on Graduation</li> <li>There continues to be an opportunity gap with respect to several of our sub groups. While the overall 4-year cohort graduation rate in 2018 was 85.4%, the same rate for our Native American Students and Hispanic students was 55.0 % and 77.6% respectively.</li> </ul>		
<p><i>Graduation is the ultimate measure of success for our entire school system. We know that a high school diploma is the gateway to many opportunities and generally leads to higher wages and a better way of life. We also know graduation is a process that begins with pre-school readiness, continues through elementary and middle school, and culminates in high school. We are committed to supporting 100% of our students in successfully achieving a high school diploma or its equivalent at the end of their K-12 educational journey. Our specific goal for 2019 - 2020 is for 88% of all Ferndale students who started high school as freshmen in the fall of 2015 to earn their diplomas by the spring of 2019.</i></p>		
<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Timeline and Person Responsible</i>	<i>Success Criteria</i>
1. Develop the “characteristics of a FHS Graduate” for each grade level. Using analytics from	February 2019	1. Each school will have a expectations or characteristics of a high school graduate from

<p>graduates from the 2019 Cohort, we will develop common characteristics for such things as attendance, course completions, behavior, and school engagement in an effort to develop a common understanding of what should be grade level expectations of all students in order to achieve graduation status.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Each school will develop a Career and College “going” program. Some of these activities will include; College Fridays, Career Displays, Where are They Now displays, and our annual Grad Walk program</li> <li>3. High School Graduation Coach for at risk students or those in jeopardy of not graduating.</li> <li>4. Focus on 9<sup>th</sup> grade success using the Stand for Students Graduation program.</li> </ol>	<p>Exec Team and Building Leadership</p> <p>Ongoing in buildings</p> <p>All year at FHS</p> <p>Executive Team and High School Admin</p>	<p>Grade 3 – 12 to share with staff</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Each school will have at least two Career and College going programs by the end of the 2019-2020 school year. (Annual Grad Walk is one of these)</li> <li>3. The graduation coach model has been an effective, research based model. FHS will have a graduation coach in place beginning September 2019 for the remainder of the school year with a specific focus this year on Math.</li> <li>4. Develop a team at FHS to focus on 9<sup>th</sup> grade success. Develop criteria and strategies through the Stand for Students Graduation Program</li> </ol>
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I want to highlight one particular strategy included for the first time in this year’s Graduation Goal -- the reference to A Freshman Success Program. We are very excited about this opportunity, which was presented to us several months ago. Here is the back story:

Research conducted by the University of Chicago revealed that student success in the first year of high school is a critical indicator for graduation. Studies showed that ninth graders who had high absentee rates or failed one or more core courses were more likely to drop out even if they had started high school with high grades and test scores. In contrast, students who successfully completed the first year of high school were almost four times more likely to graduate. These [research findings](#) prompted Chicago Public Schools to partner with the [University of Chicago’s Network for College Success](#) to create a Freshman Success program that encourages the use of data to help school teams evaluate students’ progress throughout the year and refine interventions to better meet their needs. The results have been phenomenal, with on-track graduation rates for participating schools consistently surpassing the district average for the past four years.

In the Summer of 2018, the first cohort from Washington State educators learned the protocols behind forming and sustaining Freshman Success teams in their schools, the skills to collaborate with their colleagues on the work, and ways to ground the work in real-time student data and research on adolescence development. As efforts continue to improve High School Success in Washington on a broader scale, the educators in these initial school districts will serve as the case studies – and leaders – for expanding the Freshman Success Program to benefit every student in our State.

In the Fall of 2019, a newly appointed Washington State Freshman Success Project Manager, Kaaren Andrews, met with a team from the Ferndale School District -- and subsequently with other school districts in Whatcom County -- to invite us to join the movement. Recognizing how closely the program aligns with and supports the work we have been doing to improve our graduation rates, we said an enthusiastic "yes." The other Whatcom school districts did so as well. As a result, we are going to be able to send a cohort of Ferndale staff to a county-wide training during the Summer of 2020 -- all paid for by a grant -- and implement our own Freshman Success Program in the Fall of 2020.

**2. Additional goals (related to the achievement of our Mission, as explicated in Policy R-1) are included in our reports for each of the Board's other Results policies.**

**Superintendent's Remarks**

As I noted in my introductory comments, I expressed our new way of talking about the mission of the Ferndale School District in my remarks to all 700+ FSD employees at an opening of school kick-off breakfast at the Silver Reef Event Center on September 3, 2019. A transcript of those remarks follows:

*Welcome Ferndale School District Team.*

*I am so thrilled that we can all be together this morning to kick off the new school year. It is no easy feat to get all 700 of us in the same place at the same time, especially on a day as busy as this one. It took all of you adjusting your schedules and plans to make this happen. And to all of you, I want to say thank you.*

*I wouldn't have asked you to make all those adjustments on this very busy day if I didn't think it was very important for us to be together to hear the same message. Not some of us in one place and some in another. Not some of us cooking or setting up or cleaning up after other members of our team. But all of us together in one place, on common ground.*

*The topic I want to talk to you about today is what I consider a significant shift in the main focus of our work. As an educational organization, our mission has always been to nurture the growth and development of every child and young person entrusted to our care. Those of us who have chosen this profession have always known that it is HEART*

*work -- and also HARD work. But during the past three decades -- since the publication of The Nation at Risk Report in 1983, which blamed schools and educators for many of society's problems -- our heart work has been gradually consumed and taken over by an unhealthy emphasis on testing and test scores and achievement gaps and college readiness metrics and adequate yearly progress and targeted assistance and yadda yadda yadda.*

*In this midst of all of this frenzy over scores, we have sometimes lost sight of what is most important. In the midst of this pressure to measure how smart every student is according to some rubric handed down from on high, we have lost touch with helping every student figure out how he or she is smart. What unique gifts and talents and strengths he or she has that we can nurture and celebrate.*

*In the Ferndale School District, we are going to change that. Unfortunately, we aren't going to be able to do away with testing. It's the water we swim in, and we will always do our best to teach students academic skills -- because learning the skills represented by the tests will be important to their futures. But test scores are no longer going to be our highest goal. We are no longer going to talk about taking care of students' social and emotional needs so they will do better on tests. We are going to address the development of the whole child and the whole person not as a means to an end that can be measured and quantified by a number, but because it is the right thing to do. Because it is the most important thing to do!*

*To signal to you and the community we serve that we are serious about this shift in our focus, not just for 2019-2020 but from here on out, we have picked a new "brand" to communicate the mission of our school district. FerndaleCARES is going to be our new way of talking about what we do, which is so much bigger and broader than just teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Our main goal is not to get kids ready for the next test. It's not even to get them ready for college, although that is important for those who need a college degree to pursue their chosen path in life. But college is a means to an end, not the end game itself.*

*With FerndaleCARES, we are announcing our end game, which is this: We are going to help every child and young person entrusted to our care develop into well-rounded, well-prepared, productive adults. And to do that, we are renewing our emphasis on Character, Citizenship, and Career-focused learning.*

*As I said -- as you all know -- college is not an end game, but it is a means to some ends for some of us and for some of our students, and we won't forget that. In fact, we will honor that and make sure we keep the option of college open for as many students as possible. However, we are going to make our main focus what we want for ALL students, every single one of them, and that is that they leave us Character Strong, Civic Minded, and Career Ready.*

*By Character Strong, I mean that they are good, healthy individuals who recognize their own strengths and can manage their own emotions and actions.*

*By Civic Minded, I mean that they are prepared and willing to be part of an interdependent community and world; they know how to participate in civil discourse; they understand the democratic process; they are good neighbors and good citizens.*

*By Career Ready, I mean that they are prepared when they leave us to take the next steps (which may or may not include college) toward a career that will support them; they have a purpose and a direction; they also have the knowledge and skills they need to pursue their chosen path.*

*Character Strong. Civic Minded. Career Ready.*

*All three of these goals will require us to double down on nurturing positive relationships and teaching social and emotional skills. As part of FerndaleCARES, we will be joining school districts across the United States to increase our focus on Social and Emotional Learning, which you have probably heard referred to as SEL. Another educational acronym, but one that refers to the kind of heart work those of us in education have always known is fundamental to successful lives. SEL, or social and emotional learning, has been defined as “The way that children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”*

*It seems obvious that these skills associated with SEL are the ones our students need to be Character Strong and Civic Minded. They are also exactly the skills most employers say they want in their employees. They aren’t looking for technical skills first -- those, they say, they can teach; those, they say, change from year to year. They are looking for people who can work well with others, including people who are different from them in their viewpoints or backgrounds or work styles. They are looking for people who can continue to learn, who can be counted on, who are empathetic, who are good problem solvers, who can develop and sustain positive relationships.*

*If I had to boil down my message this morning 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 -- 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.*

*Last year a teacher I respect highly talked to me about the Us-Them climate that often seems to permeate our district. She told me she would like to help me change that. I told her I would be thrilled if we could change it. I have never wanted to be the “them” in that equation. I desperately want to be part of “us.” And I know I speak for the members of the School Board and the Executive Team when I tell you they feel the same way.*

*So one of my requests this morning is that you help me create an “US” in Ferndale that includes everyone. Send me your suggestions. Invite me to your workplace to talk, or come to mine. Give me feedback. Take part in the ThoughtExchange I am going to tell you about in a few minutes.*

*My second request this morning is that you begin this new school year with a renewed focus on building relationships with students and their families. I know you’ve always paid attention to relationships, but I want to give every one of you official permission to spend the first days of school getting to know your students, helping them to know you and one another, making sure each one of them feels welcome and included and loved, making sure each one of them feels recognized and honored for the strengths he or she has to offer.*

*For teachers, this might mean putting aside any hardcore focus on the curriculum for the first few days, or even weeks, to build a team in your classroom. For bus drivers, it might mean learning your students’ names before launching into the rules -- to the extent that safety will allow you to do so. For our custodial staff and lunchroom personnel, it might mean taking time to notice and care for a student who looks lost or lonely or sad or scared. For all of us, it also means helping and caring for one another in the same kinds of ways.*

*The thing about this FerndaleCARES work is that it involves every single one of us. All of us have a role to play in creating a kinder, more caring, more empathetic, more inclusive school district -- one relationship at a time.*

*As I said, every single one of us can play a role in creating a kinder, more caring, more empathetic, more inclusive school district -- one relationship at a time. Every single one of us can help make sure FerndaleCARES is more than just another new slogan of the year. That’s why we have adopted the tagline “You, Me, We.”*

*I heard a speaker this summer say that social and emotional learning -- the kind of learning that helps create people who are Character Strong, Civic Minded, and Career Ready -- is not another thing on our plates. It is the plate! It is the foundation of everything we do.*

*This morning I want to mention several substantive changes in our district that are part of FerndaleCARES -- some new, some a continuation of the good work you are already doing, all of it brought under one umbrella where these actions can be recognized and celebrated for the way they support our core mission.*

*At the **elementary and middle levels**, classroom teachers will be teaching the Second Step curriculum to every student in grades K through 8. Second Step, which has been in our district in some places for several years, is a program aimed at creating a more empathetic and safe society by teaching students social and emotional concepts and skills.*

*At the **high school level**, we will be increasing our focus on teaching positive character traits, on encouraging civic involvement, and on ensuring each high school student is connected with a caring adult both inside the school and also beyond it. Regarding the latter, the community is helping us with partnerships like the Be The One Mentoring Program, which pairs individual students with adult mentors, and Lunch with Leaders, which connects high schoolers with business and industry leaders to talk about job skills, job shadows, and potential employment.*

*For **all of our students**, we are increasing our investment in counselors and other support personnel. The Ferndale School District has doubled down on investing in counselors over the past two years, increasing our number by more than 75% so that we now employ 11.5 counselors for our 10 school sites.*

*For **our teachers**, we are reminding you that academic test scores represent only a fraction of what students need to be successful, and we are giving you explicit permission to spend more time on building relationships.*

*For **all of our staff**, we are making a concerted effort to include every employee group in this work and to honor the contributions and influence all of you have, no matter where you work or what you do. We are also encouraging all of you to take care of yourselves, and to help you do so we are making plans to bring back an employee wellness program.*

*For **our community**, inside and outside the school district, we are launching a District Equity Committee that will be working to remove the barriers that prevent some people from feeling included in our district or from taking full advantage of all we have to offer. We will also be working to nurture and strengthen existing partnerships with the community and develop new ones.*

*To further underscore the importance of this work, we hired Patti Hoelzle a year ago to serve as District Coordinator for Social and Emotional Learning. As she continues in this role -- as we move forward with turning FerndaleCARES into an action plan rather than a bumper sticker, Patti will be working closely with our Teaching & Learning Department to figure out ways we can integrate social and emotional skill-building into as many aspects of our organization as possible.*

*Before I send you on your way this morning, I want to make sure you hear me say again that I know much of this work is already happening in our schools because of you, our wonderful staff. As we begin the 2019-2020 school year, I want to tell you that I completely support what you are already doing to build relationships and make sure every child and young person feels wanted and loved in our schools. By naming this work, by lifting it up, by acknowledging directly that this is our number one priority, and by doing it together, I am hopeful we can double our efforts. I am also hopeful we can share what we are doing with the larger community in a way that they can embrace.*

*I am serious when I say I want your suggestions for how to operationalize the goals we are setting through FerndaleCARES. We have a new technology tool in Ferndale that allows us to share ideas anonymously and also react anonymously to the ideas of others. The tool is called ThoughtExchange, and you can use any computer or smartphone to access it. The question I would love to have you respond to through ThoughtExchange is this:*

***How can we (all of us) make the Ferndale School District a kinder, more caring, more empathetic, more inclusive place for every student and staff member?***

*We will leave this ThoughtExchange open for two weeks. We will also send you instructions for participating in case you didn't get them this morning.*

*Thank you all so much for being here to kick off the new year. Thank you for joining me on the journey ahead. I heard someone say the other day that, if we only prepare students for academic success, we will be sending them into the world on a bicycle with air in only one tire. It just isn't enough. FerndaleCARES signals to the world that we plan to focus at least as much energy on putting air in the other tire. In classrooms, on school buses, in the lunchroom, at the district office, and in all of the other places you work, we are going to focus on what matters most – building strong, positive relationships with students and helping students build such relationships with each other, with us, and with their community so that they become Character Strong, Civic Minded, and Career Ready.*

*I love you, Ferndale School District Team. It is truly an honor to serve you.*

*Have a great first day and a wonderful 2019-2020!*

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In my remarks to the entire District staff on September 3, I highlighted several substantive changes in our District that are, or would be, part of FerndaleCARES (our new way of talking about the core business of our School District) -- some new agendas, some lifting up and calling out work already going on, all of it brought under one umbrella where these actions can be recognized and celebrated for the way they support our mission. I can attest to you that each of the changes I talked about on September 3 are currently underway. In addition, I want to briefly mention several other strands of our work that are aimed at turning the words of R-1's mission statement into actions that directly impact our students. These include:

- **Initiating a FerndaleCARES Advisory Committee.** In addition to launching a District Equity Team in the Spring of 2019, we have recently pulled together an Advisory Committee with representatives from every school and most departments across the District to oversee the implementation of our mission. We have advertised the purposes of this Committee as: (1) informing, inspiring, and guiding the Ferndale CARES brand; (2) representing the voices and the hearts of staff and

students throughout the District; (3) creating and monitoring success criteria related to growing students who are character strong, civic minded, and career ready; (4) helping the District be more intentional about moving staff, students, and families toward a happier and healthier future; and (5) creating a better Ferndale. Because of the symbolic importance of this committee, I am facilitating it myself. We met for the first time in December 2019 and the second time in January 2020.

- **Addressing racial discrimination head on.** Following several alarming incidents of racism in our community and our schools, we launched a “No Hate Campaign” in the Ferndale School District. During a public event held at Ferndale High school on November 25, 2019, I made the following remarks to kick off this campaign:

*In the Ferndale School District, there is room for every person who comes through our doors. As we welcome this heart today, we join together to celebrate our love for our community. We also recommit to standing firm against behaviors that do not meet that standard.*

*Let me be clear about our bottom line: The Ferndale School District must be a place where every student has the right to learn in an environment free of harassment, bullying, violence, and racism. We will not hesitate to name racism and harassment when we see it. And we will continue to work to improve our responses to such attitudes and actions. We want to be very clear that equity is neither optional nor negotiable in the Ferndale School District. Equity encompasses the core values to which we will be held accountable. This is not about politics. This is about doing what is right.*

*I want to apologize publicly to all members of our Ferndale community who have been victims of harassment or racism. I am sorry. We must do better, and I am personally pledging today to do whatever I can to ensure that we will do better in the future.*

*Today is a recommitment. Today we are joining our partners to re-affirm this recommitment: There is room for EVERYONE in Ferndale. But there is no room for hate.*

Our relatively new District Equity Team (mentioned in my September 3 remarks) has taken up this charge. Committee members have committed to developing a protocol to share with staff to assist and support them in confronting, addressing, and stopping racial/sexual orientation discrimination and/or hate speech whenever they encounter it. As one team member said, “Educators are mandatory reporters for child abuse and sexual abuse. Why are they not also mandatory reporters for discrimination and hate speech?” We are working to make sure that they are just that in the Ferndale School District.

At the administrative level, we are bolstering this initiative by engaging in a book study of Robin DiAngelo’s *White Fragility*.

- **Taking a significant step forward with teaching the *Since Time Immemorial* curriculum to all Ferndale students.** For the first time in Ferndale School District's history, our school calendar reflected the observance of Treaty Day on January 22, 2020. Treaty Day is the anniversary of the date in 1855 when the United States of America entered into a solemn agreement with the Lummi Nation. On that day, representatives from these two independent sovereign nations came together in Mukilteo and made promises to one another about how their respective peoples would share the land and resources of this region -- land that had been the traditional homelands of the Lummi people for more than 150 generations. The agreement they signed is called the Point Elliott Treaty.

Treaty Day is an important part of ALL of our history. It is not a Lummi Nation event. Both sides who signed the Point Elliot Treaty promised to live by it forever -- for all future generations. Every one of us who lives in this region has benefited from the fact that the Lummi ancestors and our pioneer ancestors chose to come together in peace to determine a way that we could all share this beautiful land. As Washingtonians, we are all Treaty people. If it weren't for treaties between the United States and the 29 sovereign nations within the Washington territories, we would not have become the state we are today.

For too long, our traditional history textbooks have ignored or downplayed this important aspect of our shared heritage. As Ferndale educators, we made a commitment to provide our students with a complete and accurate understanding of their history. Fortunately, Lummi tribal leaders stepped up to help us create a video and develop lessons we could use to teach our students K-12 the meaning of Treaty Day in every school in the Ferndale School District.

Our efforts to recognize Treaty Day have definitely felt like the right work to be doing in order to further our aim of creating a better, kinder, more inclusive, and more equitable Ferndale. The positive response we received indicates that others, both inside and outside our organization, feel the same way.

- **Designing our new high school with the Board's mission in mind.** The following eight Guiding Principles developed by the Design Advisory Committee reflect the language of our mission:
  1. Balance security needs with a feeling of openness to create a safe, positive, productive environment.
  2. Provide healthy, comfortable, environmentally sustainable accommodations for the entire community.
  3. Promote unity, human connections, and a sense of belonging for all students and staff.
  4. Include flexible and adaptive spaces to facilitate collaboration between students, staff, community members, and academic disciplines.

5. Support active, dynamic, purpose-filled, and varied learning opportunities across all disciplines.
  6. Honor our past, celebrate our present, and look toward the future to create a campus that is congruent with our community, our region, and the cultures that define us.
  7. Optimize and encourage community use with effective, efficient, and safe access.
  8. Create a future-focused facility to accommodate changing programs, populations, technologies, and approaches to learning.
- **Striving to diversify our workforce.** In my 2018-2019 year-end report to the School Board, I mentioned the work we have done to add more diversity to our leadership team. Four years ago, we were an all-white group -- which is definitely not representative of the students and families we serve. We began the 2019-2020, school year, on the other hand, with 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 Ferndale despite the fact that other options have been open to them. Another one of our new principal hires, Kelly Parsons, is also 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.

I also mentioned in my last year-end report that we have continued to work on ways to make our hiring practices more equitable by (1) developing screening protocols that focus on strengths, search out unique funds of knowledge, and reward diversity; and (2) creating common interview questions that aim at revealing potential rather than experience and positive differences rather than similarities. In addition, we eliminated screening questions that suggested stereotypes or that might discourage applicants from applying (such as inquiries about the use of marijuana).

More recently, we have begun making plans to implement a full-blown Teaching Academy program at Ferndale High School under the auspices of Career & Technical Education Department. Our ultimate goal is to create a four-year high-school-level teacher preparation program articulated with colleges and universities that provides incentives for diverse candidates who will commit to returning to teach in the Ferndale School District. Colloquially, we are referring to this as a “grow our own” approach.

- **Continuing to build and enhance equity-focused, opportunity-gap-closing programs.** Such programs include (1) Jump Start early kindergarten; (2) SOAR alternative learning environment (which now encompasses students in grades 6-12); (3) Ferndale Community Connections (our homeschool support program); (4) English Language Learner (ELL) support services; (5) Native student support services; and (6) our partnership with Bellingham Technical College's Youth Re-engagement Program called Impact!

To assist us in identifying students in need of additional supports and/or different programs, this year we have implemented an online early warning system called Panorama that allows our staff to look holistically at each child's social & emotional skills, academic achievement, and other data such as attendance and discipline referrals -- *all under one application*. This is a huge step forward in facilitating the use of data to make sure that "all" really does mean ALL in Ferndale.

- **Developing a robust High School and Beyond planning process for our secondary students.** Although the State of Washington requires each student to have a High School and Beyond Plan to graduate, the State requirement can be fulfilled with little more than a checklist (create a resume, indicate a next step after high school, and so on). Our vision is a much more substantive and all-encompassing career pathway approach for all students (not just CTE students) that engages every young person in identifying their strengths and skills, discovering their passions, researching potential careers, and ultimately figuring out how they might turn their passions into paychecks. When asked the question, "What are you going to do after high school graduation?" we don't want any of our students to say, "I have no idea." We want them all to leave us prepared to take the next steps (which may or may not include college) toward a career that will support them. We want them all to have a purpose and a direction and the knowledge and skills they need to pursue their chosen path.

At this point, our efforts in this area are still in the early planning stages.

While this list is not all-inclusive, I hope, in conjunction with my September 3 remarks, it provides you with a flavor of the serious work going on in support of the mission you have set forth in Results Policy 1.