

Dear Nooksack Valley Community,

I would like to begin by thanking everyone who has provided feedback, both formally and informally, through our entry plan process. Public education is crucial to a healthy community, and it is clear that NVSD schools are the hub of our great community.

It is with optimism and humility that I enter my second year as your superintendent. Even though I have been a part of this district for 23 years, it is with a new perspective I view the district and see its potential. I remain fully invested in our community as we set a course to fully achieve our mission of ensuring the success of ALL students.

Since last September, I have met with over 300 people, including parents, students, teachers, support staff and community members. I wanted to listen to and hear what is important to people. To understand what is working well and should continue and to learn what could be improved or changed. These conversations along with learning the inner workings of the district have led to the following report.

This report highlights the observations and key findings from the many interactions, meetings, and events I have participated in. I look forward to year 2, where we act on these findings and continue to show evidence of improvement and high achievement for ALL students.

Sincerely,

Matt Galley
Superintendent

LISTENING AND LEARNING

The initial target of the entry plan was to meet with all staff in the first 90 days, while simultaneously hosting ‘coffee with the superintendents’ at our schools. Covid restrictions put community meetings on hold and the late fall flooding changed our focus drastically.

By the end of January, I had met with over 90% of district staff. I asked each staff member the following questions:

- What should I know about your school?
- What is working well and should be continued/celebrated?
- What are challenges and could be improved?

We used the insights and information gleaned from these conversations to create a more transparent Theory of Action (TOA) and Commitment statement. We feel it is important for the community to know what we are working on so they can better help us understand how we are doing.

As restrictions were lifted in the spring, I was able to host parent nights at each school, as well as a community wide Hispanic parent night. We presented the TOA and Commitment statement and opened the conversation to Q&A. While the attendance was small, the conversations were overwhelmingly positive and informative.

The final aspect of the entry plan was to survey staff, students, and parents. The district contracted with the Center for Educational Effectiveness (CEE) and conducted the Educational Effectiveness Survey (EES). Although the surveys were anonymous, further themes were identified, highlighting strengths and areas of growth for the district.

The findings from the elongated entry plan process, as well as internal data analysis and review of documents have all contributed to the Year One Report and will be described throughout the remainder of this document.

OVERALL REFLECTIONS FROM YEAR ONE

As previously stated, the overwhelming sentiment from community members, parents, staff, and students is positive and supportive of our schools. Overall, parents feel our schools are great places for their children to be, they are responsive to concerns, and proactive in communication. There is strong collaboration and partnership, although both have been greatly impacted by Covid related restrictions to volunteers and school programs that have historically allowed for parent engagement. Despite differences of opinion related to health requirements, parents and community stepped up to support each other during historic flooding and a school closure. We are looking forward to re-establishing and strengthening these partnerships this year and beyond.

EXISTING DISTRICT STRENGTHS

Academic Performance

Nooksack Valley Schools have traditionally outperformed state averages and comparative expectations based on demographic data. Our staff and community have taken pride in our results, attributing success to our theory of action (instruction is the key variable, adult learning and collaboration is the vehicle, holding all students to high expectations with high levels of support.) The pandemic interrupted our ability to capitalize on the strength of our instructional strategies and routines and created new variables to the process. This, coupled with a lack of comparable achievement data, has created new challenges. We are considering our most recent SBAC data to be our new baseline. Because of these challenges, our Theory of action [NVSDTheoryofaction.pdf \(finalsite.net\)](#) has been revised.

Teaching and Learning

Instruction remains the key variable to success. District and school improvement plans begin with improved teaching and learning as the goal. NVSD has trained formal teacher leaders (TLs) in two cohorts from the University of Washington's teacher leader program. These staff support the principals and broader leadership teams in decision making and planning to achieve SIP goals. Three teachers on special assignment (TOSA's) support the curriculum, instruction, and assessment work at the K-5 level. Collaboration through professional learning communities (PLC's) support ongoing improvement of teaching practice and learning K-12.

Strong Financial Position

The district has maintained a strong fund balance despite declining enrollment during the pandemic. State and Federal support through ESSER funds have been used wisely and remain available through the 2023-24 school year to continue to support smaller class sizes and programs designed to close the gap created by the pandemic. The district continues to have clean audits.

Capital Projects

The district has substantially upgraded its facilities since first taking a bond to voters in 2016. In that time the following projects have been completed or are underway:

- New Middle School
- High School remodel of main office, fitness center, wood and metal shops.
- 10 Classrooms at Nooksack Elementary
- 8 Classrooms, entry way remodel at Everson Elementary
- New Sumas Elementary School
- District Office remodel

A balance remains in the capital project fund (CPF) due to proceeds from flood insurance and FEMA.

Safety and Security

NVSD has maintained a strong relationship with local law enforcement. In partnership, the district has coordinated safety planning and facility audits with law enforcement. As a result, all buildings on campus have access control and maintain a tight perimeter (all outside doors locked) throughout the school day. The district has a long-range plan to install security cameras at all sites. Regular practicing of drills ensures readiness in the event of an emergency. The district plans to involve local law enforcement in drills for the 2022-23 school year.

Student Offerings

Despite being a small rural district, NVSD boasts strong CTE programs and provides College in the High School classes (CitHS). With STEAM classes at the middle school, students are given access to beginning engineering and robotics programs. The high school offers pathways in welding, woodworking, engineering/drafting, business and technology, and culinary arts. Music and drama programs ensure students have access to the arts as well.

CitHS classes feature: English composition and literature, precalculus and calculus, Spanish 1, 2, 3, biology and chemistry allowing students to earn up to 40 credits at very low cost.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Return and Recovery

The pandemic had a major impact on engagement and learning for many students. Initial assessment scores, while still competitive with state averages, are much lower than pre-pandemic levels. Strategic use of ESSER funds has kept class sizes low at all levels to allow teachers to better utilize classroom assessments to be responsive to student needs. Robust summer school offerings at all levels have also provided more time for students to regain skills and opportunities to learn. Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) are continuing to support the instructional CORE as our newest teachers have missed out on similar professional development opportunities.

Support for Diverse Learners and Multiple Pathways

While we maintain very strong support from our families, we must acknowledge the increasingly complex needs of our students during ever changing times. Students with disabilities, English language learners, and students living in poverty do not meet the same standard at a level compared to peers. NVSD maintains a strong belief that ALL students can be successful with the right supports in place. We

also acknowledge that success looks different for each student. The district is committed to expanding credit opportunities for students currently in the work force and internship opportunities to expand opportunities in the work force. NVSD is partnering with the Center for Educational Leadership to elevate student voice and build leadership capacity to lead more equitable schools.

Communication on Student Progress

Recent survey data suggested parents do not receive adequate communication on student progress. To address this, the district is contracting with ParentSquare to become the main point of contact for all district communication. Parents should be able to access the district and school websites, skyward, and communicate directly with teachers through the ParentSquare app and website. The district will also utilize ParentSquare for all communication, including emergency alerts.

Culture of Dignity and Belonging

Overall, student and parent perception data showed relatively strong feelings of dignity and belonging. However, 20-30% of students and parents (depending on grade level) still communicate experiencing some form of bullying or harassment. The district is committed to better understanding the experience for each and every student and family, ensure a sense of dignity and belonging, and make improvements in this area.

PLANS FOR 2022-23

Enhanced Use of Data

NVSD has modified improvement plans to focus on four types of data: Achievement, Contextual, Demographic, and Perception. Each school will further identify specific data to be gathered, set goals, and accompanying actions. At the end of each (approximate) 6-week sprint, school teams will gather and analyze the data and determine next steps. Initial school improvement plans will be shared at the October meeting.

Relational Trust/Social Supports/Academic Press

The survey administered this spring measured perceptions of staff, students and parents relating to 9 characteristics of effective schools. Data from the surveys has provided schools with areas of focus incorporated into their school improvement plans.

Amplify Student Voice

A key pillar of the NVSD Theory of Action is having an “educational equity driven mindset.” This means the district takes all necessary steps to ensure each and every student has what they need to be successful. The student perception data tells leaders ‘what’ percentage of students think about level of support, academic press, safety, belonging, etc. but not ‘why’ they feel as they do. The aforementioned work with UW CEL will support our leaders in answering those questions and developing plans to address further gaps revealed.