

# Oregon School District: The Path Forward At A Glance

## Introduction

The world in which we live is changing rapidly, which has a profound impact on the education and preparation of our students. No longer can learning simply be defined by the accumulation of concepts, facts and figures. Rather, our children must have the ability to think critically and creatively, problem solve, apply their learning, reason, develop global competencies and be intrinsically motivated to learn.

These skills must be obtained by all children, not just the subset of the college-bound, and that is the challenge now before the Oregon School District. As our District continues to evolve and we determine the path forward, we must understand the new context of the world and what that means for our students. Factors relevant for our consideration include:

- Our community is becoming increasingly more diverse. Our District, in partnership with families and the community, must work to address bias, ensure access and provide opportunities for success for all students.
- Learning and achievement, at any age, are more apt to occur when learning opportunities reflect the interests and motivations of learners.
- Information is ubiquitous and easily obtained thus the role of education is to help our students learn how to find, analyze and apply knowledge, rather than simply learn content. Learning how to be astute consumers of information and users of technology will serve our students well.
- There is a balance between technology and personal interaction. Technological tools enhance our ability to personalize learning; they do not diminish the importance of educators, but rather reinforce the significant role of educators as mentors, coaches and facilitators of learning.
- Building positive relationships between students and educators is an important factor in the development of the holistic learner.
- The changing landscape of our ecological world has a profound impact on our lives. It is essential to prepare our students to learn about the world, how it works and understand the challenges and opportunities before us.
- The increasingly complex world requires that our students participate in and lead group activities involving a wide variety of people. We can provide them with such opportunities and experiences through co-curricular activities and larger community experiences involving service projects, internships and employment.
- Public school funding challenges continue to strain our ability to adequately meet the needs of our students and educators.

## Background

In light of this larger context, the question is whether we can evolve as a public school district to meet these challenges. This need to evolve does not mean that what we have been doing has somehow not served our students well. We are good at what we do.

The Oregon School District has a proud tradition of deliberate reflection on how we educate our students and the opportunities we offer to learners of all ages. Visioning papers adopted over the last 25 years by the Board of Education have shown a commitment to continuous improvement in the education of our students.

In 1992, the Board adopted a position paper titled “Commitment to Continuous Improvement: Education for Lifelong Success” that included the **Oregon School District Mission Statement**, which stands today:

“The mission of the Oregon School District is to educate by helping students acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to achieve their individual potential, to contribute to a changing society and to be receptive to learning as a lifelong process. The mission will be accomplished by delivering a high quality program through the joint efforts of students, staff, parents and community.”

In addition, the District adopted a framework for using a standards-based curriculum, which is based on students demonstrating understanding or mastery of knowledge and skills they are expected to learn.

In 2003, the paper titled “Accountability for Student Achievement” was adopted and a key component was the development and identification of “**The Four C’s**” to serve as our District’s success measures. These standards are:

- **Competency:** The mastery of subject matter curriculum.
- **Character:** Traits that emphasize honesty, integrity, respect, responsible behavior, and appropriate social skills.
- **Culture:** Positive contribution to establishing and nurturing a supportive learning environment.
- **Community:** Involvement both inside and outside our schools that furthers the learning process.

What followed were revisions to the District’s graduation standards and grading practices, and efforts to integrate curriculum both horizontally and vertically. This integration of curriculum set the stage to explore and begin the implementation of ways to personalize learning to each student’s individual needs, abilities, strengths and interests.

## **The Path Forward**

Teaching our students to thrive and build rewarding lives in a global and technological world is the task before us. Our objective is that our students not only accumulate knowledge and acquire skills, but also learn to apply them, form meaningful relationships, have a desire to learn about the world and how it works, and develop the inspiration, motivation and perseverance to continue learning.

In order to assess our progress and update our vision for the future, District stakeholders participated in a two-day Visioning Conference in August 2015. Evident from this conference was an energy and excitement among the participants about the opportunity to continue to evolve our District and the necessity to do so. In addition, there was a strong collaborative belief that education in the District should be grounded in and based upon a set of core values.

Expressed as a set of five interrelated pillars, these values work in conjunction with each other to form the foundation for a successful school district. As outlined in the District Paper titled **The Path Forward**, the following values will serve as our guideposts for the future.

## **What We Value**

### **1. Whole Child Emphasis**

Our District's long-standing emphasis on ensuring each child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged is reaffirmed. "The Four C's" remain our measures of success. An Oregon School District education will continue to encompass all subjects as academic for a well-rounded education. The school day and co-curricular activities can offer numerous opportunities for students to exercise autonomy and grow. District support for our students' mental health and emotional well-being will continue to be emphasized.

### **2. Equity For All Students**

All learners should receive an educational experience that helps them reach their full potential, regardless of family income, language, background, personal characteristics and ability. As a District, we must identify and address implicit personal and institutional bias which may exist within our learning environment to help ensure that our learners have what they need to develop their potential. Our learning community is viewed as stronger for its greater diversity and prepares our students to live and work in a more diverse world.

### **3. Relevant and Empowering Learning Experiences Inside and Outside the Classroom**

Our District is learner-centered, focusing on the abilities, interests and goals of each individual. Students benefit from meaningful learning experiences that occur both inside and outside the classroom. Learning will not necessarily be constrained by grade or age. An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) will identify the path for each child to be successful and every classroom will offer personalized instruction to ensure that path is open. Changes to the school schedule, day and year may be needed to support this vision for learning. Learning is not limited to students, but also includes educators, staff, families and the community.

### **4. Caring and Professional Educators**

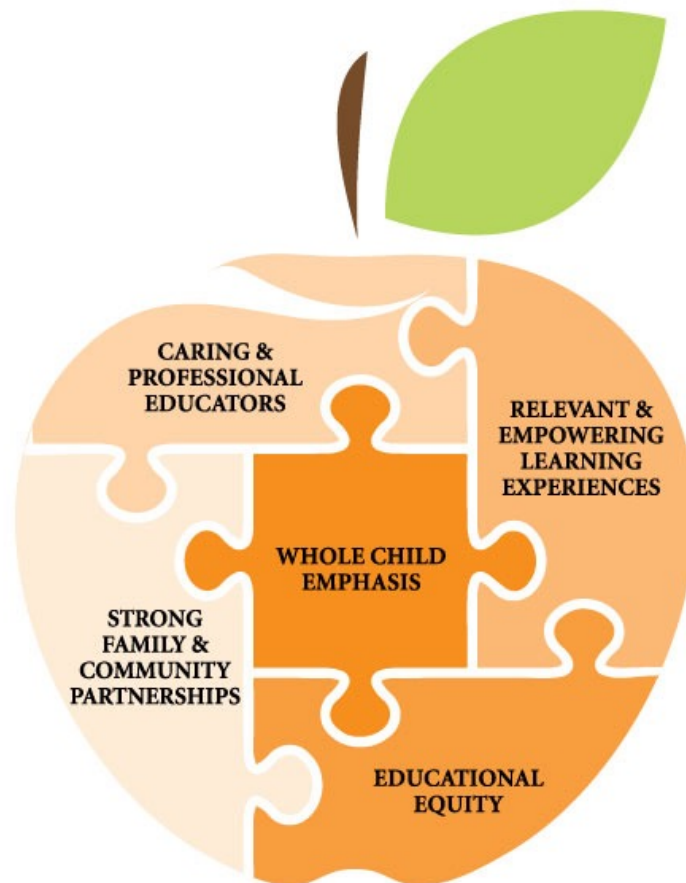
Skilled, motivating educators are critical to student success, and meaningful educator/student relationships have a significant positive impact. Educators are committed to advancing in their profession by demonstrating competence and engaging in a plan of

continual learning. Educators find meaning and value in their work, and the District is committed to retaining, attracting and developing its educators.

### **5. Strong Family and Community Partnerships**

Community members are viewed as essential partners in the effort to educate our students, and are also participants in the life-long quest for learning. Our District will effectively communicate with families and the community to strengthen our partnerships. The community will participate in community education classes, serve as mentors and tutors in our schools, and use school facilities. Through community service activities and work/internship opportunities, our students will both give to and receive from the larger community.

## What We Value



## Conclusion

Upon graduation, our students will enter a dynamic and rapidly changing world environment. No matter whether their path is post-secondary education, joining the workforce, serving one's community or country, or technical school, we envision that they will be fully prepared to meet the challenges they face, ready to build rewarding and satisfying lives and a world better than ours.

Our District is significantly different that it was 25 years ago and the pace of change in the world, and in education, is rapidly increasing. Yet, our **Mission Statement** remains relevant and calls us to provide to all students a meaningful education that is designed to help each individual reach their potential. We will deliver on our commitment to our students through the development of plans and the implementation of programs and practices that are consistent with the values - **What We Value**. Finally, **The Four C's** will serve to measure whether we have been successful.

The path is before us.

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The full version of Oregon School District: The Path Forward can be found on [www.OregonSD.org](http://www.OregonSD.org) or by contacting the District Office at 608.835.4000.

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