



Internal Monitoring Report

September 13, 2022

Policy Title: **Dealings with Citizens of Poudre School District**

Policy Type: Executive Limitation

Policy No.: EL 2.9

Period Monitored: July 2021 – August 2022

This report monitors the Board of Education's Executive Limitations Policy.

*The Superintendent shall not fail to actively engage with the citizens of Poudre School District, and the Superintendent's relationship with citizens of the District will neither violate the highest standards of transparency nor impede the Board's role as citizen representative.*

This report is presented in accordance with the Board's monitoring schedule. I certify that the information is true and complete.

Brian Kingsley

September 13, 2022

Superintendent of Schools

### **Executive Summary**

This report monitors Executive Limitation 2.9, Dealings with Citizens of Poudre School District, policy language as it deals with how the Superintendent's relationship with citizens of Poudre School District meets the highest standards of transparency and supports the Board's role as a citizen representative.



The evidence included in this monitoring report suggests that the Superintendent engaged with the citizens of PSD, maintaining high standards of transparency through two-way communication with key stakeholders while supporting the role of the Board as citizen representatives.

The evidence included in this monitoring report indicates that the Superintendent complied with the policy by adequately communicating with numerous stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- Students, parents, staff and the broader community
- Classified, licensed and administrative employees
- PSD Board of Education
- Business, nonprofit and educational partners, and
- Members of the media

Please note the information at the end of this monitoring report about the Superintendent and District's continued response to COVID, as it occurred during this monitoring period.

### **Policy Wording:**

*The Superintendent shall not fail to actively engage with the citizens of Poudre School District, and the Superintendent's relationship with citizens of the District will neither violate the highest standards of transparency nor impede the Board's role as citizen representative.*

### **Interpretation:**

The district interprets the *superintendent's relationship with citizens of Poudre School District* to mean the Superintendent's interactions with his stakeholders through direct conversations, professional meetings, community engagement sessions, direct correspondence (e.g. in person, social media, phone, email, etc.), and publication in PSD and external platforms or outlets (e.g. written and video messages).

This is reasonable since these are the means by which the Superintendent engages in citizen relationships.



The district interprets *impede the Board's role as citizen representative* as prohibiting or limiting citizens of PSD from contacting Board members. Withholding information so that Board members cannot have answers to questions or information that may assist them when discussing the district with other citizens.

These two standards of permitting citizens of PSD to contact Board members and providing information to Board members are reasonable because to function as citizen representatives, Board members need to hear and read information to make well-informed decisions as representatives. The Superintendent facilitates the Board's interactions with citizens through weekly updates, responses to community comment at Board of Education meetings, email, the District Ends, board meetings, invitations to district events, and community engagement sessions.

### **Evidence:**

During the 2021-22 school year, Brian Kingsley served in his first year as PSD Superintendent. This monitoring report captures his work during the reporting timeframe. It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the community's ability to meet in-person at various times during this monitoring period but that the impact was not as significant as during the 2019-20 or 2020-21 monitoring periods.

Community and Staff Communication. In his first year, the Superintendent met with hundreds of PSD staff, students, and family members, as well as community leaders, members of the public, and business/nonprofit partners. He also attended numerous PSD school/department, community, networking, and educational events, some of which included but weren't limited to:

- Multiple visits to all PSD schools during the 2021-22 school year,
- Meetings with PSD departments,
- Meetings with Larimer County and Denver-area superintendents,
- Regional Colorado Association of School Boards meetings,
- Meetings with City of Fort Collins, Town of Wellington, Town of Timnath and Larimer County administrators, managers and mayors,
- Meetings with representatives from PSD's three employee associations: Association of Classified Employees, Poudre Education Association, and the Poudre Association of School Executives,



- 2022 Association of Classified Employees annual awards event, 2022 Mary Hull Integrated Services awards event, and all 2022 PSD commencement ceremonies,
- Meetings of the PSD District Advisory Board; the District Accountability Committee; the PSD Foundation Board; the Audit Committee; the Equity and Diversity Advisory Council; the 2016 Bond Reserve Allocation Committee; the Budget Development Team; the Principal Advisory Group; the Mill Bond Oversight Committee; regular principal and district administrator meetings; meetings of the Student Advisory Council; meetings of school parent teacher organizations (PTOs), and meetings related to PSD's annual employee negotiations,
- School-based events, including but not limited to plays, musical performances, athletic competitions, art shows, and more,
- Individual meetings with community partners, including but not limited to those from United Way; Boys & Girls Clubs of Larimer County; Matthews House; Woodward; Bohemian Foundation and the Connect First workgroup; Rotary Clubs; Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce; Otterbox; and more,
- Spoke at various staff and community meetings,
- Attended conferences, including but not limited to the annual Colorado Association of School Boards conference and Colorado Association of School Executives conference.

Additional 2021-22 school year Superintendent communications, intended for PSD staff, families and the greater community, included but were not limited to:

- Multiple written and video messages sent via email and published on the PSD website, via PSD's social media platforms, and in the PSD Now newsletter. The Superintendent, working with the Communications Department, launched a new video series called "Doin' the Work," in which the Superintendent got to work alongside and talk with a bus driver about their work – and impact – in PSD. The intention is to continue this series in the 2022-23 school year.
- A redesign of the [Your Superintendent web page](#) to make it easier for members of the community to get to know the Superintendent and access his written and video messages, as well as his Superintendent remarks presented at Board of Education meetings.
- Shared district news through the district's website and in the bi-weekly PSD Now email newsletter, sent to more than 5,000 employees and more than 40,000 parents and community members.



- Hosted in-person and virtual staff town hall meetings about topics such as COVID, PSD's participation in the state's Medicaid program, and the PSD Strategic Plan.
- Updates shared via the [Superintendent's Twitter account](#), including photos and videos from school visits, and district and community events.
- Starting in August 2022, the Superintendent also started inviting staff to meet and talk with him in a casual, smaller group setting at their school. After visiting multiple schools during a day, the Superintendent is available at the last school he visits to talk with any staff about any topic; there is no set agenda. The intention is for staff to build their relationship with and have a direct line of communication to the Superintendent.

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The following summaries are intended to highlight specific efforts by the Superintendent and District to seek community input and engage in conversations with the students, staff, and community members they serve.

In general, the District's engagement process includes:

- Forming committees with representatives from stakeholder groups (parents, district and school staff, community, and students, when appropriate) to gather input through a variety of means, research options, and make recommendations to the Superintendent's Cabinet and/or Board of Education.
- Information and updates are shared about the process (platforms may include but aren't limited to the PSD website, social media, traditional media, school and district newsletters, staff and parent email and e-newsletters, and virtual/in-person meetings with principals, administrators, community members and staff).
- Public input opportunities are created and promoted to gather feedback to inform decision-making.
- Decisions are shared with stakeholders, utilizing a variety of the communication platforms named above.

### **Community input gathered as part of the PSD Calendar Committee's work to develop the 2022-23 school year and future school year calendars**

In December 2021, PSD circulated a survey about the district's calendar to our community, including all parents/guardians, all staff, middle and high school students, and community members. The following were key findings from that survey.



- The PSD community has a strong interest in the school year calendar. We received 8,571 responses to the survey.
- Survey respondents across all respondent categories have a strong interest in maintaining a two-week Winter Break and in having a five-day Fall Break.
- Survey respondents across all respondent categories have a strong interest in ending the school year in May.
- Respondents to the survey offered several suggestions for future calendars that they would like to see the district explore. These included:
  - A year-round school calendar, with more breaks throughout the school year
  - Instituting longer instructional days to allow for more breaks throughout the school year
  - A four-day student week
  - Considering how best to continue addressing ongoing heat concerns in classrooms

Survey findings were used to revise the [2022-23 school year calendar](#), which was modified and later approved by the Board of Education in June 2022.

The Calendar Committee, as well as the district, will continue to consider these interests, using them to inform the development of future school year calendars.

### **Continued public engagement process to develop American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency relief budget**

In May 2022, Poudre School District (PSD) communicated that the school district sought community input about how to spend American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) fund dollars, under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021. Once approved, PSD said it intended to use about \$165,222 in ARP-ESSER SUPPLEMENTAL funds during the 2022-2023 school years to address the impact of the pandemic on students.

To inform PSD's use of ARP-ESSER SUPPLEMENTAL funds, the district gathered input from our stakeholders. The input was used to develop a Supplemental Funding Plan that PSD submitted to the Colorado Department of Education for review. The district also communicated that these funds are one-time in nature and will not be used for ongoing costs, and that the district would receive funding to execute the plan once it was approved. In the summer of 2021, PSD also conducted a larger-scale community engagement process to develop the school district's comprehensive budget for ARP ESSER funds, and further information was made available to our community through email, fliers, and a COVID Support Funding web page on the PSD website.



## **Establishment of the Student Advisory Council**

During the 2021-22 school year, the PSD Board of Education, in partnership with the Superintendent, established the Student Advisory Council. The intention was to create opportunities for PSD students to communicate directly with the Board of Education about their experiences in school and their ideas for how to improve those. During the 2021-22 school year, the Student Advisory Council provided the Board, Superintendent and District staff with feedback about their access to PSD mental health and wellness resources, the annual Connections Survey and high school schedules, among other topics. This group will continue meeting in the 2022-23 school year and is led by directors from the Board of Education.

## **2021-22 school year and summer 2022 community engagement sessions**

The Board of Education hosted four community engagement sessions in spring 2022, and the District hosted two community engagement sessions in summer 2022 specifically about communication and transparency. In total, about 30 people attended the four spring sessions and reported building connections with other participants and feeling like they had an opportunity to share their ideas at these events. District staff used a restorative circle protocol that aims to build trust and affirm each individual's voice.

A total of roughly 100 people attended the two summer 2022 community engagement sessions and once again participated in a structured, restorative circle protocol. As part of the two sessions, attendees shared their values and specific ideas for how PSD can improve in the areas of communications and transparency. As an action step, District staff are reviewing attendees' feedback and, within their teams and departments, determining what ideas may be able to be implemented. Staff are also planning to host ongoing community engagement sessions during the 2022-23 school year, likely focused on specific topics.

Some families have reported feeling like they have lost trust in PSD or requested that PSD be more transparent about what is being taught at each grade level during the school days. District staff know that authentic engagement will be an important part of PSD's efforts to continue strengthening partnerships with parents/guardians and family members.

## **2021-22 school year meetings with community, business and nonprofit partners**

New in PSD, the Superintendent and his staff hosted specific meetings for community partners, including those from businesses and nonprofits in the Northern Colorado region. Due to COVID restrictions at the start of the school year, these meetings were hosted online and occurred roughly once a quarter. The purpose was to strengthen PSD's partnerships within our community, to articulate specific ways that partners can



support the school district, and to reduce the hurdles that some partners have reported facing when trying to support PSD schools and students. For the 2022-23 school year, the intention is to continue working with community partners and likely focus on what partner support can look like specifically in the areas of literacy, mental health and wellness, graduating with options, and school safety, which are District priorities.

### **Principals and Administrators**

The Superintendent met with principals and administrators throughout the 2021-2022 school year to discuss emerging issues and long-term plans regarding expectations, leadership, COVID-19 and other district-level decisions and the direction of the district. The Superintendent also spoke to new administrators at the New Administrator Orientation and addressed administrators at the two leadership retreats. Additionally, the Superintendent had dialogue with principals at some of their bi-weekly levels meetings. The Superintendent received regular updates from the 11 administrators who reported directly to him and held weekly Cabinet meetings throughout the year.

### **Schools**

The Superintendent visited all PSD schools – some of them multiple times – during the school year to see the learning process first-hand and to talk with students and staff. As noted above, the Superintendent started in August 2022 hosting opportunities for casual conversation with teachers and staff.

The Superintendent worked with assistant superintendents and principals to get input from teachers about emerging issues, as needed, and met with Poudre Education Association leadership during the 2021-22 school year.

### **Board of Education**

The Superintendent communicated frequently with Board of Education members to support their roles as citizen representatives through personal phone calls, email updates, electronic meeting agendas, as well as through work sessions, business meetings, special meetings, and retreats. Weekly updates were sent to the Board to provide information related to district operations and issues of interest so directors could be as prepared as possible for interactions with the community.





The Superintendent encouraged PSD staff to share Board member contact information with members of the public when asked. The Superintendent met with Board leadership several times each month to plan Board business and work session meetings. The Superintendent also met with Board members one-on-one routinely during the school year.

### **Education, community, local, state, and national activities**

In order to listen to and learn from stakeholders and gain strategic direction and best practices for the district, the Superintendent was a member of and/or participated in a leadership role in local and state organizations such as the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB), PSD/City of Fort Collins/Larimer County Liaison Committee, the Denver Area School Superintendent's Council (DASSC), and Colorado Association of School Executives, among others.

### **Broader community and media**

The Superintendent and his staff utilized the PSD website, PSD social media platforms, email, and work with the news media to convey and publish messages/updates to staff, families and the broader community.

### **Responsiveness to community requests**

The Superintendent modeled accessibility and honest, open communication with students, staff, families, the public and news media. His staff worked diligently to respond to media requests and met with reporters from local media outlets during the 2021-22 school year. In addition, the Superintendent and his staff responded to and/or appropriately routed emails, phone calls and general correspondence from the public, staff, and students with the intent of providing strong customer service. As a new process, the Superintendent and Board of Education started emailing those members of the public who chose to speak at Community Comment at Board of Education meetings. Additionally, the Superintendent set an expectation with members of his Cabinet that emails should be responded to within a timely manner, ideally within 72 hours if possible. Although quality customer service was provided, there are opportunities to continually improve within this space.



## **PSD's response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

Starting in spring 2020 and continuing through this reporting period, the Superintendent and his staff were also engaged in numerous virtual meetings, conference calls and planning efforts at the state and local levels in response to COVID-19. Such engagements included but weren't limited to: multiple calls with Larimer County Department of Health and Environment leaders, as well as community leaders and Thompson School District and Estes Park School District leadership teams; ongoing calls with superintendents across the State of Colorado; ongoing calls with Larimer County community liaisons working to solve shared community challenges; calls with State of Colorado Gov. Jared Polis and his leadership team, as well as Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment staff; ongoing calls with State of Colorado Commissioner of Education Katy Anthes and Colorado Department of Education leadership; meetings with PSD's three employee associations; as well as individual calls, virtual meetings and email exchanges with community partners, families and more.

The Superintendent's staff further amplified these efforts, attending collectively countless meetings to support students and staff, plan the district's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and work with community partners on solutions to community-wide issues.

Although the community response to COVID is not what it was in 2020 due to increased vaccination rates and decreased hospitalization rates, communication about the district's response to COVID was and continues to be important for the PSD community. The district first started communicating with families and the community in February 2020 and remains committed to providing transparent information about the district's response and what it means for staff, students and families. Communications efforts included but were not limited to:

- Continued updates to COVID-related web pages on the District website, including to data dashboards that were launched in the interest of transparency.
- Continued work between the Communications Department and the Language Culture and Equity Department to ensure the highest possible equity of access to information through translation of all district announcements and family newsletters in multiple languages; through robocalls in multiple languages; and more.
- COVID protocol updates at 2021-22 school year Board of Education meetings by the Superintendent's staff.



- Thousands of calls, emails and direct messages on PSD's social media platforms from families and community members during the reporting period were responded to by the Superintendent and his staff.

Due to the evidence provided, the District meets the expectations described in Executive Limitation 2.9.