



Internal Monitoring Report

September 14, 2021

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

Policy Type: Executive Limitation

Policy No.: EL 2.9

Period Monitored: July 2020 – August 2021

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 14, 2021

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:

- Community, students, parents and staff
- Principals and administrators
- Schools
- Teachers/Certified employees
- Board of Education
- Classified employees
- Specific education community
- Broader community and media

Additionally, the superintendent was responsive to community, staff and student requests/complaints.

### **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 professional meetings, correspondence, publications, and conversations conducted by the superintendent, whether through social media, by



email, in-person or by phone.

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.

The two standards of permitting citizens of PSD to contact Board members and providing information to Board members are reasonable since to function as citizen representatives, Board members need to hear and read information, so they can make well-informed decisions as representatives. The Superintendent facilitates the Board's interactions with citizens through weekly updates, email, District Ends, board meetings and outreach/engagement sessions.

**Evidence:**

During the 2020-21 school year, two individuals, Sandra Smyser and Todd Lambert, served in the roles of superintendent and interim superintendent, respectively. This monitoring report captures their collective work during the reporting timeframe. It is also important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the PSD community's ability to meet in-person at various times in this reporting period.

Community and Staff Communication. The superintendents attended various school, community, and networking events, meetings, and activities, some of which included but were not limited to: the 2020 Poudre Association of School Executives annual networking reception; 2020 Association of Classified Employees annual awards event; 2020 Mary Hull Integrated Services awards event; school-based awards events; meetings with the Fort Collins city manager and Larimer County manager; meetings with Timnath and Wellington town leadership; meetings of the District Advisory Board meetings; meetings with community partners, such as Boys and Girls Club, Matthews House, Bohemian Foundation and more; meetings with new district administrators and classified and certified staff; presentations to various community groups, including local



realtors; school visits once school resumed full-time, in-person for all grades in March 2021; and addressed staff at various staff meetings and retreats.

Additional community and staff communication activities for the 2020-2021 school year included but were not limited to **(Please note the following occurred separate from the COVID-19 pandemic; there is a separate section that addresses the superintendents'/staff work in response to the pandemic and closure of schools.):**

- Published multiple written and video messages on the PSD website and in the PSD newsletter to parents, staff, and the community.
- Shared district news through the district's website and in bi-weekly Great Happens Here e-newsletters to more than 3,800 employees and more than 40,000 parents and community members.
- Presented to numerous organizations across Larimer County on topics ranging from COVID-19 to the progress on construction of new schools and the 2016 bond/mill levy override.

#### Community input gathered as part of review of PSD's School Resource Officer Program

The goal of the Poudre School District School Resource Officer (SRO) program is to provide a safe learning environment and help reduce school violence while improving perceptions and relations between students, staff and law enforcement officials. PSD and its partner agencies agree not only to help protect the safety of PSD's school communities but also continue striving toward a restorative-practices approach to disciplinary issues.

In spring of 2020, members of PSD communities expressed concerns about the presence of SROs in PSD schools. Concerns included but weren't limited to the existence of a school-to-prison pipeline and the lifelong impact it has on some students in our schools, particularly students of color. The PSD Board of Education directed the school district to conduct a comprehensive review of the issue to determine whether to continue the SRO program.

This review included gathering input from PSD staff, students, families and district committees/boards, and culminated with recommendations to the board from a community committee known as the Community Advisory Council. The board took this critical feedback into consideration before deciding in May 2021 to continue the SRO program and directing staff to negotiate with the three law enforcement agencies that



employ the SROs: Fort Collins Police Services, Larimer County Sheriff's Office and Timnath Police Department.

A steering committee, comprised of law enforcement representatives and PSD staff, will review the SRO program four times during the school year. The committee will analyze data and program experiences, evaluate how implementation of the 2021-22 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) is going and design required trainings.

In addition to training that law enforcement agencies require SROs to go through, up to four joint trainings will take place during the school year. The trainings will be required for all PSD administrators and SROs. Trainings could cover topics including but not limited to the program and SOPs, as well as restorative practices, cybercrimes and school law.

During the 2020-21 school year, PSD staff will also provide regular updates to the board. This ongoing oversight will determine whether changes need to be made to future contracts and SOPs. This evaluation process is subject to change.

#### Public engagement process to develop American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency relief budget

On Aug. 24, the Poudre School District Board of Education approved [PSD's proposed budget](#) for how to spend federal pandemic response funds. The district used community feedback to develop the budget for using American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) fund dollars, under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The proposed budget will be submitted to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for review. The CDE will determine which expenditures are considered allowable.

- If expenses are approved, the CDE will reimburse PSD for the funds. PSD does NOT have the funds in hand, as of August 2021.
- Approval of PSD's budget by the CDE is not contingent upon its decision regarding response to COVID-19, including decisions about masks, testing or vaccinations.
- Staff created the budget using internal and external feedback from thousands of parents, students, staff members and community partners, as shared through a survey, a direct email address for input, virtual forums and feedback sessions.
- No outside agency made decisions or was directly involved in the budget-planning process. PSD leadership used community feedback to craft the final budget that will be submitted to the CDE.



Once approved, PSD will receive about \$15.5 million in ARP ESSER funds in the 2021-22 school year for the safe operation of schools and to address the impact of the pandemic on students.

#### Progress on 2016 bond-funded construction:

Staff presented information on the status of the 2016 bond and mill levy override to different stakeholder groups, including local realtors. Updates centered upon how construction is going at PSD's new schools, Transportation Maintenance Complex and the district athletics complex, as well as progress on \$40 million in improvements being made at all existing schools.

During this reporting period, PSD celebrated the grand opening of Bamford Elementary School at an Aug. 13 event with families, staff and community partners from across the region. Major projects completed during summer 2021 also included but weren't limited to: new carpet at Leshar Middle School; installation of Early Childhood bathrooms at multiple elementary schools; fire alarm replacements at several schools; a remodel of Preston Middle School's administrative office; exterior window and door replacement at Lopez Elementary; and much more.

Communications about the progress of 2016 bond construction and improvements will continue on PSD's website and social media platforms, as well as at Board of Education meetings during the 2021-22 school year.

Principals and Administrators. The superintendents met with principals and administrators throughout the 2020-2021 school year to discuss emerging issues and long-term plans regarding improvement, leadership, COVID-19 protocols/decisions and the direction of the district. The superintendents also spoke to new administrators at the New Administrator Orientation and addressed administrators at the two leadership retreats. Additionally, the superintendents had dialogue with principals at some of their monthly levels meetings and held frequent cabinet meetings throughout the year. The superintendents also received regular updates from the nine administrators who reported directly them.

Schools. The superintendents visited some but not all PSD schools during the school year to see the learning process first-hand and to talk with students and staff. Due to the



COVID-19 pandemic response and shifts to remote education throughout the 2020-21 school year, the superintendents were not able to visit all schools. Examples of visits included but weren't limited to observations of laptop/device distribution events, distribution of sack lunches at schools, learning taking place outdoors, 2021 graduations at French Field at Rocky Mountain High School and more.

Teachers. The superintendents worked with assistant superintendents and principals to get input from teachers about emerging issues, as needed, and also met with Poudre Education Association leadership during the 2020-21 school year.

Board of Education. The superintendents 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, special meetings, and retreats. Weekly updates were sent to the Board to provide information related to district functioning and issues of interest so they would be prepared for interactions with the community.

The superintendent encouraged PSD staff to direct citizens to Board member contact information 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 several Board members routinely at their request.

Education/Community, Local, State, and National Activities. In order to listen and learn from stakeholders and gain strategic direction and best practices for the district, the superintendents were members of/participated in a leadership role in local and national organizations such as the Poudre School District Foundation, Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB), PSD/City of Fort Collins/Larimer County Liaison Committee, the Denver Area School Superintendent's Council (DASSC), Institute of Education Innovation (IEI), District Administrator Leadership Institute, National Association of School Superintendents (NASS), and Colorado Association of School Executives.

Broader Community and Media. The superintendent utilized the PSD website, social media platforms, email, and the news media to convey and publish messages/updates to staff, family and other groups.



Responsiveness to community requests. The superintendents modeled accessibility and honest, open communication with the public and news media. Their staff worked diligently to respond to media requests and met with reporters from local media outlets during the 2020-21 school year. In addition, the superintendents and their staff responded to and/or appropriately routed email, phone calls and general correspondence from the public, staff, and students as appropriate in a timely manner.

Community Engagement Process. The superintendent's staff utilizes multiple communications mediums available to share information and involve stakeholders in major initiatives being considered by the district.

In general, the engagement process includes:

- Forming committees with representatives from stakeholder groups (parents, district and school staff, community, and students, when appropriate) to gather input through face to face meetings, focus groups and surveys, research options, and recommendations to the superintendent's cabinet and Board of Education.
- Information and updates are shared throughout the process utilizing 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 meetings are held to gather feedback to inform decision-making.
- Decisions are shared widely with stakeholders, utilizing a variety of the communication vehicles named above.

PSD's response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Starting in spring 2020 and continuing through this reporting period, the superintendents were also engaged in numerous virtual meetings, conference calls and planning efforts at the state and local levels in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Such engagements included but weren't limited to: multiple calls weekly 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 during the pandemic; ongoing 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, leadership, families and more.

The superintendents' 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.

Timely and accurate communication about the district's response to COVID-19 was and continues to be critical. 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:

- Creation of a suite of PSD COVID-19 web pages, a central resource for the district's comprehensive response plan; COVID-19 case data; community resources (mental health, internet services, and more); critical health and safety information; links to reputable sites, such as the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Colorado Department of Health and Environment; and more. District webpages were kept up to date throughout this reporting period, requiring countless updates to reflect the most accurate and timeline information.
- The Communications Department supported other departments and schools with communication through means including but not limited to: letter templates to ensure consistency and accuracy; district-produced news items and family updates about critical services and COVID-19 protocols; production of twice-weekly staff and family newsletters (produced in English, Spanish and Arabic); facilitation of numerous media interviews; creation of videos from the superintendents; creation of Frequently Asked Questions guides, updated frequently to reflect the most-current information available; and collaboration on



health safety messages with external partners, including but not limited to the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment.

- The Communications Department also continued its work with 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.
- Additionally, the superintendents and/or the superintendents' staff presented 2020-21 planning updates at Board of Education meetings; as well as shared planning updates with numerous community groups including but not limited to: LatinX family/community partners; City of Fort Collins staff; Integrated Services families; members of the media; and many more.
- The superintendents and their staff also directly responded to thousands of calls, emails and direct messages on PSD's social media platforms from families and community members during the reporting period.

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