

# Issaquah School District Executive Limitations Monitoring Report

## EL-2 TREATMENT OF PEOPLE (Annual Internal – April 22, 2009)

*With respect to treatment of people, including parents, citizens, and students, the superintendent shall not permit an organizational culture that treats people with disrespect, indignity or discourtesy.*

### *In Compliance*

#### **GENERAL INTERPRETATION**

I interpret this policy to require a courteous, respectful culture throughout the school district. This is accomplished through policies, leadership practices and communication structures that support and maintain appropriate conditions as noted below.

In a complex organization like the Issaquah School District, the interpersonal exchanges each day number in the millions. I interpret compliance as the maintenance of clear expectations and procedures for corrective action to be used, if needed, to sustain these values. In short, compliance is the clear, consistent valuing of respect, courtesy and meaningful informational exchange as hallmarks of district life.

*Accordingly, the superintendent may not:*

- 1. Use methods of managing information that fail to protect confidential information.*

#### **INTERPRETATION**

I interpret this to mean that confidential student and staff information will be:

- maintained in secure locations;
- accessed only by authorized persons performing official duties;
- appropriately transmitted to or made available for review by the individuals to whom it pertains, including parents with the right of access to their student's records;
- lawfully archived and destroyed;
- password-protected when stored in electronic formats.

Further, I interpret this to mean that the District complies with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) by creating and following a system that ensures that individuals who work and learn within the school district will not be photographed without their consent; they will not have personally identifiable information (directory information) published if they request that it be withheld; nor will the media or members of the general public have unauthorized access to the ordinary activities of students and staff except when activities take place in a public setting—for example, a student concert or drama production, athletic competition, or special assembly open to the

public.

In this context, I interpret *general public* to mean non-staff members who have not been specifically authorized or invited to be present by a school or district official.

## **EVIDENCE**

- In March 2009 all Principals verified that confidential student records are maintained in secure locations. This includes, but is not limited to, student cumulative folders, emergency cards, teacher gradebooks, guidance team evaluations, special education records, health records, and federal free/reduced lunch applications.

The Skyward electronic student records system, including Family Access, is password protected. Staff passwords are updated every six months.

- In March 2009 administrators and all Principals verified confidential employee records, including personnel and payroll files, are maintained under lock and key; access is by authorized personnel only, or by subject employees under specified conditions in the presence of authorized personnel.
- District archives are managed and monitored by the Chief of Finance and Operations in keeping with applicable law.
- All parents/students have the right to withhold personal directory information from publication. In March 2009 all Principals verified that forms for this purpose were distributed this year during student registration.
- A system has been developed through which media and photographer access are appropriately granted and/or limited in order to respect both the access rights of reporters and privacy rights of individuals. In applicable situations, the Director of Communications secures necessary permissions through site administrators.
- Procedures for protecting privacy as external research is conducted in the District are managed and monitored by the Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer.
- Copies of all principal/building certifications are on file in the Superintendent's office monitoring report notebook (see EL-12 monitoring report 3/25/09). For direct inspection of these check lists please contact the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent; these check lists provide evidence as needed for EL-10, EL-12 and EL-2.

... *the Superintendent may not:*

2. *Fail to provide a process for the effective handling of complaints.*

## INTERPRETATION

I interpret this to require two types of hearing-and-response systems: one for community members, parents or students; another for staff. Both should provide an effective means of bringing complaints to the person or persons in charge and receiving a timely response/resolution.

As a practical matter, employee appeal rights are noted, but are not treated in depth in this monitoring report. They will be treated in more detail in the monitoring of *EL-3: Personnel Administration*.

## EVIDENCE

- **Community members**
  - *District policy 4312: Complaints Concerning Staff or Programs* is an omnibus provision for any community member to bring a complaint or concern of any type to the appropriate source within the school district. If a complaining person does not find remedies and/or information to be satisfactory, the policy provides for timely, progressive appeals through the administration to the board level. This policy, including procedures and forms, is available to the general public through any school office or the office of the Superintendent.
  - *Student Handbooks* describe the rights and responsibilities of students in the Issaquah School District, including appeal rights. These are updated annually and distributed to all students/parents.
  - *Special Education Procedural Safeguards* clarify the educational, informational and appeal rights of students and their parents. This document is given at least once each year to parents of children who are eligible for special education services; it is given to parents as specified by law and at any other time it is requested.
- **Community members, students, and employees**
  - *Civility Policies 3205, 4011, and 5282* provide effective avenues of complaint and resolution for all members of the school community who believe the District's cultural expectation of civility has been violated.
  - *Various other federal laws and district policies* provide specific complaint and appeal procedures for individuals seeking to remedy particular conditions or decisions. Each ensures specific rights of individuals within the school community:
    - Policy 3210: Nondiscrimination
    - Policy 5010: Recruitment, Selection, Assignment: Nondiscrimination
    - Policy 3115: Homeless Students

- Policies 3212, 5013: Sexual harassment
- Policy 3214, 5014: Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying
- RCW 28A.85: Gender equity
- Sec. 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- 5241: Whistleblower Protection
- 5011: Affirmative Action and Employment of Handicapped
- 5224: Staff Participation in Political Activities

- **Employees**

Beyond the provisions noted above, employees who are members of labor organizations have additional grievance rights and procedures outlined in their collective bargaining agreements with the District. There are eight such bargaining units within the Issaquah School District covering approximately 94% of District employees.

... *the Superintendent may not*

*3. Permit any form of illegal discrimination.*

## **INTERPRETATION**

I interpret illegal discrimination as acts or omissions by school authorities that create unequal access to District resources on the basis of race, creed, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, or any other class or condition protected by law. Thus, the District must:

- make District opportunities available to all students on a fair basis without regard to the factors or conditions referenced above;
- fairly consider all qualified applicants for employment, assignment, promotion and retention without regard to the factors or conditions referenced above;
- publicize the District's commitment to nondiscrimination and procedures for addressing perceived discrimination within the school district;
- have ready procedures for determining and taking corrective action in the event that discrimination should occur within the district.

## **EVIDENCE**

- Equal educational opportunities and fair treatment of all students are guaranteed in *Policy 3210: Nondiscrimination* and *Policy 3200: Student Responsibilities, Duties and Rights*. Procedures for addressing perceived discrimination against students are set forth in 3210P and 3200P and in student handbooks which are distributed to all students/parents.
- Nondiscriminatory recruitment, selection, assignment, transfer, promotion, retention and training of staff are high priorities of the Issaquah School District as noted in *Policy*

5010 and its related procedures. These procedures have been developed to achieve equitable solutions to justifiable complaints.

- Nondiscriminatory employment practices are clearly valued and communicated on district application forms:

*“The Issaquah School District is committed to equal employment and educational opportunities. The District encourages inquiries and applications from all qualified individuals, including members of any protected group. It is the policy of the district not to discriminate in employment on the basis of race, creed, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, marital status, veteran status, age, or disability, as required by state and federal laws.”*

Individuals who have or share in responsibility for hiring are trained in fair, appropriate, nondiscriminatory practice.

- From April 23, 2008 – April 22, 2009 no formal complaints of illegal discrimination from any student or staff.

*... the Superintendent may not:*

*4. Fail to maintain an organizational culture that conforms with the following values:*

- a. encourages exchange of opinion*
- b. reasonably includes people in decisions that affect them*
- c. open and honest communication in all written and interpersonal interaction*
- d. focus on common achievement of the Board’s Ends policies*

## **INTERPRETATION**

I interpret this to require the creation of communications structures that support desired culture. Well-developed communications structures will:

- provide opportunities for meaningful input and feedback on topics of interest and importance to the individuals participating and the constituent groups they represent;
- keep the school district community generally well informed about District programs, decisions and conditions;
- build trust through transparency (access to public information and clear demonstration of reason and process in decision-making);
- maintain staff and community commitment to the Board’s Ends for Students through frequent and relevant interaction and shared decision-making.

## **EVIDENCE**

- **Opportunities for input and feedback:** ISD culture is supported by numerous opportunities for community, staff and students to provide input and feedback on

matters of interest and importance to them. Prominent examples are listed below:

- **School Continuous Improvement Plans** are developed collaboratively by staff through data analysis and shared goal-setting at each school. The individual building CIP is also shared with the members of the school's site-council.
- **Teaching and Learning Leadership Team** brings together staff and parents from all grade spans for advice on curriculum and instruction service priorities. Elementary and secondary teacher teams provide leadership on specialized topics and curriculum adoptions.
- **Standing committees** in all areas of district operations contribute to a culture of collaborative decision-making. Examples include Employee Benefits, Safety, Nutrition, Emergency Preparedness, Health Services, Library/Media, and Counseling Services.
- **Interview teams** of staff and community stakeholders help express community and district culture and identify candidates who reflect cultural values.
- **Specially chartered task forces** ensure that community and staff values are prominently represented in major initiatives (i.e., Bond and Levy Scope, Bell Times Study, Nutrition Advisory, and Boundary Review Committees). During 2007-08 and 2008-09 the district formed a Boundary Review Committee that includes 22 community members representing all 22 potentially impacted schools. These members were selected by each schools site council.
- **Levy Development Committee 2009** was formed during the 2008 – 2009 school year that included 45 community and members representing all regions of the school district.
- **Random digit dial surveys** have maintained an open feedback loop with the community since 2003. Staff residing within the district are included. Survey results are reported in EL 9 Monitoring Reports.
- **Annual student interviews and the Healthy Youth Survey for sixth, eighth and tenth graders** provide important knowledge of student issues, concerns, and risk behaviors. Results are posted on the District website.
- **Special Education Staff Advisory Committee** gathers staff perspectives in Special Education communications and problem-solving.
- **Site Councils at all schools** have been carefully designed to blend community, staff and student perspectives for input and feedback.
- **Regular labor relations meetings** between administration and union leaders, and monthly Meet and Confer meeting per IEA Negotiated Agreement help maintain open communications and positive relationships for problem-solving and collective bargaining.

- **General information:** In ongoing random digital dial surveys, the District gets high marks for “keeping the community well informed.” Four in five parents overall (82%) give the District an A or B grade for *your opinions are welcome and encouraged in this district*. Major communications strategies are continuously improved based on user feedback. These include the district website, FOCUS newsletter, school newsletters, district calendars, school bond and levy election information, District E-News, emergency notification systems, special parent letters, newcomer packets, media relations and releases, leadership presentations and activities throughout the community, and regular, open agenda community coffees with the superintendent and principals.
- **Transparency:** Transparency is the honest, continuing effort to help members of the school community (a) obtain and understand non-confidential information, and (b) understand the reasons for and process behind decisions. Primary examples of the district’s commitment to transparency include:
  - The district’s web-based budget process, which keeps budget information, the budget development process, and input opportunities before the general public;
  - Financial Advisory Core Team, facilitating full inquiry into the budget development process by internal and external stakeholders;
  - Web posting of minutes and agendas for the school board and major district committees;
  - Podcast of School Board Meetings;
  - Easy web links to student achievement data for every school and the overall district;
  - Regular budget status reports to the school board in public meetings;
  - Timely, cooperative response to all public records requests;
  - Compliance with all state and federal reporting requirements, including ESEA provisions;
  - EL-9 Report to Public – online overview of programs, finance, and achievement

... *the Superintendent may not:*

5. *Fail to provide an open and responsive environment that encourages parent involvement*

## INTERPRETATION

I interpret this to mean the District must provide meaningful, ongoing opportunities for parents to act as educational partners in their students’ school experience. At a minimum of

two-year intervals, the District will use a valid and reliable method of community-wide data collection to show the degree to which parents perceive they are treated as valued partners in their student's school experience.

## **EVIDENCE**

The Issaquah School District is exceptionally welcoming to parents who wish to support the learning of their children as individuals, serve as volunteers within the schools or on committees; question, give input, and/or become better informed on topics of interest.

- ISD Random Digital Dial Survey Results (Fall 2003 – Winter 2008) indicate nine in ten parents overall (89%) give the District an A or B grade for *your involvement in your child's education is welcome*.
- Every school holds unique activities to incorporate parents into the learning process and school culture. Examples are: kindergarten classroom and bus rider orientations, transition programs for parents of new middle school and high school students; curriculum nights; invitations to assemblies, concerts and other productions; information meetings for magnet program opportunities; graduation, assessment, and Special Education information meetings.
- Parent resources for supporting student learning in the various content areas are available on the district website.
- Parents are invited to preview, become fully informed about, and give or withhold permission for their students to participate in the FLASH curriculum.
- Parent seminars on topics of special interest are posted as a PTSA link on the district website.
- Electronic student reporting systems (Family Access) give students and parents convenient on-line access to student grades, emergency information, and other data on file.
- Direct access to teachers through e-mail enhances and reduces time lag in parent-teacher communications.
- Issaquah Connect is a new web network that will allow teachers to more easily build and maintain web pages with up-to-date classroom information and secure, interactive features such as question forums and wikis that will encourage and foster student and parent involvement.
- Teachers are supported in the development of classroom websites to show assignments due and display student work. Increasingly, Issaquah teachers are providing parents this additional window into the classroom.

- All special programs (Special Ed, BEL, ELL, Title I, Highly Capable) include parents in advisory committees.
- Parents volunteer thousands of hours throughout the district and schools.
- The Superintendent and all or most principals hold informal coffees and other meetings with parents to answer questions and maintain personal relationships with their parents.
- PTSA support for Issaquah schools is well known across the state. The superintendent and principals maintain regular meetings and cooperative relationships with PTSA leaders.

*Board approval:*