Expectations of the Superintendent

The Superintendent shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, condition, procedure or organizational circumstance which is unlawful, unethical, unsafe, disrespectful, imprudent, unfair, inequitable, disruptive, undignified or in violation of contract, Board policy, or collective bargaining agreements.

Interpretation: I interpret this EL to mean that the Superintendent is expected to ensure that the district complies with all relevant laws, policies, bargaining agreements and contracts; that all staff members, students and constituents are treated fairly, respectfully and with dignity as they interact with the school district and within the district’s programs; that actions by district staff and the Superintendent, beyond the scope of law and policy, are ethical, prudent, respectful and promote order and organization; and that the district provide an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for all of our constituents.

In compliance. The Superintendent has not knowingly violated any law or standard of ethical practice, any Board policy or any collective bargaining agreement. Similarly, the Superintendent has never knowingly allowed others in the system to violate any law, policy or contract. When issues of compliance with law, contract or policy are identified, the district takes immediate action to respond to the oversight and ensure that such problems are not repeated. The Superintendent regularly reminds administrators and staff of our collective obligation to observe both the letter and spirit of the law and our collective bargaining agreements, and this is monitored carefully on an on-going basis. Similarly, regular attention is given to district operating and Board policies to ensure compliance by both the Superintendent and administrative staff. Operating policies are a regular topic in administrative meetings to ensure that all members of the district leadership team are aware of such policies and their requirements.

During the 2020-21 school year, a global pandemic and subsequent state and local directives forced the district to make sudden and significant changes to fundamental aspects of basic operations. Schools closed to in-person learning and a new, remote learning environment was established in March of 2020. In some cases, this put long-standing policies, contracts and practices in conflict with unprecedented emergency conditions and new directives from elected and appointed leaders in our region. In response, the board passed Resolution 823-04-22-20 to provide flexibility in light of the unusual circumstances. This resolution granted limited and temporary permission to the Superintendent to operate outside of existing policy when emergency conditions required this.

Additionally, multiple regulatory agencies developed a complicated and evolving set of binding (and non-binding) guidance associated with school operations. Agencies included the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Governor of the State of Washington, the State Department of Health, the State Office of Labor and Industries, the Pierce County Health Department and others. These regulations were routinely reviewed, analyzed and implemented to ensure that the district remained in alignment with the required elements of this extensive guidance. This massive effort included ongoing training and retraining, the procurement of supplies and materials and ongoing enforcement of emerging rules and regulations. To date, we have experienced no known violations of these regulations by district staff, nor have we received any allegations or complaints that such violations have taken place.

Substantial effort is made on an annual basis to inform district administrators and staff of specific legal obligations related to nondiscrimination, child abuse reporting, harassment/intimidation/bullying, disciplinary rules and procedures, confidentiality (FERPA), use of public funds, public records requests, use and reporting of isolation and restraint and other critical issues that impact student safety and public confidence. A series of regular “compliance” trainings are organized on an annual basis to address these – and other - important topics. During the last several years, an organized series of “Safe Schools” online training developed by our insurer, the Washington State Risk Management Pool, have been a requirement for many district staff. Many of these online trainings
address law and legal issues. This year, additional training was provided to all UPSD employees on COVID19-related safety protocols and expectations.

We continue to pay close attention to equity issues in the school system - particularly in the areas of discipline, achievement and program participation. Ensuring that UPSD is an equitable system has been, and will continue to be, a priority and an organizational value. To this end, district staff continues to disaggregate, review and respond to data in an effort to close gaps and improve equity. The district’s equity advisory committee worked through the year to build capacity and to review district equity initiatives. Systematic efforts to eliminate inequity and bias in our system will continue into the coming year and beyond. It is important to note the multiple data collection tools for equity analysis were unavailable to district leadership over the last twelve months. For example, discipline data was greatly diminished with so little in-person schooling taking place over the last year. This has been an important source of equity data in past years. Similarly, school closures led to the cancellation of key assessments that have long served our efforts to examine inequities in our academic programs.

Also in pursuit of greater equity, the district revised and intensified initiatives aimed at achieving racial equity. Efforts to this end involved extensive staff training (both formal and informal), changes to our curriculum and other actions. These actions are chronicled in the Racial Equity Initiative section of our website at https://www.upsd83.org/about_upsd/racial_equity_initiative.

The unfortunate year-long school closure, and the transition through multiple learning modalities has likely created serious, new inequities for students attempting to learn at home. We have tried to mitigate these issues by distributing Chromebooks and hotspots to families who need them, by using a combination of online and paper-packet assignments and by developing school based student support teams to provide targeted support to families who have trouble accessing learning in this unprecedented environment. We’ve also prioritized student groups most in need as we developed small-group, in-person learning opportunities in October of 2020 and beyond. Student participation in our academic programs has been high and extraordinary efforts to ensure that students have the technology they need to access learning, we believe, will lessen the long-term impact of full and partial school closures.

District administrative staff have a standing directive that if at any time any decision made by the Superintendent is perceived as being illegal or questionable - or running counter to the highest standards of public sector accountability - they are to notify the Superintendent immediately, and, if the Superintendent fails to respond, they are to notify the Board of Directors.

The Superintendent consistently responds to all of the district’s employees, students and constituents in a prompt and respectful manner. Ensuring that concerned staff and citizens have access to district leadership and can share their concerns is a priority and a value. This level of responsiveness was particularly important this year with higher-than-normal levels of communication with parents due to the school closure, operational changes and public demands for greater racial equity in schools. Hundreds of email exchanges and dozens of face-to-face or phone discussions resulted from these communications in an effort to be responsive to stakeholders.

The district places great emphasis on ensuring safety and safe conditions for staff and students. Substantial planning and training takes place annually to ensure that everyone in the district is ready to do their part to keep themselves and others safe. Student safety is a regular topic in administrative meetings and substantial efforts are made on an annual basis to implement strong emergency procedures, effective preventative measures, positive behavioral interventions and supports and professional development that promotes the safety and well-being of staff. These safety efforts were heavily focused on protecting staff and students from COVID19. Currently, data shows that these safety efforts have been successful with no evidence of “in-school transmission” of the COVID19 virus. This data can be found here:
Training is provided on an ongoing basis for school safety measures. Training schedules, topics and calendars were different this year due to the significant operational changes caused by COVID shutdowns and guidance. Also the district continues to staff a Coordinator of Safety and Emergency Preparedness, a district nurse and other safety and supervision staff.

The Superintendent makes every effort to represent the district in a respectful and dignified manner in a wide array of public settings by modeling polite, positive, courteous and respectful interactions with all stakeholders- even when confronted with angry or unreasonable parents or community members. In addition, the Superintendent seeks to demonstrate patience, courtesy and responsiveness for all.

In order to ensure continuity of district operations, the Superintendent shall not allow the district’s leadership or any critical functions to be unprepared to respond to conditions that can stop or otherwise impede district operations. Accordingly, the Superintendent shall not fail to:

1. Ensure that at least one other executive staff member is familiar with Board and Superintendent issues and processes and is capable of assuming Superintendent responsibilities on an emergency basis.

   **Interpretation:** I interpret this to mean that a designated UPSD administrator should be prepared to take over leadership of the district in the event I am unable to do so.

   **In compliance.** The Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning is involved in -and has assumed significant responsibility for – extensive executive level decision-making, fiscal stewardship and board-superintendent issues and processes. He attends all board sessions and meetings and is familiar with the operations side of our organization in addition to the areas under his own supervision. The Assistant Superintendent is kept informed regarding all major district issues and projects (even those outside of his responsibilities) in the event he is needed to take on the role of Superintendent, and is also well versed in the district’s budget and finances. The Assistant Superintendent’s long-standing service to the district and his strong management and leadership abilities make him fully prepared to assume the role of Superintendent on a temporary or on-going basis should this be necessary.

2. Ensure that continuity of leadership exists at each level of the district’s management.

   **Interpretation:** I interpret this to mean that plans should be in place to provide immediate support when a manager or supervisor becomes unable to perform their duties and to ensure that the organization can function in spite of any sudden and/or unexpected change in leadership/management staffing.

   **In compliance.** There is significant overlap built into key district office leadership positions to accommodate the unanticipated absence (e.g., for periods longer than normal sick leave or vacation periods) of critical staff. Because of this overlap and because of close collaboration among central office administrators, there is capacity for the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Executive Director for Primary Education, Executive Director of Secondary Education, Executive Director of Human Resources and Executive Director of Special Services to cover central office absences- temporary or prolonged. Additionally, the leadership team for the district meets on a weekly basis to discuss current issues, projects, etc. so that members of the team are aware of the work their colleagues are doing. In many cases, leadership team members are working in concert on issues. Over the long term, the recent changes in the structure of the district leadership team will serve continuity well as it will increase the overlap of duties and responsibilities.
We also have significant ‘redundancy’ at the building administrator level. Assistant principals at all levels can perform ‘acting principal’ duties under the direction of the Superintendent and Executive Directors for unanticipated principal absences in their building (or at other buildings) in the district. District office leaders also have extensive principal experience (Superintendent, Executive Director of HR and Executive Directors of Primary & Secondary Education) should it be necessary for them to engage in principal level work. With specific regard to replacement of administrators on an emergency basis, the district maintains relationships with retired/substitute administrators who can be called in on an emergency basis.

Recently, a principal position was vacated at Chambers Primary and the current Executive Director of Primary Education was ready to step into that role immediately to complete the year. This helps ensure continuity and consistency at a challenging time. We continue to hire and train administrative staff with an eye toward their potential as leaders in other positions in the district.

3. Ensure that district plans include a projection of foreseeable disasters or emergency situations.

Interpretation: I interpret this to mean that the district must have a set of emergency preparedness plans in place that are known and understood by staff and that cover the kinds of emergencies most likely to occur (i.e., earthquakes and fires)

In compliance.

The district maintains and continually updates a set of emergency plans for a wide variety of possible incidents and situations. Also, extensive new emergency plans have been established and implemented over the last year to keep staff and students safe from COVID19 as schools reopened to in-person work, instruction and activities. This work is led by the Coordinator for Safety and Emergency Preparedness and other staff as appropriate (i.e., the district nurse has been heavily involved in leading the district’s pandemic response.)

The Superintendent and Coordinator for Safety and Emergency Preparedness collaborate regularly with city officials and law enforcement/first responders to increase familiarity and plan for emergencies. This year, high levels of close collaboration also included the district nurse and health officials at the Pierce County Health Department.

The Coordinator for Safety and Emergency Preparedness attends a wide variety of training and workshops to develop expertise on emergency preparedness. Other staff attend as needed. Training is also identified and implemented for appropriate district staff. For example, in the last year, the Coordinator worked closely with the District Lead Nurse and building-based COVID19 Supervisors to attend (and direct) regular, ongoing training to keep others safe from COVID19. These training opportunities were provided by multiple entities including the Pierce County Health Department, Pierce County Department of Emergency Management, Labor and Industries, the Risk Pool and others.

The UPSD Emergency Operations Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan and Suicide Prevention Plan can be found using the following links:

- Hazard Mitigation Plan (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c0ANiS7Fs54-ArM-FsE-uGibj02K0SCv/view?usp=sharing)
● Suicide Prevention Plan
(https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VZkf6M1IZU3SMFDQ7_Bm96yVarsHMf6P/view?usp=sharing)

Also, information specific to the district’s COVID-19 emergency response and planning can be found on our website at:

https://www.upsd83.org/family_resources/health_services/coronavirus_information

and

https://www.upsd83.org/family_resources/health_services/coronavirus_information/c_o_v_i_d-19_dashboard

Furthermore, as part of the emergency planning process, the district maintains extensive emergency supplies in special containers at each site. These containers are ready for use in disasters or emergencies and contain first aid supplies, clean water, blankets, flashlights and other equipment. The contents of these containers are monitored and refreshed as needed. Similarly, an entirely new set of emergency materials and supplies has been procured to support COVID19 prevention and response measures including face coverings (cloth, surgical, KN95 and N-95), hand sanitizer, cleaning & disinfecting supplies, COVID19 testing kits, specialized face shields, etc. The district has been able to utilize county, state and federal emergency funds and resources to assemble a wide range of supplies to address this current pandemic.

4. Ensure that the district tests disaster/emergency preparedness plans for their ability to assure organizational continuity.

Interpretation: I interpret this to mean that efforts are made to ensure that emergency plans are reasonable and appropriate and that key staff have an opportunity to practice emergency response in either actual or simulated drill situations.

In compliance. Whenever school is in session for “in-person learning” the district conducts regular, monitored drills as required by law at all district sites for emergencies generated by: fire, earthquake, school violence (e.g., lockdown) and shelter in place. Administrators are required to report all drills, and these are recorded and monitored at the ESC to ensure that emergency preparations are conducted routinely at all sites. Local law enforcement is involved in reviewing drills in each school on a periodic basis. Staff continues to engage in regular review and training related to school lockdowns, evacuation, earthquake “duck and cover” drills and other safety/emergency actions. The central office maintains a monthly record to ensure all drills are conducted according to law and the district’s Emergency Plan. Also, we rely on internal and external safety experts at UP Police, West Pierce Fire and Rescue, Pierce County Emergency Management, etc. to help review plans and ensure that they are appropriate and up to date. Training, collaborative planning and other “tabletop” discussions are also used to prepare to put emergency plans into action.

With respect to interactions with stakeholders (parents, students, and the public), the Superintendent shall not fail to ensure that parents, students and the public are treated with respect and dignity at the district level and within each school and classroom. Accordingly, the Superintendent shall not cause or allow a compromise of confidential information.

Interpretation: I interpret treating all stakeholders “…with respect and dignity” as requiring a standard of behavior that is welcoming, inclusive, responsive and courteous; treating all stakeholders with respect means responding to any and all concerns or questions in ways that seek to resolve those concerns and
answer questions to the fullest extent possible. It means that even stakeholders (students, staff) whose behavior warrants discipline or even separation from the district/employment are treated throughout the process with compassion for them as individuals. Furthermore, an important element of respect is access and availability. I believe strongly that parents and stakeholders, within reasonable limits, deserve our time and have a right to meet with district staff and administrators to share ideas, discuss concerns and/or advocate for their students appropriately.

In compliance. I make every effort to be available to all stakeholders (students, staff, parents, alumni, citizens, etc.) to discuss concerns, hear suggestions, receive complaints, listen to demands and/or accept feedback. In all of these interactions I make it a priority to communicate that I have heard the stakeholder, share pertinent information so the constituent has access to this information and provide a response as to what next steps- if any- will be taken. The tone and tenor of these interactions- whether they be in person, by phone, in a virtual meeting or through email- is characterized by respect, open-mindedness and a genuine interest in a mutually favorable resolution. This approach to collaborative problem solving is also an expectation of all district leaders and staff members as they interact with constituents.

Interpretation: Confidential information is interpreted as information that is both legally protected (i.e., for which formal confidentially requirements exist in law, policy or contract), and also information that, while not legally protected, requires sensitivity and discretion to protect a stakeholder’s privacy, and prevent any unnecessary disclosure or embarrassment. We interpret this to require a generally “protective stance” toward the very large amount of personal information that becomes available to us, to the Board or other district employees in the course of our professional responsibilities.

In compliance. The district’s expectations for protection of confidential information include that information covered by State and/or federal laws such as IDEA and FERPA. Additionally, other information is also deemed confidential. This information includes portions of employee personnel files, discipline records, background check /fingerprinting information, student records (excluding directory information as defined in policy) and investigatory files. Student records are carefully protected and are only released to identified biological parents or others who have been given written permission by parents or a court of law to receive such documents or information. No such records are provided without verification of the identity of the person requesting such records. Specific operating procedures govern the extent to which student records can be shared and identify “directory information” which can be legally shared outside our organization. These expectations and procedures are discussed on an annual basis with staff and training is provided as needed.

Confidentiality is also an important consideration in the district’s response to public records requests. Extensive effort is made to protect private information in such requests to the extent that law allows with particular attention paid to student information and/or records. When necessary, the district uses the assistance of our attorneys to help protect confidential information that may be a part of a records request. District administrators monitor and respond to any incidences of violation of confidentiality and, when appropriate, treat such violations as disciplinary incidents.

The board understands that certain legislative bodies may require the board to adopt policies that would be considered operational and therefore delegated to the Superintendent, under Policy Governance. In order to satisfy both these regulatory requirements and the board’s desire to delegate operational issues to the Superintendent, the board adopts this policy. Accordingly, the Superintendent shall not fail to:

1. Create and implement policies as required by local, state and federal legislation.

Interpretation: I interpret this to mean that the Board expects the Superintendent to ensure that the district remains in compliance with all legislatively mandated policies and their subsequent updates and
changes with the exception of 1000 series policies that govern the board’s work and decision-making processes.

In compliance. The district has a system in place to regularly review and update policies to ensure they are current, comply with law and reflect actual district practices. Policy revision is an on-going process as laws change and requirements are added or deleted. All policies required by law are current and/or in the development or revision process. UPSD uses WSSDA’s model policy service as a basis for notification of new/revised policies and as a starting point for language and legal references. However, not all language proposed by WSSDA is required and the district often amends proposed language, within the boundaries of law, to improve clarity, align policy with actual practices and avoid inclusion of unnecessary or potentially confusing information. Policies recommended to the Board are reviewed by the district’s attorney when necessary.

District operating policies follow the established WSSDA numbering system and may be initiated in response to changes in state or federal laws, ‘best practices’ recommendations from WSSDA or the district’s attorneys or by the need to codify and standardize specific district practices and procedures. The existence of a WSSDA policy does not equate to a legal requirement for a policy to be adopted by the Board of Directors.

During the 2020-21 school year, the district added or amended a number of required and recommended policies. These policies include:

- 3510 Associated Student Bodies
- 2255 Alternative Learning Experience Programs
- 3205 Sexual Harassment of Students Prohibited
- 2020 Curriculum Development and Adoption of Instructional Materials
- 3424 Opioid Related Overdose Reversal
- 6225 Use of Electronic Signatures

Operating policy 1630 - Employment and Evaluation of the Superintendent - was updated by the board through formal action this year as it is part of the 1000 series policies related to Board work - not organizational means.

2. These policies will be called district operating policies to distinguish them from the Board’s governance policies.

Interpretation: I interpret this to mean that the district operating policies (with the exception of 1000 series policies) are distinct from the board’s policy governance policies. Operating policies are developed, maintained and amended by district administrators (i.e., the Superintendent or designee) for the purposes of district operation. Board governance policies and 1000 series policies are developed, maintained and amended by the Board of Directors and govern the work of the Board, specifically.

In compliance. The district maintains two separate sets of policies and uses two distinct processes for adding or amending these policies. District operating policies are named and numbered as such on the district website for easy access by staff, administration, the Board and the public. 1000 series policies reside in the same location on our website as other operating policies but are clearly labeled with the title “The Board of Directors” to ensure they are understood as such.

Adopted: June 12, 2019
Monitoring Method: Internal Report
Monitoring Frequency: Annually in April