**PIEDMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**MEMORANDUM**

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| **TO:** | Board of Education |
| **FROM:** | Donald Evans, Interim Superintendent |
| | Stephanie Griffin, Director of Instructional Technology |
| | Brian Killgore, Director of Communications |
| **DATE:** | March 22, 2023 |
| **RE:** | **WEBSITE MODERNIZATION** |

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**BACKGROUND:**

After more than a year of research, surveys, interviews and training, the Piedmont Unified School District (PUSD) launched new district and school websites on Friday, February 24, 2023.

The need for a new website was identified on the last district Technology Plan in 2017. Over 50% of web traffic to the district website was from mobile devices, yet our district website, and many of our school websites, were not optimized for mobile screens. Most of our websites were implemented in 2008-09 and contained a variety of out-of-date (mis)information, older feature sets, and didn't speak to the vitality and innovation of our current school system. They weren't telling our story very well to community users who today expect a different online experience than a decade ago.

Another factor driving us to reexamine our web presence wes modern accessibility requirements. New stricter ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance standard for websites went into effect in January 2018 stating that a school's digital resources must be accessible to users who have physical, sensory, cognitive, or learning disabilities, just like our buildings. A school and district's public-facing website must also be fully accessible, so as not to discourage or prevent disabled people from applying for jobs, enrolling students, or participating in their local school events.

The website implementation process kicked off in the fall of 2021. A survey was sent to all parent/guardians and posted on our website asking for feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of our web presence, and also asked for examples of education websites that people liked. The results of the survey were reviewed along with Google Analytics of our current website, at a virtual District Technology Advisory Committee Meeting on October 4, 2021. A cross-function group of staff was formed to evaluate several educational website platforms and make a recommendation based on needs and scope from the DTAC meeting. The group included reps from schools, the superintendent's office, Stephanie Griffin and Brian Killgore. After hours of demos and review, the recommended

platform was Finalsite, which also hosts Head Royce, Palo Alto and many other comparable school districts.

Design began in August 2022. The district negotiated a custom theme design for our sites.  The design was based on the exemplars and input from the 2021 DTAC meeting with a few rounds of feedback from the school board, site administrators and the implementation team.  Fall of 2022 was spent learning the platform, providing logos and starter images, and migrating content from the old website to the new  platform.  In January, we held another District Technology Advisory Committee meeting open to all to do some usability testing on the pre-launch site.  We were able to take feedback from users trying to accomplish common tasks on the new website to improve the user experience before launch.

The district switched over to the Finalsite platform Friday, February 24th.  The new sites feature school and district news articles, connections to social media, stylized calendars, and some features identified in the early DTAC meeting and survey such as a "I want to..." quicklink menu.  All of our sites are now ADA compliant and look great on mobile devices. Post-launch, we have continued to add content and address typos, links to nowhere and other bugs.  So far 28 "bugs" have been reported and all have been addressed. The platform has additional feature sets we plan to grow into including integrated directories, email newsletters and communications (the site is integrated with Infinite Campus so we have parent contact information), a staff only "intranet", integrated athletics pages for our sports team, and searchable content previously contained within pdfs.  The project is not over and will continue to be a focus through next year.


**RECOMMENDATION:**
Discuss and give direction to staff