

PIEDMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Veronica Andersen Thigpen, Board Member
Megan Pillsbury, Vice President

DATE: October 26, 2022

**RE: BOARD POLICY 0100- PHILOSOPHY, GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND
COMPREHENSIVE PLANS**

The school board has undertaken the task of updating a number of board policies. Since this summer, our focus has been on Board Policy 0100 Mission, Vision, and Core Values. This update will provide valuable information to those within and outside of our district about PUSD's unique attributes and goals, especially as we seek to hire a new superintendent. Not only will this offer a window into who we strive to be (our vision) and the work we undertake to reach it (our mission), it will reflect the needs of our students as they enter a world that differs a great deal from when we last updated this policy.

Board members met at special board workshops on July 14 and September 16 to create draft mission and vision statements, and a list of core values. On October 11 and October 19, we invited members of the school community to participate in public forums to offer feedback on these statements.

While it was our initial goal to have a first reading of a finalized policy at this meeting and vote to amend it at our November 9 meeting, we have determined that these important statements are worthy of greater time to complete a policy that is long lasting, clear, and a true reflection of our entire school community. To that end, the board will continue to meet beyond the initial deadline we had set for ourselves of November 9, and develop a policy that will not only encompass the board's design, but will include input gathered from our community of students, parents, and teachers. We will also include a clear definition of what we mean by Vision, Mission, and Core Values and how they relate to each other.

Next steps: The board will discuss a time and process for review of feedback and ways to input these into our draft policy.

We coalesced pages of input from each meeting which each board member will read in their entirety. From the two forums (more detailed notes attached from each), we found the following common takeaways:

Draft Vision:

Piedmont Unified School District students are:

- **Inspired to be courageous, equity-driven leaders.**
- **Inspired to think critically.**
- **Ready to take on challenges and make a difference.**

Workshop Takeaways:

- “Ready to take on challenges and make a difference” resonated the most with participants, along with “critical thinking”, “inspired”, and “equity”.
- Instead of a charge to become “leaders”, participants suggested ideas related to curiosity, creativity, life-long learning, responsibility, individuality, and being open to experiences different from their own to discover a strong sense of self and purpose.
- Add resilience, global citizens who are able to navigate a diverse, complex, and changing world.
- Simplify the statement to ensure a common understanding of terminology. A desire for greater specificity or definition of words that could have varied interpretations, such as “making a difference”, “courageous”, “equity driven”, “leaders”.

Draft Mission:

Piedmont Unified School District provides all students with an excellent education that includes a broad-based academic and social-emotional curriculum, delivered by exemplary staff in an environment that is caring, equitable, and inclusive.

Workshop Takeaways:

- An “educational environment that supports academic excellence and social emotional growth for all” resonated with many, as well as inclusive, equitable, excellent education, broad-based, social-emotional, and exemplary staff.
- Ideas that participants want to see represented are self-knowledge and awareness, empathy and compassion, rigor, and real-life skills.

- Participants proposed expanding “exemplary staff”, to include qualities such as caring, highly professional and well supported staff, who share with students a joy of learning and a world class education.
- A number suggested changes to wording, such as replacing passive words “provides” and “delivered” to something more active and child centered, such as foster, dedicated to, prepare. Also, greater clarity and specificity around the meaning of “broad-based”, “exemplary”, “excellent”, “equitable”, “environment”. And, an overall desire to simplify the mission statement.

Draft Core Values:

Our district embraces these core values in educational practice and operational strategy:

Integrity – We elevate honesty and ethics as the centerpiece of all that we do.

Equity – We foster a welcoming, inclusive environment where individuals are nurtured, where barriers to success are eliminated, and where everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential free from racism and other forms of inherent bias.

Academic Excellence – We aim to deliver outstanding academics that pave the way for all students to achieve mastery of content, media literacy, and cultural competency.

Growth-Mindset – We promote resilience, diligent work, and risk-taking as students advance along their learning journeys.

Curiosity – We encourage students to ask questions, explore their interests and talents, innovate, and find joy in life-long learning.

Community Partnership – We strive to create authentic and productive relationships among students, teachers, staff, administrators, families and community members who support the district’s mission and vision. We model collaboration, respect, and kindness.

Courage – We stand for taking action with purpose and resolve when doing the right thing on behalf of the public good may be difficult.

Workshop Takeaways:

- The core value that resonated most was “Integrity”, as well as equity, inclusion, curiosity, academic excellence, growth mindset, and media literacy.
- Ideas that participants want to see represented include resilience, confidence, empathy, courage, work ethic, adaptability, communication, cooperation, and ability to navigate the world, love of humanity outside of school.
- Other feedback included a suggestion for a glossary of terms, such as “growth mindset” and “media literacy”
- Some suggested paring down the list of seven to five or fewer.
- Though it is not supposed to be hierarchical, order does matter.
- Clarity about what the values should be and for whom.