Date: Mar 18, 2019

From: Adam Larsen, Assistant Superintendent

To: Board of Education

Cc: Thomas Mahoney, Superintendent

Re: March 2019 Board Report

PowerSchool EDGE Conference

I was asked to attend and present at PowerSchool's EDGE Conference in Orlando on Feb 25-27. This conference was intended to showcase the full array of offerings that the company has, including the student information system (SIS), enterprise resource planning (ERP—the business management software), learning management system (LMS), special education, and data warehouse and analytics. Specifically, they asked me to present a session on data visualization, which is one of my areas of expertise.

In this session, I shared some tools, techniques, and tips on how to pull data into dashboards that all stakeholders can use, including administrators, teachers, parents, and students. We use a front-end data visualization library called FusionCharts to do some of the tedious charting, but it still requires some technical know-how to bring the data up into the presentation layer. The session was well-attended, and I had many attendees who stayed after to ask questions and to obtain my contact information for further discussion.

I was also asked to participate in a panel discussion about how school leaders see the role of technology in the K-12 setting. This panel took place over lunch, so all 800 conference attendees were in the room, which made it the largest group I'd ever spoken in front of. They asked several questions of us, including how we have seen the role of the tech leader change in the past ten years, what the future of technology looks like, and how we might pay for ever-increasing needs when budgets are flat or decreasing.

This conference was also a great opportunity to network with some PowerSchool employees, as well as other customers and community members. One of my most interesting discussions was with PowerSchool's new director of artificial intelligence and machine learning. We actually met several years ago when she was in Oregon to conduct research focus groups for an entirely different project. PowerSchool has brought her in to lead their efforts in this area, and they have potential to do some very interesting things with data. One such project is similar to some of the early warning system work we are doing here, although on a much larger scale. While we use simple linear regression to identify students who might be at risk for dropping out of high school, they can use artificial intelligence and machine learning to mine millions of data points and make better predictions about disengagement and dropout risk. I will be paying very close attention to the developments in this area.

I also had the opportunity to meet Ken O'Connor for the first time. He is one of the leading voices in the current research about grading practices. He advocates for a standards-based approach, where we provide feedback to students that is tied directly back to their learning objectives and targets. His work informed the development of the gradebook that is embedded in PowerSchool (PowerTeacher Pro). When we were revising our standards-based grading

practices a few years ago, we used one of his books as the blueprint for supporting our decision making. His work is known the world over. I had interacted with him a few times in some online forums where these practices are discussed, but this was my first time meeting him in person. We had a good discussion about some of the other thinkers in this space and how his and their work can blend together to produce the best approaches.

Transformational Leadership Panel

With Ken O'Connor

Technology Training – Mobile Mind

As we look forward to the implementation of individual ("one-to-one") student devices, we have officially selected Mobile Mind to be our professional development provider. We recently met with their leadership team to develop a plan for training our teachers and preparing them for working with Chromebooks in the classroom. The current plan is that we will have two trainers on site for a total of four days. This will allow us to break the teachers and staff into multiple groups by job role and current skill level, so everyone can receive the exact training that they need. Teachers will receive the full Google Suite training plus Google Classroom, which is like a free learning management system. This will allow them to sit for the Google Certification exams. Instructional support staff (grade level aides, interventionists, etc.) will take the same set of training and will have the option to participate in the exams. Non-instructional staff will participate in the Google Suite training to enhance their skills in office productivity tools. While some staff have experience with these cloud-based tools, there has never been an intentional effort to train and support employees in using them. This was the only vendor we could find that would blend in-person workshops, online training, and an ongoing support structure into one package that would work for a diverse array of learners. Our intent is that this will allow us to use the Google Suite to make collaboration easier and more effective across all buildings and job roles.

Respectfully Submitted,

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