From: Adam Larsen, Assistant Superintendent

To: Board of Education

Cc: Thomas Mahoney, Superintendent

Re: March 2020 Board Report

Curriculum-Based Measurement Replacement

Since the 2009-2010 school year, we have used an assessment tool known as AIMSweb as a universal screening and progress monitoring tool for students in grades K-8.   The system uses short assessment instruments, called probes, to screen students for academic difficulties (usually three times per year) as well as monitor students frequently for growth in these areas (often up to once per week). One of the advantages of using a system such as AIMSweb is that the tools used for universal screening and progress monitoring are the same form with different content. When schools built their Response to Intervention (RtI) systems for early identification and intervention of learning difficulties, tools such as AIMSweb were an integral part.

After several years, AIMSweb has begun to move in a different direction with its assessment strategy, and it likely does not continue to meet our needs beyond the current school year. Pearson, AIMSweb's parent company, retired the version of AIMSweb that we had used since 2009, and the upgraded version has been marred with several problems that we would like to avoid. Thus, we are looking at moving to a different vendor for universal screening and progress monitoring. An early-emerging candidate is the FastBridge system. It has widespread adoption throughout the country and has been seen as a good replacement for AIMSweb. One interesting addition is the presence of social-emotional screening instruments that can be used to identify students who may need contact from counseling staff in order to support their wellbeing. This would be a welcome supplement to our approach to universal screening. We are continuing to consider this as an option as we explore other products that have similar use cases. We plan on having a decision made soon so we have plenty of time for training and implementation for this fall.

Kishwaukee College – Technology Apprenticeship Site

I serve on the advisory board for the Computer Information Systems department at Kishwaukee College in Malta. This group advises the department on trends in the information technology industry to they are preparing their students in the best way to be employable upon graduation. We have IT professionals and employers from several different fields, including education, medicine, and manufacturers, among others.

A common topic of discussion is how to bring students real-world IT experience that will show them what the workplace will be like when they start looking for jobs. This is to help students be ready for interviews, but it also help students identify weaknesses in their skillsets that must be enhanced prior to seeking full-time employment. As chair of the advisory group, I have asked on multiple occasions how internship sites are identified and advertised to the students, but it has been difficult to ascertain exactly how this part of the program is supposed to run. A large reason

for this has been the attrition (and lack of replacements) for full-time faculty in the department, as well as turnover and reconfiguration at the administrative level.

This seems to be changing, however, with the recent awarding of a federal grant. The US Department of Labor is pushing for more of these types of experiences for students across all disciplines, and some funding has been made available to hire coordinators who will oversee these programs. As this was being shared at our Fall 2019 advisory group meeting, I shared that Oregon CUSD would be a great site for these students. We are geographically quite close to Kish, and it is possible that students from the Oregon, Mt. Morris, Chana, or Rochelle areas might currently be studying IT at Kish. Some could even be OHS graduates. These students would be seeking internship opportunities as they complete their certificates or degrees, and we would be able to provide plenty of opportunities for students to learn about the field.

The grant coordinator is looking for two levels of participation in this project. Firstly, they are looking for employers to weigh in on the core competencies that students must have in order to be successful in the field. We have agreed to provide feedback on what we know to be the skills that are important in the K-12 context. Secondly, they are looking for sites where students can be assigned to work. Fortunately, the hours, pay, and terms of employment appear to be extremely flexible, so we are able to design an internship experience that not only benefits the student(s), but also benefits us as an employer who needs staffing in this area. When the coordinator recently visited OCUSD to discuss the logistics of this program, we were surprised to learn that the federal grant will actually pay part of the hourly rate of the student employee, which brings the cost of hiring down significantly. This could make having a student on site not only more attractive, but also something that we do continually as part of our normal practice.

A final benefit to being an internship site is that if and when we have openings for full-time employment in the department, we would have a list of known entities from which to hire. It is often difficult to attract qualified candidates when we have open positions, and this would allow us to reach out directly to students we have previously seen and ask them to apply. An apprenticeship model, where there is an expectation that student employment leads to full-time employment, may not always be possible for us. However, when an opening is anticipated, this could be an appropriate approach for us to take.

We have already begun work on our list of competencies to share with Kish. The technical and soft skills lists for an entry-level help desk position are shared below:

Help Desk Competencies

Technical Skills
- Understanding of and ability to replace PC components
- Domain (Active Directory) Management
  - Create accounts
  - Reset passwords
  - Add computers
  - Move computers to different groups
- Clear communication skills
  - Relay technical information to end users in simple terms

- Basic Troubleshooting skills
- Basic windows understanding
- Chromebook OS understanding
- Termination of Ethernet Cable ends
- Basic Networking understanding

Soft Skills
- Demonstrates empathy
- Ability to build relationships
- Listening skills
- Time/Self Management

Respectfully Submitted,

Adam P. Larsen
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