



Dr. Kephart's 100 Day Report

School District of Washington

2021-2022



Dear School District of Washington Community,

It is a privilege to serve as the superintendent for the SDOW, and I believe building relationships with leaders, teachers, parents, students, and the community is the foundation for transparency, growth, and support. I also believe in providing leadership and direction in the implementation of the District's strategic plan to include instructional transformation, innovation, system-wide enhancements, access and opportunity to district resources, data-informed decision making, and curricular alignment to the district, state, and federal programs.

Through my transition to the District and since the official beginning of my tenure as superintendent on July 1, 2021, I have been focused on the following goals:

- Ensure a seamless transition while building a productive and collaborative relationship with the Board of Education, the community, district staff, and students.
- Deepen learning on the history, current focus, and future needs of the District in order to gain insight into its strengths, challenges, and areas of improvement so we can best serve students.
- Learn how the District's initiatives and priorities are being implemented by the District's dedicated staff.
- Learn about the values, norms, and expectations of the supportive community to best serve students.
- Gain a better appreciation of how the District's initiatives and priorities are publicized and understood in the community.
- Energize all those with a stake in the outcomes of our schools in support of our shared vision, mission, values, and strategic plan.

The following 100-Day Report will highlight the many interactions, meetings, and events as well as my own analysis of the District's achievement, student demographics, and other data sets.

I am honored to have the opportunity to serve our School District of Washington and appreciate reporting my learning to our Board of Education and the greater community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Jennifer Kephart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Jennifer Kephart
Superintendent of Schools

Listening and Learning Process:

Throughout the spring, summer, and early fall of 2021, I met with more than 500 individuals including parents, community leaders, district-level and school-level leaders, teachers, and students to gather information about the current and future needs of the District. Those conversations have occurred through the following:

- Communicated with District staff during the 2021 Opening Ceremonies where the focus was on relationships, belonging, collaboration, and living out our mission by being Washington Strong.
- Met individually with each Board Member, building leader, and District leader focused on transitioning leadership and annual goal setting for 2021-2022.
- Completed at least four visits to all of our 7 elementary schools, middle school, and high school, as well as the Early Learning Center and Four Rivers Career Center.
- Met with over 200 parents and patrons throughout each of the school's Parent and Community Engagement events focused on gathering input, feedback, and perspectives on *Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Social Emotional Learning, and Workforce and Life Skill Readiness*.
- Introduced myself and presented a gift of appreciation to over 20 businesses and industries in the Washington community for supporting our students in workforce readiness.
- Created three Superintendent Advisory teams with over 50 parents, staff, and students to advise the Superintendent and District leadership on topics related to the strategic goals of the District.
- Presented District goals and action steps to over 250 teachers and staff members during individual school staff meetings this fall.
- Participated in formal and informal community events and volunteer activities including the WINGS Hall of Honor, Rotary Pancake Breakfast, WHS Hall of Fame Ceremony, WHS Band Festival, 353 Economic Development Council, Downtown Washington Art Festival, and Washington Town and Country Fair.

Overall Reflection:

Based on these meetings, I have learned that overall community sentiment to the School District is positive and supportive. Parents and patrons believe the School District to be a cornerstone of the community that continues to be recognized as one of the most desirable in our state. There is a strong foundation of collaboration and partnership with parents and the community to support the growth of the District. While there continues to be some divide in the community based on recent national events, it is clear that parents want to have an opportunity to have a voice in the education of their children. Nearly everyone I spoke with had a positive, personal story relative to volunteering and supporting District initiatives. Many of the District's parents and community members have been Washington graduates and know the value of the education that is provided in the District.



Opportunities for Growth:

Throughout these conversations, the following topics were mentioned as issues the District may be facing in future; growth, meeting the increasingly complex needs of our students, building trust through transparency with new leadership, ensuring the excellence of public education, and providing multiple preparation avenues for students after high school. Several community



members noted the importance placed on the academic and mental health gaps from COVID, as well as the desire to focus on a transparent education foundation for students. As an overall sentiment, the community believes that most students leave the District prepared based on their experiences with their own children, other children they know, and what is communicated from the District.

Expectations of the Superintendent:

The most common themes relative to what is expected of the superintendent were visibility, transparency, being a part of the community, and continuing the tradition of Blue Jay excellence. I appreciate the many conversations I have had to assist me in building a foundation from which to transition and engage deeper with our community.

Strengths:

Based on individual interviews, community meetings, and interactions, as well as school visits and data analysis, the District is blessed with the following strengths:

Student Performance-

- **Academic Performance:** Students in the School District of Washington continue to score above the state and/or national average on assessments. The School District of Washington prides itself on strong academic achievement and continually strives to increase student success by taking a forward-thinking approach by helping students develop specific course plans to align with their future goals and provide rich experiences through hands-on exploration courses, such as Project Lead the Way (PLTW) and the offerings at Four Rivers Career Center.
- **Student Offerings:** Washington High School offers over 165 courses to students, while also offering instructional programs through Four Rivers Career Center (FRCC) and Early College through East Central College. Among those courses offered, 28 include but are not limited to, Advanced Placement, Dual Credit, and 4 full career pathways providing introductory and advanced coursework in the following areas:
 - Industrial, Manufacturing, Engineering, and Transportation
 - Biomedical Sciences
 - Business, Information Technology, and Media
 - Human Services



- **Early Learning Focus:** Our Early Learning Center is home to three different programs: Parents as Teachers is a free program that features a personal visiting model, screenings, group connections, and resources to pregnant women and families with children from birth through kindergarten that reside in our District. The center also serves preschool students through a tuition-based program for children (2 to 5 years old) as well as an Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) program.

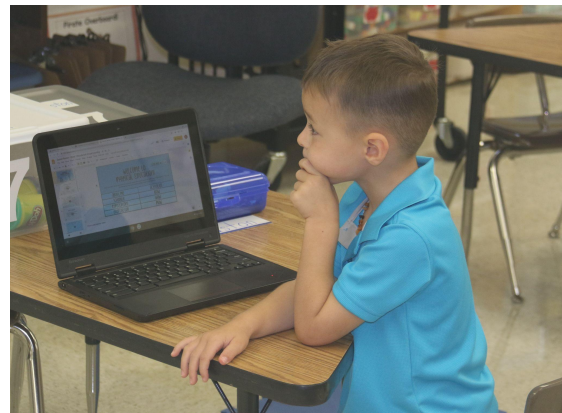
- **Resource Alignment:** The School District of Washington takes a systematic approach to learning by implementing strong curricular resources throughout the District with the appropriate spiraling of content for maximum success. This year the District implemented new English Language Arts resources designed to tailor instruction to meet the diverse

needs of each learner and is currently reviewing math resources for implementation next year.

- **Professional Development and Instructional Support:** The focus for this year's district-wide professional development is on Professional Learning Communities. This process allows teachers and administrators to focus on the whole child through discussions centered around specific data to help ensure we are meeting the needs of each child. Additionally, the School District of Washington has instructional coaches providing continuous professional development and support by working one-on-one with teachers, sending out short videos, and offering sessions on a variety of topics throughout the year based on feedback gathered from staff members.
- **Online Learning:** Over 450 of our 2020-2021 e-Learning students have returned to our campuses as in-person learners this year. Approximately 80 SDOW students are enrolled and doing well in our e-Learning program this year. Our alternative education teachers at WHS are also successfully using online courses to aid students in the credit recovery process.

Student Support-

- **Innovative Experiences:** The School District of Washington provides innovative experiences for students in preparation for life after high school through exposure and exploration opportunities such as the 6th Grade B.U.I.L.D. (Building Unique and Innovative Learning Design) Academy, Project Lead The Way in grades 6th-12th, Middle School exploratory wheel, and Washington High School EPIC (Exploring Pathways, Interests, and Careers).





- Apprenticeships: After a successful launch of our Registered Youth Apprenticeship Program last year, we are in the process of academically vetting our students in 8 pathway areas by incorporating industry-standard essential skills. FRCC is also working with the Department of Labor to add additional opportunities for apprenticeship pathways for our community employment.
- Intervention Support: The School District of Washington currently provides intervention support for struggling students focusing on the specific skills or areas of focus needed for each student ranging from

behavior and social/emotional support to academic support.

- Student Support and Well-Being Training: The School District of Washington creates a space where students belong by using established resources like Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), R.O.C.K. Character Education, Restorative Practices, and Trauma-Informed Practices. Initiatives like these support our students by ensuring they develop resilience, problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and empathy.

Employee Focus-

- Skilled Workforce: The School District of Washington has a highly qualified workforce to support our 3,626 students. We have 388 certified employees and 239 classified employees. Our certified staff has an average of 10.33 years of service with our support staff being 9.59 years. Over the last 3 school years, the District has retained an average of 91.5% of staff.
- Total compensation package: The District strives to be competitive in salary and benefits with other area districts. We continually review compensation packages compared to data from our county, neighboring counties, and the St. Louis region. This annual process in collaboration with our teacher organizations partnership continues to result in annual enhancement recommendations to the Board of Education. Our average teacher salary is \$51,423.53.
- Partnership: The District has established a collaborative structure in order to create a supportive and transparent environment related to employee compensation and workplace conditions. This collaboration between executive administration and our teacher organizations MSTA and MNEA is ongoing throughout the school year.



Parent and Community Partnerships-

- **High Parent Involvement:** Every school in the District has a strong PTO partnership along with area business partners to support learning in the classroom. Outside of the pandemic, parent and community members volunteer with Shine By Nine and other classroom opportunities to support students' growth.
- **Students Prepared to Learn:** Parents value the importance of in-person learning as highlighted by an average daily attendance of 91.87% throughout our elementaries, middle, and high school.
- **Business Partnerships:** All programs at FRCC host advisory committee meetings throughout the year to provide feedback on employment trends, the newest technology, and curriculum adaptations. They also discuss apprenticeships and other experiences for students and staff of FRCC and the District.
- **WINGS Educational Foundation:** Washington's Investment in Great Schools is a non-profit educational foundation dedicated to enhancing educational excellence in all of the District schools by providing funding for classroom grants and student scholarships. WINGS has a healthy budget as well as a \$1.3 million endowment to continue supporting the students and staff of the District.



Governance-

- **Top-Quality Facilities:** The School District of Washington recently opened South Point Elementary. South Point Elementary is a state-of-the-art building that provides flexible learning opportunities and advanced technology and safety features. The District continues to invest in the Four Rivers Career Center as it has become a top-quality facility for career and technical students in Washington and surrounding districts.
- **Planned Maintenance:** The School District of Washington is currently in year three of a five-year planned maintenance program. Included in the plan are rotations for HVAC replacement and roof repair. Also included are gym floor replacement, servers and switches, vehicle replacement, paving, carpeting, security cameras, instructional equipment, and copier rotations. Special projects in the plan include football field turf replacement, tuckpointing projects, locker room renovations, as well as a number of smaller projects.



- Strong Financial Position: The School District of Washington ended the fiscal year 2021 with an unrestricted fund balance of \$20,333,900.91. This is a fund balance of 41.49%. As compared to other districts in the state, the District is heavily funded through local tax dollars. The local tax base continues to grow as does the District's assessed valuation. The support of local tax revenue makes the District less reliant on the instability of state and federal funds.
- Safety Focus: The School District of Washington recently completed the construction of secured entry vestibules at each school building. The District also implemented a visitor screening program to monitor outside visitors. The District partners with the City of Washington to provide School Resource Officers at the buildings. The District safety coordinators attend regional and state training and work closely with local law enforcement and first responders for regular drills and training. The District recently participated in a Highway Transit Baseline Assessment for Security Enhancement Review with the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration.
- Quality Board of Education: The Board of Education collectively has more than 40 years of service to the District. Three board members have achieved additional certifications of Advanced or higher. In 2018, the Board of Education was recognized by the Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA) as an Outstanding Board of Education. For the past four years, the Board of Education has earned the MSBA Governance Award for their commitment to ongoing professional development, regional and statewide leadership, and legislative advocacy on behalf of the students they serve.

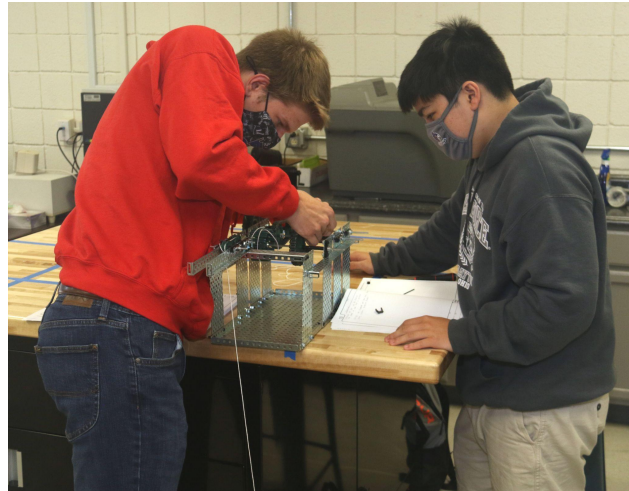


Immediate Commitments and Goals:

As a District, our short-term goals include the following four Goals and Action steps in addition to the continued focus on relationship building, partnerships, and transparency.

Increase student achievement and support:

- Monthly learning will occur with building and district leaders focused on increasing instructional leadership capacity in the four goal areas.
- A representative team of leaders, teachers, and instructional coaches will convene to review current assessments, align assessment needs, and develop future plans for the utilization of data throughout the District. The team will work to complete the Strategic Plan Scorecard.
- A Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning will be established to provide structured intervention for students.
- The District Strategic Scorecard will be completed for the District and each building in order to monitor progress on district and state goals.



Ensure a culture of belonging:

- A representative communication team will be created to showcase the District's culture of belonging through an updated communication plan. The team will focus on the utilization of social media platforms, district pride, branding, and other aligned topics to ensure a unified message.
- Increased opportunities will be provided for internal and external input through the re-establishment of advisory teams. Parent and student advisory teams will meet three times a year with the Superintendent. Staff opportunities for input will occur through semi-annual *School-Site All Staff Message* meetings, teacher/staff advisory, and regular feedback sessions with various internal employees.
 - A Social-Emotional Learning needs assessment will be completed in order to establish a systemic plan for the wellness structure of implementation throughout the District. The plan will focus on the well-being and mental health needs of students as well as training for staff to support a positive classroom culture of belonging.
 - A Parent Summit Series will provide learning opportunities for our families focused on the theme of belonging in the areas of academic, behavior, and social-emotional development.



Expand innovative practices and workforce connections:

- A representative team will explore the use of an “interest-based” or “career” language to promote career and pathways alignment throughout the District and community.
- A BUILD academy experience will be provided for all 6th-grade students in the District.
- A representative team will convene to establish an added high school diploma for students that increase their employability experiences via Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP), internships, client-based projects, industry-recognized credentials, and/or other marketable skills.
- Additional opportunities will be provided for teachers to experience local business and industry through the Pathways program.
- There will be an increase in business and industry partnerships to support the expansion of workforce connections in the community. Recognition of these partnerships will occur through a district window cling which signifies participation and appreciation.
- A long-range plan will be revisited to include a focus on updating other facilities to future-ready learning spaces.

Engage staff in meaningful, professional learning and quality District support:

- A focus on professional development in the area of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) will establish a structure and culture for the utilization of data and student work to drive instruction and personalized learning.
- A staff survey will be created to measure and monitor classified and certified staff satisfaction, connection, and growth in the District.
- A staff recognition program will be reestablished to highlight the accomplishments of classified and certified employees.
- The District will maintain competitive compensation and benefits packages for all employee groups while attracting, retaining, and growing the human capital of the District.

Long-term Commitments:

- Maintaining our District tradition of excellence.
- Continuing to partner with our local parochial schools to expand opportunities for all of our students in preparation for life after high school.
- Address the facilities needs in relation to future growth in the District.
- Enhance and maintain a robust digital environment for all students.
- Continue to provide aligned instructional resources.
- Utilize data to drive instructional practices focused on individual student needs.
- Provide structured intervention for academic, social-emotional, and behavior needs of individual students.
- Partner with parents to enhance life skill readiness.
- Partner with area business and industry to align academic learning and essential workforce skills.



Summary:

We are all fortunate to live in a community that places a high value on the quality of our children’s public education. The level of engagement and support from our parents and our community benefits our students every day. My commitment to the School District of Washington is building on the rich foundation and providing continuous improvement in all areas. I am looking forward to continuing to work with our District leaders, our staff, families, and the community to implement this vision for our schools.

As a representative for the School District of Washington internally and externally, my expectations are to provide service, care, and transparency for staff, families, and the community. In alignment with the mission of the District, I am committed to the engagement and customization of learning for each student.

It is my desire to ensure each student has an opportunity to explore their career passions and interests through experiences in our businesses and industries prior to graduating from Washington High School. This includes exposure for elementary students to learn about their individual passions and skills, exploration of career pathways in middle school, and providing multiple opportunities during high school for students to experience essential workforce skills within the community. We know the value of partnering with our parents and our workforce to create opportunities for the future of the District. Our students deserve the best every day, and I am convinced that we have a strong foundation in place to be successful which enhances our rich traditions and becomes a model of partnership and innovation.

Washington
STRONG



Washington STRONG

Our Mission is to inspire achievement, character, and personal growth in all students as they pursue and succeed in college, careers, and life.

We care. We contribute. We Learn.

We ARE Washington.



School District of Washington

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