



Ferndale

2002-2007

Public Schools

RESTRUCTURING

EVALUATION



**A Five-Year Evaluation
Of the Restructuring
Of the
Ferndale Public Schools
2002-2007**

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FINAL REPORT:

Final report was created by King, L. and Morales, M. under the supervision of Boyd, C. and Young, A.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2001, Ferndale Public Schools initiated plans for a large-scale reorganization of the school district for the purposes of achieving long-term financial stability and improved student performance. This change entailed consolidating the existing neighborhood-based school system to a grade-level, center-based system and reconfiguring the facilities and staff infrastructure to support the new system. After months of detailed research, planning and community debate, the restructuring of the Ferndale Public Schools occurred in the Fall of 2002 resulting in the division of the district into its current configuration: Preschool Early Education Center, Roosevelt Primary School (K-3), Coolidge Intermediate School (4-6), John F. Kennedy School (K-6), Ferndale Middle School (7-8), Ferndale High School (9-12) and University High School (9-12). An ongoing, formative evaluation assessed the restructuring process through the transition, with special attention to how the new system was being marketed and received, how parents and the community were experiencing the transition, and how human resource and policy changes were being handled throughout the change. These evaluative updates were routinely provided by the Superintendent to the FPS School Board. Baseline data were also collected for a long-term, summative evaluation to be completed at the end of a five year transition process (2002-2007) under the supervision of Mr. Scott Crawford (Survey Sciences Group, LLC) and Dr. Carol Boyd, a professor at the University of Michigan and an alumna of FPS (Class of 1970).

The purpose of the five-year summative evaluation report is to analyze the impact of the restructuring on student performance, student perceptions of their school's performance, and student health and social behaviors. The original goals of the restructuring process included stabilized enrollment, a 3% reduction in the drop-out rate, improved MEAP scores, ongoing

follow-up of at-risk students, and declines in alcohol and drug use among students. After five years, it is evident that the restructuring process has been successful as evidenced by the attainment of the majority of these objectives.

The trajectory of the evaluation outcomes as reported annually most resembles a check mark: an initial sharp decline followed by steady improvements over the next four years. Immediately following the restructuring process, we witness pronounced decreases in nearly every domain measured, including school and social functioning. Early in the restructuring process, students reported feeling less positive about their school mascot and colors, less confident in their school's academic and college/life preparation, and less pleased with their school overall. The number of students skipping school increased, more middle and high school students reported past 30 day use of alcohol, and more of the 5th and 6th graders got into physical fights.

By 2005, student perceptions of how their school was doing increased and in most cases excelled all previous ratings.

However, by 2004, this trend began to reverse, and the evidence shows gradual improvements in student perceptions of their school and classroom, as well as improvements in their health and social behaviors. By 2005, student perceptions of how their school was doing increased, and in most cases, exceeded previous ratings. By 2007, data clearly suggest that not only has the school district regained the declines experienced in the immediate aftermath of the restructuring, but in most areas it has surpassed the baseline ratings of 2002.

In conclusion, the overall picture of the school district is that of a higher performing district in which students are happier, feel greater allegiance to their school, have more faith in what their

school can do, and are healthier and less likely to engage in delinquent behaviors. This upward trajectory (or downward, in the case of negative behaviors) is clearly visible in the student responses. For example, students reported a continual increase in their positive feelings about their school academics, athletics, preparation for college and school experiences. Their feelings about music and fine arts spiked high in 2005 when the Marching Band won its second straight state championship; and the athletics rose with the completion of the new facilities at the Pinecrest Campus.

There remain areas of concern to be addressed. Between 2006 and 2007, students of all age groups reported feeling less safe coming to and from school. And, although students' perceptions of how their school is doing ranked at an all-time high in 2007, and students report feeling positively about classroom environment, class size, and choice of electives, there is evidence that some forms of sexual harassment, hitting, and bullying have not diminished over the five-year evaluation period, and that some forms of harassment (e.g., ethnic/racial harassment) may be increasing. We recommend the district further evaluate these results.

Finally, the data present an overall positive picture of improvements across a range of areas, suggesting that the restructuring of the Ferndale Public Schools has resulted in better learning environments, higher levels of satisfaction and school pride, and improvements in the health and well-being of the student population.