



# UPDATE ON MOUNT VERNON SCHOOL DISTRICT'S PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUTHNET

Report to the Mount Vernon School District Board of Directors

March 4, 2020



# History

- The current Youthnet agency was formed in 1969 and incorporated under the name Skagit Youth Group Homes.
- In 1976, they opened Skagit Alternative School.
- Initially intended to serve students residing in group care, they expanded to serve students from other school districts in Skagit County.
- During the 1980s and 1990s, local Skagit County districts began to establish their own alternative learning programs for high school students.
- Currently, all Skagit County K-12 districts, with the exception of LaConner and Mount Vernon, serve their high school students who require alternative education in their own district ALE programs.
- Over the past 15 years, Emerson has annually served between 80 and 125 Mount Vernon students. We currently have approximately 75 students placed at Emerson.
- We have negotiated increases to our per student rate several times over the past 16 years, most recently in June 2019.

# Current Reality

- Over the past several years, we have begun to create alternative learning options for our high school students. This has been motivated by:
  - Our desire to retain ownership over our students' teachers, attendance, instruction, curriculum, and assessment.
  - Our goal to create a continuum of alternative learning opportunities.
  - The increasing cost of student placement at Emerson, which now approximates the cost of operating our own program.
- We have shared this goal with Youthnet administration and Board members over the years, while saying that we believed Emerson could remain part of our ALE continuum.

# Recent Developments

- On November 15, 2019, Joy Walton Kawasaki and I met with Emerson Principal, Ross Baker and Youthnet Director, Carla Arnold.
- We proposed assuming responsibility for operating Emerson, while contracting Youthnet for wraparound counseling and social work services. Bringing Emerson teachers on as district employees would have the benefit of increasing their salaries significantly.
- Ross and Carla shared that they planned to apply to the state to become a charter school serving students in grades 6-12. Their rationale was that this would potentially draw students from other school districts without requiring their resident district's approval. The grade band has since been modified to grades K-9.
- If granted charter school status in April, Ross and Carla indicated they would use the 2020-21 school year to plan for the transition.
- I shared that, if they did gain charter status, we would continue to contract with them during 2020-21. If not, we would want to revisit the possibility of assuming operational responsibility for Emerson.