



Success, Achievement, Together ... for All Students

May 25, 2017

TO: Larry Deibel, Board Chair
Sheridan School District

Dr. Steve Sugg, Superintendent
Sheridan School District

FROM: Dr. Dave Novotney, Superintendent *DEN*
Willamette Education Service District

RE: **Results of Investigation – Complaints Filed by Travis & Laycee Grauer**

I have completed my investigation into the four (4) complaints filed by Travis and Laycee Grauer with the Sheridan School District Board of Directors. As you know, all four of the complaints are related to Faulconer-Chapman School (FCS) and focus on concerns related to the student learning environment at the school, the overall climate and culture of the school, student discipline and student safety related issues.

As you recall, the Board of Directors took action at their April Board meeting to hire a neutral, third-party person to investigate the complaints. On April 24th, Dr. Steve Sugg met with me to assess my level of interest in conducting the investigation on behalf of your school district. I agreed to do so and Dr. Sugg provided me with copies of the complaint documents and other supporting materials. I confirmed my willingness to conduct the investigation on behalf of your district in a memo dated April 24th (see Exhibit A, pages 9-14).

The following report summarizes my investigation into this matter. I have included a brief summary of the information I used in making my determinations and provided a summary of my findings for each complaint. I have also provided a series of recommendations that the District may want to consider as you move forward.

Note: There is no cost to the Sheridan School District for my services related to conducting this investigation. In this particular case, the Willamette ESD will pay the full cost of conducting the investigation so that your District has more funds available to support the students, teachers and staff at Faulconer-Chapman School.

Information Gathering Process:

Interviews - I conducted face-to-face interviews with the following fifteen (15) individuals as part of my investigation. Interviews were conducted on April 27th and May 4th in Sheridan, Oregon.

- Travis Grauer, Complainant and Parent
- Laycee Grauer, Complainant and Parent
- Mason Grauer, FCS Student
- Caleb Grauer, FCS Student
- Dave Kline, FCS Principal
- Ryan Sticka, FCS Associate Principal
- Karen Swinkles, FCS Counselor
- Adam DeLatte, FCS Instructional Coach
- John Taylor, FCS Instructional Coach
- Danielle Dickey, FCS Secretary
- Tiffany Wertz, FCS Kitchen Staff and Classified Union President
- Wendy Giddings, Former FCS Employee
- Mary Krick, Former FCS Employee
- Carrie Meeker, Parent and Volunteer
- April Bell, Parent and Volunteer

NOTE: All of the individuals listed on the official complaint forms (the ones submitted to the District) were interviewed as a part of this investigation.

Consultations – I consulted with the following seven (7) individuals as part of my investigation (face-to-face or via telephone).

- Dr. Steve Sugg, Superintendent
- Emily Nazarov, Oregon Department of Education
- Shawna Moran, Oregon Department of Education
- Keith Ussery, Deputy Superintendent, WESD
- Dr. Robin DeLoach, Project Director, WESD
- Gretchen Brunner, Coordinator, WESD
- Carol Larson, Coordinator, WESD

NOTE: The outgoing school improvement coach for FCS declined to consult with me on this investigation.

Classroom Observations – A total of twenty (20) classroom observations were conducted at Faulconer-Chapman School. Eight (8) observations were conducted on April 29th by Keith Ussery, Deputy Superintendent of the Willamette ESD, and an additional twelve (12) observations were conducted on May 1st by Gretchen Brunner, a Coordinator in the School Improvement Department at the Willamette ESD.

Documents – The documents I reviewed as part of my investigation include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The four (4) original complaints (plus all supporting documents) submitted to the Board of Directors
- Sheridan School District Board Policies with a focus on...
 - Board Policy KL – Public Complaints
 - Board Policy KL-AR – Public Complaint Procedure
 - Board Policy JF/JFA – Student Rights and Responsibilities
 - Board Policy JFC – Student Conduct
 - Board Policy JG – Student Discipline
 - Board Policy IA – Instructional Goals
 - Board Policy IMR – Student Achievement Program
 - Board Policy IMR-AR – Student Achievement Program
- Building level student achievement data (multiple years)
- Individual student achievement data (provided by parents)
- Building level student discipline data (multiple years)
- Building level discipline matrix (current version)
- FCS Comprehensive Achievement Plan (as of April 26, 2017)
- Sheridan School District Board Packet (April 19, 2017)
- Building level student wellness survey data (2016)
- Culture and climate survey data (2017)
- Multiple notebooks containing additional information

All of the documents listed above have been returned to the Sheridan School District including my interview notes, the audio recordings of all fifteen (15) interviews and the notes from the twenty (20) classroom observations.

Findings:

In the following paragraphs, I will summarize the results of my investigation into Travis and Laycee Grauer's complaints.

Complaint #1 - The complainants allege that the learning environment at Faulconer-Chapman School has deteriorated to the point that some students are unable to receive a quality education. Specifically, they believe that academic learning within the school is impeded due to the disruptive behaviors carried out by a relatively small number of students. They allege that disruptive students often cause classroom teachers to stop teaching to the entire class in order to correct the students' behaviors. They report that this type of disruption (relatively mild at times and significant at other times) occurs on a relatively regular basis. They also report that some staff are not very effective in preventing or correcting student misbehavior and that the teaching and learning environment, at times, has been disrupted for lengthy periods of time.

Over the course of the year, the complainants believe students have lost a significant amount of instructional time due to these disruptive behaviors. They also report that a Language Arts teacher resigned from her position shortly after the start of the school. Due to the difficulty the District had in finding a permanent replacement (as well as qualified substitute teachers), students enrolled in those classes lost approximately three (3) months of instruction.

Findings: Although the majority of teachers at FCS have well-developed classroom management skills and maintain an appropriate teaching and learning environment in their classrooms, it is clear that some teachers struggle in this area of their professional practice. Classroom observations, interview data, student discipline data and student survey data all support the conclusion that, at times, the learning environment for students in various classes at FCS was compromised as the result of disruptive student behavior. The data I reviewed indicates that the overall teaching and learning environment in these classrooms need improvement.

One of the most impactful and revealing pieces of data I reviewed during the course of this investigation was from the School Culture and Climate Survey that was administered to students in 3rd through 8th grades (April of 2017). When asked if "students in my class behave so that teachers can teach," only 31% of the students answered ALWAYS or OFTEN. 69% of the students answered SOMETIMES or NEVER. Clearly, this type of response is concerning and, overall, reflects a learning environment at FCS that is not meeting the needs of a significant number of students.

In addition, it was discovered that students enrolled in Language Arts (the classes associated with the teacher who resigned early in the school year) received ineffective instruction for approximately 30 school days or 17.3% of the school year due to many teacher changes. There is agreement among all parties on this issue and the Sheridan School District will provide students with an opportunity to make up the missed instructional time.

Complaint #2 and #4 - In their second complaint, Travis and Laycee Grauer allege that the school climate at Faulconer-Chapman School has deteriorated to the point that some students are unable to receive a quality education in a safe and motivating environment.

In their fourth complaint, the Grauer's express their concerns related to student safety issues at FCS. For the purpose of this report, I have decided to address both issues (the concerns outlined in complaint #2 and #4) in this section of the report. In my opinion, the two issues are interconnected so it makes sense to address them together rather than separately.

Essentially, the Grauer's believe that FCS is no longer a welcoming place for students, staff and visitors. They expressed concerns about the school environment being chaotic and have seen an increase in poor student behavior not only in classrooms but in the hallways, common areas and while students are outside at recess. They also expressed their concerns regarding an increase in student discipline referrals as well as a significant increase in the number of student referrals related to defiance/insubordination and physical aggression.

Findings: Interview data, student discipline data and student survey data support the conclusion that the overall school climate at FCS needs improvement.

The School Culture and Climate Survey that was administered to students in 3rd through 8th grades (April of 2017) shows that only 32% of students feel that students treat each other well. In addition, the Oregon Student Wellness Survey that was administered to FCS 6th grade students last spring (2016) shows that 17% of students (now 7th grade students at FCS) reported not going to school one or more times in the past 30 days because they felt unsafe. 46% of these same students reported being harassed in the 30 days prior to taking the survey last spring. Clearly, these types of responses are concerning and, overall, reflects a school climate at FCS that needs improvement.

There is no doubt that student discipline referrals have increased at FCS last year and remain at a high level this year as compared to other K-8 groups of students in Yamhill County (see Exhibit B, page 15) and in similar size school districts within the Willamette ESD region (see Exhibit C, page 16). While discipline referrals have increased in the past two years, this is not entirely unusual given the change in school leadership and a different discipline philosophy. Recent trend data, however, seems to indicate that the numbers are coming back down for the two most recent months.

Increases in referrals for physical aggression and insubordination are also well documented. More analysis is needed to determine whether or not the increase in these types of referrals is due to:

- A change in how student behavior is coded in the student discipline tracking system
- An actual change in student behavior, or
- A combination of both of these issues and/or other factors.

Complaint #3 – The complainants allege that the discipline matrix that was implemented at Faulconer-Chapman School in February of 2017 was vague, confusing, failed to address cyber-bullying and was not followed with fidelity.

Findings: Interview data and student survey data support the conclusion that the discipline matrix is effective overall. The discipline matrix used at FCS is similar to the discipline system utilized by a number of school districts in Oregon. In addition, the School Culture and Climate Survey that was administered to students in 3rd through 8th grades (April of 2017) shows that 74% of students feel that the school has clear rules for student behavior. I was unable to verify the claim that the discipline matrix was not followed with fidelity.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are provided for your consideration as you continue your improvement efforts at Faulconer-Chapman School.

1. Staff at FCS need to consistently enforce all rules established by the school related to student behavioral expectations.

Rationale: Although the majority of staff enforce the established school rules, there are numerous examples of staff members who do not consistently enforce them. When some employees decide to not enforce the school rules, it creates unnecessary confusion for students, creates an opportunity for select students to use the inconsistency in enforcement to their personal advantage and can create unnecessary conflict between staff and students when staff members try and enforce the rules.

2. FCS administration need to focus on processing discipline referrals in a timely manner. A system needs to be implemented to ensure this happens consistently, even when the administrator who is primarily responsible for student discipline is out of the office.

Rationale: The high volume of student referrals at FCS creates a heavy workload for staff, especially the Associate Principal who is primarily responsible for handling student discipline issues. At times, primarily when the Associate Principal is out of the office, not enough administrative or staff time is devoted to covering his discipline duties which creates a backlog of referrals and a situation where student behavior is not corrected in a timely manner. As you know, correcting student misbehavior is most effective when a caring, yet firm, adult counsels the student as soon after the infraction as possible. When necessary, they also administer consequences as soon after the incident as possible. There were numerous occasions when student misbehavior was not followed up on in a timely manner.

Any substantial delay in correcting inappropriate student behavior significantly lowers the likelihood that students will learn from their misbehavior.

3. Certain teachers at FCS need the opportunity to participate in high quality (and ongoing) professional development related to improving their classroom management skills. These teachers would also benefit from having a mentor or instructional coach work with them periodically in their classroom to model appropriate classroom management practices, provide feedback, etc. Going forward, FCS should consider providing the same type of high quality classroom management training and support to all new teachers as well as all probationary teachers.

Rationale: Although the majority of teachers at FCS have well-developed classroom management skills, it is clear that a few teachers struggle in this area of their professional practice. Student learning was significantly diminished in classrooms where teachers did not demonstrate adequate classroom management skills.

4. FCS administration should explore the possibility of hiring a behavior consultant to work with and support the staff at FCS. They should also consider hiring a consultant to support the school with PBIS implementation.

Rationale: Student discipline data shows that a relatively small number of students at FCS are responsible for a large number of discipline referrals. A behavior consultant could provide training and additional support to help FCS staff improve the behaviors of these students. A PBIS consultant could assist with the refinement of the schoolwide PBIS implementation plan and enhance the overall effectiveness of the program.

5. FCS administration should consider the possible expansion of the successful Oregon RTI model at the school. This effort was championed by school administration and the day-to-day management of the effort was led by Adam DeLatte, Instructional Coach.

Rationale: Although the effort to reemphasized the Oregon RTI model at FCS is still in its early stages, the results thus far appear to be very encouraging. School administration should consider the feasibility of expanding the program further, including the implementation of an early warning system and expansion of the RTI process to include discipline. Based on my review of the student achievement data for FCS for the last four years, it appears that the implementation of the Oregon RTI model (and the support it received from school administration and staff) may be one of the most effective programs implemented during this time period to improve student achievement at FCS.

6. FCS administration, in collaboration with Dr. Sugg, should consider creating a three (3) year strategic vision for the school that clearly outlines the steps the school will take to improve student academic achievement as well as improve the overall school climate and student learning environment. The document should clearly indicate the goals the school will achieve by the Fall of 2020 and specifically identify the financial resources needed to achieve that vision.

Rationale: During the course of this investigation, I was unable to locate a document that clearly showed all of the efforts currently underway to improve student academic achievement and the overall teaching and learning environment at FCS. To be clear, information was available but not in an organized, coherent manner that would clearly show the reader the specific steps being taken to improve the school. This is an oversight in my opinion. The staff and administration are doing some excellent work to improve student achievement and your key stakeholders (students, parents and community members) would benefit from understanding the direction you have outlined for FCS and the goals you expect the school to achieve by the Fall of 2020.

7. FCS administration, in collaboration with Dr. Sugg, should consider creating a comprehensive communication plan for the school to improve the level (and consistency) of communication provided to your key stakeholders. The plan should also focus on soliciting feedback from your key stakeholders on the overall improvement efforts you have identified for FCS.

Rationale: A well implemented and thoughtful communication plan will help FCS build community support for their improvement efforts.

Conclusion:

As you know, there is a great deal of passion and intensity surrounding the complaints filed with the Board of Directors related to these issues. In my opinion, this passion and intensity is reflective of individuals who care deeply about the students and staff at Faulconer-Chapman School, the District and the community as a whole. During the course of my investigation, I have been impressed with the tremendous commitment I have seen on the part of parents, staff and school administrators to improve the school. It is clear to me that everyone wants the very best for the students who attend FCS.

Embedded in this complaint process is an opportunity to unite people behind a common goal and to solicit the community's support of FCS and the Sheridan School District. I encourage all parties to take advantage of this opportunity.



Exhibit A

April 24, 2017

TO: Larry Deibel, Board Chair
Sheridan School District

Steve Sugg, Ed.D., Superintendent
Sheridan School District

FROM: Dave Novotney, Ph.D., Superintendent
Willamette ESD

RE: Complaint Investigation

I am writing to confirm that I have agreed to conduct an investigation into four (4) complaints filed with your school district under Board Policy KL, related to Public Complaints and KL-AR related to Public Complaint Procedure. I met with Superintendent Sugg earlier today to receive copies of the complaint documents and supporting materials.

The timeline for completing the investigation is relatively short but I have committed to completing the majority of the interviews with the complainants and other identified individuals by the end of this week (if the individuals are available to be interviewed this week). My goal is to complete my investigation and submit my findings to you during the week of May 8-12. I will also arrange to meet with you personally but I do need to advise you that I will be out of the state during the week of May 15-19.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns

Attachments:

Board Policy KL – Public complaints
Board Policy KL-AR – Public Complaint Procedure

Sheridan School District 48J

Code: **KL**
Adopted: 1/17/07
Revised/Readopted: 4/18/12; 8/19/15; 3/16/16
Orig. Code(s): KL

Public Complaints

The district will develop and implement effective means of resolving concerns voiced by employees, students and the public in order to reduce potential areas of complaints and to establish and maintain recognized channels of communication.

The Board advises the public that the proper process for resolving complaints is as follows:

1. Teacher/Employee;
2. Principal;
3. Superintendent;
4. Board.

If your complaint addresses one or more of the issues identified below, you may use the complaint process available in any of the following policies and administrative regulations (AR):

1. Discrimination or harassment on any basis protected by law: Board policy AC, AC-AR;
2. Sexual harassment (staff): Board policy GBN, GBN-AR;
3. Sexual harassment (student): Board policy JBA, JBA-AR;
4. Hazing, harassment, intimidation, bullying, menacing or cyberbullying (staff): Board policy GBNA, GBNA-AR;
5. Hazing, harassment, intimidation, bullying, menacing, cyberbullying, domestic violence or teen dating violence: Board policy JFCF, JFCF-AR;
6. Sexual conduct with students: Board policy JHFF, JHFF-AR;
7. Instructional resources or instructional materials: Board policy IIA, IIA-AR;
8. Compliance with state standards: LGA, LGA-AR.

Any complaint about school personnel other than the superintendent will be investigated by the administration before consideration and action by the Board. The Board will not hear complaints against employees in a session open to the public unless an employee requests an open session.

Public Complaints - KL

1-2

A complaint of retaliation against a student or a student's parent who in good faith reported information that the student believes is evidence of a violation of state and federal law, rule or regulation, should be reported to the administrator.

Complaints against the principal may be filed with the superintendent.

Complaints against the superintendent should be referred to the Board chair, on behalf of the Board.

Complaints against the Board as a whole or against an individual Board member should be made to the Board chair on behalf of the Board.

Complaints against the Board chair may be made directly to the Board vice chair on behalf of the Board.

The superintendent will develop and administer the general complaint process.

If a complaint alleges a violation of state standards or a violation of other statutory or administrative rule for which the State Superintendent of Public Instruction has appeal responsibilities, and the complaint is not resolved at the local level, the district will supply the complainant with appropriate information to file a direct appeal to the State Superintendent as outlined in Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 581-022-1940.

END OF POLICY

Legal Reference(s):

ORS 192.610 to -192.690
ORS 332.107

OAR 581-022-1940
OAR 581-022-1941

House Bill (HB) 3371 (2015)

Anderson v. Central Point Sch. Dist., 746 F.2d 505 (9th Cir. 1984).
Connick v. Myers, 461 U.S. 138 (1983).

Cross Reference(s):

IIA - Instructional Resources/Instructional Materials

Public Complaint Procedure

Initiating a Complaint: Step One

Any member of the public who wishes to express a complaint should discuss the matter with the school employee involved.

The Administrator: Step Two

If the complainant is unable to resolve a problem or concern at step one, within five working days of the meeting with the employee, the complainant may file a written, signed complaint with the principal. The principal shall evaluate the complaint and render a decision within five working days after receiving the complaint.

The Superintendent: Step Three

If Step 2 does not resolve the complaint, within 10 working days of the meeting with the principal, the complainant, if he/she wishes to pursue the action, shall file a signed, written complaint with the superintendent clearly stating the nature of the complaint and a suggested remedy. (A form is available, but is not required.)

The superintendent shall investigate the complaint, confer with the complainant and the parties involved and prepare a written report of his/her findings and his/her conclusion and provide the written report to the complainant within 10 working days after receiving the written complaint.

The Board: Step Four

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the superintendent's findings and conclusion, the complainant may appeal the decision to the Board within five working days of receiving the superintendent's decision. The Board may hold a hearing to review the findings and conclusion of the superintendent, to hear the complaint and to hear and evaluate any other evidence as it deems appropriate. Generally all parties involved, including the school administration, will be asked to attend such meeting for the purposes of presenting additional facts, making further explanations and clarifying the issues.

The Board may elect to hold the hearing in executive session if the subject matter qualifies under Oregon Revised Statutes.

The complainant shall be informed of the Board's decision within 20 working days from the hearing of the appeal by the Board. The Board's decision will be final.¹

Complaints against the principal may be filed with the superintendent.

Complaints against the superintendent should be referred to the Board chair on behalf of the Board. The Board chair shall present the complaint to the Board. If the Board decides an investigation is warranted, the Board may refer the investigation to a third party. When the investigation is complete, the results will be presented to the Board. After receiving the results of the investigation, the Board shall decide in open session what action, if any, is warranted.

Complaints against the Board as a whole or against an individual Board member should be made to the Board chair on behalf of the Board. The Board chair shall present the complaint to the Board. If the Board decides an investigation is warranted, the Board may refer the investigation to a third party. When the investigation is complete, the results will be presented to the Board. After receiving the results of the investigation, the Board shall decide in open session what action, if any, is warranted.

Complaints against the Board chair may be made directly to the Board vice chair. The Board vice chair shall present the complaint to the Board. If the Board decides an investigation is warranted, the Board may refer the investigation to a third party. When the investigation is complete, the results will be presented to the Board. After receiving the results of the investigation, the Board shall decide in open session what action, if any, is warranted.

If a complaint alleges a violation of state standards and is not resolved at the Board level, then the district will supply the complainant with appropriate information in order to file a direct appeal to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as outlined in Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 581-022-1940.

¹The timelines may be extended upon written agreement between both parties.

Sheridan School District 48J
COMPLAINT FORM

TO: ☐ District Office ☐ Name of School _____

Person Making Complaint _____

Telephone Number _____ Date _____

Nature of Complaint _____

Who should we talk to and what evidence should we consider? _____

Suggested solution/resolution/outcome: _____

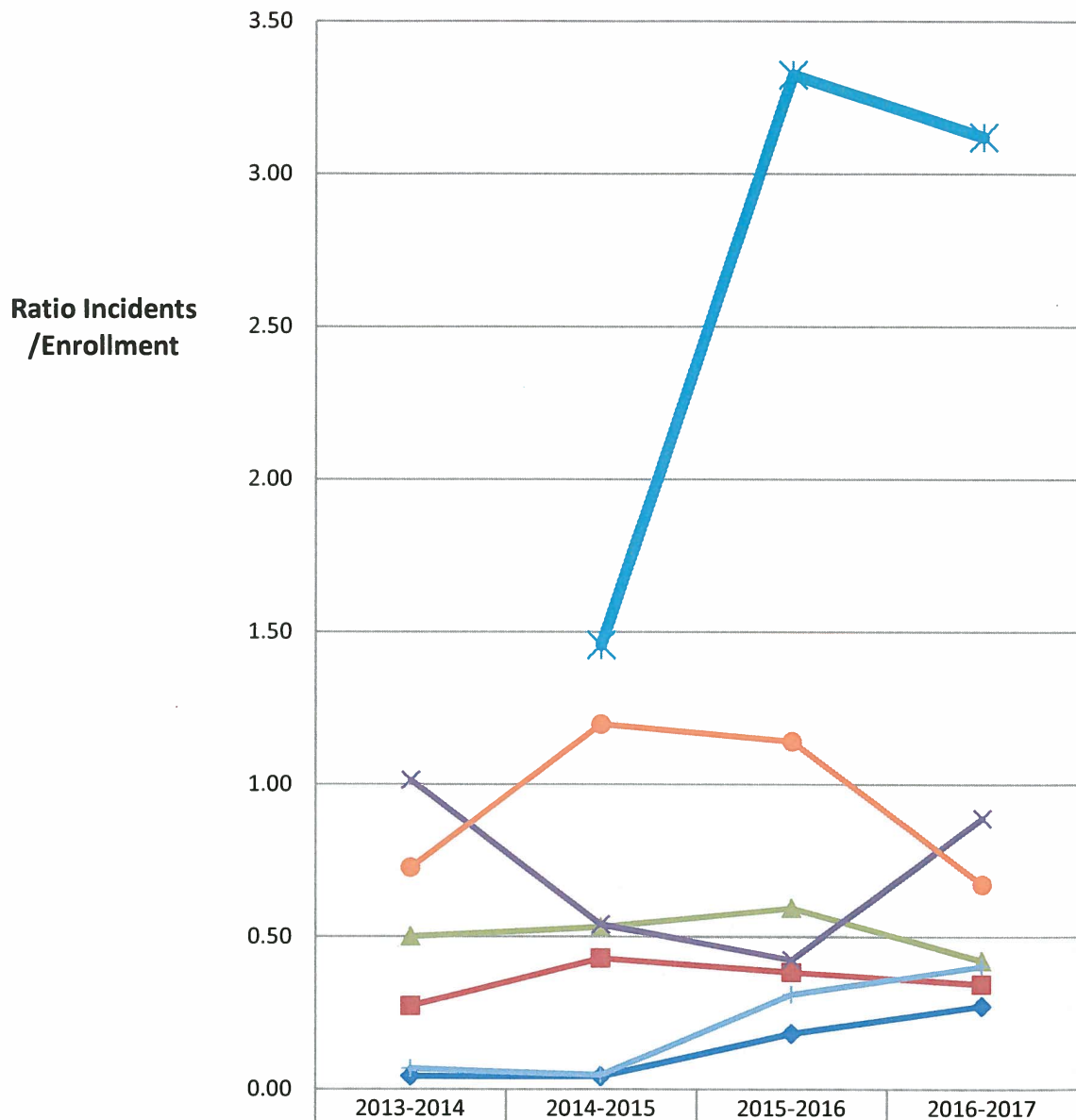
Office Use: Disposition of Complaint: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

cc: District Office

K-8 Discipline Incident to Enrollment Ratio

Yamhill County Districts
Beginning of Year through April 26



Sheridan School District 48J	**	1.46	3.32	3.12
Amity School District 4J	0.04	0.04	0.18	0.27
Dayton School District 8	0.27	0.43	0.38	0.34
McMinnville School District 40	0.50	0.53	0.59	0.42
Newberg School District 29J	1.01	0.54	0.42	0.89
Willamina School District 30J	0.73	1.20	1.14	0.67
Yamhill-Carlton School District 1	0.07	0.05	0.31	0.40

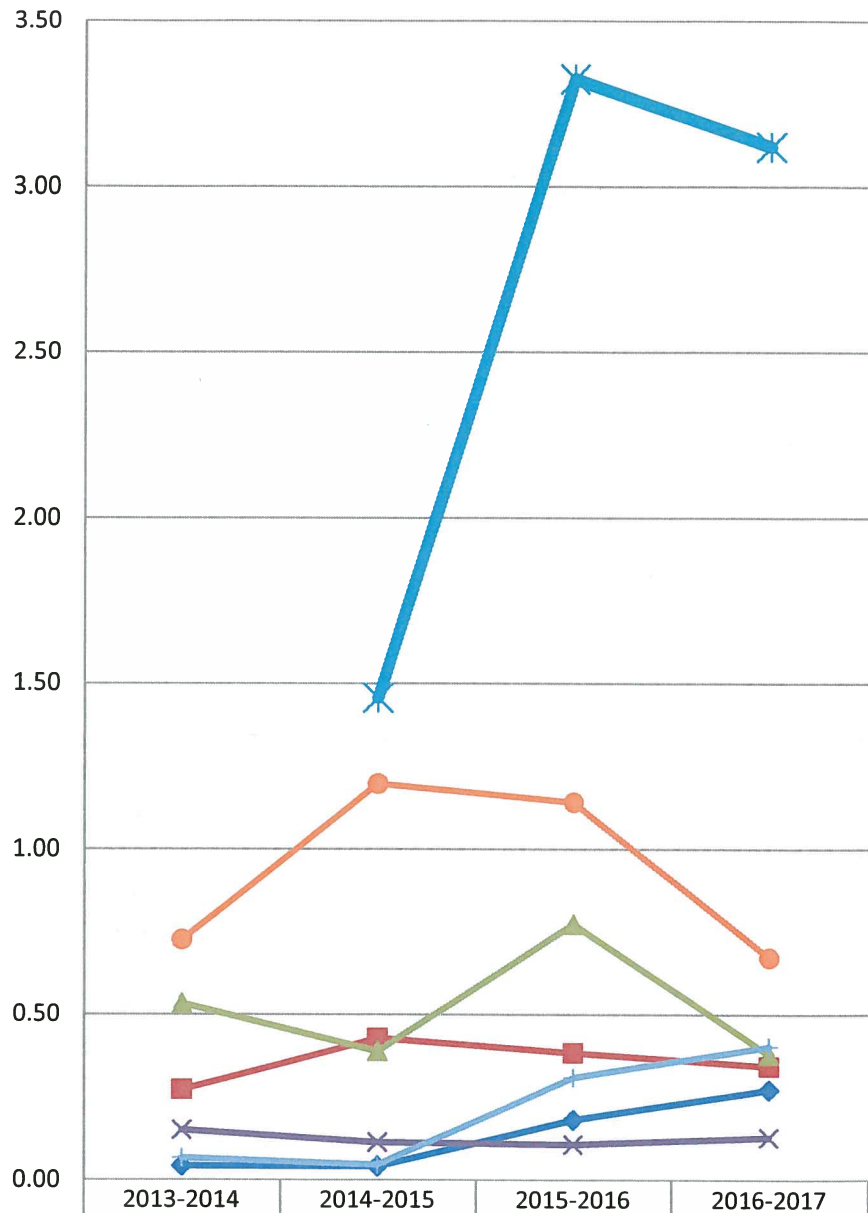
**There is no discipline data for the Sheridan SD in the Willamette ESD Data Warehouse for the 2013-14 school year.

K-8 Discipline Incident to Enrollment Ratio

Similar Size Districts

Beginning of Year through April 26

Ratio Incidents
/Enrollment



	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Sheridan School District 48J	**	1.46	3.32	3.12
Amity School District 4J	0.04	0.04	0.18	0.27
Dayton School District 8	0.27	0.43	0.38	0.34
Jefferson School District 14J	0.53	0.39	0.77	0.38
Mt Angel School District 91	0.15	0.11	0.11	0.13
Willamina School District 30J	0.73	1.20	1.14	0.67
Yamhill-Carlton School District 1	0.07	0.05	0.31	0.40

**There is no discipline data for the Sheridan SD in the Willamette ESD Data Warehouse for the 2013-14 school year.