

**Equity Committee Meeting
Eugene Public Schools District 4J
200 N. Monroe**

January 10th, 2019
4:36 pm

PRESENT: Ann Elizabeth Cole, Betsy Boyd, Ingrid Koch, Judy Newman, Nicholas Kaasa, Laura Dahill, David Abramowitz, Gary Campbell, Bao Adam, Julie Heffernan, members; Gustavo Balderas, Jeffrey Johnson, Charis McGaughy, Cydney Vandercar, Karen Pérez, Cheryl Linder, staff.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Karen Pérez calls the meeting to order at 4:36 p.m.

Ms. Pérez reviews the objectives of the agenda and announces that public comment will be moved to the time slot directly after introduction of committee members present, as Nancy Willard, the individual submitting a comment in this time slot, must leave directly after speaking to the committee.

II. Public Comment

Ms. Pérez outlines the protocol with Public Comments, saying that there is a 2 minute allotted time slot per speaker and the committee cannot hear testimonies from individual students. Ms. Willard agrees.

Nancy Willard introduces herself and begins speaking at 4:39 p.m.

She outlines her work over the last decade to undo discriminatory practices towards alternative schools and her work in the area of bullying. She shares a concern about the level of bullying and harassment in 4J Schools. She goes over statistics from a Spring 2018 district survey on the matter, and are as follows; 6.4% of students reported that they were being bullied once a week or more, 5.5% reported being harassed once a week or more with the term harassment being based on minority specs, combined for 8.76 percent of students in the district being bullied once a week or more; eliminating those students who said yes to both. She continues with the survey, which says 68% of these students wouldn't go to school staff for help. She reminds the committee of the approach for bullying as of now is to report incidents to staff, which contrasts with the survey that states 68% of students said they would not use that resource.

Ms. Willard says that the current status quo of dealing with bullying in the district is not working as it is, and announces she will begin working with community mental health consultants and advocates for kid with disabilities to set up bullying resolution services, file complaints, and work to set up independent education evaluations. She also reminds the committee of the

requirement to perform comprehensive investigations into harassment for kids on Independent Education Plans and aims to focus on positive resolutions for bullying of the target as well as the individual committing the acts of bullying and harassment to sway them onto a better path.

Ms. Willard hands out a write up on this approach to the committee and exits the meeting at 4:45 pm. Handout is attached at end of minutes.

Ms. Pérez announces there is one more public comment.

Ann Elizabeth Cole begins speaking at 4:46, her topic is a program called “Up for Learning,” which is based on proficiency based learning in schools. It teaches kids to work with data and generate their own surveys. The mission of Up For Learning is to increase youth engagement by developing youth- adult partnerships in learning to ensure that each and every young person has the skills, self- confidence, and opportunities to assume meaningful roles in shaping their learning and their lives. Ms. Cole hands out copies of “Up for Learning” to the committee. Handout is attached at end of minutes.

III. Review and Approval of Minutes

Ms. Pérez moves on to the approval of minutes and announces introductions will be after this time slot as a way to move into the next topic at 4:47 p.m.

She asks which issues from the last meeting’s minutes the committee would like to follow up with.

Charis McGaughy asks to pull the December minutes for edits, as there is a lot of edits that need to be corrected.

Ms. Pérez offers the approval of the October and November minutes and for the December minutes to be gone over again before approval.

David Abramowitz adds that the December minutes also had a lot of omissions and wonders if there is a way to capture the omissions. One of the things he noticed was omitted was the enthusiasm of people present about CTE options at Churchill. He also wondered about students at North on IEP’s and their ability to participate in CTE programs at Churchill and how to address the challenges that may come with that, and if the SPED placement of a student negates the ability to participate in a CTE program at another school. He brings to attention the question of how to make meaningful modifications to this matter as an Equity Committee.

Ms. Pérez recounts the conversation points brought up by Kevin on CTE accessibility and asks if the committee would like him to come back to give feedback and further speak on and discuss CTE spaces.

Mr. Abramowitz would like a discussion about different outlying groups and access to CTE programs.

Gary Campbell recounts that access issues was one of the topics of discussion brought up by Kevin and feels that further discussion would be beneficial.

Laura Dahill adds that another facet of the CTE discussion is how to market it to parents so families are aware of it. She also brings up the idea of having a CTE showcase, and expresses her enthusiasm of having a CTE day.

Judy Newman voices her agreement as it would be beneficial to have a showcase of different schools and programs in one place.

Ms. Pérez asks for any other comment, to which there are none, and then moves to approve the minutes from October and November. Ms. Cole moved the vote, Ms. Newman passed the vote. They are approved at 4:53 p.m.

Ms. Pérez moves to a vote for Kevin to come back for CTE discussion by way of thumbs up. It is approved for Kevin to return.

Ms. Pérez moved onto introductions. She asks since the topic of today's meeting is diversifying the workforce, for everyone should introduce themselves and say something about how their individual skills or experiences can contribute to the topic today. Introductions of all present are begun at 4:54.

IV. Equity Lens Protocol

Introductions are finished at 5:25, and Ms. Pérez moves to the guiding questions for this meeting's topic of Equity Committee Problem of Practice Protocol, which is Diversifying the Workforce.

Cydney Vandercar begins the discussion by handing out a sheet of paper that outlines diversity issues in the workforce. She points out that this has been a goal through her place in administration over the span of 3 superintendents, and there has not been much progress on the issue. She goes on to say once Superintendent Balderas was brought on the issue, he requested state and national information in the subject to make a plan. She refers to the KP2 side of her handout, which is labeled Percentage of non-White students and staff members and goes back to 2015. She points out that all areas have some improvement, but the most is in administrators, which has jumped from 23% in 2015 to 30.8% in 2019. She tells the committee about how Superintendent Balderas actively recruits diverse staff and helps them become established in 4J every step of the way. She reminds the committee of the goal – to have staff diversity reflect student diversity; student diversity is at 30.6% for non-white students as of 2019, and all areas except for administrators fall well below those numbers in terms of diversity, with teachers having the least amount of improvement.

She continues by saying that surveys have shown students respond well to staff and teachers who look like them, and can bring true background to the table as a relation point, and for kids to see someone belonging to their minority group be professional and successful in a career sets up positive role modeling. She reiterates Superintendent Balderas' recruitment efforts and told the committee she looks forward to seeing how solutions can be discussed this meeting and how staff of color can be better supported.

She announces that starting Tuesday, February 12th, a 5 week program will start with practitioners, teachers, and administrators every Thursday that will be called "So You Wanna Talk About Race," highlighting how to do so in the classroom.

Ms. Vandercar then moves to the other side of the handout which outlines some of the issues with teacher retention. The research compares attrition rates of 4J side by side with the national findings and outlines how staff turnover is another challenge to building staff diversity as well, as attrition happens for a variety of reasons, including relocation and finding schools with better pay in bigger cities. She points out that 4J's attrition reflects the national findings as well, with national and state rates both rising.

Ms. Newman asks for clarification as to if the information on the sheet means that 3.8% of the entirety of our workforce turns over, which Ms. Vandercar clarifies as yes, that it the increase of attrition rate.

Ms. Newman clarifies this is information of attrition for all staff, not just instructors, as per a question asked by Gary Campbell.

Ingrid Koch asks if there are any measurable reasons for attritions to find a pattern. Ms. Vandercar says every time a staff member leaves 4J they are given a survey for the reason why, and there is only a 10% return rate on these surveys, and they can range from finding better pay, needing to relocate, or disagreement with management.

Julie Heffernan asks if there is a standardized hiring protocol across buildings, which Ms. Vandercar answers that there are certain protocols but individual interviews, there are not.

Mr. Abramowitz asks if they are new hires that are contributing to high attrition, which Ms. Vandercar answers that the information is for across the board, but the longer you stay with 4J the less likely turnover is to happen.

Cheryl Linder comments that a fair number of experienced people moved into 4J last year which balanced out the new hires.

Betsey Boyd ponders the recruitment piece, she wonders what the strategies are to reach out to communities to grow the hiring pool in diversity.

Ms. Vandercar answers by saying growing our own hiring pool has always been the strategy, and that they have partnered with Western Oregon University for Spanish speaking programs in education, and to find students who want to go into education and mentor them through their own education process to do so. She emphasizes the strategy as a grassroots effort to build kids up to go into teaching programs. She reminds the committee this can also be problematic because sometimes kids change their mind or they aren't reached fast enough, as what they found out when she and Charis met with University of Oregon department heads. She also throws out the intention of including the fact that they are looking for diverse hires in job descriptions but questions the effectiveness.

Ms. Heffernan offers the viewpoint that different populations that make up a diverse staff may need different recruiting strategies for each.

Mr. Campbell offers three questions; concerning Springfield's teacher program and CTE as a way of mentorship, asking what outreach can and has been done to these specific communities in different places, and asking about a possibility of a bonus incentive program for retention.

Ms. Vandercar responds by saying incentives may take negotiation and are not currently in place, and they have just started up new teacher mentorships but needs improvement and building. She also adds to this by saying that there is now a partnership with U of O that helps with behavior in the classroom, as well as mentoring by retired teachers who offer their time. This helps new teachers get the help they need to stay for retention purposes.

Superintendent Balderas builds off of this response by recounting his time as lead recruiter out of Oregon to reach new communities out of state, and that this approach did not work. He offers that there needs to be a focus on localized communities and Universities to improve the chances of recruitment and to keep them here.

Ms. Pérez brings up the Pathways programs classes during the summer for local teachers.

Charis then brings up the "Courageous Conversation" course that is offered, and how it is aligned with credits for LCC and Pathways, looking at a program of study for CTE and growing our own teachers as well as a culturally responsive curriculum and is looking to grow it for students as well.

Superintendent Balderas comments about the implementation of pool hiring, and training a set of administrators on appropriate interview processes. Pool hiring is hiring a pool of people for a position yet to be determined, and help them transition to positions that work for them early on.

Ms. Linder adds on the facet of SPED, and how this is successful in growing their own hiring pool for candidates for that program as well.

Ms. Pérez formally moves the meeting to open conversation so that this conversation may continue openly.

Ms. Vandercar lastly adds how she and Ms. Linder are very excited about the Food Service training program that is now being implemented with the State of Oregon, where professionals come in and train groups of students on how to be successful and get food service jobs early on in life.

Laura Dahill recounts an individual who has a dream of opening a food truck stand, and tells the committee how wonderful it would be to implement these job training programs for kids with disabilities to give them useful workforce skills.

Ms. Linder gives credit to Mr. Abramowitz for the creation of this program several years ago, and calls for the need to refresh and renew it to give students current and up to date job ready skills, such as new coding avenues, to make these skills more relevant as well as find job sites for these programs.

Julie Heffernan left the meeting at 5:46.

Mr. Abramowitz talks about collaborations with department heads at the U of O and the county as these job sites, and how the hiring process was work samples instead of interviews. He says there's different ways to recruit different populations, and there are problems with getting around interview processes that highlight disabilities instead of strengths and skills. He thinks learning to grow the employee from early on is valuable.

Ms. Dahill recounts a personal story that highlights wanting more options for kids with disabilities, to which Ms. Linder agrees that a bar should not be set, and diversity in positions based on different skills would be most beneficial.

Ms. Boyd reflects on the effectiveness of pool hiring and how that makes an easier transition into the workforce.

Superintendent Balderas says there should be a combination of pool hiring and traditional until people are trained on hiring processes.

Ms. McGaughy outlines some strengths and weaknesses with this approach, visible bias may become an issue with site based hiring.

Cydney Vandercar leaves at 6:00 p.m.

Superintendent Balderas reflects on how a friend's accent held him back from being hired, relating to this concern of site based bias.

Ms. Pérez reflects on sharing organized meals with communities of color once a month, and how this mentorship and community process promotes inclusivity and relatability. Conversations about perspective are encouraged. As well as an Affinity group of people with color too and how

making the community welcoming and having groups that focus on a space for people of color is extremely helpful. She responds to a comment by Ms. Koch about how this is an avenue of community outreach for minority communities.

Superintendent Balderas also adds the idea of a future leaders Affinity group for teachers interested in leadership roles.

Mr. Abramowitz shares a story of a friend who experienced moving here and being treated differently because diversity was much worse in earlier times. He suggests trying programs for helping diverse groups transition into careers of teaching in other areas than the Education program at U of O.

Ms. Pérez reflects on the hate and bias town hall she attended and how personal experiences of hate and bias today are very real and still happening, and how those are the pieces that are challenging in the Eugene area.

Superintendent Balderas adds his own account of knowing people and personal accounts of discrimination in this area.

Ms. Pérez moves the meeting along and asks Ms. McGaughy to summarize her notes from the meeting. Ms. McGaughy reads main points of the meeting.

Karen Pérez moves the meeting to a group discussion on assigned equity lens questions among small groups to ponder the questions at 6:19 p.m. She calls the committee back to order at 6:27 p.m. Ms. Pérez then moves onto updates.

V. Office of Equity, Instruction and Partnerships Updates

Ms. Pérez updates the committee on an upcoming equity forum called “Connecting Threads,” which focuses on gender diversity. This includes 8-10 different organizations focusing on gender diversity and each one will have a booth that will give information in a safe space. Community equity forums are held on the first Thursday of every month.

There is also a community public safety forum, where Spanish-speaking families come to get to know public safety officers so they feel more comfortable asking for help when needed. The dates are the first Friday of February, and the first Friday of March.

The next community equity forum will be co-hosting a film festival with DisOrient, which is March 20th.

On January 7th, they had anti-bias training for teachers and tribal history shared training.

VI. Superintendent Updates

Ms. Pérez closes the meeting at 6:33 p.m.