

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

April 11th, 2019
4:36 pm

PRESENT: David Abramowitz, Gary Campbell, Laura Dahill, Betsy Boyd, Nicholas Kaasa, Ann Elizabeth Cole, Bao Adam, members; Gustavo Balderas, Karen Pérez, Andy Dey, Charis McGaughy, Cheryl Linder, Kevin Herington, Brian Kuzma, staff.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Pérez called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. She invited the attendees to introduce themselves and say a quick tidbit about their hardest coursework and why they decided to take it on.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

Ms. Pérez then continued to the review and approval of minutes once the introductions have finished. The minutes from the previous meeting in February were up for approval.

Ms. McGaughy suggested an edit about ECCO on page two, Early College Options should be changed to the acronym usually used, ECCO.

Mr. Kaasa moved to approve the minutes, Ms. Pérez passed.

III. Equity Lens Protocol

Ms. Pérez then moved the meeting to the Equity Lens Protocol. She outlined the agenda for this section, which included Mr. Herington giving a presentation on Equal Opportunity Schools partnerships and protocol throughout the school district. The introduction to this section provoked the question “What does the work with Equal Opportunity Schools look like in the Eugene School District 4J?” and the description that Equal Opportunity School’s mission is to ensure students of all backgrounds have equal access to America’s most academically intense high school programs- and particularly that low- income students and students of color have opportunities to succeed at the highest levels. The Guiding question then is “What should be considered as we move the work of Equal Opportunity Schools forward in the Eugene School District?”

Mr. Herington began his presentation on Equal Opportunity Schools and the Equity Pathways Report. He began by outlining the work that Equal Opportunity Schools does with its partnerships, expanding access in high schools and working under Measure 98. He reminds the

committee that there are 3 main areas of focus on this issue; Career technical education, dropout prevention, and opportunities for college level access.

Within that implementation plan, he said that there are areas that need to be focused on. These areas are equitable assignment to these courses, and the other is the college level opportunity. The work that is being focused then is putting systems in place to make these courses accessible to all groups of students who need it. The work began in the fall of 2018, surveying all high school students, or at least 92% of them, and 90 % of staff as well. From this survey they looked at what students would benefit from taking AP Writing courses, based on their interests, mindset, feeling of belonging in the AP environment, and having adult support system in the schools. The biggest barriers that was identified was not having enough information available, and the other was not believing they had an adult advocate within the school.

He then outlined the outreach program that was implemented, which began with teachers being trained on how to talk to students about these courses and student recruitment. Each student was asked to identify an adult within the school that they trusted. He then presented a piece of information about how staff felt about the level of challenge between AP and regular classes, there was a wide discrepancy, and the students asked the same question showed the same discrepancy. Another piece of information obtained from this survey was that staff thought students weren't accessing these courses because of difficulty and scheduling, but the number one reason among students was not having enough information.

Mr. Dey commented that it was hard to imagine that there are kids in the district that do not know about AP classes but it's these simple things that are so easily looked over.

Mr. Herington then showed what the student interest cards looked like for the survey. They included career goals and interests as well as a space for them to list a trusted adult. Then staff rated the student on how ready they thought this student was for AP/IB courses. He continued with outlining the once a month meeting with Equal Opportunity Schools on a district level.

Mr. Campbell asked if Mr. Herington can speak about the organization a little bit.

Mr. Dey answered that they have helped hundreds if not thousands of students in districts across the country, and they have a focus on AP/IB curriculum because its standardized nationally.

Mr. Herington moves the presentation from AP/IB courses themselves to the issue of equity and accessibility for all students. He presented data from the forecasting this year for students who will be taking AP courses next year to students who were enrolled this year. Next year will see an increase in 151 students, 93 being low income and 58 are in the medium high income bracket. He then shows a breakdown by school.

He then continues into Equity gaps, and how to close them in these specific areas. He pointed out that even though it may look like the gaps are widening, this happens because more

students of color are taking these classes and because of this access effort more white/ Asian students are also accessing them as well. In this last year there were 126 students of color across the district accessing, and this coming year there will be 141. He continued to present a breakdown of each school and their access percentages.

Mr. Abramowitz asked about students of color and low income identification, and asked if they were two populations grouped together or if it was students of color who were low income.

Mr. Herington said they are two populations grouped together. He continued to say that students who are African American made the sharpest increase.

Mr. Kuzma made a comment that this is forecasting for next year and not a solid number yet.

Mr. Herington said that this was correct and they are hoping to get more students before then as well.

Ms. Pérez asked about the Latino American student information.

Mr. Herington said that population made a slight increase but mostly stayed the same.

Mr. Dey made a comment about the interest card that had them list the trusted adult, and how these adults identified followed up with individual students afterward.

Mr. Herington said that this is the problem at hand, how to ensure that these students follow through with signing up after the contact with them has been made.

He then moved to income gap data. He outlined how each race and income group presented at each school, highlighting key populations to focus on for each school and how graduation and new student influx shifts these demographics of focus.

Ms. Boyd commented about the benefit of free and reduced lunch in 12th grade helping them qualify for waiving exam fees and how that would be important to focus on for this issue as well.

Ms. Pérez asked for a clarification of what AP/IB courses are exactly to make sure every community member was on board with what they were.

Mr. Dey clarified that AP meant Advanced Placement, and IB meant International Baccalaureate with an international high standard of rigorous coursework. A benefit of having an IB or AP diploma would be to receive credit for college as well as preferential treatment and access to scholarships. AP focuses on individual courses that helps college readiness and critical thinking as IB is more of a whole curriculum.

Ms. McGaughy clarified that the more rigorous courses that are taken in high school, the more likely a student is to be prepared for life after high school.

Mr. Herington continued to present gap data for equitable access, and how low income and high income persists, and although more students are participating in these courses altogether, the gap is persisting and even widening in some areas.

Ms. Boyd suggested the importance of everyone filling out free and reduced lunch so all who need it has access, so that low income students can have access to exam waivers.

Mr. Herington and Mr. Dey also clarified the data presentation, that one column is students currently enrolled in AP/IB courses and the other is the number of students forecasted and projected to enroll next year.

Mr. Dey outlined the needs of the outreach program, to keep communication between the counselors and the students, as well as keeping accessibility information distribution as a priority as well.

Ms. Boyd wondered what it would look like to mentor students into taking classes instead of requiring them.

Ms. Pérez highlighted a survey given that outlined the minimum GPA that you could be successful with.

Mr. Herington followed off of this that a common misconception that low GPA will bar a student from being successful, even though that is untrue.

Ms. Pérez also highlighted the importance of identifying barriers like this that keeps students from taking these courses.

Ms. Boyd wondered about ensuring that these students not only participate in AP courses but also take the AP test.

Mr. Dey said that students are now having to sign up for the tests at the beginning of the course with waived fees available.

Mr. Abramowitz commented about the piece of success that comes from equity is not only getting students there but accommodating them along the way.

Mr. Herington responded that some of the work that is done is looking at what these support systems look like when thinking about equity and how to implement them.

Mr. Campbell asked if there were IB courses offered at the freshman level. He also wondered about class sizes with increasing these courses.

Mr. Dey said that they were not offered at that level, and that if there are more students taking these courses then they are taken away from other classes, making rearranging staffing a solution to this.

Ms. Linder commented that a part of the challenge is getting kids with SPED services into these courses as well.

Mr. Herington stated that the conversations are shifting from why a kid can get it to why a kid can't get in.

Mr. Dey commented that they have the 9th and 10th grade years to talk to kids about these, and when students usually ask about these classes, teachers tend to talk about how hard and rigorous they are which tends to make them less desirable to students, and changes need to be made to the way they are talked about.

Ms. Pérez explained that part of the outreach program is to explain to kids at the middle school and parents as well what AP courses are and why they are an asset.

Mr. Herington noted that there were staff members at the district building discussing equitable access.

Mr. Dey then spoke on the intention to eliminate all barriers across the board to these classes, because many do exist.

Superintendent Balderas spoke about having the hard conversations about this topic to make sure that equitable access is happening.

Mr. Dey talked about the organization 15th Night that talks to families about what they need in terms of this coursework or for school, and the number one thing these families say is that they don't have information about what the graduation requirements are.

Superintendent Balderas commented about wanting to have a PEP, a Personalized Education Plan, for every student so they are on the path they need to be.

Ms. Cole asked when the surveys previously talked about by Mr. Herington are done.

Mr. Herington answered that they are done in the fall around October, and they are given to every student freshman through senior.

Ms. Adam suggested that asking students who have done AP/IB what value they gained from participating in this class and how that could help future students find motivation to join.

Mr. Herington concurred, and talked about the suggestion by other staff for students to write about their experiences in AP/IB to help cultivate that sense of belonging.

Ms. Adam asked if there will be adults in place to help these advocate efforts.

Mr. Herington responded that each student is asked to identify a trusted adult so that these efforts can happen.

Ms. Dahill suggested the idea of having students of color come in and talk to students about why AP/IB is something they should consider.

Mr. Herington responded that this was a part of the developing outreach program, that members of the student union, called IB ambassadors, help to talk about and disperse information on these courses.

Ms. Pérez reiterated the work that was being done on this issue and the efforts by Mr. Herington and Mr. Dey to break these barriers and change the communication around these courses.

Ms. Pérez closes out this discussion with a quick popcorn speaking activity to give the members a chance to ask a question or make a comment about what was talked about today.

Ms. Linder begins, and expands on the PEP's brought up by Superintendent Balderas. In Special Ed, it is centered on PEP's for every student and talked about how informative this process is for student and staff alike.

Ms. Dahill concurs and spoke about the positivity of PEP's and her son's experience with it.

Mr. Abramowitz commented about the need for students to start owning their decisions, and there needs to be a plan for adult check in to make sure that this is happening.

The student speakers that sat in on the meeting shared their perspectives and support for the issues discussed today, and how AP/IB classes are foundational for looking at future goals like college. One student speaker posed the question of what would happen if a student identified no one as a trusted adult on these surveys.

Mr. Herington responded that if that happened, they would pull teachers from their classes and asking who has a rapport or who could start one.

Mr. Dey built off of this by saying that if this happened, they would also have a phone call home and phone calls to teachers at previous schools, and ultimately rally around this kid.

Ms. Pérez also commented on the other end of this, if one teacher is listed a lot of times as a trusted adult, it would be worth looking at what qualities of this teacher made this happen.

IV. Office of Equity, Instruction & Partnerships Updates

Ms. Pérez moved the meeting to equity updates. She announced that a Noche Cultural would be happening this Friday at River Road Elementary, as well as the first Friday of every month a dinner is hosted so that people of color and allies can come together for a meal. The first Thursday of May will be a presentation by Pacific Islander elders.

Other equity pieces she mentioned was working to normalize white spaces in schools for people of color as well as anti-bias training for staff.

Superintendent Balderas moved to superintendent updates. He mentioned that there was a lot of work going on with bonds and budget at this time, and how to spend these budget dollars to be impactful and mindful of equity and to keep the focus on the kids of the district.

Ms. McGaughy mentioned the Local Option Levy that the public will be voting on in May that is incredibly helpful for the school budget.

Ms. Pérez then mentioned the next meeting on May 9th and closes the meeting at 6:25.