

**Equity Committee Meeting
Eugene Public Schools District 4J
Virtual via Zoom**

March 11, 2021
4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Gary Campbell, Ann Cole, Laura Dahill, Maya Rabasa, Eric Richardson, Anil Oommen, Members; Judy Newman, Board Member; Cydney Vandercar, Misael Flores Gutierrez, Charis McGaughy, Karen Hardin, Eric Anderson, Jenoge Khatter, David Jacobson, KC Clark, Oscar Loureiro, Andy Dey, staff.

1. Welcome & Centering Activity

Mr. Flores Gutierrez opened the 4J Equity Committee meeting at 4:37 p.m. Everyone present introduced themselves.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

Mr. Flores Gutierrez said they had minutes from December, January, and February to approve.

MOTION: Ms. Rabasa moved, seconded by Ms. Dahill, to approve the December 15, 2020 4J Equity Committee meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Richardson moved, seconded by Mr. Campbell, to approve the January 12, 2021 4J Equity Committee meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Campbell moved, seconded by Ms. Dahill, to approve the February 11, 2021 4J Equity Committee meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Update on All Students Belong

Ms. Newman reminded everyone that they conducted four interviews to find a facilitator for the Committee. They ended up picking SeeChange, since they had experience locally and with similar work. They shared 4J's goal of providing safe learning environments, support meaningful, equitable, and highly effective instruction, so that all students could thrive socially, emotionally, and academically; and reduce the disparities of outcomes for students of color and students with disabilities.

Ms. Newman said that they met with SeeChange on February 24, 2021. SeeChange proposed their approach. The first phase of their work was planning and discovery. They would collect all existing data that 4J had. Phase two was centered around outreach and understanding data. Phase three SeeChange would present a written report and talk about how a community process could be built on what 4J already had.

Ms. Newman noted that this was a different process than they planned. Originally, they wanted to start a committee to talk through these issues and act. SeeChange first wanted to collect data and set goals before bringing in the community. They did not want to waste the community's time and be more productive once the committee started. She said that SeeChange would work with the Board and with the Equity Committee. The Board would hold a work session in the coming weeks with SeeChange present so that questions could be answered.

Ms. Rabasa was able to listen into the conversation with SeeChange and appreciated everything they had to say. She was shocked that they wanted a District representative to act as a liaison. Ms. Rabasa asked if they had an idea of who that would be and what role they would play. Ms. Newman responded that they had talked to Superintendent Vandercar about the liaison but had not made any decisions. It might be Ms. Newman, Anne Marie Levis, or Martina Shabram. She added that the person would work closely with SeeChange and Ms. McGaughy.

Mr. Campbell wanted to know the timeline for the project. Ms. Newman replied that their contract would go through June 2021, with a possibility for an extension. The first three phases would be done before the contract expired.

4. Update on District Antiracism Professional Development

Mr. Flores Gutierrez stated that every institution was either producing or sustaining racial inequity between groups. Anti-racist work functioned to take down those barriers. Mr. Anderson said that their focus was on becoming stronger anti-racist educators to improve equity for all students. They developed a multi-year professional development plan. The first phase was understanding the language used when looking at racism and its barriers. Licensed staff had already underwent their first class and more classes were scheduled for April and May.

Mr. Campbell asked what trainings were provided to school and district administration. Mr. Anderson replied that their focus that year was on comprehensive distanced learning (CDL). Prior to that year they had most of their administrative staff trained in some anti-racist work. Everyone would receive the new training.

Ms. Rabasa asked if there was a plan for teachers to have access to experts on anti-racist work. Superintendent Vandercar replied that they started with defining terms because not all staff members had started working on anti-racism. She received some feedback that some staff needed more training, and they would get it. They wanted to have experts speak, in-person or virtually, to their staff.

Mr. Richardson inquired into what the budget was like and where it was coming from. Also, they were talking about how to be an anti-racist, but they also had to include more diverse history in their curriculum. He was happy that all staff would go to these trainings but was unsure how they would assess what each person learned. Mr. Flores Gutierrez replied that this year was focused on defining terms, but they would continue this work and transition it to action. Trainings in the future would be interactive and they wanted to build in accountability. Mr. Richardson stated that it was not about accountability but retaining the information and have the intention of using those lessons going forward. Superintendent Vandercar said that the money was coming from the general fund. She added that they had a plan for including more diverse history in their curriculum. They would talk about that more soon.

Mr. Richardson wanted to see how they could work with Lane ESD to align their work.

Mr. Oommen said that COVID-19 uncovered more inequities in the system. He hoped they kept that in mind going forward through trainings. Mr. Oommen emphasized that policy had to be developed if they wanted to see real change. Superintendent Vandercar agreed that they had not done enough and needed to reach all staff.

5. Curriculum Adoption – Social Studies

Mr. Anderson said that there were five key points to curriculum adoption. First was the launch, where the Board started the adoption process, and a team was formed that received training and input which established a vision with aligned criteria. Second was the pilot, where materials were piloted and examined using established criteria and data collected. Third was the evaluation and report, where the data was evaluated, and materials were ranked and a report was submitted to the instructional advisory council. Fourth was the adoption, where the Superintendent made a recommendation to the school Board. Fifth was the implementation, where schools implemented the materials with professional development and evaluation opportunities. Equity would be used throughout the process.

Mr. Khatter said that in Oregon they got new social study standards with embedded Ethnic Studies standards, which were recently approved by the legislature in HB 2845 and HB 2023. Oregon was the first State to have those requirements. SB 13 focused on Native Studies in social studies being aligned with essential understandings and critical orientations. SB 664 focused on Genocide/Holocaust studies in social studies. He said that most students got some form of Holocaust education, but the bill made it more robust.

In middle schools, 6th grade would be moving from “Ancient Civilizations” to “Western Hemisphere” with focus on indigeneity/identity; colonization and African diasporas and examples of resistance/resilience/agency; origins of racial concepts; forms/stages of genocide. 7th graders would move from “Medieval World” to “Eastern Hemisphere” with focus on identity/geography connections (river basins, sustainability); globalization; human/labor rights; colonization; forms/stages of genocide; WWII era; Shoah (Jewish Holocaust); resistance/resilience/agency; civic engagement in response to oppression/injustice. 8th grade would still be “U.S History” but have a narrower timeline (1789-1877) and emphasis on human/civil rights issues with connections to the present and community/State based civic engagement.

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) had instructional materials evaluated over the last few years. Mr. Khatter was a part of the evaluation group. He pointed out one criterion which made it so curriculum appeared to be of particular relevance to students with demographic backgrounds most likely to be pushed out of 4J schools. Those backgrounds included: American Indian/Alaska Native, Indigenous American, economically disadvantaged, Latinx, Black, Pacific Islander, served with an IEP, migrant, homeless, served through ELD.

Ms. Dahill wanted to know if disability rights was included in the human rights curriculum. Mr. Khatter replied that currently that was not included in the middle school curriculum. He had not seen it included in any middle school textbooks, which added complications. Mr. Khatter said that disability rights was a part of their list to include but had to find more sources.

Mr. Richardson was taken aback by the information presented. They talked about Western and Eastern hemispheres but did not mention any Eastern civilizations or focuses. He thought the curriculum still sounded western and white centric. Mr. Khatter agreed with him but said the river basin curriculum would talk about African culture. Mr. Richardson mentioned that Egypt was the oldest river basin and had direct relevance to the European world. He said they had to be careful with the narrative they created and make it non-Western focused.

Mr. Campbell wanted to know where they were in the process of adopting the new curriculum. Mr. Khatter replied they had to do community outreach and staff input but did not know how to do so during COVID-19.

6. Public Comment

Mike Meyer used to work with KRVM as a radio DJ. He said KRVM claimed to be equitable, but that was not true. He said that most the staff were white men, and diversity was not talked about. Mr. Meyer had brought up the lack of diversity at the radio station and states that he was fired. He loved the work that the Committee was doing and hoped they talked about the issues with the station.

Mr. Richardson noted that radio was one way that the community was influenced. He wanted to talk more with Mr. Meyer later and learn more.

7. Closing & Updates

Mr. Flores Gutierrez adjourned the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

(Minutes recorded by Lydia Dysart)