

**MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE SESSION,
AND REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON**

March 17, 2021

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held an executive session at 5:30 p.m., a regular session at 7:00 p.m. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on March 12, 2021, and published in The Register-Guard on March 17, 2021.

NOTICE: In light of current public health concerns related to coronavirus COVID-19, the meeting of the Eugene School District Board of Directors was open to the public via Zoom Meeting, live radio broadcast on KRVM 1280-AM and via the Internet at www.4j.lane.edu/.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mary Walston, Chair
Judy Newman, Vice Chair
Anne Marie Levis
Alicia Hays (via teleconference)
Martina Shabram
Jim Torrey
Gordon Lafer

STAFF:

Cydney Vandercar, Superintendent
Charis McGaughy, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Kerry Delf, Chief of Staff
Brooke Wagner, Director of K-8 Education
Jeff Johnson, Director of K-8 Education
Andy Dey, Director of Secondary Education
Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
Steve Menachemson, Direction of Technology
Kyle Tucker, Chief Operations Office
Oscar Loureiro, Director of Research and Planning
Karen Hardin, Director of Human Resources
Andrea Betz, Director of Finance
Holly Langan, Director of Nutrition Services
Misael Flores Gutierrez, Equity, Instruction, and Partnerships Administrator
Eric Anderson, Director of Curriculum
Lisa Fjordbeck, Executive Assistant/Board Secretary

STUDENT ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERS:

Dusty Temple, ECCO
Joel Sadofsky, IHS
Paige Dunnavant, North Eugene High School
Noa Ablow Measelle, South Eugene High School

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS:

Sabrina Gordon, EEA
Imelda Cortez, EEA

MEDIA: KRVM**I. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Board convened in executive session to conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to carry on labor negotiations, pursuant to ORS 192.660 (2) (d). Executive Session were close to the public.

II. REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Chair Walston called the regular Board meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

III. ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE, LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Chair Walston called out roll, led everyone in the pledge of allegiance, and read out the land acknowledgement.

IV. AGENDA REVIEW

Mr. Lafer wanted to add an item under the consideration for items at a future meeting to talk about not doing in-person standardized testing while some form of virtual learning was still taking place.

V. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Vandercar was glad to see those board members present in person that night. She asked everyone to have patience while staff figured out the live streaming process. That week marked 4J students going back to in-person hybrid for the first time since the year prior. They would hear about more hybrid preparations in the COVID-19 update item. They would also hear about a suicide prevention letter which had been drafted.

Superintendent Vandercar introduced the Sheldon High School Choir who sang for them.

VI. COMMENTS BY BOARD CHAIR

Chair Walston reminded everyone that they had been sent links of other choirs in their District performing.

VII. RECEIVE REPORTS FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Joel Sadofsky, IHS, shared that final projects for seniors were being conducted. He said that students were dealing with a lot right now and a focus should be on self-care.

Ms. Newman read out a statement from Harmony Simmons, Churchill High School, who shared that they were working on hosting weekly trivia nights for each grade level, as well as how to welcome students back into the building. Students were concerned with the hybrid concept (masks, switching between in-person and online, and students online learning at the same level as those in hybrid).

Paige Dunnivant, North Eugene High School, shared that their trivia nights ended and had been a success. With athletics starting up they were doing competitions around those events.

Dusty Temple, ECCO, shared that there had been good communication with teachers recently. They were working on limited small groups going in-person to learn. Students were excited for Spring Break so they could get a break. Many were confused on what hybrid would look like.

Noa Ablow Measelle, South Eugene High School, shared that they had a food drive the coming Thursday and Friday. All food and supplies would go to their own students and their food pantry. As they returned to school it was important for those things to be available. Students were creating a time capsule to commemorate their year in the pandemic.

Ms. Shabram read out a statement from Mazie McNamara, Sheldon High School, who shared that students were making plans for an in-person graduation in June.

VIII. ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE

Jordan Blair, President of Buena Vista Spanish Immersion School Parents Organization, understood the challenges that occurred because of COVID-19. Buena Vista created a food pantry and family emergency fund to help those in their school. They did many events to get students more involved in learning. She said that many teachers were working more than usual to connect with students.

Roscoe Caron, a retired 4J middle school teacher, thanked the Board for all the time they gave and for extending the public comment period. He stated that 4J had 144 standardized tests for Kindergarten through 8th grade. 113 of those tests were District mandated tests. Kindergarten through 2nd grade took 46 standardized tests. Of those, 91% of those were District mandated. He was worried what standardized testing would look like in the Fall to make up for all the missed testing.

Kathy Ging, Eugene resident near Camas Ridge, shared information on technology safety and electro smog. She wanted them to think about how schools contributed to the electric smog.

IX. COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Sabrina Gordon, President of Eugene Education Association (EEA), pointed out that for the 2021-2022 school year 4J would be consider having days off for Rosh Hashanah. This followed the new religious consideration policy. She said that currently September 8, 2021 was set as a teacher planning day. They hoped that 4J would allow teachers to plan on another day so they could observe Rosh Hashanah as well. Imelda Cortez, Vice President of EEA, noted that equitably supporting students was something they had to focus on. Everything they did had to be in the benefit of students and their education. Ms. Gordon said that they could consider supporting supports at middle school level by dedicating staff to same school online learning options. They had to ask if they were doing all they could equitability for students.

X. COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Mr. Lafer said that there was a bill in the legislature that would decrease class sizes. He thought they would never lower-class sizes any more without the bill. Mr. Lafer mentioned HB 2001, which was being supported by Stanford Children. He did not think that this bill was where they should be putting their energy and resources. Currently, they were not making nor planning layoffs, however, teachers of color left at a higher rate than others. They had to conduct exit interviews and have a better mentor system to figure out how to retain teachers of color.

Mr. Torrey read part of an article from Lane Community College about education needing to be recentered. He was worried about the impact COVID-19 would have on students leaving school at the end of the 2020-2021 year.

Ms. Newman wanted to talk about the ethnic studies standards which was approved a couple years before. Just last month on February 24, 2021 the State Board approve the standards. They were the first State to have these standards, which had to be implemented by the 2026-2027 school year. The focus of history would be widened to encompass those who were usually not talked about.

Ms. Levis thanked everyone at the District level for making it possible for the Board to meet in person. She thought it was important for them to be meeting in person if they were putting students in their buildings. Ms. Levis liked that allowing people to watch virtually made the Board more accessible.

Ms. Shabram took a moment to stand with the Asian Americans in their community. She cautioned everyone against focusing on how behind students would be after virtual learning. When they said those things, students and families were listening. The metrics that were set were arbitrary and did not consider what really mattered for students. Ms. Shabram hoped that they could work to bring everyone together and use equity to uphold all students.

Ms. Hays agreed with Mr. Lafer that HB 2001 would not fix their equitability issues. She wondered what their options were moving forward with seniority when layoffs happened. Many agreed that it was not a good system. Ms. Hays emphasized that it had to be fixed sooner rather than later.

Chair Walston announced that there would be a special meeting with the All Students Belong facilitators, SeeChange, on March 31, 2020. She hoped that everyone took the time during Spring Break to recharge.

XI. CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

- 1. Approve Meeting Minutes for February 3, 2021**
- 2. Formal Complaint Response**

Chair Walston wanted to make some changes to the February 3, 2021 minutes.

MOTION: Ms. Newman moved, seconded by Mr. Lafer, to approve the Formal Complaint Response.

VOTE: The motion passed – 7:0.

Chair Walston said that in the February 3, 2021 minutes under agenda review it wrote that “Chair Walston wanted to add a motion to their items for action based on a decision made in executive session.” She clarified that no decision was made in the executive session. Instead, it should read “Chair Walston asked to add an item to the agenda arising from the executive session.”

MOTION: Ms. Levis moved, seconded by Ms. Newman, to approve the meeting minutes from February 3, 2021 as amended.

VOTE: The motion passed – 7:0.

XII. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 1. Update on COVID-19 and Return to On-Site Learning**

Superintendent Vandercar said that they would discuss direction given for students and staff regarding PPE at the elementary level, an update on elementary hybrid and outdoor school possibilities, an update on middle school hybrid, an update on high school athletics, and information on an in-person graduation.

Mr. Anderson thought it would be helpful for the Board to see the resources that had been utilized when elementary went into hybrid. They had a behavior consultant, autism consultant, speech pathologist, assistance technology specialist, teachers on special assignment, and health services administrator work at the hybrid model. He said that there were lessons available on their website to educate students and families on different subjects around hybrid, like wearing masks and washing their hands. There was also information on what it would be like for students to be at the school. This could help families and students feel safer and more prepared for the change. Mr. Anderson reported that asynchronous materials and guidance had been provided for teachers.

The District had been working on outdoor school, where there were two options. If in hybrid, day trips would be available, as well as outdoor online learning for those who did not. Safety guidelines and transportation had been worked out.

Ms. Wagner noted that they welcomed their kindergarten through 1st grade students back into their schools that week. There had been a lot of positive feedback. The week of March 29, 2021 they would start orientations for their 2nd through 5th graders before they entered schools on April 5, 2021.

Mr. Johnson reported that they had meet several times with the middle school hybrid committee. They wanted to make sure that in-person students and virtual students were given the same attention. The committee was concerned with teachers having to teach to two audiences. They took a stronger look at another model which was their current process with a split in the afternoon. The morning would be synchronous learning, while the afternoon would be asynchronous. This would mean students who chose virtual would receive less teacher time. They were prepared to make changes as they watched middle school hybrid become reality.

There was an idea of adding more staff positions to help with middle school hybrid. While the District supported that idea, they were already having trouble hiring for the elementary positions. Mr. Johnson said they would continue to look for additional ways to provide supports moving forward.

Ms. Shabram wanted to hear more about additional supports. They had heard concerns about how different school communities had been impacted. Mr. Johnson replied that they continued to look at ways to block schedule students to minimize the amount of adults' students were in contact with. Ms. Shabram asked if they had data on the ratio of hybrid versus same school online versus Eugene Online Academy. If the main concern was not having enough teachers in a subject, they might find flexibility and support students who needed the most help. She acknowledged that every school had different levels of need and should be approached with different solutions.

Mr. Lafer asked about hiring additional part time staff for same school online students. Once they switched to hybrid teacher focus would switch from virtual to hybrid learning. They would be getting additional funds from the Federal government and he wondered if they could use that to hire more staff. Mr. Johnson responded that they wanted to add more supports, but it would be difficult to track down those potential employees.

Ms. Hays wanted to talk about deaf and hard of hearing students. Supports available was not the same across all schools. She was worried that if they left schools to determine what their students needed that certain groups would be left out. It was hard for a school to know the needs of all their students.

Mr. Dey said that there was a high school administrator and teacher group that would be diving into specifics on hybrid. Ninth grade orientation and homework load were a couple of the topics they were focusing on. Their intent was to provide the Board and community details on hybrid. There would be two cohorts. The first would meet in first second and third periods on Monday and fourth fifth and zero periods on Tuesday. The second would meet in first second and third periods on Thursday and fourth fifth and zero periods on Friday. There flex day would be Wednesday. Campus would be a way to engage with the school and allow equitable access to teachers. Remote learning would continue to be worked on and fit into the hybrid model. Mr. Dey said they would learn more as hybrid was rolled out and changes would be made.

Ms. Newman asked how the sound would work for asynchronous teaching. Mr. Dey replied that they were setting up speakers so that students speaking through the computer could be heard by everyone. The same thing would be done to make sure those in the classroom would be heard by the students online.

Mr. Torrey noted that there were seniors who did not meet the requirements for graduation. He asked what they were doing to help those students, if families were aware, and if those students could catch up over the Summer. Mr. Dey responded that they got direction from the State to look at students' academic history and determine if they normally would have failed that class. They would provide opportunities for students to prove that they understood information. Summer classes would also be available, as well as GED practice tests. He added that at the beginning of the first term seniors were told what classes they had to take to graduate.

Mr. Lafer said that he heard from Churchill teachers that starting in May they would need to be in school all day every day. He was under the impression that teachers would not need to be in schools if they were not teaching a class. Mr. Dey thought it was a misunderstanding and an issue in the communication. Teachers would only need to be present while teaching and any work that could be done outside of the classroom could be done somewhere else. However, the needs of the students might mean spending a few whole days in the building.

Ms. Newman asked if teachers would be able to open their room windows. Mr. Dey was unfamiliar with any directive that said teachers could not open windows. He would double check with staff since there was potential that it would disturb their new ventilation system. Ms. Hardin added that their disease plan referenced windows being open and fans being on. There was no rule saying that windows had to be closed.

Mr. Lafer thought it was critical that they changed the Eugene Online Academy so that there was a curriculum made by 4J and taught by 4J teachers. He hoped that it could be done by Fall of 2022 for students who chose to attend. Mr. Dey said that they had talked about moving away from third party curriculum. A month ago, they opened a request for proposal (RFP) process to their teachers if they wanted to convert the courses they had now to a full online model. The response was better than they imagined. However, many teachers were busy with hybrid and virtual learning.

Mr. Dey reported that they were able to get more spectators in the stands at stadiums as the weeks went by. For graduation, there would be a virtual ceremony like the year before. Signs would also be sent out. He said that they had established dates to commemorate specific senior accomplishments. In June regulations would be different than they were at that time. Unless told no by someone else, each high school would have an in-person graduation along with their virtual event. They would need to wait until closer to June to figure out what graduation would realistically look like.

Ms. Levis asked if there was any way to include parents in graduation. In a previous meeting a community member asked about parents handing out graduation gown. Superintendent Vandercar said that everything would depend on the guidelines in June.

Ms. Delf reported that some of their guidelines had changed to stay in line with the Governor's orders. Also, their own guidelines had changed to make transportation safer for staff and students. Those details were outlined in their communicable disease plan. She emphasized that all students and staff would be required to always have a face mask on. There would be no mask breaks. State guidance allowed for instruments to be played inside if students were spaced out, although it was not advised. As a result, it would continue to not be allowed.

XIII. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

1. Consider for Approval 2021-22 Academic Calendars

Ms. Nesbit said that there was a lot to look into when creating an academic calendar (holidays, instruction hours, etc.). School would start on September 9, 2021. Normally they started the Wednesday after Labor Day, but in 2021 that would be during Rosh Hashanah. There would be something called "transition day" to help students who had not been on campus adjust. The district is talking about changing the second Friday in October to an instruction day.

Ms. Shabram noted that there was a September 8, 2021 instruction day for teachers, which interfered with Rosh Hashanah. Superintendent Vandercar said that they made the schedule around students. They surveyed the staff and allowed them to take off for Rosh Hashanah if they wanted.

Mr. Lafer appreciated that the school start date was pushed back. That went beyond the policy. He thought the full instruction day should be August 31, 2021. That way it would avoid any religious holiday.

Ms. Shabram said that teachers should have the same rights that students had. Ms. Nesbit clarified that teachers could take that day off. Ms. Nesbit cautioned that this discussion was getting into bargaining issues.

2. Consider In-Person Standardized Testing

Chair Walston said that adding this to the agenda was outside of their Board agreements but understood that this was time sensitive. She did not know what to say since staff was not prepared for the discussion.

Mr. Lafer thought that the Board agreed that there should be no standardized testing that year. The state seemed to agree because it requested exemption for the year from the Federal government. He said that they should have a policy or practice saying that no in-person/hybrid days would be taken up by testing. This would also make the testing practice the same for everyone (hybrid or virtual). Mr. Lafer wanted them to put the standardized testing exemption document on the front page of their website. He wanted guidance from the Superintendent.

Superintendent Vandercar reported that they were still considering opting out. This would result in dropping from five days of testing to four days. The idea was that the tests would be completely multiple choice. Oscar Loureiro was on the State Committee around standardized testing and would give updates.

Ms. Levis noted that they had asked for the exemption document to be more accessible in the past. Superintendent Vandercar thought it was easy to find, but they would work on putting it somewhere else.

Mr. Torrey asked what the return on investment would be if they took students out of the classroom to take standardized tests.

Ms. Hays wanted this item to be moved to Leadership so it could be put on the agenda. She thought it would be a good idea to have a work session on the topic.

XIV. SUGGESTIONS BY THE BOARD FOR CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS AT A FUTURE MEETING

1. Meeting Dates:

April 2021: Friday, April 16 Board Retreat & Wednesday, April 21

May 2021: Wednesday, May 5 & Wednesday, May 19

June 2021: Wednesday, June 2 & Wednesday, June 16

Ms. Shabram wondered if they could discuss what Ms. Temple brought up about having closed captioning on their livestream. This might just be a topic for Leadership to figure out.

Ms. Shabram was glad they went back to three minutes for public comment. She wondered if they could give more time, maybe five minutes, to their employee groups. Ms. Hays mentioned that they talked about this in the past. They decided if Board members were limited to three minutes then employee groups should be too. However, if they needed more time, they hoped the groups would ask.

Ms. Levis asked if all non-Board meetings would be held virtually. The Equity and Budget Committees continued to meet online. Ms. Delf noted that those Committees were bigger and decided to continue meeting virtually. The up coming Work Session would have consultants from two hours away so it would be virtual.

XV. ADJOURN

Chair Walston adjourned the meeting at 9:37 p.m.

(Minutes recorded by Lydia Dysart)

Cydney Vandercar
District Clerk

Judy Newman
Board Chair