

**MINUTES OF THE RETREAT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON**

Date: September 6, 2022

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a retreat via video conference and at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street in Eugene, Oregon. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on August 2, 2022.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:

Maya Rabasa, Chair
Gordon Lafer, Vice Chair
Keerti Hasija Kauffman (*arrived during the first topic*)
Alicia Hays
Michelle Hsu
Judy Newman
Laural O'Rourke

STAFF:

Andy Dey, Superintendent
Rob Hess, Chief of Staff
Lisa Fjordbeck, Executive Assistant / Board Secretary

I. BOARD RETREAT

1. Establishing Meeting Agreements for 2022-23

Chair Rabasa welcomed board members to the retreat and said that she was beginning the meeting with a heavy heart after receiving the news of the accidental death of a student. Instead of her planned warm up exercises, she asked the board to share what was on their mind if they wished.

Vice Chair Lafer said that it was nice to have time with each other.

Superintendent Dey thanked the board for taking the time to discuss goals and to determine a course for the district.

Chair Rabasa felt in multiple places all at once. She felt heavy but was hopeful to get some work done together.

Ms. O'Rourke appreciated learning quickly about the death of the student and not finding out by other means.

Chair Rabasa thanked Board members for sharing their thoughts and then summarized that the first item on the agenda was to discuss the meeting agreements. They were guidelines to shape the interaction of all those in the meeting.

First was the chance for all to express their needs for the meeting in order to participate fully. She acknowledged that no agreement would be perfect for everyone. Chair Rabasa cautioned

that there was a difference between needs and preferences and she hoped that the group would recognize the difference between the two.

Chair Rabasa added that meetings agreements needed to be consensual and might be changed from time to time as the needs of the individuals changed. It would be important to listen carefully to each other. At the end of the meeting there would be a time to check-in.

Chair Rabasa said she would go through the list that the board had sent to her and Vice Chair Lafer. She asked that each board member rate each agreement without additional comment using the following criteria:

1. I fully support this
2. I support this but have reservations
3. I do not support this, but will not sabotage
4. I fully DO NOT support this
5. I have questions before I can vote.

All agreements that were unanimously rated 1 would be checked off the list. The board would then discuss items that had been rated 5.

Ms. O'Rourke said she would prefer not to use the word "sabotage" in the third item. Ms. O'Rourke agreed the phrase "I do not support this, but will live with it" suggested by Ms. Newman, would work for her.

There was additional discussion regarding the process after which Mr. Hess shared the working agreements submitted by each board member on the screen.

Mr. Lafer reasserted that the idea in the first round of discussion would be to identify suggestions that received unanimous consent from the board.

1. Removing speakers and attendees who discriminate against people because of race, ability, socioeconomic level, gender, LGBTQ, and religion.

The group decided to return to this item.

2. Respect for my time and energy by showing up to meetings prepared without expectations of becoming experts on every topic.

The group voted to return to this item.

3. Having a way for board members to escape the meeting space quickly and privately.

There was consensus on this item.

4. Identify a process for the board to use the equity lens regularly.

There was consensus on this item.

5. Use facilitators from outside of our community that are part of programs that understand racism and white supremacy.

The group decided to return to this item.

6. Prioritize impact over intention.

After clarification by Chair Rabasa, the group decided to return to this item.

7. Timely transparent communication especially from leadership.

There was consensus on this item.

8. Be curious.

There was consensus on this item.

9. Active listening and practicing response to disagreement with a spirit of respectful inquiry.

The group decided to return to this item.

10. Acknowledging the harm that has occurred and working toward repair (with mediation).

At the request of Ms. O'Rourke, the group struck this subject from the meeting agreements.

11. Board members extend some grace and curiosity when ideas and thoughts are shared.

The group decided to return to this item.

12. Recognize meeting time as a finite resource and make sure everyone gets their share.

The group decided to return to this item.

13. Agreement that we all read the material in the packet before the meeting, so that we don't waste time by having the material presented during the meetings, and that we all do our best to send any questions we have about any agenda items to the chair by Sunday night before the meeting so that staff can be prepared and have less anxiety about presentations, and also meetings can run more efficiently. This does not preclude the right of any Board member to ask any questions in the meeting itself.

The group decided to return to this item.

14. Having a board that follows public meeting laws and avoids ethics violations.

The group decided to strike this item.

15. Timely and transparent communication from board and district leadership as well as other board members to keep all board members informed and up-to-date.

The group decided to strike this item: later changed to be discussed.

16. Board members commit to directly communicate with other board members to clarify understanding and clear up misunderstandings. Have a way to at the intent of a communication or action and to understand the impact it had on others.

The group decided to strike this subject. Ms. O'Rourke clarified that she had voted 4 for the last two items because they violated meeting laws.

In response to Chair Rabasa, Ms. O'Rourke said she would be willing to discuss the items.

Items 15 and 16 were changed to be discussed.

17. The board agrees to engage in dialog in which everyone feels safe, welcomed and encouraged to express their point of view and share their ideas. All other board members listen with an open mind and heart with the intention of understanding what the speaker is communicating.

The group decided to return to this item.

18. The Board declares that there is no such thing as racism against people who present and identify as white.

The group decided to return to this item.

19. If a Board member raises a point of personal privilege because they believe another Board member is mistreating them or acting inappropriately, the chair has to address that issue before continuing the discussion.

After discussion, the group struck this item.

Chair Rabasa welcomed Ms. Hasija Kauffman to the meeting and reviewed what had been done already. She said that Ms. Hasija Kauffman should review the items and add her vote, which might change the status of items that were green or orange.

After taking a brief break, the board resumed discussion.

Ms. Hsu said that she was concerned that only one vote was needed to veto an item. The item in question was Item 10: Acknowledging the harm that has occurred and working toward repair (with mediation).

Chair Rabasa clarified that she had chosen the parameter to veto an item because if one person did not agree to an item to the extent that they wanted it struck from the agreements, it would not be effective in the long run.

There was further discussion about item 10. Ms. Hsu said that she had a sense that harm had been done to certain board members which had been left unresolved and generated hard feelings. Vice Chair Lafer wondered whether equity training might lead to resolution of some of the ongoing issues. He was concerned that Item 10 was too aspirational and could be

misunderstood. Ms. Hasija Kauffman had observed regular harm done by comments from Board members. She wondered how mediation would be implemented and who would be the mediator. Ms. Hsu added that in order to move toward equity, biases and power dynamics would need to be addressed. There were neutral professional mediators who could address the conflict.

Ms. O'Rourke said she would not participate in mediation to work through racism. She said that it did not work and was traumatizing. She did not believe in the trope that the board was broken and believed that a lot of work had been done. It was not her job to process someone else's racism with them.

After further discussion, Ms. Hsu encouraged the board to return to the discussion at a future date. She did not believe repair was possible without further discussion.

Chair Rabasa summarized that she did not want to ask others in the district to take on the work of exploring equity if the board was not willing to do it themselves. She added that the board would return to the item later. Chair Rabasa suggested that the board discuss two more items and then move on to the Board Goals.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman said she had no concerns with the items that had already been approved. She continued that she would like to have some respect for time and to determine whether a maximum time could be allotted to meetings. Chair Rabasa suggested discussing Items 2, 12, and 13, which all pertained to meetings.

Ms. O'Rourke said that in the prior year she had suggested a maximum time for board meetings after which the Board would have to vote to continue the meeting. She also agreed with the intent of Item 13, but did not think that all parts of it were realistic.

Vice Chair Lafer agreed with a time limit. He added that he had written item 13. He suggested that if the board read the packet when they received it, they could save time during the meetings. Mr. Lafer added that asking questions ahead of time would help staff to prepare their responses.

Ms. Newman said that she thought some of the items under discussion might already be in the working agreements.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman wondered which staff presentations were for the board and which were for the benefit of the public.

Chair Rabasa said she considered the three items were linked. Much time was misused because of lack of preparation. She also wanted to be aware how long each agenda item took.

Vice Chair Lafer suggested, and Ms. O'Rourke agreed, that prerecorded presentations could be sent along with the board packet. Superintendent Dey and Mr. Hess supported the idea.

Chair Rabasa summarized the items that had been approved by all board members. There was additional discussion about incorporating all the items that referred to the use of time at board meetings, and also about board members feeling safe during board meetings both physically and emotionally.

The board agreed to move to the next agenda topic and return to the discussion about meeting agreements at a future date.

2. Set Board Goals for 2022-23

Chair Rabasa introduced the discussion by summarizing how the goals that were shown on the screen had been organized. There were four groups ranked according to their importance to each board member. Ms. Rabasa added that there was some overlap, but no goal sent by a board member had been eliminated.

Ms. Newman asked whether unfinished goals from the prior year, such as the North Region development plan, would be included for the current year. Chair Rabasa acknowledged the question and added that goals required by law, such as the superintendent's evaluation and passing a budget, would not be included on the list, but she wondered to the group what was the answer to Ms. Newman's question.

Ms. O'Rourke wanted to hear whether Leadership was already working on any goals which might be removed from the board's list.

After a break, Chair Rabasa commented that all the board goals fell under four categories—engagement, equity, innovation, and wellness and belonging, and many of them overlapped many categories.

Chair Rabasa suggested that Mr. Hess be allowed to organize the goals and removing duplication. Then, after Superintendent Dey had a chance to determine which goals were being addressed and which might not be possible to address, the Board would have a chance to review and prioritize the revised list at a work session in October.

Chair Rabasa continued that three of the categories: wellness and belonging, equity, and engagement aligned with Superintendent Dey's "three rocks" and could lead to collaborative work.

Ms. O'Rourke felt like her voice was being removed. She thought that the board would have a chance to discuss their individual goals. She was concerned that someone with no understanding of her needs would be editing her work.

Ms. Hsu agreed that there were areas with overlap. Ms. Hsu was willing to collaborate with staff and understood her goals might be revised. She did not think that discussion would end because of the process that Ms. Rabasa suggested.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman agreed that some of the goals were broad and could be edited, but she would want some discussion and input beforehand.

Ms. Hays said that it was important to hear what was possible to accomplish, but that would come at the end of the of the process.

Vice Chair Lafer agreed with Ms. Hasija Kauffman's request to spend some time reviewing each item before they were edited. He also wanted to get input from Superintendent Dey regarding what was realistic, but it was ultimately the board's decision what would be the goals for the future.

Ms. Newman agreed that she felt some loss of voice. She was still not clear what the board was trying to accomplish.

After further discussion, Chair Rabasa presented each goal and gave the author an opportunity to share their intent.

The first goal to be discussed was: *Parent engagement and involvement. Focus on ways to meaningfully engage parents in the education of their students. This must include resources, supports and opportunities for parent engagement and learning.*

Ms. Newman said that she had written the goal because she wanted the district to have consistent policies and procedures for parent engagement. This would increase engagement, student voice and educational outcome.

In response to Ms. O'Rourke, Ms. Newman agreed that equitable engagement was a missing ingredient in student success. Chair Rabasa suggested using a word other than "parent".

Vice Chair Lafer would be interested to encourage parent engagement and involvement on certain issues such as special education. He felt the broad brush approach was not always successful. Ms. Newman said her intent was to develop ways to increase a parent's engagement and support for their own children at home, not the necessarily engagement with the community.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman hoped that parents would be offered different meaningful ways to be involved. She had a similar goal: *Finding ways for parental involvement and thought leadership that do not involve running for school board or serving on PTA.*

Ms. Newman believed that some parents did not know how to prepare their home for having school children. She hoped to help students and their families be more successful.

Ms. Hsu said that there were reasons why some parents who might have much to say did not get the opportunity to do so. She had written the goal: *Create opportunities for student voice.*

Ms. Hasija Kauffman was concerned that teachers might be asked to do some of the work regarding the goals discussed.

The second goal to be discussed was: *Increase clarity and transparency of communication from the board and district to the community.*

Ms. Hays said that she felt that her goal was clearly written and important. There was no further input.

Chair Rabasa presented another goal: *Review and confirm equity goals to really think through what is working – especially in light of last year's climate survey.*

Ms. Hasija Kauffman said that she had not been shocked by the poor results of the prior year's school climate survey and wanted to lessen the gap between those who felt positive about school and those who did not.

Ms. O'Rourke added that the goal on school climate change was in alignment with her goal of reviewing expulsions, which read: *Every child living in poverty and is part of a protected group must be evaluated by the Board or a board committee before that will be allowed.* She said that she wanted to write policies to address some of the inequities in the district.

Vice Chair Lafer agreed that the use of expulsions was inequitable nationwide and that more education needed to occur regarding the expulsion process and the ways to appeal an expulsion.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman considered expulsions to be one part of the equity plan.

Ms. Newman liked the idea of determining whether the district had the correct programs in order to address inequities. It would be important to know that time and money was spent in the right direction.

It was agreed that Chair Rabasa would make a link between the two goals that had been raised.

There was additional discussion about the high rate of expulsions among ethnic groups and protected classes. Ms. O'Rourke commented that to expel a child was to give up on that child and to renege on a contract to educate him or her. She added that many students who had been expelled or suspended became part of the homeless population. Ms. Hsu commented that the problem of disproportionate discipline existed among all types: expulsions; suspensions; referrals; even office visits.

Mr. Lafer wondered whether the Board would be able to identify some goals to agree upon by the end of the afternoon. He said that it might be possible to create task groups to work on some of the issues.

Chair Rabasa answered that the prior year's process had left some board members feeling left out. She was open to the consensus of the group.

Vice Chair Lafer suggested a mid-year check-in.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman had been expecting to complete the priority sorting exercise and then begin the action step process, but did not expect to finish the work that evening.

Ms. O'Rourke felt left out of the decision-making process. She wanted to come to an agreement on priorities.

Ms. Hays appreciated hearing from each Board member regarding the goals that were important to them. She wanted to continue the listening session.

After a short break, the group continued to the next goal: *Improve outcomes for students with disabilities.* Ms. Hays hoped that staff would provide action items that could support her goal as written. She acknowledged that her goal might be added to others that were similar.

Ms. Newman offered that her goal was similar: *Effective inclusion; Learning for All-a measurable increase in the number of students on IEPs who are effectively included in the general education*

classes and curriculum. Ms. Newman wanted to see more students in inclusive settings, which hopefully would lead to increased outcomes and a sense of belonging.

Chair Rabasa added she wanted to support the goal with the resources necessary.

Ms. O'Rourke said her goal of revamping special education aligned with Ms. Newman's goal. Ms. O'Rourke hoped to hire an outside evaluator to determine how the department could be restructured to be less separate from the rest of education.

The next goal was: *Clear grasp of equity.* Ms. Hsu did not need to expand on her goal, but opined that using the equity lens sometimes shut down questioning and discussion, which she hoped would not occur in the future.

Chair Rabasa said that she had also written a goal about equity: *Effectively centering equity, with measurable outcomes (as determined through metrics defined using the equity lens).* Ms. Rabasa hoped to think and innovate towards positive and fruitful experiences in schools.

Ms. O'Rourke commented on the next goal for which she was the author: *Removal of OSBA: By paying them, we are supporting the crony system of oppression. We should be using our board policies and making non-bias interpretations of those policies.* Ms. O'Rourke said that OSBA supported racist and white supremacist actions against her. She wished to have them defunded. Ms. O'Rourke gave more details on negative behavior towards her. She did not consider the work of OSBA helpful.

Ms. Hsu understood that OSBA had not been helpful in responding to Ms. O'Rourke's concerns. She wanted to learn more about what the repercussions of defunding them might be.

Mr. Lafer recognized that what Ms. O'Rourke was saying was true and disagreed on some of OSBA's legislative positions. He added that OSBA did provide policy updates which were of benefit as long as the district did not have inhouse legal counsel. Ms. O'Rourke responded that she did not have to have her goal approved, but would want to educate the Board about the issues of institutional racism and inequities.

The next goal to be discussed was: *Regional Career and Technical Education (CTE) high school plan (with LaneESD, Springfield, and Bethel).* Ms. O'Rourke wanted to create regional high schools with other districts to support CTE programs, which would provide jobs, successful futures for students, and support for educators.

Mr. Lafer said that he hoped to create a daily schedule that would allow students to access CTE classes that were not at their local school. Chair Rabasa responded that Superintendent Dey and his team were looking into the issue. Ms. Rabasa added that the new President of Lane Community College was excited to discuss the topic of a CTE regional high school as well.

3. Selecting Working Agreements for general board work for 2022-23

This item was tabled for a future meeting. Chair Rabasa hoped to find another block of time to continue the work that had begun that day.

Chair Rabasa asked if there were any final comments. Ms. Hasija Kauffman thanked Chair Rabasa and Vice Chair Lafer and the staff for the work they did to organize the retreat.

Ms. O'Rourke said that trust between her and others had been broken. She was concerned that staff and persons she did not know well would be editing her written goals. She would try to work with the process.

Ms. Hays appreciated the conversation the Board had that evening as they examined each Board member's goals. She felt positive that the goals would have a good impact on the community. She thanked her fellow board members for their in-depth sharing on their thought process.

Ms. Newman thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair and senior staff. She also appreciated hearing each Board member's thinking on how they determined what was important to them.

Superintendent Dey said it had been helpful to him to hear each Board member's goals and agreements. He hoped to make recommendations to the Board on how to make their goals a reality and understood that the goals would be challenging.

Mr. Hess appreciated the depth of conversation and engagement and was looking forward to getting work done on the Board's priorities.

II. ADJOURN

Chair Rabasa adjourned the retreat at 8:00 p.m.

Andy Dey
District Clerk

Maya Rabasa
Board Chair

(Recorded by Eliza Drummond)