

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

Date: October 1, 2022

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a retreat from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. 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 September 28, 2022.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:

Maya Rabasa, Chair
Gordon Lafer, Vice Chair
Keerti Hasija Kauffman
Alicia Hays
Michelle Hsu
Judy Newman
Laural O'Rourke

STAFF:

Andy Dey, Superintendent
Rob Hess, Chief of Staff
Lisa Fjordbeck, Executive Assistant / Department Operations Coordinator
Debbie McKim, Executive Assistant / Board Secretary
Robin Quirke, Facilitator

I. BOARD RETREAT

1. Establishing Meeting Agreements for 2022-23
2. Set Board Goals for 2022-23
3. Selecting Working Agreements for General Board Work for 2022-23

Chair Rabasa introduced the meeting facilitator, Robin Quirke. Ms. Rabasa said that Robin was known for her work to help people explore white supremacy and colonizer culture. Robin also hosted a podcast called *Cracks in the Cement*, which Chair Rabasa had been listening too and found very educational.

Robin thanked the Board for allowing her to assist with the work during the retreat. They displayed an agenda for the afternoon which included: introductions; a cultural orientation; self-awareness, progress blocks and nervous system care; group norms and relational aspirations; structure of goal-setting; sifting through the goals; summarizing next steps and reflection. Robin said that she would get a full written report to the Board by October 7.

Robin Quirke solicited questions and introductions from each Board member. After introducing herself, they called on Ms. Hays to share her story. Ms. Hays said she was inspired to serve on the Board after working with Dr. Martinez and Dr. Lake on the opportunity gap. She had also

been asked by past Superintendent Russell to facilitate equity work in the district. Ms. Hays said that school was challenging for her as a non-reader and had memories of being held back.

Chair Rabasa said that she had joined the Board to serve as a bridge to bring the voice of those who felt excluded and disenfranchised. Ms. Rabasa entered kindergarten after moving from Mexico and moved often during her school career. Her most joyful moments were during recess where she was able to demonstrate her gymnastic talents.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman felt that she needed to serve on the board to ensure that the future of her children and other students were successful. She also wanted to serve to ground herself in the community. She had a mixed experience at school but had wonderful teachers who helped her to be a good student. She called herself the “extracurricular activity queen” which created joy and stress at the same time.

Mr. Lafer ran for the Board because of the experiences of her daughter and also observing companies trying to privatize education. He reported that he often found himself in the principals office because of insubordination, and spent a lot of time in detention.

Ms. O'Rourke said she ran for the Board to fight for her children to be seen in 4J and for their IEP accommodations to be followed. She added that she had also found an opportunity to serve after the death of George Floyd and nationwide recognition of racism. Ms. O'Rourke reported that her first year on the Board she experienced discrimination and tone-policing by the staff and fellow Board members and was still experiencing racism. She hoped that things would get better.

Ms. Hsu ran for the Board so that she could be involved in the community. She did not feel like she belonged in school especially after changing schools in fifth grade. She acknowledged her personal angst and reported that school was often fun, especially tennis and stage crew.

Ms. Newman said that she ran for the Board to share her expertise in early learning and special education. Ms. Newman said it had been disappointing to see the work on inclusion continue to be abysmal. She added that the burdens on schools to provide support for all aspects of students' lives had grown and needed to be recognized. Ms. Newman's own education had been stable. She had enjoyed the arts, theaters and the outdoors and economics. She realized that the history she was taught was one-sided and it motivated her to explore ethnic studies.

Robin Quirke thanked the Board for their introductions and moved on to next portion of the retreat. Robin said that cultural orientation was the culture in which people found themselves. Robin defined white supremacy as categorizing and dividing people into groups by placing them on a hierarchy at the top of which was Christian, white, men. White supremacy also included cultural expectations and norms. Robin shared the *Aspects and Assumptions of Whiteness and White Culture in the United States* from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Robin said that the aspects of white culture were rooted in the control of others.

Robin hoped that the structure of the meeting would help the Board avoid the following blocks towards progress: Performance matching (being competitive about sharing); Evaluation apprehension (being afraid of having ideas judged by others); free-riding; hot-housing (forcing

attendees to process a lot of information at a time); and anchoring (going along with the idea of another).

Robin also asked the Board to recognize any physical symptoms they might be experiencing during the meeting and sharing how they were feeling if necessary.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman shared her personal experience with chronic illness.

Robin shared their group norms: assessing participation style and encouraging those who did not usually get to share; avoiding interrupting others while they were sharing; naming power dynamics. Robin Quirke showed a power wheel that indicated who was typically marginalized and who had power. Robin continued that they hoped the Board to ask for what they needed during the meeting and that the Board would assume the best intentions of others because everyone was a learner in life. Robin said that if harm was done, the Board should attend first and foremost to impacts. Additionally, they should ask clarifying questions to better understand, before advocating a solution.

Robin continued by showing the structure of the process she was proposing to assist the board in determining their goals. First the author would share their goal. Next, everyone would spend time to study the goal and write down any thoughts they might have, after which there would be time for clarifying questions. Finally, there would be additional time for reflect on what additional information they might need to agree to the goal, followed by time for each Board member to share any notes they took. There would be ten minutes to process each goal.

Ms. Hays said that the Board had reviewed many of the goals at the prior meeting. She wondered whether they would be discussing them again.

Robin responded that she hoped the Board would quickly review all the goals so that they would be in her final report. Robin continued by sharing how she had combined and organized the goals prior to the meeting.

Ms. O'Rourke and Ms. Newman asked clarifying questions about how the goals were structured, and remembered that the Board had not clustered the goals into groups with similar language.

Ms. Rabasa clarified that Robin had listened to the first retreat and had grouped the goals that she heard the Board discussing.

Robin showed the goals on engagement and equity the Board had discussed at the previous retreat. The Board indicated that they were comfortable moving on.

There was further discussion about when the Board would choose priority goals, after which Robin continued with the goal regarding expulsions.

Ms. O'Rourke clarified that she wanted to have Board policy and administrative regulations to ensure that all expulsions were treated in an equitable manner. Robin said she would make note of Ms. O'Rourke's request in the report.

Chair Rabasa clarified that any agreements or conclusions that the Board made would be in Robin's report. She asked to continue having the discussion about each goal before deciding how to proceed.

Robin shared the next goal: improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Ms. Newman suggested that her goal about effective inclusion aligned with this goal. Ms. O'Rourke commented that many students with special education plans did not necessarily have physical disabilities.

Chair Rabasa suggested adding language to the goal regarding funding and additional staffing to make the goal successful.

Ms. O'Rourke said that her goal to change the special education system and how it was working could be included with the two others. Chair Rabasa agreed that Ms. O'Rourke's goal was important. Ms. Hays added that if the goal was chosen as a priority, there would be an opportunity to refine the wording of the goal.

Robin showed the three goals that highlighted equity, including the goal to defund the Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA). There was a discussion about what additional information was needed to take Board action regarding OSBA. It was agreed that the issue would come before the Board as an item for information, then an item for action at a future meeting, and finally an item for action. It was suggested that a work session would provide more time for discussion.

After the Board had taken a break, Robin shared a simplified process for discussing new board goals.

The next goal to discuss was creating a regional Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. Ms. O'Rourke reiterated her hopes for the design of the program. Ms. Hsu thought that the district was moving forward with plans to create a CTE program. Ms. Newman mentioned having a work session so that the Board could learn the work that had already occurred.

Superintendent Dey shared that planning and development of a program had already begun. Funding would come from a variety of sources.

Mr. Lafer wondering whether the Board could create policies that would direct the district's work on CTE long-term.

Chair Rabasa mentioned that Bethel School District had begun a CTE program and suggested that local districts could collaborate in their efforts to provide courses to students who were not college-bound. //

The Board then reviewed a goal that had not been discussed previously: Create more engaging classes by supporting teachers to create more innovative and varied courses, units of ways of teaching things.

Mr. Lafer said that he was the author of the goal. His hope was for students to be engaged and find joy in school. His vision was for the Board, district staff, and educators to create innovative ways to enrich education while staying within the bounds of the public system.

Ms. O'Rourke asked whether the goal aligned with Ms. Hasija Kauffman's goal of supporting students and creating joy in school. Ms. Hasija Kauffman agreed that there was some similarity and supported Mr. Lafer's goal. Ms. O'Rourke added that teachers were vocalizing their concern that they were overworked and that school was again creating many stressors for students and staff.

Chair Rabasa added that she wished to combine her goal *Creativity in all facets of district operations and practices* with Vice Chair Lafer's. She opined that a model had been created for summer school that allowed teachers to teach to their passion. She felt that students and teachers would benefit from more creative content, and added that the goal would align with equity efforts by giving student a chance to see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Vice Chair Lafer said that the goal was his most important aspiration. He shared some ways in which the district could collaborate with existing community programs.

Ms. O'Rourke suggested that the goal to annually measure morale and retention could also be included in Mr. Lafer's other goal as a measure of whether other initiatives were working.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman and Vice Chair Lafer agreed that their goals about engaging teachers and classes could be combined with other similar goals. In response to a question from Ms. Hasija Kauffman, Superintendent Dey said they were in the final stages of interviewing staff twice a year to determine educator morale. Mr. Lafer thought that exit interviews could also be informative to learn why staff left the district.

Ms. Hsu would be interested in finding out more about stay and exit interviews.

Chair Rabasa shared that a person of color pursuing an administrative license was developing stay and exit interviews as part of their doctoral research.

Ms. Newman was encouraged to learn that Superintendent Dey was working on morale surveys and cautioned about survey fatigue. Ms. Hays also gave her support, and appreciated the wording *broken down by specific subgroups*.

Robin moved on to the next goal regarding upcoming budget deficits. Ms. Hays hoped to plan ahead for a known issue but was also aware that it would be part of the work that the Board would do when creating the budget. She wanted to make sure that her fellow Board members knew that it was important to her. Superintendent Dey replied that the district would communicate that there would be no replacement funds after the 2020 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund was phased out.

Mr. Lafer claimed the next goal to reduce standardized testing and develop performance-based assessments. He remembered that staff were planning to survey teachers in the spring to determine how much time they spent on standardized testing. Ms. Newman was in support, and remembered that the Board had previously put the goal on hold. Mr. Lafer agreed with Chair Rabasa's suggestion that the goal could be included with supporting teachers in being more creative.

After a break, the Board resumed the discussion.

Ms. Newman said that she had written her goal to develop a values-based and stable funding plan with the hope that the Budget Committee and the Board could have more input on planning the budget. She wanted to determine a way to fund the values of the district.

Ms. O'Rourke asked Ms. Newman to clarify whether the idea was to have initial conversations or to increase communications with the Financial Department. She wondered whether starting the budget process earlier might be helpful. Superintendent Dey said that the district planned to learn soon what the community prioritized through an integrated planning process. Ms. Newman answered that her hope was to identify priorities, especially since available funds would likely be less.

The next goal encompassed revamping the Department of Human Resources and creating Board policies. Ms. O'Rourke, who authored the goal, considered it important to equity in the district. Superintendent Dey responded that current conversations regarding pay equity and classification levels might inform the Board moving forward. Ms. O'Rourke wanted to have outside help to revamp the department.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman supported the goal, but was grappling with the immensity of the undertaking. Superintendent Dey responded that they would try to make high leverage changes and would bring in someone to give a fresh perspective. Chair Rabasa was not sure where the Board would be involved in the process beyond a directive to explore improvements. Ms. O'Rourke said that the Board could develop policies that defined the work of the department. There was further discussion about the ways in which the Board would make their expectations known.

Ms. Hsu was the author of the next goal *Prioritize building relationships and morale*. Ms. Hsu said that she hoped to improve the climate in buildings through focused efforts of positive interactions. Vice Chair Lafer wondered what the goal would look like in practice. Ms. Hsu suggested scheduling time for teachers to build relationships with students, and for students to have time with each other. Chair Rabasa asked whether Ms. Hsu's goal could be combined with her goal of improving mental health and wellness supports for students. Ms. Hsu agreed that the goals fell under the idea of relational health. Chair Rabasa hoped that the broader idea might become one of the top goals. Mr. Lafer strongly supported the goal and its correlation with mental health.

Ms. O'Rourke asked how could the Board support work that might already be started. Chair Rabasa understood the goal to be identifying the pathways to achieve the broader goals.

There was additional conversation regarding all the areas of work that might contribute to the overall goal.

Chair Rabasa recognized that work had begun on many of the goals the Board were defining. There was overlap with the desires of the Board, the district and the community.

Robin said that they had concluded the process of reviewing the goals and asked Chair Rabasa what came next.

Chair Rabasa said the next step was to narrow down the list and work on editing them before the next Board meeting. Chair Rabasa asked the Board whether they would be willing to share their top goals and to schedule a work session to finalize the language.

Ms. Hays asked whether it would be possible to reconvene after Robin had completed the task of combining the goals and doing some editing.

Ms. Newman also wanted to see the goals after they had been combined and edited.

Vice Chair Lafer defined equity; creativity and innovation; and mental health, wellness, and community building as his three areas of focus. He wanted to explore what was realistic to accomplish.

Ms. O'Rourke said it was challenging for her to organize her ideas without more information. She reiterated to the Board that they were responsible for writing policy and many of the goals were not changes to policy, but actions that might already be occurring. In response to a question from Robin, Ms. O'Rourke said that the discussion on the last area of focus—to improve mental health—was particularly dissatisfying.

Robin said that her report to the Board would contain much of the detail of the discussion and decisions that were made. If Ms. O'Rourke wanted to point out additional concerns or clarifications, Robin would add them to her report.

Ms. O'Rourke asked what systemic changes would be part of the goal to improve mental health and wellness supports for students and staff.

Ms. Hasija Kauffman said that the goals had been written in a combination of goals, mission, vision. Unless there was a framework to parse out what were actionable goals, it would be difficult to define how to make systemic changes.

Ms. Hsu was concerned that communication was breaking down due to fatigue.

Chair Rabasa shared an analogy for the difference between the work of the Board—to determine where the boat was going, and the Superintendent—to get the oars and the crew ready. She hoped to find time to clarify the goal of improving mental health.

Chair Rabasa continued by summarizing that Robin would create a report by October 7 and hoped that a subcommittee of the Board could make some edits and that the whole Board would commit to a work session prior to October 12. She asked the Board to be flexible.

Ms. Newman hoped that Robin's report would include the comments that had been made at the earlier work session.

Ms. O'Rourke asked how the Board would direct the Superintendent to prioritize the goal of improving building relationships and morale. She wanted the work to be clear and actionable.

Robin Quirke thanked the Board for their time and for the work they accomplished.

Chair Rabasa asked for clarification from the Board how to schedule the work session and final vote. The Board agreed that they would meet in a work session on October 12 and place an item for action on the agenda of the regular meeting that night. If the Board was not ready to vote, they could table the item for a later date. Ms. O'Rourke asked whether staff could compile what work had already begun. After hearing from Superintendent Dey, Chair Rabasa said that if they could not receive all the information necessary, they would cancel the work session.

Chair Rabasa thanked the Board in advance for their cooperation in scheduling future meetings, and thanked Robin Quirke for her guidance.

II. ADJOURN

Chair Rabasa adjourned the retreat at 8:04 p.m.

Andy Dey
District Clerk

Maya Rabasa
Board Chair

(Recorded by Eliza Drummond)