

MINUTES OF WORK SESSION
SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON

Date: April 3, 2024

The Board of Directors (BOD) of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a work session at 4:30 p.m. in-person at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street in Eugene, Oregon, via live-stream and broadcast on KRVM. Notice of the meeting was emailed to the media and posted on the 4J website on March 29, 2024.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Rabasa
Vice Chair Jenny Jonak
Morgan Munro
Rick Hamilton
Ericka Thessen

STAFF:

Colt Gill, Interim Superintendent
Seth Pfaefflin, Director of Student Services
Tony Lyman, Staff Development Specialist
Jeff Johnson, Elementary Education Director
Sherry Moore, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff
Debbie McKim, Executive Assistant to the Interim Superintendent and Board

OTHER GUESTS:

None.

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS:

Sabrina Gordon, Eugene Education Association (EEA) President
Liz Johnson, EEA/4J Inclusion Advisor

MEDIA:

KRVM

I. WORK SESSION

II. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

Chair Maya Rabasa called the work session to order at 4:35 p.m. She said the names of the board members who were present.

III. ITEM FOR INFORMATION

1. SPECIAL EDUCATION WEIGHTED CASELOAD ANALYSIS

Director of Student Services Seth Pfaefflin, Staff Development Specialist Tony Lyman, Eugene Education Association (EEA) President Sabrina Gordon, and EEA/4J Inclusion Advisor Liz Johnson presented information on special education weighted caseloads and behavior systems via PowerPoint presentation.

EEA President Sabrina Gordon explained their joint goal of improving special education for students. She said that EEA/4J Inclusion Advisor Liz Johnson's new role was created to improve inclusive practices for all students. The position will last two years. She said their first-year goals have focused on assessing the experience students are having, educators are having, and parents are having, to learn what supports are still needed.

Ms. Gordon said that students need individualized attention, particularly students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). She said they will focus on weighted caseload analysis to improve the ability of educators to provide more individualized attention.

Director of Student Services Seth Pfaefflin explained that in 2018 they started looking at weighted caseload analysis. He referenced the report, Internal District Wide Analysis of Factors Contributing to Caseload Complexity, provided to the Board of Directors (BOD) prior to the meeting and displayed via PowerPoint presentation.

Weighted caseloads take the needs of individual students into account when considering special education staffing, allow for more equitable distribution of workload and staffing, and helps target student needs more accurately. He provided an example, although two teachers might each have 25 students on a caseload, the students may have differing needs.

Eugene Education Association/4J Inclusion Advisor Liz Johnson introduced the formula used to weigh students. Every student started with a weight of 1, adding additional weight based on certain factors like having a safety plan, one-on-one accommodations, student, mobility, etc. She added that all of the factors were assigned weight because they are an additional impact to a case manager's workload.

Ms. Thessen asked where the physical assistance for transfers factor is represented in the weighted caseload analysis.

Staff Development Specialist Tony Lyman responded that that would be listed under accommodations and would be reflected with a weight of 0.1.

Chair Rabasa asked what the difference is between a safety plan and a behavior support plan.

Ms. Johnson responded that safety plans are typically short term and address immediate safety needs. Behavior support plans address the root causes of a behavior.

Mr. Pfaefflin added that behavior plans are an intensive process which take about 30 hours of work. They begin with a safety plan and move onto behavior plans when necessary.

Ms. Johnson presented an overview of data from November and December 2023:

- 2,112 students on IEPs in the district
- 1,695 IEPs analyzed for weighted approach
- Total number of teachers (including full-time and part-time)
 - Elementary: 35 teachers/31.25 FTE
 - Middle school: 16 teachers/16.0 FTE
 - High school: 18 teachers/18.0 FTE
 - Charter: 5 teachers/3.75 FTE
 - Outlier programs: 6 teachers/5.25 FTE

Ms. Johnson explained that the data represents a snapshot in time, and the numbers at any given time could be different because there are always ongoing evaluations.

Mr. Lyman provided details about the difference between weighted and unweighted numbers at different levels within the district (assuming staffing of 1.0 FTE). The elementary school unweighted caseload average is 19.48, the weighted caseload average is 23.67. The middle school unweighted caseload average is 24.81, the weighted caseload average is 28.6. The high school unweighted caseload average is 24.94, the weighted caseload average is 29.81.

Mr. Lyman mentioned that the report is an internal comparison. They are looking at how the case managers are resourced in comparison to other schools within the district. He said it is not possible to compare data with other districts.

In response to a previous question raised by Chair Rabasa about the range of weighted caseloads, Mr. Lyman gave some examples: at the elementary level, the minimum total weighted caseload (TWC) was 18.4 students and the maximum total weighted caseload was 32.2 students. At the middle school level, the minimum was 22.6, the maximum was 32.9. At the high school level, the minimum was 27.3 and the maximum was 34.3. At charter schools, the minimum was 24.4 and the maximum was 40. Across all levels, elementary to high school, including charter, the minimum was 18.2 and the maximum was 40. He noted that the highest ranges were being experienced by teachers who were staffed less than 1.0 (e.g. 0.5 FTE teachers were carrying caseloads far more than half that of 1.0 FTE teachers). He said their data reflects a big discrepancy regarding expectations of teachers.

Vice Chair Jonak asked if other states and/or districts have caseload caps and if those caseload caps were weighted.

Ms. Johnson responded that the ones she looked at were not weighted, and the range is great.

Mr. Pfaefflin stated that the weighted model informed their staffing recommendations, and as a result, 4JSD added 2.0 FTE across four schools (1.0 FTE at Willagillespie Elementary School, .5 FTE at Network Charter School, and .75 at Family school at Buena Vista). Not reflected in the report was the addition of a .5 FTE at Holt Elementary School.

Vice Chair Jonak asked if they look at schools that have low IEP numbers that suggest that the district may have some identification or eligibility problems.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that there are factors, like the strength of intervention systems in schools, poverty rates, etc. He said in general they have gotten better about identification over time. That's partly behind why the district's special education rates have slowly risen. He said the district is at about 14.5% special education right now and there's an 11% funding cap in the state of Oregon, requiring the district to access additional funding.

Vice Chair Jonak noted that one of the district's charter schools had an unusually low IEP rate and it made her wonder if families and students are being educated about IEP eligibility.

Ms. Johnson responded that staff have been engaging in conversations about the issue, but they ultimately decided to focus on schools that were showing a strong deficit in resources.

Mr. Pfaefflin added, in response to Vice Chair Jonak's question, that it will be addressed.

Ms. Johnson outlined their professional development recommendations: provide ongoing target IEP writing support to case managers, improve utilization of Goalbook Toolkit IEP software, establish clear guidelines for how and when to include factors in the IEP, continue training case managers on accurately applying accommodations, modifications, and specially designed instruction.

Ms. Thessen asked if a student has situational mutism, and they use their own device to communicate (i.e. text), does that get included as assistive technology?

Ms. Johnson responded that it should, but it is something that the district needs to establish formally.

Mr. Pfaefflin introduced accommodations and modifications, stating that there is wide variability on use of accommodations and modifications. He noted that accommodations involves how a student learns the material, while still addressing grade level standards; and modifications involve not meeting all the grade level standards. If a student has

modifications on their IEP in high school, they do not earn a regular diploma, but a form of a modified diploma.

Mr. Lyman inserted that recent data suggests that 19.1% of the district's special education students earned a modified diploma.

Ms. Johnson added that as they examined accommodations and modifications, it was clear that some things were listed under modifications, but they were not modifications, they were accommodations. This revealed the need to deepen case managers' understanding of how to accurately categorize the supports. She implied that the errors in reporting could have huge implications on a student's success (i.e. setting them on the path to earn a modified diploma).

Ms. Johnson outlined their next steps: develop and deliver professional learning opportunities for special education teachers, look at mobility numbers at the end of this school year, develop a system and/or tool to ease weighting, explicitly define and communicate inclusive practices and continuum of services, and time with general education teachers for professional development on inclusive practices.

Chair Rabasa asked if they plan to provide professional development opportunities for classified staff who work with special education students.

Mr. Lyman responded that they talked about the impact that EA support has on a caseload at a school. If they'd used a model that included minutes of service, it would make it easy to quantify the impact of EAs. And although it is something they want to work toward, it currently cannot be factored in.

Chair Rabasa asked why Network Charter School chose to offer a 0.7 EA versus the 0.5 licensed teacher.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that he will follow up with that information.

Ms. Thessen commented that on a recent visit to Howard Elementary, she noticed the only accessible bathroom was on the bottom floor, making access extra challenging for students who use wheelchairs, and extra challenging for staff.

Ms. Thessen asked if there are plans for teacher peer-to-peer collaborative circles and if similar work will be done around 504s.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that the model would not work as well applied to 504s. He said he will follow up about the peer-to-peer collaborative circles.

Vice Chair Jonak asked if safeguards are in place for when SDI minutes are not happening accurately, and to ensure that students do not get penalized.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that SDI minutes are written on a weekly, monthly, or annual basis. He said if an SDI is missed on a particular day, it can be made up within that week or month.

IV. ITEM FOR ACTION

1. BEHAVIOR SYSTEMS UPDATE

Director of Student Services Seth Pfaefflin and Elementary Education Director Jeff Johnson presented a behavior systems update via PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Johnson introduced Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) as a framework that integrates data and instruction to maximize student achievement and supports students' academic, social/emotional, attendance and behavioral needs from a strengths-based perspective. Tier 1: universal supports, Tier 2: additional supports, Tier 3: intensive supports.

Mr. Pfaefflin added that 4J purchased Synergy MTSS modules for district wide use. They are currently piloting the modules at more than ten schools. They are focusing on Tier 1 support systems in each school, trying to avoid students needing Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. The modules include a large family engagement component and will increase information for families to see how their students are doing. Mr. Pfaefflin said the work will be ongoing for many years. He provided an additional handout to board members.

Mr. Pfaefflin said the district expanded their behavior EA (BBSA) trainings from once per month to three times per month. Next year, they may scale the trainings back down to two times per month.

Mr. Pfaefflin explained that the district expanded their MANDT trainings. Oregon Senate Bill 283 requires one trained adult for every 50 students. In the district now there are about 300 trained adults. The training is two full days for initial certification, and an annual one-day refresher.

Vice Chair Jonak asked what kinds of things are covered in BBSA trainings.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that there is some crossover with BBSA and MANDT. He said the trainings focus on understanding the escalation cycle, how to communicate to someone who is escalating, how to deliver social skills instruction and interventions.

Vice Chair Jonak asked if the social skills instruction is neuro-diverse affirming.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that he hopes so, but he sees many areas that they and the curriculum can improve.

Chair Rabasa asked how they prioritize who receives the training and if they are going to train more than the required MANDT trainers.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that there are certain positions the district wants MANDT trained: principals, life skills staff, etc. He said he wants to expand the day one training to more staff.

In response to Chair Rabasa's question, Mr. Johnson added that they do not expect to stop at the required number of MANDT trainers.

Vice Chair Jonak asked how many MANDT trainers and BBSA trainers the district has and if they can scale up capacity by adding more trainers.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that they have five MANDT trainers (possibly increasing to six), two BBSA trainers, and are hoping to increase to four MTSS consultants.

Mr. Hamilton asked the cost of training per individual.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that the district's biggest expense is the use of substitute teachers.

Ms. Munro asked if staff have time to review what works for each individual student.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that collaboration time is essential. There are two ways to access the student's information: the Synergy Information System and an on-site physical binder with IEPs, behavior plans, and safety plans.

Mr. Pfaefflin mentioned the district's Systems Assistance Teams (SAT), designed to focus on supporting systems work in the schools. He said the systems work is essential right now. He reiterated that they are hoping to add two additional MTSS consultant positions, for a total of four.

Mr. Johnson said in January, staff and administrators began a tiered system analysis to audit each of the district's schools' systems. They also began reviewing discipline procedures. As of March 22, 2024, many of the district's schools have now received a tiered system analysis. Systems Assistance Teams will use the information to provide targeted assistance to schools.

Mr. Johnson presented a Discipline Matrix Teacher Flowchart. The flowchart was updated in January 2024 and all K-12 principals were trained at that time. He said principals then trained the teachers in their buildings to ensure that all staff are fluent with the district's discipline procedures.

Vice Chair Jonak asked if a version of the flowchart is shared with families.

Mr. Johnson said that is something they could work on. He added that their Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook is shared with families.

Mr. Pfaefflin informed the board that they recently began training elementary principles on room clear procedures for use when a classroom is disruptive and it is necessary to move students to a separate location to maintain student safety or dignity.

Mr. Johnson provided an update about increasing staffing. He said they are adding 2.0 FTE Student Success Coordinators at Buena Vista and Edgewood elementary schools, and adding Assistant Principals at Howard, Holt, and Willagillespie elementary schools. They are adding a Student Success Coordinator at each high school.

In closing, Mr. Pfaefflin stated that full implementation [of MTSS] takes five years, and it is currently year one.

V. ADJORN

Chair Rabasa adjourned the work session at 6:33 p.m.



Colt Gill
District Clerk



Maya Rabasa
Board Chair

(Recorded by LCOG)
Approved on 50/01/2024