

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

Date: April 3, 2024

The Board of Directors (BOD) of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Oregon, held a regular board meeting at 7:00 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 Friday, March 29, 2024.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Maya Rabasa, Chair
Jenny Jonak, Vice Chair
Ericka Thessen
Rick Hamilton
Morgan Munro
Tom Di Liberto (online)

STAFF:

Colt Gill, Interim Superintendent
Jenna McCulley, Chief of Staff
Brooke Wagner, Director of Human Resources
Kyle Tucker, Chief Operations Officer
Sebastian Bolden, Director of Middle School Education
Larry Williams, Executive Director of Academic Access and Advancement
Imelda Rodriguez De la Cruz, Western Regional Educators Network (WREN) Lead
Chemika Bolden, Grow Your Own Program Lead
Matt Brown, Director of Finance
Arthur Hart, Director of Transportation
Oscar Loureiro, Director of Research and Planning
Steve Menachemson, Director of Technology
Ed Mendelssohn, CTE Administrator
Tammy Steeves, Secondary ELA Specialist
Adrienne Pierce, Secondary Curriculum and MTSS Administrator
Debbie McKim, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and Board

Sherry Moore, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff

EMPLOYEE GROUPS:

Sabrina Gordon, President of Eugene Education Association (EEA)

Nancy Buffum, President of Eugene Education Foundation (EEF)
Nicolas Hadley, President of Manager, Administrator, Professional, and Supervisor (MAPS)
(online)

MEDIA:

KRVM

Register Guard

I. REGULAR BOARD MEETING

II. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE, LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Chair Maya Rabasa called the regular board meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. She said the names of the board members who were present. Superintendent Colt Gill led the flag salute and Chair Rabasa read the land acknowledgement statement.

III. AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Rabasa requested to postpone Item 4: Proposal for Academic Calendars for the Next Two Years, listed under Items for Action at a Future Meeting.

IV. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Chair Rabasa introduced Interim Superintendent Colt Gill, who will be serving in his role for the next 15 months.

Interim Superintendent Gill provided a statement, saying that he is grateful for the opportunity. In his career, Eugene School District 4J has always been known for its innovation and its commitment to educational excellence and equity. He is thrilled to be a part of the 4J family. Interim Superintendent Gill said in the past three days, he has met leadership from Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) and Manager, Administrator, Professional, and Supervisor (MAPS). Soon he will meet with Eugene Education Association (EEA). Other activities have included visiting one school, a facilities office, the Education Center, etc., and he has had the opportunity to meet with several staff members in various departments. Interim Superintendent Gill added that district staff are working hard and its showing. He said there is a genuine readiness to serve our schools so that we can serve our students and families better. He will continue his focus on discovery and building trust.

V. RECEIVE REPORTS FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Nellie Schmitke-Rosiek provided a report from South Eugene High School. She said students and staff are getting back into gear after spring break and seniors are looking ahead toward graduation. Ms. Schmitke-Rosiek brought attention to a recent event at Spencer Butte Middle School, in which a teacher was asked to take down a Palestinian flag that they had displayed in their classroom. Ms. Schmitke-Rosiek asserted that the [districts] response was problematic for a number of reasons. She said it is a complicated

issue. She has no doubt that people are genuinely are having feelings of discomfort about the flag being displayed in the classroom, but she also believes that silence about the suffering of the Palestinian people is a source of discomfort for others. She said the silence enables the violence causing suffering. The answer to the situation is not to prohibit any statement of solidarity with the Palestinian people. She suggested that prohibiting a gesture of solidarity with Palestinians is itself a form of hidden curriculum and expressed that the teacher's gesture was a subtle act of care. She urged the board to reconsider the prohibition and find a more nuanced way to support all 4J students.

Sheridan Schilling provided a report from Churchill High School. Several spring sports competitions are taking place: tennis, track and field, baseball, and softball. Junior Varsity softball had a home game against Springfield on Wednesday, April 3. Girls' lacrosse plays West Albany on Friday, April 5. There is a unified basketball game on Thursday, April 11. The Lancer Pageant Program is hosting a car wash fundraiser on Sunday, April 7, raising money for Children's Miracle Network's Kids Helping Kids program. The pageant is on Friday, April 19 at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Schilling said substantial steps are being taken to stop drug use on campus and staff are more closely monitoring students. The new program seems to be a step in the right direction, contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment.

Ms. Munro provided a report from Sheldon High School, on behalf of Carmen Gonzalez Valle. During spring break, the baseball team travelled to Arizona to compete and observe spring training. The softball team travelled to California to compete. Boys' and girls' golf travelled to southern Oregon. The tennis team competes against Thurston on Monday, April 8. Lacrosse, a club sport, requires participants to drive themselves to far away competitions. They have a game against South on Friday, April 5. The Sheldon band won their district festival and are going to State. Sheldon is hosting the district choir festival on Friday, April 5. Sheldon started the process of forecasting and there have been issues in terms of classes that aren't showing up. It has contributed to students feeling like advisory class is a waste of time since those minutes could be used for instructional time with teachers. This has put stress on the IB students, since IB students aren't meeting the instructional time and are missing over 20 hours of instructional time.

VI. ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE

Chair Rabasa shared the rules for public comment. She stated that although the board typically accepts up to ten public comments, they will receive comments from all individuals who submitted prior to the deadline.

Alex Safron, parent of two students in 4J, held a sign that read "Another Jewish Family for a Free Palestine." He said that Jewish safety exists only in a world where constructive dialogue and critical questioning can occur. He referenced an incident during which a district teacher was threatened with termination if he did not comply with the request to

remove a Palestinian flag from his classroom. Mr. Safron said supporting Palestine is not antisemitic. He asked the board to carefully consider the matter and enact a policy to protect district teachers and students from censorship.

Anna Story, Jewish 4J educator and scholar, shared her perspective that the insinuation that a Palestinian flag is antisemitic encourages binary thinking.

Eloise Parish Mueller, 4J alumnus, stated that something critical she learned at 4J was the importance of understanding history in order to not repeat the atrocities of the past. She said that genocide is the most blatant and horrific example, and it is what we are witnessing in Palestine right now. Ms. Mueller said she wants teachers in local public schools to be allowed and empowered to express solidarity with victims of genocide. She said if we silence conversations about atrocities our leaders are perpetrating, what kind of message are we sending to our youth? She urged allowing flags of all nations and tribes to be displayed in district classrooms.

Sheila Hadjivassiliou, 4J educator, advocated for flags of tribes and nations to be considered protected symbols in classrooms, much like the Pride and Black Lives Matter (BLM) flag. She explained she was troubled by assumptions made in a letter she read: assumptions about a heterogeneous group of people, about who our students are or are not, about intent and symbolism, and the erasure of certain students. She said it is not okay for educators to shut down discussion when students are having conversations with or without their guidance.

Leilani Sabzalian, 4J alumnus and parent of two 4J students, stated that it was troubling to hear that a 4J educator was directed to remove a Palestinian flag or face disciplinary action. She said the Palestinian flag is an important cultural and national symbol for millions of people and would affirm the classroom is a welcoming space for Palestinian students and that they belong. Ms. Sabzalian said it is Oregon Department of Education (ODE) policy that every student belongs. She suggested that if the board supports the removal of the Palestinian flag, they would be catering to students, staff, and families whose comfort requires the erasure and exclusion of other people.

Jamie Myers, 4J educator, raised the issue of workplace wellness. She said in 2022, the United States Surgeon General identified five essentials for workplace wellbeing: protection from harm, connection and community, work life harmony, treated with dignity/find meaning in work, and opportunity for growth. She asserted that 4J must do better. Many school employees do not feel physically or emotionally safe at work. She cited an unmanageable workload for licensed educators. Since fall of 2020, 4J was the recipient of a wellness grant. Suggestions from an annual survey indicated the desire for those wellness activities/programs to be merged with personal development time.

Nancy Good, 4J parent, shared her perspective about district communication, including school counselors in the McKinney Vento program. She said although [McKinney Vento] has been helpful for some students, it has not been ideal in her situation. For example, she waited four months to receive a letter she requested from the program stating her son's eligibility. She explained that on January 6, 2024, she unenrolled her son from high school – a mutual agreement between her and her son. Her son then went to the school and said he wanted to attend again. Since then, Ms. Good said she has been completely cut off from contact with her son. She has tried reaching out to the school counselor and Vice Principal, and they have provided no information. She said she has been totally disregarded as his parent and something needs to be done.

Shachar Efrati, Jewish community member, explained that as a member of a family with Holocaust survivors, the current destruction in Gaza is frighteningly familiar. He said the Indigenous people of Palestine have a right to exist, and a right to feel safe and secure. He said the Palestinian flag is not a threat nor a condemnation, but a symbol of a people with a right to dignity, land, and history.

Melissa Ivan, 4J educator at Monroe Middle School, asked the district to halt the implementation of advisory next year regarding the new middle school schedule. She said the Eugene Education Association (EEA) put out a survey and 75% of educators are asking for the district to halt. Ms. Ivan's two top reasons are: 1. They piloted a new rigorous 45-minute language arts curriculum, and students are still building stamina. 2. One of the biggest barriers to elevating student voices is the feeling that there is so much to teach in such little time. She said four minutes makes a difference and requested more recovery time given COVID.

Jenoge Khatter, 4J educator, stated that he believes strongly in affirming diverse identities and multiple perspectives. He explained that he displayed a scarf, stylized as a national flag up, in his classroom. A day later, he was asked to remove the flag. In response, Mr. Khatter offered to host conversations or forums to learn more about symbols of nations and current events. He told that only the removal of the flag was acceptable. He cited discrimination, not toward himself, but toward those identifying with the national symbol (i.e. flag). On Wednesday he was given a written directive to remove the flag on penalty to termination. He asserted that it is not wrong to identify with the symbols of one's tribe, people, or nation. He said there are symbols of hate, exclusion, and degradation; but the flag of Palestine is not inherently such a symbol. He requested that the board affirm, via policy, that flags of all nations and tribes be protected symbols in our schools.

Nour Aboelez, South Eugene High School alumnus, provided public comment virtually. Ms. Aboelez said she is deeply troubled by the potential consequences facing an educator for raising a Palestinian flag in their classroom. She said it saddens her to see the erosion

of the values that have long been the bedrock of our educational community. She said the action reflects a failure to uphold principals of inclusivity and suggests that certain viewpoints are deemed unwelcome or taboo. She said such actions undermine the fundamental tenants of critical thinking. She urged the board to reconsider punitive actions against Mr. Khatter and reaffirm the district's dedication to diversity, inclusion, and academic freedom.

Hanan Elsherif, 4J parent, expressed her support for district educator Jenoge Khatter. She said Mr. Khatter is a beloved educator because he believes that students must be taught how to think, not what to think. She stated that she defends Mr. Khatter's right to expression. She said Mr. Khatter's action [of displaying a Palestinian flag] should be seen as act of courage and he should be praised, not punished.

Laura Diamond, Jewish community member, expressed solidarity with Palestinians. She said she is horrified to hear that a teacher could face termination for presenting a Palestinian flag in their classroom. She suggested that censorship of the Palestinian flag signals to young folks that they will be punished for standing up for what is just. She urged the board to take a step in the right direction.

VII. COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Nicolas Hadley, Manager, Administrator, Professional, and Supervisor (MAPS) President, extended a welcome to Interim Superintendent Gill, stating that they are looking forward to future collaboration.

Sabrina Gordon, Eugene Education Association (EEA) President, brought attention to the draft calendars provided in the meeting packet, stating that EEA submitted an alternative calendar. She highlighted four minor changes:

1. Retain 8-hour grading days for mid-semester grading.
2. The day in February between semesters remain as an 8-hour planning day.
3. The day after spring break remain as a non-student/professional development day.
4. At the elementary level: one day during the week before the last week of school remain an 8-hour grading day.

She added that they are currently negotiating a new bargaining contract between EEA and 4J. She encouraged all 4J staff, board members, parents, and students to attend the public discussions.

Nancy Buffum, Eugene Education Foundation (EEF) President, thanked those who attended the EEF Gala on March 21, 2024. She reported that \$114,000 was raised. The period for applying for EEF grants opens April 8 and closes May 3, 2024.

VIII. COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Thessen thanked public commenters for their testimony. She reported rewarding visits to Yujin Gakuen and Cal Young Middle School. Ms. Thessen brought attention Autism Awareness Month, Sexual Assault Awareness month, and Arab American Heritage Month, all happening in April.

Ms. Munro reported on the Charter Schools Committee. She said it was great to hear about the work happening in the district's charter schools. She reported that no schools are up for renewal this year. Ms. Munro thanked those who attended Eugene Education Foundation (EEF) gala. She encouraged the public to provide input regarding the calendar.

Vice Chair Jonak thanked the public commenters and student representatives, stating that their accounts were moving. She hopes for the board to review district policy regarding flags and symbols.

Mr. Di Liberto welcomed Interim Superintendent Gill, stating that he feels optimistic and positive. Regarding the topic of the removal of a Palestinian flag displayed in a classroom, Mr. Di Liberto expressed that he is deeply concerned about the decision and is eager to examine what 4J policy might have driven it.

Chair Rabasa thanked the community for speaking out. Regarding the topic of the removal of a Palestinian flag displayed in a classroom, she will be asking the board to do a comprehensive review of district policy.

IX. CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. APPROVE BOARD MEETING MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 21, 2024, FEBRUARY 28, 2024, MARCH 6, 2024, MARCH 11, 2024, AND MARCH 13, 2024

2. MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN EUGENE SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J AND EUGENE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

3. APPROVE NETAPP STORAGE REPLACEMENT AND EXPANSION

MOTION: Ms. Munro made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Seconded by Ms. Thessen. **The motion passed unanimously, 6:0:0; Chair Rabasa, Vice Chair Jonak, Ms. Thessen, Mr. Di Liberto, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

X. ITEM FOR INFORMATION

1. RECEIVE REPORT FROM WESTERN REGIONAL EDUCATORS NETWORK (WREN) ON BLACK, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF COLOR (BIPOC) AFFINITY GROUPS

Presented by Eugene School District 4J's Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Staff Affinity Group

The BIPOC Staff Affinity Group introduced themselves and provided a presentation via PowerPoint. They said the group partnered with the Western Regional Educators Network (WREN) to create a space for staff at 4J.

In 2017 the Oregon Legislature Senate Bill 182, establishing the Educator Advancement Council (EAC), in order to support a diverse and thriving educator workforce in order to support all Oregon students. To meet that goal, the EAC established ten regional networks. 4J is in region C, the Western Regional Educator Network, made up of four counties and more than two hundred schools. WREN's mission is "to elevate and embrace teachers' voices by emphasizing the Oregon Equity Lens to interrupt historical patterns of inequity and support educators through every stage of their career from recruitment through retirement by creating more inclusive and empowering school cultures." Their aim is to "create more inclusive and equitable school cultures in order to increase the percentage of teachers of color in the region from 9.8% to 14.3%."

WREN is a process-oriented network and a capacity building organization. As a foundation for all their improvement projects, they lean into the Continuous Improvement Mindset: bias toward action, keep a learning orientation, possibly wrong/definitely incomplete, collective responsibility, fail forward, start small, and systems thinking.

Group members shared some successes, including a number of well-attended events that brought BIPOC members of the district together. Group members expressed that it's been nice to be in community and not be siloed and isolated.

Ms. Munro asked about their hopes and plans for the future.

Imelda Rodriguez De la Cruz responded that they will continue to grow BIPOC staff participation. Also, problem solving to provide release time for staff so everyone can attend events.

Mr. Williams added that his goal is to not only retain, but to grow, the group.

Mr. Hamilton requested an email about future events so he has the option of attending.

2. RECEIVE REPORT OF PROGRESS FOR CENTER FOR APPLIED LEARNING AND COMMUNITY IMPACT (CALCI)

Presented by members of the Center for Applied Learning and Community Impact (CALCI)

CALCI members provided a report via PowerPoint presentation.

CTE Administrator Ed Mendelssohn explained that Future Build was CALCI's first district-wide program. As they have grown, they have thought of themselves as an ecosystem inside the school district. They now have 21 programs that are housed at respective high schools. If the ecosystem is going to be healthy, the schools and programs need to be well-supported and nurtured. Mr. Mendelssohn said CALCI offers new and innovative programs that are community focused.

John Stapleton, Lane WorkForce Ambassador, said they have spent the last ten years in an earnest attempt to align their workforce systems with youth seeking employment. He said the regional program is bringing education, workforce, industry, and community, to work in collective impact space. He said an example of a meaningful real world project is the temporary housing unit builds. In fact, the work has been so successful it is being propagated throughout the state. Mr. Stapleton stated that many districts do not have the resources and skillsets that 4J has brought to get the programs off the ground. He encouraged the district to keep going.

Two programs currently in operation are Future Build and Creative Current. Two new programs – Humanitec and EmpowerED – are slated to begin next year.

Kate Doyle, CALCI educator, said their programs are designed to be safe and welcoming places that reengage all students with unique project-based learning experiences. She explained that CALCI programs are available to all eleventh and twelfth graders in the district, there are no prerequisites, and transportation is provided.

3. RECEIVE UPDATED REPORT ON INCIDENTS RELATED TO 4J BOARD POLICY ACC: RACIAL HARRASSMENT

Oscar Loureiro, Director of Research and Development, provided a PowerPoint presentation on incidents related to 4J board policy ACC: Racial Harassment.

Mr. Loureiro explained that in implementation of the district's ACC policy, they created online forms for students, families, and staff members to report incidents of bullying, bias, and harassment.

Referencing a table, Mr. Loureiro highlighted a total of 397 incidents reported by students and families since September 2023. He said almost half of reports indicated bullying incidents and racial harassment was the second most common type of incident.

Referencing a table, Mr. Loureiro highlighted a total of 40 incidents reported by staff members since September 2023.

Ms. Munro asked what caused the jump in reports in January.

Mr. Loureiro responded that he does not know, but perhaps it was a reminder about reporting.

Chair Rabasa asked if the numbers/data reflect multiple reports about the same incident.

Mr. Loureiro responded yes. He said the data can reflect all persons involved (i.e. witness, staff, victim). He said they try to filter by asking where/when an event happened. He said in some cases they are not certain based on the data.

XI. ITEMS FOR ACTION

None.

XII. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

1. TRANSPORTATION SUPPLEMENTAL PLAN

Art Hart, Transportation Director, provided a Transportation Supplemental Plan via PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Hart explained that the Supplemental Bussing Plan has not been updated for 32 years, and in that time, schools and roads have changed. Today there are more people, housing, and traffic. The transportation department is guided by equitable outcomes, student safety, and attendance; as well as objective criteria: crossing safety, crash history, speed limit, etc. He said the supplemental plan, which has been in the works since 2017, mostly identifies hazards. The transportation department hopes the board will approve the plan so that they can send it to the state for reimbursement.

2. MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS ADOPTION

Adrienne Pierce, Secondary Curriculum and MTSS Administrator, and Tammy Steeves, Secondary ELA Specialist, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the adoption of Middle School English Language Arts (ELA) instructional materials.

Ms. Pierce explained that 4J reading data indicates a need for action, specifically for the most underserved students. She said that student literacy data revealed a stark disparity across the region. She suggested that well-designed, high quality instructional material is a key to bridging the gap. In 2018, a bond was passed to purchase the language arts materials and now they need to have the materials implemented by fall 2024.

Ms. Steeves said that the district piloted two courses in 2023-24. A seven-week pilot was conducted at five middle schools. Team members reviewed and collected data from teachers, families, and students; and they came to a 100% consensus when selecting the curriculum. Now, they are seeking school board approval. With board approval, they can purchase all the materials. They hope to get the materials to instructors before summer break.

The grand total middle school budget for a 7-year contract costs \$619,928.73, including professional development.

Ms. Munro asked what the district has budgeted for this.

Ms. Pierce responded that there is roughly two million left in the bond, however it needs to cover all contents, and not just for middle school, but for high school, too. She said she doesn't know where all the funds are coming from, but in conversation with the previous Superintendent there was a commitment that [the district] would find it.

Mr. Di Liberto asked if there is a Spanish version of the curriculum.

Ms. Pierce responded that the district's dual immersion program has their own curriculum that they are currently piloting.

A request for approval will come before the board at their next regularly scheduled board meeting on April 17, 2024.

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

Vice Chair Jonak suggested the topic of reviewing district policies regarding flags and displaying them in schools.

XIV. ADJORN

Chair Rabasa adjourned the regular board meeting at 10:41 p.m.



Colt Gill
District Clerk



Maya Rabasa
Board Chair

(Recorded by LCOG)
Approved on 05/01/2024