

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

**Date: May 1, 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, April 26, 2024.

**ROLL CALL**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Maya Rabasa, Chair  
Jenny Jonak, Vice Chair  
Ericka Thessen  
Judy Newman  
Tom Di Liberto  
Morgan Munro  
Rick Hamilton

**STAFF:**

Colt Gill, Interim Superintendent  
Steve Menachemson, Director of Technology  
Matt Brown, Director of Finance  
Brooke Wagner, Director of Human Resources  
Sebastian Bolden, Director of Middle School Education  
Justin Corey, Madison Middle School Principal  
Dr. Gina Wilde, Madison Middle School Assistant Principal  
Adrienne Pierce, Secondary Curriculum Administrator  
Tammy Steeves, Secondary ELA Specialist/Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA)  
Debbie McKim, Executive Assistant to the Interim Superintendent and Board

**EMPLOYEE GROUPS:**

Sabrina Gordon, President of Eugene Education Association (EEA)  
Lisa Jenkins-Easton, Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA)

**OTHER:**

Nancy Buffum, President of Eugene Education Foundation (EEF)

**MEDIA:**

KRVM

**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 7:02 p.m. She said the names of the board members who were present. Interim Superintendent Colt Gill led the flag salute and Chair Rabasa read the land acknowledgement statement.

## **III. AGENDA APPROVAL**

Chair Rabasa requested to add an Item for Action to review the proposal of pathways for reviewing policies relevant to materials displayed in district classrooms.

## **IV. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Interim Superintendent Colt Gill provided a report. He referenced the annual audit, explaining that the Finance Department just completed their work. He cited challenging circumstances the department faced and mentioned that they are planning for a timelier submission in the future. The auditors have given a clean opinion with no reservations. He emphasized that even through staffing changes and challenges using new a software tracking system, the department is being accountable for public funds and is tracking the funds appropriately. The auditors identified 18 areas for improvement and have developed a plan to correct the deficiencies. Interim Superintendent Gill mentioned that the Finance Department has posted four positions to better support the district's readiness for audits in the future. They have upgraded technology support providing more access to utilize the software and develop expertise in it.

## **V. ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE**

Valerie Blood, 4J parent and special education volunteer, voiced that she has reached out to the district multiple times about how the needs of students, teachers, and staff are not being met. She cited not having proper staffing and training in place to meet the needs of all students and allow inclusion to occur in classrooms. The behavior systems in place are not working. She asserted that the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is not proactive and preventative. She explained that teachers and staff do not have time to write down the data and the district is not allowing time to complete important documentation. She questioned what the point of the training is if the staff do not have time to implement what they've learned. She questioned when individuals who underwent Mandt training can share their knowledge with other teachers and staff. She questioned if when a trained staff is out sick, if the school is in violation of not having enough trained staff per student. She said district elementary schools continue to have room clears and suggested it is because of lack of staffing. She urged not investing so much in the district's future but instead meeting the needs of students, staff, and teachers today.

Heather Hickox and Denise Alasco, both of Network Charter School, introduced the Outdoor Credit Recovery Adventure Program (OCRAP) designed to help recover lost learning opportunities and recover lost credits. Past activities have included camping at the Rogue River, attending shows at the Hult Center, and the Jordan Schnitzer Art Museum,

among other excursions. OCRAP is hosting a celebration at the Eugene Science Center on May 8 at 6:00 p.m.

Elizabeth Nordy, 4J educator and Eugene Education Association member, expressed concern about the emotional wellbeing of students and staff. She is concerned for support staff who have been physically and verbally attacked and for students who become dysregulated and resort to violence. Many students who rely on special design instruction are not receiving all their services due to support staff being pulled for a few students that need constant, one-on-one adult supervision. Ms. Nordy urged fully staffing all buildings and investing in a pool of qualified substitutes.

Tori Brooks SPED Educational Assistant (EA) and Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) member, stated that there are a number of students requiring significant adult support to make it through the school day. These students demonstrate through violent and aggressive behavior that what [the district] is doing is not helping them progress their social, emotional, or academic goals. Support staff have been physically attacked and verbally threatened. Ms. Brooks said that when she voiced concern about aggression, she was told “this is the job.” She has been sworn at, attacked, stalked, choked, and threatened. She described the student body witnessing such aggression. She suggested each school year begin with robust behavior guidelines and academic support plans paired with effective and ongoing training on how to implement plans to keep students and staff safe.

Abbie Stillie, Eugene Science Center Board Member, thanked the district for supporting the partnership between the district and the Eugene Science Center. This year, Eugene Science Center staff took their portable planetarium to 17 elementary and middle schools for planetarium shows. She said the partnership between a community organization provides a valuable opportunity to engage and interact with science in a unique and exciting way. Kelley Middle School is having a planetarium show on May 20 and 21.

Richard Flores, EA at Adams Elementary School, and Jorda Zealer, addressed critical issues affecting district schools. Mr. Flores offered three suggestions to enhance the educational environment: 1. Simplify reporting of behavior incidents. 2. Provide adequate staffing to ensure that employees can use their contractually guaranteed leave without negatively impacting students and other staff 3. Provide training for all staff. Mr. Flores cited challenges faced in the Life Skills room at Adams Elementary School. The staff are shouldering a heavy workload and working beyond contract hours. He said safety concerns have become a significant issue. Without proper staffing levels, they are unable to ensure a safe and effective learning environment. He urged collaborative solutions that prioritize the wellbeing of students and staff.

## **VI. COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS**

Sabrina Gordon, Eugene Education Association (EEA) President shared the need for better

systems of support for the districts most vulnerable students. She voiced common needs that have surfaced for EEA and OSEA. She said one of the needs is a clear and accessible system for reporting incidents and documenting the need for a response. Feedback has indicated that current systems are confusing and not well understood. There are multiple forms and staff report mixed messages about when and where to use them. The tools should be used to ensure that every student receives the support they require to thrive academically and socially. Ms. Gordon addressed staffing levels. She said the district has been experiencing substitute shortages for years and the daily average of unfilled absences across the district is 25%. Ms. Gordon mentioned that EEA and OSEA unions are currently working with the district to improve student supports through bargaining. EEA has proposed a new article for their collective bargaining agreement called Safe Learning Environment, emphasizing the protection of physical safety and preserving the dignity of students who are struggling and in need of additional support. The next bargaining session is scheduled for Thursday, May 9, 2024.

Lisa Jenkins-Easton, OSEA President, shared that she is proud of the work that is beginning to take shape from the effort demonstrated in partnership with licensed colleagues. OSEA will continue identifying leaders to support the needs of classified staff. They are looking forward to bargaining legislative changes directly related to special education workers. She asserted that district students and staff need negotiations to move forward. She said the OSEA investment at the state level to ensure workers voices were heard created legislative changes and it is her obligation to make sure voices are heard and change happens. She added she fears the district will lose valuable staff.

## **VII. RECEIVE REPORTS FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Sheridan Schilling provided a report from Churchill High School. Prom is happening on Saturday, May 4 at the Ford Alumni Center. The Lancer Pageant on Friday, April 19 was a huge success and more than \$26,000 was raised for the Children's Miracle Network. Churchill thespians are debuting the musical Mean Girls on Monday, May 6. Ms. Schilling reported that state testing is beginning soon, and students are preparing. Eighth grade parent night and student night are on May 7 and May 9, respectively. Lacrosse, baseball, softball, track, and tennis are all underway. Ms. Schilling highlighted Teacher Appreciation Week happening May 6 through May 10.

Carmen Gonzales Valle reported on the recent successes of Sheldon High School sport teams, including lacrosse, golf, softball, and tennis. She said Sheldon's wind ensemble will showcase their talent at the state festival, their solo celloist placed fifth at state, and their flute soloist placed eighth at state. On April 29 the Environmental Club celebrated Earth Day by promoting recycling. Sheldon's theatre program had a successful first week. There are two more showings on May 3 and May 4. Ms. Gonzales Valle added that students are gearing up for state exams and are stressed because the teachers had to cram their lessons due to the new schedule. She cited loss of instructional time as a challenge for students and teachers.

Parker Anderson provided a report from North Eugene High School. Prom is on Saturday, May 4. The tennis team held their Senior Night on April 30. Baseball and softball are on track to make playoffs. The theatre has their spring musical Into The Woods opening mid-May. North hosting visits last week from Kelley Middle School and Madison Middle School. Mr. Anderson brought attention to the high staff retention rate, commenting that it reflects a sign that the school environment has improved. He reported that their Assistant Principal is moving and will be missed. He mentioned that state testing is beginning soon, and there is some additional stress because the schedule remains not effective, as a lot of instructional time is lost. He said students are wondering if things will be the same next year and urged a conversation to address the issue. Lastly, Mr. Anderson referenced an article published on April 10, 2024, in Issue 6 of North Eugene High School's paper, The Caledonian, titled "Open Letter to the 4J Board of Directors," written by Mason Tyler. Mr. Anderson read the entire article aloud.

#### **VIII. COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS**

Mr. Di Liberto reported many activities including an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) walkthrough at Roosevelt Middle School, an English Language Arts (ELA) rollout at the Bailey Hill site, a Kodomo Celebration and open house at Yujin Gakuen Japanese Immersion Elementary School, afterschool activities with students at Kelley Middle School, a parent meeting on conscious discipline at Awbrey Park, Kindergarten registration at El Camino Del Rio Elementary School, and touring the Student Health Center at North Eugene High School. Mr. Di Liberto expressed enthusiasm and support for all the activities he witnessed in the district.

Ms. Newman attended a celebration in honor of AVID graduates, a Yujin Gakuen Kodomo Celebration and open house, the Oregon Behavioral Health Summit, a ninth-grade social studies class at Sheldon High School, and visited the Student Health Center at North Eugene High School. She remarked that during her visits to high schools she hears about challenges with the school schedule. Ms. Newman said that the 4J Budget Committee is preparing to review and study the proposed budget for the 2024-25 school year. She explained that the committee has work ahead to understand how to navigate diminishing state and federal revenues along with increasing demands.

Ms. Munro reported visiting Ridgeline Montessori School (the first visit of a weeklong tour of the district's charter schools), attending literacy training for early elementary educators, and a meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee. She reported that this is the second year the district has delivered a late audit. She mentioned that both audits were delivered without an opinion (i.e. favorably). Ms. Munro said they are hoping to schedule a mid-point Finance and Audit Committee meeting to occur in the fall.

Ms. Thessen reported attending the Lane County Student Health Conference. She expressed concern about International Baccalaureate (IB) testing and the new schedule, stating that IB

testing is a culmination of four years of students' commitment. She is curious about how the passage rates will be under the new schedule in comparison with other years. She said students have reported feeling overwhelmed that they may not pass.

Vice Chair Jonak highlighted Neurodiversity Family Support Night happening on Wednesday, June 5.

Chair Maya Rabasa provided information about the district's Student Health Centers. She emphasized that the health centers provide timely and extensive services for all community members, including, but not limited to, children. She reported attending a Fun Night at Edgewood Elementary School. Chair Rabasa recognized May 1 as International Interpreters Day and International Workers Day. She honored district unions, Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) and the Eugene Education Association (EEA).

## **IX. CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION**

**1. APPROVE BOARD WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES FROM APRIL 3, 2024 AND REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES FROM APRIL 3, 2024**

**2. APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF REPLACEMENT MACBOOK AIR LAPTOPS FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF**

**3. APPROVE FISCAL YEAR 2023 AUDIT REPORT**

**MOTION:** Vice Chair Jonak made a motion to approve the consent agenda.

Seconded by Ms. Munro. **The motion passed unanimously, 7:0:0; Chair Rabasa, Vice Chair Jonak, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Mr. Di Liberto, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

## **X. ITEM FOR INFORMATION**

**1. RECEIVE PRESENTATION OF MADISON MIDDLE SCHOOL'S CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SCIP)**

Presenters: Justin Corey, Madison Middle School Principal and Dr. Gina Wilde, Madison Middle School Assistant Principal

Principal Corey and Assistant Principal Wilde provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Madison Middle School Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP).

Principal Corey presented their school mission, "To empower all students to have an 'I can' attitude and prepare them for success in an ever-changing world."

Dr. Wilde added that the school utilizes a philosophy, PRIDE, standing for purpose, relationship, integrity, dignity, and empathy.

Principal Corey shared some relevant statistics. Of 408 students enrolled, 26% are students of color, 15% are students with individualized education plans (IEPs), and 2% McKinney-Vento.

He said there are a number of programs available for students to utilize, including FOCUS, affinity groups, No Place for Hate, WEB, and the ReFocus Room. He mentioned other built-in supports, like Positive Approach for Student Success (PASS), Justice League, and onsite counselors.

Dr. Wilde outlined their Student Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP) goals:

1. Student Attendance

Student attendance is aligned to “timely communication and meaningful community engagement.” The goal is to continue closing the gaps between the Hispanic subgroup and white subgroup and overall student body. Data reveals that Madison Middle School met that goal in the recent school year, and now the focal group has attendance that is higher than pre-pandemic rates and which surpassed the white subgroup and the overall schoolwide average.

2. Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is aligned to “a coordinated focus on equitable outcomes for all students with amplified attention to the needs of those who we have underserved.” The goal is to improve on at least two of four academic indicators on Oregon Statewide Assessment System (OSAS) state reporting and close the existing gaps between the Hispanic subgroup and other groups. Madison Middle School worked hard to collect and analyze school data, revealing that students who have good attendance are also more academically successful. Conversely, students who are missing a lot of school are not as academically successful.

3. School Culture

School culture is aligned to “Safety and wellbeing for all students and staff.” The goal is to reduce incidences of reported harassment by 25% and increase knowledge of the reporting process.

Principal Corey described their next steps as monitoring and adjusting the plan as necessary. He said they will take what is successful and apply it to all subgroups.

Mr. Di Liberto asked if the interim assessment is something that Madison Middle School has done before, who is being tested, and what are the disciplines.

Dr. Wilde responded that it is their first time doing interim assessments; and students are doing interims in math, language arts, and science.

Mr. Di Liberto asked how many periods an assessment takes.

Dr. Wilde responded that they take one period.

Ms. Newman asked what kind of restorative practices and/or trainings they use.

Dr. Wilde responded that they complete various trainings, they utilize the ReFocus Room, the PASS program, and a “reconnection card” to promote positive integration back into the classroom.

Ms. Munro asked, in reference to goal three, if they targeted certain types of harassment and if they have seen reductions.

Principal Corey responded that what they see a lot of is verbal harassment and/or written on social media. As a result, they are educating students on understanding the concept of intent v impact.

Dr. Wilde responded that another focus is empowering reporting, meaning working with kids when they do report. She said students are hesitant to report, but staff have developed a reputation of supporting the students to increase reporting.

Ms. Munro asked what is something they thought would be part of the plan but changed after implementation.

Principal Corey replied that he wanted to hire a bilingual staff person to connect with families, but they received no applicants.

Vice Chair Jonak asked if interim assessments are shared with all educators and families.

Principal Corey responded that although all educators can access the information, they are likely to only review their subject matter.

Dr. Wilde said they have not shared the data with families yet. This is the first year using it, so they are still trying to work out bugs in the system.

Ms. Thessen asked if, because of the ReFocus room and other resources, they feel that they are identifying students that will end up needing 504s and IEPs who would otherwise go unidentified.

Principal Corey responded that on occasion that can happen, but most of the time students have already been identified as needing 504s and IEPs.

Dr. Wilde addressed Ms. Thessen’s question by stating that that is one of the primary goals of PASS—to provide a second tier of support.

Vice Chair Jonak asked if they have a student receiving additional supports, but not an IEP, if the support follows the student as they leave Madison Middle School and transition to high school.

Principal Corey responded that they do what is called a transition meeting. He noted, however, that those meetings are harder to accomplish if the student is not transferring to a neighboring high school.

Dr. Wilde added that Synergy provides a record that will travel with the student.

Chair Rabasa asked, regarding school culture, if the numbers they shared in the PowerPoint is for all students or for Latinx students.

Principal Corey responded that the data regarding school culture/harassment is for all students. The first two goals are for the Latinx focus group.

Chair Rabasa mentioned that she noticed a pattern [in the data] of less students than there are reports, possibly indicating that there are students who are being repeatedly harassed and/or harassing. She asked if there are additional levels of support for those students.

Principal Corey answered that their primary response is individualized care provided by a trusted adult staff member.

## **XI. ITEMS FOR ACTION**

### **1. INVITATION FOR A MEMBER OF THE 4J BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO SIT ON THE CHINESE IMMERSION SCHOOL NAMING COMMITTEE**

Presenter: Colt Gill, Interim Superintendent

Interim Superintendent Gill explained that a Chinese Immersion School Naming Committee is forming. The committee will include students, community members, family members, educators, a district administrator, and a board member. He recommended that the board nominate and elect a representative.

Chair Rabasa nominated Ms. Thessen to sit on the Chinese Immersion School Naming Committee.

**MOTION:** Chair Rabasa moved to appoint Ms. Thessen to sit on the Chinese Immersion School Naming Committee. Seconded Ms. Newman. **The motion passed unanimously; 7:0:0; Chair Rabasa, Vice Chair Jonak, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Mr. Di Liberto, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

### **2. REVIEW THE PROPOSAL OF PATHWAYS FOR REVIEWING POLICIES RELEVANT TO MATERIALS DISPLAYED IN DISTRICT CLASSROOMS**

Presenter: Chair Maya Rabasa

Chair Rabasa described two steps for the proposal of pathways for reviewing policies relevant to materials displayed in district classrooms. She provided some background, explaining that the district heard from a group of students and families expressing that students felt unsafe and unwelcome in a learning space. Thus, in March 2024, a 4J teacher was directed to remove an item from their classroom. In response the BOD committed to conducting a review of the relevant policies that led to the decision. The BOD discussed the process and the majority of the BOD indicated they would like to be involved in reviewing policy. There was flexibility for how those policies and laws would be gathered for review. The BOD expressed strong support for community voice and legal counsel, specifically legal counsel with a focus on constitutional law.

Chair Rabasa presented two options:

1. District staff gather relevant policy and law and the entire board reviews it in a June work session.
2. A policy workgroup coordinate with district staff to gather relevant policy and law and receive community input, and the entire board reviews it in an August work session.

She clarified that for the second option, they will either select workgroup members from the board randomly, based on those who have expressed interest, or it will be determined by board leadership.

Ms. Newman asked if there is staff capacity to support option number two.

Interim Superintendent Gill requested holding a meeting with the policy workgroup for a sense of the parameters for researching the policy and law before answering definitively.

The BOD discussed the two options, exploring their personal preferences, expectations, timeline, and the importance of creating a safe space for all persons involved.

**MOTION:** Vice Chair Jonak moved to approve a policy workgroup to coordinate with district staff to gather relevant policy and law and receive community input in a safe and inclusive space. Seconded by Ms. Newman. **The motion passed unanimously, 7:0:0; Chair Rabasa, Vice Chair Jonak, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Mr. Di Liberto, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

**MOTION:** Vice Chair moved to approve that the Board of Directors select board members by random selection to sit on the policy workgroup. **Seconded by Mr. Di Liberto. The motion passed unanimously, 7:0:0; Chair Rabasa, Vice Chair Jonak, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Mr. Di Liberto, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

## **XII. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING**

### **1. HIGH SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS ADOPTION FOR GRADES 9-10**

Presenters: Adrienne Pierce, Secondary Curriculum Administrator and Tammy Steeves, Secondary ELA Specialist/Teacher on Assignment (TOSA)

Ms. Pierce and Ms. Steeves provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the adoption of high school Language Arts (ELA) instructional materials.

Ms. Steeves explained why they are interested in bringing a new curriculum to the district, stating that Oregon Department of Education (ODE) standards have been updated, but the district has not had an opportunity to update their curriculum. The last time district curriculum was updated was in 2007. Teachers have been creating materials to keep up with the standards. Furthermore, data reveals that current curriculum is not supporting all

students. Ms. Steeves and Ms. Pierce believe the new curriculum, HMH Into Literature, will help fill those gaps. The curriculum has been piloted, reviewed, and evaluated. The department tested two other curricula as well, but those materials were not as successful as HMH Into Literature.

Ms. Steeves outlined their working timeline. The initial HMH Into Literature launch was during the 2021-22 school year. The curriculum was then piloted and reviewed. If adopted, the new curriculum will be implemented during the 2024-25 school year.

Ms. Pierce described how the new curriculum supports the district's equity lens, stating that educator feedback revealed that the lessons provided choice for students with a range of difficulties and offered culturally relevant topics.

Ms. Pierce and Ms. Steeves responded to questions from the BOD. They explained that with one hundred percent support, the Curriculum Review Team will recommend the curriculum, HMH Into Literature, for school board adoption at their May 15, 2024 regular meeting.

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

Mr. Di Liberto requested data regarding District Assessment Inventory (HB 4124).

Ms. Thessen requested follow-up regarding the high school schedule.

### **XIV. ADJORN**

Chair Rabasa adjourned the regular board meeting at 10:01 p.m.



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Colt Gill  
District Clerk



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Maya Rabasa  
Board Chair

*(Recorded by LCOG)*  
*Approved on 06/05/2024*