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

Date: November 20, 2024

The Board of Directors (BOD) of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Oregon, held a work session at 6:00 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 November 15, 2024.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Jenny Jonak, Chair
Tom Di Liberto, Vice Chair
Ericka Thessen
Maya Rabasa
Judy Newman
Morgan Munro

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:
Rick Hamilton

STAFF:
Carmen Xiomara Urbina, Chief of Staff
Matt Brown, Director of Finance
Seth Pfaefflin, Director of Student Services
Brooke Wagner, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services
Kat Lange, Executive Director of Youth and Family Services
Lisa Fjordbeck, Operations Coordinator for the Superintendent's Office
Brian Young, Cal Young Middle School Principal
Ginny Hoke, Language Arts (LA)/Social Studies (SS) Teacher
Carmen Duato, Language Arts (LA)/Social Studies (SS) Teacher
Rachel Allen, Language Arts (LA)/Social Studies (SS) Teacher
Alia Turner, Language Arts (LA)/Social Studies (SS) Teacher
Angela Crum, Student Services Administrator
Della Thomas, Student Services Administrator
Tom Horn, Student Services Administrator
Joel Lavin, Student Services Administrator
Karen Apgar, Student Services Administrator
Liz Johnson, Inclusion Advisor
Debbie McKim, Executive Assistant to the Interim Superintendent and Board

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:
Sheridan Schilling, Churchill High School
Deeya Patel, South Eugene High School
Cora Ludwing, South Eugene High School
Lane Lowd, Eugene Online Academy (online)

EMPLOYEE GROUPS:
Sabrina Gordon, Eugene Education Association (EEA)
Lisa Jenkins-Easton, Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA)

OTHER GUESTS:
Eleanor, Cal Young Middle School Student
Isabella, Cal Young Middle School Student
Ruby, Cal Young Middle School Student
Alexia, Cal Young Middle School Student

MEDIA:
KRVM
Register Guard (online)

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Jenny Jonak called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m. She said the names of the board members who were present. She noted that Chief of Staff Carmen Xiomara Urbina is filling in for Interim Superintendent Colt Gill.

II. AGENDA APPROVAL

The agenda was approved as presented.

III. COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Eugene Education Association (EEA) President Sabrina Gordon offered comments relating to the new bargaining agreement. She said that EEA members approved the agreement on November 20, 2024, with a resounding vote of support. It represents a fair salary increase as well as a joint commitment between Eugene School District 4J and more than 1,000 licensed educators for ongoing efforts of creating the experience desired for students. She stated that while no contract can magically make everything perfect, components of the agreements reached include: additional compensation for the work that nurses, counselors, librarians, Special Education (SPED) teachers, and other specialists do to support student agreements, to communicate clearly the procedures and resources available to support student social and emotional wellbeing and successful participation in their learning commitment, to address environmental health and safety issues caused by extreme temperatures and poor air quality, a significant increase in protected preparation time for all educators to plan and assess the ways in which they serve students, a continued commitment to supporting staff with a licensed benefits liaison, and addressing the additional work that 4J educators take on to fill-in when there

are substitute shortages or staff vacancies. She closed by stating that the list of agreements reached is too long to include everything, but the members of EEA are celebrating the improvements to the contract and are inspired to continue the efforts already underway this school year to create the best possible experience for 4J students.

IV. CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. APPROVE BOARD MINUTES DRAFTS FOR SPECIAL BOARD MEETING ON OCTOBER 16, 2024; BOARD WORK SESSION ON OCTOBER 23, 2024; SPECIAL BOARD MEETING TO ORGANIZE SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH ON NOVEMBER 4, 2024.

No discussion was held.

2. APPROVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS' TRAVEL TO THE NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION (NSBA) ADVOCACY AND EQUITY INSTITUTE PER POLICY BHD—BOARD MEMBER COMPENSATION AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

No discussion was held.

3. APPROVE REVISIONS TO BOARD POLICY AC—NONDISCRIMINATION

No discussion was held.

> **MOTION:** Vice Chair Di Liberto made a motion to approve the consent group. Ms. Rabasa seconded. **The motion carried unanimously, 6:0:0; Chair Jonak, Vice Chair Di Liberto, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Ms. Rabasa, and Ms. Munro all voting in favor.**

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1. COMMUNITY CIRCLES AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AT CAL YOUNG MIDDLE SCHOOL

Cal Young Middle School Principal Brian Young, Language Arts (LA)/Social Studies (SS) teachers Ginny Hoke, Carmen Duato, Rachel Allen, and Alia Turner; and students Eleanor, Isabella, Ruby, and Alexia, presented information about Community Circles and Restorative Practices via PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Young described Community Circles and Restorative Practices as "game changers" for their school. He explained that while the presentation will focus primarily on Community Circles, they are also incorporating restorative practices within the school.

Post-pandemic, educators were faced with new and/or amplified displays of acute trauma and dysregulation in classrooms, prompting them to brainstorm ways that they could provide more felt safety in classrooms. During the first two weeks of the school year, Community Circles are held daily during Language Arts (LA) and Social Studies (SS). Throughout the remainder of the school year, Community Circles are held once per week.

According to educators and many students, the difference the practice has made in school climate is profound.

Ms. Hoke pointed out that Community Circles are intended for all students to feel seen, heard, valued, and safe. They also shift classroom culture, broaden student knowledge bases about diverse perspectives, and serve a purpose in times of crisis.

Cal Young Middle School students present at the meeting shared a few words about the impact that Community Circles has had on them, such as forming friendships, establishing connections with teachers, collective sharing, and promoting safety.

Regarding restorative practices, the district-wide minor reporting form for behavior now includes restorative questions such as:

- Before you document an incident, have you tried: *Teach, Reflect, Restore*?
- Have you talked with your colleagues and/or looked at page 25-39 in the Student Support Document for classroom intervention strategies?
- For repeated referrals with the same student, have you referred the student to the SIT team (or IEP/504 team)?

Furthermore, Cal Young Middle School administrators are using the following questions to support those who have been harmed from the Center for Dialogue and Resolution:

- What did you think and feel when you realized what had happened?
- How did this impact you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What needs to happen to make things right?

Mr. Young pointed out that restorative practices cannot happen without a relationship.

Mr. Young invited questions from the Board of Directors (BOD).

Ms. Rabasa asked if there will be opportunities to share the practice of Community Circles with other district middle schools.

Ms. Turner responded that after reviewing data about the impact on Cal Young Middle School students and providing more training to educators, the hope is to expand the practice to other middle schools.

Ms. Rabasa asked if the surveys include street data, such as student testimonies.

Ms. Turner responded affirmatively.

Mr. Young added that Community Circles are not taking time away from content; in fact, they are fulfilling social emotional learning standards now required in the state of Oregon as of 2023.

Ms. Munro asked how they handle disruptions, such as rude jokes or putdowns, in Community Circles.

Student Isabella responded that in their experience if a student speaks out-of-turn or has a rude comment, the facilitator redirects and reminds them of expectations.

2. SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATES

Director of Student Services Seth Pfaefflin, Student Services Administrators Angela Crum, Della Thomas, Tom Horn, Joel Lavin, and Karen Apgar, and Inclusion Advisor Liz Johnson provided a special education (SPED) update via PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Horn introduced the Student Support Department (SSD) mission and vision.

Mission: We are committed to engaging and challenging all students through learning opportunities that are accessible, inclusive, and personally meaningful. We are committed to cultivating and empowering confident and resilient students who experience meaningful academic, social, and emotional growth.

Vision: We will do this by creating inclusive and equitable communities within our buildings, establishing systems for collaboration and effectiveness, and fostering resilience and belonging for all students.

Mr. Horn explained that during the 2023-24 school year there were 2,292 students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 1,300 students with 504 plans in the district. Approximately 25% of students have an identified disability.

Ms. Apgar introduced commonly used acronyms: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). She clarified that a private provider diagnosis does not automatically ensure SPED services within the school system. The district's evaluation can take up to 60 days. She said that can be confusing for families. She explained that SPED is designed to provide meaningful progress in light of the student's disability/circumstances. It is not designed to maximize potential. In other words, none of the SPED services are intended to ensure that students match their peers at grade level. Ms. Apgar added there are three laws promoting appropriate inclusion in schools: IDEA, 504, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). She clarified that 504 plans are *not* SPED.

Ms. Johnson provided information relating to the evolution of inclusion in United States school systems. She explained that in the beginning, people with disabilities were purposely excluded from schools. Eventually the practice evolved to segregation (i.e. self-contained classrooms and separate schools) and eventually to integration. However, the integration model meant that students with IEPs remained in the back of the classroom, learning separately from other students. Ms. Johnson said that such a model is no longer considered meaningful. Rather, an inclusion model would allow for students to be interspersed throughout the class. 4J is somewhere between integration and inclusion.

Mr. Pfaefflin introduced a graph depicting the percentage of 4J SPED students spending at least 80% of the day in regular classrooms over the past 15 years. He said that thanks to the tremendous work of educators, the district is once again catching up with state averages and is now on an upward trend.

Mr. Pfaefflin referenced a document titled "Inclusion Summary of Research." He noted that research indicates that students without disabilities also benefit from inclusion practices. He cited better academic achievement, fewer discipline referrals, better attendance, better social relationships, higher graduation rates, improved post-secondary education, and improved employment outcomes.

Ms. Crum stated that MTSS work is still in the early stages. She highlighted the success of Unified sports and Unified classrooms. Unified basketball enters its third season with all 4J high schools participating. IEP alignment work has been well-received by educators.

Mr. Lavin brought attention to graduation rates for SPED students. There has been a 33.5% increase in graduation rates since 2013. While progress has been made, he believes the graduation rates for SPED students are still unacceptable. The target is that students with disabilities graduate in four years at the same rate as their peers – yet students with disabilities learn at different rates and grow in different ways.

Mr. Pfaefflin and staff members highlighted the following challenges and elaborated on key points.

1. Ableism is prevalent in our mindsets and our systems
2. Staffing and funding
3. School schedules
4. Working in silos
5. Professional development time
6. Technology

Mr. Pfaefflin invited questions from the BOD.

Ms. Thessen commented that technology can be necessary and helpful for students with selective mutism.

Ms. Rabasa asked if training focuses on the difference between person-first versus identity-first language. She said there is a strong focus on moving back towards identity-first. She added that she is personally eager for the district to not fear the term disabled.

Ms. Apgar responded that their ideal approach is to find out and use the identity that the student prefers.

Regarding collaboration between general education and special education teachers, Ms. Rabasa asked if the co-teaching model is going to continue.

Mr. Lavin responded that two teachers were part of a pilot during the 2018-19 school year. He said the funds were reallocated to transition supports. He explained that they discovered students who are being included more in classrooms are sometimes struggling with preparing for their post-secondary lives. The co-teaching as a model has not gone away and the practices continue in the district. What has changed is that the specific FTE that they were using for general education teachers to work with SPED teachers has been absorbed back into student services.

Ms. Lange emphasized the multitude of forms of co-teaching occurring in the district.

In response to a question posed by Ms. Newman relating to SPED and general education, Mr. Lavin explained that district principals serve as SPED directors. Principals should ideally be elevating the SPED team on the same level as general educators.

Ms. Munro how the department navigates not having the funding and/or staff to implement a plan.

Ms. Apgar responded that they navigate by using the personnel resources they do have effectively.

Ms. Lange added that they navigate by changing schedules, moving educators around, and creative problem-solving.

Ms. Schilling asked the department to speak to the negative aspects that have been voiced during public comment, specifically relating to challenges with inclusion in education. She cited physical altercations and classroom disruptions.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that data revealed that previous exclusionary practices, such as Comprehensive Learning Centers for Behavior (CLB), amplified behavioral challenges. He noted the importance of schools having structures in place, such as sensory rooms, support staffing, and prevention services. To Ms. Schilling's point, he said there is still more work to be done.

Ms. Apgar added that inclusion has positively impacted the social and emotional behaviors of SPED students, resulting in them reporting feeling calmer and having higher self-esteem.

Ms. Johson mentioned the need to strengthen inclusion at the elementary level. She cited additional challenges faced.

Chair Jonak asked if there are strategies for encouraging neurodiversity and role models in classified staff and educators.

Mr. Pfaefflin responded that some disabilities are visible, and others are invisible. The district is trying to promote diverse hiring and is getting better at talking about neurodiversity.

Ms. Apgar emphasized the need to attract more neurodiverse candidates into teaching programs. She noted that young professionals are becoming more comfortable with sharing their identities.

3. SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH FIRM AND TIMELINE, ENGAGEMENT PLAN FOR CREATING A CANDIDATE PROFILE

Ms. Newman provided an update about the superintendent search firm and timeline and the engagement plan for creating a candidate profile.

She explained that 33 six-member focus groups have been finalized. They will utilize a combination of appointments and lottery. A survey will be provided for community members – including staff, parents, educators, and students. The survey will be in English and Spanish, and other languages by request. After collating the information received from the focus groups and survey, the superintendent search firm is scheduled to present the candidate criteria and qualities to the BOD on January 8, 2025. The BOD is scheduled to deliberate in Executive Session on February 26, 2025. After selecting the semi-finalists, interviews are expected to be conducted virtually on March 3, 2025. They will then select finalists. Finalist interviews are expected to occur mid-March.

Ms. Patel raised concern about the type of responses that high school students may provide, for example: longer lunches. She suggested incorporating a lesson for students about what makes a great leader.

Ms. Newman said that is an excellent suggestion, and she will relay it to the superintendent search committee.

VI. ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. APPROVE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT BETWEEN EUGENE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (EEA) CHAPTER 1 AND EUGENE SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J

Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services Brooke Wagner introduced the Collective Bargaining Agreement between Eugene Education Association (EEA) and Eugene School District 4J.

Ms. Rabasa noted a conflict of interest and abstained from discussion and voting.

Members of the BOD voiced resounding support for the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

> **MOTION:** Vice Chair Di Liberto moved to approve the Collective Bargaining Agreement between Eugene Education Association (EEA) Chapter 1 and Eugene School District 4J. Ms. Newman seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 5:0:1; Chair Jonak, Vice Chair Di Liberto, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, and Ms. Munro all voting in favor. Ms. Rabasa abstained.**

2. APPROVE REVISIONS TO BOARD POLICY BBF – BOARD MEMBER STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Chief of Staff Carmen Xiomara Urbina noted two language clarification changes that were previously requested to board policy BBF – Board Member Standards of Conduct.

MOTION: Vice Chair Di Liberto moved to approve revisions to board policy BBF – Board Member Standards of Conduct. Ms. Munro seconded. **The motion carried unanimously, 6:0:0; Chair Jonak, Vice Chair Di Liberto, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Ms. Rabasa, and Ms. Munro all voting in favor.**

VII. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

1. APPROVE REVISIONS TO BOARD POLICY EEBA – STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES (FIRST READ)

Mr. Pfaefflin and Ms. Apgar presented proposed revisions to board policy EEBA – Student Health Services.

Mr. Pfaefflin explained that they are proposing removing two former policies relating to first aid and student health services. The policies will be replaced with updated Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) relating to nurse delegation law changes and a comprehensive health services plan. He referenced a handout provided in the meeting packet.

2. CONSIDER PROPOSED REVISIONS TO POLICY JBAA – SECTION 504 STUDENTS (FIRST READ)

Mr. Pfaefflin and Ms. Apgar presented proposed revisions to policy JBAA – Section 504 Students.

Ms. Apgar explained that the revisions include necessary language clarifications to support students with 504 plans.

VIII. ADJORN

Chair Jonak adjourned the work session at 8:57 p.m.

Colt Gill
District Clerk

Jenny Jonak
Board Chair

(Recorded by LCOG)
Approved on 01/08/2025