

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

Date: August 11, 2025

The Board of Directors (BOD) of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a board retreat at 8:15 a.m. via live-stream and broadcast on KRVM. Notice of the meeting was emailed to the media and posted on the 4J website on August 8, 2024.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Di Liberto
Ericka Thessen
Jenny Jonak
Maya Rabasa
Morgan Munro
Rick Hamilton

ABSENT:

Judy Newman

STAFF:

Miriam Mickelson, Superintendent
Carmen Xiomara Urbina, Chief of Staff
Matt Brown, Director of Finance
Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
Brooke Wagner, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services
Juan Carlos Cuadros, Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
Kyle Tucker, Chief Operations Officer
Kat Lange, Executive Director of Youth and Family Support
Cynthia Calletano, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff/Board
Lisa Fjordbeck, Operations Manager for the Superintendent's Office

OTHER GUESTS:

Christy Perry, Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA)

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS:

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

MEDIA:

KRVM

I. CALL BOARD RETREAT TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

Chair Di Liberto called the board retreat to order at 8:16 a.m.

II. AGENDA APPROVAL

There were no changes to the agenda.

III. RETREAT AGENDA

1. REFLECTIONS FROM AUGUST 4 BOARD RETREAT

Facilitator Christy Perry asked the Board of Directors (BOD) for reflections on the August 4, 2025 board retreat.

Ms. Munro recognized the preparation and collaboration that contributed to the success of the board retreat.

2. MEETING TYPES

Ms. Perry engaged the group in a discussion about BOD meeting types.

Ms. Jonak explained that the BOD changed their meeting format last school year. Currently, in months when there are two meetings, the second meeting is a work session. Previously, the meetings were held back-to-back. Board meetings now begin at 6:00 p.m. rather than 7:00 p.m.

Vice Chair Thessen said that work sessions allow the BOD to dedicate more time to topics than they would in a regular session.

Other members voiced pros and cons of the current meeting format.

Ms. Rabasa reported feedback that removing public comment from work sessions gave the perception that the BOD might be using the shift as a mechanism to limit public comment.

Ms. Jonak noted that public comment was expanded in certain cases, such as during the budget process.

Ms. Rabasa advocated for reinstating Board comments to directly follow public comments during regular meetings.

Mr. Hamilton and Ms. Jonak both acknowledged that policy prohibiting the BOD from providing substantive responses following public comment presents a disconnect with the community. Ms. Jonak said from a public input standpoint, the district might consider alternative meeting spaces.

Ms. Munro recalled that in the past she observed staff members following up with public commenters following testimony.

Superintendent Mickelson pointed out that a board meeting is not a public meeting, it is the BOD meeting held in public. She offered that the Chair consider stating the following

in the public comment preamble: “We will not be responding but the Superintendent or designee will follow-up with you.”

Ms. Jonak advocated for permitting members of the public to submit questions pertaining to topics covered in work sessions.

Superintendent Mickelson asked what the purpose of a work session is for the BOD.

Ms. Jonak responded that work sessions are designated for substantive topics. In her experience as Chair, the regular board meetings do not allow enough time for deliberation.

Ms. Munro added that work sessions are effective for informing and educating the Board and engaging in deeper discussions.

The BOD discussed ways to make work sessions and regular meetings more accessible for student representatives and for the general public, focusing specifically on public comment protocols.

There was general consensus to continue following the same meeting format as last school year, with regular meetings and work sessions occurring on alternating weeks during the month; and to increase public comment and student engagement opportunities at work sessions.

Superintendent Mickelson suggested briefly reflecting the entire BOD’s activities during the Comments by Individual Board Members section of the regular meeting and also listing activities on the district blog/website.

The BOD further refined the Comments by Individual Board Members section, and other components of the agenda.

3. WORKING AGREEMENTS

Ms. Perry engaged the BOD in a discussion about working agreements.

Ms. Rabasa mentioned that the length of the working agreements document and the redundancy between working agreements and policy is problematic. She noted that Ms. Fjordbeck created a document color-coding policy, working agreements, and statute.

The BOD agreed that the working agreements need refined.

Ms. Perry offered to review the working agreements and website content for clarity and bring a recommendation back to Board leadership.

4. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

General Counsel Christine Nesbit and Ms. Perry engaged the BOD in a discussion about committee structure. Ms. Nesbit presented a draft resolution. Board members reviewed

the resolution and provided necessary feedback. The resolution will come before the BOD for approval at their next meeting.

5. ENTRY PLAN, SUPERINTENDENT GOALS

Superintendent Mickelson and Finance Director Matt Brown presented the Tentative Budget Development Roadmap for 2025-2026. They highlighted the following:

Goals: Communication, Transparency, Shared Understanding, Informed and Collaborative Decision-Making

Standing Items:

- Monthly budget and enrollment updates to the school board (August start)
- Monthly budget discussions with employee groups and with building district leaders (September start)
- Monthly budget updates to staff and community (October-November start)

Timeline:

- July through August: Initial Planning and Preparation
- September through December: Engagement and Data Gathering
- January: Executive Decision-Making
- February: Planning with Schools and Departments
- March through June: Budget Refinement and Approval Process

Superintendent Mickelson presented a draft of the Strategic Plan Draft Process and Timeline. She highlighted the following:

- September through October: Preparation and Planning
 - Launch Community Coalition
 - Plan the Process
 - Launch ThoughtExchange
- November: Gathering Input
 - Conduct Focus Groups
 - Review and Analyze Data
 - Communications Update
- December: Identifying Goals
 - Propose Strategic Goals and Priorities to School Board
- January – June: Drafting the Plan
 - Create the Strategic Plan
- September – November: Launch
- December – Ongoing: Monitoring

Superintendent Mickelson opened the floor to questions.

Ms. Munro asked for more information about ThoughtExchange.

Superintendent Mickelson invited Chief of Staff Carmen Urbina to speak about ThoughtExchange.

Ms. Urbina explained that ThoughtExchange is an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool with the ability to, among other things, conduct surveys, pre-analysis, and coalesce and gather data in real time. Regarding one application, she said what previously took 8-15 hours now takes one hour. She described other benefits of ThoughtExchange and mentioned that the district successfully utilized the tool with 79 administrators.

Mr. Hamilton said he would like to know the pros, cons, weaknesses, and strengths of applying AI within the district.

Ms. Urbina reassured Mr. Hamilton and said she would follow up with more information.

Superintendent Mickelson provided a draft of the Superintendent Entry Plan:

- Values Statement
- Equitable Student Outcomes: The Center of All We Do
- Superintendent Goals
 1. Evaluate and enhance early literacy initiatives
 2. Implement the new school board resolution on meaningful inclusion for students with disabilities
 3. Strengthen partnerships and relationships
 4. Build relationships and strengthen two-way communication systems
 5. Establish a transparent, collaborative budget process
- Community Engagement and Learning Structures
 - Connecting and Learning Series (July 2025 – June 2026)
 - Community Coalition (Launch: Fall 2025)
- Deliverables and Timeline (July 2025 – September 2026)

6. SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION PLAN

Ms. Perry presented a draft of the 2025-26 Superintendent Evaluation Plan to assess the superintendent based on the five goals that align to the superintendent's entry plan and board priorities. She highlighted the following:

- Performance Standards
 1. Visionary District Leadership
 2. Ethics and Professional Norms
 3. Inclusive District Culture
 4. Culturally Responsive Instructional Leadership and Improvement
 5. Communication and Community Relations
 6. Effective Organizational Management
 7. Effective Financial Management
 8. Policy, Governance, and Advocacy

- Superintendent Goals for 4J
 1. Evaluate and enhance early literacy initiatives
 2. Implement the new school board resolution on meaningful inclusion for students with disabilities
 3. Build relationships and strengthen two-way communication systems
 4. Develop and implement a strategic planning process
 5. Establish a transparent, collaborative budget process
- Evidence/Timeline
 1. Final strategic planning process document: September 2025
 2. Final budget timeline and process document: September 2025
 3. Monthly reports on the strategic planning process: Monthly
 4. Quarterly updates on the implementation of the budget development process: October, January, March
 5. Report on literacy assessment and recommendations: December 2025
 6. First 100 days report and district strategic priorities recommendation to the board (board approval recommended in December for budget planning purposes: December 2025)
 7. Provide the board a report on the implementation status: January 2026
 8. Superintendent Evaluation Discussion #2: March 2026
 9. Proposed budget: April 2026
 10. Implementing staffing according to the proposed budget: May 2026
 11. Final superintendent evaluation: May 2026
 12. Year-end report and updates on strategic planning process: June 2026
 13. Concise, dynamic strategic plan draft: September 2026
 14. Strategic Plan communication, PD, implementation: October-November 2026

Ms. Perry opened the floor to questions.

Regarding evaluating and enhancing early literacy initiatives, Chair Di Liberto emphasized the need for more holistic reports.

Vice Chair Thessen agreed, adding that she would like to know if students are checking out more books at the library, or if there is increased engagement with librarians.

Ms. Perry asked if the BOD would like her to develop a recommendation for the superintendent evaluation process.

The Board agreed.

Ms. Rabasa noted that the BOD has not yet performed a self-evaluation.

7. BOARD GOALS AND AGREEMENTS

Ms. Perry engaged the group in a discussion about Board Goals and Agreements. She highlighted the following:

- Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships
- How We Operate and Make Decisions
- How We Communicate
- Governing Law and Policy Documents

Ms. Munro asked for clarification about the following: how and when an item can be pulled from consent agenda and comments from individuals not listed on the agenda.

Others agreed that they want more clarification about the consent agenda process.

Superintendent Mickelson provided some guidance related to the consent agenda process according to Robert's Rules of Order.

The BOD discussed and refined protocols around speakers not listed on the agenda.

Ms. Perry engaged the BOD in drafting their Governance Goals, as follows:

- The Board will prioritize individually engaging in professional learning
- The Board will be present and engaged in schools and community
- The Board will support the strategic planning process
- The Board will engage in a self-assessment process

8. NEXT STEPS

The BOD briefly discussed their role in the Educational Equity Advisory Committee (EEAC). There was consensus to default to the EEAC to determine their preferred level of engagement on the committee.

IV. ADJOURN

Chair Di Liberto adjourned the board retreat at 1:20 p.m

(Recorded by Terah Van Dusen, LCOG)

Dr. Miriam Mickelson
District Clerk

Tom Di Liberto
Board Chair