

NEAH-KAH-NIE SCHOOL DISTRICT 56

Regular Board Meeting 6:30 PM

March 9, 2020

Neah-Kah-Nie District Office Board Room

PRESENT

Present

Board Members

Pat Ryan, Chairman
Carol Mahoney, Vice Chair
Terry Kelly
Landon Myers
Michele Aeder
Sandy Tyrer
Kari Fleisher

District Office Staff

Paul Erlebach, Superintendent
Mark Sybouts, Business Manager
Kathie Sellars

Student Representative

Ecca Fry (absent)

WORK SESSION NOTES

Work Session Notes

Mr. Ryan called to order the work session at 5:32 p.m. for the purpose of the reviewing Student Investment Act (SIA) application and other documents. He turned the meeting over to Mr. Erlebach to explain the following:

Community Engagement Flyer

SIA Community Engagement Report

Mr. Erlebach reviewed the Community Engagement Report and the groups surveyed, and how they were surveyed. All survey data went to Kate Pattison, no one from the committee received survey data from community groups. Ms. Pattison compiled the data and prepared the report. Mr. Erlebach stated that a lot of time was invested in the amount of community engagement that we asked for and received.

He also presented the Continuous Improvement Plan, and briefly reviewed it with the board.

The two stated purpose are:

- Meet students' mental or behavioral health needs
- Increase academic achievement for students, including reducing academic disparities for students:
 - That are economically disadvantaged;
 - From racial or ethnic groups that have historically experienced academic disparities;
 - With disabilities;
 - Who are English language learners;
 - Who are foster children;
 - Who are homeless; and
 - Any other as determined by the State Board of Education

He reviewed the SIA timeline, the application is due to the state by April 15th. The purpose of this meeting is to share the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and the SIA application. He reviewed the CIP beginning with the allowable use of SIA funds:

- Expanded Instructional Time – Expanding early learning is part of this allowable use
- Reduce Class Size and Caseloads
- Address Student Health and Safety
- Provide a Well-Rounded Education

Performance Targets are:

- On-time Graduation & 5-year completion rates

- 9th Grade On-track
- Curbing Chronic Absenteeism
- 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

He pointed out the Mission, Values and Vision statements and then reviewed the goals, strategies, and key performance metrics. He stated explained that the CIP is a working document.

Draft SIA Grant Application

Mr. Erlebach reviewed the SIA grant application, board members had a copy of the application. Mr. Erlebach stated that one area that we need to look into is the lack of collaboration with the tribes of the Grand Ronde and Siletz Indian tribes. Mr. Erlebach reviewed the various parts of the grant application, how staff and the community contributed through the engagement meetings. He reviewed the five identified outcomes:

1. Increase 3rd grade ELA Proficiency
2. Improve Regular Attendance Rates
3. Improve Rate of 9th grade on Track to Graduate
4. Improve Graduation and Completion Rates
5. Improve Student Wellbeing

And the six key strategies that will support the desired outcomes:

1. Implement mental health supports for secondary students (MS/HS) through on-site counselors at each campus who will provide preventative and crisis support to students and staff.
2. Implement rigorous literacy instruction and intervention support in elementary and middle level programs through target coaching and RTI.
3. Increase support for emerging bilingual student and their families through culturally and linguistically inclusive communications, outreach and support.
4. Implement school-based health center to support the well-being of all students and staff, opening fall, 2021.
5. Expand early learning options including full day.
6. Increase support for those experiencing poverty at the middle and high school with a MS/HS Family Resource Coordinator who will identify individual needs, connect students and families to community resources, and assist with food insecurity.

Mr. Kelly wanted to know who would make the decision on what early learning would look like. Mr. Erlebach stated that it is the board decision to make. Mr. Kelly wants to have discussion and options to consider. Each year the district will need to evaluate the SIA plan, what worked and what did not, and revise and resubmit the plan.

Early Learning Discussion:

Preschool options:

- Status quo
- Pursuing Preschool Promise Funds to provide 10 slots – this is a county-wide effort Expand early learning options

Mr. Erlebach recommended that the district pursue Preschool Promise (PP) funds and then decide what we will do with it. Mr. Kelly stated that he does not want to be hamstrung by the requirements

attached those funds. Mr. Ryan referred to the equity lens tool where we had a lot of input from the community stating that there is a need for expanded PreK options. Mr. Erlebach shared that through this process the Early Learning work group had their survey as well, but the community engagement information brought forth a need from parents for expanded early learning. Ms. Mahoney would like to see us come up with some options to consider.

Mr. Ryan asked if we know for sure where PP will land if we apply for the funds and will requirements of that grant remain the same, or will you be able to have a regular program and a PP program. Mr. Erlebach stated that it seems that it is still under consideration. Mr. Erlebach stated that any half-day preschool will need to be 510 hours. Mr. Kelly asked Ms. Douma how many hours we have right now. Ms. Douma stated that we are about 5 days short, but there are ways to make up those days. Mr. Erlebach stated that during the board meeting it would be good if the board give him direction.

Mr. Ryan stated that the logistics are an issue, location; one or two sites, transportation, but he believes that we have parents who could benefit from a full-day program that offers academic in the a.m. and more social/developmental activities in the p.m.

Ms. Aeder stated that she would be in favor of offering all day preschool, especially in the Garibaldi area, there are just no daycare providers. Ms. Fleisher stated that she was not able to attend the work session, but she understands the need for both full day and part day preschool.

Ms. Tyrer agrees that we want to spend money on student learning. She is not convinced that we should spend the money on 3-4 year olds. She is not opposed to preschool but wants to see all our kids served. She stated that there is a difference to her between early learning and a day care, she does not want to run a day care center.

Mr. Myers stated that he agrees with Ms. Tyrer when she says that she does not want to run a daycare. He stated that he has talked to several teachers and they have shared with him that the afternoon really is daycare.

Mr. Ryan adjourned the work session at 6:24 p.m.

Executive Session, Items Excluded from Public Inspection ORS 192.660(2)(f)
The executive session was canceled.

OFFICIAL MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Ryan called to order the regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Neah-Kah-Nie School District at 6:30 p.m. He welcomed staff and patrons of the District. All present stood for the flag salute.

Approve Agenda

APPROVE AGENDA

Motion to Approve

M-Mahoney/2nd Kelly to approve agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

State Champion
Recognition

STATE CHAMPION RECOGNITION: Travis Bennett as Neah-Kah-Nie High School State Wrestling Champion

Mr. Douma shared that Travis has always wanted to be a state champion and has worked hard. There is a picture out there of him as a young wrestler and now one of him as a State Champion. We could not be more proud of him. Mr. Erlebach shared that last year the board agreed that they wanted to recognize State Champions; it is a huge accomplishment and should be celebrated.

Volunteer of the Month

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH: Karen Ryan, Nominated by Neah-Kah-Nie Middle School
Mr. Ryan read the statement from Lori Dilbeck and Kathryn Harmon thanking Karen for all her efforts to support the middle school library. Mrs. Ryan was presented with a certificate of appreciation.

Consent Agenda

CONSENT AGENDA

Approve Minutes from February 10, 2020 Regular Board Meeting

Personnel Report

Contract Renewal Letters

District Administrators

Garibaldi Grade School

Nehalem Elementary School

Neah-Kah-Nie Middle School

Neah-Kah-Nie High School - **Was handed out at the meeting**

Capital Improvement Plan

19-20 Revised Annual Calendar

19-20 Budget Committee

NWRESD Annual 20-21 Service Plan

Motion to Approve

M-Aeder/2nd Fleisher to accept the board agenda with the noted additions. Motion carried unanimously.

Communications

COMMUNICATIONS

Oral Communication

Public Input

None at this time.

Public Input

Student Input, Eccca Fry

Mr. Fry was not present at the meeting. Ms. Buckmaster presented the high school report. The report is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Kelly asked Mr. Douma to speak about the upcoming baseball banquet. Mr. Douma stated that it is a crab feed, which will be held this coming Saturday, in the cafeteria at the high school. The fee is \$25, the funds raised will go to help the baseball team trip to Arizona. Mr. Kelly also mentioned that the NKN Youth Athletics baseball team is raising money to go to Coopers Town, New York this summer. They are collecting bottles and cans.

Staff Input, Angie Douma

From NKN Middle School

NKN Middle school wasted no time implementing and training on the new Chromebook monitoring system called GoGuardian. With this software teachers can monitor students on Chromebooks, limit sites they access, push sites they want to auto open when the student logs in, and receive daily reports including timelines of sites student's visits, and the amount of time they spent on them.

Marisa Real-Bayouth, Will Crook, and Jay Blake are planning the 7th-grade field trip to see a play about the Japanese Internment camps called "The Journal of Ben Uchida: Citizen 13559" produced by Oregon Children's Theater. They will begin to teach background content a week in advance so our students are prepared for the intense content that is addressed in the play. In social studies, students will think about their most important rights and the consequences of having those rights taken away. In Language Arts, students will continue to explore the year-long focus on characterization by explaining how different characters in the play might have felt when they said a specific line. They will also write about what they would like to say to that character if they were able to sit down and share a cup of tea with them. Students will then write a haiku about what they have learned and send it to the Oregon Children's Theater and the Japanese American Museum of Oregon. Additionally, they have an opportunity to do some *family engagement* because they have come to learn that there is a student in the grade who has grandparents who were interned. They are working to figure out a way to have the student create a presentation and share it with the rest of the class.

Fred Bayouth and Jay Rocca are beginning to plan the second annual Marine Science Exploration at the Historic U.S. Coast Guard Boathouse in Garibaldi. This local field trip was created last year by the Middle School Science Department and features our 7th Grade class participating in marine science activities and experiments at an event that brings together educators and STEM coaches from Tillamook and Neah-Kah-Nie. Students engage in activities regarding marine habitats, tidal zonation, waves and energy, coastal ocean life, and erosion and deposition.

Ms. Douma read a prepared statement presenting her perspective on early learning in the district. Her statement is attached to these minutes.

Written Communications

Mr. Ryan reviewed the various written communications listed below.

Board and Administrator

February Enrollment Report

March Nehalem Nugget

February Howler

March Howler

REPORTS

Reports

Tillamook County Property Tax Exemption - Multi-family Housing, Jake Davis – Mr. Davis was unable to attend the meeting. He will present at the April meeting.

Neah-Kah-Nie School District SIA Flyer, Paul Erlebach

Mr. Erlebach shared the Community Engagement Flyer, it is accessible online, and there is also a link to access the Community Engagement Report. He attended the Latinx meetings and a big concern from them is all day preschool. He stated that expanding PreK options was a priority for the SIA committee. The committee included community members, staff and board members.

Neah-Kah-Nie School District 2019-2023 Continuous Improvement Plan, Paul Erlebach

Mr. Erlebach also referenced the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) which is aligned with the SIA application. The SIA application is a very well written document and will have to be approved and voted on by the board. They will vote on it at the April board meeting. He suggested that the board have a work session to discuss the application. It would help the administrators if the board can make a decision in time for administrators to go to the Job Fair.

Neah-Kah-Nie School District Student Investment Act (SIA) Grant Application, Paul Erlebach

Mr. Erlebach reviewed the expenses projected in the SIA grant application with some menu items. Mr. Erlebach asked if the board would like him to pursue Preschool Promise dollars, there is a consortium to collaboratively go for Preschool Promise items.

Mr. Ryan stated that we need to make a decision if we are going to apply for the funds. We do not have to take the funds if we decide not to go in that direction. The application deadline is April 2nd. NWRESD will help write the grant. Ms. Aeder does not see what we have to lose if we apply. Mr. Kelly wants to make sure that we are not locked into the requirements associated with those funds. Ms. Tyrer stated that she does not see any reason not to apply.

By consensus the board gave the superintendent permission to apply for Preschool Promise funds as long as the board has the option to not accept the funds. Mr. Myers wanted it recorded that the district does not want to be locked into using the funds, they want options and can decide not to accept Preschool Promise funds.

Ms. Aeder stated that she has been in the preschool a couple times and witnessed two very busy adults, is there a way to provide some help in that way. Mr. Erlebach stated that if the board

Report Continued

states that they want to changes the student to teacher ratio, it does not have to come out of the SIA funds. Discussion occurred.

Mr. Ryan stated that for now the superintendent has direction to apply for the grant, and the board has time to have conversations that will help them make a decision on the direction they want to go with early learning.

Mr. Erlebach asked if any of the menu items provided in SIA planning document give the board angst. Mr. Myers asked if the reduction in the half-time PE teacher at middle school is because there will be another full-time PE teacher. Mr. Erlebach stated that is correct. That the middle school PE teacher will only be teaching PE/Health.

Ms. Mahoney asked about the reduction of a teacher at Garibaldi. She stated that the numbers between Garibaldi and Nehalem are just in between keeping or adding a teacher. Mr. Erlebach stated that we can take a look at that. The projection for Garibaldi next year is 147 students.

Ms. Aeder stated that she appreciated all the work that has gone into this SIA grant application. The committee and the administrators have spent a lot of time working on it. Mr. Erlebach shared that there will be some edits to the application, but the district has received many positive comments.

New Neah-Kah-Nie School District Website, Paul Erlebach

Mr. Erlebach reviewed the new district website which will go live tomorrow. He pointed out the Coronavirus information on the website and the Pandemic Plan. Ms. Mahoney asked if we have considered additional time for custodial staff. Mr. Erlebach stated that Mr. Baertlein has added time to Garibaldi and the middle school. He did not seem to think that extra was needed at the high school. The board discussed proper sanitation of Chromebooks and how students are informed of the proper ways to cough, wash their hands to protect the health and safety of all students.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

District-wide Interior/Exterior Door Locks, Steve Baertlein

Mr. Baertlein stated that this project is 90 percent complete. We had to order some more parts. The middle school is up and running. Nehalem does not have fobs yet. All the boxes are in we are just waiting for the components to go into the boxes.

Neah-Kah-Nie High School Chemistry Lab Update, Steve Baertlein

Mr. Baertlein stated that the contractor came in this weekend and we had heat in the room this morning. We will see if we have heat for a full week. We are not going to sign off until we know it is working. Ms. Marden stated that it was plenty warm in there today. When this contractor has finished his work, we will seek a second opinion to make sure the repairs are correct.

RED Solar Grant, Steve Baertlein

Mr. Baertlein shared that we are on track for installation at Nehalem over spring break. There seems to be some miscommunication between architects, engineers, and contractors. We still do not know if the system will be installed at Garibaldi, it might go to the middle school.

Nehalem Elementary School Bleachers, Steve Baertlein

Mr. Baertlein stated that the bleachers will be installed over spring break. Mr. Kelly asked about bleachers at the softball field. Mr. Baertlein stated that he is going to use some of the bleacher frames that came out of the gym and will build something like what we have out here on the Youth Athletic field. That project is underway.

NEW BUSINESS

Nehalem Elementary Play Shelter and Garibaldi Grade School Play Shelter and Parking Bids

Mr. Sybouts stated that we received two bids. Ms. Sybouts recommend that the board accept the bid from Cove Bilt LLC, who was the low bidder at \$635,116.06 for Garibaldi and \$445,203.62 for Nehalem. Mr. Erlebach stated that the reason that Garibaldi is so much more is a retention wall and some extra parking. The bid does not include any equipment that goes inside the structures. Mr. Erlebach shared that the reason we are doing this is due to the increase in required PE minutes.

Mr. Erlebach asked Mr. Sybouts to explain how we will pay for the structures. He stated that the structures are included in the Capital Improvement Plan and will be paid for via a transfer from the general fund. Mr. Sybouts stated that we will have the same ending fund balance as when we began this year. We will need to transfer \$2.2 million dollars to Capital Improvements Fund. We will also be roofing the high school classroom wings. That will be a significant cost. There will be a big chunk this year, but then it will drop off in subsequent years.

Mr. Ryan stated that we can be thankful that we can pay for these projects without a bond. He stated that these play structures are the result of an unfunded mandate from the state. Ms. Fleisher stated that we are the last school district to put them in.

M-Kelly/2nd Mahoney to accept the bid from Cove Built LLC for the play structure at Nehalem and play structure and parking at Garibaldi. Motion carried unanimously.

FISCAL

Payment of Bills

No board member raised an issue with the February check register.

Fiscal Summary Sheet

Mr. Erlebach stated that he sent the board an article stating that the state did lose the first round of appeals in the Linn County class action lawsuit.

SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Superintendent. Paul Erlebach

Mr. Erlebach shared that he and Mr. Kelly attended the senior presentations. Mr. Kelly stated that it would have been nice to have a program, but thought the presentations were great. Mr. Erlebach shared that he will be participating in the interviews at TBCC Tillamook Works position.

Board

Ms. Douma stated that she is supposed to be inviting board members into classrooms. She would love to see board members in the preschool as well as the board contemplates this big decision regarding early learning.

PERSONNEL

Hiring

Margaret Whiting as Neah-Kah-Nie High School Counselor

Sabrina Eisele as Neah-Kah-Nie High School ELA Teacher – added at the meeting

Hiring - Coaches

Esther Troyer as Neah-Kah-Nie High School Honor Society Advisor

Jenni Stinnett as Neah-Kah-Nie High School Assistant Softball Coach

Resignations

Jennifer Smith as Neah-Kah-Nie High School Foreign Language Teacher

Alejandro Quintana as Neah-Kah-Nie High School Assistant Track Coach

Retirements

Tim Gienger as Neah-Kah-Nie High School PE Teacher - added at the meeting

NON LICENSED PERSONNEL INFORMATION - Informational Only

Hiring:

Julie Thelen as Garibaldi Grade School 2nd Cook

Carla Neahring as Neah-Kah-Nie High School Assistant Secretary

Amy Cram as Nehalem Elementary Assistant Secretary

Erin Derr as Neah-Kah-Nie High School Assistant Secretary

Kendall Rehn as Nehalem Elementary 7 hr Instructional Assistant

Kendall Rehn as Nehalem Elementary Math Tutor

Dora Lawson as Nehalem Elementary 2nd Cook

Resignations

Marcella Grimes as Nehalem Elementary 2nd Cook

Amy Cram as Nehalem Elementary Instructional Assistant

Amy Cram as Nehalem Elementary Math Tutor

Samantha Jepson as Nehalem Elementary/Neah-Kah-Nie High School Custodian I

ADJOURN

Hearing nothing more to come before the board the meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

April 13, 2020

April 27, 2020 First Budget Committee Meeting

1 **NKNHS**

School Board Report

ASB- Board Representative: Ecca Fry

2 **Special Recognition:**

Student of the Month: Jacob Waldron, Kyla Huntley

Athletes/Activities of the Month:

- Travis Bennett - State Champ!
- Kyla Huntley - All-League girls basketball

3 **Athletic Team Updates:**

Winter Sports -

Spring Sports -

Excited for the sun to come out and watch some baseball/softball games and track meets. We have a home meet coming up on March 19th that we can always use volunteers for. Baseball/Softball games will begin next week...hoping for good weather.

Info from Athletic Director: Corey Douma:

- Attended a football scheduling meeting last month...we currently have a solid 9-man schedule set. We will be looking to add some JV games. Ultimately our kids will be able to play more football next season than they would have, had we stayed 11-man

4 **Activity Updates**

Speech and Debate- Hannah Reynolds: We travelled to Pacific University this weekend and swept third in the tournament! In their respective events, Juniors Bella Grimes and Mary Watson won 1st, Juniors Kara Ramage and Dinah got 4th, Kara also received 5th in another event, Bella also earned 3rd, and Senior Megan Troutman made it to 4th place. We had 17 students competing, and the team continues to grow--thank you to the Board and community for all your support!

National Honor Society- TBD:

FBLA- Stevie Jackson: We just wrapped up our annual wreath fundraiser. We sold 67 items and profited just shy of \$700. Goals include to recruit more freshmen and send members to Salt Lake City, Utah for nationals 2020.

Safety Team- this month our safety committee will be reviewing research about tornado safety and will be reviewing a wildfire evacuation plan

5 **Activity Updates Contd.**

Student Council:

Robotics: Kathryn Harmon/Evan Solley: On February 22nd, the Neah-Kah-Nie HS robotics team participated in the last of four Super Qualifier Tournaments (SQT), selecting the top teams that will advance to the state FTC robotics championship next month. We went in ranked 7th of 24, and ended the same - sadly, not strong enough to advance, but still ranking us in the upper quartile statewide. Not bad for a rookie group of predominately freshmen. Our robot performed well, with significantly increased capabilities since our local tournament last month in Tillamook. And, the kids were thrilled to participate (we were

one of 12 rookie teams state-wide to make it to an SQT). We will spend the remainder of the school year increasing our understanding of robotics and building our teamwork skills. We will likely also host a "boot camp" at year end for next year's incoming freshmen.
School Climate and Culture- Kelly Thayer:

6 **School Updates**

PBIS: So far this year we had fewer referrals in September and October, more in November and December and less in January... this year we have seen a small increase in technology related referrals. Student relationship conflicts rose as an area of concern in December then decreased in January. We have 5 students with 3 or more referrals.

Attendance report- Margaret Whiting : We are currently at 91.36% for overall attendance and our 9-11 grades are above 90 %, our attendance goal for the year, the senior class is at 88.2%. We continue to reach out to families and offer help to get our students here and get a better understanding of absence issues.

ASPIRE report- Margaret Whiting: One of our mentors connected her mentee, who has a strong passion for competitive swimming, with the new World Record Holder in the 100 and 200 Backstroke. It was incredible to witness! As always we are looking for more volunteers, please send any interested people my way, I can be reached at 503-355-2272 or margaretw@nknsd.org

Other committees at work: Pirate- rebranding , Hispanic Parent Group, Pirate recording studio focus group, Soccer focus group, CTE revitalization grant, Measure 98 plan revisions, Climate and Culture team...

7 **College/Career Ready - Counselor Reports**

Dual Credits 2019-2020: Total credits earned Tri 1 - 398

Class of 2023: 77 students (16 SPED, 6-504's, 8 modified diploma) On Track: 92%

Class of 2022: 49 students (7 SPED, 3-504's, 2 modified diploma, 1 certificate) On Track: 82%

Class of 2021: 60 students (8 SPED, 2-504's, 4 modified diploma, 1 ext diploma, 2 certificate) On Track: 81%

Class of 2020: 59 Students (4 ext. Diploma, 1-504, 2 mod. diploma) On Track: 73% (4 2 cr def., 14 7 benchmark)

Math: 79 90% passing Reading: 84 97% passing Writing: 84 90% passing

Sophomore PSAT Results: 25% met math benchmark; 43% met reading benchmark

College/Career Speakers/Field Trips to date: 29

FAFSA Completion: 55.8%

8 **Site Council Report:**

Members: Heidi Buckmaster, Esther Troyer, Kathryn Harmon, Jaime Simpson, Jenni Stinnett and student representative Anna Deur.

Accreditation review has been postponed until 2024. Site Council funds have been used this year to install Vape Detectors in hallway bathrooms on a trial basis, and to fund regular investment in our Doubloon case, where students can purchase prizes with their doubloons they earn for being safe, responsible, and/or respectful. Our goal is to regularly look into grant funding and expenses to use resources optimally to support learning.

March 9, 2020

Neah-Kah-Nie School District Board of Directors:

As we learned at our last work session, Tillamook Early Learning Center has offered their Preschool Promise slots to the school districts in the county. I was curious about why TELC would forgo \$120,000 so I reached out to Emily Critelli, the director of Tillamook Early Learning Center. She explained that TELC operates three preschool classrooms. Two of their programs are housed at TELC; one Preschool Promise classroom and one non-Preschool Promise classroom. The third classroom is funded by Preschool Promise and is located at the Wilson School. Being off-site and away from other preschool/childcare classrooms and support staff has been persistently problematic for the Wilson site. The challenges presented by having a lack of support have resulted in staff turn-over and student behavior concerns. Recently, they moved this full day program down to a half-day program, citing student behavior as the reason. Because the Wilson site has been such a challenge, they have decided to discontinue this program. They are not pursuing making their non-Preschool Promise classroom into a Preschool Promise classroom because they are not willing to eliminate flexibility and choice for their families. Additionally, just today I saw a posting that Tillamook School District will be offering their families a choice between half and full days.

This got me wondering, why would providers in Tillamook value choice, when Nestucca Valley School District has made the decision to go with a program that only leaves the choice of take it or leave it? One potential reason may be the difference in variation in demographics. More than 95% of the students in Nestucca Valley School District qualify for free and reduced lunch, whereas 56% of the students in Tillamook qualify. Tillamook clearly has a more diverse population, in terms of SES, which may lead them to prioritize choice since different families have different needs. Nestucca, on the other hand, does not have that level of diversity and may have found, in their engagement with families, that a single, full-day choice matches their needs and values. In looking at our district, where only 48% of our students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, it seems like choice should be at least a consideration, if not a priority. I believe this is especially true, given the responses we got from families on our early learning survey.

Our families told us that they want choices. Families want to have the ability to choose a program that meets their needs and reflects the values they have for their child's first experience with school. I have notes from five years of parent conferences that confirm parents do have strong opinions for what their child's preschool experience should be. Those opinions are grounded in being tremendously knowledgeable about their own child. I choose to view parents from an assets lens, recognizing that parents of all socio-economic backgrounds are uniquely qualified as the greatest influence on their children. Providing choices is a means of empowering our parents to take the lead with their children. If we ignore what our survey told us and implement a program that does not offer parents the ability to choose what's best for their

child, especially under the premise that their child is in better hands with school staff than with family, we are doing parents and children a disservice.

The flier that summarizes the work our district has done around the Student Success Act also identified "More early learning options" as an emerging theme from community engagement efforts. While instructional time is one category of emphasis for SIA funds that could represent options for families, it is not the only option. Have we considered looking into Class Size? Nestucca Valley will have two classrooms of 18 students with five instructional assistants. We have up to 20 students per class and only one instructional assistant. What about Health and Safety? We are seeing more and more students (across all socio-economic backgrounds) with social/emotional and behavioral needs each year. Have we considered counselor support or behavior specialist support for the preschool? How about Well-Rounded education? What conversations have occurred about improving access to art, music, PE, or swim, for our preschool students?

Perhaps more options means something entirely separate from the length of the school day. When we first started our work, the early learning team discussed lots of strategies that might fit our communities needs. Should we offer programming for three year olds? Would home visits be helpful? Could we develop partnerships with childcare providers? What if we offered play and share groups, toddler music and movement classes, parent cafes, or other strategies that empower families to be their best at supporting their children? Until we ask families these questions, and likely many others, we will not truly know what options families need to be offered. True engagement is reciprocal - we cannot effectively engage families in the work we are doing at school, if we do not first gain a complete understanding of their values, preferences, and needs.

In our conversations around where our early learning program goes next, I encourage you to include parents as the asset they are to their child's education and empower them to guide program development.

Sincerely,



Angie Douma

Neah-Kah-Nie School District

Preschool Teacher