



SHAPING 4J'S FUTURE

THE PRE KINDERGARTEN & FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN

FOCUS GROUP REPORT: DECEMBER 2006

INTRODUCTION

As a part of District 4J's strategic planning process, "Shaping the Future," eight focus groups composed primarily of district staff met the week of November 13 to begin to address several unanswered questions that will have an impact on future decisions about school size, grade configurations, programs, and location of schools.

The Pre Kindergarten & Full Day Kindergarten focus group identified a number of implementation options that could be considered by the district and the implications associated with those options. We also reviewed demographic and enrollment information and instructional literature, and identified the key values and beliefs upon which we based our implementation options. Finally, we identified a number of issues and questions that we thought should be considered by the school board, a think tank that will be operated by the university, and the community.

Sally Huling facilitated our group, and Doug Gallup was our listener/writer. The listener/writer was responsible for recording what we said and for drafting this report.

The members of our committee were:

Kimberly Chinn	Kindergarten Teacher	Awbrey Park
Julie Hulme	Primary Teacher	Edgewood Community School
Pamela Irvine	Principal	Adams/Hillside
Kay Mehas	Director of School Services, K-8	
Judy Newman	EC Cares Representative	
Amanda Refshauge	Instructional Assistant/Key Teacher	Parker
Annie Soto	Head Start Representative	
Charlene Talkington	School Psychologist	Educational Support Service

We must make a disclaimer: our focus group was asked to focus on a specific topic area, knowing that all of the topics discussed during this process are interrelated and what the district does in one area has implications for the others. The focus group process allowed us to share our discussions with the other focus groups, but each group is submitting an individual report.

A broad based think tank will synthesize the work of our focus group and the other focus groups as it develops a set of integrated alternatives or possibilities for consideration by the school board later in the spring.

4J'S CURRENT PROGRAM MODEL

Kay Mehas provided the members of the focus group with a description of the district's current program model. In summary, there are twenty (20) elementary buildings and twenty-six (26) elementary schools. Of the twenty-six (26) schools, three alternative schools do not have kindergarten programs. Four elementary schools have full-day kindergarten programs. These are funded in various ways including but not limited to Title I.

Nineteen (19) schools have half-day kindergarten programs. These have different configurations, for example, most have a half-day program (2.5 hours) Monday through Friday program. One (1) school has two (2) full days and one half-day for their students. One (1) school has kindergarten four days a week, Tuesday through Friday for 3.5 hours each day. Class size varies from eight (8) to more than thirty (30) students in one class. Kindergarten instructional aide time varies in the amount of hours for each class.

Twelve (12) schools have a fee-based enrichment or a wrap around program that allows parents to have their students at the school for a full day. In other words, a.m. kindergartners can go to a fee-based program for the afternoon. Some alternative schools do not have kindergarten programs, which impacts enrollment in neighborhood schools.

Out of the twenty buildings, five do not have Regional Special Education programs. Of the remaining 15 buildings that have Regional Special Education Programs, six buildings also have additional ESD Life Skills Education or other programs. You can refer to a chart at the end of our narrative for more information.

Following our review of the district’s current program, we considered the implications it had for the following issues:

•Equity	Varies from:
Instructional time	2.5 hours to full day or 6 hours.
Staffing (certified & classified)	Some schools will be overstaffed and some will be understaffed
Parent involvement and needs	School to school and year to year
Class size	School to school and year-to-year
Funding for all day kindergarten	Some are Title I funded
Fee based programs	Some are enrichment and some are wrap around programs
Access to programs	P.E., music, assemblies, media, technology, Artists in Residence to no added programs
Impact of special education programs	Building by building Can be viewed as an asset or a liability
Placement opportunities for kids	School to school
SES: concentrations	Poverty Middle class Affluence Affects school choice options
Space availability	School to school and year to year Most schools can accommodate full day kindergartens
Security-safety	Age, design, and size of building
Staff development-skills and expertise with this age group	Teacher to teacher (years of experience, formal/informal training) School to school
Size of rooms-may be developmentally appropriate	School to school Age of school Design of school

- **Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools**

Some alternative schools do not have kindergarten.

Kindergarten students moving to alternative schools in first grade affects the stability of neighborhood schools.

Some schools have high turnover due to mobility of students.

School choice offers flexibility and options to match needs of students to programs.

School choice creates a strong public school system.

A sense of community varies greatly from school to school.

Co-location issues exist when both alternative and neighborhood schools share a building. Most alternative schools think co-location is working well; neighborhood schools believe it isn't going well.

Alternative schools are less diverse.

The mission-vision of each school or program varies. With two (2) co-located schools, it is difficult to support both schools.

School choice can foster healthy competition.

The sense of entitlement varies from school to school.

- **Program Staffing**

Site based decisions result in varied student/teacher ratios. Class size ranges from 8 to 30.

Size of classroom may not accommodate number of children and adults.

Experience, skills, and endorsements of teachers vary for this age group and varied needs of students.

Staff development opportunities vary from site to site and teacher to teacher.

Program staffing and enrichment opportunities vary from school to school.

Staff allocation process varies from school to school.

More involvement of internal stakeholders can result in stronger support for decisions.

- **State and Federal Mandates**

Title I can allow flexibility if it is school-wide.

NCLB (No Child Left Behind) narrows the curriculum, which limits kindergarteners experience in a half-day kindergarten.

The federally defined poverty level does not reflect current economic realities. Many students who do not meet the criteria still need the services.

Mandates and their interpretation at the state and federal level vary.

Many mandates force the labeling of students to obtain needed resources.

Funds and services are allocated through an identification process rather than based on what is best for each child.

Interpretation of mandates is inconsistent from building to building, even though the interpretation is within legal norms.

Many children do not fit criteria but have needs and stress resources of the school.

State school funding currently only supports 1/2-day kindergarten.

Presently, kindergarten is the gatekeeper and entry point in the school system for initial placement into special education services, especially those that have not been a part of the EC Cares program.

- **Student Transportation**

Presently transportation costs increase with half-day kindergarten programs due to more routes.

School choice is limited because district transportation is provided only for neighborhood schools.

- **High Schools**

Some high schools provide students opportunities to work with preschoolers on campus.
Some high school students gain parenting skills.
Some students may be employed as aides in preschool programs.
Preschools at high school sites are open to staff members, teen parents, and community members.

- **Elementary Schools**

Four (4) schools have full day kindergarten. Many of these schools have waiting lists.
Many schools have opportunities for fee-based programs that provide additional half-day enrichment taught by non-certified staff.
Some families choose private school full day options and then continue at that school.
Half-day kindergarten may separate this group from the rest of the school making it harder to develop community.
It is confusing to parents to know where programs are, as they vary from year to year.

- **Middle Schools**

Kindergarten enrollment may impact middle schools, because students tend to stay in the region in which they begin.

- **Regional Impact**

Inequities in kindergarten programs exist within the regions and between the regions.
Full day kindergarten can encourage more enrollment of students within a region.

- **Other (Including impact on other focus group topics)**

Current midday kindergarten bus routes and self-transportation due to school choice increases pollution, use of fossil fuels, and exacerbates traffic safety issues.
Staff turnover affects program stability.
It is difficult to predict kindergarten enrollment, which affects long term planning at some sites.
Current policies and contractual language may not support placement of qualified staff with young children.

INSTRUCTIONAL LITERATURE

Prior to the meetings of our focus group, the district asked retired elementary administrator Mike Garling to review the literature dealing with Pre K & Full Day KG. He summarized recent research and writings in this area. Highlights include:

- All children learn more in daylong classes.
- Benefits of full-day kindergarten include decreased costs by reducing retention and remediation rates.
- Teachers in full day kindergarten programs tend to use more of the instructional strategies that researchers recommend to promote young children's learning.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS: The Pre Kindergarten & Full Day Kindergarten

We were asked to identify a number of implementation options for full day kindergarten based on a range of funding assumptions. First, we were asked to assume that no additional funds would be available, second that some additional funds would be available, and finally that the Quality Education Model (QEM) was fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.

We were also asked to comment on what implications there were for a number of key issues in the district. Our proposed implementation options are described below, along with what we believe the implications to be. We also summarized the values and beliefs that we, as a focus group, operated. **The strike view on options one (1) and two (2) indicate what would be eliminated if we could not fund that particular option. Therefore, option three (3) would allow for full day kindergarten at all schools without anything stricken from the program.**

<p>The Pre Kindergarten & Full Day Kindergarten</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing resources and energy in young children results in the greatest return for the individual and society. Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten programs should provide opportunities for developing all facets of the child including social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and aesthetic abilities. Creating a learning environment that is a supportive, safe, healthy, diverse, and respectful place for all students to learn is essential to success. Early parent involvement in their child’s education is crucial to the child’s short and long-term success. 	<p>Our Values and Beliefs</p>
<p>IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS</p>	<p>IMPLICATIONS</p>
<p>Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the District</p> <p>Encourage full-day kindergarten for all the students plus funding for 80% of Oregon Pre-Kindergarten eligible preschool students</p> <p>Full day kindergarten and Oregon Pre-K school at all schools with quality standards in collaboration between 4j and Head Start</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full day kindergarten at all schools One (1) full time teacher and one (1) full time six (6) hour aide per class. Oregon pre-kindergarten with quality standards Consider option of having “Regional Campuses” (4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Pre K, Elementary, Middle School, High School and Health Clinic 4J and Family Resource Center Staffing to support the social-emotional development of students such as counselors, child development specialists or behavior mentors Program staffing for specialists (music, PE, art, media, technology) Personal education plans for each child based on relevant curriculum for the whole child Additional instruction time for struggling students 	<p>Equity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children have equal access to full day kindergarten All income eligible children have access to an Oregon Pre-Kindergarten class <p>Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools and Alternative Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More stability and less mobility because both neighborhood and alternative schools will have full day kindergarten, which improves a sense of community <p>Program Staffing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent staffing from kindergarten to kindergarten (Teachers and IA) Supports long term planning and predictability in kindergarten programs from year to year Access to all the school programs such as PE, music, technology, etc Kindergarten teachers would be better integrated as part of the school team <p>State and Federal Mandates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are hoping for a state mandate for full day kindergarten and full funding for Oregon Pre-kindergarten <p>Student Transportation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in bus routes Fuller busses — better utilization of busses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second language enrichment not limited to but to possibly include foreign teachers, bilingual high school students, volunteers, curriculum programs, AV materials, and classroom students • Student teacher ratio (1:20) • Encourage class sizes of 20 or less • Collaboration between agencies • Parent education component • Home visits • School calendar modified to year-round • Work with the legislature to change attendance to mandatory at age 5 • Strong Transition Plans between pre-school and kindergarten and school to school when children move • Add 4j information to current Welcome Baby packet • Collaboration of staff training/professional development between the early childhood community and 4j • Reduce Pre-K and kindergarten testing using on going assessment to monitor progress and guide instruction • Diversity of staff • 4j pre-school in every high school meeting quality standards • Increase partnerships between 4J and local universities • Comprehensive education (social, emotional, aesthetic, physical, academic) • Expand collaboration and communication of 4J Early Intervention Transition team and pre-schools 	<p>High Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community service options for high school students teaching language to K • Improves high school completion • Improves attendance • Gain parenting skills – high school students working in preschools • Continues sense of community • Helpful to staff who can have their children attend on site, high quality preschool programs <p>Elementary Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces wait lists for full day kindergarten • Starts building a sense of community early • Kindergarten children, parents and staff are more integrated into the schools • Increase enrollment (instead of private schools) • Provides flexibility in scheduling • Reduction in need for remediation <p>Middle Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved behavior in students, academic success, attendance • Continued sense of community with continuity <p>Regional Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance enrollment stability • Strengthen all regions – enrollment and stability • More equity between and within regions <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One school will need a modular under current facility usage • Some facilities may need improvements to meet quality requirements • Improve ability to do long term planning • More chances to connect with community resources • Less need for kids to be in low quality childcare • Full funding for Oregon Pre-K classes offers more quality placement for early childhood special education eligible children in least restrictive environments <p>Special Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More support services available • Helps scheduling special services
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier identification and remediation, may reduce the number of SPED referrals • Psychologists can do more intervention rather than testing <p>Title I:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More funds and more flexibility with funds (don't need to use funds on kindergarten classes) • More time for intervention and resources <p>ELL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More immersion time • More time to work with ELL children • More access to ELL services — full spectrum of services • Improved ability to link ELL parents with community resources <p>Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need different software for this age group • Staff training <p>Grade Configuration: (not option 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-kindergarten and full day kindergarten can be configured in many different ways with other grades
<p>Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the District</p> <p>Implementation Option:</p> <p>Funding for full-day kindergarten for all the students plus funding for 80% of Oregon Pre-Kindergarten eligible preschool students</p> <p>Full day kindergarten and Oregon Pre-K school at all schools with quality standards in collaboration between 4j and Head Start</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full day kindergarten at all schools • One (1) full time teacher and one (1) full time six (6) hour aide per class. • Oregon pre-kindergarten with quality standards • Consider option of having “Regional Campuses” (4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Pre-K, Elementary, Middle School, High School and Health Clinic 4J and Family Resource Center 	<p>Equity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>All children have equal access to full day kindergarten</u> • <u>All income eligible children have access to an Oregon Pre-Kindergarten class</u> <p>Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools and Alternative Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More stability and less mobility because both neighborhood and alternative schools will have full day kindergarten, which improves a sense of community <p>Program Staffing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent staffing from kindergarten to kindergarten (Teachers and IA) • Supports long term planning and predictability in kindergarten programs from year to year • Access to all the school programs such as PE, music, technology, etc • Kindergarten teachers would be better integrated as part of the school team

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing to support the social-emotional development of students such as counselors, child development specialists or behavior mentors • Program staffing for specialists (music, PE, art, media, technology) • Personal education plans for each child based on relevant curriculum for the whole child • Additional instruction time for struggling students • Second language enrichment not limited to but to possibly include foreign teachers, bilingual high school students, volunteers, curriculum programs, AV materials, and classroom students • Student teacher ratio (1:20) • Encourage class sizes of 20 or less • Collaboration between agencies • Parent education component • Home visits • School calendar modified to year-round • Work with the legislature to change attendance to mandatory at age 5 • Strong Transition Plans between pre-school and kindergarten and school to school when children move • Add 4j information to current Welcome Baby packet • Collaboration of staff training/professional development between the early childhood community and 4j • Reduce Pre-K and kindergarten testing using on-going assessment to monitor progress and guide instruction • Diversity of staff • 4j pre-school in every high school meeting quality standards • Increase partnerships between 4J and local universities • Comprehensive education (social, emotional, aesthetic, physical, academic) • Expand collaboration and communication of 4J Early Intervention Transition team and pre-schools 	<p>State and Federal Mandates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are hoping for a state mandate for full day kindergarten and full funding for Oregon Pre-kindergarten <p>Student Transportation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in bus routes • Fuller busses – better utilization of busses <p>High Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community service options for high school students teaching language to K • Improves high school completion • Improves attendance • Gain parenting skills – high school students working in preschools • Continues sense of community • Helpful to staff who can have their children attend on site, high quality preschool programs <p>Elementary Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces wait lists for full day kindergarten • Starts building a sense of community early • Kindergarten children, parents and staff are more integrated into the schools • Increase enrollment (instead of private schools) • Provides flexibility in scheduling • Reduction in need for remediation • See above summary of research <p>Middle Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved behavior in students, academic success, attendance • Continued sense of community with continuity <p>Regional Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance enrollment stability • Strengthen all regions – enrollment and stability • More equity between and within regions <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One school will need a modular under current facility usage • Some facilities may need improvements to meet quality requirements • Improve ability to do long term planning • More chances to connect with community resources
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QUESTIONS AND ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD AND UNIVERSITY OPERATED THINK TANK

We have the following questions that we believe the school board and university-operated think tank should consider as it synthesizes our work with the work of the other focus groups.

1. Given current brain research that indicates most significant brain development occurs before first grade, can we truly afford not to have full day kindergartens?
2. If we support the recommendations in the Access and Options report, can we continue to have the high degree of variation of programming in the Eugene School District?
3. How should district funds be reallocated so that all schools can have full day kindergartens?

We also believe that some stakeholder groups in the district may identify additional issues. We have listed what we believe those issues may be.

- Staff:** Our option two (2) and three (3) proposal eliminates inequities in teaching assignments.
- Students:** Current models do not meet changing demographics and skill set of the future work force.
- Parents:** If we continue with the current program, parents will continue to raise the issue of fairness.
- Community:** Some private schools or pre-schools may be impacted.

STRATEGIC PLANNING INFORMATION
Kindergarten Programs
Neighborhood Schools

	How much of the day?	How long are sessions?	Which days of the week?	How many students?	What staff operates your kindergarten?	How much certified FTE?	How much classified FTE?	Is there a childcare program?	COMMENTS
Adams	Half	2 sessions, each 2.5 hours	M-F	27	1 teacher 1 IA	1.0	1.0	Fee-based program sponsored by YMCA	
Awbrey Park	Half	3 sessions, each 2.5 hours	M-F	75*	2 teachers 1 IA	1.5	6 hours per day	Fee-based program sponsored by Eugene City Parks	*2006-07 enrollment is 74 general education students and 1 RLC-B student
Bertha Holt	Half	4 sessions, each 2.5 hours	M-F	71	2 teachers 2 las	2.0	1.4	Fee-based after-school program sponsored by Kid City Adventures	
Cesar Chavez	Full	3 sessions, each 6.25 hours	M-F	90	3 teachers 1 Title IA 1 SPED IA	1.5 Reg 1.5 Title	3 hours per room each day	Fee-based after-school program sponsored by Creative Care	
Coburg	Half	2 sessions, each 3.25 hours	MT ThF	27	1 teacher 1 IA	0.5	2.25 hours per day	Fee-based program with community staffing	
Crest Drive	Half	2 sessions, each 2.5 hours	M-F	40	1 teacher 1 IA	1.0	7 hours per day	Fee-based program sponsored by YMCA	
Edgewood	Half	2 sessions, each 2.5 hours	M-F	45	1 teacher 1 IA	1.0	3.2 hours per day	Fee-based program sponsored by YMCA	
Edison	Half	2 sessions, each 3.75 hours	M-F	53	2 teachers 2 IAs	1.32	6 hours per day	Fee-based program sponsored by Creative Care	
Gilham	Half	3 sessions, each 2.5 hours	MT ThF	77	3 teachers 2 IAs	1.5	7.5 hours per day	Fee-based after-school program sponsored by Kid City Adventures	
Harris	Both	2 sessions, Full 6.25 hrs Half 2.5 hrs	M-F	Full 30 Half 8	2 teachers 2 IAs	1.5	7.0 hours per day	Fee-based program rents space after school on Wednesday	
Howard	Half	2 sessions, generally 4.25 hours*	M-F	52	2 teachers 2 IAs	1.3	10 hours per day**	No	*Optional extended day program available is 30 minutes longer.
McCornack	Half	2 sessions, each 2.75 hours	M-F		2 teachers 2 IAs	1.5	6 hours per day	Fee-based after-school program sponsored by YMCA	
Meadowlark	Half	2 sessions, each 2.5 hours per day	M-F	57	2 teachers 1 IA	1.0	6 hours per day	No	
Parker	Half	2 sessions, each 2.5 hours	M-F	37	1 teacher 1 IA	1.0	4.5 hours per day	Fee-based program staffed by District 4J	
River Road	Full	3 sessions, each 6.25 hours	M-F	72	3 teachers 3 IAs	3.0	5 hours per class	No	
Spring Creek	Half	3 sessions, each 2.5 hours	M-F	66	2 teachers 2 las	1.5	1.25	Fee-based program sponsored by YMCA	
Twin Oaks	Half	2 sessions, each 3.0 hours	M-F	33	1 teacher 1 IA	1.0	5 hours per day	No	
Willagillespie	Half	3 sessions, each 2.5 hours	M-F	60	2 teachers 1 IA	1.5	6 hours per day	Fee-based program with District 4J staff	

STRATEGIC PLANNING INFORMATION
Kindergarten Programs
Alternative Schools

	How much of the day?	How long are sessions?	Which days of the week?	How many students?	What staff operates your kindergarten?	How much certified FTE?	How much classified FTE?	Is there a childcare program?	COMMENTS
Buena Vista									NO KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
Charlemagne	Half	2 sessions, each 14.5 hours per week*	M-F	46	1 teacher 1 IA	1.0	6 hours per day	Fee-based program sponsored by YMCA	*One session meets MW (full day) and F (morning 2 hours); the other session meets TTh (full day) and F (midday 2 hours).
Corridor	Half	2 sessions, each 3.75 hours	T-F	42	2 teachers 1 IA	1.0	3 hours per day	No	
Eastside								No	NO KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
Family School								Fee-based program sponsored by Creative Care	NO KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
Hillside	Half	2 sessions, 2.5 hours	M-F	27	1 teacher 1 IA	1.0	0.5 provided by parents	Fee-based program sponsored by YMCA	
Magnet Arts	Full	1 session, 6.25 hours	M-F	20	1 teacher 1 IA	1.0	1.5 hours per day	Fee-based program sponsored by Creative Care	
Yujin Gakuen	Half	2 sessions, each 2.5 hours	M-F	41	1 teachers 1 IA	1.0	6 hours per day	No	

STRATEGIC PLANNING INFORMATION
Pre-School Programs
located in District 4J Building

DISTRICT 4J BUILDING	PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAM
Adams ES	YMCA Plumtree
Bertha Holt ES	Deaf & Hard of Hearing Pre-School
Coburg ES	Coburg Co-op Pre-School
Howard ES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education Program • Head Start
Jefferson MS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Education Program • EC CARES Pre-School
Churchill HS	Child Development Center
North HS	North Eugene Pre-School
Sheldon HS	Playschool Pre-School
South HS	Kids Down South

Most pre-schools and Head Start programs have moved to Whiteaker and Westmoreland sites.