

## MINUTES

School District 4J Equity Committee  
Education Center Auditorium—200 North Monroe Street  
Eugene, Oregon

February 27, 2007  
4:30 pm

**PRESENT:** Marshall Peter, Chair; Andy Gottesman, Vice Chair; Jim Garcia, Sarah Lauer, Linda Liu, Belinda McLain, Victor Palma, Guadalupe Quinn, Larry Soberman, Surendra Subramani, Carmen Urbina, Cydney Vandercar, Jane Waite, members; Carmen Urbina, Abrella Luvert, Alan Merrill, Bruce Stiller, Dennis Urso, Abby Lane, Yvonne Curtis, Larry Sullivan, Wally Bryant, Ty Zeller, 4J staff; Carl Falsgraf, Linda Forrest, University of Oregon.

### **I. Welcome and Introduction**

Mr. Peter convened the meeting and welcomed those present. Members and guests introduced themselves.

### **II. Public Comment**

Carl Falsgraf, Center for Applied Second Language Studies, University of Oregon, described the Chinese Immersion School Feasibility Study being conducted for 4J. He distributed a list of key questions to be answered during the study and emphasized that community support was critical for the success of a language immersion program. He said initiative for the Chinese language program came from the Chinese-American community and spread to a wider group within Eugene and was then presented the concept to the district. He said some of the issues to be considered were the program's consistency with the district's strategic plan, the impact on neighborhood school enrollments and equity. He invited comments and questions from the committee.

Mr. Peter expressed concern that a language immersion school was geographically isolated, resulting in exclusion of lower income students whose parents had less flexibility to transport them. He urged the consideration of putting mechanisms in place that would assist parents who worked from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and might not be able to drive their children to and from school.

Mr. Stiller echoed Mr. Peter's comments. He said it was an equity issue that applied to all immersion schools.

Mr. Gottesman asked if the program would be available at the high school level. Mr. Falsgraf replied that the program would be started at kindergarten, with a grade added each year; it would be almost 10 years before high school grade levels were involved.

Mr. Gottesman asked what languages would be dropped to accommodate Chinese. Mr. Falsgraf said that an immersion model was fundamentally different from other language programs and it would not be necessary to eliminate traditional programs.

Ms. Waite suggested that the program be referred to as Mandarin instead of the more generic term "Chinese" to help people understand the differences between Asian cultures.

Mr. Merrill pointed out that Churchill was the only region without an immersion program and students were being pulled from that region to the disadvantage of those neighborhood schools. Ms. Curtis said that those types of issues would be incorporated in the planning process.

Mr. Falsgraf said that initial data collection indicated that students would be drawn to the program from across the district.

### **III. District Reports**

#### **English Language Learners (ELL)**

Ms. Lane provided an overview of ELL programs, noting the significant growth in programs since she began in 1992. She said there were over 26 languages represented in the district and used a map to illustrate concentrations of various groups in regions. She said that Spanish was the largest group, with Korean second. She said the ELL population was divided into four types, each with a different set of needs:

- recent arrivals who were at grade level
- recent arrivals who were not at grade level
- whole life spent in the United States but another language spoken at home
- sole speaker of foreign language at school

Ms. Lane indicated that the district's ELL plan must address English language development, literacy development and access to content-area instruction and literacy. She emphasized that educating ELL students was the responsibility of everyone in the district, not just the ELL program. Ms. Curtis added that it was a major issue to raise awareness about the need for all education resources to be focused on ELL students and that ELL funding was primarily used for English language development.

Ms. Lane shared the district's goals for ELL students were to become proficient in English, meet the same academic content and achievement standards expected of all children and meaningful access to curriculum and educational opportunities. She said that ELL instructional services used a pull-out model at the elementary level that included 30 to 45 minutes per day depending on a student's proficiency level. She said an initial academic language proficiency assessment was conducted and students were tested annually. She said that ELL curriculum was content-based and included not only English language development, but literacy and access to content. She said students could learn around a theme that interested them.

Ms. Lane said the State annually evaluated the district's ELL students for the purposes of determining that at least 85 percent moved from one level to the next and at least 20 percent reached language proficiency. She said the review also include the district's report card of adequate yearly progress (AYP). She said that all districts, regardless of the number of ELL students, were struggling to meet State standards. She reviewed the results of the most recent State evaluation.

Continuing, Ms. Lane said the ELL program would maintain a focus on effective instruction and program models across the district, meeting high school ELL needs, supporting and enhancing parent involvement,

staff development in teaching techniques and hiring more bilingual and bi-cultural teachers. She said the intent was to create a more holistic approach to meeting ELL needs.

Ms. Curtis encouraged committee members to contact her or Ms. Lane if they had information about a specific student or situation where they could help with problem-solving.

### **Retention and Recruitment**

Mr. Bryant distributed charts and tables illustrating the ethnicity of employees within the district's bargaining units. He said that administrators had received training on how to achieve staffing diversity as it was principals who had hiring authority for teachers and classified employees in each building. He said the district had revised the questions in its electronic application and teacher applicants were asked to respond to the following:

- identify diversity or related training in which they had participated and elaborate on one of those trainings and describe how their thinking was changed as a result
- discuss what they knew about best practices for teaching and how did they know the students were learning
- briefly describe the instructional strategies they would use in a classroom of students with different levels of English language proficiency and students with special needs

Ms. Waite said she did not feel the first question was a very holistic assessment of an applicant's perspectives or teaching methods. Mr. Bryant replied he was open to suggestions for modifications.

Mr. Bryant said that administrators now had access to ethnicity data to assure a more diverse applicant pool. He said that the district had the ability to recruit more broadly outside of the state or the country if greater diversity of applicant was needed.

Ms. Quinn asked if principals were responsible for deciding the composition of hiring committees in their buildings, including whether to include a parent, student or community members. Mr. Bryant said that was correct and principals reviewed applications and determined who would be interviewed.

Mr. Bryant said the district hiring process began in December with the budgeting process and resulted in an allocation of FTE and hours of classified staff to the elementary, middle and high school levels. He said that schools developed staffing plans based on those allocations.

Ms. Waite commented that there were inequities related to a school's ability to raise private funds to maintain or increase FTE. She asked if the district had a policy regarding that issue. Mr. Bryant replied that there was an equity fund and a certain percentage of the funds a school raised were contributed to the fund.

Continuing, Mr. Bryant reviewed the ethnicity statistics for various groups of employees. He noted that in some cases employees chose not to declare ethnicity and were shown as "unknown" in the data. He said the ethnic categories were defined by the federal government and did not fit everyone, including those who identified as bi- or multi-racial. He said the edZapp teacher application did include a multi-racial category. He pointed out that the district was hiring a higher percentage of employees of color but had still not reached the student population level of 21 percent students of color.

Mr. Peter asked if teachers of color were leaving at a faster rate than other teachers. Mr. Bryant distributed a table of the average number of years employees in each bargaining unit, identified by ethnicity, stayed in the district. He noted that in some cases the samples were very small.

Mr. Soberman thanked Mr. Bryant for the data and said it would be helpful to have clearer breakouts on the data, particularly with the small number of people in some categories. Mr. Bryant said he would conduct more research on the issue. He also distributed descriptions of jobs within the Human Resources department.

Ms. Waite asked if an anonymous electronic exit survey instrument was in place or being developed. Mr. Bryant said the district did not have the resources to tackle that project, although there were some changes underway in the Human Resources department and perhaps that task could be assigned to a particular position.

### **Special Education (SPED)**

Mr. Sullivan said the district's Educational Support Services (ESS) goal was to increase the achievement for all students and close the achievement gap. He used a PowerPoint slide presentation to provide statistical data on reading and math performance by grade and ethnicity and SPED and TAG (talented and gifted) membership by ethnicity at middle and high school levels.

Ms. Lane said it would be interesting to follow a cohort of students from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

Mr. Soberman said that students were tested at the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades but there were more opportunities to meet benchmarks through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. He wanted to see data on students beyond 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

Mr. Stiller reviewed statistics on the ethnicity of students by SPED category. He said there were 2,200 SPED students in the district.

Mr. Peter said it would be useful to see statistics on the percentage of students within each ethnic category that were identified as SPED.

In response to a question from Mr. Gottesman, Mr. Stiller said it was likely that a higher percentage of white students were identified under autism because that group was more likely to have an external diagnosis and referral from a physician or parent. He said with other groups it was often the district that initiated the evaluation.

Ms. Luvert asked how learning disorder referrals occurred. Mr. Stiller said that typically students were referred for evaluation when they were having difficulty learning to read and commonly the referrals were from the classroom teacher or data screening. He said that parents could and sometimes did refer their children and occasionally students self-referred.

Mr. Sullivan said the district was trying to develop the capacity for more comprehensive data collection and analysis. He said another promising project was implementation of an instructional intervention and progress monitoring process. He said better assessment would help to determine if the intervention was appropriate for a student and resulted in a successful outcome and if not, identify the barrier to success.

He said that ELL and SPED programs were focusing on improving the referral and assessment processes along with the placement identification process.

Ms. Quinn asked how parents were made aware of SPED categories and special needs. She said that in some communities parents were extremely concerned about the stigma attached to SPED, considering it to mean retardation instead of the wide range of special needs it actually represented. Mr. Stiller replied that the new progress monitor model would provide intervention at a couple of levels prior to an evaluation for SPED eligibility. He said parents would be informed that their child was receiving extra instruction and once there was an evaluation someone who was fluent in the parents' language, if it was not English, would explain the process and purpose. He agreed there was a stigma attached to learning disabilities in the Latino community and it was critical to explain issues in a positive context.

Mr. Peter suggested a follow-up discussion with the committee about ways to address bilingual and bicultural concerns with the evaluation, referral and intervention process.

There was a discussion of teacher training to deal with cultural issues as they related to SPED of ESS in general and whether participation in equity and cultural competency training was mandatory for teachers, including SPED teachers.

Mr. Sullivan said ESS could provide the committee with more data in the future, including related to the effectiveness of services. He agreed with Ms. Quinn's suggestion to obtain feedback from parents on the effectiveness of services.

Mr. Merrill suggested asking data categories related to how long students remained in programs and why they exited.

Ms. Waite asked for more information about the process by which students got out of SPED programs.

Mr. Peter thanked the presenters for the information provided to the committee. Ms. Urbina acknowledged the efforts presenters had made to address the committee's questions openly and thoroughly.

#### **IV. Board Presentation Discussion and Next Steps**

Mr. Peter stated that he would review the committee's presentation to the School Board with Ms. Urbina and Ms. Luvert and asked members to email him with any suggestions for points to be made to the board.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)