

MINUTES

Eugene School District 4J Equity Committee
Parr Room—200 North Monroe Street
Eugene, Oregon

January 26, 2010
4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Carl Hermanns, Co-chair; Andy Gottesman, Melly Holloway, Misa Joo, Sarah Lauer, Joel Lavin, Belinda McClain, Guadalupe Quinn, George Russell, Linda Smart, Larry Soberman, Bruce Stiller, Surendra Subramani, Maria Thomas, Peter Tromba, Jane Waite, Raquel Wells, members; Carmen Urbina, 4J staff; Lorraine Wilson, guest.

ABSENT: Marshall Peter, Chair

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Hermanns convened the meeting.

Ms. Urbina distributed copies of a document called “*Board Retreat and Equity Committee Conversation, January 22 & 23, 2010*,” a breakdown of priorities as decided at the board retreat the past weekend. It was decided to change the agenda so that Ms. Waite would give her update from the Race and Ethnicity Report Committee first, and then time would be spent discussing the priority recommendations and attempting to further prioritize the items to identify primary goals.

Public Comment

There were no comments.

Update Race and Ethnicity Report Committee

Ms. Waite reported that under the new guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education, as of the coming fall every student and licensed teaching staff must be asked two questions: first, if they are Latino, and second to choose one or more races from a list of: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or White. “Multiracial” would not be a choice, she said, but if someone recorded more than one race, they would be recorded as multiracial.

Ms. Waite said that a lot of support was needed at the community level to make this at all viable. In 4J District in the past, she said, students had not been asked to report all races of origin, but to identify a primary race of their identity. The district wished to continue this policy, with a desire to capture the way a person identified themselves. Lane Education Association was working to give support to community members so that appropriate choices could be made. She stated they were developing materials and providing professional development for all 4J staff.

Another aspect of the federal guidelines stated that if a person failed to self-identify, the district was required to identify the person through observation. The recommendation suggested that

there would be a designated administrator for each building, and that all staff would be trained to share the information necessary for making good identity choices. Ms. Waite said that those interested in seeing the materials could contact Ms. Urbina or herself.

She suggested that administrative staff, who needed a more advanced training, be trained this spring. Teachers would need less information, and also needed were packets of information to pass out to parents. This was an opportunity, Ms. Waite concluded, to build cultural proficiency and create networks in the schools.

Ms. Urbina remarked that the Equity Committee wanted this program to be fought against, and indeed a great fight had been attempted, including a letter written to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) by all school superintendents of Lane County. This letter had actually gone to all in authority, locally and nationally, from Mayor Piercy to Barack Obama, to no avail. She stated that Ms. Waite had done an amazing job of refining the policies that had been established into materials that were nurturing and helpful, as well as designing an outreach program for the community to begin in the spring.

Ms. Waite said she had attempted to remove all the double-talk that was present in the federal materials, and that the local human rights leaders were happy with what was now being offered and felt Lane County was leading the nation in coming to terms with these new policies. She surmised that the Latino numbers would go up as well as the multiracial numbers if care was not taken, and that African American and American Indian would go down significantly. Ms. Waite encouraged people to get in touch with her outside the meeting and stated that it would be very important to inform people of the consequences of their choices.

De-Brief Joint Meeting Equity Committee and Board on January 23, 2010

Mr. Hermanns commented that three basic questions were asked at the retreat: what the district was doing that it should continue doing, what the district was now doing that it should not continue doing, and what the district should be doing that it is not doing now. Ms. Urbina pointed out that the document she had distributed was a compilation of the priorities that had come forward from discussion of the three questions.

Mr. Hermanns noted that it was now hoped that the number of priorities raised at the retreat could be narrowed down to the most pertinent ones that would help all students to be successful, particularly in the context of budget restrictions over the next two to three years. It was decided to go through the items one at a time and attempt to identify the highest priority items.

Item #1 considered the importance of continuing the partnership of the Equity Committee with the school board, it was deemed to be high priority and with no budgetary implications.

Item #2 addressed Ms. Urbina's position (Family, Community and Diversity Coordinator), and whether to maintain, enhance or otherwise alter the position. It was acknowledged that Ms. Urbina brought extraordinary skills to her position, and also that it was important to make sure the work for this position was not person-specific, and that the job description had been created and was in the system. With constrained and somewhat unknown budgetary resources, there was concern that enhancing the position could mean cutting back other FTE. Sustaining the position was determined to be very important, as was providing the resources to perform it optimally and effectively.

Item #3 was described as progress monitoring with EasyCBM and IIPM along with an infusion of multicultural perspectives followed by tiered intervention. At the elementary schools, Mr. Hermanns clarified, there were now data teams in place so that teachers had support in working with individual students, whereas the middle schools were just beginning to implement the system and high schools were beginning to explore the possibilities. It was agreed that this item was in the #1 priority level.

Mr. Stiller added that when he and others designed the IIPM and IPBS models, one of the main concerns they addressed was the “blame the child” model of the SSP model. Instead, he said, the focus was now on how the individual children could be supported. Coaching and training were aimed at changing that mindset. He noted that change took time.

Item #4 was about capacity building, with the CFEE and Taking It Up programs. CFEE (Coaching for Educational Equity) was described as a 4-day immersion program in equity issues to which Eugene had sent 86 administrators and approximately 100 teachers for training. Ms. Waite noted that the program uplifted networking and ally building between staff and also between educators and communities.

Mr. Stiller reported that he had just returned last week from a CFEE training, and had learned things he had been blind to, including unconscious or hidden racism. He described it as very expensive and extremely valuable program, and felt people in leadership positions should receive this training.

Mr. Hermanns noted that originally CFEE training was grant funded, and that other funding would need to be found for sustaining this training, so that this item did have budgetary implications. During the next two years there was an Equity line item, so that funding was available for that time period. The Taking It Up program, he said, was a program for training teachers. He felt it was of utmost importance to get this work into the classroom where it could affect the everyday lives of children. All agreed that this item was of #1 priority.

Item #5, Clear articulation of equity and diversity goals, had no budgetary implications, and was felt to be of #1 priority.

Item #6, evaluation of resource allocations based on differentiated needs, was interpreted to mean the continuation of allocating resources based on need. There was no financial implication for this one, and the general consensus was that it had a high priority.

Since time was running short in the meeting, Mr. Stiller suggested that it might be important to find a way to choose a certain number of items to forward to the board, perhaps with each person choosing four top items. Ms. Urbina added that a subcommittee could be formed to go through all the items and prioritize them, and then email them to Equity Committee members before it was brought back to a meeting.

Mr. Hermanns said he'd like to highlight a few items that could have budgetary implications, starting with #9, counselors/ school psychologist: professional development around GLBTQ, race, and poverty issues. He noted that in the current budgetary process the counseling structure in the district was being looked at. There was agreement that this item was also of #1 priority.

Mr. Hermanns said that item #7 (creation and design of sustainable structures for GSA, BSU, LSU, ASA, middle and high school), although it did not have budgetary implications, it did have big social implications. Mr. Stiller noted that if this was done well, students would feel more supported. He said it was imperative that it be done well; otherwise it would be a waste of resources. Ms. Wells noted there were good models in the community that could be used. Ms. McClain added that her son had told her that at Churchill students wanted someone from the Equity Committee to come and talk to them, with the hope of starting clubs around equity for students there. Ms. Urbina stated that this initiative should be non-negotiable and fully supported for all the schools because of the importance of defining cultural identities for the children.

Mr. Hermanns stated that the next step for this work would include Ms. Urbina, Ms. Wells and Ms. Joo meeting in the next few days to further organize the document and send it to committee members, perhaps asking for a certain number of top priorities from members. If necessary, the larger committee would be called back for a one-hour meeting to finalize its priorities.

Mr. Hermanns adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

(Recorded by Judy Burton)