

# MINUTES

Equity Committee Meeting  
Eugene Public Schools District 4J  
200 North Monroe  
Tower Room

October 27, 2010  
4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Jennifer Geller, Andy Gottesman, Carl Hermanns, Melly Holloway, Marshall Peter, Guadalupe Quinn, Linda Smart, Maria Thomas, Linda Hamilton, Raquel Wells, Sascha Cosio, Jane Waite, Sarah Lauer, Brie Stiller, members; George Russell, School District 4J Superintendent; Carmen Urbina, Barb Bellamy, staff; Jim Torrey, Ausie Reynolds, guests; Roxanne Franco, Baronica Izaguirre, Bibiana Rodrigues, Basilio Sandoval, Adriana Monge, Centro Latino Americano.

## I. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Peter called the meeting of the 4J Equity Committee to order at 4:30 p.m.

Mr. Peter noted he planned to excuse himself from the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

Mr. Peter asked those present to introduce themselves

## II. Public Comment

Ms. Franco noted that Mr. Sandoval would present information regarding the Cento Latino Americano (CLA) organization to the Committee as well as Centro Latino's mission statement.

Mr. Hermanns arrived to the meeting at 4:34 p.m.

Mr. Sandoval described several elements of the Central Latino Americano community organization including the group's helpline and sliding fee scale for its clients.

Ms. Izaguirre commented on Centro Latino Americano's efforts to recruit new mentors for its mentoring youth program which had been initiated in 2010 to reach out to at risk Latino youths ages 11 to 17. She noted that the program had helped fill the growing need for Latino youth mentors in the community. She briefly described the basic work processes of the youth mentoring program.

Ms. Urbina proposed to the Centro Latino Americano representatives that they arrange meetings with School District 4J counselors in order to share information regarding the CLA and its programs for students. She further noted that CLA might also work with members of the various Latino student unions at the four District high schools.

Mr. Peter thanked the CLA representatives and encouraged them to return to the Equity Committee to share further information regarding their group.

Ms. Franco encouraged the Equity Committee members to distribute information regarding the CLA to any adult or youth community members who might be able to use the CLA's services or programs.

Ms. Franco volunteered to leave Spanish language information regarding the CLA for the Equity Committee members.

Mr. Sandoval encouraged the Equity Committee members to contact the CLA if they needed further information regarding the group's programs or services.

Mr. Peter proposed a modification to the meeting agenda whereby the majority of the meeting would be devoted to the Sustainable Budget presentation and the discussion items regarding the EJPR Update and the Student Surveys would be postponed to a later Equity Committee meeting.

Mr. Peter hoped that a discussion item regarding teacher recruitment might also be placed on a future Equity Committee meeting agenda.

Ms. Thomas agreed to Mr. Peter's suggestion regarding the EJPR Update agenda item.

Mr. Peter suggested that the meeting time for the next Equity Committee meeting on November 23, 2010 be altered to begin one half hour earlier and end one half hour later, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Waite asked Ms. Urbina to send a reminder to the Committee members regarding the schedule change for the November 23 meeting. Ms. Urbina confirmed that she would do so.

District Superintendent George Russell joined the meeting at 4:42 p.m.

### **III. Sustainable Budget Presentation and Conversation**

Superintendent Russell presented information regarding the Sustainable Budget options he had developed in conjunction with District staff. He noted that those efforts had been in direct response to the School District 4J Board direction for staff to develop a sustainable budget for the District by 2012/2013.

Superintendent Russell stated that the 4J Board had asked for staff's Sustainable Budget strategy options no later than the end of February 2011. He further noted that he and staff were seeking the Equity Committee's feedback and suggestions regarding the information collected and the strategy options developed thus far.

Superintendent Russell described the allocation of the District's current \$142 million general fund budget.

Mr. Gottesman commented on his tenure with the District and noted that after adjusting for various factors his pay scale had been approximately the same when he retired as it had been when he had initially joined School District 4J.

Superintendent Russell described the factors that had contributed to the District's current and anticipated budget shortfalls. He reported those contributing factors included decreases in State revenue, declining student enrollment, increases in the use of reserve and one-time funding sources, and increases in staff compensation.

Superintendent Russell outlined the staff budgetary forecasts which projected a 19-27% shortfall through the next year and continuing shortfalls through 2015. He noted that the shortfall projections had been based on: 1) assumptions of a 5% reduction in state funding per pupil; 2) the restoration of furlough days from the current 4J contract; and 3) a 2% cost increase for compensation, supplies and services.

Superintendent Russell maintained the challenge presented by the shortfalls would be to maintain and improve student achievement in an atmosphere of shrinking resources. He noted that he had requested staff to delineate between the strategy options that were required by State and federal laws, "the things we must do," and more flexible strategy options, "the things we don't absolutely have to do," as they developed potential scenarios for a sustainable district budget.

Superintendent Russell noted a suggestion that had been made regarding the prioritization of District budget items. He noted that the first priority had been described as those items directly pertaining to the District's values of equity, learning, excellence, and closing achievement gaps. He noted that the second priority had been described as those items pertaining to quality programs in all District schools. He noted that the third, fourth and fifth priorities had addressed support for teaching and learning, administrative and operational efficiencies, and community and stakeholder reports, respectively. He stated the 4J Board did not appear to completely agree with the prioritizations and that further interpretation and discussions in that regard were possible.

Superintendent Russell noted that several of the sustainable budget strategy options would require negotiations with labor organizations. He noted that other options might require impact bargaining to determine how those options would affect employee working conditions and other operational factors.

Superintendent Russell briefly reviewed the sustainable budget strategy options developed by staff in the following areas:

- Revenue Enhancements
- Fewer School/Ways Days
- Staff Reductions
- School Closure and Consolidation
- Share Services or Contract Out
- Materials, Supplies and Discretionary Funds
- School and Instruction Redesign
- Non-Instructional Programs
- Reserves and One-Time Funds
- Compensation and Benefits for Staff

Superintendent Russell, responding to a question from Ms. Cosio, stated the District currently employed approximately 1000 teachers utilizing approximately 800 FTE positions.

Superintendent Russell, responding to a question regarding the shared services strategy option, reported the State currently paid for approximately 70% of the bussing and transportation costs for the District.

Brie Stiller arrived to the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

Superintendent Russell, responding to a request for clarification from Ms. Thomas regarding the strategy options for non-instructional programs, briefly described how the District had traditionally allocated funds for professional development.

Superintendent Russell commented that while he was often reluctant to give illustrative scenarios of how the strategy options might be implemented he had determined a selection of the strategy options that was so far-fetched and drastic that it could not realistically be considered. He noted that he had developed such a dramatic sample scenario in order to help better illustrate what \$30 million represented to the continued viability of the District.

Mr. Peter excused himself from the meeting at 5:11 p.m.

Superintendent Russell, responding to a question from Ms. Wells, noted that the current staff to student ratio was approximately 23:1 for primary grade levels, 24:1 for intermediate grade levels and 26:1 for high school grade levels. He further explained that the District staffing ratio did not simply describe teacher to student ratios and classroom instruction sizes but rather included counseling and other staff not included in other class size computations. He further noted for Ms. Wells that the determination of staffing ratio priorities were the result of the various site-based decision making processes used in each 4J school.

Ms. Wells maintained that the elements contributing to the District's staffing ratios needed to be presented more clearly to the community. She maintained that many parents believed that the District staffing ratios simply described the number of students to teachers in each classroom.

The Equity Committee members and 4J staff briefly discussed how staffing ratios had traditionally been applied in each 4J school and also how those staffing ratios might be more clearly expressed to the public as the sustainable budget options process moved forward.

Superintendent Russell noted the timeline for the sustainable budget development process and reminded the Committee that he was expected to present his proposal with recommendations to the 4J Board on Wednesday, November 3, 2010.

Superintendent Russell assumed that after his sustainable budget presentation to the 4J Board that certain elements of his preliminary recommendations would be incorporated into more final recommendations for the Board to consider through their final decision process in January of 2011.

Mr. Hermanns, responding to a question from Ms. Lauer, stated that the impact of State testing standards on the 4J budget could not be definitively determined but that he would research the matter and return to the Committee with further information. Superintendent Russell added that many 4J teachers had expressed that the State testing standards typically consumed a great deal of time and instructional resources.

Mr. Hermanns, responding to a question from Ms. Lauer, stated that the State testing was required of the District although District staff had been working to mitigate the frequency and resource impacts that resulted from the State's OAKS (Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) tests and other State evaluation measures.

Ms. Lauer stated she was curious to learn more about how much District resources were being used to accommodate State testing requirements.

Superintendent Russell asked Mr. Hermanns to explain in greater detail the school closure and consolidation strategy option that had been developed by staff. Mr. Hermanns prefaced that the community discussions and staff work surrounding the potential strategy had been prefaced on three primary issues: 1) that District-wide enrollment figures since 1996/1997 had steadily decreased from 18,700 students in three million square feet of building space down to 15,500 students in the same amount of building space; 2) the difficulties involved in providing comprehensive programs to smaller schools with fewer students; and 3) the immediate and future impacts of school closure/consolidation strategies upon the instructional viability of the District.

Mr. Hermanns briefly described how the school closure/consolidation strategies might result in the reconfiguration of grade levels at certain 4J schools. He described various potential grade reconfigurations as well as many of the potential benefits and difficulties that might be involved. He noted that the primary concern for District staff had been to determine the precise pedagogical benefit of the reconfiguration scenarios.

Ms. Hamilton asked what schools were being considered by District staff as part of any potential closure/consolidation strategies. Mr. Hermanns responded that no schools had yet been formally identified for closure or consolidation. Superintendent Russell hoped that the Equity Committee members would provide feedback and recommendations as to which schools might be considered.

Ms. Bellamy suggested that, in a manner similar to the District's community forum group meetings, that the Equity Committee members divide into three smaller groups in order to brainstorm ideas for how sustainable budget strategy options might be applied and to suggest options that might not yet have been considered. Ms. Bellamy proceeded to distribute District enrollment and capacity information for each workgroup to use in their discussions.

Ms. Wells asked if there was any additional information staff might provide in order to better inform the discussion processes of the three Equity Committee discussion groups. Superintendent Russell replied that the most relevant information had been provided as part of his presentation regarding the ten strategy options for the sustainable budget.

Superintendent Russell, responding to a question from Ms. Waite, stated that he did not know of any large foundational grants that might be used for School District 4J. He further noted that many philanthropic foundations and endowments currently were either reducing their donations or refocusing their philanthropic resources on other areas. Ms. Urbina added that she had recently attended a grant funding workshop and noted that there was currently a great deal of competition for foundation grants.

Superintendent Russell hoped that the Committee's workgroup discussions would help him frame his sustainable budget recommendations to the 4J Board and include suggestions for how the strategy options might effectively be implemented.

Ms. Waite hoped that each workgroup would carefully consider how the different impacts of the strategy options might be synchronized with the District's overall efforts to maintain and improve student instruction levels.

Mr. Gottesman asked if the 4J Board had expressed any openness to the notion of a complete and total reconfiguration of the entire District. Mr. Torrey responded to Mr. Gottesman's question and briefly discussed how he and the other 4J Board members planned to consider Superintendent Russell's recommendations.

Ms. Urbina and Ms. Bellamy organized the Equity Committee members into three discussion groups:

- Group One: Raquel Wells, Brie Stiller, Andy Gottesman, Guadalupe Quinn
- Group Two: Melly Holloway, Maria Thomas, Linda Smart, Jane Waite
- Group Three: Linda Hamilton, Brian ????, Sarah Lauer

Ms. Urbina called for a break so that the three groups could begin their individual discussions at 5:33 p.m. and reconvened the meeting of the Equity Committee at 6:03 p.m.

Ms. Bellamy asked the leaders from each workgroup to present at least two of the strategy options they had discussed to the remainder of the Equity Committee members.

Ms. Wells noted that Group One had discussed the consolidation of District schools and had developed a suggestion that the District's middle schools be eliminated to allow for the reconfiguration of grade levels resulting in the creation of a "super high school." She further noted from her group's discussion the belief that many District services such as school nursing and mental health treatment could be discontinued and compensated for through the use of other community partner agencies.

Ms. Waite reported that Group Two had discussed: 1) the consolidation of District schools and the creation of smaller learning communities in the consolidated schools; 2) the centralization of District decision making processes and the elimination of site-based decision making; and 3) alternative means of structuring instructional days with an emphasis on different core instruction delivery models.

Ms. Hamilton reported that Group Three had discussed the use reduced training for District administration staff, the reduction of non-instructional staff days, and a COLA freeze on compensation for District staff. Ms. Hamilton briefly noted the remainder of the options that her group had discussed.

Ms. Thomas noted that her group had also discussed the implementation of longer winter and spring break periods for the District.

Ms. Waite noted that her group had suggested the use of a well-designed school operation tax. She further noted that her group had generally supported the use of increased community user fees for District facilities. She briefly noted the remaining strategy options that her group had discussed.

Ms. Wells noted that her group had also discussed ways in which the District's professional development practices might be transformed into a more effective model. She briefly noted the remaining strategy options that her group had discussed.

Ms. Bellamy thanked the discussion groups for their efforts and noted that many of the suggestions they had raised had previously been made in the District's regional community meetings.

Mr. Gottesman asked if District staff had considered the use of year-long calendars and also requested clarification as to what studies had been made to review that issue. Mr. Gottesman maintained that the relevant studies regarding the use of a year-long calendar indicated that substantial cost savings might be achieved.

The Committee members briefly discussed the possible effects of adopting a year-long school calendar for the District.

Mr. Gottesman referred to his group's discussion of grade reconfigurations and believed that larger elementary schools could be physically divided in a manner that would reduce the administrative costs to the District. Ms. Stiller added that it might be easier for larger schools to maintain various support services such as counselors and librarians.

Mr. Gottesman briefly commented on how student-teacher ratios might be applied to larger schools with different grade configurations.

Ms. Wells encouraged Superintendent Russell to be courageous as he presented his preliminary recommendations to the 4J Board and hoped he would continue to stand up for high levels of student achievement across the entire District.

Ms. Waite suggested that the use of data teams and progress monitoring were critical to the success of each 4J school. She hoped that the District would continue to investigate the use of increased collaborative efforts with other school districts and with the 4J District's community partners.

Ms. Waite commended Superintendent Russell for his efforts and appreciated his long-standing commitment to the use of effective collaboration within the District.

Ms. Quinn noted that the District's budget crises represented a unique opportunity for District staff to make bold policy changes that would benefit the long-term health of the District.

Mr. Gottesman commented on the labor disputes the District had faced in 1987 and agreed that the responses to that crisis had had positive ramifications for the District. He agreed with Ms. Quinn that the budget crises might represent important opportunities for the improvement of the District.

Ms. Quinn commented that the budget problems facing School District 4J were also faced by school districts in many other communities across the country.

Superintendent Russell thanked the Equity Committee member for their suggestions and feedback.

Ms. Urbina adjourned the meeting at 6:28 p.m.

*(Recorded by Wade Hicks)*