

MINUTES

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

June 22, 2010
3:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Jennifer Geller, Andy Gottesman, Carl Hermanns, Melly Holloway, Misa Joo, Joel Lavin, Marshall Peter, Guadalupe Quinn, Linda Smart, Larry Soberman, Surenda Subramani, Maria Thomas, Peter Tromba, Lorraine Wilson, members; Carmen Urbina, Cheryl Linder, Larry Sullivan, Jim Conaghan, staff.

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Peter convened the meeting of the Equity Committee at 3:30 p.m. Those present introduced themselves.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one who wished to offer public comment.

III. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Mr. Peter reviewed the agenda.

Mr. Peter said the April 1, 2010 minutes were being distributed. Noting no objection, he deemed them approved as submitted.

IV. SPED REPORT

Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Linder and Mr. Conaghan offered a PowerPoint presentation entitled *Special Education Equity Report—June 22, 2010*, copies of which were distributed. Mr. Sullivan introduced the presentation, saying special education came about in the 1970's as a compliance factor resulting from a push from the disabilities community to appropriately serve students with special needs. Since the early 1970's, special education had been driven by ensuring compliance that students with disabilities received the types of instruction they needed to have.

In response to a question from Ms. Smart, Mr. Sullivan said the high percentage of students identified with autism was due in part to the fact that the district had the skills and abilities to do so. Additionally, the district was known for its services and many parents moved to the Eugene area from around the country to be eligible for the services it offered.

Responding to a question from Mr. Tromba, Ms. Linder said the district conducted December and June census. In December the district reported on the numbers in the district, by race and ethnicity, by grade level, performance, and a variety of ways. In June, the district identified

students.

Mr. Sullivan stated procedures for identifying students for the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program had been rewritten during the last several years, particularly for culturally diverse students. In the past, the screening and referral recommendation procedures had missed students in terms of ability or achievement. The current procedures used the best non-verbal, non-discriminatory screening assessment in second grade.

Mr. Conaghan observed how, over time, assessments procedures had improved but there was still some bias in those procedures. He noted many TAG referrals were parent referrals.

Mr. Marshall said the committee had expressed concern that White and Asian parents who knew the system, referred their students to TAG, however, other parents were not aware of this option. He asked if parents could still self-refer.

Mr. Soberman confirmed that parents could still self-refer, but added that now all second grade students were screened for intellectual giftedness through a culturally sensitive test, no student with academic high scores would be missed. He noted 90 percent of the students considered for TAG were identified through the screening.

Mr. Marshall suggested a referral to Latino and other families would be helpful.

He distributed a document entitled *Instructional Intervention/Progress Monitoring (IIPM) Model Pre-Referral Process and Special Education Comprehensive Evaluation for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students—Guidelines and Resources for Eugene School District 4J—January 8, 2009.*

In response to a question from Ms. Thomas, Mr. Sullivan said the district could have done more to solicit more parent participation in the development of the CLD component.

Ms. Smart, noting the increasing number of special needs students and the severity of special needs students going into the general education classrooms, asked what support structures were available to teach teachers about the needs of special education students. She asked if there were connections to the University of Oregon in terms of additional class-work to improve awareness to enable teachers to work effectively with the students. She worked with student teachers and understood there was only one special education course requirement.

Mr. Sullivan said district resources included staff development specialists who had focused recently on working with special education and general education teachers on how to blend services. He noted the inclusion movements of the 1990's did not work well because students and teachers were set up to fail, by putting students in general education without the support and skills to serve those students.

Responding to a question from Ms. Holloway, Ms. Linder said the district's autism consultant team worked to develop information for teachers and parents. Curriculum had been added to the website in the last month and addition resources were planned.

Mr. Marshall was dismayed that the data indicated that African-American, Native-American and Latino students were more likely to be eligible for special education and less likely to be eligible for TAG. He asked if the gap was contracting, expanding or staying the same.

Ms. Linder said the gap was not contracting in academic performance, and was beginning to contract in identification. This reflected the district's efforts related to the language arts at the elementary level, CLD and identification processes.

Mr. Sullivan explained the IIPM process. He said the district was required to identify students and show instruction interventions to demonstrate it had attempted to provide appropriate instruction to help students rather than see them fall further behind. The tiered model of instruction was a general education core curriculum, with additional differentiated instruction intervention for specific skills, within the general education curriculum. Students received targeted instruction if they did not make progress with the differentiated instruction.

Ms. Joo said there were dual and tri-emersion schools in Salem and that it would be interesting to learn if they did TAG identification in the populations 4J was looking at. She thought the statistics showed the current practice was culturally or class specific and could be improved upon.

Mr. Lavin asked if there was data available on students exiting from programs.

Ms. Linder said there was a new law influencing exit data, whereby parents were able to revoke special education services and return to the general education status. Current exit data based on revocations was relatively small. She added the district had not been able to successfully move students back to the general education population.

Mr. Sullivan added that the failure to move students back to the general education population was in part due to a function of beliefs that once a student was identified as having a disability, that identification stayed with the student. Setting expectations differently made a difference in how the district would eventually move towards exiting more students. Special education services look different than they did ten years ago, when there were special classrooms. The current role of the special education teacher was to support what the student learned in the general education classroom using a variety of strategies that were different than those used in the past.

Ms. Smart asked if data was available for students who had successfully exited special education.

Ms. Linder said that the district had prepared an exit report based upon a survey which tracked students as they left the twelfth grade and a year later. When looking five years out, students were not consistently holding jobs or moving on.

Ms. Urbina asked if students whose parents opted out of the special education program were tracked by ethnicity.

Ms. Linder observed that students opting out of special education crossed disability areas and occurred primarily at the secondary level. She opined some of the movement out of the program was related to students being able to take electives rather than core courses.

Mr. Peter asserted the school district was headed into dire straights related to the budget. He noted the special education data showed disproportion and failed academic performance, which aligned with data on the achievement gap. He asked if the district was adequately prepared to make gains in the contraction of the gap. He hoped students who were in the achievement gap would be less harmed than those who were not. He asked if that outcome was achievable.

Ms. Linder said some structures were in place to mitigate Mr. Peter's concerns. The IIPM

process, language arts and math adoption, incorporated all students.

Mr. Sullivan added there were concerns with reduced funding from the State of Oregon and the federal government related to special education services.

Ms. Urbina stated the district was also dealing with declining enrollment, with enrollment falling districtwide from 17,000 in 2009-2010 to 16,500 in 2010-2011.

Ms. Quinn asked for a presentation on the TAG program during in the next year.

V. HARRASSMENT AND BULLYING SURVEY—UPDATE

Mr. Peter noted Bruce Stiller was not present. He understood the survey had been distributed. Outstanding concerns included that the committee had encouraged the district to include a “comments” field which had not been done. He hoped the district would include a “comments” field next year. He asked for an update on identification of sexual orientation.

In response to a question from Mr. Gottesman, Mr. Tromba explained that preliminary data was available at the schools that did the survey electronically. Data was being input for schools that used the pencil and paper method. The data should be available in October.

Ms. Urbina said there were two Equity Committee members on the GLBTQ subcommittee, which consisted primarily of community members. One of the group’s goals would be to look at the survey data. Staff recommended that the Equity Committee and the GLBTQ subcommittee combine to review the survey data.

Mr. Peter supported the staff recommendation.

VI. SPED—DATA REPORT PRESENTATION

Covered under agenda item IV.

VII. BUDGET UPDATE

Mr. Hermanns explained the district originally anticipated an \$8 million deficit for fiscal year 2010/2011. When the Governor’s forecast was released several weeks ago, the deficit grew to \$14.8 million, which was preceded by a \$21 million deficit last year. Based on current budget projections, the shortfall would be \$23-\$30 million deficit for 2011/2012. The district would engage principals, teachers, and the community to look at the education system of the future and bring a sustainable budget to the School Board. The district was looking at severe budget contractions for 2011/2012, but was also pulling together the best thinking of everyone as a community to develop good options.

Mr. Hermanns acknowledged the immediate concerns for the Equity Committee with the 2010/2011 budget and concerns for the students who struggled most. The Board intended to keep the gains from the last two years for the equity program. He reviewed the proposed budget revisions provided in the agenda document entitled *Board Recommendations*.

Ms. Wilson understood there were issues unique to the GLBTQ, African-American, and Asian

communities. She emphasized the importance of addressing intolerance as a whole, and making it known throughout the district that intolerance was not acceptable.

Mr. Hermanns said the district needed to ensure one area was not emphasized at the expense of others.

Ms. Joo understood the district was working on a zero tolerance of harassment of any kind.

Mr. Peter said the committee had felt this was an area that needed extra help. He did not want to eclipse the importance of people feeling respected and comfortable in their schools. Many people felt ill equipped to deal with the issues when they arose.

Ms. Urbina said the preliminary school climate survey data indicated GLBTQ, communities of color and religion were harassed or bullied most frequently. Data continually showed that particular populations were discriminated and harassed at a greater level than other populations, which called for a focus on education.

Ms. Quinn said it would be good for the district to have an umbrella policy of zero tolerance regardless of the focus of a particular conversation.

Ms. Geller said the budget process had been heart wrenching for the School Board members. She urged everyone to think about what could be done to keep programs in place in the district and to become more aware of big picture budget policy changes that could make a difference. Oregon was in a bad position when compared to other states because of the structures, such as lack of a rainy day fund, in the state. She thanked committee members for supporting the School Board as it made difficult decisions.

Mr. Peter observed a concern about how decisions were made related to which teachers were laid off. He inquired about a presentation the committee had last year related to the district being able to use determinants other than last hired first fired.

Mr. Tromba said there had been some misinformation last year about whether that clause could be used. It could be used only in cases where more than one person shared a seniority date. The contract was clear that in times of layoff, that provision could not be used.

Mr. Peter appreciated how the employee groups stepped up and the kinds of deep cuts individuals were taking. He hoped the committee would support a discussion of additional factors considered beyond hire date.

Mr. Hermanns said many people had specialized training for their jobs, and they were often not as interchangeable as they had once been. He suggested this would be a good topic for the JCAC to discuss.

VIII. REVIEW PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD—EQUITY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS—WHAT IS GOING TO BE IMPLEMENTED?

Deferred to a future meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

(Recorded by Linda Henry)