

# MINUTES

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

December 14, 2010  
4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Marshall Peter, Andy Gottesman, Carl Hermanns, Guadalupe Quinn, Linda Smart, Maria Thomas, Jane Waite, Brie Stiller, Tibor Bessko, Michael Carrigan, Jett Johnson, Belinda McLain, Jennifer Geller, Peter Tromba, Sascha Cosio, members; Carmen Urbina, staff.

ABSENT: Linda Hamilton, Sarah Lauer, Misa Joo, Joel Lavin, Charles Martinez, Belinda McLain.

## I. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Peter called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

Ms. Urbina noted that Assistant Superintendent Carl Hermanns was expected to arrive later in the meeting.

The Committee members introduced themselves and, at the suggestion of Ms. Urbina, each offered one comment on something positive they had experienced within School District 4J.

Mr. Peter asked the Committee members to review Superintendent Russell's sustainable budget strategy proposal and suggested that they feel free to offer additional input.

Mr. Hermanns arrived to the meeting at 4:37 p.m.

Mr. Peter asked the Committee members to discuss the agenda for their next meeting on January 24 before they began their discussion on the sustainable budget proposal.

Mr. Peter asked if the timeline for the Committee's discussion on the Student Survey-Harassment and Bullying Review during the January 24 meeting would allow for the addition of a comments field to the survey. Ms. Stiller responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Peter suggested it might be helpful for the Committee members to hear a presentation from EEA representative Dana Mitchell at either the January or the February meeting of the Equity Committee. Ms. Smart confirmed that Ms. Mitchell had expressed interest in making a presentation to the Committee.

Mr. Peter asked if there might be any other agenda items relating to the EJPR that needed to be discussed before the Committee's meeting on January 24. Ms. Thomas responded in the negative.

Ms. Urbina noted that she had received a request from representatives of the IDES mentorship program to make a presentation to the Equity Committee at their January meeting. She suggested the IDES presentation might align nicely with the Harassment and Bullying Review survey discussion.

Mr. Hermanns, responding to a question from Mr. Peter, noted that the District's budget would still be under development and discussion during the month of January. Mr. Hermanns believed that the 4J School District Board had planned to vote regarding the Superintendent Russell's sustainable budget proposal on January 26, 2011. He further noted that the District's overall budget assumptions would continue to be discussed after the Board's vote on January 26.

Mr. Peter noted that he had received feedback from Committee members and District staff that an additional Equity Committee meeting sometime before January 24 for the purposes of further discussions of the sustainable budget proposal might be warranted. The Committee members briefly discussed their respective availabilities for an additional meeting.

Mr. Hermanns stated the 4J Board had also scheduled a meeting for the evening of January 19.

Mr. Peter agreed that it would be necessary to schedule the additional Equity Committee meeting early enough to allow sufficient time for any recommendation or discussion points to be relayed to the 4J Board members.

The Equity Committee members and District staff agreed to tentatively schedule an additional meeting for Wednesday, January 19, 2011 at 4:00 p.m. Ms. Urbina added that the meeting location was still to be determined and that information regarding the location would be emailed to the Committee members as it became available.

Ms. Geller reported that the 4J Board had scheduled a public hearing session for January 5; a meeting to review Superintendent Russell's final sustainable budget recommendations on January 12, and a tentative Board work session meeting on January 19. She reported that the 4J Board's meeting to vote on the sustainable budget recommendations had been scheduled for Tuesday, January 25.

Mr. Peter suggested that any notable discussion points from the Equity Committee's additional meeting on January 19 could be relayed to the Board during their work session that had been tentatively scheduled for later that evening.

Mr. Peter asked staff to make sure that any presentation materials or discussion points from the 4J Board's January 12 meeting be distributed to the Equity Committee members.

Ms. Urbina, responding to a question from Mr. Peter, suggested that representatives from the IDES program might be invited to give their presentation to the Equity Committee during their January 24 meeting.

Mr. Peter suggested that Director of Human Resources Celia Feres-Johnson be allotted time on the January 24 meeting agenda to provide information and hear feedback regarding the District's Human Resources areas.

Ms. Waite suggested it might be beneficial for the Committee to have Ms. Feres-Johnson and Ms. Mitchell present during the same meeting.

Mr. Gottesman commented that Ms. Mitchell would not speak publicly during the January 24 Equity Committee meeting regarding the EEA's position with respect to the District's hiring or termination policies.

Mr. Peter expressed that Ms. Mitchell should not be ambushed with any questions regarding the District's hiring or termination policies were she to accept an invitation to present at the January 24 Equity Committee meeting. He hoped that Ms. Mitchell would engage in collaborative discussions with the Committee members regarding the relationship between the EEA and School District 4J.

Mr. Tromba responded to Mr. Peter and Mr. Gottesman's comments and noted he was interested in learning more from Ms. Mitchell regarding a recent set of trainings the EEA had organized.

Mr. Peter confirmed that Ms. Mitchell would be invited to the Equity Committee's February meeting.

## **II. Revised-Budget Strategies Recommendations Review and Update on Equity Committee's Recommendations to the Superintendent**

Mr. Hermanns reviewed the most recent revisions to Superintendent's sustainable budget proposal. He summarized that the most significant revision to the proposal was the adjustment to the budget shortfall assumptions that had provided the foundation for the proposal itself. He noted that the most recent revisions had been based on the assumption of a \$22 million deficit as opposed to the previous assumption of a \$30 million deficit.

Mr. Hermanns expressed the District office's perspective and hope that the revised budget deficit assumption proved accurate but noted from past experience that such circumstances might not ultimately be possible. Mr. Hermanns expressed it would be necessary for the District to remain fiscally prudent as the sustainable budget proposals were developed and further addressed.

Mr. Hermanns reviewed the revised sustainable budget scenarios as outlined in the proposals.

Mr. Hermanns described that the revised staffing ratios for District schools under the current sustainable budget proposals called for the addition of two students for elementary schools, three students for middle schools, and three students for high schools. He further noted that Superintendent Russell had recognized that an even higher ratio might be necessary.

Mr. Hermanns noted the potential administration staffing reductions under the revised budget proposal scenario and further noted that District staff had held conversations similar to those of the Equity Committee about the effects of administration staffing cuts upon the basic infrastructure of the entire District.

Mr. Hermanns reviewed the proposed grade reconfigurations listed in the revised sustainable budget scenario.

Mr. Hermanns clarified that as Assistant Superintendent he had supported and advocated for the grade reconfigurations as listed but also noted that the grade reconfigurations had been developed through the work of a number of individuals from the community and from the District.

Mr. Hermanns maintained that the timeframe surrounding the development of the sustainable budget proposals had made it difficult to engage in an ample amount of systematic discussions with the community regarding potential grade reconfigurations. He further noted that Superintendent Russell had decided to remove grade reconfigurations from further consideration with the caveat that a task force would be created to review and discuss the matter in much greater detail.

Ms. Stiller responded to Mr. Hermanns' comment and noted that the timeframe of the grade reconfigurations had been problematic because it had led to the public perception that the grade reconfigurations were being used primarily as a way to protect revenues and funding for the District and not as a way to improve the pedagogical capacity of the District.

Ms. Waite asked how discussions regarding the grade reconfigurations had or had not been focused on the District-wide effects of the reconfigurations. Mr. Hermanns responded that the grade reconfiguration discussions to date had never focused on only one or two regions but had encompassed how the entire District's instructional capacity might be affected. He further noted that the South and Churchill High School regions had been focused for reconfigurations first because they had been identified as areas where there were more schools than there were students.

Mr. Hermanns noted that the Board wanted to explore the use of school closures without grade reconfigurations. He further noted that District staff had actually been researching the viability of such a strategy since the spring of 2010 and that further discussions regarding the positive and negative aspects of such strategies would take place during the Board's upcoming meetings.

Mr. Hermanns noted that one element of the current sustainable budget proposal for the Churchill High School region was to consolidate Crest Drive Elementary School into the Adams Elementary School and in 2013 to close the Twin Oaks Elementary School and consolidate it into McCornack Elementary School dependent upon the passage of bond funding. He further noted that the current strategy for the South Eugene High School region under the sustainable budget proposal was to close Parker Elementary School and consolidate it into the Camas Ridge and Edgewood Community Elementary Schools.

Mr. Hermanns noted there were significant concerns regarding the effects of consolidation on the special education programs at the elementary schools that might be affected by such strategies.

Mr. Hermanns commented that certain District schools with smaller enrollment such as Parker Elementary tended to serve as huge stressors on the District with respect to the significant resource needs for special education and other more specialized programs.

Mr. Peter noted that he had significant concerns regarding how the consolidation strategies of the sustainable budget proposal might affect the Charlemagne at Fox Hollow and Parker Elementary Schools.

Mr. Hermanns responded to Mr. Peter's comments and noted that community and staff suggestions had also addressed the possibility of closing Edison Elementary School and consolidating its students with another elementary school in the District. He noted that District staff had considered that and a variety of other suggestions as it considered the best options for students and teachers as they moved forward with the sustainable budget proposal.

Mr. Hermanns maintained that although consolidation strategies potentially represented huge disruptions to various District resources and instructional areas, the quality of the teaching and learning components for students in the District could be sustained.

Mr. Hermanns recognized that there continued to be discussions regarding access and options for the District and that there were also community perceptions that immersion schools were being protected at the expense of neighborhood schools in certain areas of School District 4J. Mr. Hermanns further stressed that immersion schools received only the funding that any other District school received and that there were no disproportionate funding increases that had ever been granted to the immersion schools.

Mr. Hermanns discussed how ongoing community and staff discussions might be conducted in order to effectively address the current needs and ongoing development of both immersion and neighborhood schools within the District.

Mr. Tromba responded to Mr. Hermanns' comments and suggested that removing enrollment caps from the District's language immersion schools would make them more open and equitable for the community.

Mr. Hermanns noted that the River Road Elementary School language programs had been very successful.

Mr. Peter stated that he hated the possibility that the Charlemagne at Fox Hollow Elementary School might be moved to another non-centralized regional outpost location.

Mr. Hermanns responded to Mr. Peter's comment and briefly discussed the District staff's efforts to centralize Charlemagne in a different, less-isolated location. Mr. Hermanns further noted that efforts to relocate Charlemagne would invariably have significant effects upon the District's elementary schools.

Ms. Geller commented on the 4J Board's discussions regarding the potential school consolidation strategies.

Ms. Geller expressed that she had relocated to the Eugene area approximately eight years ago and believed that since that time the community perception of the District's neighborhood schools had increased significantly.

Ms. Stiller asked if any consideration had been given to a consolidation or cohabitation of the Charlemagne and Buena Vista Elementary Schools. Mr. Hermanns responded to Ms. Stiller and noted that any efforts to constrain one area of the District's resources such as the language immersion schools would invariably affect other areas.

Ms. Waite asked if any consolidations suggestions had been made regarding Corridor Elementary School. She suggested that a redistribution of the students from that school might help make the enrollment for the District's neighborhood schools more robust. Ms. Geller responded that Superintendent Russell had suggested that conversations regarding Corridor Elementary School might be conducted after the conclusion of the sustainable budget process.

Mr. Hermanns maintained that Corridor Elementary School might become less distinctive as time went on when considered in relation to 21st century instructional practices.

Ms. Waite commented that the development of additional language immersion resources for the District was a fantastic idea.

Mr. Hermanns agreed with Ms. Waite's statement and further noted that the development of dual language program models for schools such as River Road Elementary School often depended on the availability of native speakers for instruction.

Mr. Peter noted that the Equity Committee had at various times expressed a strong preference for the balancing of socio-economic status and ethnicity in District Schools. He further noted the Committee's preference that resources be tied to educational need.

The Equity Committee members and staff briefly discussed how various funding and resource elements had been distributed to the District's immersion and neighborhood schools.

Ms. Waite asked if there were any local, state or federal laws that regulated the District's ability to conduct various fundraising efforts. Mr. Hermanns replied that he would contact Ms. Waite with further information regarding her question.

Mr. Hermanns noted that a significant amount of the community discussion time regarding the sustainable budget proposal had been devoted to the closure and consolidation strategies.

Mr. Hermanns, responding to a question from Mr. Gottesman, reported that the sustainable budget proposal's closure and consolidation called for the consolidation of the Fox Hollow School and that the Fox Hollow facility would then be considered part of the District's surplus property.

Mr. Hermanns briefly outlined the remainder of the closure and consolidation strategies that had been included in the most recent iteration of the sustainable budget proposal.

Ms. Stiller noted her concern regarding the District's ability to maintain its IIPM programs at the middle school level under the provisions of the sustainable budget proposal.

Mr. Hermanns agreed with Ms. Stiller's concerns and stated that District staff was not contemplating cuts to the IIPM programs. He further noted that the IIPM programs were near the very top of the District staff's priorities as they considered how resources were to be focused.

Mr. Tromba suggested that the staffing ratio increases for middle schools be made the same as those for the District's elementary schools. Mr. Hermanns noted that that suggestion might be discussed as the sustainable budget process moved forward.

Ms. Waite agreed with Mr. Tromba's suggestion and briefly discussed how increases in middle school staffing ratios needed to be considered in a different context from the staffing ratios for the District's elementary and high schools.

Mr. Hermanns expressed that the staffing ratios had been the District staff's main concern throughout the sustainable budget process.

Mr. Hermanns discussed the District staff's efforts to manage resource support elements such as staff development specialists at the District's middle schools. He further discussed how students in the District's ATGE (Access to General Education) programs might be affected by any changes to the distribution of the staff development specialist positions.

Mr. Peter commented that there might be significant challenges associated with maintaining special education programs at Parker Elementary School or Charlemagne Elementary School.

Ms. Geller excused herself from the meeting at 5:34 p.m.

Mr. Hermanns, responding to questions from Ms. Waite, noted that the specific formulas used to determine how instructional and administrative resources would be allocated in relation to the proposed staffing ratio increases had not yet been definitively determined. Mr. Hermanns further discussed how formulas used to determine previous allocations in that regard had been determined.

Mr. Hermanns described the remaining strategy options from Superintendent Russell's sustainable budget proposal. He further noted that many of the remaining elements he had described were unchanged from previous iterations of the proposal.

Mr. Hermanns described additional options that were being considered by staff for incorporation into the sustainable budget proposal including early retirement incentives, the adoption of single platform technology systems, and a strategy to increase centralized direction for staffing.

Mr. Hermanns stated that any efforts to incorporate retirement incentives would be intended to reduce layoffs. He further noted that staff was working to determine what kind of retirement incentives would be the most effective.

Mr. Tromba commented that increased staffing ratios that led to 40 student class sizes served as their own incentive for District teachers to retire.

Mr. Hermanns noted that attempts to centralize decision processes for the District might create problems that would be exacerbated by various compliance requirements.

Ms. Waite commented on administrative and service cuts faced by Lane ESD the previous year and noted that ESD was currently struggling to meet the basic education service needs of the community.

Mr. Tromba noted recent discussions with District staff regarding the charter schools asked Mr. Hermanns how the discussions and reviews of the sustainable budget proposal would be conducted in relation to the Board's annual budget review process.

Mr. Hermanns responded to Mr. Tromba's question and noted that the District could not transform alternative schools into charter schools because to do so would take money away from the District.

Mr. Hermanns maintained that the Board would continue to review the charter schools on their individual merits which would also include a review of those schools' operational plans to ensure each schools' fiscal solvency.

Mr. Hermanns noted his own belief that charter schools, when they proved capable of meeting those needs which the District was incapable of meeting, could be very useful to the community and to struggling students.

Mr. Hermanns noted that he and a team of three staff persons were reviewing the three charter schools, Ridgeline Montessori Public Charter School, the Village School and the Network Charter School, and would present information to the Board regarding their effectiveness in February of 2011.

Mr. Hermanns noted that District staff were also in the process of reviewing applications to form three additional charter schools.

Mr. Hermanns, responding to a question from Ms. Stiller, commented that he also planned to present information regarding the three existing charter schools to the Equity Committee.

Mr. Hermanns noted that the District would most likely have to begin curtailing its support for the three charter schools with regard to the various legal requirements they were expected to fulfill.

Mr. Hermanns, responding to a question from Mr. Peter, noted that the District did currently not maintain any database that would allow them to manipulate the composition of schools in order to gauge the potential effects of the proposed closure and consolidation strategies on students of diverse ethnicities or on FRL students. Mr. Hermanns discussed the effects of the potential closure and consolidation strategies and noted that Adams Elementary School would not likely continue to be classified as a Title school if it were to assimilate the students from Crest Drive Elementary School.

Ms. Thomas asked how any data regarding students attending alternative schools within the District might be addressed. Mr. Hermanns responded that he hoped to have Brad (**no last name or title provided**) present information regarding alternative school students to the Equity Committee members during their February meeting. He further noted that Brad had been conducting extensive research regarding the alternative school paradigm as it pertained to School District 4J.

Mr. Peter asked if the Committee's current discussion might indicate any important or concise messages regarding the sustainable budget proposal and the associated strategy options that might be forwarded to the 4J Board for further consideration.

Mr. Tromba responded to Mr. Peter's question and hoped that the Equity Committee might suggest to the Board that specialized support staff continue to be directed toward more needy schools. He further hoped that the number of support staff directed to those schools would not only be maintained but also increased.

Mr. Peter responded to Mr. Tromba's statement and noted that his suggestion had already been forwarded to the Board in earlier communications. He further noted that the Committee might choose to re-emphasize Mr. Tromba's suggestion as a primary concern.

Mr. Hermanns, responding to a question from Mr. Johnson, restated that the most recent revisions to the sustainable budget proposal had addressed the staffing strategy option

Mr. Hermanns stated that the Equity Committee's previous statement to District staff and to the Board had been very helpful. He further noted that District staff had been able to use the Committee's statement as a guide for determining which strategy options might be the most viable.

Mr. Peter asked which of the Committee members had planned to attend the Board's work session meeting on December 15. Mr. Hermanns noted that the meeting would involve the Board posing questions to staff regarding the effects of the sustainable budget proposal.

Mr. Peter asked if any of the Committee members planned to attend the work session meeting of the Eugene City Council later that evening. Mr. Hermanns believed that the Council meeting would be very well attended.

Mr. Peter noted that he was scheduled to attend a meeting of the Natives program later in the evening to discuss the search process for the next Superintendent of School District 4J.

Mr. Hermanns noted that the 4J Board's work session meeting on December 15 would be a joint meeting with members of the 4J Budget Committee.



Ms. Urbina responded to earlier comments made by Mr. Tromba and suggested that she and other District staff might follow up with EEA representatives regarding CP training strategies. Ms. Smart noted that many District staff members had not attended CP training because they had not been informed of it. Ms. Urbina noted that she would work to address any communication gaps regarding the CP training and provide further information to the Committee members.

Superintendent George Russell arrived to the meeting at 5:58 p.m.

Mr. Peter confirmed that the Equity Committee had scheduled an additional meeting for January 19, 2011 at 4:00 p.m. to review further elements relating Superintendent Russell's recommendations regarding the sustainable budget proposal.

Mr. Peter reminded Superintendent Russell that the Committee hoped that as much resources as possible would continue to be allocated to meet the instructional needs of the District.

Superintendent Russell noted that the most recent communications from State officials and the Governor's office indicated that the current State funding allocations would ultimately result in a \$26 million budget shortfall for School District 4J.

Mr. Peter adjourned the meeting at 6:01 p.m.

*(Recorded by Wade Hicks)*