

MINUTES

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

February 28, 2012
4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Marshall Peter, Chair; Beth Gerot, Andy Gottesman, Matt Hayes, Jett Johnson, Misa Joo, Joel Lavin, Ann Marie Levis, John Lockhart, Belinda McClain, Linda Smart, Brianna Stiller, Maria Thomas, members; Superintendent Sheldon Berman, Barb Bellamy, Caroline Passerotti, Simone Sangster, Tibor Bessko (after 5:31 p.m.), staff; Alicia Hays, 4J School Board Chair (after 5:01 p.m.); Kori Rodley, CALC, guest.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Marshall Peter called the meeting to order at 4:37 p.m. Those present introduced themselves.

II. Public Comment

No members of the public asked to speak.

III. Equity Committee Appointment Process (Dr. Berman and Barb Bellamy)

Barb Bellamy outlined the application process and timeline. The recruitment process would commence following final board action on the committee structure and purpose which was scheduled for March 14. Ms. Bellamy said that she was working with Carmen Urbina to develop an outreach strategy that would provide a good pool of applicants. It included making applications available on line, sending information to the current Equity Committee's mailing list and asking recipients to send it on to others, creating weekly Facebook postings, and e-mailing a community list that would reach around 400 people through schools, site councils, and newsletters. Ms. Bellamy emphasized the importance of committee members talking to people in the community about the opportunity to serve and the process for applying.

After a three-week recruitment period, board leadership would decide whether all applicants would meet with the board or if a preliminary screening process would need to be used. The board would meet with candidates May 2 and would appoint members at its

May 16 meeting. The new Equity Committee would hold its first meeting in late May or early June.

Ms. McClain was concerned that the many and various community organizations would not be adequately represented by a 12-member appointed Equity Committee.

Dr. Berman explained that changing from a committee that was advisory to the superintendent to one that was appointed by and reported directly to the school board was the result of a seven-month long process that involved a great deal of dialogue and surveys of administrators, board members and committee members. The change would elevate the Equity Committee to a status similar to that of the Budget Committee. Representation would not be from specific organizations but members were expected to have broad community involvement that would help the district build partnerships with a variety of communities. A smaller committee may be able to do more significant work and could invite participation by many organizations and individuals.

Mr. Peter pointed out that in the past, committee meetings had been attended by more district staff than community members. He believed that the change represented a strong statement from the district that equity was as important as money. Noting that there had been some confusion about groups that had a seat at the table, Mr. Peter said that the new committee would do more active outreach into the community and that interested people who were not appointed would still be welcome to attend meetings and their perspectives would be valued.

Answering a question from Ms. Joo the superintendent stated that none of the 12 positions would be for 4J staff or board members, although there would be two board members who would attend the meetings as ex officio members. District staff members likely would attend meetings but not as part of the regular membership.

Ms. Thomas believed that the Equity Committee had resulted from a court decision and that there was a legal document that established its function and structure. Dr. Berman disagreed.

Ms. Thomas expressed concern that many parents were unwilling to go before the school board so would be excluded from the appointment process. She also questioned the criteria for selection of members and indicated that more parents should participate on the committee. She found the selection process too limiting. Dr. Berman responded that the committee had reviewed the selection criteria at previous meetings. He said that the board wanted the committee to be broadly representative and he asked current members to encourage individuals they felt should be on the committee to submit their applications.

The superintendent said that he envisioned the Equity Committee becoming a network that reached out and built a broader sense of community. He saw the committee members as partners with the district and the community and he believed that achieving equity was the work of the entire community.

Ms. Levis commented that there appeared to be many different levels of understanding of the proposal.

Ms. Hays arrived 5:01 p.m.

Ms. Thomas maintained that the Equity Committee needed to look at the district from an outside perspective. She continued to voice her unease about the lack of parent participation and involvement in creating the changes to the committee.

Mr. Lockhart considered it important for the Equity Committee to follow Oregon public meetings law and he supported making it an explicit policy of the committee that anyone was welcome to attend its meetings

Ms. Joo observed that while the committee had met twice regarding the proposed changes, half the people attending the meeting had not been at those earlier meetings where the concerns presently being voiced had been considered. She pointed out that much of the new committee's work would be done through ad hoc committees and that particular groups would be able to participate on those committees

Superintendent Berman commented that transitions were always difficult and he assured the committee that the district's intent was not to diminish but to enhance, broaden and raise the significance of the committee's work. The existing committee would continue to meet over the next couple of months.

Ms. Hays reported that there was a lot of interest in membership on the new committee among community organizations and she took this to mean that people understood the importance of the committee's work.

Mr. Peter stated that the changes would result in higher expectations of committee members and it was important for potential applicants to ask themselves if they were ready to step up. He also noted that the committee would need to find a way to hear from parents. Ms. Hays added that while hearing parent voices would be important, being a concerned parent alone was not a sufficient qualification for serving on the committee. Ms. Joo recommended that the new committee actively encourage parents to come to meetings and speak about their concerns.

Mr. Lavin considered it critically important for 4J staff members to encourage interest in the committee. He believed that people talking to people was a better way to do outreach than posting information on Facebook. Dr. Berman added that it was also important for current members to talk to others and get them excited about the new committee.

Jett Johnson suggested that the committee use parent listening circles to obtain important data from parents.

The superintendent said that the April meeting would address transition issues and would be an opportunity for current members to offer suggestions to the new committee.

Ms. Bellamy encouraged members to use social media and other ways of networking to begin raising awareness of the new committee immediately. She expected applications to be available on March 16.

Ms. Bellamy and Ms. Hays left the meeting at 5:22 p.m.

IV. Needs Based Funding for Schools Presentation (Dr. Berman and Caroline Passerotti)

Dr. Berman explained that the district was drawing from Jefferson County's (Kentucky) work on a needs index and the index would continue to be refined for District 4J. He noted that LCOG's analysis and the Jefferson County index had aligned closely.

Caroline Passerotti presented information through a slide show, copies of which were available at the meeting. The board had asked the district to develop a funding model that would provide targeted resources for elementary and middle school students who were not on track to demonstrate the knowledge and essential skills needed upon entry to high school, and for high school students needing additional support to meet the new graduation requirements. More resources would be allocated as teaching staff, the needs index would be used to influence the allocation of classroom teachers and targeted dollars to schools, and more positions would be programmed centrally to ensure certain functions were performed in schools.

High needs students were defined by free or reduced price meal eligibility (F/R), high mobility, special education services qualification, and enrollment in an English Language Learner (ELL) program.

Ms. Joo noted that race or ethnicity were not components of the needs index as it was presented. She maintained that the achievement gap in Eugene correlated better with ethnicity than with F/R eligibility.

Mr. Hayes responded that race had not been a component of the original Jefferson County model and that the model heavily weighted F/R. However, the district would do more analysis in the ongoing development of Eugene's model and weighting could be changed and additional factors could be added.

Answering a question from Ms. Stiller, Mr. Hayes said that Jefferson County had done regression analysis over a ten-year period to arrive at the weighting of the four factors defining high needs.

Superintendent Berman noted that including minority status as a weighted factor could lead to legal problems and that LCOG used educational attainment of adults in the

neighborhood, minority status in the community, and median family income as factors that described the populations in individual schools.

Answering Mr. Peter's question about using student achievement as a measure of instructional need, Dr. Berman said that a school would perform above or below target for schools with similar demographics and that performance below the target was an indicator of internal issues within the school that additional resources may or may not influence.

Mr. Hayes explained that the mobility category counted the number of exits and entries and projected them as a percentage of total enrollment. Dr. Berman added that the transitions caused by highly mobile school populations had a detrimental impact on students and required faculty to be in a state of constant assessment of what new students needed.

The group next looked at the examples of the highest and lowest needs schools. Ms. Stiller commented that her intuitive feeling after visiting the schools lined up well with the scores on the needs index. Noting that the two schools with the lowest needs (Buena Vista and Charlemagne) were both immersion schools, Dr. Berman said that this was one of the reasons the district had implemented the new dual immersion pilot program at Buena Vista.

Ms. Passerotti explained that the formula that allocated classroom teachers to schools used both projected enrollment and the needs index. The model focused on lower class sizes to the extent possible.

Mr. Peter pointed out that some schools had more resources because of grants and parent fund-raising efforts. The needs based funding allocation of general fund dollars did not factor in those other resources.

Ms. Levis left the meeting at 6 p.m.

Ms. Passerotti said that presently music and PE resources were distributed inequitably. Dr. Berman informed the committee that 12 elementary schools had no PE or music, five schools had either PE or music, and only two had both. Under the new model every elementary school would have some PE and music instruction and the deployment of those music and PE teachers in the district was designed to provide some common collaboration and preparation time for classroom teachers.

Dr. Berman left the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

Ms. Rodley observed that a district's staff should reflect the ethnicity and race of its students and she hoped to see District 4J move toward creating that environment. Mr. Peter acknowledged that this had been a persistent issue for the committee. He further stated that while newer hires typically were more diverse, they were the first to be let go during difficult budget times. Ms. Stiller commented that the hiring process failed to put

an equity lens at the forefront and she asked to have Ms. Feres-Johnson speak to the committee in the near future.

Ms. Passerotti continued with her presentation by pointing out that another part of the new allocation model for ensuring that certain functions were performed in all schools would involve programming essential skills coordinators at elementary, middle, and high schools based on needs and student population.

Mr. Peter summarized by saying that the Equity Committee had long supported something like needs-based allocation of resources. However, he cautioned that because some schools may be negatively affected they were not likely to support the changes. He said that committee members could assist in such cases and would be willing to speak in support of the changes. Ms. Joo pointed out that every school would benefit by having PE, music, and a counselor. Mr. Lavin added that every school should have a librarian as well.

V. Review Calendar

Mr. Peter reviewed the March 20 and April 17 agendas. He encouraged members to raise the issue about the district's work force reflecting the population at the April 17 meeting. He also encouraged members to share their final thoughts, observations and suggestions for outreach during those meetings in order to help ensure the success of the next committee.

Ms. Stiller asked whether the March 20 meeting would include review of last year's climate data. Mr. Peter said that committee members would be interested in having that discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

(Recorded by Mary Feldman)