

MINUTES

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

February 26, 2013
4:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Charles Martinez, Rita Radostitz, co-Chairs; Linda DeSpain, Beth Gerot, Andy Gottesman, Joel Lavin (afte4 4:59 p.m.), Anne Marie Levis, Eileen Nittler, Herb Pendleton, Ana Quintero-Arias, Laurie Trieger, members; Superintendent Sheldon Berman; Carmen Urbina, Casey Tiemann, staff.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Radostitz called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. She asked everyone to name a person who taught them something important about who they were or their identity.

II. Public Comment

No members of the public asked to speak.

III. Review Agenda

Responding to Ms. Trieger's request to have an opportunity to hand something out and share some information, Mr. Martinez suggested adding an information sharing item at the end of each agenda. The group agreed this was a good idea.

IV. Data Presentation by Oscar Loureiro

Mr. Loureiro reviewed the document entitled "Demographics and Student Achievement in 4J." He noted an 8 percent decline in total enrollment and an increase from 22 to 43 percent in low-income students (defined by qualification for free or reduced price lunch). Enrollment of white students had declined 10 percent while the Latino student population had nearly tripled from 5 to 13 percent. Multiracial students had not been recorded until 2005-06 and were now 9 percent.

Graphs illustrated that socio-economic and racial diversity differed greatly among the district's 26 schools.

After reviewing charts showing gaps across races in student performance in OAKS testing, Mr. Martinez observed that research documented that disaggregating subgroups of Asian students showed different patterns of achievement. He added that socio-economic status did not obviate the gap shown by race.

Dr. Berman pointed out that based on OAKS scores 4J's Hispanic students who were not low income performed at a level similar to low income White students but Black students who were not low income performed significantly below low income White students.

Mr. Loureiro added that the achievement gaps were bigger for Black and Hispanic students in math and science than they were in reading and writing.

The next set of charts showed that the gender gap in the 4-year graduation rate had increased rapidly in the last 4 years and the district's overall 4-year graduation rate had decreased from 78.9 to 66.1 percent.

Ms. Radostitz wondered if a change in the definition of English Language Learner was responsible for the number of such students increasing from 25 to 213 in a single year.

This led to a brief discussion about ELL in which Dr. Berman said that some people believed that students identified as ELL should not be removed from that category regardless of whether they had completed the program. Mr. Martinez observed that 4J's 4-year graduation rate for ELL students was less than 40 percent while the state average was close to 50 percent. He questioned the 213 number in light of the fact that most ELL students were Hispanic yet there were only 162 district students identified as Latino. Additionally, the data indicated that the number of students with disabilities decreased from 233 to 36 in one year. Members requested that Oscar Loureiro check the accuracy of this data. If this data was accurate, further investigation was warranted.

Mr. Loureiro clarified that in 2012 students had to pass the OAKS reading test to receive a high school diploma and in 2013 they would have to pass both the reading and writing tests and in 2014 reading, writing and math.

Mr. Tiemann commented on the paradox of a decreasing graduation rate for Hispanic students when increased attention was focused on the achievement gap.

Turning to the chart on the five-year graduation rate, Mr. Loureiro pointed out that the gender gap was widening while the gap for African American and Hispanic students was decreasing.

Dr. Berman suggested that the new ACT program that provided 4J students with the opportunity for a fifth year at Lane Community College was growing and that a large percentage of students in that program were Hispanic. This program likely contributed to the increase in the five-year graduation rate for Hispanic students, while at the same time probably contributed to the decline in the four-year rate.

The data indicated that the grade in which a student entered one of the 4J high schools had an effect on the likelihood of that student graduating in four years. Attendance also influenced the likelihood of graduating in four years.

Dr. Berman explained that 24 credits were required for graduation and different schools had differing capacities for students being scheduled to earn sufficient credits. It appeared to be critical for students to earn enough credits during their freshman and sophomore years if they were to be on track for graduation.

Ms. Radostitz noted differences among high schools in the number of classes students took each year and wondered about South Eugene graduating more students despite students taking fewer classes per year than they did elsewhere. Dr. Berman commented that there were striking differences in demographics among high schools. He added that the ability to provide needed remediation as well as acceleration were among the reasons behind the change to the common high school schedule. Fully scheduled students then would be able to earn 30 credits at all schools.

The final chart relating to graduation rates showed that a cumulative GPA also affected the likelihood of graduating in four years.

The group spent some time discussing the data related to Progress Monitoring Testing in Grades K to 5 which showed a consistent gap between the averages scores of low-income and non-low-income students beginning in first grade. Committee members suggested that this gap indicated a need for readiness interventions. They also noted profound dips in students' reading performance each fall, indicating that intervention during the summers may be beneficial.

Ms. Quintero-Arias suggested looking for differences in retention between those students who were in summer school programs and those who were not.

Mr. Pendleton wondered whether year-round school had been considered. Committee members commented that 4J had looked at this idea but rejected it because families objected to giving up their summer vacations, that research indicated year-round school did not have a dramatic effect on the overall gaps, and that some districts had found cost savings in operating their schools year-round,

Dr. Berman reported that his previous district in Louisville had implemented an eight-week, four day-per-week summer program that never became part of a district-wide culture, failed to have a significant impact, and eventually was abandoned in favor of intensive summer programs for at-risk students. Union negotiations had resulted in requiring two-week breaks between sessions so in reality the year-round program had not provided a significant increase in instructional time.

V. Debrief Date Presented

Committee members broke into small groups to spend ten minutes discussing who else they needed to hear from to better understand the data; how they would do this, and whether based on the data there were more clear interventions or targets that could be acted upon now. Each group reported back and the following ideas were presented:

- Committee members should visit and observe at schools, especially those with greater diversity.
- Small group conversations with students could be arranged.
- Ask administrators and teachers who had seen the demographic data why the achievement gap persisted despite the investment of significant time and money. Talk about what was improving and what was being done differently that produced those results.
- Work on reducing class size.
- The data confirmed assumptions about where gaps existed except in the area of gender.
- While all students might have equal opportunities, unequal effort may be required to produce equal achievement.
- More qualitative data would be useful: what schools have the smallest and largest achievement gaps? Disaggregate the ethnicity data.
- The ACT program appeared to be impacting graduation rates positively. Consider expanding it.
- Consult with the district's student advisory committee members and groups of teachers about what would help change the achievement gap.
- Is the achievement gap data consistent with the school indexing data that allows resources to be targeted to help the schools that need it most?
- How does school choice impact the demographics of specific schools? Look at demographic trends by type of school, region, and also by individual school (acknowledging that some schools had particular programs placed in them which affected the demographics of those schools).

Mr. Tiemann said that he and Ms. Urbina were working with South Eugene administrators and the data team to delve more deeply into the achievement gap and to look at interventions in a culturally responsive way. They recognized the role of culture and race in building relational trust. Mr. Tiemann recommended Tyrone C. Howard's book *Why Race and Culture Matter*.

At this point Mr. Martinez said that the Asset Map agenda item would be postponed to the next meeting.

Mr. Martinez indicated that the committee's leadership would discuss how to accomplish the information gathering members had suggested and would consider both inviting people to committee meetings and arranging school visits.

Dr. Berman said that committee member Suzy Price was the district's Achievement Gap Coordinator, charged with coordinating closure of the achievement gap. She was

convening study teams to go into schools and see what had helped close the achievement gap in some of them and what had not worked in those where the achievement gap had not been reduced. Thus far, it appeared that the gap was not really closing and was a systemic problem. He proposed that some committee members might serve on these site study teams, likely next year.

Superintendent Berman suggested that the committee invite people knowledgeable about the research relating to the achievement gap to meet with them. He commented that the district had not yet looked at family circumstances, homelessness, or neighborhoods in relation to the achievement gap and that it may be prudent to broaden the conversation about data to include additional demographics. In order to fulfill the committee's mission of building bridges to community and to families it was important to know more about the families and communities represented by the data.

VI. Information Sharing

Ms. Trieger passed out Oregon Health Authority documents titled "Health and Academic Achievement Research Fact Sheet" and "School Health Profiles Survey." Noting that there was a strong link between health and learning, she asked members to read the information so they could discuss it at the next meeting.

Ms. Radostitz announced that noted author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie would speak at the UO on April 1. She distributed a flyer about the event.

Mr. Martinez asked members to send items to be placed on future agendas to Ms. Urbina, Ms. Radostitz or him.

Mr. Pendleton reported that he had been elected treasurer of the local NAACP. He encouraged committee members to attend the upcoming NAACP Freedom Fund dinner fundraiser. The event provided funding for the "Back to School, Stay in School" program.

Mr. Martinez announced that Paul Tough, author of the book *How Children Succeed* would speak in Eugene on April 26, 2013 at 6:00 pm.

VII. Next Steps

The next meeting was scheduled for March 12 at 4 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

(Recorded by Mary Feldman)