

# MINUTES

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

March 12, 2013  
4:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Charles Martinez, Rita Radostitz, co-Chairs; Linda DeSpain, Beth Gerot, Andy Gottesman, Malvina Holloway, Jett Johnson, Misa Joo, Joel Lavin, Anne Marie Levis, Eileen Nittler, Suzy Price, Jane Waite, members; Superintendent Sheldon Berman; Laurie Moses, Oscar Loureiro, Randy Bernstein, Eric Anderson; and Carmen Urbina, Casey Tiemann, committee staff.

## **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Ms. Radostitz called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. She asked everyone to reflect upon the data presented at the last meeting and share one thing each person found promising or hopeful or about which he/she felt optimistic. As part of his reflection, Mr. Gottesman noted he was moving and this would be his last committee meeting.

Ms. Holloway, Ms. Joo, and Mr. Lavin arrived at the meeting at 4:22 p.m.

## **II. Public Comment**

No members of the public asked to speak.

## **III. Review Agenda**

Ms. Radostitz moved the High School Common Schedule agenda item later in the meeting to accommodate scheduling conflicts.

#### **IV. Conclude Debrief on Demographics and Student Achievement Data Presentation**

Mr. Loureiro distributed two updates to the material from the last meeting. The documents were entitled, *Percentages of Fully Scheduled Students at 4J Comprehensive High Schools* and *Number of Active Students Who Are Currently in One Comprehensive HS and Were before in another Comprehensive HS*.

Mr. Martinez started the discussion by asking committee members if there were others from whom they wanted information or insights.

Ms. Radostitz suggested identifying families or individuals that should be having problems but were not and learning from them. She referenced Tufts University's *Positive Deviance Initiative* and recommended their website (<http://www.positivedeviance.org>).

Mr. Johnson requested more information on attendance. What policies were in place at the schools? Had any interventions been tried? What were the success rates? He suggested reviewing School District 4J information and looking at other communities. Ms. Price noted Mr. Loureiro and she were developing a survey for principals that could be expanded to collect some of the information Mr. Johnson requested.

Dr. Berman observed the greatest achievement gap was for students with disabilities. He asked Mr. Loureiro if data were available on those who met multiple demographic segments, e.g., disabled and Hispanic. Mr. Loureiro said yes, but cautioned the number of people in those cross-sections was small. Dr. Berman added it was a good plan to explore the data presented. He noted the decrease in the achievement gap for Hispanic students and said the committee should go further and ask why. Another area to research was whether the schedule change at Churchill High School affected the achievement gap data. He expected it might, as students were now fully scheduled.

Mr. Martinez cautioned the committee to resist the "seduction of best practices." An approach used elsewhere may not work here. He emphasized their focus should be on areas the committee could impact.

When Ms. Waite asked for discipline and school climate data, Dr. Berman responded the discipline data was inconsistent among schools. Expulsion data was available.

Discussion turned to students earning General Educational Development (GED) certificates. Were they included in the data? Dr. Berman clarified GED numbers were not part of 4J's database but were included in the State of Oregon's completion data. Ms. Radostitz added life achievement data differed among students completing high school in 4 years, 5 years, or via a GED.

Returning to the students with disabilities data, Mr. Gottesman noted the District changed special education policies so frequently it was difficult to judge their effectiveness. He

thought the most important success factor was the teacher, followed by the number of students per teacher. Dr. Berman described the difference between the District's programs and those provided by the Lane Education Service District (ESD). For example, ESD did the Life Skills programs for those with more severe disabilities. He felt the District needed to do a better job integrating ESD students into 4J's systems.

Several committee members referenced available expertise at the University of Oregon (UO). Mr. Johnson suggested Dr. Gina Biancarosa with UO's Department of Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership. Ms. Holloway recommended Dr. Joanna Goode, whose research examined issues of access and equity for underrepresented students of color and females in computer science education. Mr. Martinez offered to provide the committee a directory of UO resources available.

Ms. Joo advocated the learning go beyond the committee membership and be co-created with the community. Mr. Martinez concurred and described an event he had helped develop that focused on the education concerns of the Latino population. Ms. Radostitz also supported the idea of a community event. The synergy built more capacity. Later in the meeting, Mr. Martinez asked if there was sufficient interest among committee members about a potential community event for the leadership group to take up the topic. There was.

Turning to the question of a library for use by Equity Committee members, Mr. Lavin described EdModo, an education social network site. He suggested the committee be added as a closed group so they could share ideas, post articles, or conduct short polls. Consensus of the committee was EdModo was a good idea. There was agreement the universe of articles and books relevant to committee members were vast. Ms. Waite, Ms. Holloway, and Mr. Lavin volunteered to screen material and identify seminal works that were important for all to read and discuss. The subgroup also would catalog references by topic, which committee members could opt to read. Ms. Waite suggested a link to the "must read" books and articles be added to the Equity Committee's page on School District 4J's website.

## **V. High School Common Schedule**

Ms. Moses introduced Mr. Bernstein and said Mr. Anderson was expected shortly. She described the process used to select the recommended high school 3 x 5 schedule, i.e., three trimesters, five classes a day, seventy minutes per class. Ms. Moses emphasized the benefits: Student Learning (the schedule helped both high achievers and those needing credit recovery); Equity (all high school students received the same amount of instruction); and Efficiency (organizational gains across the District). She noted the uniform schedule greatly benefitted those students who changed high schools. The achievement gap data indicated mobility was factor.

When Ms. Radostitz asked why parents or students had not participated in the working group who chose the common schedule, Ms. Moses responded the topic was very

technical and complex. Mr. Bernstein added that the size of the working group, over thirty participants, was also a consideration. He described the community forums held prior to the 4J School Board's decision on the 3 x 5 schedule.

Ms. Joo requested more information on how the schedule helped with credit recovery. Ms. Moses referenced Churchill High School, now on the 3 x 5 schedule. Were a student not master a subject in the first trimester, s/he could take it in the second trimester. Previously, the student had to wait until the next school year. Mr. Bernstein described how South Eugene High School Algebra classes were expected to be scheduled. He emphasized the benefits of either retaking, spreading out the learning, or moving on to the next level for different students. Dr. Berman added a support class, for example a Math Lab, was available in the trimester schedule.

Ms. Radostitz observed that opposition to the schedule appeared focused on the perceived negative impact on advanced learners. Mr. Johnson concurred. How did the new schedule help Talented and Gifted (TAG) students? Ms. Moses responded the schedule was based on a program of studies for a four-year pathway to graduation. Advanced students were able to finish sooner and continue their learning through online classes or by attending classes at UO. Because the schedule was more flexible, principals were better able to predict and respond to needed classes. Mr. Anderson said North Eugene High School's philosophy was; all students could excel. He did not see the 3 x 5 schedule as a limitation. Instead, it provided multiple pathways to success. Dr. Berman added instruction was most effective in seventy minute, consecutive day classes.

Ms. Joo agreed seventy minutes were ideal for instruction. She asked if the proposed schedule affected the number or diversity of classes offered at the high schools.

Mr. Bernstein said South Eugene High School was not eliminating any classes from the master schedule. Term electives were not an issue. Some concerns had been raised over year-long electives, such as Choir and Band. Those concerns had been addressed by adding a zero period, which opened those programs to all students.

Responding to Ms. Waite's question about Churchill High School's experience with the 3 x 5 schedule, Ms. Moses noted that assistant principals had shared that there had been a sixty percent decrease in serious discipline incidents over the prior year. He attributed the decline to the schedule. It resulted in students being fully scheduled and having less free time between classes. Mr. Johnson added a full schedule grounded students at the school. Ms. Waite noted the data had indicated a link between discipline issues and the achievement gap. Ms. Radostitz said Churchill data also demonstrated an improvement in attendance. Attendance and schedule were also achievement gap factors.

Discussion turned to how the Equity Committee might support the 4J School Board as they addressed concerns raised about the 3 x 5 schedule. Ms. Levis and Ms. Gerot noted the resistance to change was very strong and the understanding of how the schedule provided equity and opportunity for all students was weak. Consensus among Equity Committee members was support for the schedule. They discussed showing a presence at

the upcoming School Board work session, testifying at the March 20, 2013 4J School Board public meeting, identifying and sharing Churchill High School students' success stories, and writing an Op Ed piece for submission to the *Register Guard*. Mr. Bernstein emphasized equity for all students had been a key factor in moving to the common schedule.

Dr. Berman summarized the benefits of the 3 x 5 schedule for all District high schools. It helped those who were struggling with learning and those who were high achievers. It allowed students to focus on key subjects. High schools were better positioned to provide needed support and at the same time were more nimble to adjust schedules to meet students' needs. The common schedule was more economically viable and might possibly result in lower class sizes in some areas. Dr. Berman acknowledged there were some scheduling constraints. Students had been able to get thirty-two credits in the semester schedule. The maximum load for the trimester schedule was thirty credits.

Ms. Moses thanked the Equity Committee members for their support, especially their intent to testify at the upcoming 4J School Board meeting on March 20, 2013. She said the District was working on a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet and would ensure the Equity Committee had access to the information.

## **VI. Next Steps**

The next meeting is scheduled for April 16, 2013 at 4 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

*(Recorded by Beth Bridges)*