

Shaping 4J's Future



“Our students are more diverse, and so are their needs. Our challenge is to deliver a great education to all students, and teach in ways that push all students to be their best.”

Abby Lane, Teacher

Building on success Eugene schools have a recognized record of student achievement, innovation and broad public support. Shaping 4J's Future, the district's two-year long strategic planning process, looks at how we're doing today and asks how we might become even better.

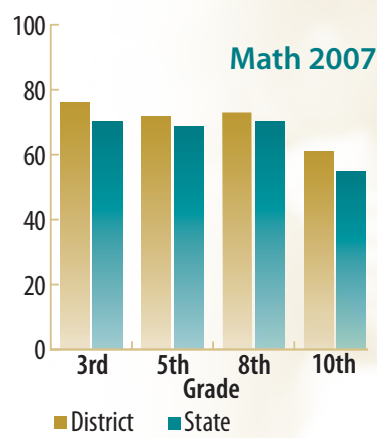
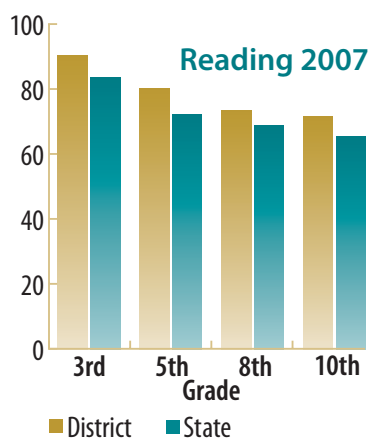
The school board's goals guide district planning and decisions. These goals are:

- Increase achievement for all students
- Close the achievement gap
- Provide equal opportunities for all students to succeed
- Ensure high school graduates are prepared to be successful in careers, in college and as citizens

Our mission is to do what's best for students. 4J staff, volunteers and parents work together every day to do that.

A strong tradition of achievement

Eugene schools have a strong tradition of excellence, as proven by academic performance. 4J's students consistently do better than statewide averages and compare well nationally.



SAT Scores 2005-06

4J average	1131
Oregon average	1052
U.S. average	1021
4J seniors taking test	60%
Oregon seniors taking test	54%

High School Drop Out Rates 2005-06

4J rate	2.1%
Oregon rate	4.1%

Students in grades 9-12 who dropped out in one year.

Increasing achievement for all students

4J is investing in instructional programs that are targeted at improving student achievement, such as:

- Launching a literacy initiative to improve reading skills of all students, elementary through high school
- Selecting new language arts materials and aligning curriculum across grades to ensure that students cover all essential content areas as they progress through school
- Expanding after-school and summer school sessions to help students who need extra learning time
- Developing reading and math assessments and data tools that help teachers see each student's progress and better adjust instruction for each student
- Creating a transition program for eighth grade students to ensure they have a strong and successful start in high school

Eugene School District 4J

200 North Monroe Street
Eugene OR 97402
(541) 687-3123 • TDD 687-3447
www.4j.lane.edu



Please complete the survey on page 7 or online at www.4j.lane.edu.

The Challenges

Declining enrollment and diverse learning needs

“Giving all students access to schools with a core of middle-class students and parents will significantly raise the overall quality of schooling in America.”

Richard D. Kahlenberg,
education fellow at The Century Foundation

Declining enrollment District enrollment peaked in the early 1970s at about 20,000 students. Last year 17,507 students attended 4J schools; by 2015, enrollment is projected to drop to 16,375.

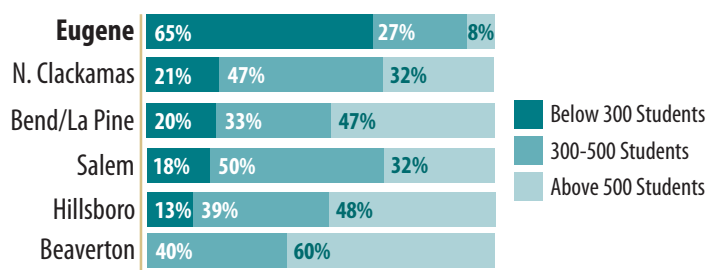
Declining enrollment challenges schools. Fewer students mean that a school also has fewer teachers and staff. To adjust for declining enrollment, the district has:

- Closed and consolidated several elementary schools, including neighborhood schools and alternative schools, and now has five fewer elementary school sites than in 2001
- Converted one middle school into a small K-8 school, serving students from kindergarten through grade 8
- Limited some transfers to schools with larger enrollments

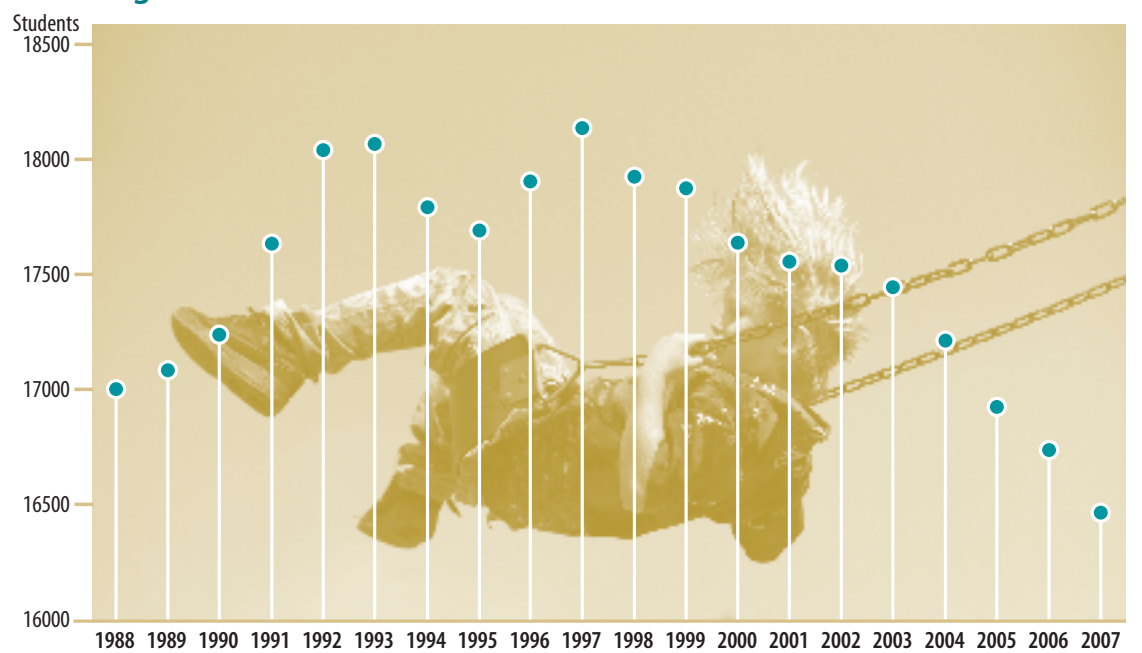
High school enrollment will likely decline significantly in the next few years, as smaller classes of students move into grades 9-12.

School size varies Fewer children throughout the district means some schools are larger and some are smaller, which can affect the programs that each school can offer. Schools also vary in size because of the demographics of their neighborhoods, the size of their buildings, and transfers in and out of each school. Looking at comparable districts in Oregon, it's apparent that Eugene's elementary schools are smaller than other districts.

Enrollment % by Size for Elementary Schools by District

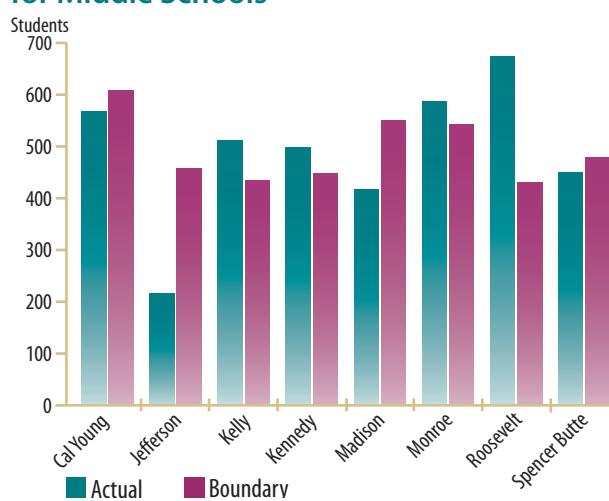


Declining District Enrollment

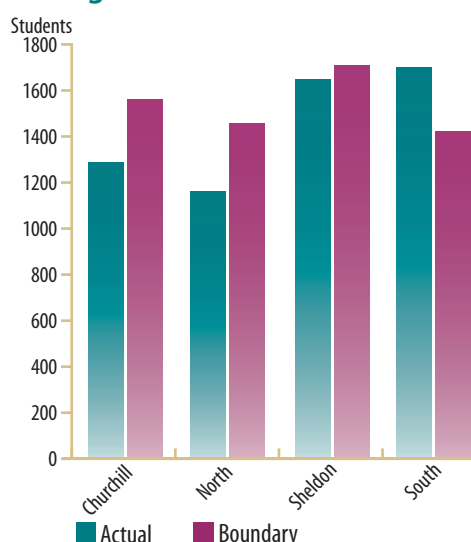


Impact of choice/transfers In Eugene, students can attend their neighborhood school or apply to attend another school in the district. This movement of students impacts how many students attend a school. It also results in a wide range of school sizes within the district. As enrollment declines in a school, it has fewer resources to educate students. Schools with larger enrollment can often offer more programs that meet the interests and needs of students. These charts show how school choice affects individual schools.

Actual Enrollment vs. Boundary for Middle Schools



Actual Enrollment vs. Boundary for High Schools



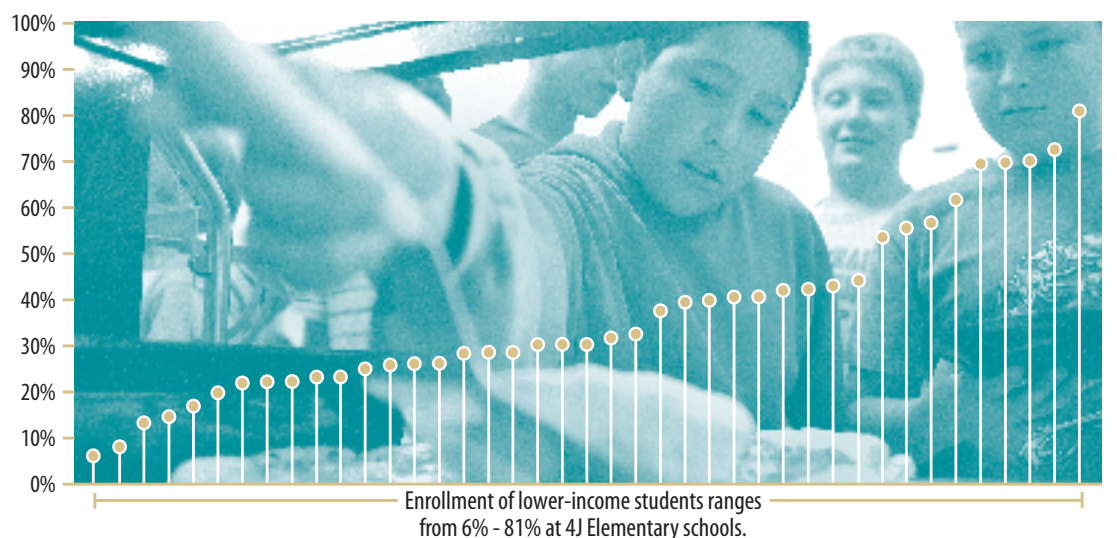
School children come from many backgrounds

The demographics in Eugene reflect trends throughout Oregon and the nation. 4J students come from a wider array of cultures, family experiences and economic circumstances than ever before. More 4J students now come from lower-income families. Currently, about 31 percent of 4J students qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch, based on family income.

Research suggests that lower-income students do better in schools with a majority of middle-class students. There appears to be an academic tipping point according to research by the Piton Foundation. When more than 50 percent of students at a school qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, it becomes more difficult for low-income students to excel.

Some school districts are taking steps to try to balance the economic mix of students within each school as a way to increase student achievement.

Free and Reduced Lunch % for District Elementary Schools



The Achievement Gap

A National Dilemma

The achievement gap is a nationwide challenge. In Eugene, and in most school districts in the country, some groups of students are not as likely to achieve at high levels and reach state and district academic benchmarks. In 4J schools today, there is an achievement gap between some of these groups of students and our larger student population.

4J's goal is to eliminate the achievement gap. The district has made strides by:

- Offering after-school programs at six elementary schools and two middle schools with high rates of poverty
- Increasing programs that support English Language Learners and providing training that helps teachers adapt and improve instruction for these students
- Providing funding to help schools serving low income students to redesign and create new programs to improve student achievement
- Implementing the recommendations of the 4J Math Task Force to improve math instruction, including teacher training and innovative pilot projects within some schools
- Increasing staffing to reduce math class size at middle and high schools

Although 4J students do better than their counterparts in other Oregon schools, there is still an achievement gap. This chart shows one example, comparing student achievement based on socioeconomic situation.

Responding to economic diversity

This district is already using some strategies to create economic balance among schools, such as:

- Providing additional resources to neighborhood schools with the highest percentage of students living in poverty in order to create excellent learning environments that will attract a wide variety of students
- Increased outreach to parents about choice options within 4J so that more low-income families are aware of school choice opportunities

Other options to increase economic diversity could include:

- Change school boundaries to create more diversity throughout the district
- Transport some students from their neighborhood schools to other schools of their choice

A longer-term solution may involve working with the local Interagency Housing Policy Board to reduce residential segregation in our community.

4J schools reflect changes in our community

Our schools are shaped by changes in our community. With fewer school-aged children, student enrollment has been declining since the 1970s. In addition, students have far more diverse learning needs. A greater proportion of 4J students now qualify for special education services or English Language Learner instruction. The district expects that more students will need these services in the future.

There are advantages to small learning communities. Yet if a school becomes too small, it is more difficult to offer classes and programs that interest and serve a wide range of students. Schools need to deliver a rigorous and challenging academic experience for all students, from those who need intensive instruction or special services to those who need advanced learning opportunities.

“The basic damage inflicted by segregated education comes not from racial concentration but from the concentration of children from poor families.”

Gary Orfield, Harvard University 1978

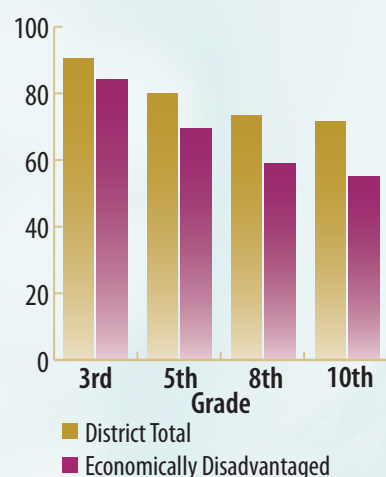
“One of our school’s primary challenges is to close the achievement gap. All students need to be eligible for college and prepared to succeed in a workforce that is rapidly changing. We have developed a variety of programs to accelerate students’ learning in skill areas where they are lagging behind and to support their success in class.”

Randy Bernstein, Principal

“In my 25 years, kids and families have changed so much. Today, we face more challenging situations. The one thing that hasn’t changed, though, is that all kids need our help.”

Rosie Hatleberg, Elementary Secretary

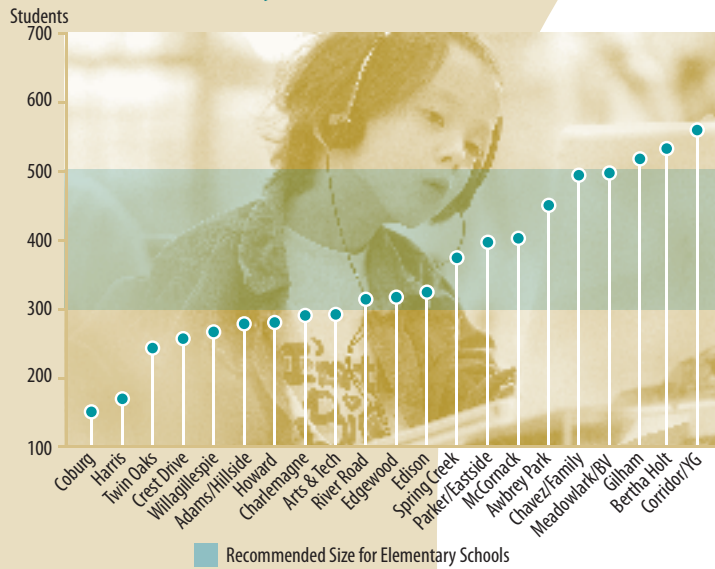
4J Overall and Economically Disadvantaged Reading Performance, 2007



Balancing enrollment and programs among schools

Why does size matter? Schools that are close to the same size are more likely to provide the children who attend them with similar educational opportunities.

Current Elementary School Sizes



Elementary Schools An elementary school with at least 300 students can provide comprehensive support to a broad range of students. Schools of this size have enough staff and resources to effectively serve special education and English language learners. These schools can also offer more art, music, physical education, counseling and library services and are less expensive to operate. Many researchers believe that an effective size for an elementary school is about 300–400 students, which is also suggested by the Oregon Quality Education Model. Schools above 500 begin to face challenges in creating a school community that is cohesive and provides individualized attention.

A very important factor in elementary school size is the number of classes within each grade. Schools with two or more classes per grade level can better balance students with a broad range of needs between classrooms—from intellectually gifted to those who need special education services. Other advantages of at least two teachers at one grade level include greater opportunity to match students with teacher expertise and for team planning and teaching.

Ten 4J elementary schools have fewer than 300 students enrolled, and four schools have fewer than 200 students. The average elementary school in the U.S. teaches 480 students. Additionally, smaller schools are less cost-efficient due to the expense of operating a building.

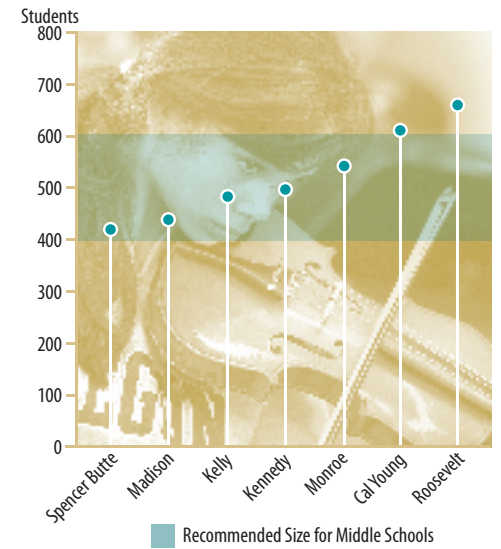
Middle Schools The Oregon Quality Education Model recommends that middle schools in the range of 500 students provide comprehensive programs at a reasonable cost and maintain a personalized learning environment. Schools below 400 struggle to offer an appropriate range of classes and services.

At present, five of the district’s seven middle schools fall in the 400–600 range and two schools exceed 600.

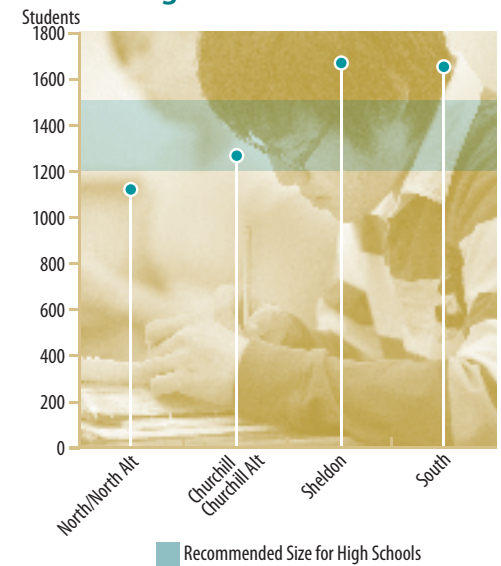
High Schools Projections indicate that high school enrollment will decline by 700 students over the next five years. If high schools become too small, they have more difficulty providing a broad range of course offerings.

There is also a national trend toward having multiple small learning communities (see page 6) on a single high school campus. These small learning communities allow for a greater focus on building personal relationships, which is a positive factor in student achievement.

Current Middle School Sizes



Current High School Sizes



School choice impacts

school size The district’s choice policy allows parents to enroll their children in any 4J school, if it has room for them. With declining enrollment, one school’s growth can negatively impact other schools, because transfers result in some schools losing enrollment and growing smaller.

Making schools more evenly sized Schools that are about the same size are more likely to provide the children who attend them with similar educational opportunities.

Strategies proposed to create schools that are more balanced in size are:

- Continue to close and consolidate smaller elementary schools
- Distribute students more evenly through high schools
- Manage school choice to keep schools within enrollment targets for school size
- Adjust school boundaries to help balance school size

“One of our current challenges is developing an environment where near perfect attendance is the norm for all students. When teachers have the opportunity to proceed through curriculum without needing to continually patch together make-up lessons, learning takes place and frustrations diminish. Being IN school is the first step toward being a successful learner!”

Laurene Larson, Counselor

Looking at some strategies

Shaping 4J's Future, the district's two-year long strategic planning process, considers the impact of the challenges and trends facing the district. Some strategies emerged as 4J staff focus groups and a community think tank talked about these issues over the past year. Now that you've learned more about how the changes in our community affect our schools, take a moment to reflect on options, and then please complete the survey at the back of this newsletter. Here are some thought-provoking questions.

Evaluating school size Schools that become too small have fewer staff and often struggle to offer programs that meet the educational needs and interests of a wide range of students.

- Should we close and consolidate more elementary schools to cluster more staff, students and services into fewer buildings?
- Should we adjust school boundaries to try to better balance school size?
- Should we develop strategies to balance high school enrollment among 4J's four high schools?

Balancing enrollment and programs among schools The district has long offered parents the option of enrolling their children in any 4J school, as long as space is available. As enrollment declines, schools are able to accept more transfers from outside of their neighborhood boundaries. Yet, that means some schools have fewer students.

- Should the district try to balance programs offered among schools or allow some schools to be larger while others grow smaller?
- Should the district limit the number of students who can transfer to a school, so that each school can offer a similar range of programs?

Responding to economic diversity Our school district serves students from all economic backgrounds. Some school districts are responding to education research that shows that students do better when there is not a large concentration of poor or disadvantaged students within a school.

- How should the district respond to having schools with a high concentration of students who are economically disadvantaged?

Did you know...

4J has partnered with the University of Oregon to create a reading assessment to monitor student progress in language arts. Now teachers are able to compare their students' progress with students in other schools.

Howard Elementary created a learning environment that provides continuous access to technology. Each student uses computers and other digital equipment to learn and engage in project-based learning. Apple Inc. considers it a model technology oriented school.

More than **2,500 Eugene middle school students** build and race solar vehicles every June as part of their renewable energy focus.

Excelsior Academy at Churchill High School offers 10th-12th grade students the opportunity to earn college credits through Honors and Advanced Placement courses.

The Eugene Middle School Mentoring Program has received a three-year \$600,000 grant that will expand its current program that pairs students and adults (usually Rotarians) for weekly interactions.

More than 1,350 K-12 students visit local streams to view salmon migration, and conduct scientific inquiries involving habitat and water quality.

Crest Drive Elementary's environmental science program gets students out of the classroom to study watersheds using a combination of writing, scientific inquiry, mathematics, and field projects.

The Sheldon High School Advisory connects each student with a staff member to help the student maneuver through the requirements and demands of high school. It also ensures that each student receives personal attention so that no one "falls between the cracks."

Kelly Middle School makes math relevant to 6th grade student teams who develop their own pizza businesses. The project builds writing, problem solving, and presentation skills as each team creates its business plan.

Edison Elementary has a six-year ocean-science program that incorporates science, math, writing, art, and music into classroom and field trip activities. Students in grades K-5 each work on a different marine ecosystem, from ponds to the Pacific Ocean.

Students at Madison Middle School make working wind turbines, demonstrating the continued need for developing alternative energy.

The Arts and Technology Academy at Jefferson is 4J's first K-8 school, and is designed specifically for learners of different ages and abilities. Students rotate through subjects like publications, audio-visual productions, music, performing arts, cultural arts, integrated sciences, physical education, and foreign languages.

South Eugene High School has implemented programs like the "Intro to Math Block" to close the achievement gap. Rather than stay behind their peers, students learn three years of math in their first two years of high school. By their junior year, they are ready to take algebra 2/trigonometry.

Considering New Initiatives

Some educational improvements will require spending outside of the district's operating budget. These initiatives would be funded through a future bond measure that would need voter approval. In planning for what to include, the school board is interested in community input relative to support for these initiatives.

Early education programs, greater use of technology and new approaches to high school learning are among the strategies that 4J has initiated to improve teaching and student learning. More can be done in each of these areas, and that would require community support and investments in new or remodeled school buildings.

Technology in the classroom Tools such as electronic blackboards and interactive software enrich the classroom experience and often provide both students and teachers with instant feedback that helps target instruction. In addition, today's students need to be adept at using technology and data to gather information and to solve problems in the real world.

4J is expanding the use of technology in the classroom. Additional investments would better equip schools and students to take advantage of current and new technology to better support teaching and learning. This is particularly important for those students who do not have access to technology at home.

Early education Early education programs, such as all-day kindergarten and preschool programs are proven to boost student achievement and prepare young children for school. Oregon currently funds only half-day kindergarten programs, however all-day kindergarten is emerging as a future state funding priority.

Adding all-day kindergarten would require more space. The district would need to plan for this now, as elementary school consolidations are considered.

The district currently offers some longer-day kindergarten programs at three schools, using federal funds allocated to help disadvantaged students. Pre-kindergarten programs are currently funded by organizations outside of 4J. If schools have space available, they could provide rooms for pre-school programs.

New approaches to high school instruction

High schools are using new methods to more effectively work with students. Buildings need remodeling or additions to better support:

- Career academies that prepare students for post-high school opportunities in professional fields such as engineering and nursing.
- Small learning communities that allow a group of teachers to work with a group of 300-500 students on a daily basis. There are several advantages: increased student attendance, improved attention and a sense of community. Often these learning environments are located within the same building.

The district is offering some of these programs, and expansion would favorably impact student learning. Churchill High School students currently work in small learning communities for their first two years, and then join a career academy that focuses on an occupational field such as health, natural resources, human resources and arts and communication.

North Eugene High School offers three small, autonomous theme-based schools focused on arts, engineering and science, and international studies.

Do what's best for students. That simple statement guides 4J teachers and staff, as they serve students. The district's programs offer a variety of learning experiences. Schools strive to provide a challenging curriculum for all students and to tailor instruction to meet the needs of students who learn in diverse ways.

"All students must learn skills that previously were only needed by those who were headed to college. That's a real challenge for teachers.

This new norm requires development of new professional knowledge, new school structures, and new ways of working together."

Beth Gerot, Eugene School Board

"Our school's challenge is to help students prepare for future jobs that don't yet exist. They need more access to technology to learn skills that will be necessary for future success."

Patrick Lyon, Teacher



We want to hear from you

You may complete this survey online at www.4j.lane.edu.

The statements below describe choices 4J could make to address important issues. Tell us how much you oppose or support these ideas by putting a number 0 through 10 in the box next to the statement. A 0 means you strongly oppose it, a 10 that you strongly support it. A 5 means you are completely neutral. Please feel free to include additional comment sheets with the survey.

Please rate each of the following statements on a scale of 0 to 10 and indicate your score in the box before each number. Example:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
oppose neutral support

School size

Elementary Schools (Neighborhood and Alternative)

- 1 **Continue current policies: Allow each neighborhood elementary school to accept all students who choose to attend it, subject to the capacity of the school building.** Consider closure or consolidation for schools below 200 students (below 100 for Coburg Elementary). Smaller schools will offer fewer programs and have less capacity to serve students with special needs. This option will likely lead to the closure and consolidation of 1-2 schools over the next 5 years.
- 2 **Create neighborhood elementary schools of 300-500 students.** This will better allow all schools to offer a full range of programs and more effectively serve students of all abilities and backgrounds. This option will likely lead to the closure and consolidation of 2-4 schools over the next 5 years.
- 3 **Continue current policies regarding alternative school enrollment: Using a lottery process, each alternative school accepts students up to its enrollment cap.** Alternative elementary schools offer a distinctive curriculum (e.g., Japanese language immersion) and draw their enrollment from throughout the district. Current enrollment caps range from 122 to 272.
- 4 **Require that alternative school sites have an enrollment of between 300 and 500 students.** The enrollment may be from a single alternative school or multiple alternative schools sharing the same site. This size will better enable alternative schools to serve students of all abilities and from all backgrounds. Enrollment caps for some alternative schools could be raised.

Middle Schools

- 5 **Continue current policies: With only minor limits, allow each middle school to accept all students who choose to attend it.** Because of student and parent choice, some middle schools will be significantly larger than others and will be able to offer a broader range of courses.
- 6 **Create middle schools of 400-600 students.** This will help balance the programs and courses offered among the middle schools. This may limit the number of students allowed to transfer to middle schools outside of their neighborhood. Two middle schools currently exceed 600 students.

High Schools

- 7 **Continue current policies: With only minor limits, allow each high school to accept all students who choose to attend it, subject to capacity limitations.** Some high schools will be significantly larger than others and will be able to offer a broader range of programs and courses than are available at smaller high schools.
- 8 **Ensure that smaller high schools have comparable academic programs to larger high schools.** Smaller high schools would receive more money per student than larger high schools in order to do this.
- 9 **Balance high school enrollment to between 1,200 and 1,500.** This would create four high schools of nearly equal size, with comparable academic programs and similar resources. It would limit the ability of students to transfer to high schools outside their neighborhood region. School boundary adjustments might be needed. Two high schools currently have more than 1,500 students.

Managing Enrollment/Improving Diversity

- 10 **Continue current enrollment and school choice policies.** At present, the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunches ranges from 6% to 81%. If trends continue, the current policies will result in some schools having an increasing concentration of students from low-income households and, disproportionately, higher educational needs. 4J schools will become increasingly economically segregated.
- 11 **Adopt attendance boundaries to improve the economic and cultural diversity of district schools.** This would alter some current school boundaries.
- 12 **Change school boundaries with the goal of ensuring that no school has more than 50% of its students from low-income households.** Currently, the enrollment of 5 elementary schools and the district's new K-8 school exceed this limit.
- 13 **Provide transportation for students from lower-income households to attend other neighborhood schools and alternative schools.** This would reduce one barrier to lower-income students attending the school of their choice and may create more economic diversity in some schools.
- 14 **Develop unique academic programs (e.g., second language, arts, music, and technology) at schools with a high concentration of lower-income students to attract the enrollment of high achieving students.** This would require more resources to be shifted to these schools to support the new programs. This might increase the diversity of some schools.

Expanding New Initiatives

Some of the initiatives the district is considering would require additional investments in new or remodeled buildings. Based on what you know today, how important do you believe it is to expand the following initiatives:

- 15 **Technology:** increase hardware for technology and correct the inequities that now exist amongst school buildings.
- 16 **Kindergarten:** Provide sufficient space so that each elementary school could provide a full day kindergarten program when sufficient funds become available.
- 17 **Pre-kindergarten:** Provide additional space for pre-kindergarten programs within district school buildings.
- 18 **Career academies:** Remodel or add facilities so that high schools can expand their career academy programs.
- 19 **Small learning environments:** Remodel or add facilities so that high schools can provide smaller learning environments.

Please complete the survey, cut and fold where indicated, seal with tape, return to a 4J school, or add postage and mail by Nov. 9, 2007.

You may complete this survey online at www.4j.lane.edu.

Some Questions about You

This information will be used only to help us analyze the data and understand how the community feels about these possible changes.

What is your gender? Female Male

Which category includes your age?

- 18 or younger 55-64
 19-34 65 and older
 35-54

What school region do you live in? Using the map below, please check which region you live in.

- Churchill North Eugene
 Sheldon South Eugene

Do you currently have any pre-school or school-age children who reside in the 4J district?

- No Yes

If yes, please check their grade levels:

- Kindergarten through grade 5 High school (grades 9-12)
 Middle school (grades 6-8)

Do any attend a 4J school?

- No Yes

Do any of your school-age children qualify for special education services?

- No Yes

Do you currently work for school district 4J?

- No Yes

If yes, what is the nature of your job?

- Classified staff Teacher/other certified staff
 Administrator

If you currently work for school district 4J, at which level do you work?

- Kindergarten through grade 5 High school (grades 9-12)
 Middle school (grades 6-8) Central service

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High school/GED or less College (BA/BS)
 Some college Graduate Degree (MA/JD/Ph.D./MD)

Do you currently own your home or are you renting?

- Own home Renting

Which category below includes the total annual income of your household?

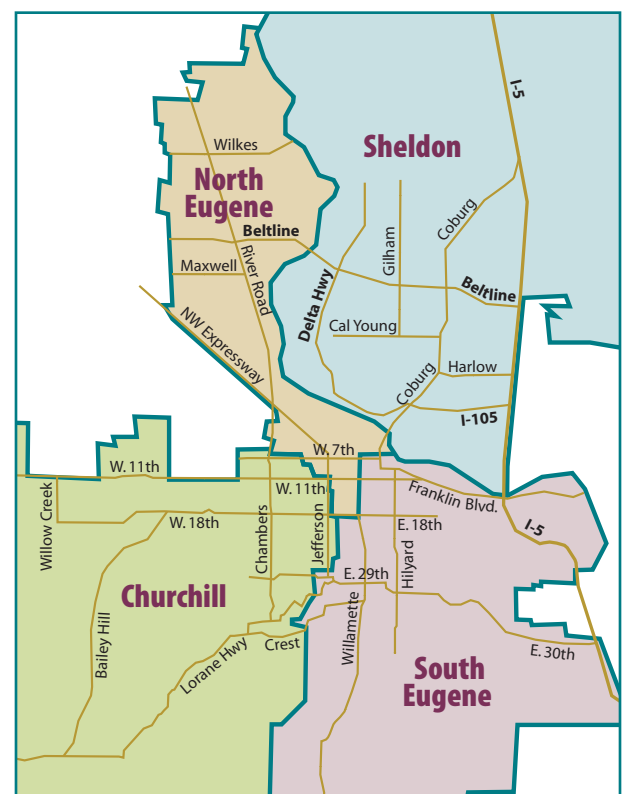
- Less than \$10,000 \$50,000 to \$74,999
 \$10,000 to \$14,999 \$75,000 to \$99,999
 \$15,000 to \$24,999 \$100,000 or more
 \$25,000 to \$49,999

What is your ethnic or racial identity?

- White/European Black or African American
 Latino/Hispanic Asian
 American Indian or Alaska Native Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 Other: (please specify) _____

Is the primary language spoken at home English?

- No Yes



How should **4J** respond to changes facing public education?

We're proud of our schools. The Eugene School District has a strong record of innovation and student achievement.

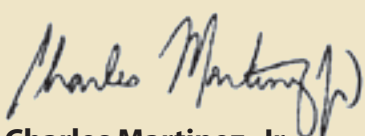
Our community's support has contributed to that success. As we consider how to respond to two challenges facing our schools, we recognize the importance of hearing from parents, staff and community members.

First, we must address the long-term decline in student enrollment. Secondly, Eugene students today have far more diverse learning needs than in the past.

This newsletter presents some strategies for handling these challenges and asks for your input. Some questions may seem simple. Yet many will cause you to think about how our schools can best serve today's students.

Even though our schools are among the best in the nation, we can't rest on our past achievements. We must always strive to improve, as we work to educate every student to be successful in a constantly changing world.

Thanks for taking time to learn more and for sharing your thoughts through the survey you'll find inside and on the 4J website: www.4j.lane.edu.



Charles Martinez, Jr.
Eugene School Board Chair



George Russell
Eugene School District Superintendent



Eugene School District 4J

200 North Monroe Street
Eugene OR 97402
(541) 687-3123 • TDD 687-3447
www.4j.lane.edu

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Surveys may also be returned to 4J schools

Eugene School District 4J

200 North Monroe Street
Eugene OR 97402

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“In the ‘60s and ‘70s, the odds were pretty good that, after graduating from high school, people could get jobs that would support a family. Today, because of a change from a manufacturing to information age economy, almost everyone needs college preparatory skills to secure a family wage job. Both schools and students are accountable to achieve at high levels.”

Dennis Biggerstaff, Principal

