

MINUTES

Eugene School District 4J Equity Committee
Auditorium—200 North Monroe Street
Eugene, Oregon

May 27, 2008
4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Marshall Peter, Chair; Michael Carrigan, Andy Gottesman, Alicia Hays, Arbrella Luvert, Jason Mak, Guadalupe Quinn, Jerry Rosiek, Bruce Stiller, Surendra Subramani, Maria Thomas, Helen Towle, Jane Waite, Carmen Urbina, members; Patrick Hughes, 4J staff; Tony Baker, Eugene Police Department; Alan Brown, guest.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Peter convened the meeting and those present introduced themselves.

Ms. Urbina announced that Mr. Kerrigan, Mr. Russell, and Mr. Rosiek were excused.

II. Public Comment

Mr. Brown spoke about the incidence of suicide and suicide attempts by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) students and the need to better educate the students and those who worked with them in the schools about the free community resources available to them. He described his efforts to disburse information on GLBT youth resources and distributed an informational flyers. He said he was also available to counsel youth and make presentations to students. He provided his contact information: 541/954-3732, alan@rainbowsafaribengals.com.

Ms. Lauer observed that when her son was in school there were no resources available to students. She said that teachers could present themselves at “safe” people to GLBT students. She said PFLAG was willing to provide that training.

Mr. Stiller asked if Mr. Brown and Ms. Lauer had much contact with counselors at the middle and high school levels. Ms. Lauer replied that PFLAG when to schools when invited, but did not have regular contact. Mr. Brown said he had no contact with schools.

Mr. Stiller said he would send out an annual reminder to faculty about the community resources that were available.

Ms. Luvert suggested a presentation at the meetings of principals and counselors in the fall.

III. Cooperation with Law Enforcement Agencies

Mr. Hughes, 4J risk manager, introduced himself to the committee. He said Risk Management had many facets, including emergency planning and law enforcement liaison. He was available to respond to questions about how the district’s policies regarding interaction with law enforcement agencies and personnel. He announced the formation of a new Emergency Response Advisory Team to address the district’s emergency operations plan, including some aspects of diversity. He said the committee would be composed of representatives from each school site—elementary, middle and high school levels—as well as facilities, transportation, instruction and police. He said Ms.

Urbina was also a member. Ms. Towle added that one of the committee's responsibilities was to oversee the police/school relationship and contract.

Mr. Peter said a parent had come to a previous committee meeting and expressed concern that a police officer questioned her son without her being present or notified.

Mr. Hughes referred to a handout that included the school board's policy regarding cooperation with law enforcement as well as an excerpt from the *Student Rights & Responsibilities Handbook*. He said the policies provided some discretion and were broadly written because each incident was different. He said the student handbook was somewhat more detailed and addressed whether an incident involved criminal activity or was school-based and related to school policy and rules. He said police had more leeway in an investigation of criminal activity because of the need to move quickly in some cases. He said principals were required to make a reasonable effort to contact parents when illegal acts were involved, but were given discretion regarding parent contact when the situation involved school-based activities.

Ms. Quinn asked how "illegal act" was defined. Ms. Towle said an illegal act was a violation of criminal law, rather than school policy or rules.

Ms. Quinn said she had heard that there were often false accusations of criminal activity and parents were concerned that those incidents were treated from the beginning as a criminal act. She asked to see statistics on incidents involving police officers in the schools.

Ms. Luvert said the statistical information requested by Ms. Quinn would be very helpful to the committee's examination practices involving police officers and students.

Ms. Thomas concurred with the request for data. She said parents' major complaint was lack of contact when the police questioned their children.

Ms. Towle indicated that the district did not keep statistics on police contact and investigations, but if it was a criminal matter, the police department should have that information.

Mr. Baker said he had worked in the Bethel School District as a school officer and his preference was to have parents present when talking to students, as they were part of the solutions. He estimated that 85 percent of the incidents police officers dealt with at schools were minor; the remaining 15 percent were serious and might involve weapons or drugs on campus. He said an administrator or counselor was always present if a parent was not. He said the department maintained statistics only if a police report was filed.

In response to a question from Mr. Peter, Ms. Towle said the committee described by Mr. Hughes was an internal committee; Ms. Urbina was a member

Ms. Waite suggested several things to address the problem:

- clear definitions of "reasonable effort" and "illegal acts,"
- require documentation of the entire contact with the student,
- record interviews with students, regardless of who was present, and
- contact parents regardless of what action needed to be taken.

Ms. Quinn agreed with the importance of tracking and reporting on all contacts between police and students so the district could evaluate the effectiveness of having police in the schools.

Ms. Waite asked if there were provisions for regular review of the district's policy. Ms. Urbina replied

that the contract with the police department included provisions for review.

Ms. Hays asked what next steps the Equity Committee would recommend to the district or the board. She felt that obtaining whatever statistics the police department might have was a good place to start.

Ms. Towle suggested the newly formed Emergency Response Advisory Team (ERAT) could consider the issue and invite Equity Committee members to discuss the matter.

Ms. Quinn said it was also important to talk to students and parents.

Ms. Luvert suggested that principals and committee representatives could meet with the school resource officers to discuss statistics, review the system, and consider how to collect more information.

Ms. Hays recommended that the committee develop a proposal requesting the data and reports it wished to see, asking the ERAT to report quarterly and recommending that community voices, including youth, were heard in the process.

Mr. Stiller asked if there was a standard procedure for documenting police contact with students. Ms. Urbina said there was not.

Mr. Baker said there was one resource officer per high school and that officer responded to the feeder schools for that high school as time permitted. He said a primary mission for officers was to develop relationships with students through casual conversations. He said it would be important to clarify what types of contact needed to be documented, both by police and by the district. He was very interested in resolving any issues.

Ms. Urbina agreed it would be important to clarify the type of contact officers would document as it was not necessary or appropriate to document all contacts. She said the district should determine what types of issues were prompting administrators to call law enforcement. She said it would be interesting to see the data related to reports that had been filed by police officers.

Mr. Peter asked for volunteers to form a subcommittee to work with district staff on the issue. Mr. Stiller, Ms. Thomas, Ms. Quinn, Ms. Luvert, Ms. Waite and Ms. Hays volunteered. Ms. Urbina said committee members Alan Merrill and Peter Tromba also expressed an interest in the subcommittee.

Ms. Hays asked to have the police present at the subcommittee's meeting.

IV. Hate Graffiti Dialogue

Ms. Urbina described a series of incidents at schools over the past three weeks that involved hate graffiti targeting specific teachers and students. She said schools included Spencer Butte, César Chavez, Kennedy, Roosevelt, Yujin Gakuen, Ridgeline South Eugene and Parker/Eastside, although Spencer Butte and César Chavez were subjected to the worst attacks. She said the district had developed a community response team to support the schools, but realized there was no specific district protocol for responding to various levels of graffiti. She felt it was important for the district to establish lines of communication with community organizations that were tracking this type of hate activity.

Mr. Baker announced that four arrests had been made to date; they were two white males and two white females ranging in age from 10 to 13. He said a fifth suspect had been identified. He did not feel they were involved in all of the incidents.

Mr. Carrigan said CALC (Community Alliance of Lane County) tracked all hate activity in Lane County. He distributed copies of a flyer that CALC handed out in neighborhoods that had been targeted by hate activities.

Ms. Waite encouraged the committee to remember that the protocol it recommended should support students' education with a holistic approach.

Mr. Stiller observed that Ms. Urbina and others had turned the Spencer Butte situation into an opportunity to educate and mobilize students. He agreed it would be a good goal for the district to have that protocol in place for future incidents.

Mr. Roziek emphasized that the only response to racist discourse was anti-racist discourse and principals and teachers had to be prepared to do that. He said the committee should articulate to the district that staff should receive professional development training in that area. He suggested inventorying current capacity to respond among building administrators.

Mr. Mak also commended how the district had responded to the Spencer Butte incident and agreed there should be a policy and procedures for responding in place.

Ms. Waite, Mr. Carrigan and Mr. Stiller agreed to form a subcommittee to develop policy recommendations.

V. Dual Immersion: Mandarin and Spanish Update

Ms. Urbina distributed Superintendent Russell's recommendations to the school board regarding the proposed language immersion programs.

Ms. Hays asked if the Equity Committee thought a Spanish dual immersion program would be a good tool for closing the achievement gap. She wanted the committee to provide its comments and recommendations to the school board.

Mr. Peter said he was still not clear, even with the report from John Lenssen, the extent to which the district was committing resources to diversity and closing the achievement gap. He did not know how to respond to Ms. Hays' question.

Ms. Waite remarked that a dual language immersion program was a good tool for closing the achievement gap; the Chinese immersion program would also help close the achievement gap by creating a wider base of understanding and acceptance.

Mr. Gottesman noted that the committee had only determined there was an achievement gap; it had not identified any solutions. He supported the concept of a dual immersion, but did not feel the committee had sufficient evidence on which to base a determination that it could effectively close the achievement gap.

Mr. Roziek said it was a complicated question and good curriculum were often conflated with raising test scores, which diverted the conversation from the fact that it was great to educate children to be bilingual or multilingual. He said a focus on closing the achievement gap then suggested the programs were ineffective if test scores did not increase to the extent expected. He said the terms of debate of language immersion programs should be about values and curriculum.

Mr. Mak agreed with Mr. Roziek's comments. He said the Asian-American community typically did

not organize around political issues and it was significant that so many of them were advocating for the Chinese immersion program. He encouraged the district to regard multi-cultural, multilingual learning as the basis for educating students in 4J

Ms. Towle reported on a recent meeting discussing the unintended consequences of creating a dual immersion program and the potential migration of higher SES away from Howard. She said that illustrated how interrelated all of these issues were.

Ms. Lauer said she favored the concept of a dual immersion program and agreed with Mr. Rosiek's comments about not teaching to test scores.

Ms. Luvert said that stereotyping race and poverty was another way to divide and it was important to elevate thinking to the level of transforming a system that had policies and procedures that were racist. She said having to choose begin Chinese and Spanish immersion programs would perpetuate that approach. She was in favor of the Equity Committee service the board in an advisory capacity.

Ms. Urbina said it was time for the Equity Committee to decide what conversations it wished to have with district leadership about where the committee and its recommendations fit within the organization. She said instructional matters were often at issue in discussions about closing the achievement gap. She noted that principals had requested copies of the committee's minutes.

Ms. Towle clarified that it was not a question of choosing between the language immersion programs; they were both still on the table for consideration but planning for the Spanish language dual immersion program was further along.

Mr. Peter asked if Ms. Hays wanted the committee to make a recommendation on the language immersion programs.

Ms. Hays said her intent was not to obtain a recommendation, but rather to listen to committee members discuss the topic and their perspectives and input were of interest. She wanted, as a board member, to ensure that the committee's voice was heard.

Ms. Towle suggested the committee explore systematic ways to connect with more staff in the district.

Mr. Roziek said he had a different voice at the committee's meetings than he might in the political setting of a school board meeting.

Ms. Urbina recommended that she, Mr. Peter, Ms. Waite, Ms. Luvert and Ms. Hays have a conversation with Superintendent Russell and Tom Henry regarding the committee's role in the district and its connection with district staff.

VI. Next Steps and Updates

Eugene School District 4J Diversity Mapping

Mr. Peter encouraged committee members to read the report *Diversity Mapping: Eugene 4J School District*. He said the report was not what he had hoped for in terms of identifying district staff committed to issues of diversity.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40p.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)