

SHAPING 4J'S FUTURE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)

FOCUS GROUP REPORT: DECEMBER 2006

INTRODUCTION

As a part of District 4J's strategic planning process, "Shaping the Future," eight focus groups composed primarily of district staff met the week of November 13 to begin to address several unanswered questions that will have an impact on future decisions about school size, grade configurations, programs, and location of schools.

The English Language Learners (ELL) focus group identified a number of implementation options that could be considered by the district and the implications associated with those options. We also reviewed demographic and enrollment information and instructional literature, and identified the key values and beliefs upon which we based our implementation options. Finally, we identified a number of issues and questions that we thought should be considered by the school board, a think tank that will be operated by the university, and the community.

Our group was facilitated by Tami Walkup, and Sabrina Gordon was our listener/writer. The listener writer was responsible for recording what we said and for drafting this report.

The members of our committee were:

Abby Lane, ELL Coordinator
Carmen Urbina, Parent, Family and Community Coordinator
Imelda Cortez, Elementary Teacher, River Road
Stella Dadson, Principal, Willagillespie
Joyce Wade, ELL Teacher, Sheldon Secondary Region
Carolyn Clements, ELL Teacher, Churchill High School
Mary Peterson, ELL Instructional Assistant, Harris
Jennifer Dutton, Special Education Teacher, Holt

We must make a disclaimer: our focus group was asked to focus on a specific topic area, knowing that all of the topics discussed during this process are interrelated and what the district does in one area has implications for the others. The focus group process allowed us to share our discussions with the other focus groups, but each group is submitting an individual report.

A broad based think tank will synthesize the work of our focus group and the other focus groups as it develops a set of integrated alternatives or possibilities for consideration by the school board later in the spring.

A list of definitions for ELL-related terms is attached at the end of this report.

4J'S CURRENT PROGRAM MODEL

Abby Lane, ELL Coordinator (.7 FTE) provided the members of the focus group with a description of the district's current program model. In summary, the district plan must provide appropriate instruction in three key areas:

1. English language development
2. Literacy development
3. Access to content area instruction

We also considered the four types of English Language Learners found in the 4J school district:

1. Recent arrival. At grade level academically in their native language
2. Recent arrival. Not at grade level academically in their native language
3. Sole speaker of a foreign language at the school. May or may not be literate in native language
4. Has spent their whole life in U. S., and speaks another language other than English at home. They are learning in English at school and continue to struggle academically.

At the elementary level 4J provides a core program of content based pull-out instruction, some in-class support, and some services in extended day kindergarten. At the secondary level, the core program consists of content based ELL 1 (beginning) and 2 (intermediate) classes, some sheltered-instruction and bilingual content courses, reading support through programs such as Read Right and Read 180, and study skills courses. Services at all levels are stretched thin over many schools, and not all students are receiving all of these services. 4J also has a Welcome Center for Migrant and Latino ELL families in Lane County, staffed by a full time instructional assistant (half of this position is funded by ELL).

Following our review of the district's current program, we considered the implications it had for the following issues:

- Equity: gaps in meeting academic needs, inconsistent services for students and parents depending on number of ELL students at each school; the Welcome Center does not meet the diverse range of ELL learners and the families; ELL program often seen as a "second class" program
- Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools: services are spread out over large geographic area; continuum of services and staff development is limited and inconsistent; site-based decisions do not always reflect best practices; some families have limited access to alternative schools
- Program Staffing: staffing is stretched because of schools with low ELL concentration, staffing and schedule are driving program decisions; classified staff are sometimes used to teach programs that should be taught by certified staff at the elementary level
- State and Federal Mandates: inconsistencies from school to school in addressing mandates due to varying levels of awareness, mandates require huge assessment time and create pressure, which leads to loss of quality instruction time

- Student Transportation: lack of transportation affects school choice and ELL program design and scheduling
- High Schools: Staffing, rather than students' needs, drives program; not all students are being served in the areas they need
- Elementary Schools: scheduling often drives program, current model removes responsibility from classroom teacher to be connected to ELL students and families, native languages are not addressed (issue at all levels), inconsistent services
- Middle Schools: similar to implications for high schools, also dealing with assimilation vs. acculturation, transition issues
- Regional Impact: inconsistent program offerings due to numbers of ELL at each school, some regions are more ELL concentrated; regions have different types of ELL needs

INSTRUCTIONAL LITERATURE

Prior to the meetings of our focus group, the district asked Betsy Shepard to review the literature dealing with ELL. She summarized recent research and writings in this area. In summary, the strength of a student's academic skills in his/her first language is an important predictor of success in acquiring a second language. Conversational ability in a second language takes 1 – 3 years to develop, while academic ability takes 5 – 9 years. Frameworks for designing instruction work best when implemented across districts. Teacher training and support is key to successful implementation. A copy of that full report is attached

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

We were asked to identify a number of implementation options for ELL based on a range of funding assumptions. First, we were asked to assume that no additional funds would be available, second that some additional funds would be available, and finally that the Quality Education Model (QEM) was fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.

We were also asked to comment on what implications there were for a number of key issues in the district.

Our proposed implementation options are described below, along with what we believe the implications to be. We have also summarized the values and beliefs that we, as a focus group, operated by.

<p>ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS</p> <p>Our Values and Beliefs</p> <p>Always value the child’s culture and language</p> <p>Staff development is key to academic success of ELL students</p> <p>One size does not fit all; continuum of ELL services is crucial</p> <p>We can’t do it alone; parents and community partnerships are critical</p>	
<p><i>Each of our implementation options are based on the idea that four key areas (staff development, community partnerships, district structure/support, and parent/family support) serve as a base for the ELL program and support ELL instruction.</i></p>	
<p>IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS</p>	<p>IMPLICATIONS</p>
<p>Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the District.</p> <p>Implementation Option A:</p> <p><u>Staff Development</u> – focus training on new teachers; provide ongoing training for all teachers; cannot provide intensive or follow-up support at this funding level</p> <p><u>Community Partnerships</u> – stays status quo</p> <p><u>District Structure/Support</u> – restructure current staffing to support current elem./secondary programs; change recruitment focus for new hires to include ESOL and bilingual staff</p>	<p>(Note: the definition of each implication is attached)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Equity: (-) inconsistent access to appropriate instruction; (-) not able to close achievement gap; (-) clustering causes equity issues with classroom teachers’ workload; (-) parental resistance to clustering; (-) native language literacy programs paid for at expense of other school-wide programs •Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools: (-) lack of access to information; (-) flight of affluent students to alternative schools •Program Staffing: (-) cannot provide full range of services; (-) scheduling is difficult; (-) unequal access to certified staff

<p><u>Parent and Family Support</u> – Welcome Center stays status quo</p> <p><u>Instruction</u> – course offerings stay status quo; Newcomer program for grades 6-12 could be funded at expense of other services; Dual Language programs are possible using school funds; encourage clustering of ELLs within a classroom; possible clustering of students within regions (some transportation would be needed); support native language literacy using school funds</p> <p><u>Support for Instruction</u> – reading interventions stay status quo; academic tutoring is site-based decision, volunteer dependent and not sustainable; no support for transitions (pre-K, elementary to middle, middle to high, and post secondary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •State and Federal Mandates: (-) students are not meeting state standards; (-) district not meeting NCLB requirements (highly qualified teachers, etc.) •Student Transportation: N/A for this model •High Schools: (-) limited access to content; (-) not supporting students through graduation; (-) varying graduation requirements; (-) no support for transitions; (-) high drop-out rates •Elementary Schools: (-) limited access to content; (-) not enough instruction time; •Middle Schools: (-) limited course offerings; (-) students leave ELL and struggle in mainstream; (-) lack of transition support •Regional Impact: (+) regions are funded by need, (-) but regions with low ELL concentrations do not get enough support and regions with high needs are not getting the level of support they need either •Other (Including impact on other focus group topics)
<p>Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the District.</p> <p>Implementation Option B:</p> <p><u>Staff Development</u> – focus training on every new teacher; provide ongoing training for all teachers; support for implementation (subs, extended contract)</p> <p><u>Community Partnerships</u> – status quo</p> <p><u>District Structure/Support</u> – 2 half-time ELL coordinators (.5 elementary and .5 secondary) to coordinate ELL instruction and services to schools</p> <p><u>Parent and Family Support</u> – Welcome Center with more staffing and possibly more locations and serving more language groups</p> <p><u>Instruction</u> – expand continuum of course offerings at middle and high schools; Newcomer program grades 6-12: more than one and fund without impacting current programs; Dual Language: add</p>	<p>(Note: the definition of each implication is attached)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Equity: (-) classified/certified staff development would be unequal; (+) All staff assumes responsibility for every child; (+/-) student access to appropriate instruction would be better but still not adequate; (-) ELL/non-ELL student ratio would not be balanced across schools •Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools: (+) more choice for families because of transportation; (-) open enrollment can dilute effect of trying to cluster ELL students •Program Staffing: (+/-) changes in staff around district; (+) changes in recruitment (bilingual staff) •State and Federal Mandates: (+) more likely to meet “highly qualified” mandate; (+) better able to address mandates; (+) paperwork and assessments completed in a timely manner •Student Transportation: (+) ELL transportation would not pull services from other students (i.e. students with

<p>transportation and planning time; cluster South region ELLs from schools with low concentration of ELL students; support native language literacy with additional staffing and curriculum</p> <p><u>Support for Instruction</u> – more trained staff for reading interventions; some FTE to support transitions, academic tutoring coordinator to ensure consistent services</p>	<p>disabilities), (-) but may not have enough transportation dollars for all ELL needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High Schools: (+) additional ELL coordinator would benefit all school levels; (+) help with transitions, (+) some academic support; (+) improved parent communication; (+) better course offerings •Elementary Schools: (+) some support for native language literacy; (-) clustering will change student composition at a school (less diversity);(-) clustering limits school choice •Middle Schools: (+) better continuum of services; (+) help with transitions; (+) more academic support; (+) improved parent communication •Regional Impact: (+) design instructional support to meet needs of regions; (+) target needs of specific groups (more cost effective); (-) difficult to decide where to house programs •Other (Including implications for other focus group topics): might need to incorporate funds from other sources; school size/enrollment/grade configuration would affect implementation
<p>Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.</p> <p>Implementation Option C:</p> <p><u>Staff Development</u> - focus training on every new teacher; provide ongoing training for all teachers; hire a district-wide staff development coordinator; support for implementation (subs, extended contract); coaches for GLAD/SIOP; more intensive training for more staff</p> <p><u>Community Partnerships</u> – Regional coordinators</p> <p><u>District Structure/Support</u> – More ELL coordinators (1.0 elementary, .5 middle, .5 high = 2.0 FTE)</p> <p><u>Parent and Family Support</u> – transportation for parents to a Welcome Center with adequate staffing and additional languages,</p>	<p>(Note: the definition of each implication is attached)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Equity: (+) all ELL student needs (academic and social) are met; (+) full access to school information for families; (+) All staff assumes responsibility for every child; (-) Newcomer program could be seen as segregation; (-) clustering could cause an imbalance of ELL/non-ELL students at certain schools (limits diversity) •Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools: (+) improved programs (dual language, Newcomer) would draw families back to neighborhood schools; (-) clustering could limit school choice; (+/-) Newcomer and dual language would create changes in staff/buildings; (-) space could be an issue •Program Staffing: (+/-) changes in staff around district; (+) more highly qualified staff including ESOL or bilingual endorsed; (+) consistent and complete continuum of instruction

<p>used as an Intake Center for ELL families (possibly expanded to <i>all</i> incoming 4J families – not just ELL)</p> <p><u>Instruction</u> – broader continuum of ELL classes; Newcomer program in each region for grades 6-12 housed at high schools; Dual Language: coordinator, more training, curriculum materials; Clustering in each region with transportation; support native language literacy in K-12 through dual language programs and extended day/year programs; access to content through native language, more sheltered instruction and integrated technology</p> <p><u>Support for Instruction</u> – transitions coordinator for more comprehensive support in all transition years; academic tutoring coordinator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •State and Federal Mandates: (+) likelihood that we'll meet them; (+) district viewed by community in positive light, perhaps leading to more community funding; (+) achievement gap likely closed; (+) 4J will be model school district •Student Transportation: (+) would remove barrier to attending school of choice •High Schools: (+) provide full range of courses needed for graduation; (+) provide post-secondary prep for students; (+) more academic and social support for students; (+) high school ELL coordinator facilitates positive change •Elementary Schools: (+) supports native language development which accelerates second language acquisition; (+) K-5 ELL coordinator facilitates positive change (coordinate with Title I, SPED, etc.) •Middle Schools: (+) provide full range of courses; (+) support native language development and cultural support at an age of identity negotiation; (+) ELL coordinator for 6-12 facilitates positive change •Regional Impact: (+) programs and classes consistent enough to allow smooth transitions and unbroken, consistent continuum of instruction for all ELL students •Other (Including implications for other focus group topics) (+) more parent involvement and community partnerships
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QUESTIONS AND ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD AND UNIVERSITY OPERATED THINK TANK

We have the following questions that we believe the school board and university operated think tank should consider as it synthesizes our work with the work of the other focus groups.

- Access to informational content in native languages (books, technology, etc.) needs to be made more available. How can this be made easily available for our students and staff?
- Budgets are so compartmentalized (ELL, Title, Special Ed, etc.). How can we pool monies and consider student needs?

- How do we encourage and support ALL teachers with differentiated instruction and making personal connections with students?
- How can we ensure that teacher training programs adequately prepare teachers for our diverse student population?
- How can a site-based decision making district support a comprehensive district-wide ELL program?
- How can 4J provide sustainability of programs and staffing for ELL?
- How will 4J decide where to locate/house different programs?
- How can we minimize the inequities caused by open enrollment for the ELL program?
- Students and/or parents can still opt out of ELL programs that are recommended. How can these groups be educated to understand the need for services?
- What have other similar school districts tried?
- How will clustering affect neighborhood schools that are competing with alternative schools?
- As the ELL population grows, will clustering be the most effective model?

We also believe that some stakeholder groups in the district may identify additional issues. We have listed what we believe those issues may be.

Staff: concerns about clustering ELL students, workload issues, less diversity that comes from clustering, shifting staff around the district

Students: school choice, segregation, meeting graduation requirements, acculturation issues

Parents: concerns about clustering ELL students, transportation time, segregation of students in some programs, meeting graduation requirements, assimilation vs. acculturation

Community: clustering creates a perception of a less desirable school, segregation issues, creates pockets of elitism and poverty, creates less diverse schools

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT
IMPLICATIONS DEFINED

- (a) **Equity:** 4J is committed to ensuring that each student receives full services without regard to disability, race, color, gender, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, marital status, socio-economic status, cultural background familial status, physical characteristics, or linguistic characteristics of a national origin group.

4J is also committed to closing the achievement gap between students while ensuring that all students continue to make academic progress. Closing the achievement gap may require the allocation of additional resources to some schools where there are a high number of low achieving students.

What implications, positive or negative, do the implementation options your group identified have for the district as it continues to focus on equity?

- (b) **Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools and Alternative Schools:** 4J is committed to ensuring that all students have equal access to all options that are available within the district and that are appropriate to the student's interests and needs.

4J also wants to assure that both neighborhood schools and alternative schools provide an excellent education program and that neither has an unfair advantage over the other.

What implications, positive or negative, do the implementation options your group identified have on neighborhood schools, alternative schools, and the district's open enrollment program?

- (c) **Program Staffing;** Historically, 4J has given schools a great deal of flexibility in how it allocates the resources they receive as long as the schools meet district, state, and federal requirements. As funding becomes more limited and as mandates, especially those mandates dealing with student achievement, increase there is often more and more pressure to consider program staffing. Program staffing is where the district requires that a certain portion of a school's resources be allocated to a certain program whether it be physical education, counseling, or library services. Currently the district program staffs special education and Title 1, certain student support positions at some schools, a portion of elementary music and, through this year, services that qualify for City levy funding. From time-to-time the district will also make additional funds available to a school to focus on a particular need such as closing the achievement gap.

What implications, positive or negative, do the implementation options your group identified have on program staffing?

- (d) **State and Federal Mandates:** 4J assumes that it will continue to comply with state and federal mandates and that those mandates will influence the implementation options your focus groups will identify. The district also assumes that the result of this planning process will not require it to challenge major mandates such as special education and student assessment. There may, however, be questions about whether some of your implementation options are possible under state and federal law.

What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on the ability of the district to continue to comply with state and federal mandates? As you

consider these implications you may want to consider if and how state and federal mandates limit your implementation options. Or you may want to consider if it may be reasonable to consider challenging some state mandates? For example, if the district was to implement a full day kindergarten program, the state currently funds only half-day programs, and the district would be required to reallocate funds.

- (e) **Student Transportation:** Student transportation is mandated in certain circumstances: for example the state requires that students who live a certain distance from school be transported and the federal government requires that students with disabilities who are transferred to a school other than their neighborhood because of their disability receive transportation services.

What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on providing student transportation?

- (f) **High Schools:** What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on high schools?
- (g) **Elementary Schools:** What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on elementary schools?
- (h) **Middle Schools:** What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on middle schools?
- (i) **Regional Impact (Churchill, North, Sheldon, and South):** Each region in town has its own feeder system and the schools in that region work together to ensure that students transition between schools. Enrollment at elementary and middle schools affects high school enrollment within a region. The students and their families in each region also have differing expectations of their schools. Changing instructional models, limiting the size of schools, and other issues may have different impacts on different geographic regions of 4J.

What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on each of the four regions?

- (j) **Other Implications (Including implications for other focus group topics):** Are there other implications that your group has identified?

ATTACHMENT
Definitions of ELL Terms

Newcomer Program – instructional program designed to support the academic needs of new arrivals who are non-English speaking, grades 6 - 12

Clustering – grouping ELL students together

Schools with low concentration of ELL students – schools where the small numbers of ELL do not allow for the development of a comprehensive instructional program

Dual Language – two-way language immersion program that targets native English speakers and other native language speakers (primarily Spanish at this time)

Transitions – students moving from pre-school to kindergarten, elementary to middle, middle to high, and high school to post-secondary

NLCB – No Child Left Behind federal mandates

Highly Qualified – as defined by state

GLAD/SIOP – Guided Language Acquisition Design/Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol – two staff development models for developing sheltered instruction lessons

Sheltered Instruction – instructional strategies that focus on teaching explicit content and language objectives and provide comprehensible instruction to ELLs

ESOL – English for speakers of other languages