

Lane County School District No. 4J
Eugene, Oregon

SHAPING 4J'S FUTURE
A Strategic Planning Process for the Eugene School District

PROCESS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE
EIGHT FOCUS GROUPS

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BACKGROUND

District 4J is undertaking a strategic planning process to determine what the district should look like in 2012 and beyond. Several focus groups will be established to address unanswered questions that will have an impact on school size, grade configurations, programs, and location of schools. This planning process is operating within the context of and in relationship to ongoing instructional planning and previous district planning efforts.

This is the strategic question: "What services and facilities will be needed to support the district's future instructional programs in order to increase achievement for all students and close the achievement gap?" In answering this question, the school district will be taking into consideration declining enrollment, regional enrollment patterns, placement of special education programs, the location of alternative schools, and potential strategies such as boundary changes, grade and school reconfigurations, and school closures and/or expansions.

The focus groups will be asked to address issues in the areas listed below and is just one part of an 18-month process that will include the collection of statistical information about student and community demographics and best practice information, the development of options with input from the community, and a public involvement process. The 4J School Board anticipates taking action on a set of recommendations in the spring of 2008.

Focus Group Topics

- (1) **Special Education:** What is the right model for special education in 4J? What are the implications?
- (2) **Title 1:** What is the right model for Title 1 in 4J? What are the implications?

- (3) **English Language Learners:** What is the right model for ELL in 4J? What are the implications?
- (4) **Pre-Kindergarten and Full Day Kindergartens:** Are 4J elementary schools going to house and support full day kindergartens and/or pre-Kindergarten programs? What are the implications?
- (5) **High School Size:** What size high schools, including alternative schools, is 4J willing to accommodate? What are the implications?
- (6) **Elementary and Middle School Size:** What size elementary and middle schools, including alternative schools, is 4J willing to accommodate?
- (7) **Technology:** How will technology support 4J operations and instruction (regular instruction and such programs as special education and ELL)? What are the implications?
- (8) **Grade Configurations:** Should 4J consider implementing alternative grade configurations (e.g., K-8 or primary schools), and, if so, which ones? What are the implications?

WHAT WILL THE FOCUS GROUPS BE ASKED TO DO?

Each focus group will be asked to address the following questions or issues in an intensive process that will occur during November and early December.

- (1) Review 4J's current program model;
- (2) Consider best practices;
- (3) Identify focus group values and beliefs;
- (4) Identify implementation options based on a range of funding options;
- (5) Consider implications;
 - (a) Equity;
 - (b) Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools and Alternative Schools;
 - (c) Program Staffing;
 - (d) State and Federal Mandates;
 - (e) Student Transportation;
 - (f) High Schools;
 - (g) Elementary Schools;
 - (h) Middle Schools;
 - (i) Regional Impact (Churchill, North, Sheldon, and South); and
 - (j) Other, including implications for other focus groups.
- (6) Identify questions and issues for consideration by the University operated committee, which will integrate and synthesize options identified by the focus groups.

WHEN WILL THE FOCUS GROUPS MEET AND WHAT SUPPORT WILL THEY HAVE?

The intensive work of the focus groups will be initiated on the afternoon of Tuesday, November 7 and completed on Friday, December 5. Final products will be available no later than December 15, 2006. Prior to November 7 group facilitators will be trained and all statistical and best practice information will be summarized for use by the focus groups.

Meeting Schedule

All focus groups will have the same meeting schedule and meet in the same location. The opportunity for mutually timed breaks and consultation among focus groups will make for a dynamic discussion of these unanswered questions. It is possible specific focus groups could assign themselves additional meetings within the month period leading up to December 5.

The following meeting provides for predetermined meeting times, but also provides time for each focus group to schedule additional meetings, do research, work in smaller groups, or meet with other focus groups or specialists.

Tuesday, November 7	1 p.m. to 4 p.m.	Large group orientation to the planning process, statistical and best practice information and initial focus group meetings. Individual focus group meetings to review process and discuss operational agreements.
Tuesday, November 14	8 a.m. to 4 p.m.	Focus group meetings to review current program Model and current literature, identify focus group values and beliefs, and begin to discuss potential options.
Wednesday, November 15	8 a.m. to 4 p.m.	Focus group meetings to identify options, Implications and questions for the University.
Thursday, November 16	8 a.m. to Noon	Focus group directed activities.
Thursday, November 16	Noon to 4 p.m.	Large group meeting: focus group presentations to all participants and coordinating committee members. Audience will give feedback to each focus group.
Friday, November 17	8 a.m. to 4 p.m.	Focus group meetings to complete template.
Monday, December 4	Noon to 4 p.m.	Large group meeting to receive initial reports from each of the focus groups and for large group critique.
Tuesday, December 5	8 a.m. to 4 p.m.	Focus groups revise initial reports as necessary.
Spring 2007		Give feedback regarding the outcomes from the Think Tank Process.

Focus Group Member Work Schedule

Focus Group members will be asked to be available during the full process. Those employees who are released for this process and require substitutes, they will be provided. This will allow them to direct full time attention to this planning process for this short but intense period of time. We assume that those employees who do not need substitutes will also devote their full attention to the process. PDU credit will be available for teachers and administrators who participate in this process.

Staffing And Facilitation Of The Focus Groups

Overall facilitation: David Piercy and Marilyn Clotz will be responsible for the overall facilitation and operation of the focus group process. They will be responsible for planning, training, and the overall smooth operation of the process. They will be available to assist

individual focus groups that may have questions or are getting bogged down. They will facilitate the initial large group meeting and the large group meeting proposed for December 4. They will also help focus groups determine when a consultation with another group could be helpful.

Group Facilitation: Eight group facilitators have agreed to lead the groups.

Listening and Writing: Each focus group has been assigned a skilled listener and writer. These individuals will be responsible for tracking the work of the focus groups, summarizing each day's outcomes, and putting the group's conclusions and comments into a written document that will be completed no later than December 15. They will draft the initial focus group reports between November 17 and November 29. They will attend all focus group meetings.

HOW WERE FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS NOMINATED?

Each focus group is being designed to have a mix of administrators, teachers, specialists, and classified staff that are knowledgeable about the specific subject areas. A site-council or parent group chair is also being invited to participate in several of the groups. The conclusions of the focus groups will be forwarded to a committee that has a range of participants, including school board members, parents, teachers, and community leaders who will integrate and synthesize the conclusions reached by the focus group and develop a set of possibilities for the future (See the section entitled, "What happens with the information the focus groups develop?")

The eight focus groups are listed below:

- (1) **Special Education**
- (2) **Title 1**
- (3) **English Language Learners**
- (4) **Pre-Kindergarten and Full Day Kindergartens**
- (5) **High School Size**
- (6) **Elementary and Middle School Size**
- (7) **Technology**
- (8) **Grade Configurations**

Process for the Specific Selection of Focus Group Members

Teachers: District administrators and the Eugene Education Association identified potential focus group members. Representatives from the EEA and the district then met and mutually agreed on the nominations.

Classified Staff: District administrators and OSEA identified potential focus group members. Representatives from the OSEA and the district then met and mutually agreed on the nominations.

Administrators: Specific Education Center administrators were nominated to serve on the focus groups because of their scope of responsibility and/or technical skills. Instruction Department Directors and the principal resource team nominated building level administrators.

WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE INFORMATION THE FOCUS GROUPS DEVELOP?

The work of the focus groups is critically important in generating key information that will be included in a report that will go to the School Board in January or February of 2007. The Focus Group Reports will be the raw data used by a University operated committee that will explore the information and options developed by the focus groups.

That committee will develop a set of integrated alternatives or possibilities for the School Board. In developing these alternatives, the committee will synthesize information from the focus groups and consider constraints such as demographics, enrollment, operating and capital costs, legal issues, and other policy considerations. The committee will include a range of participants, including focus group representatives, school board members, parents, teachers, and community leaders. As the committee refines its work, it will report back to the focus groups for review and feedback. The findings from the committee will be incorporated into a report to the school board, who will determine the next steps.