

January 22, 2007

Summary of Think Tank Approach and Process

The Think Tank is being conducted by a team from the University of Oregon in consultation with the 4J School District. This document summarizes the overall approach for this process and the first phase of the Think Tank process.

Staff Supporting UO Think Tank

This information gathering process will be carried out by a team from the University of Oregon. It will involve three faculty and a team of graduate students with a background in collaborative processes and public deliberation efforts. The team members are:

- Richard Margerum, Assoc. Prof. and Chair, Dept. of Planning, Public Policy & Management
- Ed Weeks, Assoc. Prof, Department of Planning, Public Policy & Management
- Robert Parker, Co-Director, Community Service Center, Univ. of Oregon

Overall Approach

The role of the Think Tank is to provide strategic advice on broad ideas and directions. This group will function at this strategic level to provide its input. It will start with District goals, work through the trends, and then help develop broad strategic options. 4J staff and the UO team will develop the detailed analysis and implications of these options.

Developing Strategic Options for Think Tank

The primary strategic issue driving this process is the configuration and service options facing the District. There are several issues and trends that are the **strategic issues that influence** what these configuration and service options might be for the district. These issues define the current and future environment the district will operate in, and provide context for the problem(s) to be addressed. Some of these are trends over which the district has no control (e.g., enrollment), while others are policy decisions the District must face (e.g., school size). The various inputs will create a wide range of school **service and configuration options**. Each of these options will have **implications** for a wide range of concerns relating to services, equity, operational budgets, transportation budgets, and community concerns.

Strategic Issues

The following inputs can be thought of as the variables that can be used to determine the range of service and configuration options:

- Regardless of any policy changes the District is confronted with several important trends: enrollment decreases, geographic shifts in enrollment, a diversifying student population, and concerns about educational equity
- Regardless of any policy changes, these trends are going to have implications for the physical facilities of the District (closings, mergers, moves, etc)
- Best practice models in education point to some potential changes for the District, such as: providing all-day kindergarten, managing school size, and adjusting grade configurations.

- District policies, beliefs and values also point to the need to consider some best practice models for educational quality that have space and service configuration implications, including (but not limited to):
 1. Expanding programs to serve a growing number of ELL students
 2. Restructuring Special Education and Title 1 programs to better disperse services
 3. Investing in technology that supports effective instruction and schools

Configuration Options

The inputs will lead to a wide range of options for configuring the 4J services and physical facilities. These options (or some boundaries around potential configurations) will need to be developed by the 4J staff and UO team, because they will build off the details of the Focus Groups. There may need to be more background materials from the District on facilities, locations, maintenance costs, etc.

Implications

Once the Think Tank has a “reasonable” set of configuration options, its role will be to review and provide feedback on the implications for these configurations. As some of these options become “fleshed out,” some may be removed from consideration. For example, the costs or equity concerns of some options could be unacceptable or unpalatable. There will be three sources of information to help inform this discussion:

Internal (4J) Educational Implications

- Educational environment (school size, grade configuration)
- Special Education
- Title 1
- English Language Learners
- Technology

Internal (4J) Other Implications

- Facility costs
- Transportation costs
- Staffing costs
- Staff training and qualification issues
- Transition issues

External Implications (palatability, impacts, and likely community concerns)

- Overall costs
- Impacts of change and transition
- Transportation concerns
- Other community concerns

Narrowing of Options

During the implications discussion, more of the configuration options will need to be eliminated so that a more manageable set of options can be forwarded to a public deliberation. The reasons for eliminating these will be documented. This final set of options will be presented to the School Board in August. The Board will decide if they want to narrow the options further and how they will want to proceed with a public deliberation process.

First Think Tank Meeting

The first Think Tank meeting will explain the overall process and their approach and role in this process. This process may include:

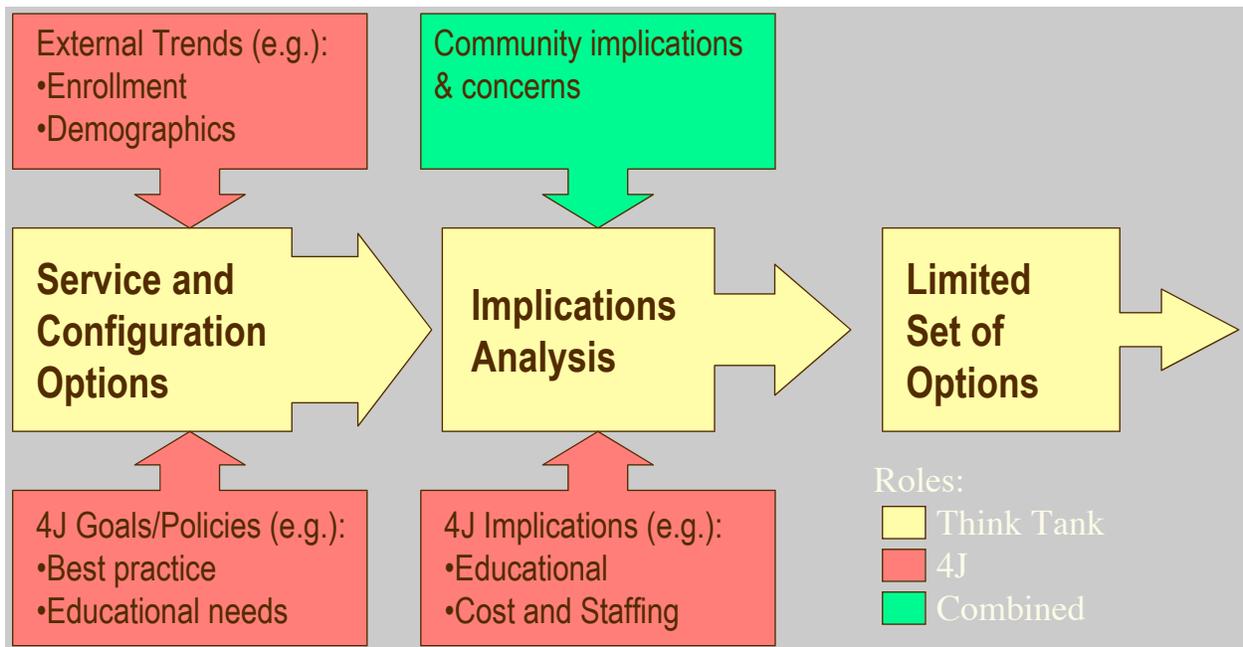
- Reviewing information from the 4J focus groups and following up with clarifications and questions
- Consulting 4J staff and stakeholder groups through surveys or focus groups
- Reporting the group's findings to the School Board

Setting the Stage for the Think Tank

The relationship of this process to other District activities and policies may be somewhat confusing to an outsider. At the first meeting, the group will spend time hearing from 4J Superintendent George Russell about:

- The problem they are addressing
- Why this problem come about
- Why this requires a more public process than other 4J plans

Think Tank Process



Think Tank Issues

Think Tank Role

The role of the think tank will be to:

- **Review and Respond** to the information presented to them to allow us to understand what is confusing, what questions people may have, and how some of this might be framed for a public discussion
- **Identify** external implications that may not have been considered by the District, including community concerns, palatability of cost scenarios, and other issues
- **Help Narrow or Coalesce** the range of options so they can be forwarded to the School Board and public deliberation process
- **Raise Questions** about the trends, issues and other implications that may be important for understanding public questions and concerns

Think Tank Ground Rules

We are asking the Think Tank to provide responses and reactions to a range of proposals, which will help us determine how to present and organize the public deliberation. This is an information gathering process, so the Think Tank will not be limited by what issues it can raise.